

Start of Season Newsletter: 2014/15

The start of the New Season will be an important milestone in the life of our Society, marked as it is by the well-deserved but much regretted retirement of 3 of our senior Officers.

After countless years of steadfastness, loyalty and devotion in the service of the Society our Chairman – Roy Dunstall; our Minutes Secretary – Jill Dunstall; and our Registrar – Olivia Seaman – have all told us of their decision to retire with effect from the end of our forthcoming AGM. And on that occasion I am sure that all of our Members will want to take the opportunity to thank them wholeheartedly for their enormous contributions to the survival and success of the Society.

But this also means, of course, that Members will now need to turn their attention to the nomination and election of their successors: further details were set out in the *Notice and Agenda* for the AGM, already circulated on August 10th.

Message from our Musical Director, Rebecca Miller

Dear RTWCS Members,



It seems an absolute age since I've seen you all, and I can't wait to begin our work together again very soon. My first thought is to say a massive Thank You to all of you for making last year such a resounding success, both financially and artistically, which was due in no small part to your hard work on vocal and singing techniques, but also to the extraordinary efforts that you put in with regard to fundraising, ticket sales, and recruitment. It was a true statement of solidarity and renewed my belief that a little extra effort individually goes a long way towards the success of the community (incidentally, the reason that I'm a conductor!). Looking back at my letter from last year, you took my challenge to 'tend our community garden' very seriously, and I hope you have the satisfaction, as I do, of looking out onto some lovely flowering plants.

As is customary, I will first take a look back at last year - we began with a wonderfully varied programme of Poulenc's Gloria and Faure's Requiem, sandwiching the magnificent playing of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto by Chloë Hanslip. I have already mentioned the successes in terms of audience (it was one of our largest audiences to date), but the musical challenges that each piece put forward were met with impressive vigour and hard work. I feel we mastered the difficult Poulenc (albeit with very little time to spare!), with great aplomb and really took a step forward in our choral sound and blend with the beautiful Fauré.

With the Spring came the challenges of the Brahms waltzes, which I hope in the end, you enjoyed. I fundamentally believe in challenging ourselves to do better, to do more, and music especially gives us this opportunity. I realize that singing in German was difficult for many of you (partially due to the print of the editions as well), but I hope you enjoyed the challenge. As a conductor, I feel it is my job

to get as close to the composer's intentions as possible – be it through an understanding of what instruments he wrote for, the political or social context in which a piece of music was written, his or her personal attributes and circumstances, and many other factors. Language is an essential part of all of us and of our culture – one of the things that make us human, and one which develops within its own culture. Brahms conceived of these works with the German words in mind, and I feel the music idiomatically represents them and is almost inseparable. I do, however, also appreciate the argument for singing in English – I appreciate that the audience would like to understand the words as they are sung rather than following a translation, and I sympathise with those who wish to sing in their native language to feel closest to the music and the text. I'm pleased that we were able to bring off the pieces in German, and I challenge us not to always take the easier route – but to find a balance between singing in our native language and exploring the sounds and effects of another.

Our final concert of the year was the Opera Gala. I feel that this concert showed us several things: firstly, it served to enhance our versatility of style, and enabled us to embrace a great variety of emotional and dramatic operatic scenes. It provided a different type of concert format that proved very popular with those who attended – the variety of selections, separated by short spoken introductions really broke down some barriers and will ultimately serve us heartily in terms of developing a younger and more varied audience base. Secondly, our disappointing audience numbers showed how important your role is in selling tickets. We simply cannot rely on traditional models of ticket sales, but must realize that word-of-mouth and personal recommendation is by far the most persuasive advertising technique, and we must also move towards using social media by many more members, not just a handful of us!

And now a look forward – we have great challenges for us this season – two monstrous works of art, indeed two of the greatest choral masterpieces – Elgar's Dream of Gerontius and Bach's St Matthew Passion. These pieces will require a great amount of commitment and work and I will be asking for more practice outside of rehearsal and more discipline inside the rehearsal room for the sake of rehearsal efficiency. Extra-musically, I will ask for you to look back on the success of last Autumn, which showed that we can nearly fill the hall, and try to build on it – through ticket sales, organizing fundraising activities, volunteering for small extra jobs, and helping in every way to spread the word around TW about the choir and its great work. I would like to reiterate my statements from last year – this is YOUR society, which you have chosen – I encourage you to take ownership, commit to it wholeheartedly and humbly, pitch in a little extra wherever possible, and continue to build on our hard work to create something of which we can be even prouder next summer.

Thank you - [Rebecca](#)

REPORT on the 2013– 2014 Season from our Chairman

I look back at my Report for last year, which stated:

"I have undertaken to stand again this year, if it is your wish for me to remain in office, as there is no obvious candidate for the position, but I must state that I will not extend the period beyond the end of this new season".

So the year has gone by, and it is now time for me to leave the Office. My sincere thanks to the Committee(s) and individuals who have assisted and supported me over the years. We have endeavoured to manage the Society in a positive and profitable manner. At the AGM on the 1st September I will stand down to allow someone with vigour and enthusiasm to carry on, in the hope that the style and traditions of the RTWCS are maintained or enhanced. I have enjoyed my many years in office, as a Treasurer and then as Chairman, and I will obviously miss the work.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 1st September, when a new Committee will be formed. I hope that by this date it will have been decided who is the right person to be elected to this role of Chairman. There are also other Offices that need to be filled.

I urge you to support the Committee, who work hard on your behalf, for without a Committee there would not be a RTWCS.

In the coming season you have the opportunity to sing two of the major choral works, Elgar's **Dream of Gerontius** and Bach's **St. Matthew Passion**. Both are big works that require all of our resources if they are to be successful, so please be there and enjoy them.

Sponsorship is becoming more important to us. Income received under this heading helps us keep the cost of subscriptions and ticket prices down. We will endeavour to maintain or improve this in the coming season, with *St James' Place* taking on a more prominent role, as we are to perform a private concert for them in December.

- Before committing the RTWCS to this event, I sought assurance by asking the Choir earlier in the year whether they would support this additional concert, and received a very positive response. Now the time is drawing nearer and I ask that you put it in your diaries – **Friday 5th December 2014**. I know that it is a weekday afternoon, but a commitment has been made to *St James' Place* for us to perform this, for which we will receive a substantial donation. Please support us if you can, I promise you a fun afternoon.
- To assist in the travel a bus will be hired from Tunbridge Wells, leaving at 12 noon, for those who do not want to drive – although there is a car park adjoining the church (All Saints).
- The Registrar will be asking all of you to sign up for this and I ask for your support.

It is likely that there will be other Christmas activities where volunteers will be sought, but the concerts on the **5th December**, and the repeat at Goudhurst on the **14th December**, are part of the season's programme and are not regarded as optional.

The November 2013 concert was very successful, and thanks to Rebecca for persuading her friend Chloë Hanslip to perform for us. The success was mostly due to you, the members, supporting the concert by selling tickets, so that we had a good audience.

The Opera Choruses concert in May 2014 was very enjoyable, with 2 talented soloists who sang the great opera pieces beautifully. Thanks again to Rebecca for procuring the services of these 2 gifted singers. On this occasion the ticket sales were below our expectations and in the coming season you will be reminded that you need to support the Society by ticket sales if we are not to lose a whole load of money on our productions.

Enjoy your new season. Please support it and make it successful.

A final farewell from:

Roy Dunstall, Chairman

CALENDAR of KEY DATES: Season 2014 - 2015

- **Weekly Rehearsal Schedule:**
 - **Starting on September 1st** 2014, rehearsals will be held every Monday evening at St John's Church, Amherst Road, Tunbridge Wells:
 - please note that owing to Church activities, on the 3rd Monday of each month rehearsals will now take place in the CHURCH itself, rather than in *Grosvenor* as usual.
 - Please remember to bring a soft-leaded pencil and eraser to rehearsals, to annotate your scores with the directions of the Musical Director!
 - **Normal** Monday rehearsal times are from 7:30 to 9:30pm [with a 10 minute break mid-way].
 - **HOWEVER, our first evening of the Season will start at 7.00pm**, when we will have a brief Part 1 of our AGM before starting the rehearsal [see following paragraph for details]
 - *Convening Notices* and the *Agenda* for the AGM were sent out on August 10th.
- **AGM: Monday September 1st: 7.00pm to approx 7.30pm in St John's Church Hall: followed immediately by our normal rehearsal.**
 - **Part 1 of our AGM** will be held followed by our first rehearsal: please note that we will start the **AGM at 7.00pm**, so Members are asked to arrive if possible no later than 6.45pm to allow time to be issued with scores of *The Dream of Gerontius*.
 - There will be a £3 charge for the hire of a score: Members who wish to obtain their own score should please note that we shall be using the *Novello* edition, – for which the cheapest source is probably *Amazon* [giving Members a chance to make a purchase via *easyfundraising.org.uk* – see below!]
 - Our Librarian – Diana Blower - would be most grateful if Members needing a library score could come along with the correct change on the night.
 - **Officerships:**
 - Roy Dunstall's resignation as *Chairman* will take effect as from the close of the AGM
 - Olivia Seaman [*Registrar*] and Jill Dunstall [*Minutes Secretary*] have also given notice of their resignation as of the same date.
 - Jane Walters has already been co-opted as *Acting Registrar* and her name will be proposed and seconded for formal election at the AGM
 - Members are invited to propose names of suitable candidates for the posts of *Chairman* and *Minutes Secretary*
 - **Committee Members:**
 - TWO Committee Members are due to retire by rotation this year [Jean Finch and Margaret Butcher] and members who are interested in serving, or who wish to nominate others who could serve, should please submit nominations to the General Secretary [Trevor Hurrell – contact details on the web-site] by the end of August.
- **Sunday November 9th at 3.00pm in the Assembly Hall Theatre:**
 - Autumn Concert
 - Programme:
 - *The Dream of Gerontius* – by Edward Elgar

- **Friday December 5th at 2.30pm – All Saints Church Maidstone**
 - A private Concert of Traditional Christmas Carols will be given to the clients of our principal Corporate Sponsor – **St James' Place**
- **Sunday December 14th at 6.30pm: St Mary's Church Goudhurst**
 - Traditional Christmas Concert.
- **Saturday and Sunday December 20th – 21st**
 - the Society has been invited to sing Carols in what was once Sir Winston Churchill's dining-room, as part of Chartwell's series of Christmas events: approx 20 choristers will be needed for both days.
 - Further details will be announced shortly of this exciting opportunity.
- Other possible smaller fund-raising events in the pre-Christmas run-up may be announced during the autumn
- **Sunday April 26th at 3.00pm in the TW Assembly Hall Theatre:**
 - ***The St Matthew Passion*** – by J.S. Bach

Important Notice: Fund-raising

Fund-raising Activities are essential to your Society's continued success, and to its ability to stage Concerts of the high standard that is necessary for our survival.

To illustrate this, here is a list of the fund-raising activities that were undertaken during the 2103 – 2014 Season, together with an indication of the sums raised by each activity:

• Raffle tickets -	Jean Finch	£864
• Summer Tea Party	Muriel Thatcher and Olivia Seaman:	£350
• Home Baking -	Margaret Butcher	£130
• Garden Party -	Elena Lewis Grey	£300
• Quiz Evening -	Guy Huntrods and Trevor Hurrell	£1250
• Carols at John Lewis -	Melissa Richards	£560
• Book Stall -	Muriel Thatcher and Eileen Phillips	£286
• Singing at 2 Weddings -	Group effort	£225
• <i>How Argo got it Wrong</i> -	Talk by Martin Williams	£790
• easyfundraising.org.uk -	Organised by Liz Ford	£123

Grand total: £4,878

This means that through fund-raising we have obtained extra income equivalent to nearly 40% of our total income from subscriptions!

HOWEVER, we will have no choice but to sustain and repeat this success throughout the coming Season.

In order for this to happen, many more members must be prepared to take an active part in both devising and organising suitable activities.

In the Season now ending – other than the choristers singing at 2 Weddings – 95% of the effort of devising, organising and managing the activities that brought in these funds was ALL undertaken by no more than a dozen Members.

It can't always be the same dozen people and the same ideas: there are 80 or so more people who must be prepared to step forward and play their part too, and we urge all Members to reflect upon

what each of them can contribute – starting right now – to take up the slack and contribute to fund-raising. It needs both fresh ideas AND a willingness to implement them! If not, we are in trouble.

To help Members' reflections in this area, it is worth pointing out that the 2 most "productive" fund-raisers this Season were events where we were able to draw in participants from OUTSIDE the Society:

- the QUIZ evening
- the ARGONAUT Talk

.....if we limit our efforts only to events that can bring in contributions from Members themselves, in spite of people's generosity, eventually "donor fatigue" will set-in, and we will miss the targets we need to hit.

A very good example where an opportunity already exists for Members mobilise other members of the families – as well as friends/neighbours/colleagues etc – to contribute to our funds **at no expense to themselves** is through www.easyfundraising.org.uk Liz Ford kindly set up this opportunity for us last year, but although it has so far raised £123 for the Society – this result has been achieved through only 11 active participants! There is enormous scope for doing much better – especially in the heavy shopping period between now and Christmas – so we will be drawing much more attention to this resource so as to encourage more people take up the opportunity. A detailed explanatory document is attached, and we will be talking about the scheme – and answering questions – at one of the forthcoming rehearsals.

Miscellaneous Notice to Members

Subscriptions:

May we remind Members that Subscriptions for the 2014-2015 Season fall due now? A Subscription Form is attached with this Newsletter to remind you of payment options: we would encourage you to use this form when paying your Subs, to make life easier for The Treasurer and The Registrar!

Contact Details:

All Members are kindly asked to keep Jane Walters [our *Acting Registrar*] and their *Line Representative* up-to-date with any changes to their contact details [postal address/ e-address /telephone numbers]. We will of course continue to send important information by post to those Members who prefer not to use e-mail, but in the interests of saving costs of printing and postage, we would like to be able to use e-mail wherever possible to contact Members.

Website:

This is also a suitable moment to remind Members that our website <http://www.rtwcs.org.uk> is continually updated – and is the best easily-accessed source of information or news about any aspect of the Society's affairs.

EASYFUNDRAISING

How it works.

easyfundraising.org.uk

.....helps charities, schools, sports clubs, community groups, and other good causes to raise money when their supporters shop online. So far they have raised over £6 million for causes throughout the UK. It works in a similar way to many other loyalty shopping sites, but instead of earning points when you shop, you automatically raise a donation for RTWCS. It's as simple as that!

You can shop with around 2,700 well known stores and each will donate a varying percentage of what you spend. For example, John Lewis will donate 1.5%, Amazon 1.5%, The Body Shop 6%, some insurance retailers will even donate up to £30 simply for taking out a policy with them.

It doesn't cost you a penny more

The great thing is it won't cost you any more, plus there are lots of voucher codes and special discounts available so you can actually save money while helping to raise funds for RTWCS. There is no extra cost involved for us either – the service is totally free.

No doubt a lot of Members already shop on-line and if those who do would merely nominate RTWCS as their 'good cause', the Society will immediately begin to see money credited to its account.

Although the individual amounts may be small, they will soon add up.

Money raised so far by RTWCS Members and family/friends:

By the end of last Season, 11 members of RTWCS had registered with easyfundraising and by August 2014 they had raised **£123** for the Society, simply by shopping on-line.

How to generate donations

Anyone can “sign-up” to the scheme by following these easy steps:

1. To register, click on the following link to the easyfundraising website or type it into your normal browser/search engine (Google, Yahoo etc): www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/rtwcs
2. As soon as you have registered you will receive a “welcome” email – which will contain an easyfundraising link.
3. Next time you shop on-line, **enter your chosen retailer's website via this easyfundraising link** and your purchase will automatically be registered as being eligible for a donation to RTWCS, and the appropriate “cash-back” will be credited to the Society.
4. Each time you make a purchase in this way you will see a cumulative tally of the amount the Society has earned from your own purchase(s) and from the total purchases of all those who have chosen to raise funds for the Society via easyfundraising.

Please be aware, too, that the scheme isn't just limited to members of RTWCS, but can be used by anyone else you care to send the link to – family members/friends/etc. It's also possible to order business equipment, stationery - even computers and printers via the scheme - so anyone who has their own business can also order supplies on-line, using easyfundraising.

Most retailers will confirm the donation within hours of your transaction, but some can take anything **up to 30 days** to respond.

If you have any queries, please contact Liz Ford at lizford22@hotmail.com