



Patron : Samuel West  
Music Director : Darius Battiwalla

Registered Charity No.

## **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT 2011**

### **REVIEW OF THE 2010-11 SEASON**

This was the season in which the Chorus celebrated its 75th Anniversary, and it began for us most appropriately with our 'signature' piece, *The Dream of Gerontius*, performed under the baton of James Burton with the Halle on 4 November 2010. It was a memorable performance and we were proud and delighted that six of that evening's singers had also sung in the acclaimed 1964 recording.

Recording and filming the BBC Songs of Praise broadcast on 5 December 2010 was an exciting and very interesting experience at St. Oswald's Church, Bannercross. We were intrigued at how the programme was put together rather like an audio jigsaw puzzle, and singing Christmas Carols in October surrounded by seasonal decorations was very odd!

Earlier in the same day a group from SPC were to be heard on Radio 4's 'Sunday Worship', recorded at St. Mary's, Bramall Lane whose priest, Rev. Julian Sullivan, is one of our tenors. This normally live broadcast at 8.10am was recorded, after a rehearsal session the previous day, on account of the extreme and dangerous weather conditions prevalent at the time : -15 degrees most mornings and a deep covering of snow even in the city centre. As on many occasions we have Rachel Copley to thank for directing the singing and liaising in such a professional manner with the church musicians and the Producer.

Owing to popular demand we performed two Christmas Concerts in the city Hall. While we anticipated logistical difficulties, in practice all went quite smoothly and everyone enjoyed the whole day. sherry and mince pies were served in the evening interval as usual. Ian McMillan was on form and while there were officially two identical performances Ian did vary his part enough to keep us laughing into the evening. Many reports were heard from people saying that how much they had enjoyed the choice of carols and that the concert had been the best for many years.

Christmas started with commuters at Sheffield rail station being greeted with the strains of Christmas carols as a large contingent from SPC plus a few visitors gathered in the atrium this has become quite a tradition and the acoustic there makes for satisfying singing and a fun filled afternoon. Heart Research UK is always very appreciative of our efforts and just under £500 was raised. Pleasingly SPC then featured in Heart Research's Newsletter report of the national Sing for Your Heart fundraising initiative.

We had our usual visit to Tickhill but unfortunately the freezing temperatures and a severe weather forecast played havoc with the turnout of both performers and audience alike. Despite the doom and gloom one enthusiastic singer was so determined to take part that she arrived with her overnight bag! The Alzheimer's Society of Doncaster benefited by £200 as a result of the noble people who either took part or supported the event.

Mozart's Requiem was extremely well attended and it was a very commendable performance under the baton of Nicholas Kraemer with the Manchester Camerata on 25 February 2011. Paul Duffield did a sterling job in his debut performance as Transport Manager. This concert was dedicated to the memory of our previous Transport Manager who died tragically while on holiday in the summer of 2010 and we are grateful to his widow Heather who made a generous gift to the Chorus.

Walton's Henry V was the final concert of the 2010-11 Season and it was a fine opportunity to share the platform with our patron, Samuel West. We knew he would be good but he was really tremendous. Furthermore, he has asked to be considered for other appropriate performances. As well as being a superb actor '...who brings a touch of class to proceedings with his ability to say lines the way a real person would rather than deliver them like an actor' (Radio Times 7.8.11.) he is also a singer so there could be plenty of opportunities to perform with him again.

During the last year no fewer than 20 new members have joined the Chorus and our numbers are now in excess of 200. Our very own 'Three Tenors' appeared in the local press and one of them was heard on BBC Radio Sheffield extolling the virtues of singing and gave us a superb promotion.

**Singclude** - We are proud and excited to have made a successful Big Lottery bid for Awards for All funding for our 'Singclude' project to buy a portable stairclimber. Dorothy Plant, one of our sopranos, passed her re-audition two years ago and while she was able to attend rehearsals regularly, the choir staging at the City Hall is unsuitable for ordinary wheelchairs and so Dorothy had been excluded from taking part in concerts there. We named the project 'Singclude' as it succinctly fitted our objectives and it is to be officially launched in the new year thanks to the National Lottery 'Awards for All' grant scheme.

The stairclimber had its 'maiden voyage' at Leeds Town Hall and enabled Dorothy to sing in the fantastic performance of Verdi's Requiem on 21 May, which we shared with Leeds Philharmonic Choir and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by David Hill.

**Alight** - Rachel Mallaband, our extremely efficient and proactive Marketing and Publicity Officer, picked up on 'Music Nation' a project put forward by the BBC for the Cultural Olympiad in the lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games. As a result of her efforts in promoting SPC she won for us the privilege of leading the Yorkshire area in this unique event and we are now in the process of fine tuning this remarkable event which will take place on 3 March 2012.

One of our members, Yaron Hollander, is composing a piece of music specifically for 'Alight' which is the agreed name given to the Yorkshire area's contribution. This project is about to take off in a big way with all of us, and a host of other organizations, being drawn into the excitement of a multi-faceted weekend of culture.

**'By Any Means'** - As part of the national Open Weekend, held on 23 July 2011 as one of the events to start the Cultural Olympiad and lead up to the Olympic Games next year, Sheffield had a mock-up of a fifty meter section of running track in Tudor Square. A diverse range of performers, community groups and individuals was invited to complete the track 'by any means'. Over thirty members of the Chorus sang their way round two laps of the track - a round called Belle Mama which a few members learned by ear at Big Sing Yorkshire earlier in the summer. Rachel Copley directed us to a very harmonious finale on the finishing line.

**Sheffield Pride** - Thanks again to an initiative taken by Rachel Mallaband, we had a stall at Sheffield Pride in Endcliffe Park on 16 July. About fourteen volunteers from the Chorus staffed the stall in turns or distributed hundreds of our leaflets to the festival goers throughout the site. 75th Anniversary books, Chorus mugs and secondhand music and CDs were sold. Hopefully it will have created some interest in either joining us or coming to concerts. Thanks to all who took part - it was good fun and hopefully will have raised our profile among a new audience.

**Gala Birthday Celebration** - On 18 June the City Hall Ballroom was the scene of a most enjoyable evening. We celebrated 75 years of being Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus in great style.

Our guests included the Lord Mayor of Sheffield and her Consort, Councillor Sylvia Dunkley and her husband John, who are both choral singers themselves, and who wrote to us the following week to say what a memorable evening it had been. In her first year as Social Events Officer, Helen Kirk arranged a superb event and we thank and congratulate her for helping to bring our 75th Anniversary year to a truly wonderful climax.

Some of the funding for this was possible through the generous contribution made by Warren Gilchrist, the widow of our much loved Membership Officer, Miriam.

We can feel proud to be the ones continuing the tradition of first class choral music in Sheffield City Hall and beyond.

## **2011-12 SEASON**

Early in the new season on 7 October, we welcome James Burton back to conduct Walton's dramatic *Belshazzar's Feast*. The soloist is David Soar, an excellent choice for that work.

Again we have been asked to perform two Carol Concerts in the City Hall. These both take place on Saturday 10 October with a matinee and then an evening performance.

On 11 February 2012 we will perform Faure's *Requiem* with Manchester Camerata and will be conducted by our Music Director, Darius Battiwalla. We welcome back David Stout as baritone soloist.

Preparations are in place for our forthcoming self-promoted performance of The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins and Philip Wilby's Bronte Mass. This will take place in the City Hall on 28 April 2012. While this is not part of the SIV series of concerts it will be presented in a similar manner, starting at 7.00pm with all tickets being £15.

We have invited Halifax Choral Society to join us. They made us most welcome when we shared the platform with them in Birmingham for the recorded concert which resulted in our being able to sell DVDs of the performance. The band will again be Black Dyke. A member of the Halifax choir who arranged the video element for the DVD has offered his help in this field and has suggested that some of the images projected should be of the Sheffield blitz which will make the whole event personal to us and no doubt strike chords with our audience who will be mainly Sheffield people.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH SIV**

After a meeting with the Deputy Manager at the City Hall to deal with technicalities relating to the staging the DVD images for The Armed Man. When we expressed our gratitude for his help and kindness he said 'Well, it's your home, isn't it?' Those few words spoke volumes to us.

Rachel Mallaband has formed an excellent, mutually collaborative relationship with the City Hall marketing team, and Helen Kirk couldn't praise enough the staff who helped with the arrangements for the 75th Celebrations. We have also received real co-operation from staff over the storage and general management of the stair climber. Although we are now contributing to our concerts financially, it should not be thought that the favour is one way only, as behind the scenes some generous discounting on various facilities we need is being given.

All the negative feelings of the past regarding SIV can now have a line drawn under them, and we look forward to a friendly, supportive and co-operative relationship with everyone at the City Hall.

### **THE BEATITUDES**

We have been invited by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra to perform 'The Beatitudes' by Sir Arthur Bliss. CBSC had been asked but they are unavailable and SPC were recommended as being 'excellent' and 'reliable'.

This work was commissioned for the opening and consecration of the newly built Coventry Cathedral but in fact it has never been performed in the Cathedral. To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the opening it has been decided that the Bliss commission should at last be sung in the 'new' Cathedral. We are honoured to have been chosen to take part in this memorable occasion. The date is 22 September 2012.

### **OTHER EVENTS**

Already we have been invited by Heart Research UK to sing at the Sheffield Rail Station on 15 December, with a possible second date the week before on 8 December.

Once again we have agreed to lead the singing at St. Luke's Service of Celebration and Remembrance on Sunday 11 December in Sheffield Cathedral.

Tickhill Carols will take place at St. Mary's Church, Tickhill on Tuesday 20 December.

## **CONCLUSION**

The events of the 75th Anniversary year demonstrate that Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus is still as active and enthusiastic as ever and has no intention of settling into a quiet 'old age'. It has a full and exciting year ahead and we are all privileged to belong to such a wonderful organisation as 'The Phil'.

Janet Bower  
Chorus Administrator  
September 2011