



WHITEHALL CHOIR

From the Chairman - Summer Newsletter 2007

Hello to you all! I hope that you have been able to enjoy at least *some* summer sunshine over recent months...

Various people, including the Committee, have been working very hard on our behalf in recent weeks, so it's time for me to write down a few of the plans for Whitehall Choir over the coming Season and beyond. Again I think we are going to have a busy year – but also a rewarding and vibrant one, and one which I hope that you will very much enjoy.

In summary we will be performing three large concerts, plus our regular Christmas carol concert. We will be using two exciting new venues this year including the Banqueting House, Whitehall; and we will repeat our visit to Clapham for what I hope will now be our regular Come and Sing event, this year exploring one of the magnificent works of Beethoven. In addition we are planning to have a workshop day for the Choir, covering various aspects of technique – with plenty of fun thrown in too; and a weekend away in the early summer 2008 – a “mini” tour - more details of which will follow in due course.

Main concerts for the Season

We will very quickly arrive at our first concert of the year – Handel's *Saul* (**Friday 16th November 2007** at St John's, Smith Square, alongside the Brandenburg Sinfonia). This is one of the less well known Handel works, but I'm sure you will quickly agree that this is a fabulous piece, full of drama and variety. It also has some slightly unusual orchestration in the form of carillon bells which will hope will add an extra dimension to the performance. Please remember that there is an extra rehearsal for this concert on **Thursday 8th November** (normal time and place).

And we then have 3 whole weeks (the luxury!) to rehearse for our regular carol concert at St Stephen's (which is on **Tuesday 11th December 2007**) and thus we will be adding an excerpt from one of the larger choral works to our repertoire. I'll tell you more shortly.

One of the main features of the 2007-08 Season is going to be our experimentation with new concert venues. As many of you will be aware, it is unexpectedly difficult to find venues in central London which have both the space and facilities that we need and are within our price range. So it is with great pleasure that I can report that, thanks to the extensive research efforts of Monica Darnbrough and Lis Warren, we will be singing at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street in April next year, and at the Banqueting House, Whitehall in July. (NB – for both of these venues we have yet to “sign” the contract, but they are 99% confirmed!)

Holy Trinity will be the venue for our performance of the Monteverdi *1610 Vespers* (**Thursday 10th April 2008**, alongside the London Baroque Sinfonia), and is a beautiful Church in the Art and Crafts tradition. It is a large and welcoming venue, with good general facilities (including a kitchen and plenty of toilets!) and in a nice central location close to restaurants and bars which will hopefully help you encourage a large audience. Apparently,

when Whitehall Choir performed this piece at Westminster Cathedral, several years ago, the potential audience members were queued around the block, so we are obviously hoping that this too will be a popular event!.

Our concert at the Banqueting House (**Monday 7th July 2008**, accompanied by James Longford) will be slightly unusual in that we will form part of a series of concerts which they are promoting, and ticket prices for our audience (£17.50ea) will include a hot supper, and wine et al, after the performance. The venue have kindly agreed that as part of the deal they will “feed and water” the Choir too! The repertoire will be an English Secular programme.

Other events and performances

Our first event of the Season will be the Come and Sing (**Saturday 3rd November 2007**), at Holy Spirit, Clapham: Beethoven’s *Mass in C*. We are anticipating an equally fantastic day to the one we enjoyed last year for the Mozart *Requiem* event, and a warm welcome back from the Church and the local residents. Please do put this date in your diary now, and distribute details to your family and friends. The cost will be £5 for Whitehall Choir members and £15 for others (£10 for full time students). Again there will be an informal concert, alongside soloists, in the early evening and the cost for audience-only tickets will be £5.

I am delighted to report that the Ritz Hotel has once again booked us to sing carols in the week leading up to Christmas. We are of course now an established part of the Ritz Christmas routine, which is great news for the Choir and particularly our fundraising efforts, given that they pay a fee (although they do, of course, expect highly professional standards from us). For your diary the dates for 2007 are: **17, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 24 December 2007**, ie 6 nights, starting on the Monday, missing the Tuesday and Sunday, finishing with Xmas Eve, 5.40pm-8.00pm each evening. Please block out a couple of these in your diary now and we will be confirming individual dates with you shortly.

There are fledgling plans to hold a workshop day on a Saturday during the **spring 2008 term**, probably then followed by dinner. This should hopefully (funds permitting) involve working with a guest conductor/facilitator alongside Paul, in a venue other than St Stephen’s for a bit of variety, and is very much something for us all to look forward to. I will let you know more – and a date – as plans evolve.

The final piece of the puzzle for this Season is the proposal that we go on a “mini” tour for a weekend in June (the Committee will consider plans for our next full tour in due course). Originally the proposed venue was in Winchester, thus allowing those that wished to make it a day trip - and thus very economical – to return home after an early evening concert (repertoire TBA), and for others to stay over for some extra socialising! While it now may be that our initial plans for venue need to change, we are still hoping for a trip along similar lines. Please pencil in the weekend of the **21st/22nd June 2008** for this event and more details will follow.

(Of course, those of you that went along to the Choir’s social event at the open air theatre in Regent’s Park in July will recall a beautiful balmy evening and much enjoyment; I imagine that a repeat of that event will also be on the cards for 2008!)

General matters

Choir Subscriptions are, as ever, due no later than 3 weeks into the new term. The 2007 AGM agreed that there will be no increase in rates for the 2007-08 Season. Forms with all the details on will be provided at the first rehearsals of the new Season, and part reps can give you further information if needed.

The first **Committee Meeting** of the new Season will be on Monday 3rd September 2007. Please do discuss any issues of concern, or ideas, suggestions etc with your part rep, and they will raise these at this, or future, meetings.

One of the resolutions carried at the 2007 AGM concerned **concert attire**. Can I confirm that for gentlemen we now have TWO possible concert dress options. The normal black tie set up, and also the new option of black open neck shirt, dress trousers et al without jacket. Please could you make sure that you have both of these options available early in the new term? While the Committee will give you plenty of warning of the required attire for main concert events, we do, of course, sometimes get invited to other events at short notice and these may be occasions when the slightly more informal attire (ie black shirts) may be appropriate. And for confirmation, ladies concert dress remains the same, being long sleeved black evening top/blouse and LONG black skirt. I have been asked by a number of people to remind the ladies that long means long please – skirts should be a *minimum* of ankle length and preferably full length. You will appreciate that a uniform “look” for the Choir adds a great deal to our professionalism. Again part reps can answer any questions you may have on this subject.

As ever, all the details of the above and much more are on our website (www.whitehallchoir.org.uk), which I encourage you to visit regularly (part reps can remind you of the password to the Member’s page if you have forgotten). Using the link to the **Amazon** website means any purchases you then make provide a small but welcome source of extra income to the Choir. The Amazon “mini site” on the Member’s Page also provides an easy link to CD recordings of this Season’s music which you may wish to purchase.

..and finally

We look forward to working with Paul Spicer again for this Season, and to welcoming James Longford (www.jameslongford.com) as our new accompanist.

I very much look forward to seeing you all again on **Tuesday 4th September** for our first rehearsal, and to welcoming some potential new members from our waiting list on that date too. Music ordered from the librarians will be available from soon after 6pm, so please do make an extra effort to arrive a few minutes early to allow for time for music collection etc. Rehearsal will, as ever, start at 6.30pm sharp.

Kind regards,

Sam

Samantha Foley
27th August 2007
(chairman@whitehallchoir.org.uk)

NB – term dates for the 2007/08 Season are:

Autumn term: 4th Sept to 11th Dec 2007 (extra rehearsal 8th Nov) – Xmas break 18, 25 Dec and 1st Jan (concerts 16th Nov; 11th Dec). 15 rehearsals.

Spring term: 8th January to 11th March 2008 - Easter break, 18th and 25th March. 10 rehearsals.

Summer Term: 1st April to 1st July 2008 (concerts 10th April; 7th July). 14 rehearsals.