

Phoenix Singers



Chairman's report to the AGM of 26th September 2018

Singers, it is a great pleasure to report to you on another eventful year in the history of Phoenix Singers.

Last autumn our then musical director, Drew Cantrill, took a term's rest from working with us and so, gave us an opportunity to learn and sing under the direction of Geoff Lavery with Alex Binns taking Geoff's place at the piano. The resulting Messiah will be remembered for the dramatic emphasis of Geoff's interpretation, giving the work epic scale and breadth. The new setting, Framlingham College Chapel, with its two wings, one formal, and packed, and the other, sideways facing and somehow more relaxed, imbued the evening with a sense that all life is here, and we are here for the duration. Very epic and very special.

In November last year, Drew Cantrill announced his resignation as our musical director as he wished to devote his energies to other endeavours. We all understood and regretted in equal measure and much has been said. The committee considered a range of options for a new musical director and came to the view that, if it were possible, the combination of Geoff Lavery as musical director and Alex Binns as accompanist would give us a musical team of unparalleled depth and breadth. I am delighted that we have managed to secure that team.

The spring term showed just how broad the choral experience can be. Drew returned and coached us, with his habitual energy and patience, in a cappella singing. The result, the March concert we called Eternal Light, in St Michaels' Church, was to many in the audience, and indeed the choir, one of Phoenix Singers' greatest achievements. The programming, juxtaposing the playing of a first rate string quartet with the Mendleson psalms in the first half was a triumph of the imagination. Drew coaxed a sensitive reading of the psalms from the choir and, after the interval, of the Pizzetti Requiem. Thanks also to Geoff for his tactful support of our pitch on the night.

The summer concert, Gloria, represented a great deal of singing and rehearsing and the choir really showed its mettle. The Poulenc Gloria was new to almost everyone, the Brahms German Requiem more familiar but just as challenging. I was not at the performance but got feedback straight afterwards. It was Drew's last concert and the choir worked hard for him, the evening being lifted further by the wonderful playing of the Bibby Sisters and the farewell proceedings, a chance to celebrate six years of great music making and to get ready for to the next phase in our choral life.

So tonight we look back over our 2017-18 season and forward to the 2018-19 season when we will be performing some of the most renowned choral works in the repertoire, including our first collaboration with Beccles Choral Society and Gyppeswick Singers at Snape in May for Verdi Requiem. Geoff and Alex are in post and I am confident that Phoenix Singers will continue to flourish through aiming for excellence.

Singers, this is my swan song as your chairman. I will not, and indeed cannot, go on and on, and, unlike Mrs Thatcher, have no will to. So I shall sing, well not really, of the enormous privilege it has been to serve you and to work with a committee that I, and you, can rely on to be there when they need to be, work hard, show leadership, wisdom and dedication. So, in a minute, I am going to ask you to show give a great Phoenix Singers thank you to your committee, but just before I do that I must also thank two committee members, who are standing down, in particular, Judith Russell, the widow of our founder, whose devotion to his founding vision has often pulled us up in committee and whose work with visiting musicians has been stirring, and Janet Lansdale, who has taken on the task of marshaling us with energy and good humour. So please, a big Phoenix thank you to Judith, Janet and the committee.