

THREE SPIRES SINGERS

NEWSLETTER TO SPONSORS, PATRONS, FRIENDS,
ORCHESTRA MEMBERS AND SINGERS

September 2007



Three Spires Singers Website

After some four years of financial doubts, technophobia, indecision and sometimes hiding under the bedclothes, a choir website has emerged. It has, frankly, felt like giving birth at times.

Delivery was eventually assisted, in an unlikely way: by a teenage boy, who has a bit of a future as a website-midwife ahead of him. Josh Bonfield is fifteen years of age, still at school and already runs his own webdesign company, JBuk Design. He was discovered by Caroline in the course of her work and he has stepped in and sorted what the rest of us could neither afford to do nor understand how to do.

The website finally came into being and was pronounced 'live' on Tuesday 11 September – not a very auspicious date! – and all seems to be well. We hope to develop it further in future but for now, log on to www.threespiresingers.org.uk to view the choir in full colour and see details of future concerts. The site includes a link to Hall for Cornwall's online booking page.

Camilla Comeau

Musical Director

As we arrive once again at the start of a new season, it is interesting to reflect on last year and on the forthcoming Three Spires concerts. Whilst doing so, I would like to thank all of the choir for their hard work and commitment - no amount of planning and rehearsal can make up for a lack of that and we are very lucky to have such wonderful members. It goes without saying too, that our committee under the leadership of the chairman, Caroline Johnson, is a wonderful group of very devoted and hard-working people.

We began last year with two classic works: Haydn's *Creation* in the autumn, and Handel's *Messiah* at Christmas. Both attracted large audiences and for many new young members of the choir it was the first time of performing these works. This is something it's easy for the more expert and experienced older members to forget, but this passing on of musical knowledge is an important part of a living choir. We were particularly pleased with the superb soloists in the *Creation* concert, including Dawid Kimburg and David Webb who both have strong links with the cathedral now.

For the March concert, it was a great privilege to conduct Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, where we also benefited immeasurably from the superb talent of Nicholas Hurndall Smith as Evangelist. The divided Three Spires chorus and two orchestras were joined by the cathedral choristers for the opening (and ending) of Part One, to great aural effect in the Cathedral's resonant acoustic. It was a great pleasure for me to direct this performance and I do hope we shall be able to afford to present the work again before not too long (it is a large financial undertaking!).

During the summer term, we made two trips out of Truro to Penzance and Bodmin where we performed Rachmaninov's *Russian Vespers* on two consecutive weeks. The choir much enjoyed a summer trip out of Truro and we plan to do a similar, single, concert next year. I think the considerable challenges of Rachmaninov's work were enjoyed by the choir but we were all able to see why this work is nearly always performed by professional singers requiring as it does huge stamina and technique.

We are now one rehearsal into our next programme, which will be an attractive concert of Purcell's *O Come Ye Sons of Art*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No 2* (with soloists from the orchestra) and, in the second half, Schubert's grand *Mass in E flat*. We have a particularly good line-up of soloists for this October concert, so do put the date in your diary if you have not already done so.

At Christmas, the Singers will be making another appearance with the cathedral choir for a concert of popular and less-well-know Christmas music, with each choir separate and together. A particular highlight will be a performance of our super and multi-talented accompanist, Paul Comeau's piece *In Principio*, written some years ago for the same two choirs. This concert, which is a Cathedral event, is always very popular so book well ahead.

Next year in March, we shall be presenting Beethoven's epic *Missa Solemnis*, to which we are all looking forward. This work, although challenging technically, is one of the great masterpieces of the choral repertoire. In the Summer we shall perform a concert of secular *a cappella* and piano-accompanied music in Penzance - a wonderful way to spend a summer evening and round off the season.

Thank you for supporting Three Spires. I look forward to seeing you at our concerts!

Robert Sharpe

Patrons & Friends

Tickets are selling well for the concerts in October and December so please remember that if you have not already done so, it is worth ordering your tickets as soon as possible in order to obtain good seats. We all look forward to seeing you on 20 October and 15 December 2007.

Anne Drew

Treasurer

The financial year for the choir ended on 31 July 2007. The accounts for the year show that we had a surplus of receipts over payments for the year of £5,792. 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 surplus of £5,059. This includes two donations totalling £1,200, which have been ear-marked for specific expenditure during 2007/08.

There are three main factors that have enabled us to achieve this surplus:

- *Messiah* is always a popular and very well-attended concert, which enabled us to make a small surplus on this one concert.
- This summer, our unaccompanied concerts in Penzance and Bodmin gave us an opportunity to sing in new venues, whilst keeping costs considerably lower than a concert with orchestra in the Cathedral.
- In September 2006, choir members were asked to pay subscriptions of £84 as a minimum, with larger donations gratefully received. The response to this change was fantastic and has resulted in an increase of approximately £3,000 in members' subscriptions, which also has a knock-on effect on Gift Aid tax refunds.

We must record our thanks to Forgotten Houses, Hawthorne Dene Hotel, King Harry Ferry 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

AGM

Officers for the 2007/08 season were elected as follows:

Chair:	Caroline Johnson	Secretary:	Faye Cuddy
Treasurer:	Sheelagh Jenkins	Publicity:	Camilla Comeau
Patrons & Friends:	Anne Drew	Librarian:	Lynne Fleming
Membership:	Penny Price		
Committee:	Phillip Osmond (Concert management), Stephen Clutterbuck, David Smith, Paul Comeau is accompanist, Margaret Pritchard is Minutes Secretary and deals with the newsletter and Dee Gordon Jackson acts as Orchestra Liaison.		

Future concerts and events

20 October 07	Schubert	Mass in E Flat	Truro Cathedral
	J S Bach	Brandenburg Concerto No 2	
	Purcell	Oh Come Ye Sons of Art	
15 December 07	Christmas Concert with the Cathedral Choristers		Truro Cathedral
1 March 08	Beethoven	Missa Solemnis	Truro Cathedral
28 June 08	Programme not yet arranged		Penzance
7 July 08	Vaughan Williams	Sinfonia Antarctica	Exeter
9 July 08	(Women only)		Truro

Chairman

Last year, finance was a big issue and I am very pleased to be able to confirm with Sheelagh that our change in subscriptions has made a great difference to the financial future of this choir. We are extremely grateful to those members who feel able to support us so well in this way and indeed to all who have encouraged others to join us and keep our membership numbers so high. This is also no doubt partly due to the continuing high standard of our performances and we should never take for granted the musicianship and enthusiasm of our conductor Robert and the ever-adaptable Paul.

A few concert highlights for me this year. To start with, Haydn's *Creation* - a memorable soprano soloist whom we have tried to book again. Undoubtedly the *Messiah* was a very special performance, appreciated by an absolutely packed Cathedral. We could have done two nights running. The Come and Sing event in January was also very popular and such a variety of people joined in. I have invited Paul to come once more before perhaps we have a change, as it is now becoming established as a regular event. We have not yet decided on the date or what we will sing. Suggestions to put to him are welcome. People either love or hate the Passions - I love them and I think all felt that we came up to the challenge of *St Matthew*. Once again, Polly Sharpe provided us with a superb group of soloists, including a memorable Evangelist. It is a tribute to our co-operation with the other choirs that our audiences could enjoy both the *St Matthew* and *St John Passions* within the space of a month. This co-operation continues with the publication of our third joint leaflet this Autumn. And finally those two summer concerts - a highlight in that although they tested our organisational and musical skills, they were so very much appreciated by local audiences. Some of us came to love Rachmaninov and what a pleasant contrast once a year to see an audience propping up wineglasses on the pews! You may be glad to hear that we have decided to repeat this experiment next year and hope to perform in Penzance only as part of the Golowan Festival, possibly combining it with a choir meal for those who would like it. It's often only on these sort of occasions that different sections of the choir mingle and get to know each other a little better - surely that is partly what this is all about.

As mentioned above, we are proud to launch the Three Spires Website, after much sweat and tears, onto the airwaves and I'm personally pleased because it has been created by a Young Enterprise student whom I met originally through my work at the hospital school. Please encourage others to use it - and comments are welcome! As you probably know, ticket booking for our concerts is now available on line through the Hall for Cornwall and there is also a link to that on our website but we will continue to hold our usual bank of tickets which will be available for sale through Anne Drew and her team. Many thanks to her and David for sorting all this out and particularly to Anne for providing this service for us.

The loss of Ben Cartlidge last year was very sad for many members of this choir and the response to our appeal towards the Motor Neurone Society at the *Messiah* concert was quite remarkable. We have recently received a bequest from Ben's will and the committee have decided with Christine Cartlidge that it would be a fitting tribute to design and build a wooden music stand in memory of Ben's huge contribution to this organisation. Ben's son, a professional cabinet maker, will make the music stand for us and we hope that it may be in use by the New Year.

Lastly, I would like to raise the issue of sponsorship. Jeff Baker has worked tirelessly for a number of years at sponsorship, which in his own words is a pretty thankless task as

Cornwall is not the easiest county to find funding. We have felt for some time that there should be new markets for sponsorship and to this end have had a meeting with Michael Maberley, a member of the Duchy Charity, to give us some food for thought. Bellanne Lethbridge is now going to assist Jeff in seeking new sponsors and will be approaching different companies during the year. As new members join us, there is always the chance that someone may be able to find a new source of sponsorship, however small.

This year, we have other challenges as well. We need to work constantly with the other choirs that perform in the County and to maintain a good working relationship with the new Chief Executive at the Cathedral. Perhaps most of all it is time to think about passing on some responsibilities to others in the choir. In one more year, we will need a new membership secretary and I feel that five years as Chairman is long enough so please give some consideration to possible recruits for these two positions. We will be having our first committee meeting of the year this week and if you feel you would like to help in any way, however small, please let me or any member of the committee know. This could be anything from taking the register for your section, helping to do those teas at the Come and Sing, becoming Chairman – anything at all. After the committee meeting, I will outline some of the specific help we need and hope for a good response.

In the meantime, I hope you really enjoy the year ahead and again, thank you for all your support.

Caroline Johnson

Rehearsal and Concert Dates

September 2007	10, 17, 24
October	1, 8, 15, 20 Concert, 22
November	5, 12, 19, 26
December	3, 10, 15 Concert
January 2008	7, 14, 21, 28
February	4, 18, 25, 28
March	1 Concert
March	3, 10
April	7, 14, 21, 28
May	12, 19
June	2, 9, 16, 23, 28 Concert (Penzance)
	Women only: 30 June, 7 July, 8 July (Exeter), 9 July (Truro)
July	14, 21, 28
August	4 St Endellion Concert