

Appendix B

Whitehall Choir 2013 AGM
Conductor's Report
Paul Spicer

We have had another good season with a mixture of concerts which have mostly upheld our reputation as one of London's best amateur choirs of our size.

In November last year we gave a concert of Langelis, Poulenc and Durufle in St Margaret's Westminster which went very well indeed. It was a very challenging programme and the Langelis, in particular, was a revelation to everyone. Good comments from the audience as well. There was a good audience in this prestigious location and we did ourselves a lot of good that evening.

The next month we did our usual Christmas concert in Rochester Row which went perfectly well. There is nowhere near enough time for preparing this concert but we always get there by the skin of our teeth. It was James' last concert with us and we bid him a fond farewell.

The B minor Mass in Smith Square in March was the highlight of the season and was really very good indeed. A wonderful audience helped us on our way and we had a good team of soloists and an excellent orchestra as ever provided by Peter McCarthy. This is such a demanding work and yet you really took it all in your stride.

The Brahms Requiem Come and Sing was a new innovation instigated by Jonathan, and was a very successful day. It also raised good funds for the choir. It isn't perfect in its formation yet, as the Verdi showed this year, but it is a very good thing to do.

The concert we gave yesterday was one of the most stressful of recent times and I have been distressed by the issues it has raised. The music was challenging certainly, but the amount of absenteeism, of a seemingly laissez-faire attitude to rehearsal, and the last minute approach to it all was not only worrying but it left me wondering if people actually wanted a summer concert. This is not the approach of a choir which takes itself and its singing seriously. It led to a poor ticket sales exercise by the choir

who didn't really want to sell it and a general feeling that we would rather that this concert passed away from us. A shame for an anniversary concert.

In terms of general comments, we need to recruit. We are short of basses and altos and are losing others in the sopros and tenors who will need to be replaced.

We need to decide what we want in the summer and whether we want to go through this agony every year.

We need to remind people about punctuality.

If we want to be what we claim – one of the best small choirs in London then we have to act like it.

I would like to congratulate Jonathan, Patrick and Liz and say what a pleasure it has been to work with them again this year. A choir like this is not an easy thing to run and they do it all quietly and efficiently and with infectious enthusiasm. Thanks, too, to all the committee which is hard-working and always full of ideas and keen to implement them.

The Whitehall Choir is really a quite special organization. I wouldn't keep taking so much time, effort and money to get here on a Tuesday every week if it wasn't, but We really need to tighten up in some areas if we are going to keep ahead of the game and develop our reputation. It is very difficult to gain such a good press, and the matter of hours to lose it.