

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The 2019/20 season was cut short by the *Covid 19* pandemic. We were lucky to have been able to perform the B minor mass just before lockdown but had to abandon the June concert which was to have been *Ceremonial Sacred Music with Fine Arts Brass*.

As I write this in October 2020. we are still not back together singing and have most sadly had to abandon plans to perform the *St Matthew Passion* in March 2021 and ideas of a *Messiah* in April 2021 are now seeming less likely. We are looking at the possibility of giving our Summer concert but that, if it happens, may be the only concert of the 2020/2021 season.

Making plans at this time is extremely challenging and depends on many factors. Amongst these are the availability of a rehearsal venue that is *Covid 19* safe, a membership whose individuals deem it safe to return and the availability of a venue for a performance with social distancing.

Of course, we are not alone in this, as other Sheffield choirs face the same situation. Some of these choirs are thinking about a limited number rehearsals and working virtually via *Zoom* and the like. The committee is exploring these avenues and are consulting with the membership to try and gain an idea of what members might feel comfortable with and would support. The committee is also still meeting very regularly and updating with regard to the Pandemic so that plans to get back to the albeit "new" normal can be put in place as soon as is realistically possible.

In the meantime, I hope that you all keep safe and I look forward to singing and, not least, meeting with you all again, whenever or however that might be.

Chris Walker

Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

As you can see from the enclosed accounts, the choir enjoyed a healthy surplus for the 2019/2020 Season. This is entirely accounted for by sponsorship and donations, and a very welcome bequest from the estate of Eric Stuart who many members will remember was our continuo 'cellist for many years. His late wife Thelma Marion, oboist, also played with the Society on many occasions. We would particularly like to thank Betty Grimsley, Jane Ginsborg, George Nicholson and Janet Dethick for their very generous sponsorship.

For the 2020/2021 Season we find ourselves in very different circumstances. The committee has agreed to continue paying the professional fees for our conductor and accompanist, and we also have to pay subscriptions to Making Music (which includes our insurance) and to Classical Sheffield. This means outgoings of around £8000. As we cannot sell tickets, we depend on members to help to fund this. We are therefore appealing to members to consider paying their usual membership subscription in full or in part. We would also encourage as many members as possible to sign up to other schemes to raise much-needed funds, such as the monthly draw and also to support the choir when shopping online through Give as You Live, Easy Fundraising and Amazon Smile.

Kitty Ross

Treasurer

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:

"The object of the Society shall be to educate the public in the arts and sciences and in particular the art and science of music by encouraging the study and performance of the works of J.S.Bach and such other composers as are deemed appropriate, by promoting concerts and recitals devoted to their music and by maintaining a choir for this purpose; and by such other activities as the Society may from time to time think fit."

The Committee has met on 5 occasions during the 2019-20 season although much work continues between meetings, including other informal meetings to discuss a range of issues and of course emails! The Committee continues to focus on concert and event planning, attendance, recruitment, publicity, the society's finances and any changes in requirements which we need to meet. Planning for 2020-21 and beyond was a major focus early in the season, but plans were then put on hold due to the challenges resulting from Covid-19. Latterly, meetings, held via Zoom, have focussed primarily on the necessary work entailed by the forced changes to our plans, liaising with performers, venues etc. Although most communications with performers and players have sadly been about abandoning our performances, it has been lovely to receive so many good wishes from our orchestral and soloist friends during these challenging times.

Normally I would be encouraging members to speak to a committee member or use the *suggestions book* if you have ideas for programmes or other society matters - currently, however, emails will have to suffice! Please note that the Committee has taken the decision to defer to Autumn 2021, any re-auditions due at the start of the 2019-20 season and move all future re-auditions on by a year.

I will continue to communicate with members primarily by email (please make sure you let me know if your address changes). As ever, a huge 'thank you' to everyone who has contributed to the success of the parts of 2019-20 season which did prove possible.

Liz Buxton

Secretary

CONDUCTOR'S REPORT

It is my pleasure to send each and every member of Sheffield Bach Choir my personal good wishes to you all at this extraordinary time. Last year, at the Annual General meeting, I made much mention of upcoming performances including, not least, the projected presentation of Honegger's *King David* on which a considerable amount of preparation had already taken place – not least between Sarah Hogan and Liz Buxton with regard to the not inconsiderable challenges in obtaining copies in English! Tom Hunt had very generously donated to me his late father's marked vocal score designating misprints, typographical errors and significant helpful interpretative directions – a warm-hearted gesture that I hugely appreciated and, not least, a wonderful permanent momentum one of my greatest ever musical friendships with a colleague whom I esteemed and admired greatly. Ah well, we *will* sing this great and hugely unusual work *one of these days*, I feel quite certain.

I admire hugely, and commend unreservedly to members of the Bach Society the tireless endeavour of our Officers and Committee Members – a huge raiser of many spirits including my own during the very difficult past months and, dare one say it, for the foreseeable future in addition.

Another abandoned endeavour was that of a planned recital by soprano Jenny Cowling and myself at Dr Bullivant's harpsichord in the engine shed of South Leeds' Middleton Railway during the course of its centenary this year, 1920. I find *abandoning* something somehow a *little* more positive than *cancelling* it,

a terminology that presumes one is exercising a conscious decision rather than presentation such an upcoming experience as a sad consequence of necessity in terms of prevailing circumstances.

As Chris Walker has said, we had “on the back burner” a number of what seemed at one stage fairly/eminently possible progress in terms of planning/re-scheduling concerts. It is a great disappointment to us all that it is clear, here and now, that we find ourselves ongoing to be less and less likely to undertake anything for the foreseeable future. I share hugely the great regret we must all endure and look forward to better times ahead – not least in determining a way forward in terms of recruitment that I mentioned at this last year and that the Chairman and Committee are determined to put at the forefront of imminent progress in the form of a plan for when times are more favourable and “normal”

The Bach Choir and other musical charities have taught me the value of the technology of *Zoom*. With a considerable American family now in Florida and with both the grand-daughters gradually emerging from University higher education studies – one as a musician and the other as a medic [a *proper* doctor is the terminology among the Lindleys!] – such contacts have become life-enhancing.

With every good wish and blessing to you all and particular thanks to those who have been in touch with me personally on a regular or occasional basis. The contacts have been, and remain, hugely appreciated.

Simon Lindley
Conductor