

# Waltham Singers newsletter

Issue No 45  
April 2011

## From the Chair...

I hope you have all had an enjoyable Easter break and “Welcome back!” to the summer term.

In my first stint as Chairman of the choir, an unbelievable twenty years ago, my initial season saw one of the Waltham Singers’ first concerts in Chelmsford Cathedral, Mendelssohn’s Elijah. It remains in the memory still (mainly for Tim Robinson’s wonderful tenor solos). My second spell has now started on another high with Messiah. We should rightly congratulate ourselves on a good performance in front of a record audience and be grateful to those who came and supported us in such numbers.

The summer term holds quite a different experience as east meets west in the fusion of Tomas Luis de Victoria’s beautiful polyphony with the rhythmic drive of the Bhangra. It is the 400th anniversary of the death of Victoria, sometimes referred to as the Spanish Palestrina, as he may have studied with him during his time in Rome in the 1570s and 1580s. The Gaudeamus Mass clearly demonstrates the artistry of his composition cleverly crafted around the “gaudeamus” theme. Mantra is inspired by the musical experiences of the Portuguese missionaries who settled in Goa 500 years ago introducing plainsong, polyphony and western instruments into the eastern music of the day. It is not meant to be an historically accurate representation, but for me it captures well the musical contrasts and surprising ease of blending the two styles. The concert is on Saturday 18th June in Great Waltham Church at 8 pm. Let’s make it another full house.

Our annual review meeting is on Thursday 23 June at 8pm, when we hear reports from Andrew, Mike Wall as Treasurer and myself as Chair on the choir’s activities over the 2010/11 season and have the opportunity to discuss matters in open forum that either the committee or individual members wish to raise.

We finish the term in relaxed manner with our barbecue on Sunday, 3rd July from 12.30 pm at Foxtons, Little Waltham. Tickets will be on sale nearer the time and I hope as many of you as possible will come to join us with your family and friends.

Looking further ahead, the committee has been considering possible destinations for a choir tour in 2013 and we expect to circulate proposals for a trip to Venice shortly.

It is going to be a busy term. Enjoy!

*Gerald Malton*

*Please keep us up to date with any change in your email address. If you change it, please email [SchNussey@AOL.com](mailto:SchNussey@AOL.com) so that we can amend your details.*

## VIEW FROM THE SECOND ROW

(not of the scrum)

The Waltham Singers committee had been kind to rugby enthusiasts as they had arranged the kick off in the vital England/Ireland game at 5.30 p.m., thus ensuring that the majority of the action could be seen on TV between rehearsal and performance. No doubt the fact that the committee pointed out that Messiah had its first performance in Dublin persuaded the Irish Rugby Union to go for a late afternoon kickoff. As it turned out it was a game to forget for England supporters. Total concentration could now be directed to Messiah.

Having a delicate constitution I decided to wear my coat for the journey between the chapter house and the cathedral. At the back of the cathedral I found a row of chairs and I was just putting my coat down on one of them when a verger approached me and said "Sorry, mate, you can't put your coat there. We need the chairs for the punters." That had to be a good sign and this was confirmed when I heard later that people were being turned away at the door as the cathedral was full. Looking at the audience before the start I could believe it. I could not see a spare seat.

The first half flashed past. There were thumbs up from friends and relations at half time. The second half, containing the Hallelujah Chorus, presents a challenge to both choir and audience. Does the audience stand and do the performers take any notice? One of my colleagues wondered whether we would get a Mexican wave when the Chorus started. I was quietly giggling to myself at the prospect as the orchestra played the opening bars. We were greeted not so much by a Mexican wave as groups of meerkats, some slower than others, popping up looking for predators. Was this ComparetheMarket.com or the Hallelujah Chorus? There was no doubt as to the answer to this question. The applause at the end was enthusiastic, led by a gent in a red pullover. I wonder if he is a tenor.

Foureyes

## HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Waltham Singers at Chelmsford Cathedral  
19.03.11

Our Cathedral was crammed to overflowing to hear Andrew Fardell conduct his Waltham Singers, accompanied by "leading Baroque instrumentalists", in a complete performance of Messiah. This much-loved work includes some of Handel's best writing, from the first tenor aria [expressively sung here by Christopher Watson] to the final Amen, beautifully contemplative at first, then splendidly celebratory, with the angels trumpeting the glory of God.

The authentic practices band made an inestimable contribution to this performance; it was clear from the opening Symphony that their tone would be pure without being austere.

Four fine soloists: Ruth Massey's alto, perhaps occasionally under-powered against chorus and orchestra, was warm-toned and eloquent, especially in a movingly compassionate He Was Despised. A nicely ornamented I Know My Redeemer Liveth from the elegant soprano of Kirsty Hopkins. Bass William Gaunt brought a richness of tone and an arresting delivery to Why Do The Nations, and to the last trumpet ...

The Singers gave an impressively dramatic account of Handel's [often literally] descriptive writing - "every valley shall be exalted" - and his powerful effects in the Hallelujah Chorus and the superbly sustained Behold The Lamb and Since By Man Came Death. It's true that in a packed cathedral a little of their trademark attack was lost, but the architecture of We Like Sheep, for instance, was meticulously explored under Fardell's demanding direction.

Michael Gray

### 50:50 Winners!

**£50 Janis Croom £25 Lynda Stapleton  
£20 Jenny Crook £20 Philippa Berkley  
£20 Barbara Johnson  
£12 Liz Strickland**

**The next Committee Meeting will take place at 7.45 pm on 25 May 2011  
If there are matters you would like the committee to consider, please contact  
Gerald (01245 360240) or an other committee member.**