

NOTES

The Newsletter of the Formby Choral Society

No. 15 April 2010

President-Stephen Threlfall

Conductor-David Holroyd

Chairman Mike Fletcher's Message to Members.

Well, this year appears to have flown by for me since election as Chairman. In such a short space of time I am already letting you know via the Newsletter that rehearsals will end after the May concert (and I am so looking forward to The Creation) for the summer break before we return on Wednesday 1st September.

The Verdi Requiem at the Philharmonic Hall seems to have been very well received and I hope you enjoyed the experience as much as I did. We should all be grateful for the enthusiasm of the various Committees, sub-groups and individuals who work very hard to ensure that we can enjoy the best of music with professional soloists and musicians; and for the motivation and drive of our conductor and the enthusiasm, skill and humour of our accompanist. We are very fortunate. Welcome, too, to the influx of new members in the third and final part of the season. Numbers are such that the Committee may have to review new membership criteria in the coming season. Finally, I do hope to see you at the Annual Dinner on 26th May at Don Luigi's. Last year's dinner proved so successful that we are going there again! Enjoy Creation and then the summer break and come back refreshed for some wonderful music next season - and a probable return to the Philharmonic Hall in 2011 as we switch the 2-yearly cycle- watch this space!

Anna Goodband, one of our 'new influx', writes about her first term with FCS

When Martin asked me to write about my first term experiences with Formby Choral Society I was more than willing, until I found out I had to write 300 words and have it completed in three days! That said I have no excuse as the server is down at work and the only things I can access are the internet and *word*.

So here it is in its full glory: 'My first term at Formby Choral Society.'....

I moved back to Liverpool nearly three years ago and thought about joining a choir. I had been a member of Bradford Choral Society and growing up in Liverpool years before, I had belonged to various church, school and university choirs. But I had a baby and another one on the way so I put it to the back of my mind. Then last October I started a new job and a colleague Emma and I got talking about choirs. We'd heard about Formby Choral Society and I had been along to one of their concerts but we thought it might be a bit too good for us or a bit challenging.

Anyway after a lot of thought Emma phoned up Shirley and we went along to a rehearsal for the Christmas concert. The programme was very full and varied and a little daunting but everyone was extremely supportive especially the other second sopranos who helped us along!

Our audition was something of a short lived stress as I hadn't opened my e-mails that week so I arrived to find we had to sing alone. David was extremely forgiving and supportive and let me stay in the choir.

It was a real honour to discover after Christmas we were to perform Verdi's Requiem at the Philharmonic. I had never sung it before but again found that others were more than willing to support me and lend me the CD. After that all my car journeys were punctuated with the sounds of Verdi.

The concert was a wonderful experience which I am truly proud and honoured to have been part of. I have found the choir both

News of a FCS 'old girl'.

Earlier this year, several members of FCS went to hear Stockport Choral Society perform Mozart's *Requiem* because **Sarah Platt**, daughter of Muriel, one of our Vice-Presidents, was the soprano soloist. Sarah was a member of FCS whilst at Merchant Taylors' Girls School and after doing a physics degree in Manchester spent several years as Head of Science at the International School in Rome. Sarah continued singing in and around Rome as a member of the Campion Quartet and every summer has been part of the St Endellion Festival with Richard Hicox.

Sarah has now decided to concentrate on singing and is currently studying at the Birmingham Conservatoire.

Who knows-perhaps she will follow in the footsteps of Andrew Greenan, an 'old boy' of FCS, and return to Formby as a soloist rather than as a choir member. But obviously not as Elijah.....!

Joys to come:

- **November 13th 2010. Rossini *Petite Messe Solonelle***
- **March 2011 See Chairman, above.**
- **Summer 2011 Puccini *Messa di Gloria* plus shorter works**
- **November 2011 Handel *Messiah***
- **March 2012 Bach *B minor Mass***

The Movers and Shakers

In this edition of the Newsletter, Mike Smithson, leader of our Repertoire Group, tells us something of his musical background.

I grew up in York. When I was about 8 my older sister, who had been having piano lessons for a couple of years, showed me how to play some simple tunes. My Dad heard us and said to me "Would you like to have piano lessons yourself?" "Yes please", I said and that's how my interest in music started (I remember my sister sulking because she wasn't going to be allowed to teach me the piano). My first introduction to singing, though, wasn't until a little later when I started grammar school. All the first-year boys were encouraged to take part in the end-of-year concert which was mostly choral singing with a few instrumental solos. That was also where I gave my first public piano performance which almost ended in disaster. Being as nervous as I'd ever been in my life I went into "auto pilot" and then suddenly ground to a halt when I couldn't remember what came next. I remember a feeling of total panic as I couldn't find my place on the page and was unable to carry on. Eventually I did get going again and finished to sympathetic, if not rapturous, applause. There's a reel-to-reel recording of that somewhere and the pause is about 3 seconds but at the time felt like an eternity. Back to the singing. After that concert anyone with any ability or interest in carrying on was invited to join the choir which was about 40 strong (including a few teachers) and over the years I was there we put on a number of the major choral works including Mozart's Requiem, Haydn's Theresa Mass and Orff's Carmina Burana. We also premiered a piece by Peter Maxwell Davis conducted by the composer. I can't remember what it was called and I couldn't find anything that looked familiar on the web so it probably hasn't survived as one of the masterpieces of the 20th century! Additionally we got to sing in York Minster twice a year, for the School Founders Day Service and the Carol Service. My music teacher was inspirational and I would have loved to have gone on and done A-level music but it didn't fit with the sciences and mathematics which I never had any doubt were what I wanted to study. After leaving school I went to university to study physics. I joined the chorus and orchestra (did I mention I also learned the trumpet at school) and later, as a post-graduate student, was asked to join the university chamber choir. That was great fun and we had a number of memorable tours both in the UK and abroad. It was also where I met my future wife, Ros. We'd known each other for a while before we got together but with immaculate timing I'd just accepted a 2-year post in the USA. Fortunately for me, with the help of two or three trips home, some astronomical phone bills and a visit by Ros, we managed to stay together. For some reason though, while I was there I didn't get involved with any music and I still don't know why. On my return home in 1987 there was some involvement with the old university chamber choir but that soon fizzled out (too much travelling to rehearsals) and a short stint with the Liverpool Renaissance Music Group (too much of the same stuff), but it was over 10 years later when it really got started again. Ros and I had been saying to each other how nice it would be to start singing again and to that end we went to hear a local music society with a view to joining. I can't remember the programme but they were truly abysmal. Ros wanted to leave at the interval but I said we ought to stay for the second half in case it was just a "blip" and that things might improve. Ros was right. Needless to say we decided not to join.

It was a couple of years later after doing the weekly shop at Tesco in Southport that I saw an advert for a choral concert. It was pure chance that I noticed it, not a glossy poster but a hand-written postcard – 21st November 1998, Formby Choral Society, Mozart and Rutter Requiems, Holy Trinity Church, Formby. Ros phoned to book some tickets and we turned up without great expectations after our experience with the other local choir and orchestra. But, my goodness, I knew after just a few bars of that magical orchestral opening to Mozart's Requiem that this was going to be something special. And it was. We joined the following week, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Some internet gleanings about Creation.

..he was 18 when Bach died, just before the close of the baroque era and, with the classical in between, 72 when Beethoven's Eroica ushered in the Romantic.

..Haydn alone has the secret both of making me smile and of touching my innermost soul (Mozart)

.. *Creation, Seasons* and the last 6 masses were all composed in the last 10 years of his life..during the last years of his life, his mind dwelt more on the future than on his own time and he was absorbed in thoughts as to what impression his works would make on posterity.

.. during his first visit to London, he attended one of the great Handel festivals, was overwhelmed by the experience and resolved to write an oratorio that would be worthy of Handel's supreme examples, such as *Israel in Egypt*

..after being 'tossed out on the streets of Vienna' from the Cathedral Choir after his voice changed, a typical day would include violin playing at 6.30 morning mass, tenor singing in Cathedral choir at a later mass, teaching, composition, practice, evening orchestral playing or playing in the streets for cash with parties of other musicians.

..his legs were too short, he had a fiery look in his eyes, his face was scarred by smallpox and he had a hawk-like nose.

.. he could read in several languages.

..England made him wealthy and set the seal on his international fame.

..librettist Van Swieten was not fluent in English (really??)