

December concert: Gounod, Fauré & Debussy

Numerous congratulations were received from audience members, not only about the performance, but also about the selection of music. One regular wrote: *"Last night's concert was easily one of the best I have attended. Congratulations to the Society and to the orchestra."*

Spring term 2020: Concerts Friday 27 & Saturday 28 March

First choir rehearsal Thursday 9 January

Rossini: Stabat Mater, Beethoven: Hallelujah (from The Mount of Olives) & Jesu dulcis memoria

Like last term's composer Gounod, Rossini (1792-1868) is perhaps better known for opera than for sacred music. It's sixteen years since we performed his other great religious work, the *Petite Messe Solennelle* and we come now to his *Stabat Mater*, depicting the Virgin Mary weeping at the foot of the cross. Rossini began an early version in 1831, but it is the final version completed in 1841 which we are doing, the one usually performed these days. There are four soloists: Aimee Presswood, Hannah Bennett, William Smith and Brian McAlea.

There's a lot of Beethoven going on this year as it's the 250th anniversary of his birth, and the first half of our concert programme is devoted entirely to his music. Isabel Knowland is the soloist in his *Romance No.2 in F* for violin and orchestra, and there are two short pieces for choir and orchestra: the final *Hallelujah Chorus* from the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* and the motet *Jesu dulcis memoria (The sweet memory of Jesus)*.

Nicholas Cleobury

We sent condolences to our Honorary Patron, Nicholas Cleobury, after hearing of the death of his brother in November, and have received this reply:

My dear Friends, you will, I hope, understand and excuse me for not writing individually to you all, for your wonderful letters, cards and emails about Stephen. They were kind, sincere and hugely appreciated. He was taken too early and has left a huge gap, not only in the family, but in the musical world too. He has left a wonderful legacy, and I will, with Emma and other family and colleagues, in due time, attempt to build on this in the way he would have wanted.

With very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and New Year. Nick

Health and Safety Officer

We thank Suzie Tomlin for agreeing to become our new Safeguarding Officer, but she has pointed out that we should really have a Health and Safety Officer too. That person doesn't have to be a member of the committee. Does anyone have a H & S experience? If so, please speak to a committee member.

Committee members

Welcome to Alison Wheeler who was elected to fill the vacancy on our committee at the November AGM. However, Chris Osman has decided to stand down this year, although he is still willing to provide concert refreshments. Thank you, Chris, for your contribution to our discussions for the past five years. This now leaves a vacancy once again, so if you are interested in being co-opted, please let Evelyn know.

Non-event

The BBC withdrew their original offer for our choir to appear on the BBC Breakfast Show just before Christmas, giving their reason that we would sound too much like 'a cathedral choir'. We'll take that as a compliment. However, a big thank you to all fifty of you who volunteered to take part, especially as it involved arriving at Blenheim by 5.30 am. What commitment that shows to the Society!

Come and Sing Brahms' Requiem: Saturday 30 May (10 am – 5 pm)

This is a first for WMS. After 45 years of existence the Society is hosting a Sing-in Day for singers of a wide range of experience to come and join our choir to rehearse selected movements of this magnificent work. Our Honorary Patron, Nicholas Cleobury, has generously offered to conduct the rehearsals and to talk about the background to the music. Cassandra Wright, currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music, will be the soprano soloist. This will serve as a forerunner to our concerts next year, when we shall be performing the Requiem in full on 26 and 27 March 2021.

Visit our website www.woodstockmusic.info as soon as possible to book your place for 30 May.

Summer concert: 10 & 11 July. 'Northern Lights'

1st choir rehearsal: 23 April. No rehearsal on 28 May.

Ola Gjeilo: *Dreamweaver* and *Northern Lights*, in which the soprano soloist will be Katherine Walker, Grieg's *Holberg Suite* and *Peer Gynt* (excerpts).

If you are planning a holiday in May, you may like to note that the government has moved the early May Bank Holiday from a Monday to Friday 8 May to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Woodstock Chamber Choir: Thursday 23 – Sunday 26 July

49 singers have signed up to take part in a concert to celebrate 800 years of St Mary's Church, Kidlington. Rehearsals on the first two days will be in Merton College Chapel, transferring to St Mary's for the Saturday rehearsals and the Sunday concert (at 5pm). The balance of £45 per person is due by 21st May and can be paid by cheque payable to Woodstock Music Society or by bank transfer to WMS Trips Account, sort code 30 19 83, account number 13384668.

Winter concert: 11 & 12 December.

1st choir rehearsal: 10 September. No rehearsal 29 October.

Main works: Parry's *Ode on the Nativity* and Schumann's *Adventlied*.

A happy New Year to everyone!

Evelyn Hendy, Secretary, choir@woodstockmusic.info