

Welcome to our March Newsletter! I continue to be grateful for your feedback and positive contributions. A twice yearly letter provides an opportunity to look back at our successes, note some important changes and look forward to the challenges of the future. 'Sustaining our improvement' as a choir is now very much part of our ethos, thanks to Cliff's inspirational leadership. So there is always work to be done, and there is also copy to fill, so on with this letter...

In the last six months we have performed three very successful concerts. Our jazz concert in October was extremely popular, we nearly ran out of chairs! Many thanks to **John Rotherham** and his trio. Our disappointment at not singing at Dunham Massey last year was assuaged by a very different kind of concert in Dean Row Chapel in November, when many choir members were able to showcase their talents as 'readers'. The Annual Christmas concert at All Saints, this time quite close to Christmas, was, like the last one, 'the best yet!'

Also in November, with the kind permission of Heidi, (and father Pete of course), our accompanist **Lauren Hibbard** returned from 'maternity leave'. Lauren tells me that Heidi is now coming up to 7 months and is enjoying eating lots of new food and generally making a mess in her high chair. She still doesn't like sleeping much at night but is all smiles during the day and has just started to sit up on her own. And here she is!



Always ready to sit at the piano, when Lauren has not been able to make it, is our own **Julie Holland**, one of our altos.



And here, with thanks, is her 'musical story'.....

'My Mother's lovely mezzo-soprano voice and my Father's love for Shirley Bassey are amongst my earliest musical memories! Amongst my earliest musical experiences, an attempt to learn the violin (not a success!) and the flute in which I somehow managed to get to grade 5, at which point I knew I had reached my limit. I had always been very keen to learn to play the piano and started lessons at the age of 8, I managed to get

through all my grades doing a little bit of accompanying and some duet exams along the way. I also loved singing, being in school choirs and starting lessons when I was about 13 years old. Whilst still at school, I was lucky enough to be involved in a small choir called the Thursday Singers, a group made up of singers from Manchester High School and MGS. The standard was high and the group still exists today. I did both Music O and A level and was torn between studying law or music at university, I opted for law but still wonder where a music degree would have taken me. When I left school, university, work, marriage and children took over but I just about managed to keep up with the piano and singing. In my mid-thirties I wanted to become involved with music again and so joined Altrincham Choral Society for a short while followed by the Laurence Singers. I cannot remember a time when I have not loved music. The sense of excitement and anticipation a new piece of music brings with it, the sense of achievement once it has been tackled remains with me today.'

Another lady who clearly loves her music is **Janet Bolton**. You may remember her lovely solo singing in Poulenc's Gloria a couple of years ago. Here is her 'story'....

'I am one of our choir's first sopranos and one of the choir's many Soloists.

We are lucky to have so many soloists to call upon within the choir

I have been a member of the choir for many years now and have gained plenty of experience as a soloist and choir member.

I first began singing as a youngster in church at the age of seven – from there I progressed to both school and church choirs.

In senior school, I performed many solos in school productions and then began vocal training at the age of 16 – I took singing exams and had attained Grade 7 before leaving school at 18.

I continued vocal tuition whilst at the Manchester School of Music with John Cameron to obtain Grade 8 Singing and subsequently with Honour Sheppard of RNCM until getting married and moving to Bedfordshire. Whilst living there, I sang with a large choir, the Danes borough Chorus. I then moved back to Cheshire, where I joined a local choir and my solo experience blossomed.

Shortly after I joined the Laurence Singers and, following surgery due to nodules on my vocal chords, I started vocal coaching again with Jayne Carpenter (PPRNCM).

It was some time before I was able to sing again but I was welcomed back to the Laurence Singers and eventually resumed performing solos and things have continued in that vein.

My experience as a Singer continues to grow and long may it last....'



Somehow, I don't think Janet is singing Poulenc in this photograph!

Perhaps because of our recent success, say with singing unaccompanied, (nineteen pieces so far...), Cliff decided we could have a 'Wednesday off' in January, and so on the 23rd, the choir descended on an Italian restaurant in Handforth for a very delightful meal and social event...



Many thanks to **Sue Moore** for organising this.

I referred earlier to changes in the choir, so now is the opportunity to welcome **Leah Burman** to the sopranos. I hope she has many years of satisfying music making with us.

On a sadder note, our Chairman **John Healey** announced at the AGM last month that after twenty-eight years as a member, and the last seven as Chairman, he has decided to retire from the choir following the two concerts in April. We shall all miss him.

We hope to appoint a new Chairman later this month and to celebrate John's achievements soon afterwards. (The next issue of this newsletter will also afford an opportunity to do this.)

And now for the future...!

So, as it says on our excellent website, in April we will be '**Serving a Full English!**'

Music by English composers

Tuesday 4 April, 7.30 pm

St James Church, Gatley Green, Gatley, Cheadle SK8 4NF, Tickets (£10), 0161 428 2337

And on **Saturday 8 April 7.30 pm**

Wilmslow United Reformed Church, Alderley Road, Wilmslow SK9 1PR Tickets £9 (£8), 0161 850 0304

tickets@thelaurencesingers.org.uk

Two chances for you to join us for a super tasty, musical treat that won't ruin your waistline! Great, traditional fare, all locally sourced, from your favourite English composers! With music from Elgar, Purcell, Gilbert & Sullivan, Vaughan Williams, Stanford (*Te Deum*) and much more...

Lauren Hibberd, piano; Richard Brocklehurst, organ; Cliff Crewe, conductor. Concert tickets may be available on the door. However, booking is advised to avoid disappointment!

And for the rest of 2017...

Sat 13th May Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church, a concert with a Balalaika Orchestra.

Sat 17th June Norbury Church, Hazel Grove.

Sat Oct 14th St Michael's Church, Macclesfield, a concert with young people from the local charity 'Cre8'.

Thurs Dec 21st All Saints Cheadle Hulme, Annual Christmas concert.

And save the date in 2018...

Sat Nov 10th, venue to be decided.

Best wishes, Peter
