

## **Brockham Choral Chairperson's Report August 2022**

As I look back on the 2021/22 season for Brockham Choral, there is some relief, a few regrets, and a lot of pleasure.

Let me start with the relief: after 18 months of uncertainty and zoom connections, most of us were able to come together in the Autumn ready to rehearse for the Messiah concert in December. It was touch and go up to the day before the concert as to whether it could go ahead due to further pandemic restrictions looming in front of us, but we were lucky... We timed it well! And in the end, we celebrated a hugely successful concert with the acclaimed Academy of Ancient Music boosting the musical experience, for which we thank Cole, who was finally able to conduct us in a live concert.

There are of course some regrets. I would have preferred for us not to have had to contend with yet more adaptations due to the pandemic dragging on as it did through the Spring term. We had to cope with many more absences than normal, with some people needing to miss the whole season, as well as some of us struggling with longer term fatigue. We have had to cope with a breezy, often cold, rehearsal space, and extra precautions with health and safety, all of which take extra energy. Many people found singing the St Matthew Passion in German extremely challenging and some struggled to enjoy the intensity of the challenge of such a work. In the end, with the help of some friends from other choral societies the choir sang very well, but there was criticism of the choice of soloists and the continuo. It is all too easy to be critical with hindsight and we will take forward the learning – we had simply hoped to make it a special 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert.

Personally, I think we have coped very well with the complex challenges that we have encountered over the past year. These are not easy times. Many choral societies chose not to attempt to come together for a concert. Despite the inevitable struggles, I'm still glad that we continued, and I want to reflect on the many moments of pleasure throughout the year...

We held a very successful, joyful workshop in November for the Messiah concert and several new members have joined us as a result of that. We are delighted to have you on board. Miraculously, we managed to sing carols at care homes and enjoyed a brilliant Christmas Social evening at the Red Lion afterwards.

Socially, the January term got off to a good start with a fun Quiz evening at the Rialto Lounge. Then we enjoyed a wonderful 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at Betchworth Park Golf Club in May, thanks to Jane's brilliant organisation, the courageous entertainers, and a moment of celebrating Marion's longstanding commitment, having accompanied the choir for 23 years. We are truly grateful to have such a lovely, accomplished pianist.

I think we are all aware of the amazing work that Ed has continued to do as Secretary and Website Co-ordinator, for which we are immensely grateful. Our Treasurer, Mick, has worked incredibly hard to maintain our finances, and again we pass on our gratitude to him. Reuben stepped into the role of Concert Manager and both concerts were proof of his commitment to the choir for which we are very grateful. This year proved to have a

considerably greater workload for Mary and Tortie as Membership Secretaries, and Romey as 'Friends' Secretary – thank you. Whilst we were so sad that Maria had to step back from the choir whilst recovering from surgery, we are very grateful to Jackie for taking on the Ticket sales so efficiently. Sue Tanton continues to amaze us in her ability to procure grants – a very time-consuming job – and organise the concert teas. There has been additional work this year in addressing our Health & Safety Policy and we thank Mick for setting this up and Robin Luff for now taking it on. Our thanks also go to the Concert Staging Crews, and the Part Reps, for their care and commitment each week, as well as Anne Mitchell, Phil, Jane, Nick and Val for their roles on the committee. Last, but not least, I thank Tony for all his support and wisdom.

Looking forward to the next season, I hope that we will continue to develop as a choral society, by encouraging one another, supporting the committee and the many other members who work behind the scenes, bringing in new members, and by having fun! I'll be saying more about the future of the choir at the AGM.

Most of all, I hope we will enjoy singing together again. Let's start the new term by celebrating the fact that we have maintained our ability to sing beautiful music together, give enjoyment to both ourselves and our audiences, and continue to be a positive influence on our world.

Here's to the year ahead, let's...

**Keep Singing!**

Estelle Earnshaw  
Chairperson  
August 2022