

**BISHOPWEARMOUTH CHORAL SOCIETY  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 2nd September 2015, 7.30 p.m.  
at Sunderland Minster.**

Minutes of last year's AGM have been published on the Society website – under Members' News. Anyone without access to these can request a paper copy from the Secretary (Tel: 522 7721) as long as this is made before the meeting. Nomination Forms for the elections are also available from the same source.

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last AGM
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Conductor's Report
7. Proposed Amendment to Constitution
8. Election of Officers
9. Election of Representatives
10. Any Other Business

## **BISHOPWEARMOUTH CHORAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2013/2014 SEASON**

This was held at Sunderland Minster, on Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. The meeting began at 7.30 p.m. with C.A. in the chair and 35 members of the Society present.

**Apologies for Absence :** L.G, M.A, W.C, L.L, K.C, A.P, L.W, H.G, S.R, M.S, C.M.

**Minutes of the last A.G.M. :** These had been previously circulated and were unanimously accepted as a true record – proposed by A.L. and seconded by F.G.

**Matters Arising :**

- There were no matters arising from the minutes.

The following reports were presented to the meeting and are reproduced below.

**The Chairman's Report :** This report was presented by C.A. :-

Welcome, and thank you for your attendance at our AGM. This is an opportunity for us to review our work of the past year, to plan for the future, to maintain the tradition of fine choral singing in our city, and to try to bring our love of this to as wide an audience as possible.

Your committee has been extremely busy as usual, and I thank them for all their hard work, which will become evident as we go through the meeting. Special thanks go to I.W. and A. M. for their service as section reps. and also to C. L. for stepping into the breach when A.M. left us to move closer to her family. Other personnel changes to the committee concerned our Librarian, and we welcomed A.L. as acting librarian. With W.C. away on granddaughter duties A.L. has had to negotiate a steep learning curve, and I thank her for it!

As a society we have reduced in size over the past few years, reflecting a trend all over the country, although happily our tenor section is numerically very healthy. Thankfully we continue to attract new members, but we must all continue to try to add to our number.

Sadly we have said some goodbyes this year. "Young" I.W. and A.C. are off to university and enter a new and exciting phase of their lives. We wish them well, and hope that they keep on singing. Also, sadly, Marj. Barton, Sara and Syd Cohen have died in recent months, and we remember them with gratitude.

Hopefully our society is more than a number of people who learn to sing a particular piece of choral music and then perform it. We are a society, and reflect the wider society in which we are placed. We make friendships, have disagreements and enjoy social interaction. The importance of the social aspect of our life is significant, and coffee breaks, coffee mornings, and the informal dinner are good examples of how we might come together as one. Support for these has not been of the greatest, I have to say, but thanks to C. L. we have the opportunity to start the season "on a high" with the barbecue on Sept.13th. You received information of this in your mailing, and I urge you to come along and enjoy what will be a very special occasion.

At last year's AGM you asked the committee to consider the matter of election of officers. A subcommittee was duly formed and its options have been presented to you for a decision tonight. More of that later. At this juncture I should just like to thank E.W., C.L., J.F. and GW. for their hard work and contributions to this matter.

Also at that meeting there was some discussion about performing in German. The decision to do both St. Matthew Passion and Brahms' Requiem in German was completely vindicated, in no small way due to our expert C.R. Thank you!

I also encouraged you last year to let the committee know of any work which you were desperate for us to include in our programme. Nothing has been forthcoming, so our policy of a joint decision between conductor and committee will continue. The Five Year Programme, as far as we can plan it, is always on the noticeboard and the website for you to see, and we continue to welcome your suggestions.

Finance must always be a bed fellow with repertoire. We must balance the desirable with the attainable, and exist within reality. Sheena will present the balance sheet in a moment and answer any queries from you. You will see that income is down and expenses up as compared with last season, but the two years are not comparable because of the concert in the Sage. In this present climate no classical concert makes a profit. All require sponsorship, and in fact, for the past eight years we have been sponsored. Anne Todd's legacy was indeed her sponsorship of the society. Now that it is diminishing it is right that we seek further funding to be able to plan for the future, and I would suggest that eight thousand pounds a year of guaranteed income is what we should be aiming for. Think of it as eight individuals or businesses giving one thousand pounds, sixteen giving five hundred, or thirty two giving two hundred and fifty, just over twenty pounds a month. This will be the job of a finance sub-committee to be set up in the next week or so I am looking for two or three of you who feel that you have the expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm to join the officers in this work.

I make no apology, as your chairman, for the programmes we have performed during my tenure, and only achieved because of the invention and hard work of D.M., who manages to perform value for money miracles. To repeat myself, classical music does not make money. All our large orchestras and choirs are sponsored and audiences sadly are diminishing everywhere. We have a duty to be prudent and fiscally wise and inventive in ways of staging and programming, but we also have a duty to perform the great works of the classical choral repertoire, as we were set up to do. Think of the experience we gave to our young singers as well to ourselves when we performed St. Matthew Passion, one of the greatest pieces of music ever written. That experience will be with them and you all your lives, and you will be changed by it. You do not settle for a diet of Banksie (good though he is), if you can enrich your experience with Turner, Rembrandt, or one of the great Italian masters. And so it is with us. We must continue to have a varied programme and one which hopefully will attract wider audiences, but it is hard work, and results are not always immediate. So we must all try hard.

Our society was founded on the dreams and vision of one small but determined man. We are privileged to carry the torch for a while, and to try to ensure that we pass it on intact to the next generation, which I am sure that our forthcoming season will help us to do.

**The Treasurer's Report** : The Treasurer, S.R., in her Financial Report to the Society presented a number of points :

- Another expensive year, but very interesting, musically. We have lost £8000 of our savings which is a hole in our reserves. Ticket sales are poorer as the comparison is 3 concerts against 2.
- The Sage concert does not appear separately on the concert breakdown but overall cost us £2280, making it the cheapest concert of the three. Putting that amount with the previous season's two concerts gives a similar pro rata concert expenditure for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 seasons.

- I'd like to thank all those who contribute to fund-raising, raffles, coffee, coffee mornings, hire library and the dinner. Again we have invested in music for the hire library which gives us a steady income.
- We have had some generous donations this season including the £1000 left by Jim Manwaring.
- The subscription will increase to £90 for the season and the opportunity is there to pay in instalments. Last year 12 members paid online and I will give you the account details if you wish to pay your subscription this way. This saves on trips to the bank, often by my husband.
- The Social fund stands at £62. Reps can use this for gifts, cards, flowers etc. sent on behalf of Society members.
- March was a difficult time for me and I would like to thank everyone for their help and support. Coming to sing helped me to cope.
- I will not be here on 17 and 24 September but C.A. will receive subs or you can pay online.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for her very efficient work, which was so important to the Society. There were no questions on the Treasurer's Report and the accounts were unanimously accepted – proposed by L.W. and seconded by J.M.

**The Business Manager's Report** would normally be presented by L.W. but the Chairman spoke on her behalf. The Chairman reminded the Society that the Business Manager prepares the concert programmes and that we were very grateful for her completing this onerous task.

**The Conductor's Report** was given by D.M. :-

Its been, as usual quite a season. It started very very slowly I seem to remember with the Brahms Requiem, for some reason, taking an absolute age to learn. I was a little taken aback – having just scaled the heights of a hugely successful performance of Belshazzar the previous season I had thought that the Brahms Requiem would be something we could take in our stride very easily. Not so. Many weeks of repetition and forgotten notes were to dominate the Autumn term – rather frustrating to say the least, and I had hoped that we would have been able to add a few Brahms partsongs into the first half of the programme. Not a bit of it. It took 14 rehearsals to get the piece ready. Not a good omen for what was around the corner in the New Year – the huge task of learning the Matthew Passion and this time we'd only have 14 rehearsals before the joint rehearsals with Ryton to get it ready. But we did manage the Brahms very well. It was a very powerful performance, preceded by a first half with no choral element in it whatsoever – our two soloists Jessica Holmes and Richard Gooding sang Brahms and Schumann lieder very beautifully and I enjoyed playing selections from one of my favorite sets of late Brahms piano pieces.

I was pleased with the concert – it showed the choir in fine fettle with strong and confident singing throughout. The phrasing was musical and shapely and the all important dynamic details – so very important to the success of this particular work – were all in place. The balance was good and the combination of the four part chorus with the texture of the piano duet was perfect. I think I have mentioned before that this is in fact my preferred version of the piece with piano duet – above that of the orchestral version, because the detail of the chorus work can be heard and of course it's a very much more intimate type of music making. So although it took us a while to get there and it was a pretty near perfect performance – just one alto glitch in the link to the fugue spoilt things a bit but otherwise a splendid account.

The New Year saw us begin on the massive task of learning the Matthew Passion. The progress here, thank goodness, was much better and we had an extended rehearsal slot every week to help. The amount of chorus work in this piece is just overwhelming, and many of the choruses are of course technically very demanding, and require sometimes a subtlety of approach, sometimes really powerful singing, sometimes really quick-fire starts in fast tempos which have to be internalized by everyone in the choir in order for the drama to unfold as it should. The other problem is the sheer amount of material which needs to be not only learnt but also remembered, and as you will remember the rehearsal schedule reflected this more and more as we got into the month of March. It's not the type of rehearsal technique I particularly enjoy – a sort of intense revision of as much as possible – without getting into too much more musical detail. But it is necessary as otherwise we forget choruses altogether and then they have to be completely relearnt as if we've never seen them before. This actually started to happen at Ryton despite my efforts, and it was scary, resulting in my giving two of their choruses to soloists at rather a late stage. But this didn't happen here and I was of course delighted with the final outcome. Both choirs sang fabulously, it was a powerful and very moving performance, and my hand picked orchestra and my hand picked soloists – so many of them this time youngsters at the start of their careers – were all wonderful. The Evangelist Daniel Norman gave a wonderfully dramatic account of the story and Philip Smith as Christus sang with great presence and eloquence.

There were some wonderful orchestral solos – the gamba solos were fantastic – they are so very difficult and Andy Wardale handled them with apparent ease. The flute solos were amazing – and Eilidh Gillespie was a new face on the block so that was a nice surprise. And of course the violin solo Martin gave us in Ebarne Dich was out of this world – as good as I've ever heard it. So the performance was indeed wonderful. But the preparation outside of the choral requirements for this piece – and I do remember this from when we did the piece way back in 2004 – is really a bit of a nightmare. There are so many things to arrange. The schedule for the afternoon rehearsal is a nightmare in itself: two orchestras who only sometimes play together, a huge amount of linking recits and choruses to do, the recit rehearsals themselves which are always a bit of a nail biting job to get together on one morning rehearsal, and a cast of seemingly thousands – will they all turn up at the right time? Have the soloists learnt the correct aria? Have the soloists all the learnt the extra bits that Ryton didn't manage to learn in time? What if I run out of orchestral parts? There's only one player per part for this performance so there's no room for anyone – not even a string player – forgetting a part. Actually I did need two extra parts, and luckily I'd ordered a back up set – more of that in a moment. And this time I had the added complexity of Simon Lee, our tenor soloist, having to get back for evensong at Durham by 4.30.

The fixing of the orchestra was a nightmare which went on for about two months. I had, surprisingly enough, not too much difficulty with the strings – it did make it easier that they were playing one a part and that automatically reduces the number of players needed. But they all had to be top notch if it was going to be single strings. But there was one big problem. Our lovely cellist Ruth Waterson who has played for us for so many years, is no longer able to play because her husband is in very poor health now and cannot be left on his own. This was a real blow because I needed someone truly exceptional to do the continuo for all the secco recits for the evangelist and all the small parts, its very tricky and just being a good cellist is not enough to be able to make a success of it – you have to be a fantastic accompanist and have an instinctive feel for the word rhythms. At least we were doing it in German which makes it a whole lot easier than trying to read a translation with all the attendant wrong rhythms. However, I thought, help is at hand, the wonderful Jeannette Mountain is back in the area – ex leader of cellos in Northern Sinfonia, she will make a fantastic continuo cellist for orchestra 1. Not so. Busy – booked already for something else. I tried any many people and eventually ended up with Dan Hammersley, the current no.2 in the Sinfonia and a fine player. He hadn't done it before which wasn't great news. He managed ok in the end but we had some difficulty in the morning rehearsal getting it all together.

The major problem, though, were the flutes. Last time David Haslam did it and of course he is amazing. But David has stopped playing now. So I tried Juliette, the current 1<sup>st</sup> flute in the Sinfonia. Busy. She put me on to Eilidh, however, - a good choice and thank goodness she was free: Juliette put me on to many others who were alas all busy. My first calls I had already investigated of course - Margaret Borthwick Brian Stewart and Rachel Jeffers - but all busy - what to do? I needed four! Well I was in the position of having two of them for what seemed like a very long time – Martin’s wife Jill is a very good player, and she is always keen to come up from Bedford if Martin is playing and play as well. Eventually I was doing some accompaniment work for a project towards the end of February in Hull, and I came across a nice player there. I asked her outright if she would play and heavens be praised she said yes. So that was three. Then my wife Jennifer, who officially fixes the wind for me but by this time had given up all hope with the flutes– made a last ditch desperate phone call in March to Geoffrey Emerson who has now moved from North Yorkshire to North Northumberland, and has some interesting contacts. He suggested John Harris who had been abroad for a long time but had moved back to Northumberland. Now John Harris was a bit of a star when I was a bit of a flute player myself before I went off to college, and before he decided to be a vet instead of a flute player, despite winning a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music. It was good to know he was still playing and obviously came highly recommended. So that was it thank goodness but it seemed to represent months of agonizing.

On the day itself I was very focused on following the crazy rehearsal schedule – its crazy because everything has to be rehearsed in the wrong order so orchestra 1 can arrive first and orchestra 2 later then orchestra 1 can leave a little early and so on - so no –one is hanging around for too long – but actually you know even then everyone is hanging around for more time than they are paid for and that we can afford. A St Matthew Passion amongst other things calls for a lot of co-operation and understanding amongst fellow musicians. In the midst of this, about half way through the rehearsal, when orchestra 2 must have arrived, I saw this old man sitting in front of the orchestra 2 organ. I was a bit concerned. – who on earth has let this man in and what on earth is he doing sitting in front of that organ ? The next time I looked he seemed to be playing a flute. Then the penny dropped. It was John Harris. I hadn’t seen him since I was about sixteen years old. He was probably having very similar thoughts about me.

I mentioned that I did need to dip into my spare set of parts. There was one thing I had miscalculated when booking players. In both orchestra 1 and Orchestra 2 there are violin solos. One is the lovely Ebarme Dich I’ve already mentioned. That was Martin’s solo, orchestra 1. The other is Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder (Give me back my Lord) which was Iona’s solo, Orchestra 2. Of course what I had forgotten was if you have single players that’s fine – the leader of each orchestra plays the solo, as ever. But who plays the tutti 1<sup>st</sup> violin part? The rest of the orchestra are all busy. It normally doesn’t matter as whoever else is sitting on the 1<sup>st</sup> desk will play it. But not with single players – there’s no-one else sitting there its one per desk. Fortunately both Iona and Martin had spotted this, and they did a very helpful thing. When Martin was playing the solo, Iona became tutti 1<sup>st</sup> violin for orchestra 1, and when Iona was playing her solo, Martin became tutti 1<sup>st</sup> for orchestra 2.

On a choral front I was pleased that I had decided to tackle the difficulties of training two choirs for the piece by putting together this choral society with Ryton – choirs that I work with on a week in week out basis. It worked very well indeed and the blend was good and the ensemble was good after one rather difficult rehearsal in here because of space and seating. The follow up rehearsal was much more successful in Ryton school hall. The other thing that was very nice to be able to do was to choose the soloists for the small character parts from both choirs, and have them singing from the four quarters of the choir – just as I am sure Bach intended. All soloists excelled themselves. Their preparation was excellent and their nerves didn’t let them down on what I know is a bit of a scary occasion. So well done to all who took on that challenge. As usual

we must thank Cristal for all her hard work with the German – we are indeed very lucky to have her, and this season of course we did two pieces end on which used German text so she was doubly appreciated. I seem to remember at this time last year there was some discussion about whether we should be doing the piece in German. I have no doubts at all from my point of view that it was and indeed will remain the only option in current tastes and stylistic practices which abound in this country and the rest of world. By the way I couldn't help notice that Roger Norrington's St John Passion at the Proms this year was in German, and no-one even mentioned it – its so taken for granted these days that it will be. Whether German text worked in Sunderland on that particular occasion for the audience I would have to defer to others to make that judgment. I've just read the excellent recently published biography of Bach by John Eliot Gardiner – its called Music in the Castle of Heaven. Its fantastic – well I suppose it would be, written by one of the foremost of Bach's interpreters in the world, who also happens to be a historian. He sums up the impact of Bach's two Passion settings as follows: (read p 429 from MICOH). If our performance came anywhere near that for our audience here is Sunderland I'll be very pleased. From where I was standing though it was a wonderful occasion, and well worth all the hard work and agonizing amounts of preparation, but maybe let's wait a few years before we do it again!

And after all of that what could have been more different than learning Purcell's wonderful little masterpiece, Dido and Aeneas? Well the learning of this, after the Bach, seemed relatively straightforward. We zipped through in a matter of three weeks and also took on board the more challenging, and I know for some of you the stylistically more unfamiliar MacMillan. This was really a tough cookie especially for the tenors and basses, but with weekly work it got easier – never easy – but rather as I had observed in the learning of the opening of Belshazzar with all those strange harmonies, - you were prepared to throw yourself into it, and go for it, which is exactly the approach it needed.

Once again, the Purcell provided lots of opportunities for soloists from within the choir, and we certainly had a lot of fun with witches and spirits and echo choruses. Everyone who did this did a terrific job, and once again must be congratulated on really fine singing. The choir as a whole coped very well, too, with the direction from the harpsichord, which of course means minimal direction. But was very positive, full blooded singing and it caught the changing characters of the opera brilliantly – whether you were the concerted voice of compassion and reason, or whether you were witches having a cackle, or even sailors having a dance and a drink, you seemed to enter into the spirit wonderfully. The addition of some props and costumes and of course not least the famous tankards brought – from where I was standing- or rather sitting – a new lease of life into the performance . The Glade was lovely, the cauldron was fun, and the tankards were awesome! And the staggered sit at the end was profoundly moving. Our soloists were brilliant – a wonderful team for the two title roles and the brilliant Elen Roberts stepping into the role of Belinda at fairly short notice and doing a great job, and of course Sarah Ryan will somehow have to find a way of slipping the comment made about her in the crit as 'the sexiest sorceress I have ever seen ' into a cv somehow, I don't know how though. As she said to me later – 'well yes this is all very well but what about my singing?!'

The MacMillan seemed to be a big hit – I imagine some people in the audience were nonplussed especially at the end with its seagull cries – but I got the feeling that most were convinced and I also got the feeling that most of the choir were too. It was certainly a fine performance, accompanied with real style by the Edinburgh Quartet, who we were very lucky to have. They had actually co- commissioned the work and given it its first performance so they knew it backwards. Good job as they'd managed to lose the viola part. But they were great and played a really dazzling 'Joke' quartet in the first half. That together with the wonderful young Luke Williams singing one of my favourite song cycles, Vaughan Williams' Songs of Travel – all added up to a concert which was very different and refreshing and I think a big success.

A great season – and one that couldn't have worked at all without the unfailing support of my friends in the committee who, as ever work very very hard indeed behind the scenes, and are very often there to keep me right if I forget something – which is not unheard of . And of course Eileen continues to be a great support, not only as a terrific repetiteur but as a joint choral trainer: without her we could simply not tackle the sort of repertoire we do – both in scale and in complexity. So my thanks to them all for their terrific work throughout the year. Long may it continue.

So what's next?

Well this term we look forward to a very Christmassy programme indeed which will feature the Young Singers very prominently. The first half is a Christmas Messiah – that's basically all of Part One which includes all the lovely Christmas bits including Pastoral Symphony, Glory to God etc and then we stick the Hallelujah Chorus on the end to make a spectacular finish.

The second half will be a performance of a piece I wrote as long ago as 1978, when I had just returned from London to the North East. My Librettist, Tony Runham, had left the College of Education we were both teaching in at same the time as me and we had agreed to write musical based on Dickens' A Christmas Carol when we got our new jobs. So every week in my first term up here a song lyric would arrive through the post and every weekend a completed song would be posted back to London. This went on for some weeks and at the end of term I jumped on the London train and went to hear the piece performed in Tony's school where he was deputy head. It was a fantastic experience. But funnily enough the piece lay around in my attic for the next 30 years totally forgotten until I rediscovered it and Eileen decided she would love her Young Singers to do it. So they did that Christmas. I was supposed to be deeply involved but it was when my mum was very ill and actually she died the day before the performance. But I went to see it and rather enjoyed it, and thought that it could certainly be resurrected, but that it needed more fleshing out – there was a distinct lack of dialogue and the feeling of scenes was not tangible as the story progressed. In fact it only really progressed through the songs themselves. So I got in touch with Tony and he re wrote a lot of it and to cut a long story short we did it last year at Christmas with Ryton and the Young Singers. It was a fantastic success and they all dressed in Victorian costume, it was semi-staged etc. And following on from the success of our tankards and the rest – well it seems too good an opportunity to miss. The subtitle now is not just 'A Musical for Children' – its for Adult choir too, and of course I wrote proper parts for the strings, so its all sitting here ready to go. I think you'll enjoy it a lot.

The New Year sees us tackling a big programme: The central piece is Elgar's The Music Makers. This is a tremendous work, one of my all time favourites, in which he writes a sort of autobiography of himself, quoting all the way through from his own works. Its set for choir orchestra and contralto solo, and its very difficult but well worth it. The last time we did this was in a summer term and we were flying by our coat tails to learn it in time. This time we'll have a lot more time. I hope that once again our President Anne Marie Owens will be our contralto soloist, and I hope also that she will sing Elgar's Sea Pictures for us.

And our final concert will be a joint operation once again, following on from the success of the Carmina Burana concert in the Sage Gateshead last summer, together with Ryton Choral Society and Orchestra North East, this time it will be that all time favourite ,Verdi's Requiem. If all goes as well as it did last time and we get a massive audience to boot, it will be a thrilling climax to the year, and I'm looking forward to it immensely.

The Chairman expressed everyone's thanks to David for his contribution in producing miracles all around.



**The Patrons' Officer's Report** was presented by C.L.

This season the number of Patrons has fallen and I can foresee that this trend will continue in the coming season.

2013–14 we had a total of 34 Individual Patrons  
1 Family  
1 School

Of these 15 are Life Patrons and all, but 1, are Senior Patrons.

We have lost 4 Patrons as a result of ill health and 2 others have not responded to any of the year's newsletters. We also gained 1 Senior Patron.

Already this coming season we have lost A. M, as a result of relocation, and I am sure we were all shocked and saddened by the death of Marj Barton who was, without doubt, one of our most proactive Patrons.

Patrons' ticket sales throughout the year were slightly down but still represent about a third of the audiences we attract.

December 2013 we sold	30 tickets
March 2014 we sold	32 tickets
June 2014 we sold	19 tickets

The latter was less than normal but sales in June are always lower as a number of Patrons take holidays in June. Most Patrons have opted to order their tickets and pay and collect at the door which both saves postage and streamlines the system

I am sure that our Patrons scheme is cheaper than many in the area and offers similar benefits.

Senior Patrons	£12
Adult Patrons	£24
Family	£36
School	£50
Life	£120
Corporate	£150

The Chairman expressed her thanks to C.L. for her hard work. An invitation was extended to any members to become patrons if they so wished.

**The Vice-Chairman's Report was presented by D.C. :**

**Christmas Concert: Ein Deutsches Requiem : Brahms**

Singing in Requiem with piano duet accompaniment meant there was a better balance as the chorus did not have to make themselves heard over an orchestra. Setting up was tricky thanks to the Minster putting up their large Christmas tree where part of the staging was meant to be, but thanks to I.W. for an on the spot revision of my plans the staging was erected in time. Only the sopranos in the back row had baubles as earrings. 60 members sang in the concert. 22 Sopranos, 18 Altos, 9 Tenors, 11 Basses.

## **St Matthew Passion : Bach**

Staging proved a different challenge for this concert, accommodating Ryton and Bishopwearmouth choruses, young singers and positioning soloists who were singing from the choir, two chamber organs, two orchestras, soloists and conductor. Thanks to everyone in both societies for their full co-operation in seating for the Friday rehearsal as that saved a lot of angst for the full rehearsal on Saturday. It made for a very long day as I was in the Minster from before 9am – to open up for the arrival and tuning of the two chamber organs - and did not leave until after 11.30pm at night when everything was set for Sunday morning worship. Clearing away was excellent as Ryton members lent a hand which was greatly appreciated. An excellent concert performance from all involved. The combined choir numbered: 114 singers, 42 Sopranos, 33 Altos, 15 Tenors, 24 Basses plus 8 young singers.

## **Who are these Angels? and Dido and Aeneas**

Another challenge for the society singing a modern work by a living composer! The chorus were arranged differently to accommodate the MacMillan work as there was a distinct difference between the ladies as angels and the men, singing in Latin, as earthly beings, or should that be unearthly!! The tenors and basses were stage left and the sopranos and altos were stage right. Unusual harmony for the tenors and basses and long sustained notes for the sopranos and altos were particularly challenging. Whale and seal effects from the strings at the end added to the unusual nature of the work!!!

The chorus arrangement stayed for **Dido and Aeneas**. This was a first for the gentlemen wearing a ribbon and waving a tankard in the air. Mind you I would have drawn the line at wearing a toga!!! The work was directed by David from the harpsichord, who said men couldn't multi task!! At least Dido didn't expire in the middle of the aisle this time!! Setting up stage went very well because for once I got the gaps right. I'll eventually get the hang of Norman's instructions. Taking one base piece out at a time from the undercroft instead of trying to drag out the whole trolley proved much easier. Thanks to everyone who helped. After the concert we were cleared away by 10.40pm which was thanks to members of the audience helping. Thanks to Minster for use of lobster pots, nets, flowers and Emily's nursery for trees and K.C. for charming the trees from Emily's Nursery!! 56 members sang in the concert. 21 Sopranos, 16 Altos, 8 Tenors, 11 Basses.

**Firsts for the society** last season were:

Brahms, Ein Deutsches Requiem and Bach's, St Matthew Passion sung in German a major achievement; a work by James MacMillan and a whole opera Dido & Aeneas semi-staged, with grove, lobster pots, tankards and sound effects. The audience were not sure if the seagulls were part of the opera or were on the roof!!

## **Chorus Points**

### **Observations from concerts:-**

The wearing of black tops for women and open necked black shirts for men worked well, it is much easier to sing without a bow tie.

### **Points to note**

Please remember to smile at the audience at the end of the concert show that you have enjoyed your singing. Singing is good for you!! So, learn the music, watch the conductor, keep with the beat and follow the conductor's interpretation in rehearsal and performance.

The Chorus at the last count consisted of 24 Sopranos, 19 Contraltos, 8 Tenors and 13 Basses a total of 64.

I look forward to a challenging 66<sup>th</sup> season of Scrooge, Elgar and Verdi Requiem at the Sage.

I would like to thank D.M. and E.B. for their hard work and patience. I would also like to thank everyone who helps set up & clear away for rehearsals and concerts, makes coffee, sells raffle tickets, buys raffle tickets and helps in any way - these things don't happen by magic! We pride ourselves in leaving the Minster neat and tidy and ready for Sunday morning worship. As well as those members who support the extras – Dinner in the Rosedene, Coffee Mornings at Fulwell and Young Singers Concerts, a busy season as usual.

Finally – well – Eileen – I just know you're waiting for a joke.

*Did you here about the opera singer who couldn't find a singing partner?*

*She had to find a duet yourself kit!*

*What do you get if you drop a piano down a mine shaft?*

*A flat Minor*

*What do you get if you drop a piano in an army barracks?*

*A flat Major!*

The Chairman thanked D.Cox for his report and for all of the work he had contributed.

**The Librarian's Report** was presented by A.L. :-

1. Last AGM W. C. indicated retirement in 12-18 months. Suggested new volunteer shadow her. I agreed January 2014, and Wendy moved south February! Have had her help from afar but otherwise, seat of pants.
2. Please continue to give music hire money in envelopes with **your** name on, not mine
3. All hired/loaned choral music to be done though me, **including soloists.**
4. Thanks for support of committee.

The Chairman thanked A.L. for taking over this important role. She also passed on some comments on behalf of W.C. to thank I.W. and E.M. for their assistance during her time in the role.

**The Bishopwearmouth Young Singers Report** was presented by E.B. :-

This has been yet another enjoyable year for the Young Singers, with a varied and often challenging programme of concerts. We started our season with preparations for a performance of that famous opera Scrooge, which of course, as we all know, was written especially for the Young Singers. We were invited to participate by Ryton Choral Society who were performing it as part of their Christmas concert and we had a lot of fun both in rehearsal and in the performance itself. This was followed by another equally wonderful masterpiece, namely the St Matthew Passion of J.S. Bach. For this we had the added challenge of mastering the German, which I think they did remarkably well, especially considering that I decided that they should learn some of the chorales too. Our final concert in the summer was something rather different. For some time now I have wanted to do a concert with invited guests, talented young students from the region who would perform alongside the Young Singers. Not only would this give these gifted young musicians an opportunity to perform in a new setting, but it would also afford the Young Singers the chance to hear some fine young talent. We decided to do the concert in the Minster, as the piano is better, and it is not our usual performing space. The evening was a great success in musical terms, the Young Singers sang beautifully and our guests acquitted themselves with distinction. We had nice refreshments and the audience was

considerably greater in number than is usual. Artistically the evening was a great success, but financially it was rather less so. Although the audience was generous in supporting the raffle and also in the donations which were given, the whole thing was blown out of the water by the size of the bill we had to pay to the Minster. Clearly the Minster have costs and we were more than happy to pay, but I don't think we were expecting a bill for £300. That's a lot of money for a tiny little singing group to find, so although we loved being in the Minster and are very grateful for the opportunity to perform in such a nice venue, we simply can't afford that sort of cost. So its back to Ewesley Road folks!

Thanks must go to all of you who faithfully support us in all sorts of ways, to D.M. for playing for us, to V.V. for our raffles, , to D.C., S.R., L.W. for moral and practical support, to K.C. who is there every week on door duty and of course to dearest E.W. who as you all know is truly amazing and is the possessor of almost supernatural powers of organisation and efficiency!

The Chairman thanked E.B. for her report and work with the Young Singers, noting that it had been a good year for such a small group and that they added an extra dimension to any concert where they joined with the main Society – which is why the Committee sought to include in at least one concert per season.

**Election of Officers** – The Chairman informed the Society that although the offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon.Secretary, Hon.Treasurer and were all open for re-election, the 35 members present were insufficient to make the meeting quorate (The Constitution requires 40) and therefore another meeting would have to called in 14 days time to complete the elections of these posts (and the new Section Reps)

An addition Extraordinary Meeting of the Society was therefore called for Wednesday September 17<sup>th</sup> 2014, at 9.00 p.m. following the scheduled rehearsal, to deal with the outstanding agenda items (no. 12, 13 and 14)

**Any Other Business :-**

- Greetings from Beatrix Weber to the Society were conveyed by C. R..
- F.G. expressed his thanks for all of the cards, letters and telephone calls he had received while he had been unwell. As this had only enabled him to attend some of the concerts, rather than sing in them, he also thanked everyone for the experience as an audience member.
- S.R. reported that she would be absent from the first rehearsal and the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> September, but she was willing to stand as Treasurer.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.57 p.m.

Eileen Watson,  
Hon.Secretary.

## Extraordinary Annual General Meeting

held on Wednesday September 17<sup>th</sup> 2014

at 9.00 p.m. at Sunderland Minster.

This was with C.A. in the chair and 46 members of the Society present.

### Apologies for absence :

**Election of Officers :** The Chairman explained that the posts of Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary were all for election for the season 2014/15. It was proposed by F.G. and seconded by V.V. that C.A., S.R., and E.W. should be re-elected and this was unanimously accepted by the meeting.

**Election of Section Representatives :** For the Alto section, C.L. was proposed by C.L. and seconded by C.R. and this was unanimously accepted by the Alto section.

There was no proposal for a new representative of the Bass section and I.W., who had completed two years in this role offered to continue for another year. This was propose by C.M. and seconded by M.A. and unanimously accepted by the Bass section.

**Vote on Committee Succession Arrangements :** A voting paper containing a variety of options for this had been previously circulated.

<b>BCS Committee Succession Arrangements.</b>	
<b><u>Option 1</u></b>	That election arrangements for the Committee should remain as they are – as per the present Constitution.
<b><u>Option 2</u></b>	The election for Chairman should be for a 3 year term, which could be extended for a further 2 years at the wish of the incumbent.  The election of the Secretary and Treasurer to remain as yearly, and for Section Reps to be elected every two years.
<b><u>Option 3</u></b>	The election for the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to be for 5 year terms.  The election of a new post holder for each of these to be at a year ahead of the end of each term of office to allow for some 'shadowing' of that role. The three elections to be staggered between Year 1, Year 3, and Year 5.  Election of Section Reps. to remain, as now, at two years.

The Chairman provided an explanation of the options to the Society and asked members to use their vote very carefully. Some comments on the proposals were also made from the floor by G.W. and P.R. before the meeting moved to a vote. The votes collected were counted by E.B. and D.M. acting as tellers and the Chairman announced the outcome which was :-

Option 1	28 votes
Option 2	9 votes
Option 3	7 votes

Future elections will therefore take place in the manner contained in the present Constitution.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

E. W.,  
Hon.Secretary.