

Spring term. We believe that most of us have been fully vaccinated by now and are taking precautions to ensure our own personal safety and that of others, so we are going ahead with choir rehearsals for Brahms' *Requiem* (to be sung in English) on **Thursday 13 January** and orchestra rehearsals on **Monday 17 January**. Please take a lateral flow test before you come and stay at home if you have any symptoms of Covid or feel unwell in any way.

The concerts are on **Friday 8 & Saturday 9 April**, with the soloists Cassandra Wright and Timothy Nelson. In addition to the Brahms, during rehearsals Paul is going to introduce us to one of the pieces to be sung in the summer term. We welcomed several new singers in the autumn, and are about to do so this term too. Do look out for them and help them to settle in.

You will notice some changes from now on: **Joyce Morris** has decided to stand down as regular accompanist, though we shall still see her among the altos every Thursday. She has written to say:

'Thank you so much for the very beautiful antique silver cream jug. It has been a great privilege to accompany the rehearsals for so many years during which time the choir has practised and performed so many wonderful pieces of music, always achieving a very high standard. I shall miss my role at the piano but will enjoy sitting amongst the altos and being able to sing each week.'

Alistair Eden and Huw Morgan will be sharing the job of accompanist this term.

After 18 years as treasurer, **Richard Sills** has handed over to **Philip Boxall**, but will continue as a member of the committee. We thank him for keeping our accounts in order for so long and especially most recently for his work formulating the Society's revised constitution.

Philip has been auditing our accounts for several years now, so he is well acquainted with our finances. Here are his '**Messages from the treasurer**':

'It's the time of year when we usually submit our Gift Aid claim to HMRC (the tax office) - it is always a useful boost to our funds. For anyone (new or existing members) yet to complete a Gift Aid form, providing you are a tax payer, we can claim back the tax you paid when earning your subscription money, at no cost to you and valuable benefit to WMS. Forms will be available on Thursday nights and also attached to this newsletter (please print and complete and bring along on Thursday night.) For new members, joining us this term, we like you to settle in for a few weeks before paying your subscription. Once you know you are happy to continue, subscriptions will be £66 pounds for the remainder of the year, covering the spring and summer concerts. (Note the summer Chamber choir is paid for separately by those participating.) If possible please pay your subscription by bank transfer. Please email me to let me know you have made the transfer. It is much easier to manage on line receipts so if all members could please keep a record of these bank details and use them when paying subscriptions to WMS, it would be much appreciated. I can accept cheques from those unable to pay by bank transfer. If there are any members who sang last term still to pay their subs please likewise pay £100 by transfer or cheque ASAP.

Like many arts organisations our funds have taken a little bit of a hit over the last couple of years, but we have not been affected as badly as many by the pandemic, and the Come and Sing day in the Autumn combined with the success of the December concert also helped bolster our reserves. So we anticipate continuing our return to business as usual – Covid permitting! If you wish to contact me my email address is treasurer@woodstockmusic.info. Looking forward to singing the Brahms this term,

John Morris has been on the committee since 1982 and chairman from 1985. He feels he should make way for someone else but has assured us he will continue to act as orchestral secretary, assembling however many players are needed for the great variety of works we perform. We are happy to announce that **Will Clark**, who has guided us through the intricacies of the Covid rules, has agreed to become chairman.

Ali Wheeler, whose enthusiasm has produced some great publicity ideas, has decided to step down from the committee, but the good news is that she is still willing to distribute posters and leaflets around Woodstock. Last autumn she also set up very eye-catching displays for WMS in the church for our Come and Sing Day and at the community event, Woodstock Festive Fayre.

The line-up of committee members (trustees) is now:

Officers: Will Clark (chairman and website manager), Evelyn Hendy (secretary), Phillip Boxall (treasurer), Ruth Sutherland (Making Music Representative).

Other committee members: Elizabeth Mason (choir librarian), Douglas Mason (publicity organiser), John Morris (orchestral secretary), Gilliane Sills (ticket manager and chamber choir organiser), Richard Sills (minutes secretary), and Suzie Tomlin (safeguarding officer).

Paul Ingram (music director) is an ex-officio member of the committee.

Looking back

The **Christmas concerts** were held in St Mary Magdalene Church on Friday 10 and Saturday 11 December. We thank the Rector and Churchwardens for allowing them to go ahead, and all our members for selling so many tickets to make the performances a success. It was very rewarding to have a full church on Friday and almost full on Saturday. Several people commented on Paul's programming, seamlessly joining together Beethoven and Christmas music. The orchestra added an extra dimension to the experience, not only in the Bach which was really uplifting, but with their performance of the Finale from Beethoven's *5th Symphony* (probably the first time it has ever been heard in this church?) and the *Romance in F*, with leader **Isabel Knowland** as soloist. One of the front of house team congratulated our organisers on adapting to the new situation. Between them **Will Clark** and **Ruth Sutherland** have become experts on stage management as well as the ever-changing Covid rules. So many people have taken the new regulations in their stride with good humour. There are some spare programmes left; they will be available at rehearsals for anyone who wants to take one.

The **Annual General Meeting 2021** was held on Thursday 11 November. We heard reports from the chairman, treasurer, and music director, and we voted unanimously for a proposed new Constitution and Rules to suit our Society. Since then some amendments have had to be made to conform to the Charity Commission's regulations, and we now await final approval.

In October, we held our first ever **Come and Sing Day**, conducted by Nicholas Cleobury. Singers from other local choirs joined us, and some visitors from the 'This is Woodstock' day dropped in to listen from time to time. Nicholas was pleased with the result and is keen to do another for us some time. Thank you, **Rosemary, Elizabeth** and **Gilliane** for all the work you put into coping with the two postponements and for making the final event so smooth-running.

Looking forward in 2022

Summer term: 1st choir rehearsal **Thursday 28 April**, 1st orchestra rehearsal **Monday 25 April**. Concerts on **Friday 8 & Saturday 9 July:** A programme of Norwegian music by Ola Gjeilo: *Dreamweaver* and *Northern Lights* and by Grieg: the *Holberg Suite* for strings, and excerpts from *Peer Gynt* and his unfinished opera about the exploits of the Viking warrior *Olav Trygvason*.

Chamber Choir – July. We are once again staying home for our chamber choir event, rather than going on our travels, and anyone who wishes to take part may do so. Paul is selecting pieces representative of English choral and organ music throughout the centuries, with the aim of raising funds for St Mary's Church Kidlington and our own Society. There will be daytime rehearsals on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 July, afternoon rehearsals on Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 July, and the concert will take place on the evening of **Friday 29 July**. Gilliane Sills will be sending out an application form with detailed information about timings and cost in a separate email.

The **Winter concerts on Friday 9 December & Saturday 10 December** have the theme 'A Boy is Born'. The main work for choir and orchestra is Parry's *Ode on the Nativity*, and Paul has chosen a programme of joyful music and Christmas carols, some with audience participation, to suit the festive season.

Call for Patrons. Our patrons form an important element of our organisation and we thank them for their continued support. If you have a family member or friend who attends our concerts regularly, please consider asking them to become a patron. They will then receive a ticket for three concerts a year, acknowledgement in the programme and a newsletter every term. The current subscription is £75 per person or £120 per couple. You, or they, can contact our patrons' secretary Barbara Pix and she will write to them to set up the necessary arrangements.

Happy New Year!

Evelyn Hendy, Secretary – choir@woodstockmusic.info