

## For the Diary

### Concerts

**Saturday 21 January 2017 at 7:30 pm**  
**St Mary's Church, Church Street,**  
**Warwick**

Performing Verdi's Requiem at the  
 Amnesty International Concert

**Saturday 13 May 2017 at 7:30 pm**     **St**  
**Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick**

Performing Puccini's Missa di Gloria and  
 Opera Choruses

### Social

**Friday 3 February 2017 at 7:00 pm**  
**Skittles Night at Stoneleigh Deer Park**  
**Golf Club**

Tickets are £11 each and include food,  
 fun. And a raffle. Partners, and other  
 guests are welcome to attend. Tickets  
 are now available from one of the Social  
 Committee members.

**Saturday 20 May 2017 from 2:00 to 4:30**  
**pm Plant Sale**

There will also be bring and buy  
 refreshments. More details in the next  
 newsletter.

**Sunday 2 July 2017 Sunday lunch at the**  
**Windmill, just past the Allesley exit**  
**of the A45 towards Birmingham**

Price for tickets will be £15 for a three-  
 course lunch. Partners, guests, visitors are  
 all welcome and there will be a raffle and a  
 quiz

## Rehearsals

We rehearse every Thursday evening from  
 October to July at Quinton Park Baptist  
 Church Hall, Coventry



## From the Chair

Last year members of the choir were asked to take part in a short survey about the Coventry Philharmonic. The survey results were analysed and one of the many great suggestions was that we should have a regular newsletter. We are keen to act on your suggestions and this newsletter is our first step.

The Membership Survey Summary of Results compiled by Chris Carpenter forms a supplement to this newsletter and makes very interesting reading. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy our first issue and look forward to hearing your suggestions for future content.

**John Atkins**

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## Useful Information

### Committee Members

John Atkins (Chair), Peter Snaith (Secretary), John Thompson (Treasurer), Celia Lewis (Membership), Henry Whitney (Librarian), Neil Kingdon, Clare Samson, Margaret Parkinson, Hilary Ward, Rachael Bermingham, Sheila Cowen, Heather Payne, Margaret Jakiel

**Publicity** - Heather Payne, Margaret Jakiel

**Social Committee** - Sheila Cowen (Chair), Glenda Way, Jay Durrant, Liz Chester, Margaret Thompson, Hilary Ward

### “Buddies”

In the survey, you suggested that when a new member joins us we should take particular care to ensure they're made welcome. We've therefore decided to start a “buddy system” as follows. When someone new comes along to Choir we'll take an email and phone number from them and ask an existing Choir member to look after them for their first rehearsal – in particular, organising music and making sure they get a cup of tea etc. Then the “buddy” will contact them during the subsequent week or so to ask if they enjoyed it, if they need any questions answered, etc. Assuming they come for a second week the buddy can welcome them and see they are still all right.

**We're looking for volunteers for buddies – we suggest three each from Sopranos and Altos and two from Tenors and Basses – so do write to us if you would like to volunteer.** (This effectively replaces the Section Leader role that some of you may remember.) No fixed term of office envisaged – you can always step down when you have done enough.

Please speak to any Committee member or email [contact.cps@covphilchoir.org.uk](mailto:contact.cps@covphilchoir.org.uk) if you'd be prepared to help with this.

## The Sound of Music

Around the third week in August every year 60-80 singers come together, supported by a team of music professionals, at Schloss Zell an der Pram (<http://www.schloss-zell.at/>).

Each year the whole group joins in a major work, which is performed with orchestra on Saturday evening at the end of the course, four chamber choirs (including a womens' choir and a jazz group) work separately on their own repertoire to be performed also at the Saturday concert.

As well as the choral singing, the event offers one-to-one singing coaching, a “LiederAbend” for those who want to perform pieces of their own choosing (professional accompanist provided) and an informal “Karaoke Abend” with live accompaniment.

The Schloss offers a large auditorium for performances, a number of smaller rooms for group working, dining room, a bar and accommodation for most of the attendees. It's set in the picturesque small village of Zell an der Pram, midway between Linz and Passau. On Wednesdays there is a free afternoon for sight-seeing (Passau is reachable by train or car). There are cycling and walking routes round about. It's run as an educational facility by the Austrian Government.

The attendees and professional staff are welcoming and friendly and the “social” side of the choir week is very important. Most of the attendees are from Austria and Southern Germany. For the social part of the week, English is entirely possible for conversation, but for the working sessions German is essential (conductors and tutors always work in German, although the repertoire will be the usual mixture of Latin, German, English and other European languages; we sang some Russian in 2016).

If you think you might like to know more or may be interested to join a tour I'm happy to give more information. You'll find me in the back row of the basses.

**Dave Weir**

## Singing Experiences

My earliest singing dates back to primary school. I had joined the primary school choir club in Year 5, and I had even played the role of Fagin in the production of "Oliver!" I still remember the dressing gown as part of my costume.

I think my musical ear really began to flourish when I was in secondary school, particularly with the various musical concerts and productions that would be held in the school's very own theatre. One I still remember fondly was the production of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory". Mind you, I was only in year 7 then, so I didn't really get much of a major role. But I did play the lead Oompa Loompa! The only problem was that the other Oompa Loompas relied on me for most of the singing parts, and I managed to lose most of my voice!

I had fantastic fun singing with the Bel Canto choir and in the musical productions in secondary school. I think my favourite will still always be Bussy Malone, where I played an energetic radio announcer, and a quirky hand puppet. And it was during my time at secondary school that I made my audition for the Hertfordshire County Youth Choir. I remember the audition going rather well, and the examiners asking why I hadn't come sooner.

And whilst I think about the HCYC, it made me think of all the fun tours I went on as well. One such tour was to Russia when I was in year 9. We had stayed at a nice hotel in St. Petersburg, and had a lovely time performing small concerts in local places, seeing all the sights, and even walking on the frozen Baltic Sea. One tour I still remember was to Holland. We were invited to help perform at a local church service, but we weren't able to sing because we didn't know the melody. And neither did the churchgoers.

By the time I had reached year 13 for my A-Levels, I decided to drop AS-Music, since I wanted to focus more on the academic subjects, and keep music as a hobby. It was around then that I started doing some more

music making myself. I was able to get a hold of music-making software and some decent microphones as well, and most of it ends up going onto my Youtube channel. Most of the work is parody songs, but I somehow always get those funny little ideas for song changes. Maybe that's why I like Weird Al Yankovic.

And when I started heading off to University in 2011, I was still able to join in with the HCYC, and we sung some fantastic songs at some simply superb concerts. Some songs still stick in my mind like; "Ezekiel saw the Wheel", "La Lluvia" and even the entirety of "The Armed Man". However, when I turned 21, I knew that my time was up. I was now too old to re-join the HCYC, but I hope they still get to sing some amazing pieces.

After my graduation things became a little cloudy in terms of music. I was doing a lot of part-time work, trying to get some essential experience so I could get a better job. Trouble is that most of the work was in warehousing, which is very boring, and always mentally drained me each day.

Then came an interview in March 2016, for a company called Tata Technologies. I remember going all the way up to Leamington Spa to a nice lodge, heading to the meeting room, and giving my presentation for the first part of the interview with graphics which I had made myself. - I was accepted into their graduate scheme.

So now I have moved up to Coventry in a nice little flat with a good job, and I think I was very fortunate in joining the Philharmonic Choir. Not only do I get to take part in some joyous singing, but also get to hear some fantastic choral pieces performed by some great and friendly singers as well.

**Richard White**

## Coventry Philharmonic Choir Membership Survey Summary of Results

The questionnaire was given to choir members at rehearsals on October 27<sup>th</sup> and November 3, 2016. Eighty-five completed questionnaires were returned (111 distributed) resulting in a very good response rate of 77%.

Eighty nine percent of us felt that we were provided with sufficient information about the choir activities but a larger percentage could *not* identify the committee members (24%) or had their contact details (18%). Most of us (90%) receive information by email but more than half (59%) do *not* access the choir members' Facebook page. A significant majority (81%) are *not* registered on Twitter and, of those that *are* registered, 10% do *not* follow the choir members' Tweets'. The choir website is used as a source of information by 71% of us but a few people did not know the website existed or how to access the members page, and thought that a password was necessary. The main suggestion to improve information sharing with members was a quarterly Newsletter and encourage access to the website.

Sixty-five percent of us indicated that we *usually* borrowed music scores for concerts and 96% understood the arrangements for collecting and returning scores.

A Likert Scale (1-6) was used to determine degree of satisfaction (1=very dissatisfied and 6=completely satisfied). Eighty one percent of us indicated that we were completely (42%) or almost completely satisfied (39%) with the Cheylesmore rehearsal location. No one suggested they were dissatisfied, however, three individuals felt the room was 'too hot'. Similarly, most of us (86%) were completely or almost completely satisfied, and 16% generally satisfied, with the rehearsal arrangements with no one indicating dissatisfaction.

Sixty-two percent of us were completely or almost completely satisfied with St Mary's Church, Warwick as the concert location and a further 33% were generally satisfied. No

one indicated that they were dissatisfied. Comments about alternative concert locations yielded a number of suggestions and there was a general sense that 'it would be nice to perform in Coventry.' Most of us (88%) knew who to contact about obtaining and paying for tickets.

Seventy of us were motivated to comment on what we valued most about being a member of choir. These comments were overwhelmingly positive and were grouped into the following four themes:

- Socializing with friendly like minded people
- The opportunity to sing! The joy and health benefits of singing with others. Exposure to lovely and diverse music and fantastic musicians
- Learning to sing better and meeting the challenge of learning and practicing new music. Improving one's own singing and musical skills and expertise. Capitalizing on the choral expertise of others in the choir and the Director.
- Pride in the choir, the fantastic sound we make together, the high standards established by the choir, the great performances.

Some diverse suggestions for fund raising for the Coventry Philharmonic Society e.g. car boot or table sales, Christmas cards, pub caroling, singing marathons, cake and other goods sales, music related jewelry to sell etc. These will provide food for thought for the committees!

In summary, we are very grateful to all of you who took the time to complete the questionnaire. Overall, the results reflect how positive and committed most of us are to the choir and the pleasure we experience through singing and interaction with other members. The results have highlighted a number of areas where actions can be taken and the choir committees will be addressing these. If anyone would like more details about the survey please contact Chris Carpenter at [carpenter410@btinternet.com](mailto:carpenter410@btinternet.com).