



From the Editor

This edition shines a spotlight on an eclectic mix of issues. There is the insightful '12 Rules for Ensemble Singing' contributed by soprano Jenney Annett. Bass Rep Bernard Carter has conducted exhaustive research to answer the question on everyone's lips: 'Who are the Basses?' and the results are revealed on page 3. Chair Susan Edwards looks back on a very successful Quiz Night; while alto Sally McEwen contributes an impassioned and thought-provoking piece on how music and the arts can shed light on age-old prejudices. There's an update on the Henley Youth Choir Workshops (the sharp-eyed amongst you will note the spotlights in the lovely picture by one of the children) or you can bask in the warm glow of the pictures from Vice Chair Sally Clark's (Bornhoft's) wedding.

Plus, (and the reason for this painfully extended metaphor,) bass John Legh provides some expert thoughts on the future of stage lighting.

You will also find a Caption Competition, ideas on how to get more involved in HCS and the usual bits and pieces shaken out of my email inbox. The Christmas Concert is coming up and is sold-out. Check out the diary on page 3 to ensure you don't miss out on the various events, concerts and workshops planned for next year. Please do keep ideas and contributions for the Newsletter coming to angelalaw@eversense.co.uk – it's great to hear from so many of you. Needless to say, any errors or omissions are entirely the responsibility of the editor. Just room to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy Singing in 2015!

Angela Law, Alto and Editor

Quiz Night

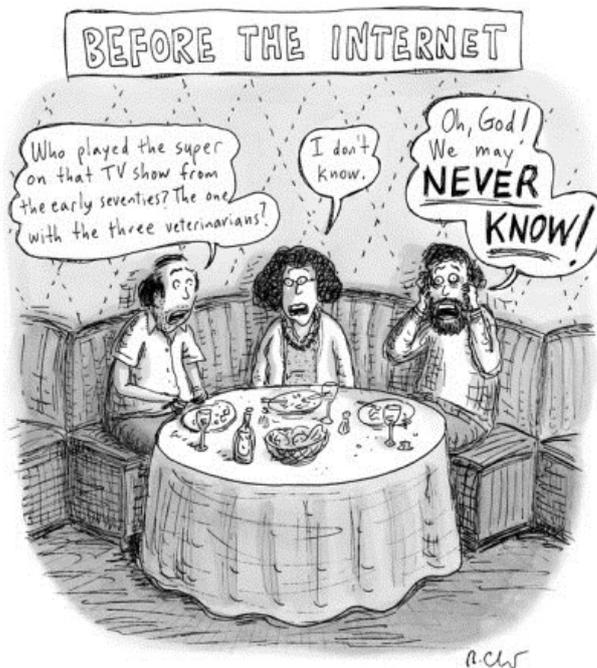
Do you ever sit with friends trying to remember the name of that actor, that book or that film? You know what the actor looks like, can see them in your mind's eye but can't get his name ... until the next day. If that sounds a familiar experience you will recognise the challenge posed by our two quiz masters, Robin Batchelor-Smith and Toby Greenwood at the recent Henley Choral Society Quiz Night. This was the first major event set up and run by our new 'social work-stream', ably led by Sally Clark and which proved to be a fantastic success. Members of HCS with friends and relatives all joined in the light-hearted evening, although I can now reveal that competition between some tables towards the back of the hall was fierce.

Why was this evening such a success? First of all, it was great fun; secondly, it involved a large team of volunteers who worked together to make it go with a swing, bar tenders (crucial); porters of the fish and chips (delicious); ticket sellers; raffle ticket sellers; co-ordinators of the enormous number of raffle prizes; those who set up and cleared away, washed up or disposed the rubbish. Enormous thanks to Robin and Toby and the team. Then there was the good will generated by everyone who turned up ... and we made a great profit, nearly £1000. Fantastic work, team HCS!

How did I fare with my friends who sit around trying to remember elusive facts? Well, I ended up on a table of sharp young minds so there was not too much of that, just the occasional frustration of not knowing the

answers. The biggest shock came when we learnt that we hadn't recognised the opening bars of the Verdi *Requiem*: the shame! If you missed this evening look out for the next event - a great way to have fun with fellow HCS members and friends while raising money to support our performances.

Susan Edwards, Alto and HCS Chair





Singing at my Wedding

It was lovely to have a group of 14 good friends from HCS to sing at our wedding ceremony. They sang two pieces – *Deep Peace* by Bill Douglas and *Give Your Hearts* by Tim Crosley while we signed the Register and were listened to by a room full of our family and close friends. They sang fantastically, with the first piece being a gorgeous Irish Blessing and the second piece, with a fabulous soprano solo sung by our very own Fi Harding, giving us goose bumps and moving the room to tears. Their performance surpassed all our expectations and we are very grateful for all the rehearsal time and effort that the group invested for us. Having music as part of the ceremony was really important to us and for it to be sung by friends from the choir made it extremely special. The same merry band then sang a Beatles Medley at the evening reception. Thank you to all and to Wendy for helping with rehearsals and to Ben for additional rehearsal and for playing on the day.

Sally Clark, Soprano and Vice Chair



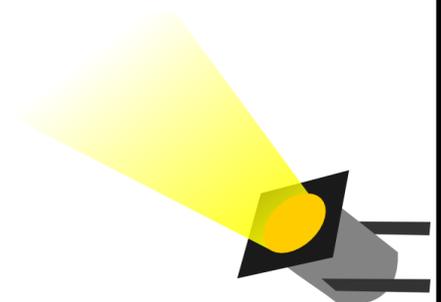
Some technical thoughts on stage lighting arising from last year's *Verdi Requiem* Performance

Sweltering on stage in Reading Concert Hall during the rehearsal for and performance of Verdi's *Requiem* last year, it occurred to me that it would be much more comfortable for the performers and possibly for the audience if the Hall had LED lights rather than traditional stage lights.

All electric lighting works by passing an electric current through some medium (often a metal filament or a tube of gas) which converts the electrical power to light. The media used in traditional lights convert some of that power also to heat. The modern semiconductor materials used in LED lights are much more efficient in converting most of the power to light rather than unwanted heat. They are therefore

cheaper to run, can be run on much more limited power supplies and are more comfortable to sit under. They are also better for the environment. The big snag with LED lights at the moment is that they cost substantially more, although the cost difference is likely to reduce as the technology becomes more widely used. The initial cost of installation is also of course offset over a period of time by lower running costs. Anybody who has anything to do with providing lighting for performances (whether on a temporary basis or as a permanent installation) should consider the LED option.

John Legh, Bass



Diary Dates

Vocal Technique Workshop
Christmas Concert
Christmas Meal
St John Passion Workshop
St John Passion Concert
Performance Technique Workshop
Summer Concert

Sat 22nd Nov, d:two, Henley
Tues 9th Dec, St Mary's, Henley
Mon 15th Dec, The Maltster's Arms
Sat 7th Feb, St Mary's, Henley
Sat 14th March, St Mary's, Henley
Sat 18th April, d:two, Henley
Sat 20th June, St Mary's, Henley

Who are the Basses?

You may think you know the bass section of the choir. But who are they really? What makes them tick? How would you excite their musical passions? To answer such questions, we surveyed their tastes, behaviours and musical preferences.

The research shone a spotlight on the basses' approach towards concert etiquette. Their dress sense is largely conventional, the majority favouring black or grey socks with their concert attire. One obedient bass wears whatever his wife puts out for him. Others rebel, favouring purple, cerise or multi-coloured hosiery. And one hardy soul wears nothing between his shoe leather and his skin. I invite you to examine their ankles at our next concert and check for yourselves.

Asked what they drink after concerts, all but one favour strong alcohol to soothe their vocal chords. Among wine drinkers, red tends to be preferred. Beer drinkers are very loyal to particular styles - Doom Bar, London Pride, warm stout and weisse bier. A few favour hard liquor, especially if the concert has been taxing. But, colleagues, beware buying a round for the basses - Cristal champagne is the tipples of choice for one.

Among their musical heroes, the undisputed greats - Bach, Mozart and Beethoven - dominate. Some mention Mahler, Dvorak, Scott Joplin and Henryk Wieniavski as strong influences. Few favour British composers, however.

Their affection is spread across the different parts of orchestra. Equal numbers favour string, keyboard and woodwind instruments. Cellos, guitars, oboes and the piano are particularly popular. Again, their tastes are traditional - only two identify an electronic instrument as their favourite. One choir stalwart mentions the "voice" as his instrument of choice.

We also explored the basses' attitudes towards other musical genres, especially the popular music of the 60s and 70s. A surprisingly large number claim to have no recollection of the 60s. Maybe, the basses are younger than you think. Alternatively, this response may reflect their misspent youth - as Robin Williams famously quipped, "if you remember the 60s, you weren't there".

Much as expected, the Beatles and the Beach Boys are favourites. Some basses admire the sweet harmonies of Simon and Garfunkel, a love which may influence their contribution to the choir. A significant minority are hard rock fans. The jazz/funk sounds of Level 42 and the punk songs of The Stranglers also have their adherents. A fondness for musical discord is therefore widespread among of the basses. You may have already noticed this.

To sum up, the basses are conventional, if occasionally sozzled, music-lovers. But our survey also shows that their tastes can be unusual or even eccentric. Plainly, their passions run deep. This helps explain why the section can produce the most heart-rending and rousing sounds when inspiration takes them.

Bernard Carter, Bass and Bass Rep



Henley Youth Choir Workshops

On Monday September 23rd d:two was abuzz with excitement as some sixty 8-12 year olds and a smaller group of rather more reserved 13-17 year olds piled into d:two for the very first Workshop. There was a mix of curiosity, nervousness and excitement – and that was just amongst the organising team! Before too long everyone had been greeted and registered, sorted with name badges and music and Ben had got them started. The Henley Youth Choir Workshops were up and running. The organising team had been working since June to get HYCW off the ground. Although HYCW comes under the umbrella of the Choral Society, it is entirely self-funded. Revenue comes from fees, from donations from generous individuals as well as Henley Lions, Henley Round Table and Henley Municipal Charities and from grants provided to date by Henley Town Council and Henley Educational Trust. The participants are split into two groups, with 55 youngsters in the 8-12 year old choir and a stalwart group of nine 13-17 year olds in the older group. Future plans include performing as part of the Henley Youth Festival at the Kenton Theatre as well as performances with HCS and on their own account.



Picture of HYCW looking
Concert by HYCW men





“I am so glad that Henley Choral Society is taking this initiative to create a youth choir. Ben has done wonders with the adult choir and he was getting really good results from the children on Monday. All the children looked like they were enjoying themselves and I’m absolutely delighted.”
 Councillor Akehurst, Mayor of Henley-on-Thames

So what can you do to help? The HYCW team need more volunteers to help with a range of tasks. There have been very generous donations by HCS members and further funding is always welcome. If you run a local business, or have strong connections with a local business, then you may be interested in becoming a sponsor of HYCW – a great way to show your commitment to your local community and our young people. Perhaps, above all, you can help spread the word about HYCW – amongst your friends, neighbours, relatives. The HYCW team is particularly keen to develop the membership and numbers in the 13-17 year age group and to encourage boys to sing. In the meantime, anticipation is building for the Christmas Concert when we will be able to hear HYCW in performance for the very first time!

The Editor

HENLEY YOUTH CHOIR WORKSHOPS 2015

Monday, d:two Henley: 8-12 age group 5.30pm–6.15pm
13-17 age group 6.15pm–7.00pm
 12th January – 23rd March (excludes half term)
 13th April – 22nd June (excludes half term and bank hols)
 Contact Fi Harding by email - fi.harding@sky.com

forward to the Christmas
 member Ella Dickson age 9



TWELVE GOLDEN RULES FOR ENSEMBLE SINGING

1. Ensure everyone is singing the same piece.
2. Stop at every repeat sign and discuss whether or not to recognise it.
3. If you sing a wrong note, look sharply at your neighbour.
4. The right note sung at the wrong time is a wrong note (and vice versa).
A wrong note sung timidly is a wrong note.
A wrong note sung with authority is an interpretation.
A true interpretation is realised when not one note of the original remains.
5. Warm up thoroughly before a rehearsal. That way you can sing flat all evening with a clear conscience.
6. Take your time over page turns. Swiftly moving paper causes a draught.
7. If everyone gets lost except you, be kind and follow them.
8. Alternatively, stop and explain in detail why you got lost. Everyone will be very interested.
9. Do your best to get the maximum NPS (notes per second). That way you will gain the admiration of your section.
10. Markings for slurs, dynamics and ornaments should not be observed. They are only there to embellish the score.
11. If a passage is difficult, slow down. If it's easy, speed it up – everything will work itself out in the end.
12. When everyone else has stopped singing, you should not sing any notes you have left.

Contributed by Jenny Annett—Soprano

The editor suggests 7 Ways to help your Choral Society

1. Practise, practise, practise! You can't change what others do but you can change what you do! Check out free sources of support such as you tube and www.cyberbass.com. Ask your rep if you are not sure.
2. Find a tenor! Those that stay often come with an existing member – let Wendy Hawkins or Paul Clayden know if you have someone in mind.
3. Find a teenager – one that wants to sing that is! Henley Youth Choir Workshops would love to have more 13-17 year olds for the senior group. See pages 4 and 5 or speak to Fi Harding.
4. Find a Friend. The Friends of HCS have been thriving and growing. The next Friends event
5. Sign up to raise money for HCS at <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/henleycs> Retailers give a percentage of their revenue every time you shop online through this site. It's easy and doesn't cost you a penny!
6. Be sociable – get involved and volunteer – there are loads of things to do – or tell the Committee about your ideas. Susan Edwards or Sally Bornhoft will welcome you with open arms.
7. Be social – if you are on Facebook then like us and if you are on twitter then follow us @henleychoral

will be an invite to see as us all working hard at the St John Passion Workshop on Saturday 7th Feb. Talk to Friends' Secretary soprano Jan Stanton with your ideas or contacts.

Tweeting tenors!

Bass Ian Tiffin contributed this lovely picture he took of baby swallows and suggested it could be used to recruit more tenors! I am sure it can. The similarities are striking... this enthusiastic team look as though they are hitting the high notes and clearly want to get noticed. Their shoulders are down and heads up (not in the score) and they have a fluffy, boyish charm – just like our tenor section. I am sure Ben would commend those lovely dropped jaws. The only difference is that we don't want any of our tenors to fly the nest!

The ongoing recruitment drive to get more men to come and sing is working and you can play your part. We know from experience that existing members of HCS are the best ambassadors to recruit more men. So if you know any chaps – friend, relative, colleague or neighbour who might be interested, do encourage them to come along to a rehearsal, look at the website or get in touch with Membership Secretary Wendy Hawkins on 01491 576929. They will be sure of a warm welcome. In the meantime, relatively new Tenor, Paul McMahon has been doing his bit by (literally) tweeting about his enjoyment of HCS. Thanks Paul. A couple of his tweets are reproduced below for those of you who are not yet part of the twitter-sphere, and for those who are, please follow us @henleychoral and get tweeting about HCS!



CAPTION COMPETITION!

There's a prize of a bottle of wine for the best caption to this picture! Please send your suggested captions to angelalaw@every sense.co.uk or give them to me at rehearsal by Friday Dec 12th. The winner will be announced at the Christmas meal at The Maltster's and printed in the next newsletter. Tweet tweet!

The Editor



HCS Committee

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Vice Chair	Sally Clark
Musical Director	Benjamin Goodson bafg@ymail.com
Accompanist	David Smith
Secretary	Fi Harding
Treasurer	Stephen Fisher
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Membership Secretary	Wendy Hawkins 01491 576929

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Alto Rep	Jenny Fleming
Tenor Rep	Paul Clayden
Bass Rep	Bernard Carter

Please contact your voice reps if you have any questions or comments.

Armed Police, Opera & Bach's *Passions* – a personal experience

I don't normally go looking for trouble but you might think otherwise on reading this. Last month I had the good fortune to spend a week in New York City & attended the Met Opera's premiere of a new production of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, by American composer John Adams. Having previously seen the composer's *Dr Atomic* & *Nixon in China* I was reasonably familiar with the composer's minimalist style & interest in big contemporary subjects. I was also aware that since its staging in 1991 the opera had drawn controversy. I was expecting a challenging evening and so it was.

The opera is based on an historic event of 1985 when an Italian cruise liner, the Achille Lauro, was hijacked by four Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) terrorists. Tragically, wheelchair-bound Jewish American, Leon Klinghoffer on holiday with his wife Marilyn (they were celebrating their 36th wedding anniversary) becomes a scapegoat for the rage of the terrorists, is shot & his body tossed overboard. After three days passengers & crew are rescued, when the hijackers surrender. The drama of *Klinghoffer* unfolds retrospectively as the ship's captain recalls what happens during the hijacking. Whilst the opera spares us witnessing the full horror of this event it realistically represents the fear & panic among the passengers, the thoughts of the terrorists, Marilyn Klinghoffer's grief & anger. It goes beyond the senseless barbarity of the historical event to what seems the never-ending conflict in the Middle East with its ancient roots & everyday headline news.

On the night I attended hundreds of protestors gathered outside the Lincoln Centre to denounce the work as anti-Semitic & sympathetic to terrorists. Ticket-holders were led through a cordon of police, subjected to rigorous security checks & confronted by the presence of armed police inside the opera house. Though people had apparently threatened to disrupt the opera, the performance went on with sporadic bursts of chanting & booing & two of the more vociferous audience members escorted from the auditorium.

Whilst all this was disquieting to say the least, once the initial protests died down it was possible to concentrate fully on the opera. It was riveting. Raw, penetrating, at times mystical, it was neither anti-Semitic nor a glorification of terrorism. Although the

opera *dramatises* anti-Semitism, it in no way supports it. It is a deeply humane work in which the subliminal power of music movingly explores motivations & reactions.

Less minimalist I think than his other works, in *Klinghoffer* Adams' music has moments of lyrical beauty while pulsing energetic passages underline the tension in the drama being played out. Bach's *Passions* provided the composer with a structure for the piece with their alternating powerful choruses & intimate arias. The first chorus of exiled Palestinians, weary then increasingly violent, is both poignant & ominous. On removal of headscarves & outer garments the choristers become exiled brooding Jews in modern garb. The Met's superb chorus certainly threw itself into these mighty opening sections. Along with the rest of the performers, conductor, composer & director they richly deserved the tremendous ovation they were given at the end. I was more than happy to join in the rapturous applause while attempting to drown my neighbour's boos & shouts of 'Shame' with my 'Bravos'.

Sally McEwen, Alto



Sing. Enjoy. Support.

Become part of Henley Choral Society

www.henleychoralsociety.org.uk

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