



# 2018 - 2019

The Henley Youth Choir is now five years old. It has transformed from a workshop idea at the Henley youth Festival to a vibrant young voice in our town, supplementing and often fulfilling the need for young people to express themselves through song within the local area.

Often, local schools cannot support their own choirs, and families who value vocal expression have chosen HYC to fulfil their needs. Additionally, schools with a vocal tradition have seen HYC as an opportunity to extend the repertoire for some of their children.

It has performed within the town at the Kenton Theatre, the Living Advent Calendar, St Mary's Church, the Henley Regatta and the Henley Festival, both as a workshop and in two full performances. It has also captivated an audience at Wallingford in one of Anita's concerts and has established itself as a medium of quality for young singers.

During the five years, the choir has been led by two directors who also lead the adult choir. Now it has its own leader, Jessica Norton, who is finding her feet following her appointment last summer.

## 1. Personnel

- Fi Harding - Manager & Administrator of HYC - manages the youngsters , liaises with Jessica, parents & members, sends communications to parents and members, collects subs , creates registers, compiles the HYC calendar, plans concerts and events, assists with singing, makes Junior song sheet, arranges seating plans,
- Jo Dickson - writes the agenda and minutes for HYC committee meetings, chairs meetings, arranges the rota for HYC, is current recruiter for DBS checks, plans concerts and events , does some publicity for HYC , often arranges refreshments for the youngsters at events -
- Maureen Smith ( who is not a choral society member, but who is an experienced retired teacher and school choir manager) - word projection for Juniors, takes registers and assists senior singing
- Alfie Hay - word projection for Juniors, junior librarian, assists junior and senior singing and school liaison (took on role after Maureen became ill) He is current HYC representative on HCS Trustees, but is standing down
- Wendy Hawkins - librarian for Seniors, takes registers and is singing assistant for Juniors & Seniors -
- Jan French - takes registers and is singing assistant for Juniors & Seniors

- Melissa Maples- HYC Treasurer
- We were fortunate this year to add Nicky Norminton to our list of volunteers, whose unstinting service in preparing the hall for the choir and supporting the juniors has made the absence throughout illness of Maureen and Jan more bearable.

Anita D'Attellis is our accompanist. A well known concert performer, who luckily for us lives in Henley and loves education and children,

Jessica Norton was appointed as our MD in the summer to take over from Peter. She is a freelance choral conductor, workshop leader and professional soprano based in central London and involved with a wide variety of choirs in the capital.

All our volunteers and leaders have DBS checks and safeguarding knowledge.

We are always looking for additional volunteers to be able attend choir rehearsals and help us to supervise the children.

## **2. Programme**

- Autumn Term. At Christmas the juniors sang The New Year Carol; I saw three ships and Ding Dong (with the seniors) during the afternoon concert. The seniors sang at both concerts – O Holy Night, I wonder as I wander, the Processional from the Ceremony of Carols and Ding song ( with the juniors)
- Spring term The choir sang in the Kenton Theatre as part of the HYF and Jessica involved the audience. It was a great event which was warmly and raucously appreciated by the packed theatre.
- Summer Term: The choir was delighted to be invited once more to take part in the family day of the Henley Festival. This year, the committee agreed to give air to some of Alfie's songs from his musical on the life of St Francis. Because of the scale of the piece and our reduced numbers in the juniors, Sacred Heart choir was asked to join us. The choir was both proud and excited to be performing on the floating stage, which of course is the venue for all the famous stars!!!!

## **3. Choir numbers**

When Jessica was appointed we realised that, such is her busy schedule, she could only come to Henley on Thursday. We therefore had to switch from the original Monday night slot. This has proved to be an obstacle for many of the families this year and, whereas we would have expected to gain as many as we lost by a change of evening, this has proved not to be the case.

At the beginning of September 2018, we had 25 juniors and 17 seniors. The older group has maintained its number, as those who moved out of the top end to college and university have been equalled by those moving up. However, the junior numbers are more of a concern. The downward trend has continued into this academic year, where the junior choir number is now 14, the same as the seniors. We are therefore in the process of promoting the choir widely.

#### **4. Promoting the choir**

As part of our promotional activity:

- The choir had a Come and Sing workshop open for all comers in May.
- We also arranged workshops in Trinity, Valley Road and Badgemore Schools. Further workshops this term include Sonning common, Peppard and Shiplake. (A few new members have been enrolled through these workshops.)
- We celebrated the 5<sup>th</sup> birthday with style and members will have seen the coverage in the Henley Standard.
- We are due to perform at Henley Christmas Fair on November 29<sup>th</sup>
- Some members will be singing with Aliquando "Elijah" on November 9<sup>th</sup>
- A performance at some public venue is planned for the Spring Term
- A workshop at Gillotts Secondary School is also planned.
- We hope to be invited to sing again at the Henley Festival on July.
- We are investigating the possibility of singing on the bandstand as part of the summer concerts.
- There may be some knock on effect of the promotion of the adult choir in the rugby club, as families have shown interest for their children as well as their sporty parents.
- Jessica herself has suggested several possible ways to increase the promotion of the choir in the town and the committee are working with her to make a reasonable and practical plan to implement all the ideas.

#### **5. Funding**

At the outset, the subs for joining the choir were set competitively in consultation with other young people's groups in the town. For this fee they get weekly rehearsals (more in number than the adult choir), free workshops and all their music. We inserted the extra proviso that bursaries would be available and offered sensitively to families whose desire to sing was not matched by their ability to pay. This concession has been applied in several instances. We are grateful for the generous donation by the Worshipful Company of Cutlers towards these bursaries.

Core costs have risen by about £500 this year due to staff pay rises and, due to lower numbers, we are unlikely to recover more than fifty percent of costs. The Choral Society committee have always looked favourably on their young choir and are generous in their support, both personal and financial. Although there has been discussion with the senior committee over reducing these fees, it was decided that they remain as they are for the moment, since we do not believe that the cost of subscription is the cause of reduction in numbers.

We are considering an application to the town council and Waitrose for support and are monitoring the financial situation very carefully.

Many of you have experienced the joyful and enthusiastic sound of our young voices and we would encourage as many of you as possible to attend either a rehearsal on Thursday evenings between 5.30 and 7.00 or one of our concerts. It is after all YOUR young choir.

Alfie Hay October 2019