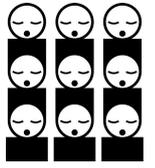




# Whitehall Choir



Members' Newsletter

May 2015

## From the Chairman

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## Dates for your diary

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## From the Chairman

*Our summer term has already begun and we are making good progress with our forthcoming concert of music by Vaughan Williams.*

This term I have delayed publication of the termly newsletter by a couple of weeks as I wanted to include a discussion on the choir's strategy for the future. Overleaf you will see that I have written up the work that the committee has been doing in the background during this season. We have now reached the stage where we want to share this work with the whole choir and develop an action plan with everyone's input that can be consolidated and agreed at the AGM.

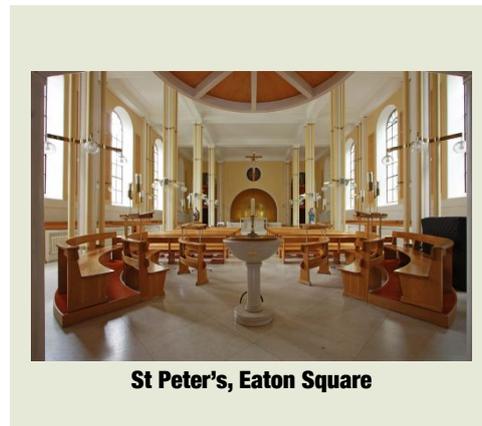
We have just completed the choir re-auditions and, after detailed research, have decided to adopt a new rehearsal venue. Now is therefore a good time to take stock of our activities generally and develop plans for the future covering the next three to five years. In common with most organisations, we do not have infinite resources and we need to balance our aspirations with our capabilities. At our rehearsal on Tuesday 19 May Paul will give a presentation to the choir and this will be followed by a short open discussion. Please take a moment to read the article overleaf

beforehand so that we can have an effective discussion. We will then have a series of focus groups which will meet in the rehearsal breaks over the next few weeks to work on the action plans in more detail. Please think if you can give some time to one of these.

Our last concert of the Schubert Stabat Mater and Mozart mass in c minor was well received at St John's Smith Square. We were fortunate enough to have a review by Edward Clark for *Musical Opinion* who wrote that it was a pleasure to attend a concert featuring a rare performance of the Schubert. Also, with the Mozart, it was an uplifting preparation for the Easter period.

### New rehearsal venue

I am pleased to report that we will be moving to St Peter's, Eaton Square as our new rehearsal



St Peter's, Eaton Square

venue from the start of our new season in September. I am very grateful to Patrick and Joanna for the effort they put into discussions with the clergy and administrators to make this happen. We will be rehearsing in the upstairs parish room, which we visited for a trial rehearsal last term, and we also have the possibility of using the church with its larger acoustic for one or two rehearsals as we near the concert date. More details to follow over the summer.

### Choir tour and next season

We have now paid the second deposit to the tour company for the choir tour in May 2016. Paul is in discussion with our host choir in Vienna on the programme for our joint concert with them. This music will also form the basis for our spring concert in London. In the autumn of this year we will be performing Handel's *Athalia* at St John's. All that remains to be planned is a programme and location for our summer concert in 2016.

### Choir AGM

A reminder that the choir AGM will take place at St Stephen's on Tuesday 14 July, the week after our concert. At the AGM we review the past season, elect the committee for the new season and discuss choir matters generally. This year we will formally agree our future strategy as well. Please come along and be involved in the running of the choir.

Jonathan

[chairman@whitehallchoir.org.uk](mailto:chairman@whitehallchoir.org.uk)

## Key dates for 2015

**Thursday 9 July, Vaughan Williams concert, St Peter's, Eaton Square**

**Tuesday 14 July, Choir AGM**

**Tuesday 17 November, Handel's *Athalia*, St John's Smith Square**

**Monday 14 December, Christmas Concert, St Peter's, Eaton Square**

# Choir development

The committee have been working on the choir strategy for the future and met for a half day in March to look at some of the issues in depth.

We analysed our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and also debated our overall mission and aspirations. The next stage is to share this thinking with everyone and have an open debate on our priorities. As it's important to involve as many members as possible in the discussion, we have decided to allocate part of our rehearsal on Tuesday 19 May to it.

Why undertake this exercise now? The choir has a long history of performing in the Whitehall area, including concerts at major venues such as St John's Smith Square, Holy Trinity Sloane Square and St Paul's Knightsbridge. However, the cost of staging a performance, the competition for ticket sales and the range of music on offer in London are ever increasing. We therefore need a clear idea of where we are going, what we want to achieve and our operating principles of how to achieve it.

Here's where the thinking of the committee has reached so far.

Who are we? A medium size amateur choir producing performances on the London stage at an above average standard for amateurs.

What are our strengths?

- We are an auditioned choir in a central London location
- We perform in prestigious venues with professional orchestras and soloists
- We perform a varied programme of music to a high standard
- We are a friendly group of committed singers

- We benefit from a top ranking choral conductor supported by leading accompanists

What opportunities do we have?

- There is a resurgence of interest in choral singing
- We have a specialism in English choral music
- We can put on extra concerts, workshops and other events, go on tour and make recordings
- We can perform at other venues including private concerts

What weaknesses do we have?

- We perform well but to a restricted audience
- We spend a large part of our rehearsal time on note learning rather than music making
- We lack a coordinated approach to recruitment
- We have a limited external profile

What threats do we face?

- Competition from other London choirs in terms of members and audience
- Increasing cost of operating a London choir including rehearsal and concert venues

- Increasing subscriptions to subsidise concerts becoming too high

Four priorities for action

- For **choir development** including technique, recruitment and fundraising, we will plan for three development activities for each season:
  1. A workshop for choir members only to cover activities such as sight reading, vocal technique (with breakout groups) and to develop some standard repertoire for special concerts. It is expected that all choir members should attend
  2. A come and sing day positioned to make some money and advertise the choir to potential new members
  3. A trip which could be anything from a single day out, through a UK weekend away up to a foreign tour
- For **repertoire planning**, we will aim to have a forward programme covering venues and music for at least a year ahead at any given time. This will include a minimum of one orchestra concert. We will also develop

repertoire for performance at occasional concerts, such as with the Brandenburg Sinfonia, that can be produced with a minimum of rehearsal time.

- For **rehearsal development**, we will publish a rehearsal schedule each term and follow it up with weekly post-rehearsal emails detailing material covered and difficult passages for private study. We will also produce a document setting out our expectation of members covering weekly and termly attendance, conduct at rehearsals, expectations regarding note learning, a list of standard repertoire and copies of music that all members should have.
- For **audience development**, we need to maintain an active network of supporters, who are kept informed of our programme of events. We plan to set up a database of contacts so that they can receive regular updates on our concerts and other activities. We ask every member of the choir to provide email addresses for this database.

## Workshops

On Saturday 13 June Twickenham Choral Society are holding an open workshop at Andrew's Church, Surbiton on Handel's Israel in Egypt, led by Laurence Cummings, Musical Director of the London Handel Festival and Professor of Historical Performance at the Royal Academy of Music. More details [here](#).

On the weekend of 13/14 June, there's an opportunity to rehearse Handel's Messiah on the Saturday for a special one-off performance on the Sunday under Music Director, Sam Evans. The concert will be at Church of the Ascension, Lavender Hill and is to raise funds for the rebuilding of Battersea Arts Centre. More details [here](#).



Receiving applause after our Schubert and Mozart concert

## The committee

**Chairman:** Jonathan Williams

**Secretary:** Joanna Tomlinson

**Treasurer:** Patrick Haighton

**Business Manager:** Penny Prior

**Librarian:** Mark Graver

**Publicity:** Martin Humphreys & Ruth Eastman

**Soprano Rep:** Kate Goulden

**Alto Rep:** Alison Williams

**Tenor Rep:** Alastair Tolley

**Bass Rep:** Daniel Lambauer

**Webmaster:** Richard Grafen