

Waltham Singers newsletter

Issue No 49
August 2012

From the Chair...

I hope you have had a relaxing break over the summer and are ready to return to what is going to be an exciting 40th Anniversary Season for the choir.

Looking back, it was very good to see so many of you at the Annual Review Meeting at the end of June and to share in such a useful exchange of views on steps we can take to improve the rehearsal process to the benefit of us all individually and our performances. Some of the ideas discussed will be implemented when we return.

I am also grateful for the information many of you have provided regarding the lower numbers of singers we experienced for our concerts last season. By far the majority of responses related to poor health or holiday/travel commitments. There were also some who had chosen to be absent as a result of the programme of music being performed and others who felt insufficiently confident about their performance having missed some rehearsals. We shall consider the responses further in Committee.

Andrew has given an appetising resumé of the season's musical programme. I can only add that the full line-up of soloists for Verdi is now fixed: Susan Gritton (soprano), Sarah Pring (mezzo), John Pierce (tenor) and Stephen Gadd (bass). We are in for a treat!

Our first rehearsal this term is on Thursday, 6th September at the usual time of 8.00 pm in St Cedd's School Hall. The following week, Thursday, 13th September, we have our Open Rehearsal. Do please take the opportunity to invite those who may wish to join the choir to come and give us a try – especially if they are tenors!

A reminder that next Summer Term, with the exception of one rehearsal immediately prior to the Tour to Venice, all rehearsals will be for the full choir and much of the music being taken on tour will also form the first half of the Summer Concert.

Subscriptions for the coming season have been kept at the same level as last, being £115 for a single payment at the start of the season or two instalments of £60 each payable in September and January. As last year, £15 of the subscription is not eligible for Gift Aid. Reduced subscriptions of just £10 per annum are payable by full-time students under the age of 25.

We have our Annual General Meeting at the end of the rehearsal on Thursday, 6th October 2012, when the formal business of the Annual Report and the Accounts are considered and a new committee is elected for the following year. As always, all of the committee posts are up for re-election. Do please consider joining the committee. It is important we get a wide cross-section of views represented. Alternatively, you may be able to help with the running of the choir in some other way, e.g. with the Friends programme, or keeping the website up to date. There is no fixed pattern in which the various responsibilities are allocated, so if there is any particular task you feel you could help with, do please let me or another committee member know. If it helps focus your thoughts, I know that some of the current committee and other post holders intend to stand down at the AGM, so we have particular requirements for a new Friends secretary, publicity officer and web site manager.

I look forward to seeing you all on Thursday, 6th September. It's going to be a good season.

Gerald

Dick Meader Remembered

Dick made a huge contribution to the Waltham Singers right from the choir's early formative years, when he joined in 1977, through to more recent times. As a tenor, always in demand, he was eagerly recruited to the choir for his vocal talents. But Dick gave more than that, bringing both his organisational skills and enthusiastic involvement in all aspects of the choir's social activities.

Dick twice served as Chairman of the Waltham Singers from 1982 to 1984 and from 1988 to 1990 and was an active member of the committee in many other seasons. It was Dick who, during his first term as Chairman, brought Andrew Fardell to the Waltham Singers as Musical Director in 1983. Being an engineer, Dick brought a practical common sense approach to the committee and his calm, measured manner ensured things got done without any histrionics. Dick also had an encyclopaedic mind, something that made him highly successful at Waltham Singers Quiz Nights.

The social dimension to the choir was very important to Dick. His enthusiasm for it, along with others, led to mass cycle rides (60 or so plus families), running (including two coaches full of Waltham Singers and friends participating in the Hyde Park fun run), cricket matches, musical evenings and the legendary Boxing Day family hockey matches with 16 or 20 a side, most of whom did not know the rules, and which I understand always ended up as a 1-1 draw. Dick and his wife, Liz, also hosted many post-concert parties at their home in Barrack Lane. It is no coincidence that when Dick undertook to compile the choir's 25th Anniversary booklet, he chose to write about "The Social Scene" himself.

He will be missed.

With thanks to Anne Cowlin and Tina Bailey



Committee meetings:

The next Committee meeting will be held on 26th September.
If there are any matters you would like to be considered by the committee, please advise Gerald Malton or Jemma Parker in advance of this date.

50:50 Club News:

Winners for Draw 62 are:-

£50: Neville Bird £30: Roger Berkley

£25: Marion Garrett, Linda Neilson £16: Sheila Holmes

In 2011/2012 season just ended 50:50 club members contributed £432 towards the funding of Waltham Singers concerts. If you would like one or more numbers for the 50:50 club please see Mike Wall .

From the Musical Director...

There is definitely an Italian strand running through the musical programme for the Waltham Singers' 40th anniversary season.

At the heart of this celebratory season is Verdi's mighty *Requiem* in which we will be joined in Chelmsford Cathedral by our regular partners the Salomon Orchestra and a truly stellar line-up of international soloists. This is a concert that we should be able to sell out twice over! As the doyen of programme note creators, John Bawden, writes: "Few choral works have captured the public imagination in the way that Verdi's *Requiem* has. The uncomplicated directness of his style, his soaring, lyrical melodies which lie perfectly for the human voice, the scintillating orchestration and, most significantly, the work's extraordinary dramatic and emotional intensity, all contribute to the *Requiem*'s status as one of the great icons of Western music."

In May many of us will be fortunate to sing music in some of Venice's most exquisite churches. I have resisted the temptation to include Vivaldi in this programme – as loads of choirs do this, but I have selected items that we can arrange in different combinations according to the accompaniment resources and the geographical circumstances of each venue. The tour material will also form the first half of the summer concert programme in Waltham Church, with the second half featuring "lollipops" from the repertoire of the Kings' Singers: an opportunity for the Waltham Singers to let their hair down a bit.

Our season opens with a Christmas concert which does include Vivaldi's most famous choral work, the *Gloria*, but also features a broad range of seasonal favourites: *Virga Jesse* by Bruckner, Tallis's *O Nata Lux* and the settings by both Victoria and Lauridsen of *O Magnum Mysterium*. There are also a couple of relatively new pieces that I hope will be enjoyed as well as the much demanded "Shepherds' Farewell" – but this time in French.

The Annual Meeting at the end of last season provided a welcome opportunity to discuss the expectations that are made of singers and those that singers should have of the choir and the rehearsal process. I have always been clear that the process of rehearsal is as important to us as the concerts that act as our focus. The Waltham Singers has long been fortunate in having a loyal membership who make great efforts to attend as many rehearsals as possible – and there is a significant number of singers who really do make pretty well every rehearsal – however, we know that many singers will need to miss some rehearsals at some point during the season. In order to help people catch up with what might have been missed, we will arrange for details of material that has been covered to be added to our website. Meanwhile, my aspiration is to make every rehearsal an unmissable experience!

May I draw your attention to some events taking place at New Hall over the coming months? On Friday October 5th at 7pm we will be hosting a concert by the David Rees-Williams Trio, who combine the highest levels of classical technique with jazz (think along the lines of Jacques Loussier). The following day Ken Burton, famed for his work with London Adventist Chorale and Prom at the Palace, will lead a choral workshop afternoon. Ken has produced his own book of choral warm-ups, published by Faber, so he will have lots of fresh ideas to get us all singing.

We are making a CD of choral music in November and on Saturday 10 November we are welcoming extra singers to join us for the day. I hope that many of you will be able to come and help us commit a variety of sacred repertoire to disc.

Andrew Fardell

Dates for your Diary

Autumn Term 2012			
Thursday 6 September	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	First rehearsal of term
Thursday 13 September	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Open Rehearsal
Thursday 4 October	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Rehearsal and AGM (9.30 pm)
Sunday 2 December	2.00 - 4.00 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Pre-concert rehearsal
Thursday 6 December	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Last rehearsal of term
Saturday 8 December	1.30 - 4.30 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Rehearsal - NB change of time
Saturday 8 December	7.30 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Christmas Concert
Spring Term 2013			
Thursday 10 January	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	First rehearsal of term
Sunday 10 March	2.00 - 4.00 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Pre-concert rehearsal
Saturday 16 March	1.00 - 4.00 pm	Chelmsford Cathedral	Rehearsal
Saturday 16 March	7.30 pm	Chelmsford Cathedral	Verdi <i>Requiem</i> 40th Anniversary Concert
Thursday 28 March	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Last rehearsal of term
Summer Term 2013			
Thursday 18 April	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	First rehearsal of term
Thursday 23 May	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Rehearsal for touring party only
Friday 24 - Tuesday 28 May		Venice	Tour
Sunday 16 June	2.00 - 4.00 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Pre-concert rehearsal
Thursday 20 June	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Last rehearsal of term
Saturday 22 June	1.00 - 4.00 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Rehearsal
Saturday 22 June	7.30 pm	Gt Waltham Church	Concert: A Summer Celebration
Thursday 27 June	8.00 pm	St Cedd's School	Annual Review Meeting
Future Concert Dates			
Saturday 16 November 2013	7.30 pm	Chelmsford Cathedral	
Wednesday 4 December 2013	7.30 pm	Chelmsford Cathedral	Mencap Carol Concert
Saturday 15 March 2014	7.30 pm		
Saturday 21 June 2014	7.30 pm		
Other Events			
Saturday 8 September 2012	7.00 pm	Chelmsford Cathedral	Schubertiade
Friday 5 October 2012	7.00 pm	New Hall School	David Rees-Williams Trio concert
Saturday 6 October 2012	2.30 - 7.45 pm	New Hall School	Ken Burton choral workshop
Saturday 10 November 2012	All day	New Hall School	Recording session with New Hall choir