

cleveland philharmonic choir



www.clevelandphilharmonicchoir.com

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Looking back to last season

It's been a year of growth – both musically, and in the number of choirs in the Cleveland Philharmonic family. We now have four performing groups, with Isaac Conroy, in his first year as Assistant Music Director, leading two of them, as well as directing sectional rehearsals for the adult choir.

The size of the adult choir has remained pretty stable at about 120, with new members in most sections. We have also welcomed back some singers who have taken a break, and we send our good wishes to those who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to attend at the moment. We have not forgotten you!

Britten: *War Requiem* Saturday 10 November 2018, Sage Gateshead



This was undoubtedly the most musically challenging, logistically complex and financially demanding concert ever undertaken by CPC, bringing together six choirs, two orchestras, three soloists and three conductors. Rehearsals spanned almost two years, with introductory workshops, three combined choir sessions, and two extra rehearsals for the Mowbray Orchestras. Throughout, John Forsyth led us patiently and expertly, inspiring in us all the confidence that we could do it.

Feedback from the 1100 audience, soloists and orchestra indicated that all this effort

resulted in an excellent performance, both in the musical standard reached and its emotional impact. The soloists (Mark Padmore, Roderick Williams and Rachel Nicholls) were superb and justified the decision to engage the best possible singers for those roles.

The total cost was £43,000. Generous donations, grants and fundraising sales (mostly the very popular cakes) meant the loss to the choir was a manageable £12,000. However, because of a new Sage Gateshead policy, selling tickets through the choirs was more difficult than in the past, and some aspects of Sage Gateshead marketing were disappointing.

The choir has built good relationships with Newcastle Choral Society and the Durham Cathedral Choirmaster and renewed its link with Northern Spirit Singers.

It must be true that the whole project moved the choir forward in its confidence to sing challenging works.

It has been confirmed recently, at a meeting Charmian Marshall (Chair NCS), Barbara Eifler (Chief Executive, Making Music) and Joan attended at Sage Gateshead, that groups like ours will no longer be able to hire Sage Gateshead on Saturdays, and that hire costs and the commission on ticket and programme sales will increase. The reasons for this are largely financial.

Family Christmas Carol Concert Sunday 16 December 2018, St Barnabas Church.

Once again, we welcomed the Fishburn Band, who set the scene with seasonal music as the audience entered for the afternoon concert. All soon joined in popular carols, with the sopranos enjoying singing descants. CPC contributed carols by Rutter, Mathias and Sweelinck, and the Intermediate Choir sang Britten's *There is no rose* and *The Virgin Mary had a baby boy*. Juniors joined the other choirs for Donald Swann's charming *Christmas Candle*. Alison Gill accompanied the choral singing, and the concert finished in traditional fashion with *We wish you a merry Christmas*.

Also in December, a small group of CPC singers visited Victoria House Care Home to sing popular carols.

On 22 December, choir members formed part of the choir for the Christmas Cracker concert at Darlington's Dolphin Centre, contributing with other groups and an orchestra, all conducted by John Forsyth, to raise funds for St Teresa's Hospice.



Bernstein: *Chichester Psalms*, Mozart *Vespers KV339* and *Requiem*, Saturday 6 April 2019 Stockton Baptist Church



As usual, we received splendid, cheerful help from the team at the Baptist Church. We used a small orchestra, which made effective dynamics possible. The lively singing was much appreciated by the audience of 200, and *Chichester Psalms*, with its young soloist from our Intermediate Choir, Thomas McDonagh, and a quartet of young CPC singers, received enthusiastic applause. The four professional soloists were brought together by mezzo Anna Huntley. Baritone Gavan Ring's performance was particularly enjoyed, and he emailed to say he'd like to sing with us again in future.



Thomas



The Quartet

Homeward Bound – A Tour of the British Isles in Song, Friday 28 June 2019
St Mary's Cathedral, Coulby Newham

Many of the choir said how much they enjoyed the music, much of it in arrangements by John Forsyth. John's *joie de vivre* spread to us all, and we left rehearsals smiling. The audience of 280 was soon carried along with both the fun and the beauty of the songs.

Wasn't it great to hear the sound of our tenors and basses (below) singing by themselves! The audience loved *A policeman's lot* and John made the most of his role as Sergeant.



Our young choirs were superb, and the chamber choir gave its first performance, directed by Isaac Conroy. The amazing Andrew Christer provided all the accompaniments and we would like to thank him for his superb playing throughout the year.

Comments from the audience: 'Uplifting', 'a high standard set in all choirs', 'really excellent'.

Young Choirs

Music Directors *John Forsyth, Isaac Conroy*
Accompanists *Andrew Christer, Alex Evans*

These choirs are run by Anne Barberi (Chair), Judith Arber (Secretary) and Graham Hinton (Treasurer). Joan Carter provides the link with the CPC committee. Jacinta Skipp and Joyce Dixon attend every rehearsal, providing valuable support.

The experienced singers from last year's Junior Choir formed an Intermediate Choir, now named Vivaldi Voices. Attendance has been very good and the progress rapid - they are now singing in four parts. The voices of older boys are already beginning to change, and they will be supported by John to continue singing. In February, Vivaldi Voices sang very well in Durham Cathedral as part of the North East Festival of Youth Choirs. Their new uniform includes ties and scarves funded by donations from CPC members.



Despite much work behind the scenes, visits to primary schools, and Isaac's nurturing, the younger group, now called the Cherubini Choir, is still very small. We have had most success with recruitment when John has led a singing session in school and those interested take a letter home. Parents return a slip to school if their child would like to audition, and John makes a further visit to hear the singers. This procedure means that both parents and children have some commitment, so the children are more likely to take up the offer and be supported by those at home. It has always worked best when CPC has a personal link with the school, and we

need to renew our efforts at the beginning of the Autumn term if the Cherubinis are to reach a viable size.

Have you a contact with a primary school? Would you be willing to make an approach to see if they would be happy for John to lead a singing session? Music is regaining importance in the curriculum, so now is a good time. We can give you lots of supportive information, so let Joan know if you can help. It could make a real difference.

Both choirs sang in the CPC Family Christmas Carol Concert in December, and they gave a performance of their own - 'Songs for Spring' - on 23 March at Nunthorpe Methodist Church. Their excellent singing was much enjoyed by the audience. It was good to see CPC members there, and the young choirs were very grateful for the cakes you made for the tea party afterwards and for the brilliant help with serving and clearing up.

In the CPC summer concert, both choirs joined CPC for *Long and winding road* and *Irish blessing*. Cherubini Choir had their moment in the sun when they performed *The turtle dove*, backed by the Chamber Choir, and sang the tune of *Now is the month of maying* with the four-part Vivaldi Voices. This was very impressive singing! Vivaldi Voices contributed the much-loved *Blow the wind southerly*, *The lark in the clear air* and *Afton Water*.

With agreement from parents at the AGM, subscriptions were increased this season, but the young choirs still need a subsidy of about £1200 per year from the main choir. Things will improve as numbers increase,



but the committee running the choir, knowing how much goodwill there is in CPC, have a couple of suggestions to make.

Would you be willing to become a patron of our young choirs? An annual donation of any size is all that is needed. We will acknowledge your support in concert programmes and keep you up to date with choir news.

If you work for a business, could you find out if there is a community/charity fund to which the choirs could apply? We would not be asking for running costs, but for specific support for, say, the November concert, where professional musicians are needed for accompaniment.

The Chamber Choir



How pleased we all were that Isaac was keen to lead a small choir of our excellent younger CPC singers! These people are the future of our choir; the qualification is that they expect to be singing in a choir like CPC in 20 years. We reached the stage where we had just enough singers for each part for an SATB choir, and Ricky Hallam, with energy and commitment, has pulled them all together. They sang *The dark-eyed sailor* in the summer concert, and a few days later met at a pub to discuss their future. We look forward to hearing their plans.

Committee news

The committee has met nine times this season in the conference room at Elmwood Centre, Stockton. John Forsyth was invited to the June meeting when we were planning future concerts and regeneration strategy. We are very grateful to Vivienne Flynn - and occasionally Jan Smith - for writing the minutes. Joan emails a brief report to John after most meetings. Every meeting has slots for a Treasurer's report, a concert progress report, a regeneration report - and a report from section representatives, when your views are considered by the committee.

1. The annual general meeting was planned in accordance with the choir's constitution. The committee remained unchanged. Members voted to increase subscriptions by £1 per month to £156 per year from August 2019. **Those paying by monthly standing order need to make the amendment now.**
2. Ricky Hallam volunteered to represent the choir's younger singers on the committee, and it was a great pleasure to co-opt him.
3. The committee did further work on writing down what their jobs entailed, enabling smooth transitions in the future.
4. A simplified Child Protection Policy was adopted, with wording aligned to the requirements of local authorities.
5. The marketing group has now disbanded, and the committee has begun to act on their recommendations.
 - a. Steve Weighell has worked to improve the appeal of the choir's website.
 - b. Extra information is now given on the reverse of concert leaflets.
 - c. Criteria for a new logo were decided on, and choir members were asked for designs by 3 September.
6. The restriction on alto recruitment has been lifted.
7. The committee considered several email requests for the choir's participation, many of which were publicised to members for individual responses; for a few, a group was organised.
8. A social event questionnaire was circulated to members and the results reported on.

Committee Members' Responsibilities – everything they do helps to sustain, improve and make things happen for the choir

Martin Brooks chairs meetings and writes the sits and stands for concerts.

Joan Carter arranges meetings and the AGM, deals with communication, liaises with John Forsyth, Isaac Conroy, Andrew Christer, the committee of the young choirs and St Barnabas and sets up and co-ordinates concerts, working with Steve.

Jane Neal is the Treasurer and often helps with catering.

Val Burns (1st soprano rep) organises Choral Training Days, helps with uniform and has co-ordinated splendid fundraising cake stalls.

Vivienne Flynn (2nd soprano rep) minutes committee meetings, organises the Christmas concert and occasionally acts as Ticket Secretary.

Julia Greenwood (1st alto rep) is Membership Secretary, arranges coach transport and invites and looks after concert guests. She is the contact for enquiries arriving via the website.

Lizanne Allen and Jan Smith (2nd soprano reps). Lizanne ensures that the choir's information on a large number of websites is kept up to date. Jan occasionally writes committee minutes and is a willing helper in many ways.

Denis Rigg (tenor rep) is Ticket Secretary for most concerts, and Data Controller, and has helped with taking photographs.

Keith Robinson (bass rep) is a valuable member of the concert staging team.

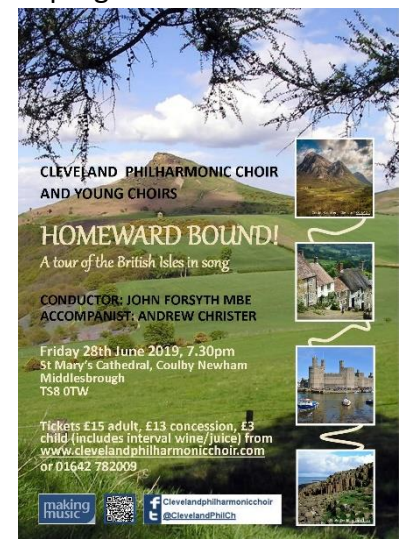
Steve Weighell (Concert Manager) is also the Health and Safety Officer. He deals with practical aspects of using venues, works with Joan to organise concerts, is Webmaster and the expert on TicketSource (online ticketing) and Mailchimp (emailing the choir and those on the mailing list).

Kathryn Beevers (Librarian) sources and acquires scores using orders from reps, and distributes them to reps.

Ricky Hallam keeps in touch with younger members, supporting the chamber choir and organising consultations. He is a member of the concert staging team. He is about to breathe new life into the choir's Facebook presence.

*Many choir members who are not on the committee give their time and expertise, too!
Thank you to you all:*

- Judith Arber is Secretary of the Junior Choir.
- Anne Barberi is Chair of the Junior Choir and looks after Safeguarding.
- Jo Brooks makes sure that there is a microphone at rehearsals to make announcements more easily heard.
- Marcus and Bethany Cooke, Harriet Bradshaw, James Corking and Malcolm Donnelly have sung solos and in ensembles.
- Jackie Cove-Smith looks after the Friends of the Choir.
- Rod Cuff edits our concert programmes and is doing an increasing amount of research and writing of features. He liaises with the print shop at Holme House Prison. He has volunteered to help Steve with the website.
- Joyce Dixon ensures that John and Andrew receive reviving cups of tea between the Junior and main choir rehearsals and helps in many other ways.
- Margaret Floyd prepares the postal mailing for hand delivery.
- Janet Hall is the choir's chief Tweeter! She has also written excellent marketing material. She has arranged for the printing of booklets of songs.
- Francis Harrison is a member of the staging team, and also writes for the programme.
- Graham Hinton is the Treasurer of the Junior Choir. He publicises events on Facebook.
- Jean Jones looks after the Junior Choir waistcoats. She also makes beautiful bouquets for concert soloists, which are paid for by an anonymous choir donor.
- Pat and David Jones look after the concert music folders.
- Jo Lewis has taken excellent photographs.
- Sylvia Richardson has designed superb posters and programme covers (see right).
- Jacinta Skipp attends the Junior Choir rehearsal every week and helps with registration.
- All the unsung others who have made donations and helped on concert days, together with those who baked cakes for choral training days – and those who bought and ate them!



Regeneration – our efforts to ensure there is still a thriving Cleveland Philharmonic Choir in 20 years. This is the CPC2040 project.

A wake-up call from John Forsyth some time ago led to the formation of singing opportunities for children at a time when music education was declining.

Throughout this season, the committee has:

- Listed the attributes which make a choir successful and considered how they were related to one another.
- Concluded that, given an inspirational Music Director and a competent committee, the essential ingredient was having enough singers with sufficient skill. To have a choir in 20 years, the twin problems were finding younger singers and ensuring that enough of them had the necessary skills.
- Brainstormed solutions to these problems.

- Organised a full-choir brainstorm during a Singing Day.
- Met with John to plan next season's actions.

We decided to:

- Nurture the younger singers we have. Support Isaac and the chamber choir and give solo opportunities.
- Provide notes on rehearsals and support on the website to help learning, realising that people who are working and/or have a young family may not be able to attend regularly.
- Consult our younger singers about recruiting other people in their age group.
- Continue to improve the website with younger people in mind.
- Redesign the choir logo. **The brief for the design is available from Joan - closing date 3 September 2019.**
- Make better use of social media.
- Design a brochure about the choir and distribute it effectively to this age group.
- Organise a Come and Sing event or a choral weekend with a performance.
- Accept that not all singers will be able to read music and be ready to provide musicianship classes.
- Renew efforts to recruit in both primary and secondary schools and via singing and instrumental teachers to keep our young choirs thriving.

*John is the person who makes the choir the success it is.
He moves us forward musically at every rehearsal, raises our sights, keeps us
optimistic, and makes the hard work fun.
We take this opportunity to give him our warmest thanks.*

Looking forward to next season

Saturday 12 October 2019, 7.30 pm, Ripon Cathedral, Mahler *Symphony No 2* - "Resurrection"

A Saint Cecilia Orchestra Concert conducted by Xenophon Kelsey

Fflur Wynn, soprano, Caitlin Hulcup, mezzo-soprano

We will form a chorus with Darlington Choral Society and possibly others and sing in the wonderful final movement. We need to arrive at the cathedral at 4pm to rehearse. Please decide if you wish to travel on the choir coach (funded by St Cecilia Orchestra). We will have the use of the Cathedral Hall for changing and making hot drinks. Bring your own tea or forage in Ripon – booking is advised in nearby restaurants.

Go to <https://www.clevelandphilharmonicchoir.com/music> where there are links to the score, rehearsal aids and recordings. CPC tenors will sing tenor 1, with those who find the tessitura too high reverting to tenor 2. CPC basses will sing bass 2, with those finding it difficult to sing at the lower register singing bass 1. DCS tenors and basses will concentrate on tenor 2 and bass 1. Sopranos and altos have very few divided parts.

Tickets from www.st-cecilia.org.uk

Saturday 30 November 2019, 6.30pm, Nunthorpe Methodist Church

A concert by the Cherubini Choir and Vivaldi Voices, to include Chilcott: *Little Jazz Mass* and Britten: *A Ceremony of Carols*.

Sunday 8 December 2019, 7pm, Middlesbrough Town Hall, Handel: *Messiah*

Keri Fuge, soprano, Victoria Simmonds, mezzo-soprano, Nick Pritchard, tenor, Henry Waddington, bass
The Mowbray Orchestra

Tickets (on sale from 2 September): Premium seats £18, £16 concession, £5 child/student

All other seats £15, £13 concession, £5 child/student

The Town Hall has given the choir special concessions – we will not pay a hire charge, just staffing costs, and no commission will be taken. In return, we hope this performance will bring a large audience to the Town Hall, and boost their classical concerts mailing list. The choir will have tickets printed off to sell on our first rehearsal in September and Denis will run the box office. Buy early to get the best seats! I've just heard Nick Pritchard sing Ferrando in *Così fan tutti* (Neville Holt Opera and Royal Northern Sinfonia) at Sage Gateshead – a lovely voice!

Family Christmas Carol Concert Sunday 15 December 2019, 3pm, St Barnabas Church, with Fishburn Band and accompanist Alison Gill

This event will include contributions from all our choirs and the band, and there will be popular carols for all. If you have any suggestions for what we could sing, please send them to Joan, or write them on the list when we return in September.

Christmas Cracker Saturday 21 December 2019, Dolphin Centre, Darlington, in aid of Saint Teresa's Hospice

Afternoon rehearsal, evening performance, all music supplied. Always a delight! Do take part if you possibly can.

Spring Concert Saturday 28 March 2020, 7.30pm, The Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm

The Mowbray Orchestra

Vaughan Williams: *Serenade to Music* (choral version)

Rachmaninov: *Variations on a theme of Paganini* Alison Gill, piano

Rutter: *Mass of the Children*, with Emma Morwood, soprano, Arthur Bruce, baritone, and our young choirs.

We look forward to singing with Emma again – it's always a pleasure – and she has recommended Arthur Bruce, saying, 'He's a baritone on the up.... just been named as a Scottish Opera Emerging Artist.'

Tickets £17 (adult) £15 (concession) £3 (child/student)

Summer Concert Friday 26 June 2019, 7.30, St Mary's Cathedral, Coulby Newham.

The committee was keen to feature opera and operetta in this concert, and there will be some opera choruses, I'm sure. All our choirs will take part and there will be soprano and tenor soloists (Austin Gunn and his wife Heather Jill Burns). You may remember Austin as one of the tenors in *La Traviata* when we provided the chorus for Opera Gold in 2012. With a theme of **Songs of Life and Love**, there will be plenty of solos and duets to choose from.

And after that

There is no concert at Sage Gateshead in the planning at the moment. Charmian and I hope to meet Thorben Dittes, Head of Classical Programming, to discuss whether concerts such as ours might be included in the classical programme and marketed as such. NCS are performing there with Hertfordshire Chorus, and their programme may include Vaughan Williams: *Sea Symphony*.

As you may know, we have been contemplating a performance of *Monteverdi Vespers*, conducted by Thomas Neal (with John as Chorusmaster) and using Claire McIntyre's group of players with sackbuts and cornetts. The ideal setting would be Durham Cathedral, but we have learned from Daniel Cook, Master of the Choristers, that they will be performing the work in 2019. So, it's back to the drawing board on that one,

but following an alternative suggestion from Thomas, we are looking at a concert to include some Bruckner motets, possibly with Bruckner's *E minor Mass* (John's suggestion), which is accompanied by wind instruments. This concert, also, would sound wonderful in Durham Cathedral.

I contacted soprano Elin Manahan Thomas earlier this year. Although she was not available for the concert under consideration, she was keen to perform with us, and sent (at my request) works she would love to sing. These included Mozart's C minor Mass and *Exsultate Jubilate* – so perhaps there is a germ of a concert there.

Whilst discussing, in the planning meeting, music which would appeal to younger singers, the topic of songs from shows emerged. John suggested a summer concert entitled, 'Another opening, another show!'

The CPC dates and events for the future are in a separate document emailed with the newsletter. You are welcome to send your reactions, suggestions, comments (or criticisms!) of the 2019-20 newsletter or future programme to the committee at secretary@clevelandphilharmonicchoir.com – or just come and talk to one of us! Our contact details are below.

Joan Carter, Choir Secretary
August 2019

Contacting the Committee

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