

# THREE SPIRES SINGERS

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

September 2008



## Musical Director I

It seems a little odd to be writing a report for you when I have only taken one and a half rehearsals with the Choir, having barely taken off my coat (or, indeed, lowered my umbrella).

I have been an admirer of Three Spires Singers since first hearing them in October 2000 and I am thrilled to be working with the committee to build on the sustained success it has enjoyed over so many years. The atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement in rehearsals is truly special and my first two sessions with the Choir have been high points of my first term in my new position.

We have a colourful year of music planned, which will include some familiar and some perhaps not so familiar pieces. It is all fabulous and I commend each and every performance to you warmly.

On Saturday 18 October, there is a rare chance to hear a terrific but neglected work by Bach - his *Mass in F*. It consists of *Kyrie* and *Gloria* only, as was required by the Lutheran liturgy for which it was written and it lasts about half an hour. Of all the pieces I have discovered in the past year, the *Gloria* from this Mass is my favourite. Paul Comeau will join us at the piano for Mozart's popular *Piano Concerto no 20 in D minor* and we will also perform Haydn's *Te Deum* and Vivaldi's sunny *Magnificat*.

I am sure our performance of Handel's *Messiah* needs no introduction from me. It is on Saturday 13 December and I would urge you to book your tickets well in advance to get a good seat!

On Saturday 28 March 2009, we have an English programme to include the Choir's first performance of Elgar's *The Music Makers*. This work will form the second half of the programme and contains quotes from lots of the composer's most famous pieces, including a choral version of *Nimrod*. If you like good tunes, this concert is for you! The orchestra will be the biggest to perform with us for some years and we will take full advantage of the triple woodwind, 30 strings and more brass than you can shake a baton at by performing Parry's *I was Glad* and *Blest Pair of Sirens* in the first half. And in case that's not enough, we will be joined by one of Cornwall's most eminent musicians, Tim Boulton, as viola soloist in Vaughan Williams' *Flos Campi*.

We round the academic year off with a performance in St Mary's Church in Penzance in June. We will perform English Romantic part-songs and madrigals to include Pearsall's beautiful *Lay a garland*. We hope to be joined by one of the County's renowned brass bands for this summer concert.

I hope you will enjoy the year's mixture of familiar and new and I look forward to meeting those of you I do not already know over the coming months.

**Christopher Gray**

Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.

*Red Auerbach*

## Treasurer

This year, there is a surplus of £4,669 for the year ended 31 July 2008, compared with a surplus of £5,792 in the previous year. The main causes for the reduction in receipts are that there were only three concerts this year (2007/08) and that the year before (2006/07) included the Messiah, which always attracts a very large audience. This has been compensated for in part by new sponsorship in the year, with an increase of £800 on last year. We now have cash funds of £19,937 to carry forward to 2008/09, which is a strong financial position.

In general, concerts make deficits, the exceptions being the Messiah, joint concerts with the Cathedral choir and concerts in smaller venues. It is the surplus from so called 'core' activities (subscriptions, sponsors, fundraising etc) that enable us to perform the programmes we do. Three years ago we changed from a fixed members' subscription to a minimum subscription and the generosity of members in paying more than the minimum subscription has improved the finances of the choir considerably. In fact, I estimate that 80 per cent of the choir pay more than the minimum amount, which brings in additional subscriptions of about £2,600.

It was agreed at a previous AGM that the minimum subscription should rise in line with inflation each year. Currently £86pa, inflation according to *The Times* on 4 September 2008 was 4.4 per cent, which would bring the new minimum subscription to £89.

Another financial matter for 2008/09 is that the library has changed the hire charges for music - we used to pay £4-6 per month for an unlimited number of scores but we are now charged £2 for every 5 copies for an unlimited time, meaning that costs per concert have at least trebled. The committee wish to ask for a £1 per concert contribution rather than 50p as it has been for the past couple of years and also to encourage members to buy their own music copies.

**Sheelagh Jenkins**

## AGM

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

<b>Chair:</b>	Priscilla Reeve	<b>Secretary:</b>	Bellanne Lethbridge
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Sheelagh Jenkins	<b>Publicity:</b>	Camilla Comeau
<b>Patrons &amp; Friends:</b>	Anne Drew	<b>Librarian:</b>	Lynne Fleming
<b>Membership:</b>	Kate Dalziel	<b>Concert management:</b>	Phillip Osmond
<b>Sponsorship:</b>	David Smith		

Co-opted members: Stephen Clutterbuck, Paul Comeau is accompanist, Margaret Pritchard is Minutes Secretary and newsletter editor and Dee Gordon Jackson acts as Orchestra Liaison.

## Chairman I

There was an air of confidence in September last year when we began our rehearsals for the Schubert and Purcell concert in October. Unfortunately for us, our concert coincided with the rugby World Cup Final, which meant that we had only a small - but very enthusiastic - audience. Then came our biennial Christmas concert with the Cathedral Choir which was, of course, very well attended and provided a good start to the Christmas season.

The Come & Sing in January seemed to run like clockwork. Paul Spicer entertained and worked us hard, Robert accompanied us superbly and many people attended, we will be doing it again next year.

And then came *Missa Solemnis*. This was very hard work and there was much muttering, especially in the soprano section, general anxiety that there would be enough members singing and the musical director going off for interviews. Then right at the end, we had an extra rehearsal with Russell Pascoe standing in and his praise, jokes and general lightheartedness energised us all. It proved to be an exciting and exhausting performance and many doubters were, to their surprise, converted to the power of Beethoven.

The summer term had its problems - it is always difficult to sustain regular numbers with all the bank holidays and to choose the right music. This, and Robert's appointment as Master of Music at York, meant that we felt we had to cancel the Penzance concert. In the end, the final concert of the year - a stunningly beautiful work by Duruflé and the Kodaly - was a good and moving end to our season with an enjoyable party to finish it all off.

I would like to thank all the members of the choir for their enthusiasm and friendliness. I have been fortunate to have a committee with a sense of humour and who have been thoroughly supportive and professional in their many roles.

As for the future, I am sure that Chris's enthusiasm and drive will be exciting for us all. He has been an inspiration to St Mary's Singers - so may it be with Three Spires Singers.

**Caroline Johnson**

### Future concerts and events

<b>4 October 2008</b>	<b>Bennallack Concert</b>	
<b>18 October 2008</b>	<b>Mass in F Te Deum Magnificat Piano Concerto No 20 In D minor Soloist Paul Comeau</b>	<b>J S Bach Haydn Vivaldi Mozart</b>
<b>13 December 2008</b>	<b>Messiah</b>	<b>Handel</b>
<b>January 2009</b>	<b>Come &amp; Sing</b>	
<b>28 March 2009</b>	<b>I was Glad Blest Pair of Sirens Flos Campi Viola Soloist Rim Boulton The Music Makers</b>	<b>Parry  Vaughan Williams  Elgar</b>
<b>June 2009</b>	<b>English Romantic Part Songs at St Mary's Church, Penzance</b>	

### Chairman II

How good to see some new faces at the beginning of this choir year, so a warm welcome to Chris Gray and all returning and new members. We have a challenging programme for the 2008/9 season and I am looking forward to it all with great pleasure. Chris is an immensely gifted and inspiring choral trainer and has great plans for us. Our first two rehearsals with him have been stimulating and for some people a little daunting.

I know we will all learn and improve in technique as well as developing further musicianship in the weeks and years to come. If anyone feels they need to boost their sight reading techniques or knowledge of music theory, I can recommend an expert tutor if you come and have a quiet word with me.

Thanks and goodbyes were said to Robert, Polly, Louis and Clara last term and at the AGM, we expressed gratitude to Caroline for the five years she spent chairing the Three Spires

Singers and Orchestra. From personal experience, I say confidently that what you all used to see on Monday nights and at concerts was the tiniest tip of the job mountain she tackled so competently. As your new chairman, I am afraid I will not be so efficient or look so cool - but I am working on it.

**Priscilla Reeve**

## Patrons & Friends

I have been asked by the Committee to explain why we were unable to invite our Friends to Robert Sharpe's leaving party on 12 July - this was because due to Fire Regulations, only a limited number of people are allowed in the Chapter House. However, we are inviting you to attend a fundraising concert at Benallack on Saturday 4 October, where the Benallack Trio consisting of Paul Comeau (piano), Phil Montgomery (violin) and Barbara Degene ('cello) will be playing music by Mozart, Schubert and Rachmaninov. The tickets cost £15 to include a first class buffet supper and a glass of wine. These evenings are always very enjoyable and very good value for money. Please telephone Anne Turner on 01872 273158 for tickets for this event.

Tickets are selling well for our two forthcoming concerts, so it would be advisable to book as soon as possible if you wish to attend. Please display our posters in strategic places to maximize the publicity.

We are currently updating our contact lists and would therefore be grateful if all Patrons and Friends who have access to email could let us know their email addresses. Please send them to the Newsletter editor Margaret Pritchard on [pritchard@littlehalwyn1.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:pritchard@littlehalwyn1.fsnet.co.uk)

**Anne Drew**

## Sponsorship

TSS are extremely grateful to our corporate sponsors, who give us some much needed financial assistance in return for free concert tickets (or priority booking of 'premium seats, according to their sponsorship package), advertising space in concert programmes and regular updates on choir activities through this newsletter.

Putting on performances of the quality expected of us, with professional soloists and orchestra, is expensive and our name does not qualify us for free use of Truro Cathedral - the venue for which we are named - does not come cheap. Almost every concert that we give runs at a substantial financial deficit, the difference being made up by members' subscriptions, fundraising activities and through the generosity of our Friends, Patrons and Sponsors.

Whether you are new to the choir or have sung with us for as long as the choir has existed, or indeed if you are an existing Friend, Patron or Sponsor, could I please urge you to think of any local businesses that might be encouraged to support us and to let me know of any such ideas? The sky is, of course, the limit but our categories of sponsorship start at as little as £100 per year, which is less than many businesses hold in their petty cash!

So thanks again to our existing sponsors and please do get in touch with your ideas for additional businesses for me to approach.

Everyclick has now raised £106.27 and has 26 'fundraisers', ie regular users who have selected TSS as their chosen charity to support. So, this has been reasonably successful but we would be most grateful if more people began use it.

Buy.At has raised comparatively little and I would be interested to have some feedback from anyone who has tried it. If you think it is unfriendly to use then this is something that I could

feed back to the organisers. However, other charities claim to be getting much more out of it than we do.

Please contact me on 01872 278930 or email me at [d.g.smith@talktalk.net](mailto:d.g.smith@talktalk.net).

David Smith

## Rehearsal and Concert Dates

<b>September 08</b>	8, 15, 22, 29
<b>October</b>	6, 13, 18 (concert)
<b>November</b>	3, 10, 17, 24
<b>December</b>	1, 8, 13 (concert)
<b>January 09</b>	5, 12, 19, 26
<b>February</b>	2, 9, 23
<b>March</b>	2, 9, 14 (concert), 16, 23, 30
<b>April</b>	20, 27
<b>May</b>	11, 18
<b>June</b>	1, 8, 11 (concert)

## Musical Director II

I write from York after a momentous few weeks of moving and unpacking and settling into my new job here at the Minster, which began on 1 September. As I reflect back over my last season with Three Spires and indeed the five previous ones, I realise what a wonderful thing Three Spires is.

First and foremost are the warm, enthusiastic and committed members, without whom the music would remain on the page and not come to life. Thank you all for being what you are and for your lovely presents which have prominent place here in Minster Court.

Then there is the way the choir is run. A committee of very able people each looking after the different jobs which ensure the smooth-running of the choir and enable the musical director to do just that and not have to worry about money, publicity, policy, music or bookings. I have worked with two magnificent lady chairmen, Lora Wicks and Caroline Johnson and I owe them both a huge debt of gratitude for their wisdom, encouragement, and sagely guidance. Others on the committee who had taught me so much are Camilla Comeau and her artistic sense, Paul Comeau whose genius and serene presence are a constant reassurance, Lynne Fleming for meticulous music hire and Dee Gordon-Jackson whose tireless work booking orchestral players is remarkable.

The late Ben Cartlidge and more recently Sheelagh Jenkins have also taught me much about choir finances and risk-taking. I'm grateful to all of these people and those whom I haven't named individually and will long remember all that we achieved as a team.

I would also like to thank all the musicians who have played in the orchestra over the past six years and helped us to achieve some wonderful musical moments, most memorably for me the *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* and *B minor Mass* of Bach, the *Farewell Symphony* of Haydn, Monteverdi's *Vespers*, the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* and of course Spicer's *Easter Oratorio*.

In conclusion, a very heartfelt thank you to you all and very best wishes to another ambitious, stylish and inspiring lady, Priscilla Reeve, as she takes over as Chairman and to Christopher Gray whose work with St Mary's singers and for the past eight years as assistant organist at the cathedral speaks for itself and under whose conductorship I know the choir will continue to flourish.

Polly joins me in sending our love and best wishes to you all.

Robert Sharpe  
York

# ***STOP PRESS!***

## **SINGDAY<sup>®</sup> 2009**

# **JOHN RUTTER**

### **conducts the Rutter**

# **REQUIEM**

**A unique chance to rehearse and perform  
the Requiem and other works under the  
baton of this inspiring musician**

***Royal Albert Hall, Sunday 12 July 2009\****  
(rehearsals morning and afternoon, plus full evening performance)

Why not start planning now? Your choir's priority invitation and booking form with full musical details and schedule will be sent in September 2009.  
For the best positions apply promptly.

## **COME AND JOIN IN!**

You may express your interest now by writing to PO Box 4211, Bath BA1 0HJ,  
but full details will not be available until September.

*\*The date is subject to confirmation by the Royal Albert Hall, but is unlikely to change*

Organized by  
Concerts From **Scratch**   
in aid of The Really Big Chorus

THE REALLY  
**BIG**  
CHORUS  
www.trbc.co.uk  
Registered Charity 1061515

**NB:** *I presume that the schedule will be sent in September 2008 - not 2009!*  
**MP**