



Patron: Samuel West
Music Director: Darius Battiwalla

Summer Newsletter, July 2008

Firstly, before I write anything else, I must express my gratitude to Stephen Knight, who was General Secretary of the Chorus from 2000 to 2007. Stephen's painstaking orderliness, meticulousness and attention to detail, made it so much easier for me to take over the administration of the Chorus last October. He created a solid foundation for me to build on for which I am hugely grateful. Thank you Stephen and thank you for all the work you have put in for the Chorus, largely unseen and unknown by most of us over these past years.

We've had a great season. So varied. We launched almost straight away into the 75th Anniversary Gala concert at the end of September. What a lot of fun it was to share the stage with the consummate performer and singer, Lesley Garrett, and stars of TV and the dance floor, Eric Boeg and Anton Du Beke.

Then down to the more serious business of simultaneously rehearsing for the Carol concert, the Messiah and how can we ever forget – the Spem in Alium and the Rachmaninov rehearsals.

It is always very special for us to be conducted by Darius in the actual concert after weeks of rehearsing with him, and the Messiah was an uplifting occasion.

The Christmas Carol Concert was one of the liveliest we've had for several years, compered by the Bard of Barnsley, Ian McMillan, with the Black Dyke Band providing the rousing playing.

Launching the five40five series in the City Hall Ballroom was very exciting and a great privilege - to say nothing of nerve-wracking! However, we acquitted ourselves pretty well in such a new situation and had the satisfaction of having the biggest audience of the series.

In between these autumn/winter concerts, we held a Singing Day at the Victoria Hall with the aim of interesting potential new members. We rehearsed and performed the Fauré Requiem and some Duruflé motets. There was a really nice feeling of camaraderie during that day. It's good to do some singing when we have more time to socialise.

Before we knew it, it was Easter and we were performing Bach's St John Passion on Good Friday. What a great luxury it was to have three rehearsals with Nicholas Kraemer. And how well we eventually got round all the German and all the notes! That was another great concert.

And then our final concert at the end of May. The very beautiful-to-sing Elgar, The Music Makers, which necessitated what became a rather fraught coach trip to Manchester. Still, there was the wine on the coach to look forward to on the way back. Many thanks, Peter (Clarke) for organising the coaches, not an enviable job.

And of course, the absolute finale to the season was our contribution to the *Race for Life* event on 15 June at Don Valley Stadium. It was very heart-warming to see so many of our members, men and women, turn out to set the runners off with the rendering of "You'll Never Walk Alone" led by Andy Booth.

We have made a lot of music together this season – lots of styles, techniques, languages and lengths. I look forward very much to what our next season has in store. Here is the summary of our main concerts – what a lot of wonderful singing to be had:

Friday 12 September & Friday 26 September

Beethoven: Symphony No 9 in D Minor
Beethoven: Elegischer Gesang
CBSO Chorus, BBC Philharmonic, Gianandrea Nosedà

A late entry into the start of our season was the invitation for a number of our members to have the privilege of joining the CBSO Chorus in these two concerts, the first at the Albert Hall as part of the Proms and the second at the Bridgewater Hall. Although ultimately only a few could be involved, and many were disappointed, those involved will proudly represent the Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus at these venues and we do hope that this may lead to engagements for the full Chorus in the future.

Saturday 27 September 08

Liszt: Dante Symphony (women's voices)
Beethoven: Symphony No 9 in D Minor
BBC Philharmonic, Gianandrea Nosedà
Jane Irvin, mezzo; Paul Nilon, tenor; Iain Paterson, baritone

Saturday 1 November 08

Bruckner: Ecce Sacerdos & Ave Maria
Gabrieli: Choral & Brass Music
John Rutter: Gloria
Organ, Harlequin Brass, Darius Battiwalla

Saturday 13 December 08 - Christmas Concert

Northern Chamber Orchestra Sinfonia, Darius Battiwalla
Brian Kay - Presenter

Friday March 6 2009

Mendelssohn: Elijah
Hallé Orchestra, Nicholas Kraemer
Janice Watson, soprano; Susan Bickley, mezzo-soprano; Andrew Kennedy, tenor; Roderick Williams, baritone

Friday May 29 2009

Haydn: Symphony No 103 & Symphony No 60
Haydn: Nelson Mass
Manchester Camerata, Douglas Boyd; Soloists to be confirmed

We also already have several small-scale voluntary concerts lined up, all conducted by our wonderful Rachel Copley who is such a pleasure to sing for:

Friday 5 December 08 at 7.30pm Concert for the Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind

With South Yorkshire Police Brass Band
Victoria Hall, Sheffield

Sunday 14 December 08 (afternoon) Carol Concert for St Luke's Hospice

Sheffield Cathedral

December 08 at 7.30pm (date tbc) Tickhill Carol Concert

St Mary's Church, Tickhill

Spring 2009 (date and venue tbc) Barlow Music Festival

And for those who are able to go, there will be a visit to Bochum in Germany during June to sing Carmina Burana with the Bochum Philharmonic Chorus with whom we have forged a long-lasting relationship since their first visit here in 2006. The concert will be on **Wednesday 10 June 2009**

and Janet Hoyle of the altos has kindly agreed to co-ordinate the visit and will have more details for us in September.

Before I let Julie as our Chairman, have the last words, I'd like to say a little about the Committee, the City Hall, Simon Webb, Margaret McDonald, Andrew Booth and Darius.

The Committee

The committee are members of the Chorus who voluntarily give of their time to work on behalf of the Chorus in order, basically, that it exists. Some have very specific responsibilities and others are there to give support and back-up. Here are the people who have ensured that our Chorus keeps running, with my thanks to them all as a great group of people to work with:

Julie Smethurst (1st soprano), our wise, diplomatic, and incredible Chairman.

Pamela Leon (1st alto), our Finance Officer who endeavours to keep us financially secure. We give advance notice that subscriptions will have to rise next season. We have not had an increase for the past 3 years and so it is not unreasonable to do so this time, especially in the light of ever increasing costs. This is surely one financial expenditure that gives us much back in return.

Miriam Gilchrist (1st alto), our Membership Officer who has sadly been unwell for the past few months. We all wish you well and send you our love at this time. May you return strengthened in September.

John Spence (1st tenor), acting Membership Officer, to whom we are most grateful for taking over from Miriam at such short notice and having to learn the job that Miriam has made her own for the past 17 years which we have all taken for granted – now we see how much she has done for and given to the chorus.

Sally Turnbull (2nd soprano), acting as New Members' Officer, again to whom we are very grateful as this is a new role that she has taken on and is developing in order to help cover all the work that Miriam has done.

Sue Pennington (2nd soprano), Minute Secretary – that under-rated task of trying to make sense of much talking at lengthy committee meetings that we have every 6 weeks or so. But we especially thank Sue for her brilliant and innovative idea of the workshops for the men that resulted in a surge of membership amongst the basses and tenors this year.

Kate Reece (2nd alto), Publicity Officer, who seems to live with a constant supply of printed matter about her person so that no opportunity is missed to spread the word about the Chorus – or encourage us to do likewise.

Hilary Bingham (2nd soprano), Librarian, the fairly thankless task of ordering music, re-ordering music, photocopying Christmas carols (last minute), handing music out, collecting music in, chasing people up for unreturned music. And all done very elegantly.

Angela Argenzio (1st soprano) Social Events Officer, our resident "bella signora", also fluent in French and Spanish, and whose additional computer skills have led to the pilot membership booklet – those newer members that have been given one, don't forget to report back in the autumn so that we can produce them for every member. Angela and Dan (of the first basses) have organised some socials after rehearsals this season so that new members can get to know others in the Chorus. Coming up next season will be a post-concert curry following Beethoven 9th on **Saturday 27 September** and we intend to have a social event on **Friday 3 October**, courtesy of Paul Henstridge's (1st tenor) marquee. Thank you, Paul. More details to come in September but put the date in your diary now.

Jenny Swann (1st soprano), Education and Outreach Officer, who has behind the scenes been making contact with a great variety of people and organisations, in our mission to expand the membership of the Chorus. This new post reflects our specific aim to build and strengthen our membership – of all voice parts and age - and to raise our profile.

Helen Kirk (1st soprano), **Jim Monach** (1st tenor), **Richard Salt** (1st bass), **Susan Silcock** (1st soprano) and **Janet Bower** (1st soprano) have all given tremendous support to the work of the committee in general. Thanks to all of them.

As you can see some of the voice parts are somewhat under-represented in the make-up of the committee. The AGM will be held in October when there will be the opportunity to join the committee. Please consider whether you would like to be involved in the running of the Chorus. There are people in the Chorus with skills and experience that could be so helpful to the development of the Chorus. But pure enthusiasm and passion are equally appreciated. Committee work is actually very rewarding and a lot of fun at times. You can try it for a year and see.

There are other members of the Chorus who are not on the committee but who do a lot of work on behalf of the Chorus and who are greatly appreciated, who I would like to thank on behalf of the committee.

Mat Morgan (2nd bass) for his hard work on the website.

Ros Hunt (1st alto) for her brilliant work with the choral workshops.

Peter Clarke, our "coachman"

Rachel Mallaband (2nd soprano) for her magnificent work on the Race for Life which generated so much media coverage for us – and a debut I think for us on television.

Rachel Copley (2nd soprano) for her unflagging enthusiasm and willingness to take us on for all of our small-choir concerts.

Our voice reps: **Janet Bower & Sue Silcox** (1st soprano)

Patricia Hall (2nd soprano)

Felicity Goodliffe (1st alto)

Kate Reece (2nd alto)

John Spence (1st tenor)

Peter Clarke (1st bass)

David Mortimer (2nd bass)

The City Hall

Things have changed for us at the City Hall and at the moment there is no alternative but just to bite the bullet. The contract for the Comedy Club is for 3 years and so our long-standing use of the Memorial Hall has come to an end and we have to get to feel some sort of affinity with the basement area of the City Hall. Julie and I are very aware of the problems this causes for a number of our members and will be having a meeting with Sara Unwin, who is always hugely supportive of the Chorus, and the City Hall management this summer, to put something in place for next season to make things easier for them. For the rest of us, look upon those steps as an aerobic exercise.

Simon Webb

As some of you will know by now, Simon will be leaving this summer to start a new job at the CBSO (not a bad link for us). Simon has breathed new life, to say nothing of new hope, into the concert season at the City Hall, and subsequently for us too. He has been a pleasure to work with and hugely supportive of us as a choir. We hope that his successor will be as professional and passionate as Simon and that what Simon has put into place will be built upon. Simon has endeavoured to put in place a good season for us for 2009-10, though it is not quite finalised. Julie will be sending formal thanks and best wishes to him on behalf of the Chorus.

Margaret McDonald

We are lucky to have such a talented and lovely person as Maggie to act as our voice coach. A highlight for many this season was to have Maggie sing the mezzo solo in the Elgar during our rehearsal to see how that part fitted in with our music. As well as giving us many very useful tips as to how to use our voices better, she has enabled us to coo like pigeons, brum like tractors and move like funky gibbons.

Andrew Booth

Andy took over as our accompanist at the beginning of the season, bringing his own particular talents and personality to the job, firmly making it his own by the end of the season. We are really pleased to have Andy as part of the core team of the Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus and look forward to many seasons working with him. He has been great to have as accompanist in our smaller concerts too where some of us experienced his brilliant talent as a "Fabulous Baker Boy" And we particularly look forward to his debut as one of the chorus. What a multi-talented chap.

Darius

For many of us, Darius is synonymous with the Chorus. I am always very moved when I see how many people turn out for additional rehearsals which for some necessitate making complicated arrangements and a lot of effort, physically and otherwise. I am quite sure that it is not only the commitment to singing, but dedication to Darius as a much-loved music director that makes people so committed. Apart from being so talented musically, Darius's warmth and sense of humour make you want to make the effort to turn out. We hope we have the privilege of working with him for a long time yet.

All of us are in the Chorus because of one thing – we love to sing. Our youngest member is 19 and our eldest, 89. We are a disparate bunch of individuals but united in this one thing. We have people who have been in the Chorus for years and years, and we have short term members as well. It is essential however, that each and everyone of us plays a part, no matter how small, in promoting the Chorus. We need to continue to strive for personal improvement in our voices and musicianship, and we need to continue to seek for opportunities to share with others what a wonderful thing it is to sing, and to sing with others. We are a great choir but we can always be better. By taking personal responsibility to be as good as we can be and to be as professional as we can in our ways of working, then our future will be secure.

So, over to Julie. I hope you all have a lovely summer and I look forward to 2 September when we meet up again to sing "An die Freude" – to joy. Singing is indeed joyous.

Ruth Jones
Chorus Administrator

July 2008

Last year at this time I wrote about the importance of every member of the Chorus taking responsibility for recruiting new members, and spotting and grabbing any and every opportunity to promote the Chorus. It has been a joy and a satisfaction as I have observed people really getting hold of these challenges and coming forward with ideas, suggestions and projects large and small to advance them. The Committee has been hugely busy developing some of them, in other cases individual members have taken on work themselves, and this has resulted in some excellent publicity and a healthy intake of new members. Thank you most sincerely to everyone who has seized hold of this "vision". A Chorus whose members really "own" it and participate fully in not just singing enthusiastically, but in helping to secure its future, must surely enjoy a high level of morale and be somewhere where people just like to be - a great place in which to make music and make friends!

Many members have freely and generously put in loads of extra hours of work behind the scenes, and it certainly shows! I sense a momentum in the Chorus which is crucial if we are to have a good, secure future. Darius, Andy and Maggie continue to help and encourage us to improve our musical standard, and I do hope this will result in more great opportunities to perform superb music both at home and away!

Ruth has taken over Chorus admin seamlessly from Stephen this season, and has brought her own wonderful brand of enthusiasm to it as well as her very useful knowledge and experience of the arts scene. I would like to add my thanks to both of them for the brilliant, sometimes thankless, job they have done, and which Ruth continues to do with great good humour and surpassing efficiency. When Chorus administration is done really well, as Darius commented at last year's AGM, nobody quite realizes just how much work and time is required. Sincerest thanks, Ruth, for keeping the show on the road and dealing with all sorts of challenges and details which, if overlooked, might have led to chaos and worse! I do hope you will continue to enjoy this challenging role, and that we shall never grow to take you for granted!

For the coming season, let's keep our eye on the ball and build on the good foundations we have laid this year – we continue to need new members, to retain recent ones, and to promote the Chorus as much as we can. Please keep the ideas coming and if you can, or want to, help in any way with anything, please let any Committee member or Section Rep know. I hope everyone has a refreshing and enjoyable summer break, and look forward to seeing you all again in September for another season of wonderful singing and good times together. With best wishes to you all,

Julie Smethurst
Chairman

July 2008