



Summer Newsletter – August 2014

Welcome to the SBS summer newsletter. In the following pages you will find a round-up of choir news from the secretary, some notes from the membership secretary and from the chairman and a couple of bits and pieces to amuse you – we hope! Simon Lindley's introduction to the season's music was much appreciated in last summer's newsletter, so to start off the 2014 newsletter, our conductor has again provided his insight into some of the music to be performed in 2014-15 . . .



Saturday 11 October 2014
Mass in B Minor
Sheffield Cathedral

The return of Bach Choir concerts to Sheffield Cathedral in year of its centenary has been made possible by the completion of the Cathedral's scheme of major refurbishment. Perhaps appropriately, the first of the Bach Choir's performances in the renewed building programmes what many would argue as the greatest single musical work of all time – the **Mass in B minor**. The composer's enthusiasm for anthologising towards the end of his long creative life has left posterity for ever in his debt. *The Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue* hold pride of place along with Bach's great **Mass**. In terms of his Lutheran heritage, Bach worked within the tradition of the reformed *Missa* with choral and orchestral involvement in settings of *Kyrie eleison* and *Gloria in excelsis* only. To the noble torso of his **Missa**, the composer added what he referred to as the **Symbolum Nicenum** (the Nicene Creed), along with **Sanctus**, **Osanna**, **Benedictus** followed by **Osanna** repeated, **Agnus Dei** and **Dona nobis pacem**.

Bach gives to his mighty work a special kind of unity through the use of the same music for **Gratias agimus tibi** in the **Gloria** and the final choral movement, **Dona nobis pacem** and, in keeping with a tradition extending back to the earlier Renaissance composers and forward to the likes of Haydn and Mozart, he uses the same **Osanna** music after **Benedictus** as well as **Sanctus**.

The music of **Sanctus** and **Osanna** is disposed for double choir (two four part ensembles) with much use of antiphonal effects doubtless wishing to echo the words of Isaiah's vision of the Cherubim – *and one cried unto another "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts"*. Further imagery is achieved through the use of four massive beats to the bar each divided into triplets, providing the illustrative in aural terms to the "six wings" of the Seraphim who stood about the Throne.

Many of the component movements were re-used from earlier originals, though so successfully is this re-arrangement achieved that there is no feel whatsoever of other than

perfect fits. The dance-like progress of many of the movements – *Domine Deus* in *Gloria* for flute *obbligato* atop muted strings is one of the happiest such concepts – provides a lightness of texture in beautiful contrast to the more majestic and substantial musical sonorities.



Saturday 15 November 2014
First World War Commemoration Concert
Sheffield Cathedral

Vaughan Williams's *Toward the Unknown Region*

Described by its creator as a *Song for chorus and orchestra*, Vaughan Williams produced this deeply evocative work during the course of 1906 – a momentous year in which VW was also pre-occupied with the publication of *The English Hymnal* of which he was chief Musical Editor. It was at this time too that he set off working on the *Sea Symphony* that would be premiered at the Leeds Triennial Festival in 1910. In common with the *Sea Symphony*, the lyrics of *Toward the Unknown Region* are taken from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, an epic text begun in 1855. This work, the object of continual revision until its author's death, and Whitman's Bohemian life-style characterise the popular public image of Walt Whitman [1819-1892] who was essayist and journalist as well as poet.

English composers of the early decades of the 20th century were strongly attracted to Whitman's uplifting, humanitarian style and his ability to produce inspirational verbiage greatly stirring to reader as well as to singer. His texts are deployed in major musical works by Adams, Bernstein, Britten, Delius and Ned Rorem – among many other creative spirits of the Anglo-American axis as – and also, perhaps most notably, Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Vaughan Williams had set Whitman texts to songs in 1903 and maybe even at that time was beginning to contemplate producing a large-scale work to a Whitman libretto. As is well-known, the emergent masterpiece, in 1910 for the Leeds Musical Festival, was to be *A Sea Symphony*. From that same year emerged the magical *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis* for string orchestra.

Just three years earlier, for the triennial Leeds event in 1907, V-W had produced a much shorter piece to a Whitman text, *Toward the Unknown Region*. Immediately popular with audiences and critics alike, *Toward the Unknown Region* did much to advance VW's reputation as an up and coming composer to be well and truly reckoned with.

At its first performance in Leeds in 1907 it made an immediate impression on the public and the critics, and identified Vaughan Williams as a new and important voice in English music. More than one authority has asserted that . . . 'the work's enduring success stems from its remarkable marriage of music and text, the unmistakable quality of Vaughan Williams' inspired music perfectly encapsulating Whitman's noble, humanistic aspirations.'

The forward movement of the musical score is somewhat in the manner of a solemn procession. A great piece, with rich orchestral scoring!

Elgar – *With proud thanksgiving* [1920]

One of the most often-performed memorial works of the First World War was Edward Elgar's *The Spirit of England*, a setting in three movements of poems by Laurence Binyon [1869-1943]. The dedication in the score was: *To the memory of our glorious men, with a special thought for the Worcesters* In March 1920, Elgar was asked to write a work that would be performed at the unveiling of the Cenotaph in London on 11 November 1920. For this occasion he decided to abridge the third part of the trilogy, *For the Fallen*, with an

accompaniment for military band, giving it the title of *With proud Thanksgiving*. In the event the work was not used for the ceremony, but it was first heard at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on 7 May 1921 in a version for full orchestra (the military band score had been prepared by Frank Winterbottom, not Elgar) based on the original score of *For the Fallen*. The work was performed again at the *Pageant of Empire* at Wembley in 1924, and not heard again until a revival at Eton in 1988.

Elgar's re-working is a remarkable exercise in "re-composition". The introduction is shortened, the soloist omitted from the score and the middle section containing the memorable lines of *They shall not grow old* (note Elgar's transposition of the words "not" and "grow") is re-written in a simplified and more comforting style. The final section is a condensed version of the original, but with some additional harmonic twists, building up to a passage of enormous power and dignity before subsiding quickly into a suitably peaceful ending on the serenity of a major chord. *With Proud Thanksgiving* was heard for the first time in Worcester Cathedral (only its fourth public performance) on May 8, 2010 commemorating 65 years to the day from the end of the Second World War; that evening was also the occasion of the 50th Anniversary Concert of the Bromsgrove Festival. The choral forces on that occasion included Leeds-based chamber choir St Peter's Singers under Dr Hunt's direction. The Vocal Score and Orchestral material used on that occasion had been prepared by Dr Donald Hunt from the Full Score in the *Elgar Edition* published in 1986.

Vaughan Williams – *Dona nobis pacem* [1936]

Symphonist, song-writer, and, for many, the spirit of truly English music, Ralph Vaughan Williams spent his early life in his father's vicarage at Down Ampney in Gloucestershire and was therefore, like Holst, a true West Country man. A kinsman of both the famous Wedgwood porcelain family and of Charles Darwin (who was the composer's great uncle), RVW studied with composers Max Bruch and Maurice Ravel after earlier pupillage with Stanford at the RCM prior to undergraduate studies at Cambridge. Vaughan Williams returned to the Royal College of Music after graduation and became a serious composition student of Parry while also learning the organ with Huddersfield-born Sir Walter Parratt.

Prior to the First World War, in which he enlisted as a private soldier at the age of 41, RVW was involved extensively in collecting and editing folk-songs and also undertook the huge task of musical editorship of *The English Hymnal* published in 1906. Commissions for significant British musical festivals followed – the *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis* for the Gloucester Three Choirs of 1910 and the *Sea Symphony* for the Leeds Festival in autumn of the same year. 1911 saw the Worcester Three Choirs' premiere of the famous *Five Mystical Songs*.

It is well-known that RVW was deeply affected by his experiences in the First World War. Firstly, he suffered the bereavement of his wife's brother, Charles, and the composer's close friend George Sinton Butterworth and, equally affecting, the slow descent into insanity of composer and poet Ivor Gurney, like VW a Gloucester man through and through. Secondly, the War served to kindle the full ardour of the composer's socialist ideology and further emphasised the doubts that nourished his essentially agnostic or even atheist tenets.

Like *A Sea Symphony* of a quarter of a century earlier, the deeply moving *Dona nobis pacem* was composed for one of Yorkshire's famous choirs – being commissioned by Huddersfield Choral Society for its centenary celebrations of 1936 and first performed on 2 October of that momentous year.

Although through-composed without a break, the work is disposed over six clear sections,

unfolding initially with the eponymous cry for peace taken from the *Agnus Dei* of the Latin Mass. There then follow three poems of Walt Whitman: *Beat! Beat! Drums!*, the short single stanza entitled *Reconciliation* (beginning with the words *Word over all, beautiful as the sky*) and, very significantly, the composer's setting of the *Dirge for Two Veterans* that VW probably wrote as early as 1914. John Bright's world-famous *Angel of Death* speech provides the powerful text for the opening of the work's fifth movement; the speech, one of many made by Bright, on 23 February 1855 was couched in powerful language demonstrating the radical's profound opposition to the Crimean War and delivered to an entirely unreceptive House of Commons:

*The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land;
you may almost hear the beating of his wings.*

*There is no one as of old....to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of
our doors, that he may spare and pass on.*

VW follows these few chilling lines with wholly apt scriptural passages from the Old Testament – from the prophets Jeremiah and Micah and from the Book of Daniel. The work's finale contains an even more powerful verbal compilation adapted by the composer himself from Micah, Leviticus, the Psalms, Isaiah and the Gospel according to Saint Luke. The anguished pleas of baritone and soprano soloists combine to yield a wonderfully passionate fervour before the glorious, hushed and other-worldly tones of the final pages bring the work to an end.

In his selection of his verbal texts, Vaughan Williams shows himself a distinguished compiler of such material in the traditions of Parry and Samuel Sebastian Wesley.



Monday 1st December 2014

Messiah – Handel

Sheffield Cathedral

For a number of years, Sheffield Bach Choir has invariably presented a 'complete' performance of Handel's immortal masterwork, *Messiah*. The work was composed at white heat in the late summer of 1741 for a special charity concert in Dublin for the relief of prisoners in the City's two gaols. Thanks to surviving 'word-books' (programmes with the libretto printed in full) and accounts associated with Handel's London performances of the work between 1742 and his death seventeen years later, it is possible to glean much information about the composer's own presentation of the work. He would invariably direct from the keyboard and he possibly never heard the work in full – it was his custom to draw from the allotment of soloists and choose which arias would be included on a particular occasion in congruence with the artistic gifts and flair of the solo singers concerned.

Messiah is by far the least typical of Handel's many oratorios. This is due in the main to the special genius of his 'librettist' Charles Jennens, who was responsible for the imaginative compilation of the verbal text - a compilation which has, in itself, probably done almost as much to establish the work in the hearts and minds of successive generations as Handel's music.

Messiah, truly, stands in a class of its own - as much almost a liturgical observance as a concert piece; not in the manner of the Passion oratorios from the Lutheran tradition, but more as a series of scenarios and reflective tableaux.

Sir Malcolm Sargent's famous remark on the role of the conductor springs to mind. He maintained that narrative Passions were the musical equivalent of a motion picture, with

Messiah as more a series of magic lantern slides. (His thesis being that anyone, given sufficient technical background, could load a cinema reel and switch on, but that it took real judgement and timing to control the progress of magic lantern slides.) Bringing us back to Handel's own performances, it is of interest to recall the assessment of a French poetess:

The Oratorio, or pious concert, pleases us highly. *English* words are sung by *Italian* performers, and accompanied by a variety of instruments. HANDEL is the soul of it: When he makes his appearance, two wax lights are carried before him, which are laid upon his organ. Amidst a loud clapping of hands he seats himself, and the whole band of music strikes up at exactly the right moment. At the interludes he plays concertos of his own composition, either alone or accompanied by the orchestra. These are equally admirable for the harmony and the execution. The Italian opera, in three acts, gives us much less pleasure.

Handel was engaged extensively in the composition and presentation of oratorio in London for the last two decades of his life. His business sense and entrepreneurial energy seems to have captured the mood of the age. Had he remained stubbornly committed to opera composition, his twilight years would have been much less comfortable and his public far less appreciative. The composer's curt comment to a member of the nobility is especially revealing of his own attitude to oratorio. On receiving the compliment of having provided his audience with a 'noble entertainment' Handel is alleged to have replied, *'I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wish to make them better...'*



Saturday 6th December 2014

Carol Concert with Fine Arts Brass

Central United Reformed Church – Chapel Walk

Our 2014-15 season includes a new venture in the form of our first Carol Concert for which we will be welcoming the renowned *Fine Arts Brass*. The event was spear-headed by Central United Reformed Church following the Church's invitation for the Bach Choir to contribute to the 300th anniversary celebration of worship on the site in Sheffield; additional to the Church's support, we have been fortunate to have obtained extremely generous sponsorship from two choir members enabling us to secure the presence of *Fine Arts Brass*. The programme includes a wide range of Christmas Carols and other festive music with contributions from organist Jonathan Gooing. A carol concert has been something that many members have felt to be missing from our annual schedule, not least because of the wealth of wonderful seasonal music available to us from which to select a wide ranging programme. Many of the carol settings come from the iconic *Carols for Choirs* anthologies published regularly since 1960, but there will be some special carols including a revival of the now rarely-heard *Come to the Manger* by S P Waddington [once a staple of the Roman Catholic Christmas tradition] as well as original music from the pen of John Rutter and others. Eight national traditions will be involved and, especially appropriate during the First World War Centenary year, there'll be *Silent Night* sung alternately in English and German reflecting what happened in the trenches during the truce of the first Christmas of the "Great War". It is our hope that the Carol Concert will become a regular feature in the Sheffield musical calendar. This concert will be included as part of the main 2014-15 season programme for those purchasing season tickets. There'll be carols for all, of course, alongside the other music – so, come prepared to *sing!*



Saturday 7th March 2015

Bach – St Matthew Passion
Sheffield Cathedral

Judged by any yardstick, Bach's Passion Settings have to be ranked as amongst the greatest musical works ever written. Two survive to us today in complete form - the *St John* of 1723 and that according to *St Matthew* of 1729. Parts of a setting of the narrative of St Mark's Gospel also survive. All of this music is in the important tradition of the Passion Oratorio. For our *St Matthew* presentation this year, Sheffield Bach Choir is absolutely delighted to be joined by the gifted young choristers from St John's Ranmoor under the inspirational direction of Ian Roberts. The Ranmoor boys and girls will sing in part one and are particularly featured by having their own part in the magnificent opening chorale fantasia.

Of especial interest to the student of these expansive essays are their precursors from a mainly Hamburg-based school. Regular supporters of the Bach Choir will recall the Society's recent acclaimed revival of Handel's *Passion of Christ*. It is well known that this *Passion* of 1716, to the libretto of Barthold Heinrich Brockes - a work copied out in full by Bach and his first wife - contains elements notably present in the *St Matthew*: the use of strings for the accompaniment to the words of the Saviour, the contemplative arias - the texts of which comment upon the progress of the Passion Narrative - and the important use of choral dialogue. This last characteristic is wrought in wondrous fashion in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* by means of the use of double chorus and orchestra (and by their impressive combination). Particularly masterful is the 'scene-setting', yet powerfully rhetorical, opening chorus with its 'question and answer' textures all woven around the majestic chorale by the so-called *ripieno* singers - *O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig*.

The *St John Passion* - an intensely dramatic work, scored for single chorus and orchestra - loses a great deal when performed in English translation. Never as popular with English-speaking audiences as the *St Matthew* setting, the former's direct expression and fast-moving narrative have a power all their own which transcends the linguistic barrier and a summarised synopsis can still involve the listener in the work as a whole even when sung in a language other than his or her own.

The *St Matthew Passion* is altogether more reflective, and the individual's response is more crucial to the fulfilment of the listener; it is, as has been shown, on a grander musical scale (about twice as grand, in fact) and about an hour longer in duration. There are more chorale hymns deployed, and thus active participation through such congregational singing is the more easily achieved. In 2015, as in all recent Bach Choir performances, the music of the hymns will be provided so that those attending may play their own full part in the singing.

The standard English translation of the Arias, Hymns and most of the Choruses is also of superlative quality. What is rather less satisfactory is the recitative in English; Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Ivor Atkins adapted Bach's musical rhythms to fit the Authorised or 'King James' version of the biblical story. While this expression may be said to lend great depth of expression to the *Christus* part sung by the Principal Bass, it is regrettable that some of the directness in the original vocal rhythms of the German text is, inevitably, lost in translation. The incumbent Bach Choir conductor has incorporated minor modifications in some of the choruses, drawing partly on the pioneering work undertaken by the London musician Denys Darlow who directed performances in his new English version at the fashionable West End Church of St George, Hanover Square on Good Friday for many

years past. Amongst these adjustments may be mentioned an increasing directness in verbal expression, such as the substitution of the aggressive *To death with Him! He's guilty!* For the more passive and less involved *He worthy is of death* provided by Elgar and Atkins. However, we hope we have not made alterations simply for their own sake; this is not by any means a performance in Darlow's new English concept - but rather a celebration of the Elgar-Atkins edition. We have tried to keep, wherever possible, to Bach's musical rhythms in order to achieve as near a result as we may in consort with the composer's artistic intentions.

Yet we sometimes forget that the *Passion* is not - in essence - a concert-piece. All the oratorios in the stupendous Lutheran heritage were composed for liturgical performance - that is, presentation within the context of public worship. This is a long tradition in England too, going back many generations almost to the period immediately following Mendelssohn's notable revival of the work for its celebrated centenary performance of 1829 in Berlin.

This masterpiece comprises the culmination of the musical development of the setting of the Passion story - a process that may with ease be traced through the simply inflected, yet immensely moving, Plainchant Passions by way of the additions of polyphonic 'turba' (crowd) choruses by Renaissance Masters such as Byrd and Victoria through to the Motet Passions of composers like J C Demantius and the narrative settings of Heinrich Schütz. All these works have involved their composer's personal response to 'the greatest story ever told' - a tale of divinity portrayed as the suffering servant from Isaiah's prophecy, whereby the tree of the gallows became the tree of glory - the 'one reliance' of humanity as St Venantius' glorious hymn has it. Truly may we all share the mourning of the daughters of Jerusalem expressed so powerfully in the intense music from which Bach's peerless setting unfolds.



Saturday 13th June 2015
Sacred Choral Classics – 'Jesu Joy' and all that Jazz
St Mark's Church Broomhill

The Bach Choir's appearance in the 2015 Broomhill Festival will provide an opportunity to deploy the full resources of the magnificent organ at St Mark's, currently undergoing major refurbishment by Wood of Huddersfield. The music comprises a popular selection of sacred choral favourites from all traditions. With Mr David Houlder as our accompanist, a vividly etched evening from singers and instrument can be thoroughly guaranteed! The final programme of works to be included will be determined in the Autumn with suggestions welcomed from choir members and Friends, but will certainly include Bach's *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring!*

And, in addition, our annual Come and Sing Messiah . . .



Monday 15th December 2014
'Come and Sing' Messiah
Dore Parish Church

The 'Come and Sing Messiah' at Dore Parish Church is always well attended and a popular social event too which contributes to much needed choir funds. It was lovely to have young soloists from Sheffield University Music Department in December 2013, a tradition which we hope to continue when Mark McCombs from the University conducts the event

	<p>with more university soloists in the coming season. For those new to this event, the evening also provides a lovely opportunity for us to enjoy hearing Simon Lindley skilfully providing the <i>entire</i> orchestral accompaniment at the organ, interspersed with mine pies and mulled wine (<i>well – at the interval that is!</i>)</p>
	<p>Now, a round-up of choir news from Liz Buxton, Secretary . . .</p>
	<p>Communication with choir members – it is now possible to communicate with absolutely every member of the choir via email, which has meant that much rehearsal time has been saved as we are now able to communicate ‘sits and stands’, concert arrangements and pretty much everything else in this way. This only works though if everyone makes sure that any changes to contact details are communicated promptly. Please check your subscription slip in September as this will contain the most up to date details that we hold for each member and let Liz know if there are any changes - lizbuxton@sfd10.plus.com Providing this doesn’t result in ‘daily’ SBS bulletins, Liz is always happy to include any messages from other choir members that they would like to circulate – perhaps you are involved in another concert or musical event?</p>
	<p>Concert previews and reviews – the long standing music critic for the Sheffield Telegraph retired last year, but Bernard Lee is now very actively involved in the development of the Classical Sheffield website and if you haven’t already visited this, it is well worth a ‘click or two’. Just type <i>Classical Sheffield</i> into your search engine. Our choir was one of the first to become involved when this started and along with other associated activities this is really taking off now, becoming the primary source of information about music making in the Sheffield area. Bernard Lee writes previews of many concerts and we always make sure that information is sent to him in good time. We have had some reviews by Bernard and others in his team and this all adds to our efforts to market our concerts. Anne Adams ensures too that we are ‘tweeting’ about our concerts. Once into the Classical Sheffield website, you can register to receive a weekly ‘Listings’ email which also includes SBS concerts. Our Conductor, Chairman and Secretary have all attended meetings of the User-group over the course of the year and a Classical Sheffield ‘Mini-Festival’ is planned for 2015, to which many of us hope Sheffield Bach Choir or a smaller SBS group can contribute. More about this next term.</p>
	<p>Publicity and ticket sales – as many of you know, Jen Smith now liaises with our designer and with various printers to ensure that our publicity material remains at the high standard which has been much praised by current and former members alike. A big thank you to Jen as this is a demanding job, sometimes with VERY tight timescales. We were thrilled to have the 2014-15 season brochures ready for the last concert of the season this year, and some advance postal ticket requests have already started to arrive. Improving ‘footfall’ at concerts (as I understand this is called in the retail industry!) is increasingly critical. The cost of staging concerts continues to increase and since refurbishment, it now costs us £900 each time we hire the Cathedral. With four concerts there in 2014-15, this is going to be an expensive year, so please do your best to entice a few more audience members. Some of you will remember that I mentioned previously that ‘<i>word of mouth</i>’ proved to be the most effective means of publicising our concerts as shown through our audience surveys. Hopefully, everyone is trying to send on to someone the PDF version of our posters that are now delivered to your in-box in advance of each concert? Ticket sales via members of the choir or ‘on the door’ continue to be in the majority, although many people are finding it very convenient to purchase tickets on</p>

	<p>line via our web-site www.sheffieldbachchoir.org.uk. Following feedback from some audience members, tickets bought on line can now be collected from a separate table to save people having to join the same queue as those purchasing 'on the door' So – that proves we really do listen to feedback and where possible, try to act upon this! A list of venues where we ensure publicity is delivered has been compiled with your help – we will ensure this is out at rehearsals so if you think of somewhere else where <i>you</i> could take a poster, then please add this to our list.</p>
	<p>Social programme and fund-raising – Thanks go to Richard Morton who has continued to co-ordinate our monthly fund-raising stall which contributes a 'steady income' to our much-needed funds. Richard will welcome any contributions to the stall – the things that can be eaten during the break seem very popular – indeed, Kitty's scones are an especial favourite of our conductor!! Thanks too to Kitty Ross for organising the 'little raffle' each week. A special thank you also to Joan Gaunt who has contributed over £1800 over the last few years through her donation of the profits from the refreshments at her Open Garden event each year. Our SBS Annual Garden Party was again hosted by Chris and Helen Walker and raised almost £350 for the society. This year for the first time, some of Helen's Guides Company prepared and served the refreshments and very well they did this too. The scones rivalled any we had previously sampled and it is hoped that they will be persuaded to help us again next year! Our social programme has admittedly not been as full this year - we are clearly missing Alison Down's tenacity following her move to Cardiff and we still don't have a Social Secretary! Perhaps a small group of members might like to bring some new ideas to how the social/fund raising programme might be developed?</p>
	<p>Choir copies for the coming season – all the music for our November concert has now arrived from various sources and the remaining music will be available for singers early in September. Members should have their own copies of Bach's Mass in B Minor and St Matthew Passion, and Handel's Messiah, all needed in the coming season. We have already made arrangements to ensure everyone has copies of the books needed for the Carol Concert in December – either both orange and green Carols for Choirs I and II <u>OR</u> the white book 100 Carols for Choirs (all published by OUP). The programme for the final concert of the season in June has not yet been finalised, but we will be using music that we <i>own</i> for this concert. Incidentally, talking of music we own, we were overwhelmed by the number of offers to re-house the choir's music which was stored at the Coates' home and continue to be very grateful to the other members who store substantial stocks of our music in their attics!</p> <p>For many people, the music needed for many concerts just mysteriously 'appears' when needed, and they may not realise the arrangements necessary to ensure this happens. We have been very grateful for many years to Liz Coates, ably assisted by Laurence, for sorting, distributing and collecting back in, the music we need and we were all very sad that Liz Coates was forced to relinquish her role as Librarian during this season when she became ill. We are very fortunate however, to have Sarah Hogan in the choir who has the ability to seek out music from Public Libraries across the entire country – this is a great asset. We are also still regularly using the Yorkshire Music Library too which maintains the collection that was threatened a few years ago due to cut-backs. What many people won't realise is that we are also able to borrow a significant amount of music, both choral scores and orchestral parts, through Simon Lindley's personal contacts with other choral societies and through Leeds Minster. This has helped the choir hugely and enabled us to make some substantial savings on hire costs, which can be very high. Many of you will remember that the Britten scores for last November's concert literally came from the</p>

	<p>corners of the earth and will understand the frenetic activity on the front pews immediately after a concert to make sure that all the orchestral parts are back in for prompt return to save penalty charges!!!</p> <p>Many of you have enquired about Liz Coates in the last few months and I am delighted to report that she managed to get out to a concert during Buxton Festival, where several SBS members were also singing – it was lovely to see her looking much better and hope she and Laurence will be able to manage to join us again soon.</p>
	<p>Membership matters from Liz Arnesen, membership secretary. . .</p>
	<p>First of all, may I thank you for putting up with my periodic nagging to let me know as soon as you know that you will be absent from a rehearsal which does help Simon to determine the rehearsal schedule. This is particularly important in relation to who will be missing from a concert. In addition to the weekly attendance register therefore, I will be putting out a sheet specifically to record projected absences from rehearsals and concerts. This will be enormously helpful to forewarn Simon and the committee if/when a voice part will need strengthening by invoking the Voice Exchange Scheme, in order to continue to give the very best performances that we can.</p> <p>Just a gentle reminder to the ladies that prefer to wear trousers for concerts, that these do need to be full length please. Also a reminder that it was agreed at the last AGM that the choir subscription would be £110 from the 2014-15 season.</p> <p>We have welcomed a number of new members to the choir over the last year and hope they have quickly felt a part of the choir, and are enjoying the music. As of the end of the last season, the choir numbers 60 (Sops 20, lost 3 & gained 2; Altos 21, lost 2 & gained 2; Tenors 9, lost 3 & gained 1; Basses 10, lost 1), and we have one potential new Alto to audition. Over the year, we have had several people contact us, and come along to try out – encouraging, but a pity some decided not to commit!</p> <p>Congratulations to three choir members who were married during the year – two of them to each other! I think it's fair to say that the more we can encourage potential new members to give us a try this season, the healthier it will be for all members, and the better we will be able to sing a varied programme in a thoroughly musical fashion!</p> <p>So – go for it!</p>
	<p>Some words from Chris Walker, our Chairman . . .</p>
	<p>After a season of alternative venues we look forward to being back in the revamped cathedral and an exciting and very busy season. We are there for two big Bach works, for Messiah and the World War 1 Commemoration concert. The final concert of the season to be held in St Mark's is again part of the Broomhill Festival and I hope that this will help to increase our audience and profile. We are very pleased that this year we also will be giving a Carol concert in the Central United Reformed Church. This again is a chance for us to reach out to a new audience and we should seize the opportunity to market our other concerts. Some of you may remember the Fine Arts Brass, who will be joining us for this concert and we can look forward to an exceptionally high class performance from them. I would be very keen for the Carol concert to become a regular part of our season, possibly with a guest band.</p>

All this comes at a price and if we are to put on these large works that we enjoy, and do so with good professional musicians, as Liz has already mentioned, we need to sell more tickets than we currently manage to do. We are also quite a small choir now and need to actively find new members to join us.

As you are aware, we are part of the Voice exchange scheme with the Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus and the Oratorio Chorus. This lets us borrow tenors and basses for specific concerts and gives our tenors and basses the opportunity to reciprocate for some of their concerts. We are also enjoying building our relationship with the St Peter's Singers from Leeds.

I am very keen to actively promote the image of the choir and to build up its numbers - both in membership and audience. We warmly welcome those who have recently joined us! Realistically this is essential if we are to continue in our present fashion of works and venues for our concerts.

I feel that we are doing very well in moving with the times and now have an active website, Facebook page and are Tweeting. Very many thanks to those who manage this for us. It is really pushing the Bach Choir forward technologically which is essential these days.

We have a faithful group who now help with setting up for concerts, selling programmes and generally assisting in many different ways from making tea to storing music and much more. A lot of this happens behind the scenes but is extremely valuable and so many thanks indeed.

There is still the opportunity for anyone who is able to give sponsorship however large or small to the Carol concert or other events, and this can be done when we go back in September. In the meantime let us all try and become ambassadors for the Sheffield Bach Choir to promote it at every possible opportunity and to let us grow in stature in Sheffield and environs.

With best wishes



Fancy that - 'singing on prescription???

A new long-term study on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and singing from Canterbury Christ Church University has shown that the benefits are real. Dr Ian Morrison, a senior research fellow and one of the project's authors, said: "Lung function improved dramatically, particularly after about five months, once people had got used to what they were doing and changed their breathing habits - to get such an improvement really was quite remarkable. The whole musculature around the lungs, throat and the upper chest improve with time," says Dr Morrison. "Singers use what they have much better and you really see a difference in the skill of actually breathing."

To test its effects, Morrison and his colleagues asked over 100 COPD patients - ranging from mild to severely affected - to attend weekly singing sessions over a 12-month period. They measured their lung capacity and asked participants to fill in a questionnaire. "On average the people in our study had 50% of expected lung function, i.e. about 1.5 litres of air in a one second puff. For healthy lungs, we would expect something more like 3 litres" said Prof Stephen Clift, the study's lead author.

The very best the team had hoped for was that *after singing regularly for one year*, the

size of that one second puff would stay the same. "Instead we got an increase of 30ml," says Prof Clift. "In our study, we not only appeared to halt the decline but people showed a small improvement." The study's authors certainly do not claim that singing can cure COPD or be an alternative to interventions such as giving up smoking, but Dr Morrison thinks that it could be a useful tool in helping people to manage the condition and live with it day to day. "Deep down, what we're looking for is **singing on prescription** for various long-term conditions," he says.



And finally . . .

The Committee looks forward to seeing you at the first rehearsal of the new season which will be on **Monday 1st September at 7.30pm**. Please be aware that re-auditions will be taking place before and after this rehearsal, so if people could stay in the lobby before the rehearsal, and speedily 'evacuate' the hall at the end, this would be most appreciated! Lastly, in order to improve the quality of the choir's performance still further, here are a few new musical terms for members to brush-up on in readiness for the forthcoming season!

ALLREGRETTO - when you are 16 bars into the piece and realise you took too fast a tempo

ANGUS DEI - to play with a divinely beefy tone

A PATELLA - accompanied by knee-slapping

APPOLOGGIATURA - a work you regret singing

APPROXIMATURA - a series of notes not intended by the composer, yet sung with confidence

APPROXIMENTO - an entry somewhere in the vicinity of the correct pitch

CACOPHANY (aka **CACOUGHANY**) - a composition incorporating many people with chest colds

CORAL SYMPHONY - a large multi-movement work from Beethoven's Caribbean period

DILL PICCOLINI - an exceedingly small wind instrument that plays only sour notes

FERMANTRA - a note held over and over and over and over and . . .

FLUTE FLIES - those tiny mosquitos that bother musicians on outdoor gigs

FRUGALHORN - a sensible and inexpensive brass instrument

GREGORIAN CHAMP - the title bestowed upon the monk who can hold a note the longest

PLACEBO DOMINGO - a faux tenor

THE RIGHT OF STRINGS - manifesto of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Violinists

SPRITZICATO - an indication to stringed instruments to produce a bright and bubbly sound

TEMPO TANTRUM - what a choir does when not following the conductor

TROUBLE CLEF - any clef one can't read eg. alto clef for pianists

VESUVIOSO - an indication to build to a fiery conclusion

Thanks to www.thebeatgoesonmb.org isn't the internet wonderful?!!

We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter - please let Liz B know if you have any suggestions for inclusion in future newsletters or general emails to singers.

See you all in September!!