



HENLEY CHORAL Society

HERE'S THE PITCH

Issue 35
June 2016

From the Editor

A shorter Newsletter because your Committee and reps do such a good job of communicating through email.

In this edition: a plea from tenor and Youth Choir team member Alfie Hay to help his musicals live on, an update on the Youth Choirs, an article on how research is showing that singing in a choir can help patients with cancer, the review of the glory that was the Gerontius concert and a couple of light-hearted items including the daft tale of how The Dream of Gerontius turned into a bit of a nightmare for the editor and other singers.

It will be great to have past HCS Musical Director Will Dawes singing with us in the Summer concert. Please do your bit to make it a super sold-out Summer concert.

Angela Law, Alto



SAT 18TH JUNE 2016 / 7.30PM

20TH CENTURY FRENCH COMPOSERS

DURUFLÉ REQUIEM
FAURÉ
VIERNE

FEATURING
Will Dawes, baritone
Judy Brown, mezzo-soprano
Richard Moore, organist
Tom Edwards, conductor



Christ Church Centre, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1AG

Tickets £16.00 (under 18s £5.00)
Ticket Secretary Jan French 01491 572795
Garrett & Stone, 28 Duke Street, Henley-on-Thames

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Become part of Henley Choral Society
www.henleychoralsociety.org.uk
Registered Charity Number 276728



"Guest conductor Tom Edwards is joined by former conductor Will Dawes for a soothing Midsummer's concert"

Help Alfie spread a musical message for the next generation

Many of you will know that the Youth Choir are singing one of my musical compositions at the Henley Festival Family Day this year. Rehearsals are going well and Tom is teaching the ten songs with enthusiasm and understanding. I am excited by the prospect of this piece being performed by someone other than me.

For almost forty years, working with the children in schools in Oxfordshire and particularly in Henley, I have written almost twenty musicals. We had great fun creating them and the audiences of families, as you can imagine, loved the results. I've never had any musical training but I do have an uncanny ability to write catchy songs for children and to assist them to write their own. However, many of the musicals are still in my head as I always played piano by ear and never need to write down the tunes. Some of the musicals have been performed elsewhere, such as The Hexagon and Kenton Theatre, with the help of musical friends such as our own Wendy Hawkins and Fi Harding and a former pupil, who tolerated my musical hieroglyphics

However, despite some being arranged by others with instrumental backing for a particular event, none of these musicals has been prepared and printed in a primary level-friendly form which will allow schools to give their children the same joy of performance which we felt in creating them. Some of the musicals have been lost from memory already; some are still just in my head

or in rudimentary form and I am concerned that, as I enter my seventies, my memory is becoming unreliable and my fingers unable to play as they used to. I need to publish them in a simple form for schools.

I plan to circulate to families who have been involved in the creation and performance of the musicals to request help from them to publish the musicals. I need to fund the cost of getting the music into its correct form and then to print out the script, music and lyrics so that they can be used by schools. Once they are printed out, I intend to seek out volunteer schools willing to learn the songs of a particular musical in order to make a professional recording of their efforts, so that they have a rehearsal tape to help them learn the music. If you know anyone who could help in any of these endeavours, please let me know or contact me on 01491 573909 or alfiehay1@googlemail.com. These musicals have given great joy to a whole generation of families and, with a bit of help, they can be passed on to the next.

Alfie Hay, Tenor



Henley Youth Choir Update

Our Youth Choirs go from strength to strength. They had a sell-out performance at the Kenton Theatre in March as part of Henley Youth Festival and will be singing on Sunday 10th July at Henley Festival Family Day in 'The Top' at the Henley Festival site. Fi Harding, said, 'We will be singing 'Henley Seasons', which tells the story of a year in Henley and has something for everyone. It was written by Alfie Hay, who is also part of the Youth Choirs team and was first performed over 20 years ago.' Alfie Hay said, 'We are really looking forward to the performance in July - it will be a fantastic experience for our young singers to perform at the Henley Festival Family Day. It is the perfect venue for this piece and a great time to join the Youth Choir.'

The Youth Choir welcomes more singers to join the 60 members. HCS members have done a wonderful job in supporting the Youth Choirs and in encouraging children, grandchildren and the children of friends and neighbours to join up. The Youth Choir has recently set up a bursary scheme, funded by Invesco Perpetual as part of their Community Support programme. It will cover 90% of the termly fees. Anyone interested in receiving a bursary can find a form on the website or contact Fi Harding (fi.harding@sky.com). David Bower, Head of Marketing at

Invesco Perpetual said, 'Invesco is delighted to be supporting Henley Youth Choir this year, in particular their bursary scheme. Our support will enable as many children as possible to be able to join the Youth Choir and benefit from the joys of singing.'

The Youth Choirs team are delighted that the Youth Choirs have received such generous support from HCS members; not just financial support but through spreading the word and offering time. If you would like to help the Youth Choirs or get involved just contact Fi Harding fi.harding@sky.com

Contributed by the Youth Choirs team



How a 'Dream' turned into a bit of a nightmare

Last September soprano Sally Clark and altos Jo Dickson, Louise Earl and myself set off in great excitement to see Simon Rattle and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra perform *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Proms. Great preparation for our own *Gerontius* concert we thought! As the picture shows, we had a box with a marvellous view.

After the interval, I was making rather critical notes for a review (Magdalena Kožená as *The Angel* seemed fidgeting and underpowered) when I began to feel hot and light-headed and decided to leave the box for some fresh air. The next thing I remember was a voice saying 'madam, madam are you alright?' accompanied by a very close-up view of the carpet in the corridor. I had fainted and hit my head on the wall going down. I was basically fine but did not feel great. Two paramedics arrived. Sally, noticing I had left the box and hearing noises outside, came out to find me on the floor. Feeling very embarrassed for disrupting her evening I urged her to go back and not miss the performance. One paramedic took me downstairs to their first aid unit. On the way I was surprised to hear an announcement requesting 'paramedic to box 34.' Surely that was the box I had been in and the incident was all over? Downstairs I sipped water. Little did I know that when Sally went back and opened the door of the box the first thing she saw was *another* body on the floor! Turning to the remaining paramedic she said with commendable understatement: 'We've got another one here.' Jo, who had originally been sitting in front of me in the box, had also fainted. She had slipped sideways in the seat and Louise, who was sat next to her (thinking she was asleep and only slightly surprised that Jo was taking a nap during the performance) had pushed her back upright. Jo had come round and, still feeling unwell, decided she should move towards the door of the

box and lie down - where Sally found her. So the paramedics brought Jo downstairs to the first aid unit for a reunion. After drinks of water and a few more medical checks we were free to go. Sally and Louise wisely decided that taking two fainters on public transport was too much and arranged a mini-cab to bring us all back to Henley.

It turns out that while Jo and I were falling like autumn leaves and Sally was doing her best Florence Nightingale impression, Louise had been oblivious to everything; had not noticed people coming and going in the box or indeed fainting and lying down. Perhaps this is a tribute to Elgar and to Rattle's conducting? What the Spanish woman who was also in the box must have made of it all can only be imagined. But perhaps the last words should go to an elderly lady who had also felt unwell and was in the first aid room when I arrived. 'Are you alright dear?' she kindly enquired. I briefly explained. 'Yes' she said 'it was very hot in there.' Then offered her own explanation as to why I passed out which Elgar and Rattle might not be so pleased about. 'And besides' she said: 'The music was SO depressing.'

Angela Law, Alto



Musical tea towels - who knew?

HCS Members stop at nothing to contribute to the Newsletter. Soprano Anne Frankum kindly dropped off the pictured tea towel which a friend had given her and that she thought you would enjoy. On the internet I found a website featuring a 'musical tea-towel section'...who knew?! www.musicalgiftsonline.co.uk if, like Anne, your life would be the richer with one. Text by Peter Hayward © Music notables (UK)

p piano (soft)- the neighbours have complained
f forte (loud) - the neighbours are out
Crescendo getting louder - testing the neighbours' tolerance level
ff fortissimo (VERY loud)- to hell with the neighbours
pp pianissimo (VERY soft) - the neighbours are at the door
Dim - thick
Obligato - being forced to practice
Rit. and/or **Rall.** - coming up to a bit you haven't practised
Con moto - I have a car
Allegro - A little motor car
Maestro - A bigger motor car
Metronome - Person small enough to fit comfortably into a Mini
Lento - the days leading up to Easto (with eggo and choco and things)
Largo - brewed in Germany (Hence "Handel's Largo" reaches parts other beers cannot reach!)
Piu Animato - if you don't clean that rabbit cage out, it will have to go
Interval - time to meet the players in the bar
Perfect interval - when drinks are on the house
Cantabile - singing (that is, viz. drunk)
Con spirito - drunk again
Cantata - a fizzy drink
Tutti - ice cream
Coda - a fish-a served with chips-a
Codetta - child's portion
Chords - things that organists play with one finger
Dischords - things that organists play with two fingers
Suspended chord - for lynching the soloist
Rubato - ointment for the musician's back
Subdominant - "I can't play until I've asked the wife"

Tonic - a pick-me-up
Syncopation - bowel condition brought on by an overdose of Jazz
Crotchet - knitting
Quaver - the feeling before a lesson when you haven't practised
Key signature - silly things put there to frighten you (ignore them, they will go away, and so will your audience)
Time signatures - things for drummers to ignore
Colla voce - this shirt is so tight I can't talk
Professional - anyone who can't hold down a steady job
Flats - English apartments
A tempo - (just) in time
A tempo de cafe - Ah, coffee time!
Improvisation - what you do when the music falls down
Fugue - clever stuff
Prelude - warm-up session before the clever stuff
Acciaccatura/appoggiatura - insects
Opus - exclamation made when Moggy has done a "whoopsie" on the carpet
Scales - fishy things
Trills - bird food
Virtuoso - someone who can work wonders with easy-play music
Antiphonal - crossed lines
Melody - an ancient and now extinct art in song-writing
Music - Happiness!



Tom's bon mots

The newsletter used to include memorable sayings from rehearsal by previous MD Will Dawes ...well done temporary MD Tom for reviving the tradition!

'I want you to be as slippery as a slippery seal sliding about on something soapy'
 'It's like stirring porridge up here.'
 'Second sops - I could come and kiss every one of you...but my wife would object'
 'There were some gorgeous harmonies there. I bet Durufle is kicking himself that he did not think of writing a single one of them.'
 'This is a funeral march; let's not be quite so Pavarotti about it.'
 'Ha! I laugh in the face of 5/8 bars.'

CAPTION COMPETITION! Tom is looking pretty pleased in this picture - but why? Funniest caption that can be read out without blushing wins a bottle of wine! Send to angelalaw@everysense.co.uk by Friday 17th June or give to me in rehearsal.



Singing in a choir has biological effects

Singing in a choir could help cancer patients stay in remission, scientists have suggested. One hour of choral singing was found to increase levels of immune proteins, reduce stress and improve mood. Boosting the immune system and keeping down stress are important in preventing cancer returning.

Dr Ian Lewis, director of research at the charity Tenovus Cancer Care, who co-led the study, said: 'These are really exciting findings. We have been building a body of evidence over the past six years to show that singing in a choir can have a range of social, emotional and psychological benefits, and now we can see it has biological effects too. We've long heard anecdotal evidence that singing in a choir makes people feel good, but this is the first time it's been demonstrated that the immune system can be affected by singing. It's really exciting and could enhance the way we support people with cancer in the future.'

The research involved a collaboration between Tenovus Cancer Care and the Royal College of Music. A total of 193 members of five different choirs were tested for levels of the stress hormone cortisol and cytokines - immune system signalling molecules that boost the body's ability to fight serious illness. Choir members provided saliva samples for

analysis just before and after singing for an hour. The study also found mood improvements and reduced levels of inflammation associated with singing that were greatest for individuals suffering from depression and poor mental well-being.

Co-author Dr Daisy Fancourt, from the Centre for Performance Science, a partnership between the Royal College of Music and Imperial College London, said: 'Many people affected by cancer can experience psychological difficulties such as stress, anxiety and depression. Research has demonstrated that these can suppress immune activity, at a time when patients need as much support as they can get from their immune system. This research is exciting as it suggests that an activity as simple as singing could reduce some of this stress-induced suppression, helping to improve well-being and quality of life amongst patients and put them in the best position to receive treatment.'

All the participants had been affected by cancer in some way - either by having the disease, or caring for a patient, or losing a loved one.

Edited version of an article by Sarah Knapton published in The Daily Telegraph. The findings are published in the on-line journal cancermedalscience.

Agony, ecstasy and everything in between as Director bows out

Musial director Ben Goodson's final concert, after three seasons with Henley Choral Society, absolutely lived up to expectations. Elgar's monumental setting of Cardinal Newman's poem The Dream of Gerontius, an ambitious choice, provided the ultimate proof of Goodson's dual orchestral and choral credentials.

HCS were joined by the Lea Singers, who handled their own largely separate brief extremely well throughout, along with an orchestra of hand-picked freelance musicians, and three magnificent soloists – Joshua Ellicott (tenor) as Gerontius, Yvonne Howard (soprano) as the Angel and Matthew Brook (bass) as the Priest and Angel of Agony. In the prelude's lengthy, elaborate exposition of the main themes, the orchestra played impeccably, while Goodson looked as comfortable as any seasoned conductor in that role. Elgar's favoured violas excelled and the principal produced a fine solo.

Part one alternated between agony and ecstasy in an exchange between Gerontius and the Assistants, culminating in Gerontius's death. Joshua Ellicott, dominating with his commanding voice, was complemented by the chorus's well-honed sound quality, while the orchestra was exceptionally sensitive in the "pain" section. Matthew Brook's arrival as the Priest

marked a mood change as timps pounded ominously and the entire stage gave full throttle to Gerontius's march to the next world.

Part two opened in a reflective change of mood (Soul of Gerontius) in contrast to the Demons section and, much later, Purgatory itself. As the chorus rested, Yvonne Howard (Angel) engaged with the Joshua Ellicott (Soul) in a glorious duet, while cellos and violas provided a soothing modicum of calm. The Demons, a frenetic and complex fugue, interwoven with the chorus, was held brilliantly together. One of several epic climaxes, choreographed with perfect timing by Goodson, occurred at the words "Praise to the Holiest", where the chorus came into their own. This was matched further on by the tremendous entry at "Take me away" – a carefully managed moment of silence broken by a massive percussive crash. Further excellent singing by the chorus in Souls in Purgatory and stunning contributions from Yvonne Howard signalled a gradual winding down to some extraordinary Elgar writing and a serene, optimistic finale.

A plan for total quality had been realised in every detail – much of this down to Henley Choral Society's gifted, now departing conductor, who will clearly go far. His legacy of significantly improved vocal technique and children's choirs will hopefully endure.

Trevor Howell, The Henley Standard

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