



Start of Season Newsletter: 2017/2018

To all of our Members, friends and supporters

In this *Start of the Season Newsletter* we would like to welcome most warmly all Members, Patrons, Friends and well-wishers to yet another year of music and fellowship: and of course the same warm welcome is extended especially to a number of new singers that we very much look forward to seeing at our first rehearsal on September 4th.

Message from our Chairman Alan Spencer

Dear fellow Members,

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer and are looking forward as much as I am to our new Season. It was very refreshing last Season to gain a number of new Members and it's good to know that some additional singers are joining us at our first rehearsal.

This coming season we shall be giving two concerts in the Assembly Hall - in November and April - when we will perform a variety of choral works. The Dvorak *Mass in D* that we'll be singing in November is probably unfamiliar to most of our members and should prove an enjoyable and interesting addition to our repertoire.

- This will be coupled with a performance of Brahms *2nd Piano Concerto* given by Danny Driver which will enable us to offer a very attractive programme to our audience. Danny has an international reputation as a concert pianist and is also married to Rebecca, our Musical Director who will be conducting this concert. It will be particularly enjoyable to have them performing together.

In April 2018 we will be performing a programme of three works, Rutter's *Magnificat*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and *The Symphony of Psalms* by Stravinsky. This will be a challenging programme with a lot of variety and I am sure we will all thoroughly enjoy the experience of learning these works. Rebecca will be conducting this concert and we shall be accompanied both in November and April by the *Salomon Orchestra* with whom we performed the Brahms *German Requiem* concert last Season. Members will recall the enjoyment we had in participating in the extra rehearsal with the orchestra in London for that concert and a similar arrangement is being made for our two concerts with them this coming season.

In addition to the Assembly Hall concerts we shall be performing as usual a Christmas concert in St. Mary's Church Goudhurst and singing carols on Christmas Eve in the *Hotel du Vin* as part of our sponsorship arrangement with the Hotel.

As already announced, our two major concerts will be conducted by Rebecca and we are indebted to her for being willing to remain as our Musical Director and for the professionalism and enthusiasm she brings to all our performances in that role. Many thanks, Rebecca for your continuing support for all we do in the RTWCS.

Throughout the past Season Rebecca has been ably supported by our Assistant Conductor, Jamie Sperling who has taken a number of rehearsals and also stood in for Rebecca to conduct our recent Summer concert. I am sure I speak for all our members when I say a big thank you, Jamie for all the hard work you have put in over the past season.

You will have seen my recent note about the new arrangements we have made for the musical direction of the Choir next Season - and Rebecca also refers to these in her own message. I am sure under both Rebecca's and Jamie's leadership we shall be able to maintain the high level of concert performance to which our audiences are accustomed.

I am pleased to confirm that Craig Hudson will continue to be our accompanist this coming season. We have been delighted with the cheerfulness and enthusiasm Craig brings to all our rehearsals and the brilliant and sensitive way he blends with both singers and conductor by his playing... Many thanks, Craig.

The past season was a memorable one with the April performance of the Bach *B minor Mass* proving to be a real highlight. The work is a very demanding one to sing but I felt that the hard work put in over many weeks of rehearsal really paid off and we were able to give a strong performance on the day. We were assisted by some wonderful orchestral playing from the *Southbank Sinfonia* and by our excellent solo singers. Thanks too to Rebecca for such inspired conducting. The reaction from the audience at this concert was extremely positive - as it was to our recent summer concert in the URC church. This proved a very successful event from both a musical and social standpoint and included an impressive organ solo from Craig which was particularly appreciated by the church members present.

We must now make sure that the encouraging audience response to these two concerts inspires us to rise to the occasion again in the new Season.

The past Season also involved two major fund-raising events:

- a quiz in November led again by our friends Brian and Christine Perriman
- and a very well attended and thoroughly enjoyable presentation in March by the two Elenas on their *Life in Soviet Russia*. Hopefully they can be prevailed upon to give us another talk some time in the future.
- Meanwhile plans are being made for another Quiz in the spring term – AND we hope it may be possible to have our President, Guy Huntrods, talk about the fascinating and varied life he has led for the last 94 years!

Although Guy has unfortunately not be able to sing much with us this past season he continues to give us his unstinting support, attending our concerts and often coming along

to rehearsals from time to time. It's always good to see you, Guy and we all wish you well for the season ahead.

My thanks go out to my fellow Committee members who work so hard behind the scenes to ensure that the Choral Society runs smoothly. I particularly wish to single out our Publicity Officer, Melissa who had sadly felt it necessary to step down from this position. She has made a very important contribution in this role and we urgently need to find a suitable replacement to make sure that our activities continue to be publicised effectively.

I look forward to working with you to make sure we have another successful and enjoyable season of music-making.

Alan Spencer

**Message from our Musical Director
Rebecca Miller**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's that time of year again (have we really made it around the sun another time already?) that I take to reflect on our accomplishments of the past year and to look ahead towards the upcoming season.

I'm very proud of what we achieved during 2016-17 - we successfully tackled two of the choral repertoire's giants - the Brahms *Requiem* and Bach's *B Minor Mass*. When I speak to members about why they joined RTWCS, most of them say, 'to sing the great masterworks' and indeed that is what we have done. These two works are hugely challenging in their own way - the Brahms with its language challenges, and the Bach with its sheer size, scale, and difficulty. I believe we 'conquered' each of these two works admirably, and in doing so greatly increased our choral and singing skill set confidence immeasurably. Many of you probably felt like giving up at one point during the rehearsal process, especially during the Bach preparation, but I thank you for your hard work, perseverance, and courage in carrying on. It's one great thing that music can give to us - continuing to challenge us to do more, to do better, to reach higher, and when we are able to grab the next branch, it makes us feel like we can rise to the next challenge. I hope you have ended up with this enhanced sense of purpose and that the performances and the pieces remain with you for many years to come - I know they will with me.

And so to look forward to next season:

Firstly, I will address the major change that will occur - and later will speak about the repertoire.

As many of you may know, I have been blessed with quite a bit more work in the past two years than I had when I first took on the job of Music Director of RTWCS. I have been trying to keep going as I believe in the Choral Society, and very much enjoy working with each and every one of you. However, the time commitment has become harder and harder for me to

surmount, and it seemed that the time had come for me to turn the reins over to someone else, which saddened me greatly.

However, in discussing this issue with Alan and Trevor, we were all anxious to find a way for me to continue if possible. Together we developed a plan that was discussed and approved by the Management Committee, who has asked for me to remain this year – and it's a plan that will hopefully benefit all parties.

- I will be at the first and last few rehearsals of each of Assembly Hall concert periods, and will conduct those two concerts during the year. I will remain as Musical Director - to continue to oversee the artistic product and vision of the society - and to oversee musical issues and the music staff, help programme future seasons, and to maintain our collaborations with the *Southbank Sinfonia* and the *Salomon Orchestra*, both of whom are very keen for me to be involved in our future collaborations.
- This plan will be different both for you and for me, although I hope not greatly different. I have been accustomed to preparing all or most of my own rehearsals in the concerts that I undertake. However, I have seen, through the very talented Jamie and his fantastic work this past year, that in fact the two-tier system can work quite well, and have been humbled and relieved to know that in fact I am not indispensable! (As the truly irreplaceable Guy Huntrods has quoted to me on multiple occasions - hopefully not related to anything specifically personal - '*the graveyards are filled with indispensable people*').
- I hope that you all agree that the two-tier system worked well this past year, and I hope that in fact you may have even enjoyed the variety in our approaches and that the model perhaps even inspired an expanded approach to the music.

This coming year's model will not be vastly different, therefore, but just that I'll be missing a bit more in the middle. Jamie will take the remaining rehearsals in between, and, as courtesy to him, and in recognition of his hard work with the choir this year, he will also have the honour of leading you in the two smaller performances at Christmas and in summer. This will be an experimental year for this process, and I ask for your patience and perseverance with it. I will also ask that if you have issues that are arising, that you please do not let them fester - please take them to your section leader or to a member of the management committee, or to Jamie - I will be in close contact with all of them. Jamie will also be reporting to me on every rehearsal, and will therefore be able to keep me abreast of any issues arising.

The repertoire for this coming season is again varied and challenging. The Dvorak will be a great sing, but also provides the challenge of a different style, and also quite a few '*a cappella*' passages. In the spring we have a great programme of Bernstein's '*Chichester Psalms*', Stravinsky's '*Symphony of Psalms*', and John Rutter's '*Magnificat*'. Both of the Bernstein and the Stravinsky will require some very hard work on our part, but I promise will reap great rewards as well. I urge you all to obtain recordings of the Stravinsky and Bernstein if you don't have them already, and to start listening to both during the Autumn. This will help greatly in your preparation.

Finally - I would like to reiterate my usual pleas for the coming season - that we continue our work on rehearsal discipline (promptness, attendance, rehearsal chatting), and to push ourselves to do even more work outside of rehearsals - the ideal rehearsals will be dealing

with dynamics, blend, intonation, text, diction, and musical statements, and they are not for the learning of, but rather the refining of notes. Some even say that rehearsals are primarily for learning the other parts, not your own! I am greatly looking forward to another season of hard work and great joy and to making music with you all again soon.

With best wishes,

Rebecca Miller

CALENDAR of KEY DATES: Season 2017- 2018

September 4th: FIRST rehearsal of the new Season.

This will be the first of a series of rehearsals working up to our performance of Dvořák's *Mass in D*, and a selection from Handel's *Coronation Anthems*.

Please note that this rehearsal will be led by Jamie, as Rebecca returns from her vacation only on September 6th.

- For those who wish to purchase their own copies of the score, our Librarian Diana Blower asks you to note that for the *Mass* we shall be using the *Novello* Edition and for the Handel the *Oxford* Edition.
- But at our **September 4th** rehearsal, Diana will have copies of both scores for hire, at a charge of £5.00 per set: she would be very grateful if Members could please bring the correct change on the night.
- Please be sure to bring a soft-led pencil and eraser to rehearsals, to annotate your scores with the directions of the conductor.
- As usual, Members are urged to lose no time in buying tickets for the November Concert, to sell-on to friends, family members, work colleagues etc. In an effort to make these even easier, **we shall have both flyers AND tickets available at the very earliest opportunity**
- **Normal** Monday rehearsal times are from 7:30 to 9:30pm [with a 10 minute break mid-way].

Date to be advised: a Talk by our President, Guy Huntrods

- David Wright, who is kindly organising the evening, will shortly be announcing a date for this exceptional event, and will ask everyone to please mark their calendars accordingly – AND those of their friends and families!

November 4th: Orchestral rehearsal in London for the November 12th Concert

- Full details will be announced in due course, but arrangements will be made for a coach or coaches to take Members to the orchestral rehearsal which will last from 3.00pm to 6.00pm. For this event too, Members are urged to please reserve the date in their calendars: it is very important that – just one week before the Concert – we achieve the maximum possible attendance at this rehearsal.

November 12th: Our autumn concert:

<i>Coronation Anthem:</i>	Handel
<i>Mass in D:</i>	Dvorak

- The Concert will take place in the *TW Assembly Hall Theatre* at 3.00pm
- As usual, the final rehearsal will be in the Theatre itself on the same morning from 10.00 am onwards

November 13th: our AGM

- Our rehearsal will finish earlier than normal on November 13th, so as to allow time for the AGM to be held on the same evening.
- The Convening Notice and Agenda will be sent out to all Members in due course
- A number of both Officer and Ordinary Members posts will fall vacant at the AGM, of which details will be listed in the Agenda.
 - Members are invited to consider whether they know of suitable candidates to fill these vacancies, and put forward such names to the Secretary.

December 10th: Our traditional Christmas Concert in St Mary's Church, Goudhurst

**Monday rehearsals will then be suspended
until January 8th 2018**

December 24th: Traditional Christmas Carol-singing at the *Hotel du Vin* – as part of our corporate sponsorship arrangement

January 8th 2018: resumption of normal weekly Monday rehearsals

April 28th 2018: Orchestral rehearsal in London for the April 29th Concert

- The calendar constraints are such that this rehearsal can only be fitted in the day before the actual concert.
- We therefore hope that – with the 9 months notice we are now giving – all Members will do their very best to reserve this date in their calendars
- More details will be announced nearer the time, but the likely timing is from 3.00pm to 6.00pm and transport will be provided for Members

April 29th 2018: Our spring concert: Works by Stravinsky, Bernstein and Rutter

- The Concert will take place in the *TW Assembly Hall Theatre* at 3.00pm
- As usual, the final rehearsal will be in the Theatre itself on the same morning from 10.00 a.m. onwards.

June/July 2018 Our summer concert will take place at the TW United Reformed Church

- details of the venue and programme will be advised nearer the time

Fund-raising

As our Chairman underlines in his own Message, fund-raising Activities are essential to your Society's continued success, and to its ability to stage Concerts of the high standard that is necessary for our survival.

A small number of Members are to be thanked warmly for the energy and time they devoted to last Season's events and to those Members who have already made the commitments outlined earlier for the coming Season.

But it can't always be the same small group of people and the same ideas: there are 80 or more other Members whom we would like to encourage to also step forward and play their part too, and we urge all Members to reflect upon what each of you can contribute – starting right now – to take up the slack and contribute to new fund-raising efforts in the year ahead. It needs not merely fresh ideas but ALSO a willingness to implement them.

To help Members' reflections in this area, it is worth pointing out that the 3 most "productive" fund-raisers in the past were those where we were able to draw in participants from OUTSIDE the Society:

- the QUIZ evening
- the *Pitcairn* Talk
- the *Life in Soviet Russia* talk

.....if we limit our efforts only to events that can bring in contributions from Members themselves, in spite of people's generosity, eventually "donor fatigue" will set-in, and we will fall short of the targets we need to hit.

IMPORTANT APPEAL:

We would like to appeal to Members to encourage those friends and family who come to our concerts to consider becoming either Patrons or Friends of the Society. In doing so that will enjoy a saving on the costs of a full Season's tickets – and the benefit of being assured of their preferred seating.

Details can be found on our website, or by speaking to Gerald Chew

Miscellaneous Notices to Members

Subscriptions:

The committee is pleased to confirm that subject to ratification at the AGM, the annual subscription for the 2017-2018 season will remain at £135 (or 2 instalments of £70, payable in September and January.) The subscription for students and under-25s is £25.

The subscription income does not cover all the choir's costs and we are grateful to those who can afford to pay a little extra on top of the standard subscription.

As a charity, we can claim tax back on subscriptions under the Gift Aid scheme, and received approximately £4,500 last year. If you are in a position to sign a Gift Aid form, please will you check that we have one from you?

Subs can be paid by cheque (payable to RTWCS) or cash at the first Monday evening rehearsal (September 4th) or by sending a cheque in advance to:
Ailsa McMahon, Treasurer RTWCS, 7 Broadwater Down, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5NJ

OR – if you would prefer to pay by bank transfer the details are as follows:

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account no: 00017884

Please use your name as the “reference” and email Ailsa (ailsamcmahon@hotmail.com) to let her know.

We never want the subscription to be a barrier to those who would like to sing with us – so if you have difficulty paying it please talk to Ailsa in complete confidence, as concessionary rates are available.

Contact Details:

We would like to make a strong appeal to all Members to please keep Jane, our Membership Secretary - and their Voice Section Leader - up-to-date with any changes to their contact details [postal address/ e-address /telephone numbers].

It is very frustrating to receive “failed delivery reports” to emails sent to an address that has been changed without our being notified.

Website:

This is also a suitable moment to remind Members that our website <http://www.rtwcs.org.uk> is continually updated – and is the best easily-accessed source of information or news about any aspect of the Society’s affairs.

Car-parking at St John’s:

This is a reminder that we have agreed with St John’s Church that on the 2nd Monday of each calendar month, Members will refrain from parking on any part of the area to the north of the church – the side where the lawn is.

The dates involved are as follows:

- **2017:**
 - September 11th
 - October 9th

- November 13th
- **2018:**
 - January 15th
 - February 12th
 - March 12th
 - April 9th
 - May 14th
 - June 11th

On each of these dates, as a courtesy to our hosts in facilitating parking for the Parish Council, all Members are asked to park either in the main car parkor else away from the premises altogether.