

Whitehall Choir

Secretary's Report 2012-13

The purpose of the Secretary's report is to give an over view of how the Choir has operated over the last year, to review the programme we have performed and look forward to what is coming up during the next season. This year I am pleased to say there is quite a bit to review and I feel also much to look forward to in the 2013/14 season

First I must once again commend Jonathan for the way he has steered the choir with clear determination to maintain our standards and at the same time look to how we can strengthen and broaden our activities. We again had the joint venture Come and Sing with the Whitehall Orchestra (of which more later) and in the autumn went through the selection process and were fortunate in appointing Ian as our new accompanist as from January this year.

But the major focus this year has been on the commissioning of a new work through our young composer competition and planning forward for the choir's third CD recording next May. Here I have also to highlight Ben Nichols' helpful input based on his own experience of mounting such a competition; on the hard work and slog Patrick Haighton put in on pulling together the background paperwork and finally but not least thank Paul in attracting leading judges for the competition: namely Judith Weir and Robert Saxton, really major figures in British choral music.

The first performance of the new work together with a selection of music for Passiontide and Ascension Day will form the basis of our spring concert at St Albans just before Easter. Meanwhile we are on course to return to the church in early May to record the programme. Those of us who recorded there before will recall that this is a stimulating , demanding and at times exhausting exercise but I think all of us would say at the same time enjoyable and fulfilling. Most importantly for the choir each recording does seem to notch up our quality of singing. So there's a challenge for us all next year!

I cannot leave this section of my report without also mentioning Jonathan's excellent and stylish Newsletters which really bring the choir up-to-date with what is happening and is going to happen and also are extremely stylish in their presentation. Thank you Jonathan for these and also for all the footwork most of us are unaware of, which you have put in over the last year in taking the choir forward.

But we would not be here unless we had a sound financial base and for this we of course have to thank Patrick for his firm stewardship of our funds together with the trustees of the Jubilee Fund whose work ensures the Fund continues to provide such a comforting foundation for taking forward enterprises such as the competition and recording.

So to a brief review of the year's concerts starting with the enjoyable winter concert of Poulenc, Duruffle and the taxing but enjoyable Langlais at St Margaret's Westminster. We were particularly grateful for the warm reception we received from the church and also were rewarded with a really good turnout from a appreciative audience. Likewise our annual Christmas Concert drew a good crowd and the opportunity to bid James farewell over a glass of wine and thank him for his time as our accompanist.

Ian arrived in the new year only to be faced with much transposing for our memorable performance of the B Minor mass at St John's to a sell out, and again appreciative audience. [I hope you agree Ian it was worth the effort for which we thank you and hope you now feel well bedded into Whitehall work.]

In May we had our second Come and Sing at St Sepulchres with the Whitehall Orchestra performing the Verdi Requiem. Although this was a successful event the committee do feel that the format and form of future Come and Sings needs further thought to fully exploit the choral opportunities provided by such a day. Also my view is that such events really need a dedicated team to take them forward to ensure that the burden does not fall too much on the chairman and fire fighting on the day to pull all the loose ends together.

Last night crowned off what has been a great year of singing for the choir. Paul certainly presented us with a challenging although very satisfying programme and once again managed (albeit at the final hour) to extract an exhilarating performance from us in the fabulous setting of the Banqueting House. The champagne toasts to the choir afterwards were I feel duly deserved and I got the impression that a good time was had by all - certainly my guests loved the music in particular the less familiar Mathias and Sheering and the instrumental pieces.

As to the future, next season we return to St Johns for Jephtha in November, have our up-market Christmas gig at Le Manoir and then down to earth Christmas Concert here the next day on December 10th. By then we will have the results of the competition so that immediately into the New year we can

begin rehearsing for St Albans and the recording. Finally next summer our July concert will be at Holy Trinity Sloane Square with hopefully a fully restored organ and one where we usually get a very good audience. Given the pressure we have had this term I do feel the programme for that concert needs to be decided carefully in order that we perform an easier piece and also one which will attract the punters.

So all it leaves me to say is to thank all the members of the committee for their continuing support and input plus all those other people while not on the committee make the choir work - the church key holders, the catering team William as our programme editor in chief etc

But I leave the most important thanks for Paul. Without him as our Musical Director none of this would have been possible . Overall this year has been a little goose pimply at times but I am sure you will all agree we are extremely lucky to have a musical director such as Paul who gives us the opportunity to perform exciting repertoire which many choirs would never have the chance to even look at .

Thanks therefore to you Paul and everyone else who has contributed to our success over the past year and I leave you with what looks like an encouraging outlook for the year ahead.

Liz Walton
July 2013