



Registered Charity no. 518073

Music Director - Darius Battiwalla
Patron - Sam West

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I was very pleased last September when around 20 Chorus members gave up a Saturday morning to help the Committee work through some ideas and strategy for the future of the Chorus. Our thanks to the Business School at Hallam University for offering to facilitate this process, and for enabling us to emerge with some useful conclusions. The report is available on the website and will be worth a re-visit by the Committee this year.

Our performance of Britten's War Requiem, sponsored by Chorus member and Friend for Life Steve Terry, ranks I think as a historic one for the Chorus. We were delighted to welcome the CBSO as our orchestra, and members of the CBSO Chorus, and Sheffield Oratorio Chorus through the Voice Exchange scheme, to enhance our vocal forces. Professor Melvyn Cooke provided an excellent introduction to the evening In Conversation with Trisha Cooper. Altogether an amazing evening, both musically and emotionally, and I must once again sincerely thank Steve for enabling it to happen.

Preparing to perform The Dream of Gerontius with Leeds Philharmonic Chorus in February was quite a challenge on top of the Britten performance and our usual plethora of pre-Christmas events. It is always great to work in collaboration with other choirs and we thoroughly enjoyed this one. I am delighted that we have been able to invite our friends from Leeds to join us for the performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony on 17 May 2015.

Continuing the theme of collaboration, about 70 members had the delightful experience of joining around 300 other singers from all over Yorkshire for the world premier in York Minster of Alexander L'Estrange's Vive la Velorution, commissioned by York Chapter House Choir for the Cultural Festival linked with the Tour de France Grand Départ. For many reasons this was a fantastic experience - having the composer take part of the rehearsal and having him in the accompanying jazz band; singing in a much more "popular music" genre than we are accustomed to; enjoying a whole day of music-making with other singers, including lots of young singers who really added a special dimension; and appreciating a real sense of community singing as the audience in York Minster joined with us in a unique performance of sections from Alex L'Estrange's Zimbe. Altogether a very special occasion, and our thanks go to the York Chapter House Choir for having the vision and drive to make it happen, and for inviting us to be part of it.

We continue to face the considerable challenge of being an "arts" organisation in an era of austerity. We have made a good start on establishing our Friends scheme, and last Christmas and prior to our June concert we were delighted to host receptions for our "Friends". This coming year one of our priorities will be to consolidate the scheme and ensure it is working well. We have already welcomed one new Friend for Life this season, and we need to ensure that we nurture our Friends, who are already enabling us to take on projects that would have been impossible without their financial support. An example of this was our concert on 7 June, which commemorated long-standing member George Swindells and also marked the centenary of the start of World War 1. This gave us the opportunity to perform some very unusual repertoire, including a reprise of our 2012 commission "Everyone Sang" which gave its name to the concert; and another world premier, "So Sing", commissioned by Chorus Membership Officer John Spence, in honour of George. Former Chorus member Sue Morton performed inspiring prose and poetry to link the musical elements. This kind of concert needs significant financial investment and it is the Friends' scheme which can provide this. The Chorus will again be promoting a concert on 18 April 2015.

Another exciting project this season will be the recording of a Christmas CD with our friends the Black Dyke Band, for release in time for Christmas 2015. Although we have made several commercial recordings for the BBC and Chandos, this is the first time we have undertaken our own recording project since 1989 when we made our Carol Noel recording.

This will be my final season as Chorus Chairman, and whilst we continue to face challenges we also continue to have significant strengths to meet them: the best professional support from Darius, Maggie and Nigel; well-established good relationships with our partners The Halle and Sheffield International Venues; closer links with other musical organisations in Sheffield through the Classical Sheffield network; and our amazing team of officers, Committee members and other helpers who literally keep the Chorus show on the road. Once again my sincerest thanks, on your behalf, to all of them. We do, indeed, have everything we need to enable the Chorus to continue to flourish as one of the region's premier symphony choruses, and I look forward to what will hopefully be a very successful and fulfilling season.

Julie Smethurst
September 2015

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

This last season has been a very exciting one and has required quite a bit of homework to maintain the high standard of singing demanded by Darius.

The very moment we returned from our summer break we were nose to the grindstone for Britten's War Requiem.

We are fortunate to have in our ranks Steve Terry whose generous sponsorship enabled us to perform this amazing work in celebration of the life of his late wife, as well as in

commemoration of the centenary of the birth of his long standing friend and mentor, Benjamin Britten. It was a privilege to be part of a concert so emotionally charged and critically acclaimed and we are grateful to Steve for his initiative and support.

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While still on a high from The War Requiem we swung straight into Christmas events - all eight of them!

The first of these was for St. Luke's Hospice, a charity much favoured by Members through personal connections. Led by Chairman Julie we sang at their 'Festival of Light' for commuters at the Sheffield train station.

Another regular and popular event for St. Luke's was the 'Service of Celebration and Remembrance'. This time, owing to building work at Sheffield Cathedral, the carol service was held at the Cutler's Hall and the Chorus was conducted by our tireless President, Rachel Copley.

Back at the train station we sang, as we have done for many years, for Heart Research UK. It is very satisfying that so many travellers stop and join in, take photos/videos, pick up leaflets and ask about the Chorus.

Home again to the City Hall we had, what seems now to be the norm, two carol concerts accompanied once more by the tremendous Black Dyke Band.

This time we were delighted and honoured that our patron Sam West was able to comper the concerts. 'Friends of Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus' enjoyed refreshments and met Sam between concerts and he clearly took great pleasure in being part of us.

After a last minute scramble to find an organist when Darius found himself unable to join us, Tickhill Carols took off in its usual exuberant style and, with Rachel again wielding her baton, was a wonderful celebration of Christmas for singers and audience alike. We were pleased, too, to welcome Sue Morton, a former Member, whose seasonal readings were a delight.

Without Rachel's expertise and willingness to oblige we would be unable to take on many of these extramural events and we are most grateful to her.

She has undertaken this role over many years and she is a star!

Julie stepped forward again with her list of carols and we sang in the lovely acoustic of Weston Park Museum where we found numerous children singing along, including some homegrown ones, which made it feel that this is 'what it's all about'.

Finally, on Christmas Eve before we could reach for our glass of sherry, we sang carols at BBC Radio Sheffield.

In February we travelled to Leeds to join Leeds Philharmonic Chorus in a performance of Elgar's much loved "Dream of Gerontius". A few issues over seating arrangements and accessibility needed addressing but then we enjoyed a very satisfying and moving performance. The following is an extract from an email received from conductor David Hill :

'Of all the collaborations I have experienced in LTH, this was, by far, the very best. The two choirs blend well together and they sounded 'as one'.

Praise indeed from a choral doyen!

Beethoven's 'Choral Fantasia' was next and that was a delightfully rollicking sing with the Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra.

Rachel came to the fore again when we were invited by the Graves Art Gallery to provide singers for 'Multi-Story', a joint Libraries/Museum festival. Choral pieces were selected to team with the art works in each room of the gallery. Thanks to Rachel and the small choir it was a resounding success.

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The season closed on 7 June 2014 with a concert in the Victoria Hall to commemorate 100 years since the start of World War I. We took the opportunity to dedicate the concert to a long serving member of the Chorus, George Swindells who died in March 2013. Most of the concert was recorded by a professional sound engineer and a CD has been made. When it has been vetted by Darius it will be used for publicity purposes. There were issues in organizing the concert which highlighted the need for dedicated personnel to stage manage our self-promoted concerts. Furthermore, this event revealed that 'The Friends' scheme would also benefit from having its own co-ordinator. Anyone who feels that either of these roles would be in their capabilities should speak to Julie or me.

A post season opportunity was supported by about 80 Members. Early in the year we were invited by the Chapter House Choir to join them in York Minster to perform a new work by Alexander L'Estrange. CHC commissioned a cantata to celebrate the Grand Départ through Yorkshire of the Tour de France. The exciting and light hearted 'Vive la Velorution' tells the history of the bicycle. Unusually for us we were accompanied by a five piece jazz band with the composer at the piano. The programme was completed by pieces from Alex's exuberant African work 'Zimbe'. Thanks are due to Paul Duffield in his role as Transport Officer for making light of the complicated coach travel.

Finally, our 'Flog It!' programme, recorded at the Cutler's Hall back in November 2012, was eventually broadcast in May this year. I think a 'curate's egg' sums it up!

Janet Bower
October 2014

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus				
Statement of Assets & Liabilities as at 31.07.2014				
Summary		Monetary Assets		

Balance at 31.07.2013	£52,464.30	General Bank Account	£3,183.92
		Concert Account	£2,874.75
		Savings Account	£4,840.62
		Friends of SPC	£2,208.50
		Friends of SPC savings	£5,904.18
Profit for current year	£2,547.67	COIF Deposit Account	£36,000.00
	£55,011.97		£55,011.97
Income Categories	Actual		Budget
War Requiem	£3,050.00		£0.00
City hall Tickets	£1,505.00		£0.00
Friends of SPC	£2,010.00		£1,500.00
Folders & scarves	£169.50		£55.00
Fund Raising	£112.58		£750.00
Gifts Recieved	£13,892.86		£4,500.00
Investment Income	£149.19		£260.00
Leeds Tickets	£310.00		£0.00
Performance fees	£1,320.00		£1,200.00
Sale and Hire of Music	£3,801.94		£2,500.00
Self promoted concert	£2,053.00		£3,740.00
Subscriptions	£19,823.56		£19,740.00
Stairclimber fund	£315.70		£300.00
Tax Refund	£0.00		£6,500.00
Tickhill	£126.00		£0.00
Travel	£950.00		£0.00
Total Income Categories	£49,589.33		£41,045.00
Expense Categories	Actual		Budget
City Hall tickets	£1,505.00		£0.00
Accompanist	£3,910.00		£3,525.00
Chorus Master	£7,846.20		£8,825.00
Complimentary tickets	£0.00		£200.00

Coach Travel	£2,300.00		£1,650.00
Concert contribution	£1,320.00		£2,000.00
Scarves/folders replacement	£87.40		£0.00
Friends event	£107.93		£0.00
Fund raising expence mugs/cards	£0.00		£350.00
Gifts & social	£98.94		£200.00
Insurance & Subscription	£585.00		£650.00
PRS Performing Rights	£89.54		£0.00
Piano tuning	£0.00		£100.00
Publicity & Marketing	£837.00		£4,300.00
Purchase and hire of music	£3,582.11		£2,500.00
Room Hire	£3,512.50		£4,890.00
Secretarial	£595.37		£500.00
Self-promoted Concert	£6,393.87		£6,850.00
Stairclimber	£226.80		£300.00
Tickhill	£126.00		£0.00
Tickets Leeds	£307.50		£0.00
Voice Coaching	£1,500.00		£1,500.00
Workshops	£0.00		£250.00
War Requiem	£12,110.50		£0.00
Total Expense Categories	£47,041.66		£38,590.00
Grand Total			
	£2,547.67		£2,455.00

Angela Argenzio
October 2014

MEMBERSHIP OFFICER'S REPORT

Due to a significant IT problem, the Membership Officer's report could not be produced in time for this report. It is planned that the usual comprehensive report will be compiled and available to members as soon as possible.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION OFFICER'S REPORT

I am pleased to report that my third year as the Chorus's Outreach & Education Officer has been a positive one with three successful series of pre-rehearsal workshops having been run.

The first of these, which took place during January and February, was for men interested in trying out singing with the Chorus. A total of eleven men attended of which seven (5 tenors and 2 basses) have subsequently taken auditions and joined the Chorus.

Although in the run up to the workshops a press release led to publicity in the local press and a slot on Paulette Edwards' show on Radio Sheffield, most of those who attended the workshops found out about them either directly from the Chorus website or as a result of personal invitations from Chorus members. This again points up the importance for us all of spotting potential new members (men & women) and encouraging them to come along and give us a try.

The other workshops run were for existing Chorus members and covered music/sight reading. In consultation with the workshop leader it was decided to organise these in two parts:

- Workshops for sopranos, altos and tenors ('treble clefers') which took place between April and June and were attended by a total of eight people.
- Workshops for basses which commenced at the start of the current season and will continue into October. Although these are still going on, numbers so far have been very pleasing with a total of ten men having so far taken part.

Invitations to take part in these workshops have been issued after consultation with Darius and also with a particular focus on somewhat less established members of the Chorus (those with us for less than 5 or so years). However, they have also been opened up to others who feel that they might benefit from them and it has been great to see people volunteering themselves in this way.

The most significant change this year in relation to workshops has been a change of workshop leader. Ros Hobson who has previously led these has been unavailable this year due to other commitments so, in her place, we have been pleased to welcome Chris Wiltshire. Chris has brought lots of new things to the workshops and I know that those who have attended them have found them very useful – not always without challenge but enjoyable and useful nevertheless! I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Chris very much for his contribution over the year which has been much appreciated, both by me and those who have worked with him.

Looking ahead to the future it will probably come as no surprise that the ongoing priority is still the recruitment and support of new members – men in particular!

I decided some time ago that I would step down from the Outreach and Education Officer post at the 2014 AGM and I still intend to do this. So here's your chance to take on this really important role. It is not a particularly arduous one, mainly involving setting up and promoting the kind of workshops I have described above; although there is of course

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always plenty more that could be done. There is a good foundation on which to build and I would be more than happy to induct and continue to support the person who takes it on, added to which there is also a very supportive Recruitment, Outreach & Education group to help things along. If this sounds as if this is something in which you might be interested, I would be very pleased to have a chat with you about what is involved.

Paul Maddox
Outreach and Education Officer

NEW MEMBERS OFFICER'S REPORT

This season has seen a steady influx of visitors to try our rehearsals. I had contact of some sort from about 60 people, some of whom never showed up, some of whom tried us and did not stay on, but the good news is we have successfully auditioned 21 new members this year. 4 more people are hoping to audition before the Mozart concert. Of the successes, 5 are men who came to us via the men's music reading workshops. We have Paul Maddox to thank for organising the sessions and also Chris Wiltshire for his teaching. 2 other men are hoping to re-audition soon who have also attended the classes.

It is lovely to see the varied ages and backgrounds of the people who do visit and I again want to thank all those who have offered or been bullied into mentoring or accompanying new singers during their first rehearsals. Even if people can't stay with us for whatever reason, I frequently have emails thanking me/ us for the friendly reception they receive and saying what a great atmosphere there is in the chorus. Thank you!

Sally Turnbull

September 2014

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

This year was again very interesting and varied ranging from performances of the great War Requiem to the light hearted Song Cycle Concert in York to celebrate the start of the Tour the France.

Each year seems to set me a challenge as far as finding a particular score and this year the winner was the Requiem da Camera by Gerald Finzi. This very beautiful, but seldom performed, work was finally tracked down. It had changed publishers recently and was in the process of being re-edited and printed to be ready at the end of April. Boosey and Hawkes are now the sole publishers of all works by Finzi and only 53 scores of the previous edition were to be found in the whole of Europe. The newly printed scores came from Germany, including the scores for the orchestra. This meant that we had the scores just in time to rehearse, ready for the concert in June, but also that they came with an eye watering price tag.

The lesson we must learn from this is that when we plan a concert independently and which is paid for by us as a Chorus, it is wise to have the program fixed well in advance so

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that we can actually budget the cost of the music, which in this case could not reasonably be covered by the members of the chorus.

The Huddersfield Music Library remains the first port of call for music scores and I will attend an information session there in October to find out how to make use of the new computer system and ordering procedure. Looking at the system it is clear that copies are reserved years in advance and forward planning is important for securing the music for the best possible hire charge.

Again for those who have short memories and new members, a reminder that scores need to be returned as soon as possible and no later than 2 weeks after a performance. Please erase pencil marks. If this is a problem contact me to make alternative arrangements. Late returns will incur extra costs and a £5.00 charge will have to be made or, if lost, replacement costs.

Again I could not do without the help of members of the chorus who are always ready to help with the smooth and speedy distribution of the music. Again a particular thanks to Patricia Hall and Howard Dore for their help.

Els Pearse
September 2014

SOCIAL EVENTS OFFICER'S REPORT

Social Events have been rather sparse this year. The Garden Party was cancelled due to limited interest and we were unable to have a post concert drink in the City Bar, an event which has been popular in the past.

A suitable venue close to the Victoria Hall, was found, however, due to a misunderstood double booking with another choir we had a last minute change to the Novotel which was further away and therefore not as accessible for everyone, for which I apologize. For those who did make it it was a lovely opportunity to share a drink with friends and a chance to

get to know less familiar chorus members in large comfortable surroundings. Prior to the concert afternoon tea was served to the Friends of the Chorus.

The tradition of partaking in sherry and mince pies in the interval of the evening Carol Concert continued and appeared to be enjoyed by members of both the chorus and band. There was also a pre-concert reception for the Friends and a chance for them to meet our Compere and Patron, Samuel West.

As usual these events only happen because of the help I receive from other members and I am extremely grateful to them all.

I have plans to hold an event one Tuesday evening in the next few weeks. This will be after a shorter rehearsal and I hope it will be well supported.

If anyone has an idea of a social event which you would like us to consider I would love to hear from you.

Helen Kirk
Social Events Officer