

What Rachel would have said had we won!

Thank you to all who voted for us amongst the other *very* worthy nominees. I was born in Rotherham near Sheffield and grew up visiting and enjoying the music of the city. Managing to get a passport to cross the Pennines, I joined the Northern School (which later amalgamated with Royal Manchester College and is now *this* splendid institution) spending several years there with the BBC Northern Singers who were based there. I'm so delighted that for the first time the Awards ceremony is outside London.

Sheffield is now very diverse, with venues such as the City Hall and the Arena and many street music festivals. During my long membership of the Sheffield Phil I have been directed by four Music Directors, the present being Darius Battiwalla who can't be here as he has a gig with Black Dyke Band and it's thanks to him, supported by our Chair Jo, Administrator Anne and all the committee and choir, that this diversity has continued in so many ways.

The inclusivity of the members and warmth of welcome is there to all who would care to come and sing in a choir such as the Phil, with workshops to help with sight singing etc, the opportunity to sing with professional orchestras, conductors and soloists and latterly a new competition for young composers, which will be ongoing, and a mentoring scheme for young choral conductors, all of which keep the chorus vital and membership buoyant. Add to that the different, and sometimes challenging, choices of new music as well as standard repertoire, make for a wonderful choral experience.

So, no matter what we do in our daily lives, or who we are in our personal lives, we have the joy of singing together, playing together and making music together - and may that joy remain undiminished. Thank you.