



Phoenixsingers

Chair's report to the Phoenix Singers AGM of 5th October 2016

Singers, I hope that you will all agree that our 2015-16 season provided an unusually rich mix of singing. A season which encompasses a major large scale twentieth century choral work, a much loved choral standard and a night out on Broadway is quite a whirl and there is still John Gardner's Cantata for Christmas, some spirituals, American sacred pieces, Brother Heinrich's Christmas and the Coronation Anthems Come and Sing to add to the tally.

Each of us will have their own highlights. For me they were the energy that we brought to the Messiah last December, the rollicking Songs of the Sea at Snape and the sheer good humour of the second half of our performance at Framlingham College in July. Each concert was a near sell out and it looked as though most of our audiences went away smiling.

It was also rewarding to see, as I am sure many of you did, Gill Clare and Geraldine Smith in the EADT holding a huge cheque for East Anglian Children's Hospices. We raised over £1,500.00 at our charity come and sing day in June, a fantastic effort.

Outreach was a major feature of our last season, a further aspect being the establishment and development of Firebird Boys Chorus at Sir Robert Hitcham's Primary School. The boys are trained by our musical director, Drew Cantrill, with funds raised by the Friends of Phoenix Singers. They shared our concert platform for two of last season's concerts. Few will manage to stifle a smile when they remember their "Consider Yourself at Home" at the College in July.

Gill Clare, our treasurer, will report on our financial position. I do not want to steal her thunder but I will reflect on how the strengthening of our finances has gone hand in hand with growing audience numbers and sea change in the quality of the choir's performance over the last few years. This virtuous circle enables us to work with good players and soloists and so present better concerts into the future.

Our next outing is a case in point. In December, at St Michael's Church, Monteverdi Vespers will be Phoenix Singers' most ambitious concert for many years and fittingly so as this is our fortieth anniversary year. We will be joined by a strong cadre of vocal soloists and the English Cornetts and Sackbuts Ensemble, a nationally renowned group of period specialists. I know that it will be a thrilling evening for singers and audience and it is enabled by our solid financial position.



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Singers, every institution must develop, plot and replot its course as it faces the future. Your committee is mindful that our choir lives in a rapidly changing world and that the principles that have underpinned its recent development may not be the right ones to inform our future direction. East Suffolk has a very lively, and busy, cultural scene and we need to know where Phoenix Singers fits into that so that we can recruit both the members and the audiences we need to flourish. What is the right model, broad, local and community based or more specialist in style, repertoire and draw for members and audience? This is a live discussion in your committee at the moment and one on which I am sure many of you have views. Do let us know them, face to face or by email to William.

A successful season, then and a firm base for the future. What has made it so?

When I reflect on the inevitable connectedness of our endeavours as a choir I realise how hard it is to single out one aspect or one individual and say they or that did it. We have been fortunate, this year, to have had the opportunity, through our relations with Woodbridge Choral Society, to perform in a major choral work at Snape and I am sure we would all like to thank them for that. We should also acknowledge the contribution made by the commercial sponsorship we have received, from Lindacre in April and Clarke and Simpson in July and thank the advertisers who support us through our concert programmes. I have already referred to the generosity of the Friends of Phoenix Singers who have enabled the development of the Firebird Boys Chorus who, in turn, have enriched our performances this year.

Of course, the Phoenix Singers would not be what it is today without those two forces of nature which power it along with boundless energy and commitment, our musical team, on the one hand, Drew and Geoff, and, our committee on the other hand. Drew's devotion to the art of choral singing shines through everything he does with us and we are immensely fortunate to benefit from his skill and energy; Geoff frequently shows us the breadth of his musicianship when he steps up to take rehearsal with his habitual wit and, I have to say it again, energy. Thank you, Drew and Geoff. Then our committee, a happily well balanced group of individuals with a great range of complementary skills and ideas who work as an effective team to steer and run the choir and organise the backroom work in preparing for our concerts.

Not least, that third force of nature, our members: let's thank everyone who helps with coffee, catering, rubbing out, proof reading, putting up posters, selling tickets, persuading their spouses or friends to help out on concert night. It a long list, in fact it is, pretty much, all of us.

Thank you. Here's to next year.