

17th August 2023

Dear Chorale Member

This last year has felt like a welcome return to normality, post-Covid. The Chorale performed three excellent and varied concerts:

Mendelssohn's epic *Elijah* oratorio was our second very successful collaboration with Coro and performed with the St Paul's Sinfonia. The loss of baritone soloist Jonathan Brown on concert day was challenging, but we were fortunate that Arthur Bruce not only saved the day but sang splendidly. The *Durufle Requiem* spring concert presented us with very different vocal challenges, whilst we celebrated the King's Coronation in our re-programmed summer concert, with Mozart's lovely *Coronation Mass* (last performed by the Chorale in 1996), a selection of classic English choral standards and *Ave Verum Corpus* sung so beautifully by our quartet of soloists. The evening culminated in a rendition of *Jerusalem* which almost blew the roof off St George's!

Many thanks to Mark Griffiths for leading us so superbly throughout the year - his stewardship of the *Elijah* concert should certainly see him mentioned in dispatches! Last autumn we also welcomed Aeron Preston as our new accompanist and are delighted that he's joined us.

In March we were shocked and saddened by the death of Eamonn Murphy, a long-standing and much-respected member who had chaired the Chorale superbly for six years. Thirty-five members sang Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* in tribute at a Service of Thanksgiving for Eamonn.

We're delighted to confirm that the concerts for our upcoming season will be:

Saturday 2nd December 2023 – highlights from Handel's *Messiah* (p: 2011/2013) with soprano soloist, St Paul's Sinfonia and a selection of carols and seasonal music.

Saturday 23rd March 2024 – two seminal Classical works, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* (p: 2008) and Schubert's *Mass in G*, (p: 2013) both with orchestra and soloists.

Saturday 15th June 2024 – will feature music by contemporary American and British composers including Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* (1st perf by BC) and Bob Chilcott's *Songs and Cries of London Town*, (p: 2012) with other works to be confirmed.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th October 2023, with details to follow.

We look forward to seeing you in September.

Best wishes

Rosaleen Bishop, President

Nigel Britten, Committee Chair

A personal message from Nigel Britten

This has been my fifth and final year as Chair and I certainly couldn't have anticipated many of the challenges we've faced! However, these have also presented the opportunity to make many changes to the way we do things, to help ensure the long-term future of the Chorale. I think the Chorale is in very good shape and there's no doubt that the quality of our singing has improved markedly under Mark's guidance. I would like to say a big thank you to all my fellow Committee members and others who have helped – I really appreciate the enormous commitment you have all made, and for your diligent hard work, support, good humour, and encouragement. I would also like to thank Mark for his superb musicianship, and for his support and friendship.

I'm delighted that our current Membership Secretary Sally Moran will take over from me as Chair in October, and I wish her well.

Details and arrangements for the 2023/2024 Season

1. **Rehearsals** for next season will take place at St George's Church starting at 7.45pm on Tuesday 12th September, led by our Musical Director Mark Griffiths. The new rehearsal schedule is attached and is also posted in the Members' Area of our website (password: Elgar).
2. **Subscriptions.** The annual subscription will stay at £180, whilst any Members under 30 will pay £90. I'm sure you'll agree that this still represents terrific value as it equates to approx. £5 per rehearsal, with music scores provided and all the costs involved in rehearsing and staging our concerts. **All annual subscriptions must be paid in full by the middle of October 2023.**

Payment by BACS Transfer please, as this helps to simplify and reduce the considerable workload for our Treasurer, Elaine Ullmann. If it would help your finances to pay your subscription termly, please contact Sally Moran. The Beckenham Chorale bank details are:

Lloyds Bank Sort code 30-91-35 Account No. 01157186

Your payment should be identified as: BC Subs 23/24 and your surname

A significant number of members generously add an extra amount to their subscription, and this has contributed greatly to the Chorale's healthy financial position. Their generosity last year amounted to just over £800, a significant sum for which the Chorale is very grateful. **Please consider making a similar voluntary donation this year.**

3. **Membership.** We currently have around 80 members, almost up to pre-Covid levels. However, we're still keen to:
- Recruit more male voices, particularly baritones and basses.
 - Recruit more sopranos to balance our alto section.
 - Attract good singers of all ages who hear about us from a variety of sources, especially from existing members. This is without doubt the most effective means of recruitment, **but it does require an active and ongoing recruitment effort from all members.**
 - We're also keen to recruit younger members to help ensure the long-term survival of the Chorale - our age profile has too few singers in their 20's - 50's. We really need and want, to attract members from this demographic with some experience in four-part singing.
4. **We'd like to encourage as many members as possible to participate actively in the running of the Chorale.** Most of us lead busy lives and many will feel that they've joined the Chorale simply to sing. **However, without the volunteers to run it, the Chorale will simply cease to exist.**

Please talk to Nigel Britten, Sally Moran or any of the Committee Members to see how you might be able to help, even in a small way – we're particularly looking for members who might have skills that could be used in our design and publicity.

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