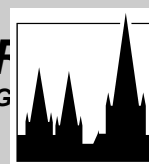


THREE SPIRES SINGERS & ORCHESTRA

NEWSLETTER TO SPONSORS, FRIENDS, ORCHESTRA MEMBERS & SINGERS



September 2006

Musical Director

It is always exciting at the start of a new season to reflect on the previous year's concerts and to look forward to the musical treasures ahead.

Last year included a very successful appearance in the Hall for Cornwall, marred only by a little competition from a band out on the street. You will be interested to know that this was much more obvious to the choir than it was to the orchestra and conductor! The acoustic of the Hall is always a challenge, but some clever use of the microphone system enabled a convincing account of Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* to be given.

The choir very much enjoyed their guest appearance with the cathedral choir for last December's Christmas concert in the cathedral and I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to present some of the items in that programme with both choirs combined. We shall hope to repeat this format in a future year, as I'm sure you will agree that it made for a very special pre-Christmas evening.

I was very sad to have been unwell at the time of the anniversary concert in March of Brahms' *Requiem* and *Fourth Symphony*. It is a good opportunity for me here to be able to pay tribute to our regular rehearsal accompanist, Paul Comeau (himself also a soloist and composer of wide-spread reputation) who stood in as conductor for this concert with only a few days' notice. I know that the evening was well-received and I am very grateful to Paul for being willing to help out in this way.

We all very much enjoyed the all-Mozart summer concert marking that particular anniversary and it was super to see a bigger-than-expected audience. Summer can often see a drop in numbers, so thank you for supporting the choir on that magical evening. The wonderful soprano voice of Elizabeth Weisberg stays in my mind as possibly the highlight of the concert. We very much hope that Elizabeth will pay a return visit to Truro in the very near future.

Rehearsals have already started for the 21 October 2006 performance of Haydn's *Creation*. This classic work has many wonderful moments of colour and fun, as well as some more profound writing and I hope you will be able to come and listen to it. Our second concert this term will be on 9 December with a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, the first time for the choir since 2002 and a work which always attracts a large audience. This relatively popular run of programmes should help us to establish a good financial basis for our Spring concert of Bach's epic *St Matthew Passion*, to which we look forward with eager anticipation. Finally, next summer we shall be performing one of Handel's lesser-known but nonetheless superb oratorios, *Judas Maccabeus*. I do hope you will enjoy coming to these concerts, all of which will be in Truro Cathedral, and hope that you will be able to encourage your music-loving friends to come too.

Robert Sharpe

Patrons & Friends

Matters Financial

The financial year for the choir ended on 31 July 2006. The accounts for the year show that we had a surplus of receipts over payments for the year of £145. This is on a receipts and payments basis and is not adjusted for debtors and creditors. If the appropriate adjustment is carried out, the results for the year show a deficit of £894.

Attendance at concerts has been good this year, especially in the Hall for Cornwall and at Christmas and this is reflected in the ticket income.

We budget carefully for each concert and keep costs as low as is possible, while still maintaining the quality of performance that audiences have come to expect. Summer 2006 saw a further increase in the charges from the Cathedral.

In 2004/05 we were fortunate to receive a one-off donation of £4,000 from the Three Spires Foundation. We cannot continue to operate with a deficit each year and in an effort to continue to offer the range of programmes we currently perform, choir members have been asked to pay subscriptions of £84 as a minimum, with larger donations gratefully received. To enable members to spread the cost of increased subscriptions, it is now possible to set up a monthly standing order.

We must record our thanks to Forgotten Houses, Hawthorne Dene Hotel and Mr & Mrs Maberly for their valuable and valued sponsorship. Thanks also to all our Friends and Patrons who so generously continue to support our concerts. We are always delighted to welcome new sponsors, Friends and Patrons to ensure that we can continue to offer such exciting programmes.

Sheelagh Jenkins

Financial Statement for 2005 – 2006

Receipts and payments account presented to and approved at the AGM on 4 September 2006

		2006		2005	
		£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS					
Members subscriptions		7,084		6,742	
Patrons subscriptions		1,200		1,325	
Friends subscriptions		1,720		1,519	
Tax refunds		<u>2,637</u>		<u>2,452</u>	
			12,641		12,038
Bank interest gross			176		142
Concert tickets and programmes (net of HfC commission)			24,145		20,100
Sponsorship	Forgotten Houses	1,250			1,000
	Hawthorne Dene Hotel	100			100
	Mr & Mrs Maberley	<u>-</u>			500
			1,350		
Donations (including gift aid refunds)	Various	782			43
	Three Spires Foundation	<u>-</u>			4,000
			782		
Sale of music			146		-
Hire of music (inc £122 to third party)			246		-
Sale of CDs			102		898
Fund raising - raffles, Benallack etc			2,371		1,042
Further Education and Training Aid			<u>-</u>		<u>1,700</u>
Total receipts			<u>41,959</u>		<u>41,563</u>
PAYMENTS					
Rehearsals	Fees	3,599		3,202	
	Accommodation	<u>938</u>		<u>926</u>	
			4,537		4,128
Concerts	Conductor	2,030		2,506	
	Orchestra, music and instruments	13,870		14,136	
	Soloists	4,260		4,170	
	Accommodation	7,800		6,909	
	PRS	551		151	
	Advertising	3,010		3,395	
	Printing, tickets etc	3,672		2,368	
	Equipment costs	495		526	
	Music hiring	134		328	
	Music purchase	<u>146</u>		<u>8</u>	
			35,968		34,497
Purchase of CDs			-		1,114
Administration etc			1,245		1,185
Other expenditure			<u>64</u>		<u>-</u>
Total payments			<u>41,814</u>		<u>40,924</u>
Excess of receipts over payments			<u>145</u>		<u>639</u>

For your future musical delight

Chairman

Looking back in my diary at all the references to Three Spires Singers, I was amazed to discover that there were only five months in the year when there wasn't an opportunity for a member of this choir to sing in a concert. In case you've forgotten, we began the year with a dash to Gloucester for a performance by the combined choirs of Verdi's *Requiem*, followed by our somewhat daunting venture the following month to the Hall for Cornwall for Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* and then there was a highly successful Christmas Concert in December. The New Year began swiftly with a fundraiser, ending with an informal concert with Paul Spicer, Brahms' *Requiem* in March and finally a small breather between Mozart in June and then for some of us, the schools concert in July, which was also a memorable occasion.

Obviously, not all of us chose to sing in them all but I think it is significant that we are not only promoting ourselves as a choir with extremely high standards but are aware of the whole concert scene around us in the South West, that we are open to new ideas and opportunities and are aware of the need to broaden our base if necessary.

I see much of my role as Chairman as keeping up these contacts, being aware of what other choirs are doing and looking for new opportunities – even singing on the new King Harry Ferry – the eighth concert! A bit of a laugh - but we have a new sponsor as a result.

The combined choirs leaflet which we initiated last year has proved a success and has resulted in regular meetings with Truro Choral and St Mary's Singers, as at the end of the day we share much of the same audience. Camilla has been working on one for the coming season.

Through the concerts this year, many of us have had the opportunity to sing with and network with members of Gloucester Choral Society and others in the South West, St Mary's Singers, the choristers in the cathedral (always a pleasure), young singers from the schools in our area and many enthusiasts who joined in the Paul Spicer day in January. The overall effect of this is to encourage more people of all ages to come to our concerts and has had a very positive effect on our membership numbers. Although inevitably we lose a few people each year, Penny I am sure would confirm that she is regularly contacted by people wishing to join us, particularly after concerts and especially after the Come and Sing Day. Such was the enthusiasm for this from all sides, including Paul Spicer - and the financial gain! - that I have booked another day with him on 13 January 2007, when we hope to increase the numbers, make even more cakes and sing the *Nelson Mass*. In the same way, the response to our Christmas concert from the audience was incredibly positive and we are set to do this again, which solves our problem of the Cathedral not allowing us to do a December concert of our own.

As you can imagine this has been a bit of a whirlwind for the Committee and as always, I am indebted to their fantastic enthusiastic support, especially this year as I was unable to be around very much in the Spring. I remember when I took over from Laura that she said there was really nothing much to do as Chairman and although I didn't really believe her, it has certainly been true that the concert organisation seems to run like a well-oiled machine these days and with a smile – what a difference that makes and how much the Cathedral felt like an old friend after the organisational tangles of the Hall for

Cornwall. (This is not to say that we won't do another concert there sometime in the future.)

It has not been all a bed of roses, as I know you are all aware and I think we as a committee have become increasingly conscious of the importance of keeping every choir member aware of plans and particularly financial realities. It is a constant challenge and anxiety to get the largest possible audiences for our concerts and particularly this past year with such a demanding programme – the Hall for Cornwall to fill, the pressure of the 25th anniversary and the question of whether we should even do a summer concert at all. On top of that, there are always personal pressures and although we have come out from it all successfully, I know it was very sad for Robert not to be with us in March. I would like to thank both Robert and Paul once again for their excellent musicianship and constant support.

I hope all this emphasises the strength of feeling within the committee that we fundamentally believe in Three Spires as a choir that should maintain high professional standards, provide if at all possible four orchestral concerts a year and find the best soloists and players from inside or outside the County. At the end of the day, it is often a soloist who can make or break a concert – I personally remember Ruth Holton in the Verdi and our soprano Elizabeth Weisberg in the Summer. The audience remember them too and that's what makes them return. This means a degree of financial security and the committee and I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the response to our appeal at the end of the summer. As you know, we have chewed this over at great length but I think we have been proved right in believing that many of you feel very strongly about the continuance of this choir in its present form and that it is a charity well worth supporting as well as you are individually able to do so. Thank you: because of that support, Robert and the committee have been able to plan a full and exciting programme for the coming year.

So many people have helped out this year in practical ways, from making cakes, serving teas, offering accommodation, helping out with organising the seating etc in the cathedral, selling tickets, fetching soloists etc and even opening their garden! Many, many thanks to all of you and please continue to contribute, however small the effort involved – it always counts. Do give us your ideas.

I am looking forward this year to new faces joining the committee as much as is possible. There must be loads of talent in publicity, web site design and even public speaking lurking amongst you! After our first committee meeting, we will be coming back to you for help.

Finally, I promised that I would find a new President for us and it seems that we may have Richard Hickox back with us - so watch this space.

Caroline Johnson