

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The season of 2023-2024 was the first under our new conductor Phillip Colin. I am delighted to report how successful this was, how happy people are working with him and that he has settled in so well. I am also really pleased that the choir has grown in number and welcome our new members and hope for more!

The season started with Elijah, which at times seemed to lift the roof off St Mark's. A fine performance of Messiah followed, in the Victoria Hall due to unavailability of the Cathedral (but we will be back there in 2024). St. John Passion in St Marks was then a great success and well received by another appreciative audience. The final concert of the season was Brahms's Requiem and Shicksalslied. This was a joint concert with Sheffield Oratorio Chorus and future collaborations to tackle the larger works are being considered.

We had a Come Sing Messiah which showcased young soloists from St Johns Ranmoor, who we will be welcoming, along with Steel City Choristers to join us for St Matthew Passion in 2024-25. We also hosted a workshop before the Elijah concert and it is planned that further workshops will take place as part of our seasons. Social events added enormously to the music making and the choir is one of the friendliest I know. The season was enjoyably ended with a Bring and Share Supper organised by our Social Secretary – Anne Adams.

I feel really optimistic about the strength and the potential for the choir to move forward, continue to grow and form new connections, making us a big player on the Sheffield music scene.

It would be remiss not to thank the committee and all of those who contribute to the running of the choir and those who feel able to offer financial support. Without these efforts the choir could not exist in these more challenging times for the arts. We have so much to offer and look forward to an exciting future.

Chris Walker

Chairman

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Unfortunately, as in recent years since the Pandemic, we continue to run a deficit over the 2023-2024 season. The good news is that the choir has adequate reserves for now and our income is up substantially since last year, with a growing membership bringing in more subscriptions, increased ticket sales and fund raising, plus some generous sponsorship from the late (and much missed) Laurence Coates. However, many of our costs are also rising, most notably professional fees and hall hire (including heating). The most expensive concert from last season was Mendelssohn's Elijah in November, which was a great occasion but cost £7700 for soloists, orchestra and hall hire so the choir is not in a position to put on such large works very often (other than with substantial sponsorship).

Our main sources of income are choir subscriptions and ticket sales - so attracting new members and selling more tickets are the best ways to help us financially. Membership subscription rates have remained at £150 this season and can be paid in instalments, but we will have to increase the annual rate to £200 next season to help cover costs. We are always very grateful for additional donations and sponsorship from any members who feel able to contribute further.

Please do support our fundraising efforts, including the weekly little raffle and monthly stalls, plus carol singing in December. If anyone has any innovative fundraising ideas please to let the committee know!

We are also hoping that more members will join the monthly draw (£4 per month) and to sign up to online gift schemes such as Give as You Live and Easy Fundraising. Please contact me if you would like more information on any of these.

Kitty Ross

Treasurer

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CONDUCTOR'S REPORT

It has been a huge pleasure to be your conductor this year. I have been made to feel very welcome and I have very much appreciated your enthusiasm and your committed singing.

Elijah is one of my favourite oratorios and it was great to be able to start with that. A strong quartet of soloists, an augmented chorus and an orchestra on top form. I was grateful to Elizabeth Roberts for standing in at the last minute for Chrissie Birchall-Samson and to Cath Backhouse for standing in for Ailsa Mainwaring. Tenor Nicolas Watts made a very strong impression and William Burn was an imposing and dramatic presence as Elijah. I received very many favourable comments about the choir's performance – clear text, an exciting sound and a strong sense of drama.

Messiah at Victoria Hall was also very memorable. Jane Burnell, who has sung for the society before, Beth Mackay, the returning Nicolas Watts (standing in for an indisposed Peter Wilman) and Sheffield's own Francis Wells were the quartet and the National Festival Orchestra once again accompanying brilliantly, including our accompanist Ruth Nicholson playing harpsichord and organ. The Victoria Hall was an excellent stand in venue but we look forward to returning to the Cathedral in the 24/25 season.

In the Spring was St John Passion. Again, we needed to replace indisposed soloists, this time Evangelist Stephen Lilley, replaced by Ben Thapa, who tragically died later in the year. Chrissie Birchall-Samson, Hannah Mason (again, previously known to the society) and Dean Robinson sang the arias and local baritone Peter Taylor sang Christ. It was a very moving performance, again accompanied by the National Festival Orchestra with Ruth Nicholson playing continuo.

For our final concert in the season, we teamed up with the Oratorio Chorus to perform Ein Deutsches Requiem and Shicksalslied, both by Brahms in Victoria Hall. It was great fun to rehearse and perform with larger forces and it would be great to collaborate again on a large work in the near future.

I am most grateful to the committee for all their hard work.

Philip Collin

Conductor

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

I can confirm that the Committee has continued to work on behalf of members, to meet the 'object' of our Society as outlined in the Constitution, meeting formally three times during the last season and engaging in several additional discussions in person and via email as issues arose. Meetings continued to focus primarily on detailed planning for each forthcoming season and outline planning

for future seasons. We have been very pleased that Philip Collin can now contribute to the forward planning which has included introducing the choir to new works.

The Committee undertook a detailed review of the last season before the summer break, considering 'What went well ...' and 'What could be even better if ...'. The overwhelming view was that our first season with our new conductor had been a real success. Enjoyable rehearsals had included a good balance of singing, training and musical input from Philip. It went without saying that we still needed to recruit more tenors, but it had been very encouraging that over the season we had welcomed more new members in one year than in the last five years! Attendance at rehearsals has been impacted by illness and holidays and sometimes rather concerning. The Committee haven't yet, however, needed to enforce our stated expectation of '75% attendance at rehearsals to sing in the concert', but attendance at rehearsals will be kept under careful review, especially as we add new and less familiar works to our repertoire.

Invitations were accepted by Jane Ginsborg and Barbara Hawley to become Life-Friends of the Society in recognition of their many years of singing with us.

Since the last AGM, we heard of the death of a number of people who had a long association with the Society. Dr Alan Brown, a quiet and unassuming man but truly brilliant musician who accompanied choir rehearsals for many years and served as our Vice-President; Laurence Coates, a former member of the choir who generously sponsored the joint Brahms concert in memory of his late wife Liz, only sadly not to live to attend the concert himself; and more recently we heard of the death of Hazel Elliot-Kemp who continued to support the choir in the audience for many concerts after she stopped singing.

Thank you to everyone for your contribution to the success of the society over the last year as we look forward to another exciting season under the direction of Philip Collin.

Liz Buxton

Secretary

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