

THREE SPIRES SINGERS

Newsletter, September 2009



- *Sponsors*
- *Patrons*
- *Friends*
- *Orchestra*
- *Singers*



Music Director

With barely time to draw breath after an action-packed first year with Three Spires Singers, the committee and I are now putting the finishing touches to next season's programme.

We received such strong support for last year's ambitious round of events, that we felt bold enough to schedule two monumental works from the choral repertoire: Verdi's *Requiem* in November and Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers* in March. There will be a vast orchestra for the Verdi with well over fifty professional players, including some fourteen violinists, to create a suitably lush sound-world. For the Monteverdi, we will be joined by the period-instrument ensemble, Charivari Agreeable, whose stylish playing has delighted us in the past. Our performance will celebrate the 400th anniversary of Monteverdi's iconic piece.

Our Christmas concert will be held at All Saints' Church in Falmouth. My colleague at the Cathedral, Luke Bond, will join us at the organ in a programme of both familiar and lesser-known carols which all have a traditional Christmas flavour. Russell Pascoe's beautiful setting of *Lo, How a Rose e'er Blooming* is one of three Cornish carols to be performed.

The choir's new president, Petroc Trelawny, will join us to introduce Verdi's *Requiem* and will compère the Christmas concert. Anyone who has heard Petroc on Radio 3, Classic FM or live at the Proms, will be familiar with his insightful and, for me, extremely helpful introductions to various repertoire. We are all delighted he is taking such a 'hands on' approach in his new role.

Our June concert takes us to St Endellion Church, where we will perform a programme of music by two composers who both have anniversaries next year. The first is the glorious but rarely heard *St Cecilia Mass* by Scarlatti and the second, Pergolesi's sunny *Magnificat*. We are delighted to have Paul Comeau at the piano for this final performance of the academic year.

In addition to these four concerts, Three Spires will host two workshops - one in September and one in January. The Verdi workshop is aimed at anyone who wants to know more about the *Requiem* and perhaps understand some of the compositional techniques through which Verdi communicates. January's come-and-sing event with Paul Spicer has become popular with singers who wish to familiarise themselves with core, choral repertoire in one intensive session. We hope it will be as successful as it has been in previous years.

I look forward to seeing you at some, or perhaps all, of the events above.

Christopher Gray

Rehearsal Dates

September

7th
14th
21st
28th

October

5th
12th
19th

November

2nd
9th
16th
23rd
30th



Treasurer

The Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st July 2009 shows a deficit of £2,017, compared with a surplus of £4,669 in the previous year.

Receipts for the year total £40,317, up from £38,571. Running through the figures:

Membership subscriptions have risen because the choir has many new members; the tax refund for the year has not yet been received, unfortunately, because the original claim was not received by HMRC. It has been resubmitted and we hope to receive the tax refund of £4,229 shortly.

Ticket income is much higher because there were 4 concerts this year (2008/09) and only 3 last year (2007/08) and this year included the Messiah, which always attracts a very large audience.

The economic climate has meant that our sponsorship is much reduced.

Fundraising is higher because of the successful Benallack evening – please note that this figure includes £328 received in advance for the Verdi workshop.

Other income includes costs reimbursed by the Cathedral for Robert Sharpe's final concert.

Payments for the year total £42,334 up from £33,902 last year. Again, running through the figures:

Last year there were only 3 concerts, one of which was not orchestral and had no soloists. This year, we have had 4 concerts, including the Music Makers which required a very large orchestra.

Other expenditure is mainly the redesign of our website, which is an increasingly necessary source of information for concert-goers.

The Accumulated fund/Cash funds shows cash funds to carry forward to 2009/10 of £17,920, which remains a strong financial position.

People keep saying to me that they didn't realize how much concerts cost, so the information is all here. The concert in October 2008 incurred costs of £10,213 and made a deficit of £4,029, and in March 2008 costs were £13,695 with a deficit of £7,762. Even the Messiah in December 2008 made a deficit of £665 on costs of £9,799 – in the past the Messiah could be relied upon to make a surplus, rising costs make this no longer the case. The Penzance concert in June made a deficit of £558, attendance at this concert being rather disappointing.

Almost without exception, concerts make deficits. It is the surplus from so called 'core' activities (subscriptions, sponsors, fundraising etc) that enable us to perform the programmes we do.

Four 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 over 80% of the choir pay more than the minimum amount which brings in additional subscriptions of about £3,000.

Subscriptions for 2009/10

It was agreed at a previous AGM that the minimum subscription should rise in line with inflation each year.

The committee has decided that with inflation rates so low, and the current economic climate, the minimum annual subscription should remain at £89 for another year.

Sheelagh Jenkins.



Chairman

I have greatly enjoyed this year as chairman, and working with Christopher Gray has been a delight. I am glad to see so many new faces, and the quality of the sound and standard of performance have continued to rise with the ambitious programme he has arranged for us. The orchestra is magnificent under Chris's direction and I know they regard him with great respect as an inspiring, sensitive and able conductor.

My grateful thanks for a valiant job done despite serious health problems, to Margaret for minute-taking and production of the newsletter. She is now retiring with regret and we will miss her common sense in committee. Thankfully, Georgina Brown has come forward to take over this newsletter. You can download many recent editions on the new website, and enjoy Camilla Comeau's excellent photographs in addition to reading all about us.

I loved the Penzance concert, but those gifted young people were dreadfully loud in that church! I wonder if you all realise how hard we try to arrange the summer concerts so everyone will remain interested, and attract an audience outside of Truro. (We try to break even in the summer and can't afford the usual losses integral to a cathedral concert). St Endellion Church is next summer's destination and I'm sure this will be a great success and perhaps set a precedent.

Please continue to support us with your voices and presence at concerts. If you know of any source of sponsorship, however small, we will always be very grateful for suggestions. Have a good year! **Priscilla Reeve.**



Patrons & Friends

Tickets are now selling well for our two concerts this term, so it would be advisable to book your seats as soon as possible. We do hope that you will support our carol concert at All Saints, Falmouth. This is a new venture in a new venue.

I enclose posters for the Verdi Requiem. Please circulate them as widely as possible. When you receive the posters for the carol concert, please would all of you who live in the Falmouth area particularly, make sure that they are in prominent places.

Thank you again for all your invaluable support.

Anne Drew, Patrons and Friends Secretary.



Poster Sites

In an attempt to increase attendance at our concerts, we have decided to revert to our self-help system. This should improve visibility and reduce costs. As members are scattered throughout Cornwall, it is hoped volunteers will be willing to deliver posters in their local areas.

Firstly, we need to update our list of target positions and if possible, identify some more exclusive sites. Since a potential audience will respond well to personal invitation, members could consider approaching their friends and ask them to display posters. Also, our own cars are EXCELLENT 'vehicles' for our message, in contrast to an over-busy library notice board!

We all share responsibility for publicity, so please give it some thought over the next few weeks.

John Loughnan



Website

We now feel ready to advertise the fact that our new website is ready for launch.

Please follow the link,
www.threespiressingers.org.uk

We welcome additional material, especially for the Members' Section, where there are some wonderful photographs taken by Camilla. We could do with pieces on any courses or workshops you have been on over the summer, or tips on how you learn choral works - there's help online, for example.

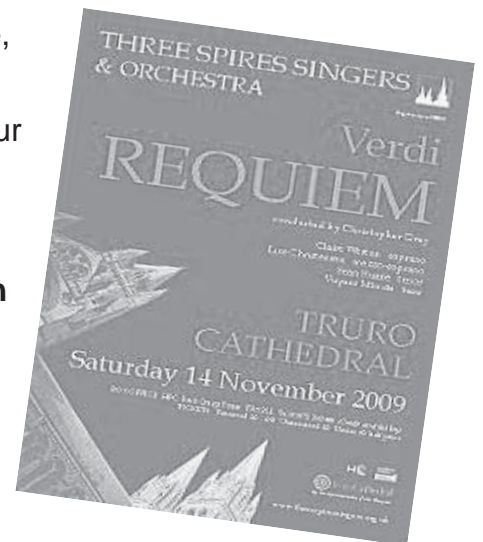
Contact Priscilla through the email links on the site.

www.threespiressingers.org.uk



AGM

Chair:	Priscilla Reeve	Secretary:	Bellanne Lethbridge
Treasurer:	Sheelagh Jenkins	Publicity:	Camilla Comeau
Patrons & Friends:	Anne Drew	Librarian:	Vacant
Membership:	Kate Dalziel	Concert	Management: Philip Osmond
Sponsorship:	David Smith		



Concert Dates

14th November: Verdi Requiem
Truro Cathedral

5th December: Carol Concert
All Saints, Falmouth

20th March: Monteverdi Vespers
Truro Cathedral

12th June: Scarlatti St Cecilia Mass
Pergolesi Magnificat
St Endellion Church



Review of, ‘Music For A Summer’s Evening’

‘Have choir – will travel’ might well apply to the Cathedral’s Music Director, Christopher Gray, whose choristers regularly tour the county and will shortly be singing in Spain. But it was his other choir, the Three Spires Singers, which he transferred from Truro cathedral to Penzance in an unusual programme shared with Camborne Youth Band.



St Mary’s Church would not have been my choice of venue to hear forty brass players, but they were the tops. Few youth groups in the country would surpass them and they have been national champions six times. Their programme of ten items created solo opportunities for several young brass players, notably Jessica Tredrea on cornet and Jeremy Taylor, who would be a believable winner in Britain’s Got Talent, for his performance on the xylophone of the aptly titled, *Helter Skelter*. His dazzling performance had the audience applauding on its feet.

Alan Pope began the band ten years ago with just seven players. He has now moulded this, ‘unstoppable band juggernaut’ of over a hundred into an exceptional force. I appreciated the purity of their tone (especially obvious in unison passages) their phrasing and sang-froid in the frequent ‘vivace’ pieces; but even more, their discipline and movement – even exchanging mutes was choreographed. Superb!



The band’s two itineraries were separated by the choral items, many based on part songs, often ‘romantic’, i.e. about love and/ or death! Of them all, the most ambitious was Pearsall’s arrangement of the Scottish ballad, *Sir Patrick Spens*, which required four tenor parts and two each of the three other voices. But like the other unaccompanied items, the tuning was perfect, even though there were a hundred singers.

Britten’s *Rejoice in the Lamb* was quite different from the rest of the programme. The well-sung ‘mystical’ opening is apt for a cantata that uses Christopher Smart’s extraordinary poem with its obscure references. The organ accompaniment with Joshua Hales provided musical parallels. The soloists were Kay Deeming, Annabel Gregory, Tom Crow and Ian Brown.



The evening ended with Alan Pope conducting the combined forces of band and choir in a spectacular-sounding performance of Parry’s coronation anthem, *I was glad*.

Eric Dare.



Workshop Dates

Verdi Requiem Workshop

19th September, 9am - 1pm.

Truro School Chapel.

Tickets £10 (£5 full-time students)
Bellanne Lethbridge: 01872 223843
bell.leth@googlemail.com

Come & Sing

16th January.

Truro School Chapel.

Handel’s Coronation Anthems.
Details to be confirmed.