



**Patron: Samuel West**  
**Music Director: Darius Battiwalla**  
Registered Charity No. 518073

## NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2011

### REVIEW OF 2010-2011 SEASON

This was the season in which the Chorus celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and it began for us most appropriately with our “signature” piece, The Dream of Gerontius, performed under the baton of Jamie Burton with the Hallé on 4 November. 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 BBC Songs of Praise (broadcast on 5th December), was an exciting and very interesting experience at St. Oswald’s Church, Bannercross. We were intrigued at how the programme was put together in sections rather like an audio jigsaw puzzle - and singing Christmas carols surrounded by candles and seasonal decorations complete with tree felt very odd in the middle of October!

We seemed to have made a bit of a take-over bid for the BBC on 5th December, as earlier in the day a group from the SPC were to be heard on Radio 4’s Sunday Worship. One of our tenors, the Rev. Julian Sullivan, asked if a number of Members would be able to augment the singing at his church, St. Mary’s, Bramall Lane, which was hosting the BBC broadcast ‘Morning Worship’ to mark the 25th anniversary of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Faith in the City report. This is normally a live broadcast at 8.10am but because of the extreme and dangerous weather conditions (-15 degrees most mornings and a deep covering of snow, even in the city centre), it was agreed with the BBC that the afternoon rehearsal on the previous day should extend into a recording session. As on many such 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 this season. 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 how much they had enjoyed the choice of carols and that the concert had been the best for many years.

Christmas for the Phil started with commuters at Sheffield railway station being greeted with the strains of Christmas carols as a large contingent from SPC plus a few appendages 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.

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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 singer was so determined to take part she turned up with her overnight bag! The Alzheimer's Association of Doncaster benefited by £200 as a result of the noble people who either took part in 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 25th February. Paul Duffield did a sterling job in his debut performance as Transport Manager. This concert was dedicated to the memory of our former transport manager Peter Clark 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 Samuel West, our patron. We knew he would be good but he was really tremendous. Furthermore, he has asked to be considered again 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 have now topped the 200 mark. Our very own 'Three Tenors' appeared in the local press and one of them was heard on Radio Sheffield extolling the virtues of singing with 'the Phil' and gave us a superb promotion.

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 passed her re-audition two years ago and while she was able to attend rehearsal regularly, the choir platform at the City Hall is unsuitable for ordinary wheelchairs and so Dorothy has been excluded from it, and, therefore, unable to take part in concerts. We named the project 'Singclude' as it succinctly fitted our objectives and it is to be officially launched this autumn 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 the Leeds Philharmonic Choir and the BBC Philharmonic, all conducted by David Hill. The manoeuvre had its interesting moments but with practise it should eventually be a smooth ride.

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

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privilege of leading the Yorkshire area in this unique event and we are now in the process of fine tuning the details of this remarkable musical weekend.

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. Please put 3 March 2012 in your diary and read more specific details in the "Housekeeping" section of this letter.

#### BY ANY MEANS

As part of the national Open Weekend, held on 23 July as one of the events to kick off the Cultural Olympiad and lead up to the Olympic Games next year, Sheffield had a mock-up of a fifty metre 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 Bellé Mama which a handful of us learned by ear at Big Sing Yorkshire earlier this summer. Rachel Copley, as always up for having a go at most things, directed operations and successfully conducted us to a very harmonious finale on the finishing line. Our good friend Sara Unwin, who was co-ordinating the day, wrote: "Please do give my HUGE thanks to the Chorus for their appearance on Saturday - I thought it was breathtaking! I know I'm biased but it was my favourite appearance of the day. Sylvia LOVED it!!!! Rachel was fab. When I have it I'll forward the link to you for the film that we've had made so you can all enjoy it. Thanks again." "Sylvia" was, of course, our Lord Mayor and another good friend of the Chorus, who with Husband/Consort John joined us for this jolly event!

#### SHEFFIELD PRIDE

Thanks 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 took turns to staff the stall and/or to take Chorus leaflets out to give to the festival-goers throughout the site. It poured with rain in the morning but apart from one very heavy shower the afternoon (when we were all there) was sunny and breezy. We talked to lots of people, gave out hundreds of leaflets, sold some 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary books and Chorus mugs, plus some second-hand music and CDs, and hopefully will have interested some people in either joining us or coming to our concerts. Huge thanks to everyone who turned out – it was good fun and hopefully will have given us a profile amongst a new audience. Thanks also to Rachel for arranging the opportunity and for setting up stall in the morning – hope you didn't get too wet!

#### GALA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On 18th 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. The Ballroom

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looked beautiful, the food was delicious, we met old friends from Bochum as well as former Members, the music was most enjoyable whether performed by us or by the band, we reminisced and laughed at old photographs and we sang and danced the night away. Our guests included the Lord Mayor and her Consort, Councillor Sylvia Dunkley and 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 – Sylvia reckons it will be one of the highlights of her Mayoral year!

The weeks Helen Kirk spent biting her fingernails were totally unnecessary. In her first year as Social Events Officer she arranged a superb event and we thank and congratulate her for helping us 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 a tradition of first class choral music in Sheffield City Hall and beyond.

#### 2011-12 SEASON

Early in the new season, on 7th October, we welcome Jamie Burton back to conduct us with the Hallé in Walton's dramatic Belshazzar's Feast. The soloist is David Soar who I am certain is an excellent choice for that work.

Again we have been asked to do two performances of the Christmas Concert. These will be on Saturday 10th December taking a similar format to last year with a matinee and an evening performance.

On 11th February 2012 we will be performing Fauré's Requiem with the Manchester Camerata, conducted by Darius, when we welcome back David Stout as baritone soloist .

Preparations are well in hand for our forth coming self promoted performance of 'The Armed Man' by Karl Jenkins, and Philip Wilby's Bronté Mass. This will take place in the City Hall on 28th April 2012. While this is not part of the SIV series of concerts it will be presented in a similar manner: start time 7.00pm, all tickets £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 of the Birmingham performance has offered his help in this field which has been an enormous load off our collective minds. He has suggested that some of the images should be of the Sheffield Blitz which will make the

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whole event personal to us and no doubt strike chords with our audience who, I guess, will be mainly Sheffield people. The samples I've seen are very striking.

Tickets should go on sale in September, and we are hoping this will be a really popular concert so that we don't lose too much money! So please do your best to promote it and make sure we really sell it well. There will be some advertising space in the programme. We are currently working out rates for this, so if anyone has any ideas for possible advertisers, including those of us who run our own businesses, or even sponsors, please let Julie or Rachel M have contact details – a named contact and an email address, please.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH SIV

Julie and I met with Andy Graham, the Deputy Manager at the City Hall, to sort out some technicalities to do with the DVD images for the Armed Man performance. He was most helpful and has promised as much support as possible. When we expressed our gratitude for his kindness and co-operation he said "Well, it's your home isn't it?" Those few words spoke volumes to us.

Rachel M has formed an excellent, mutually helpful and collaborative relationship with the City hall Marketing team, and Helen couldn't praise enough the staff who helped with the arrangements for our Birthday celebration. 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. So on concert days when maybe nerves are a bit frayed and we're hassled with so many people and so little space, if there is a problem then let me know and I'll find the appropriate person to help out. Remember - it's our home!

Apologies that communication about next season's programme has been rather ad hoc, and that some may have only discovered what we will be performing when the SICS brochure was published. Arrangements have been particularly late this year due to Local Authority budgetary revisions which meant the season had to be re-constructed at the last minute at a considerably reduced cost, with obvious knock-on effects to our programming. Hopefully this will not be the case for 2012-13, for which we already have programmed in The Beatitudes (22 September 2012, Coventry), Christmas concert(s) 8 December 2012, and Messiah (15 December 2012). Darius is already discussing some interesting possibilities for 2013 too.

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## THE BEATITUDES

We have been invited by the BBC Philharmonic 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 wasn't performed. Britten's War Requiem was performed instead. It has never been performed in the Cathedral and 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 22nd September 2012 and clearly rehearsals for this will take place this season after the 28<sup>th</sup> April concert.

## 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. In the past a fluctuating number of singers has enjoyed bringing music to the ears of commuters and the pleasure on their faces is a joy to see. The acoustic is very satisfying too!

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

Tickhill Carols will take place on a date TBC in December, and more details will be provided in due course.

The Committee is also considering some other possible opportunities for members to take part in music at various venues on various dates, so please listen out for details in the notices, and look out for announcements on our website and sign-up lists at rehearsals.

Now for some SPC housekeeping.

## LIBRARY

The Library has eventually found a new home with Howard Dore, to whom we are extremely grateful. Many thanks too (and congratulations - new baby!) to Kate Wilson who has housed the library for several years. Those who have arranged the removal of the library are a galaxy of stars for their teamwork in providing transport, boxes, time, muscle power and tea. Their organizational skills are awesome. Thank you to all of you. Our wonderful Librarian Els has taken this opportunity to do a thorough audit and reorganization of the library. Unfortunately, for health reasons, she will be on light duties for some months over the autumn and winter; so she has arranged with Howard that they will share the job: she will continue to look after admin,

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Howard will be responsible for the shifting of the actual music! If anyone feels able to lend a helping hand at any time please apply to Els or Howard, who I'm sure will be very appreciative. If this arrangement works out as we hope Els will be able to continue as Librarian, which she says she would like to do; but she, Howard and the Committee will monitor the situation, and if she needs or wants to step down completely at any point we may be looking for a replacement.

## WHEELCHAIR

As you know Jane Parkin has very kindly loaned us a wheelchair for the benefit of anyone who might find mobility a bit trying when the coaches are unable to drop us off near to our venue. So far I have squeezed it into our garage but it really cannot stay there. Someone who boards the coach at The Sportsman, Crosspool where Dennis, our most likely candidate, boards would be an ideal custodian. Please contact me if you think you could house it.

Another storage problem: Last year I managed to acquire from John Lewis, free of charge, some commercial sized Christmas decorations for use in the City Hall for our carol concerts. Again these are in my garage and one day I would very much like to put the car in there. Out of over 200 members there must be someone who has more storage space than I have!

## AGM

Please treat this as formal notice of this year's AGM, which will be held on Tuesday 11 October 2011 at 8.30 p.m. The earlier-than-usual date is intended to help us collect subs at an earlier stage in the season.

If you are at all interested in the inner workings of the Chorus and feel you would like to have a role in shaping our plans and activities, or that you have particular expertise which would help with these, please consider standing for the Committee as a members' Representative, or for one of the current or upcoming Officer vacancies explained below.

Members' Representatives can stand for three consecutive years, but we all stand for re-election every year, so if you feel you wouldn't want to commit to longer than a year please don't hesitate to stand for election. This year, Dan Spicer, Kate Reece and Ann Holloway are standing down, leaving room for up to four new Members' Reps.

## OFFICER VACANCY

Jenny Swann is reluctantly relinquishing her post as Education and Outreach Officer due to pressure of work. This is a relatively new area of work for the Chorus which has scope for further development. We would love to increase and broaden our efforts and opportunities to promote choral singing and make links with sources of potential new members, so if you have an interest in this please don't hesitate to get nominated – no previous experience necessary!

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To be eligible for election as an Officer or Members' Rep on the Committee you need to have completed a minimum of one full season with the Chorus, and you need to be nominated and seconded by Chorus members in accordance with our constitution, which states that no Chorus member may nominate, or second, more than one person. Please collect a nomination form from Janet and return it, completed, to her by no later than end of rehearsal on 4 October.

## NEW MARKETING AND PUBLICITY OFFICER

Rachel Mallaband and her team have been doing an absolutely splendid job in providing professional standard promotional material to keep the Chorus in the public eye and to take as many chances as possible to publicise our activities. Here it is appropriate to thank especially Peter Miles, who has most generously and freely put his time and professional expertise at our disposal, thus saving us literally thousands of pounds in payments to a commercial graphic designer; huge thanks, Peter! The coming season is going to offer us unprecedented promotional opportunities with our own concerts to market and our leadership of Alight. During the coming year Rachel will be applying to return to full-time employment, so by this time next year she will need to hand over the marketing and publicity reins to her successor. As there is so much to do in the next few months, she would really welcome help with some admin tasks such as writing copy for our press releases, flyers, and concert programmes, and if this was done by the person who would take over from her next year it would make the whole process of hand-over much smoother. If anyone would be interested in this possibility please speak to Janet, Julie or Rachel – it could even be a job-share provided the sharers were clear about who was doing what, so please don't feel daunted if you think you may not have enough time or expertise to take on the whole role – we reiterate that you would be joining a team which already has lots of expertise and knowledge.

ALIGHT – part of Music Nation, a Countdown event for the London 2012 Festival, the finale of the Cultural Olympiad

SPC is the lead organization for the only Music Nation event in Yorkshire, and Rachel Mallaband has been working her socks off all summer, as Alight Co-ordinator, to pull together a truly spectacular musical extravaganza in and around Sheffield on Saturday 3 March 2012.

The Committee believes that the Chorus should therefore participate fully in the proceedings, and play its part in leading some perhaps less experienced musicians and singers to have a musical experience they will never forget (after all, for some of us who are less sporty, this is our chance to have a share in the UK-wide Olympic festivities).

So, please put the following important dates in your diaries and gird up your loins for a long but hopefully exhilarating day on 3 March:

Saturday 5 November 2011: (to coincide with Bonfire day!): Alight Commissions Workshop: the rare and exciting opportunity for us to take part in the creative process of composition for music

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we are going to sing, with two local composers (one of them our own bass Yaron Hollander) writing brand new music which will receive its world premier performances in the City Hall on the evening of 3 March. All participants in the commissions will be encouraged to attend, so that Yaron and Tim (Timothy Allen, Director of BeVox – <http://www.timothyallenmusic.co.uk>), can try out their draft compositions and see what changes they may want to make before final scores are printed. Call time TBA but likely to be both morning and afternoon; venue: TBA

Sunday 26 February 2012: Alight evening event Dress Rehearsal. This is going to be crucial as the logistics of the evening will be extremely complicated (there will be several hundred performers to be accommodated and moved around the performance area as necessary. The massed choir, of whom we will be the most numerous contingent, is likely to be around three hundred and sixty and will be seated in various blocks on the three audience levels plus the fixed seating near the organ). Call time TBA but please be prepared to be present for several hours; venue: Irwin Mitchell Hall TBC

Saturday 3 March: Morning: Final rehearsal for evening, Irwin Mitchell Hall

Afternoon concert, presumably preceded by a short rehearsal,

Venue: Victoria Hall, Norfolk Street; rehearsal call time TBA

Concert: TBC but probably 4.15 to 5.30

Repertoire: Unaccompanied and pieces for choir and unusual instrumental accompaniment (Darius is working on this)

NB Due to the complexities of the rehearsal schedule and the distribution of this season's concerts we shall probably be rehearsing repertoire for this concert during October/November 2011.

Alight Evening event

Artistic Director: Mark Langley - <http://www.marklangley.co.uk/biography.html>.

Various conductors, including hopefully Darius

Repertoire: Being worked on as we write: provisionally: three world premiers of commissions, pieces for massed and individual choirs, orchestra, organ, dancers, ensembles, music theatre, visual images, etc, and various combinations of these! SPC is likely to be singing in four to six pieces during the evening, including all three commissions. The one which is not local is the Making Music Overture (see <http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/our-work/projects-and-programmes/London-2012-Cultural-Olympiad/making-music-overture> for details).

As choir seating is limited and stage management will be complicated we will probably be asking members to sign up for the Alight events at an early stage in the season to ensure we reserve the right number of seats, so please block out 5 November, 26 February and 3 March in your diaries to ensure you are available to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime festival of music in our city and region – we are regarding Alight as part of the Chorus's season so as with all concerts we expect the majority of members to participate.

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## ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

We would love to source some sponsorship for both The Armed Man concert and Alight. If anyone has any contacts that we could approach please let Julie or Rachel M have them as soon as possible (no need to wait till the start of the new season if you have ideas). Please give us a name and an email address to contact so that we can easily send some of our promotional material.

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEW FOLDERS

As mentioned towards the end of June, we are purchasing new folders for everyone in the Chorus, and these will be available in time for the Belshazzar concert. Thanks to some good negotiating by John Spence, the cost to each of us will be £5.50, not £6 as originally announced. In order to simplify financial administration for members and for Angela, we will this year add this to our annual subscription. In future, this figure will also be added to the first year subscription for new members. Please be assured that this is not a stealthy way of making a large, unconstitutional increase in annual subs, and barring any total financial crisis, members will note that subs for 2012-13 will revert to a lower figure than this year's aggregated amount. Further, the level of subs for 2011-2012 will, as per our constitution, be determined, as always, by a vote at this year's AGM. If any of this is unclear or you have any concerns about these arrangements please don't hesitate to have a word with Angela or Julie.

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKS

We still have about 3 boxes of these left, so if you are aware of suitable outlets for these please be pro-active and help with sales. Also a number of members who showed an interest in buying a copy still haven't done so. It will help SPC finances if all copies are sold soon, so if you are planning to buy one (or some!) please do so as soon as possible when we reconvene.

SPC Mugs - These have been delivered and will be available to purchase at £5 per mug on Tuesday 6th September.

SPC diaries - Thank you to those who showed an interest however there was not enough take up to order these this year.

## FRIENDS OF SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS

Under the Chairmanship and guidance of John Hyde, to whom we are hugely grateful, the Friends Steering Committee has been working hard to get this project up and running in time for the new season. We now have a Friends' email address, room on our website, a Friends' bank account open and ready for business, and our first "Friend for Life", in the person of our former General Secretary and Honorary Member Mike Philpott, who gave us a wonderful start with a very generous donation to mark SPC's 75th Birthday - Sincerest thanks, Mike! We also already

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know of several people who have asked to be told when they could become a Friend. So the next task is for us to find our Friends and get them signed up. These could be our relatives, friends, audience members – anyone who is passionate about music in Sheffield and wants to have a role in the Chorus's future. Please look out for our Friends' Brochure which will be available for members to take and distribute from Tuesday 20th September. We will also be giving full details of the Friends' project to audience members at our concerts, starting with Belshazzar's Feast on 7th October. If any Honorary Members wish to receive details too, please contact us.

## CONCLUSION

This has been a long (and hopefully interesting) Newsletter, which clearly demonstrates that at age 75, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus is still as active and enthusiastic as ever and has no intention of settling into a quiet "old age". There are lots of dates for your diary and a busy and exciting season ahead of us so we hope you have a relaxing summer and look forward to seeing all of you at The Springs Academy on 6th September refreshed and ready to sing.

With best wishes, Janet and Julie

## DIARY DATES AT A GLANCE

2011

Tuesday 6 September: First rehearsal

Saturday 17 September: Extra Belshazzar rehearsal

Tuesday 4 October: Belshazzar piano rehearsal

Thursday 6 October: Belshazzar tutti rehearsal, Studio 7, old BBC Centre, Oxford Road, Manchester, 7.30 to 10.00 p.m.

Friday 7 October: Belshazzar concert, City Hall

Saturday 5 November: Alight Commissions workshop, venue TBA

Thursday 8 December: possible Rail Station carols

Saturday 10 December: two Christmas Concerts

Sunday 12 December: St Luke's Christmas service

Thursday 15 December: Rail station carols

Date in December TBC: Tickhill Carol Concert

2012

Saturday 11 February: Fauré concert, City Hall

Sunday 26 February: Alight dress rehearsal, City Hall

Saturday 3 March: Alight – morning rehearsal, afternoon rehearsal and SPC concert Victoria Hall, evening event City Hall

Saturday 28 April: Armed Man/Bronté Mass concert, City Hall

Saturday 22 September: Beatitudes concert, Coventry

Saturday 8 December: Christmas Concert(s), City Hall

Saturday 15 December: Messiah, City Hall

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