



Rhythmic Times

A Brief Roundup of your news from Brockham Choral Society

Voces8 Workshop

On a grey, damp day in October a brave group of Brockham Choral singers, plus three friends, made their way across London, past St Paul's Cathedral to the beautiful, light, Gresham Centre in St Anne's & St Agnes' Church - now the home of Voces8.

I went along with some trepidation, not knowing what would be expected of us. My usual battery of unhelpful thoughts tried to undermine any confidence I had in my ability as a singer. Would I sing in tune? Would I be picked on for the one wrong note I sang? Can I remember any rhythms for more than 5 minutes? Would the genius leading the workshop be able to hear me breathe in the wrong place? Etc...

Well the genius turned out to be Paul Smith, co-founder of Voces8 and brother of Barnaby Smith, who was previously Musical Director of BCS. Paul immediately helped us to relax and participate with enthusiasm in the wide variety of exercises he introduced to us. Under his experienced tuition, complex combinations of rhythms and sounds were taught in a very digestible fashion, and we were soon entering into the session with energy and joy. Not only did we learn a lot, but we came away feeling valued as a singing group. Altogether an energizing, exhilarating and exhausting afternoon, followed by suitable refreshment and fun at Cote restaurant afterwards. Hopefully more workshops will follow - I urge you not to miss the next one!

Estelle

What a great year!

This autumn we celebrate our first year under Patrick's gifted musical direction. Since the last newsletter, we have travelled through a variety of musical journeys -

Puccini & Opera in March; 'In the Mood' Jazz & Swing Picnic Concert in June; A wonderful Workshop Weekend Away in Portsmouth with Patrick and Neil Ferris, and a Voces8 Workshop in London. Sectional rehearsals have continued to enhance our practice together, and the variety of social events have given us a chance to get to know each other as well as raise necessary funds to support the musical expenses of the choir. Another exciting year awaits us : "Entente Cordiale" Concert - Durufle's Requiem, Faure, etc, in November; Family Christmas Concert & Carols in Care Homes in December; Vaughn Williams 'Sea Symphony' in March, and "Tea at the Ritz" in June 2018. Never mind the dancing... let's Keep on Singing!!



The Annual Dinner

It was a beautiful Spring evening and North Holmwood Community Building looked very festive, in shades of pink and white, with delicate flower arrangements provided by Mary White. After a delicious seafood starter, diners had a choice of Boeuf Bourguignonne or Pork Stroganoff. There was a cheese board and wonderful array of fabulous desserts, provided by members of the choir. Coffee and tea were served while diners prepared themselves for the entertainment to follow. What can I say?! Stunning singing from Anne Mitchell, Fred Harrison and Peter Slot, while Romey and her team reminded us, melodically and affectionately, of our splendid MD and Tony Earnshaw and company made the audience cry with laughter, although not always for the right reasons perhaps! Many thanks to everyone who helped with this very successful and happy evening.

Jane





A Grand Auction it was... 28 January 2017

Here's a photo of an Auction Promise being fulfilled. Sue and Nick Tanton shared their sailing boat, Snowgoose, with friends including Gareth Jones and John Bartholomew. Says Sue: We all greatly enjoyed the day - as John says in a thank you card "Good weather, food and company. Perfect!"

Richard Bass was an enthusiastic supporter of BCS and a great champion of an Auction of Promises to raise funds. He always urged us to repeat the success of the first one we held in May 2014. Following his sudden death in 2016 it was felt that another auction, in his memory, would be an appropriate tribute to him. This time the event was held in the brand new North Holmwood Community Building and we had an enthusiastic audience of seventy people. Our excellent auctioneer, Ges Ray, quickly whipped up a lively atmosphere, aided perhaps by a welcome glass of wine, and the evening flowed wonderfully, with numerous generous bids. A 'scrumptious casserole for six', for example, raised £67, while the Greensand Band were in such demand to play for parties that two bids were honoured, raising an amazing £750! The buffet was universally agreed to have been fantastic, with many visitors regretting having eaten before they came. Although it was a little crowded, the evening proved a huge success - a very enjoyable end to the gloomy month of January - and the total sum raised was £4,440! Thanks to all the people who offered promises, contributed to the buffet and generally supported the auction so wonderfully!

Jane

Mad Hatter's Teaparty

Imagine a warm Summer's afternoon: the sun shining, dishes overflowing with red strawberries, scrumptious scones and cream, divine cakes, tea, and friends relaxing in easy chairs set in one of the most beautiful gardens in Surrey. You're there - BCS's summer social/fund raiser, kindly hosted by Anne and Peter Mitchell. Fab!



Could this be true?...

There is no human activity that isn't motivated by sex, including singing in a choir. Research has shown that when choirboys sing in front of adolescent girls, they sing louder than usual to try to stand out from the rest.

There is something about a beautiful voice which makes the most unprepossessing individual seem wildly attractive: witness the nightingale. You wouldn't give it a second glance whilst at rest, but when it starts singing....!

Being a member of a choir is an all round, collaborative experience. You need to learn the music, take control of your breathing, be aware of and listen to other parts, take direction from a conductor and have the courage to pitch and sing your opening note without waiting for your neighbour to do it first. Above all, concentration is essential. There is no doubt that the skills and techniques learnt in a choir are hugely beneficial in life.

Choirs that meet regularly, it seems, have a stronger bonding than any other activity, including sport. As Charles Dickens once put it, "all mingle in one pursuit, without regard to station or degree, and with the utmost harmony of feeling".

But beware. If you should find yourself singing too loudly and not blending with the rest of your section, we will all know what's really on your mind!

Extracts from, and adaptations to an article by Melanie McDonagh (Telegraph) by Reuben

Getting to know you...

A chance to get to know fellow members of BCS. This edition features alto
JENNY REGAN

In the beginning...

Jenny Regan was born in Cobham and lived in a house overlooking St George's Fairway. Her father served in the RAF, and during the war was stationed at St Merion, Cornwall. A significant effect of the war was that Jenny attended 16 different schools before settling at Sherbourne School as a boarder. Happy memories of Sherbourne included playing cricket, and of course, tennis. At the age of 10, she played tennis for the Surrey County Junior team and at 14 was entering tournaments, progressing to the adult section, frequently playing at Eastbourne. One bonus, was staying at the Grand Hotel at Eastbourne and enjoying the social life within the tennis community.

Life continued...

and work called her to be a secretary in London. A varied and interesting career emerged, as secretary to a variety of businesses including a Fleet Street Advertising Agency promoting Maserati sports cars and a solicitors' firm working for the Snowdon Mountain Railway. She also worked for the Director of Willis Faber, who was renowned for always wearing his Bowler hat in winter and Panama in summer – those were the days!

Beautiful homes...

In 1964 Jenny married Michael, who ran the family business, The Architectural Press, and in 1965 they moved to Tilehurst Lane near Dorking, where Jenny still lives today. When her first son, Tim was a baby they fell in love with a house in Trebetherick, Cornwall, and were able to buy their holiday home in 1968, which is a source of joy to her family and friends. Simon was born in 1970, and Philippa in 1977. Her eldest grandson is also at Sherbourne School and has accepted a place at a university in the USA. Her two younger grandchildren are both talented hockey players.

As well as enjoying the tennis court at Tilehurst, Jenny also has a passion for gardening and although the frustration of arthritis limits the hours of work now, she is happily supported by Hugh Tanton as her gardener and right hand man.

As we talked we were soothed by the snores of her beautiful English Pointer, Domino - a seriously spoilt dog, who shares Jenny's roast chicken dinner!

Happy days...

Sailing with Michael meant Jenny was 'crew' when not feeling seasick, enjoying some sailing holidays, although not at the tiller. Meanwhile, whilst Michael was entering Racing week, Jenny was heading for the grass courts for a game of tennis.

Anyone for tennis?

In 1983 she became a full member of The All England Club, Wimbledon, playing tennis regularly until sadly, the pain of arthritis curtailed her game. However her social life is still based in Wimbledon with many happy outings for lunch to see other players on a regular basis.

And singing...

began again when she joined Capel Choir 10 years ago, where she continues to sing in the Leith Hill Festival each year, followed by joining Brockham Choral – wooed by the welcome and the wine! As for music – she says, "Not classical for me, give me Mama Mia any day!" (You'll have to ask Jenny whether this statement is true or false...)

And most importantly?

"Life is for enjoying."



A Memorable Requiem



In my time I have sung in quite a few Verdi Requiems, but there is one which has always stayed with me. This particular performance was in Ghent Cathedral as part of the Flanders festival. Before the final rehearsal I had spent a sunny morning wandering along the canals and admiring the magnificent van Eyck altarpiece in the cathedral. Then midway through our afternoon rehearsal we were given a break and some of us hot-footed it across the square to a bar we had noticed earlier for some liquid refreshment. As we approached the entrance, we were surprised to see the whole place jam-packed, standing room only. At the far end of the bar was a TV screen, and the entire clientele seemed to be watching a horror film. Images of airliners crashing into skyscrapers didn't seem to us an ideal way to spend a sunny September afternoon. There was clearly no chance of a drink, and we were about to go when it slowly dawned on us that what appeared to be the film's subtitles was in fact a rolling news commentary from New York. This was really happening. By now, of course, you've realised the date of this concert – September 11th 2001. When the rehearsal belatedly resumed, the news having swept through orchestra, soloists and choir, our conductor, Daniele Gatti, announced that the performance would still go ahead, but as a genuine Requiem rather than a concert. Come the evening, the cathedral was packed, the atmosphere intense, and the musicians played and sang with more feeling than I can ever remember. At one point, the mezzo-soprano soloist, a young black American, briefly broke down, but

recovered quickly. Gatti had asked the audience not to applaud at the end, and when one or two brave souls tried, his fierce look soon silenced them. A poignant sight as we silently filed out was a sad little row of bouquets lined up on a table to be presented to the soloists during the applause which never happened.

Diana Unwin

News of the Year

We changed the venue for our weekly rehearsals in February, and have settled in to St John's School. Most importantly Marion, our wonderful accompanist is still smiling!



WELCOME The new year has also brought new members to the choir, and we welcome you all.

THANK YOU to all partners and friends who support the choir in so many different ways.

Some Sad Times too...

Very sadly we also said farewell to David Ord who died in April, and Melanie Knight earlier this month. Although no longer singing with Brockham, they are very fondly remembered.

Men Wanted!

Our tenor and bass teams are looking a little sparse these days and would welcome new friends to sing alongside them. If you know of any likely candidates please encourage them to come along and sing with us for a term for free. For further information please speak to Mary Suckling or Victoria.

Last but not least ...a special thanks
to Soo Abram for continuing to design and produce such great posters for our concerts.

THANK YOU TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS
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