

NOTES

The Newsletter of the Formby Choral Society
No 13 September 2009

President-Stephen Threlfall

Conductor-David Holroyd

The Last Word...

My final message as chairman – where have the years gone?

I thought the summer concert was huge fun and certainly a breakaway from our usual programme. I bet Neil Baker, our soloist, hadn't banked on strolling round Our Lady's church under a rainbow umbrella while it 'rained and rained and rained and rained and rained'! Very jolly. And the boys from Merchant Taylors' did themselves proud in the *Benedicite* and were a credit to David and the school. I hope those who attended the end of season dinner enjoyed the occasion as much as I did. I think Don Luigi's did a great job getting us all fed so efficiently. My orchid is thriving on neglect; and still flowering, David! Thank you again.

Thank you too to everyone for all your friendship and support during my period as chairman; it is great to be able to pass the society on in such great shape. I wish my successor as many good times as I have had.

Shirlev Potter

Our 2009/10 Season.

David Holroyd is looking forward to a feast of 'simply divine music'.

Another season dawns. I started in the spring of 1991 and that autumn we had the choir's Silver Jubilee concert. And now, here we are, two years on from the Ruby Anniversary season.

In that time, a great deal of wonderful music has resounded around Holy Trinity Church Hall each Wednesday but, taking the coming season as a whole, I don't think there has been one with quite such simply divine music all in one year.

It might not be the most adventurous year-but our public does not necessarily want much unusual stuff. Your family and friends come to support you singing what they like; and we have to remember that!

We start off the year celebrating a number of anniversaries. 2009 marks the 350th anniversary of Purcell's birth, the 250th of Handel's death and the 200th of Haydn's death and of Mendessohn's birth. (Actually, realizing last night the amount of music we have to get through for November, I think we may have to give the Mendelssohn a miss!).

The Purcell *Funeral Sentences* are dramatic and powerful-especially the brass canzonas which originally accompanied the procession of the cortege into Westminster Abbey. However, we're playing down the title of the work in case it puts off any potential audience!! The piece is only short, and undeniably sombre, but very beautiful. But better the audience find that out once they are in Our Lady's.!!

The Haydn *Paukenmesse* is characteristically energetic and very singable whilst the Handel Coronation Anthems are also a delight. In the planning stage, someone said "oh, we mustn't sing Zadok"-to which the response (or at least my response) was "but we must sing Zadok-it's the one the audience will know and like the best". So we are including Zadok!

"Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat".(But we're not having goose this year in this house because last year it really wasn't all it was cracked up to be. That being said, it provided fat for fantastic roast potatoes for about 6 months). Which means carols, of course. Let's put on a good show, even though you might think "it's just carols"-because the audience really likes the concert and it is an important part of the Village Christmas.

Then we are back at "the Phil" with Joseph Green's little *Requiem* (who's he?...think about it a bit). So soon it seems, yet it will be two years since the spectacular Armed man concert. I've already started psyching up the kids into what a fantastic experience this will be-and we are only back at school today-and I'm sure you're also "up for it".

And to finish the season, something very different, but utterly beautiful-Haydn's *Creation*. Not just a contrast to the Verdi, but also a different format for the summer concert. And "why not?" I say. It's a lovely work; you should be able to attract an audience and whilst it may not involve youngsters as we normally do in this concert, we've certainly not been missing them out recently what with last summer's *Benedicite* and Noah and this Christmas and next March. I think our charitable status is safe.

I hope you enjoy the season. I know I will.

FCS's 'Strolling Singers' on the road again.

Ann Deacon reports on Rutter at the Albert Hall.

July dawned once again and it was time for the 'Stalwart Strolling Singers' (we'll go anywhere to sing) of FCS to hit the streets of London again.

A good journey then picnic in the British Library forecourt (where else?) preceded booking into our hotel at King's Cross. It was then time to have some intellectual stimulus at an art gallery. Some visited the Royal Academy while others went to the National Portrait Gallery. We also had a chance to see what or who was on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. A few of us popped into St Martin in the Fields (to finish Marge's education) and were rewarded with a small string orchestra rehearsing Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. It was an oasis in the midst of the hustle and bustle outside. An excellent meal was followed by a visit to the New London Theatre for a performance of 'War Horse', a play based on the children's book by Michael Morpurgo. The manipulation of the life sized horse puppets was just incredible. Two birds being flown around were reminiscent of Captain Noah-and it did rain afterwards!

Next morning it was off on the No 10 bus to the Albert Hall to join the others making up the choir of 1952 singers from all over the country and even some from the Balearics. John Rutter was our conductor and introduced us to some new musical terms. One, which was very appealing and worked well, was 'Penguin'. He leant forward, arms bent but outstretched, palms facing each other and when he straightened up, his arms went up and that was our cut-off. It worked well. He also asked us to 'refresh' each repeated note to prevent us from going flat. We rehearsed the Vaughan Williams version of the Hundredth Psalm which was a good exercise in sight reading for us having never sung it before. An interesting piece with a few quite tricky bits.

Then it was the 'Requiem'. He was very patient even when the choir went flat and it was amazing how quickly time passed. Lunch time gave us the opportunity to soak up some sun in the park as well as taking in another exhibition in the Serpentine Gallery, Jeff Koons' 'Popeye' series. The models looked as if they were plastic blow up kids' toys but in fact were cast aluminium. There was a great temptation to touch them-but we held back. The orchestra joined us for the afternoon session together with the delightful soprano soloist, Mary Bevan. Another musical term was introduced by John Rutter to the orchestra-'juicy fruity'. Not an Italian term in sight!

Another delicious meal followed before a stroll back to the Albert Hall for the concert. There was a good sized audience which is always rewarding. Following the Vaughan Williams, the orchestra played Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow* and this was followed by a wonderful young violinist, Thomas Gould. Playing *The Lark Ascending*. This was just magical. His interpretation was simple but wonderful. Both audience and choir were silent and mesmerised, an amazing moment in such large surroundings. The *English Folk Song Suite*, again by Vaughan Williams, completed the first half. Wonderful music for a summer evening. The *Requiem* went well but many in the audience had not been educated as to when to applaud and rather spoil the mood in place by applauding after each movement. I guess one could say that at least they enjoyed it.

It was then back to the hotel for a nightcap and a chat before falling into bed. Monday morning dawned and making the most of our situation some of us popped into St Pancras station for coffee in the champagne bar-we're saving the champagne till next year. Some of us went to the Henry VIII exhibition while others saw the Codex Sinaiticus, both in the British Library. We do make the most of our time.

All too soon it was the parting of the ways as a few of our group were travelling elsewhere while for the rest of us it was back home.

Next year it will be the tenth anniversary of our London trips and it would seem that Karl Jenkins has knowledge of this as he is composing a piece which will have its World Premier at the concert.

Thanks to Beatrice and Ian Macintosh for booking train and theatre tickets and to Irene for booking our seats at the Albert Hall which were great.