

In this past year we've had three larger scale concerts:

Dream of G – lovely evening in Tewkesbury Abbey last November. This masterpiece in particular benefits from performance in context, sort of a ritualistic or theatrical subject. The Creation – March in Gloucester. My memories are of a sunny day and lovely bright and uplifting music with delightful soloists. Haydn is such an underrated composer in my view. Rossini – fun and unusual evening in the Sub Rooms. There were fun musical chairs amongst the conductor, the accompanists and the soprano soloist. Emma Brain -Gabbott (who is joining us as our vocal coach on January 30th) and Simon and Ed were terrific colleagues to have, they remained calm and flexible in the midst of all the chaos!

There has also been some smaller stuff:

Just over 12 months ago many of us were on tour in the Netherlands! This year has also seen the formation of the Minpins & the spectacular Stroudissimo event to dazzle us! The Christmas concert was hugely successful (our Treasurer in particular liked this!) and full of energy and fun. A wonderful debut by Zoe and the Minpins (no that's not a pop group we are founding!) made this event a particularly special occasion. In March we went to Swansea. It rained. I believe that it would be good for the choir's development and continued success for us to perform one or two smaller scale events such as this each year. We are looking into venues for the spring and summer of 2016 and have pencilled in a concert on April 30th at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.

Repertoire – The Christmas concert and these smaller scale events give us a chance to recycle repertoire and come back to works we already know – returning to an old favourite is much like greeting an old friend. In addition the more often the choir performs the better it will become. In 2013 did anyone wonder if we can perform the Mozart Requiem and Haydn Theresienmesse in 8 weeks why do we sometimes take 14 weeks? The more 'match practice' you get the better you become.

I believe these smaller concerts have contributed to the improved confidence and musical standard in the choir. Miscellaneous concerts also have their own sense of balance and satisfaction as there's something for everyone. These concerts offer the choir the chance to do repertoire we might not otherwise perform, notably Renaissance, modern and smaller scale Baroque music.

Choir improvement – despite more challenging music

Before this a quick re-cap as to why we have improved:

- i) Better singers have joined
- ii) Fantastic committee – energy, drive & vision & v good relationship with HW
- iii) Excellent accompanist
- iv) More regular concerts per year
- v) Blockbuster concert 'Verdi Requiem', Mozart Requiem – stuff people want to sing
- vi) Come & Sings/July workshops
- vii) Better venues for concerts
- viii) Improved conductors – 'professional conductors' Ben then Huw
- ix) Better rehearsal venue/piano
- x) Increased self esteem/morale of choir – from better venues/conductors/good concerts
- xi) Plan – preparation between rehearsals 'homework'

Some areas we haven't yet tackled, and these are features of future plans:

Sight-reading classes (next two weeks – these will be experimental!)

Vocal coaching

Guest conductors

Outreach – as well as forming The Minpins we are planning in future to look at performing a Christmas charity concert in the Stroud area. We are aware that even though performing in Gloucester Cathedral and Tewkesbury Abbey are wonderful experiences, the downside is that we lose some presence and visibility in the Stroud area. This would be one way of addressing this.

March 2016

The Pelicantata has a new spelling! It would be great to maximise our publicity from this landmark event – any contacts you have in the press/local radio/TV please pass onto the committee. We'll get a chance to meet the composer Peter Ash. He has written an opera on Charlie & the Chocolate Factory called The Golden Ticket. We will be performing this in 2 versions: with orchestra in Bath Abbey on March 5th with The Melody Makers and again on June 26th in Stroud at the sub Rooms. We have changed the remainder of the programme for this concert. Now instead of performing Schubert's Mass in G & Magnificat we are performing all 4 of Handel's Coronation Anthems. Most of you will know Zadok the priest, but we will also do Let thy hand be strengthened (sun in 2011) and The king shall rejoice and My heart is inditing.

Then in January (30th 10-1) Emma Brain-Gabbott will be joining us for a vocal refresher day to help us work on singing technique with extended warm ups and vocal tips! Those of you who don't know her, she is a fantastic singer and a lively and fun person and I'm sure it will be an enjoyable day.

I must close by emphasising my thanks and admiration of the committee and other choir workers for their excellent energy and commitment, especially Molly this past 6 months as acting chair. Also too we need to congratulate Zoe on her brilliant achievement as musical director and founder of The Minpins. As well as the other committee members there are many others who volunteer with ticket sales, poster and programme production etc. Without these very cheerful and hard working volunteers this choir would be much less enjoyable and successful. Thanks to Simon for his wonderful work at the keyboard, it is a subtle but huge source of leadership and direction for the choir having him there confidently at the piano on a weekly basis. Finally, thanks to you for turning out week after week and giving of your time and musical skills!