

WELCOME

Welcome to all our audience, whether you are first-timers or old friends. We are much honoured that HM Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Mr Allan Willett CMG and Mrs Anne Willett are present today, with the Chairman of Kent County Council, Mr Kent Tucker MBE and Mrs Eileen Tucker, the Mayor and Mayoress of Tunbridge Wells, Councillor David Wakefield and Mrs Ruth Wakefield, and the Mayor of Southborough, Mrs Colette March and escort, all as our distinguished guests. We are also delighted that our friends from the Bach Choir of Wiesbaden have come from Germany to sing with us. Their Director of Music, Klaus Uwe Ludwig, is the piano soloist in today's performance of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. Thank you all for coming to help us celebrate our 100th birthday. Few organisations survive so long – only the very tenacious that are involved in something worthwhile. Making music is just that, both for those of us who are performing and for you whom we wish to entertain. We do hope you will enjoy our concert.

Helen MacNab, Hon Chairman

DEREK – A VIEW FROM THE CHOIR

Rehearsals and concerts under Derek's direction have been enormously enjoyable affairs. Members of the Choral Society have been encouraged, cajoled, entertained and taught by a consummate musician, who is possessed of great patience and humour. We have benefited not only from Derek's musicianship but also from his wide-ranging knowledge and interests. He is interested in literature and art and in the world around him. He loves to travel and to converse, in several languages, with all sorts and conditions of people. In rehearsal he will produce a story to illustrate any point, or a reference from any branch of music to illuminate a phrase and make it easier to learn. All of us who have sung with Derek have been subtly educated and essentially have had a great deal of fun. We have seen for ourselves the vast amount of physical, intellectual and emotional energy that Derek has contributed to all our enterprises. We are privileged to have joined in making music during his reign as our Musical Director.

Helen MacNab, Hon Chairman

NEW MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Members of our audience will be interested to know that our new Musical Director, from September 2004, will be Richard Jenkinson, FRCO, GRSM, ARCM. Since completing his studies at the Royal College of Music, Richard has worked as a conductor, chorus master, accompanist, organist, composer and singer. We look forward to a happy association with him as our new Musical Director.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are indebted to a former member of the Choral Society, Joan Lowdon, whose generous legacy has enabled us to stage our very costly concert today. Her love of music was profound and she would have been delighted to know that through her we have been able to celebrate our Centenary in such a way.

GEOFF STREDDER (d. 2003) AN APPRECIATION

When Helen MacNab asked me if I felt I could write a short account of Geoff's time with the RTWCS, I gave it considerable thought before finally agreeing. Here I should point out that such an appraisal must of its nature, be totally subjective. In the end it has proved for me, mostly a happy experience, which was quite a surprise.

Geoff's first association with the Society dates back some thirty-six years, which is a long time. We both responded to a Courier advert for members, and we went along to rehearsal then, as now, on a Monday evening. How many members presently remember the old Christ Church Hall in the High Street, a somewhat depressing venue thankfully changed a few years later to St John's Hall, lighter and brighter? Geoff thought carefully before accepting an invitation from Cyril Wood to step into his shoes as Secretary in 1973 when we returned from a tour of duty in Mauritius. He needed to satisfy himself that he would be capable of doing the job efficiently and happily. I don't think he needed to have had doubts. His own essentially optimistic, cheerful and positive attitude to life coupled with his emphasis on efficiency and a structured pattern in all his work influenced all that he

subsequently did as Secretary. Those who knew him well will not forget his friendliness, his own particular brand of quick wit and wry humour which invariably lightened a potentially difficult situation, whether in general rehearsal announcements, concert practices or on concert days themselves. This is not to say that he suffered fools gladly, nor was he often called upon to pour oil on troubled water!

Geoff saw two main areas where change was needed - firstly, he made a clear division between the organisation of orchestra and choir and took over that of the latter. He also clarified the work and fees of accompanist and conductor, not a totally popular move with everyone. But he was not to be moved. Secondly, in order to create a much warmer friendlier atmosphere among the membership he moved us on from an end-of-season glass of sherry standing up and instigated an end-of-season social gathering with refreshments and ad hoc entertainment. This has gone on from strength to strength under new leadership. How greatly Geoff enjoyed all the concerts and how much practice time he spent at the piano at home in order to be certain of his part and to be thoroughly prepared.

I notice that the Wiesbaden Choir is joining to sing in this, Derek's farewell concert. It was Geoff's foresight that forged the link with this choir when their Pastor first came to Vale Royal Church where Geoff met him. Also, Anthony Michaels-Moore is fulfilling a promise made to Geoff, that he would be happy to sing for the choir at some future date, when free to do so. And here he is!

Geoff never believed in clinging on to office if he felt no longer able to give his best. So in 1983 he resigned the Secretaryship, passing it on to Len Lee. In the 1990s he took up the reins again for a couple of years. Thereafter on concert days he took on the responsibility for looking after the soloists and ensuring that they appeared in the hall on time. Now somewhere "out there" Geoff and many other members no longer with us, are raising their voices with the angelic choir, singing maybeGerontius?

Joyce Stredder

OUR FORTHCOMING SEASON

The first concert of our next season is on **Sunday, 13th November at 3 pm** in the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells. This will be our first concert with our new Musical Director and we shall be giving a performance of **Handel's *Messiah*** - a work we have not performed for 12 years. It is a very popular work but however familiar it is to both singers and audiences there is always something special about each individual performance and we hope that many of you will come and enjoy it in November.

Are you a newcomer to singing who likes the idea of taking part in large choral works? Do you doubt your ability? Here is your chance to start with a work that is relatively familiar. Come and join us and see how much you enjoy it. We should love to have you. If you are a more experienced singer we should be delighted to see you too. No matter how many times you have sung *Messiah* there is always more to learn. And there is always someone in the audience who has never heard it before. If you are interested in joining our choir, please contact **Celia Sumner**, our Membership Secretary, on **01892 534814** or **Helen MacNab**, our Chairman, on **01892 526434**. Rehearsals commence on Monday, 5th September at 7.30-9.30 pm in St John's Church Hall, Amherst Road, Tunbridge Wells. You are welcome to come along to one or two rehearsals before you commit yourself to joining.

For more information about us visit our website: www.rtwcs.org.uk

OTHER LOCAL CONCERTS

Tonbridge Philharmonic Society

Saturday, 26th June at 7.30 pm, Tonbridge School Chapel

The Creation (Haydn) with the Evangelische Kantorei Heustenstamm

Green Room Music Club 2004-5. All concerts in Trinity Theatre at 3 pm

Sunday 19th September 2004

The Razumovsky Ensemble

Schubert: Octet in F D803; Beethoven Septet in E flat Op 20

Sunday 17th October 2004

The Romney Concert

Michael Cox (flute); Katherine Baker (flute); Nigel Clayton (piano)

Music by Bach, Mozart, Luzuriaga, Berlioz, Doppler, Fauré, Ian Clark, Damase

Sunday 28th November 2004

Melvyn Tan (piano)

Debussy Préludes Book 2; Schubert Sonata in B Flat D960