



Start of Season Newsletter: 2016/2017

To all of our Members, friends and supporters

In this *Start of the Season Newsletter* we would like to welcome most warmly all Members, Patrons, Friends and well-wishers to yet another year of music and fellowship: and of course the same warm welcome is extended especially to a number of new singers that we very much look forward to seeing at our first rehearsal.

Message from our Chairman Alan Spencer

Dear fellow Members,

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer break and that everyone will be looking forward to the first rehearsal on September 5th

A particular welcome to new members who will be joining us for what promises to be a memorable season when we shall be performing two of the most enjoyable and rewarding works in the choral repertoire, Brahms *A German Requiem* in November - and the Bach *B Minor Mass* in May next year.

On both occasions we shall have the privilege of being accompanied by a different but well-known London orchestra and we look forward to working with them both on concert-day, as well as the extra rehearsals in London which both have kindly offered us.

It is many years since the Choral Society last performed the Bach *Mass in B Minor*, and for those unfamiliar with this work I can assure you that is a tremendous piece of music and one which I am sure we shall all gain enormous satisfaction from performing.

As well as these 2 wonderful works, the season will also include our usual Christmas concert in St. Mary's Church Goudhurst. We are also making plans for what should be an exciting summer singing event – more of that later.

All our concerts will be conducted by our Musical Director – Rebecca – to whom we continue to be indebted for her commitment to the Society and for the inspiring and enthusiastic way she leads our singing. Many thanks, Rebecca, for all you do for us – it is really very much appreciated

We are very sorry to be bidding farewell to Matthew Jorysz, following his decision to relinquish the position of our Accompanist, and to take an exciting new step in his career. Of course our good wishes go with him, as well as our thanks for his outstanding contribution to the musical life of the Society last Season. However, I am pleased that we have been able to engage Paul Jeffery to fill this role from the beginning of the new Season.

Paul has accompanied us on previous occasions and we look forward to his joining us on a regular basis

Looking back over the past season we not only shared in two memorable performances at the Assembly Hall but also held two very successful and enjoyable fund-raising events. The Quiz in November led by Brian and Christine Perriman provided us with plenty of brain-teasers: and this was followed in March by the well-attended illustrated talk given by Martin Williams on his experiences as Governor of Pitcairn. Such events are not only of great help financially, they are also enjoyable social events which draw in members' friends and families. A further quiz is already planned for October 2016 and hopefully there will be another Member's talk in the Spring. Should any of you wish to offer other fund-raising initiatives they will be gladly received!

The past year has been a busy one as usual for your hard-working Committee and I very much value their support. In particular I would like to thank Gavin Grant who has carried out sterling work as our *Webmaster* for several years and will shortly be handing over his responsibilities to his successor, to be elected at our October AGM. The new season promises to be a full and challenging one. Let's work together to make it a success and in so doing keep up the great tradition of the Choral Society.

Alan Spencer

**Message from our Musical Director
Rebecca Miller**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As usual, I'd like to begin by thanking you all for a terrific season in 2015-16, both musically and for all those who work so hard behind the scenes in the running of the concerts and the choral society organization. I am continually impressed with the commitment and hard work of our Committees in particular, and thank them again wholeheartedly for their time, their work and their commitment to the Society.

Firstly, looking back on our performances this season: I thought our performances of both the Mozart *Requiem* in the Autumn and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* in the Spring displayed a real step forward in terms of choral ensemble and musical confidence. In general we were able to get out of our scores more, listen to each other more, and improve our communication to the audience and between each other.

This past season launched some new relationships and new directions for the choir:

- the beginning of our relationship with the *Salomon Orchestra*, which I think we all agree was a very successful and inspiring collaboration and one which I hope will grow and develop in the coming years
- the introduction of a new accompanist in Matthew, whose prodigious talents and services we were extremely lucky to have grace our rehearsals this year;
- and the introduction of the Assistant Conductor position, which obviously didn't run as smoothly as was envisaged, but nonetheless did introduce us to some of the young talent out there in choral conducting.

The circumstances that surrounded the hiccups with the Assistant Conductor position could not have been foreseen and were an unlucky series of unfortunate events and circumstances, which believe me, caused me many a night of disrupted sleep. However, this situation was handled to the very best of our abilities, and I cannot thank Alan and Trevor enough for their wonderful support and help throughout the process. I can only apologize for the inconvenience that this caused to you, the membership, and assure you that this year will run smoothly in this regard.

Looking back, however, even though some members felt disturbed by the interruptions in continuity, I do not feel that it affected the choir adversely in terms of performance or preparation - in fact I think in some ways the situation of 'expect the unexpected' and the variety of conductors actually served to keep the choir on its toes, and actually served to enhance your own confidence in your knowledge and portrayal of the score (!)

Nonetheless I do not wish a repeat of such events! Our new Assistant Conductor, Jamie Sperling, I'm certain will provide the excellent training, positive spirit, and continued commitment that we are after, and I will be coordinating with him closely on all musical matters so as to avoid confusion with regard to musical interpretation. You will see his own personal message of introduction below, and he will be with me at the first rehearsal to say hello in person to all of you.

During the coming Season, I am very excited about introducing you to the *Southbank Sinfonia* as well: I have worked annually with this fine organization for the past 6 years, and am continually amazed at the young musicians' musical ability, intelligence, passion, and commitment, and astounded at the amount that the orchestra as a whole is able to achieve given their very meagre budget. I am delighted to be able to support the SBS organization by inviting them to perform with us, and I think it's a wonderful move to have the choral Society's orchestral funds go towards supporting such young musicians. I'm certain you will find them an extremely inspiring orchestra for our B Minor Mass, and I can't wait for you to meet and work with them.

The two works awaiting us this Season are among the best choral music ever written, and I consider myself extremely lucky to be in a position to spend quality time with Brahms and Bach and to share my love of these composers with you. The challenges of this music are great, if not immense, both technically and musically, but I have total confidence that through such challenges we can achieve great things, as music continually pushes us to do.

I challenge you, the membership, to continue to work on our discipline in and out of rehearsal - to further improve our concentration in rehearsals, punctuality and consistent attendance at rehearsals, our note-learning (and - this Autumn - language) work outside of rehearsals, and to renew our commitment to ticket-selling and to the wonderful small but powerful fundraising work that you all did in preparation for the 'Chloë Hanslip' concert in November 2013, which reaped great rewards. In what seem like difficult and trying times in the world surrounding us, we must focus on the positives, and on what we have - on doing what we can to improve the world in our small way - the listening, the working together, the respecting each other that can be accomplished every week in our choral society, I fundamentally believe helps make the world a better place, and I look forward to our journey this year.

Rebecca Miller

**Message from our new Assistant Conductor
Jamie Sperling**

Dear Members,

Thank you for inviting me to serve as your Assistant Conductor, and I am really looking forward to meeting you all on the 5th September.

I thought I'd start by introducing myself: I am currently studying at the *Royal Academy of Music* for a Masters in Choral Conducting.

Before that, I was at *Royal Holloway, University of London* from 2012-15, and sang in the Chapel Choir there. Whilst at *RHUL*, I met Rebecca, and during my time there, we collaborated in concerts, so I'm excited about assisting her again this coming Season.

I hope to bring you lots of energy and enthusiasm, (as Rebecca's already mentioned) as we tackle some of the most-loved choral pieces ever written, and I hope we'll have a really good time as we learn these works together.

With best wishes,
Jamie Sperling

CALENDAR of KEY DATES: Season 2016- 2017

September 5th: our FIRST rehearsal.

- We shall be starting a rehearsal series working up to a performance of the Brahms *German Requiem*. PLEASE NOTE THAT WE SHALL BE SINGING THE WORK IN GERMAN
- For those who wish to purchase their own copies of the score, our Librarian Diana Blower asks you to note that we shall be using the PETERS Edition
- But at our **September 5th** rehearsal, Diana will have copies of the PETERS scores for hire, at a charge of £3.00 per score. Diana will be very grateful if Members could please bring the correct change on the night.
- Please remember to bring a soft-led pencil and eraser to rehearsals, to annotate your scores with the directions of the Musical Director
- As usual, Members are urged to lose no time in buying tickets for the November Concert, to sell-on to friends, family members, work colleagues etc. In an effort to make these even easier, **we shall at last have both flyers AND tickets available as from this first rehearsal of the Season!**
- **Normal** Monday rehearsal times are from 7:30 to 9:30pm [with a 10 minute break mid-way].

October 24th: our AGM

- On that evening the rehearsal will finish earlier than normal so as to allow time for the AGM to be held on the same evening.
- The Convening Notice and Agenda will be sent out to all Members in due course

October 29th: our Quiz & Supper Evening

- Peter Rosling, who is kindly organising the evening, asks everyone to please mark their calendars accordingly – AND those of their friends and families!

November 6th: Orchestral rehearsal in London for the November 13th Concert

- Full details will be announced in due course, but arrangements will be made for a coach or coaches to leave TW at 08.00am – with return to TW at 1.30pm. The timing has been chosen to ensure that Members who also want to attend the TWSO Concert on the same afternoon will be back in TW in plenty of time to do so.
- For this event too, Members are urged to please reserve the date in their calendars: it is very important that – just one week before the Concert – we achieve the maximum possible attendance at this rehearsal.

November 13th: Our autumn concert: Brahms' A German Requiem

- The Concert will take place in the TW *Assembly Hall Theatre* at 3.00pm
- As usual, the final rehearsal will be in the Theatre itself on the same morning from 10.00 am onwards

December 11th: Our traditional Christmas Concert in St Mary's Church, Goudhurst

- **December 2nd and 16th**
- Our generous corporate Sponsors – **Burfields House Wealth Management Ltd** – have asked us to participate in 2 afternoon recitals to be arranged for their own guests on these 2 dates in December.
- We expect to let Members have further details by the time of our September 5th rehearsal

**Monday rehearsals will then be suspended
until January 9th 2017**

December 24th: Traditional Christmas Carol-singing at the *Hotel du Vin*

January 9th 2017: resumption of normal weekly Monday rehearsals

May 1st 2017: Orchestral rehearsal in London for the May 7th Concert

- Although this falls on a Bank Holiday, we haven't been able to find any other date on which all the parties involved can be available.
- We therefore hope that – with the 9 months notice we are now giving – all Members will do their very best to reserve this date in their calendars
- More details will be announced nearer the time, but the likely timing is that transport will be provided leaving TW at about 11.30 am – returning back to TW at about 7.30pm

May 7th 2017: Our spring concert: J. S. Bach's *Mass in B Minor*

- The Concert will take place in the *TW Assembly Hall Theatre* at 3.00pm
- As usual, the final rehearsal will be in the Theatre itself on the same morning from 10.00 am onwards – but it will begin [and end] 30 minutes later than is normally the case, owing to the need for the orchestra to travel from London. This means there will be a shorter break than usual between the end of the rehearsal and the start of the Concert – and singers will need to plan accordingly.

July 2nd 2017 Our summer concert/event will take place

- details of the format, programme and venue will be advised nearer the time

Important Notice: Fund-raising

As our Chairman underlines in his own Message, 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.

A small number of Members are to be thanked warmly for the energy and time they devoted to various projects last Season [Jean and her colleagues in the Raffle each Monday: Muriel and Eileen for their Book Stall at rehearsals: Elena Lewis-Gray for the Quiz Evening: Martin and Sue Williams for their absorbing Talk , based on the time they spent themselves on the *Pitcairn Islands*.....as well as other contributors.

But it can't always be the same small group of people and the same ideas: there are 80 or more other Members whom we would like to encourage to also step forward and play their part too, and we urge all Members to reflect upon what each of you can contribute – starting right now – to take up the slack and contribute to better fund-raising efforts in the year ahead. It needs not merely fresh ideas but ALSO a willingness to implement them.

As there is already a vacancy for 2 Members willing to take over the running of the book-stall from Muriel and Eileen.....we would be very glad to hear from volunteers for this job as soon as possible.

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

- the QUIZ evening
- the *Pitcairn* 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 fall short of the targets we need to hit.

PUBLICITY

Members may have noticed in recent years, a growing trend for estate agents to publicize events such as School Fairs by means of what at first glance seem to be typical *For Sale* boards – but which in fact carry only the details of the event being published and – of course – the name and logo of the estate agent.

In return for offering sites where these boards can be displayed, the estate agent donates funds to the charity whose event is being promoted.

Melissa – our Publicity Manager – has had the inspired idea of proposing to a leading TW Estate Agent that we could come to a similar arrangement which – if it proves possible – would simultaneously offer wide-spread additional advertising for our Concerts AND very attractive donations for the Society.

All that remains to make this idea a reality is for 30 or so of our Members to be willing to have a board erected on their premises for approximately 6 weeks.

Not all addresses will be suitable of course, but we will be canvassing Members once the Season is under way to seek volunteers to help in this way.

Miscellaneous Notices to Members

Subscriptions:

The committee is pleased to say that subject to ratification at the AGM, the annual subscription for the 2016-2017 season will remain at £135 (or 2 instalments of £70, payable in September and January.) The subscription for students and under-25s is £25.

The subscription income does not cover all the choir's costs and we are grateful to those who can afford to pay a little extra on top of the standard subscription.

As a charity, we can claim tax back on subscriptions under the Gift Aid scheme, and received over £2000 last year. If you can sign a Gift Aid form, please will you check that we have one from you.

Subs can be paid by cheque (payable to RTWCS) or cash at the first Monday evening rehearsal (September 5th) or by sending a cheque in advance to:

Ailsa McMahon, Treasurer RTWCS, 7 Broadwater Down, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5NJ

OR – if you would prefer to pay by bank transfer the details are as follows:

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account no: 00017884

Please use your name as the “reference” and email Ailsa (ailsamcmahon@hotmail.com) to let her know.

We never want the subscription to be a barrier to those who would like to sing with us – so if you have difficulty paying it please talk to Ailsa in complete confidence, as concessionary rates are available.

Contact Details:

All Members are also kindly asked to keep Jane, our Membership Secretary - and their *Voice Section Leader* - 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.

Car-parking at St John’s:

This is a reminder that we have agreed with St John’s Church that on the 2nd Monday of each calendar month, Members will refrain from parking on any part of the area to the north of the church – the side where the lawn is.

The dates involved are as follows:

- September 12th 2016
- October 10th 2016.
- November 14th 2016.
- February 13th 2017
- March 13th 2017
- April 10th 2017
- May 8th 2017
- June 12th 2017.

On each of these dates, as a courtesy to our hosts in facilitating parking for the Parish Council, all Members are asked to park either in the main car parkor else away from the premises altogether.