

Paul has already sent his thanks to choir and orchestra 'for a great term's music, culminating in two tremendous performances of the Brahms.'

The baritone soloist Alistair Ollerenshaw, who took over with two weeks' notice when Timothy Nelson had to cancel, has written to say 'It was an absolute pleasure. They were two wonderful concerts and the choir sounded fantastic!' The soprano Cassandra Wright wrote 'I so enjoyed performing with WMS and would love to join again in the future, if any opportunities arise.'

The collection on the door for the Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal was an amazing total of £964.04, which the Society has topped up to £1,000. Thank you, performers and audience members, for being so generous.

This term

The first orchestra rehearsal is on **Monday 25 April** and the first choir rehearsal on **Thursday 28 April**. The concerts are on **Friday 8 and Saturday 9 July**, and we are giving them the title 'Northern Lights', as they feature two Norwegian composers, Edvard Grieg and Ola Gjeilo. The orchestra will play Grieg's *Holberg Suite* and a selection from *Peer Gynt* which includes songs sung in Norwegian by soprano Katherine Walker and a special treat: dances played by Isabel Knowland on her Hardanger fiddle, considered to be the national instrument of Norway. There is also an excerpt from Grieg's unfinished opera about the exploits of the Viking warrior *Olav Trygvason*. Ola Gjeilo (pronounced Yay-lo) is Norwegian by birth, but lives now in the USA. His *Dreamweaver* for choir and orchestra is based on a medieval folk poem in which a wanderer wakes up from a long sleep and describes his journey through Paradise. Gjeilo says that his inspiration for *Northern Lights*, written for unaccompanied choir, came from seeing the powerful beauty of the aurora borealis and comparing it with the beauty expressed in a text taken from the Song of Solomon: *Pulchra es amica mea*.

At our committee meeting last night, it was agreed that we shall no longer ask people to wear face-coverings in the rehearsal room. Some may wish to do so and that is absolutely fine, but people will be left to make their own personal choice. The windows and doors in the Community Centre will still be kept open to allow in as much fresh air as possible.

Volunteers

Whenever there's a job to be done, there's always someone in WMS who comes forward to help. This is especially important at concert weekends, when putting up and taking down the staging, hosting a soloist, arranging parking and front of house are among a number of things essential for the smooth-running of the show. It may be something done behind the scenes, but it certainly doesn't go unnoticed, so thank you all very much.

Two choir members have volunteered to take up roles which will be vacated at the end of this term. Sue Tee has agreed to be our new Patrons Secretary, as Barbara Pix has decided to stand down after 22 years. Barbara has always been very active in securing us new patrons, which helps tremendously to boost not only our income, but also our audience numbers, and we are very glad to welcome them. Rosemary Lewis will be our new Choir Librarian in place of Elizabeth Mason who for 10 years has done an excellent job in keeping track of all our music and chasing people for returns whenever necessary. Thank you, all four, for giving up your time in the past and in the future.

Before the pandemic people used to say they regarded our concerts as a social occasion as well as a musical one. After two concerts with no interval, we are now planning to provide interval refreshments in July, so need a volunteer (or two?) to provide the drinks and organise people to serve them. They don't need to be on the committee, or even a member of the Society (maybe someone in your family?) Chris Osman has offered to shadow whoever takes this on to ensure a smooth handover. Thank you, Chris, for your 8 years of superb organisation. If anyone can help, please speak to Will Clark (Chairman), Evelyn Hendy (Secretary), Philip Boxall (Treasurer), or any other member of the committee: Elizabeth Mason, Douglas Mason, John Morris, Gilliane Sills, Richard Sills, Ruth Sutherland, and Suzie Tomlin.

Chamber Choir week

Plans are going ahead for the week of half-day rehearsals at the end of July, ending with a concert in St Mary's Church Kidlington on **Friday 29 July**. As with last year's event, the programme consists of anthems and organ music from the 15th to the 21st century, but this time is focused on music by English composers only. So far 13 sopranos, 15 altos, 5 tenors and 8 basses have signed up, but it is not too late to join. Just get in touch with Gilliane Sills and she will send you an application form.

Autumn term

Choir rehearsals begin on **Thursday 8 September** and orchestra rehearsals on **Monday 19 September**. The concerts on **Friday 9 December** and **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 the programme also includes the Scherzo from Schubert's *9th Symphony*. Christmas carols, some with audience participation, will all contribute to make this a joyful occasion for the festive season.

Spring 2023

Concerts on **Friday 31 March** and **Saturday 1 April**. A programme of dramatic choruses and arias from three of Handel's brilliant oratorios, *Jephtha*, *Theodora* and *Samson*.

Evelyn Hendy, Secretary – choir@woodstockmusic.info