

## Vice Chairman's Report 2015 – David Cox

### 1<sup>st</sup> Concert: Christmas Messiah and Scrooge

The extra legs the society purchased to increase the flexibility of the staging proved to be very useful for this concert. In the first half the chorus toggled out in their traditional gear sang the Christmas parts of the Messiah finishing with the Hallelujah Chorus. There then followed an interval in which the chorus chairs were moved and the stage set up for Scrooge, while the choir donned their costumes. The change went smoothly and Scrooge was sung semi – staged, I even got the midnight chime in the right place! This was out of my comfort zone though the audience loved it. The Young Singers excelled themselves along with other members of the cast who acted and danced!! Thanks to all who helped to move everything in the interval and those who provided costumes, props etc. or just joined the general Victorian theme. It was certainly a departure from our usual fare. *'God bless us. Every one!'*

57 members sang in the concert. 23 Sopranos, 14 Altos, 8 Tenors, 12 Basses.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Elgar Bavarian Highlands, Sea Pictures and Music Makers

In contrast we were back on song with the Elgar programme. A large orchestra was necessary and in the stage set up we used the extra legs to avoid erecting the highest level. The concert was excellent from all involved although the size of the audience was disappointing. The chorus rose to the challenge of Music Makers with its constant changes of tempi and dynamics.

The chorus numbered 51 singers; 23 Sopranos, 12 Altos, 8 Tenors, 8 Basses

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Verdi Requiem in the Sage

The combined rehearsals proved a seating challenge for the chorus in various venues because the work called for firsts and seconds in parts and a double chorus in the Sanctus. Getting everyone into four rows worked reasonable in the Minster and at Thorpe school but the Town Hall Gateshead proved an almost impossible task. Once we were at the Sage rehearsal things went much more smoothly and changes at the interval of the rehearsal ironed out some problems. Thanks to everyone who followed instructions and came on and off the Sage chorus area in rehearsal and performance in a very neat, professional manner. Thanks especially to the sopranos some of whom were involved in musical chairs at each rehearsal. Nevertheless a fantastic concert, a great sing with a full orchestra, a very LOUD drum and at the end no need to clear away, just walk out and let the Sage clear up!!

Combined choir was 104 singers; 42 Sopranos, 23 Altos, 17 Tenors, 22 Basses.

### Firsts for the society

So the last season saw the society make a big departure from their usual style with the semi staging of Scrooge, sung without copies (well some did cheat!!) and we rehearsed in Gateshead Town Hall, an experience not to be repeated with an 70 piece orchestra!!!!

### Observation from concerts

In general concert etiquette was well observed, I saw only one bottle of water on the Sage stage – please remember it does look bad if, when the chorus sits and the soloist sings, members of the chorus immediately start to swig from baby's bottles!!!

*'Singing is good for you'*; I thoroughly enjoyed singing in the concerts once I got over stage fright in Scrooge, and managed to toll the midnight bell in the right place. It was great to sing Music Makers and wonderful to sing the Verdi in a great concert hall with a full orchestra. Congratulations to both choirs on their professionalism and commitment to their societies!

So be ready at the start of rehearsals/concerts, 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 27 Sopranos, 13 Contraltos, 9 Tenors and 12 Basses a total of 61.

I look forward to a challenging 67<sup>th</sup> season starting with Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony, perhaps we should get out the lobster pots and keep the whale!!! (Minster joke!) and Sondheim - well just *Send in the clowns!!*.

I would like to thank David and Eileen for their hard work and patience. I would also like to thank everyone who helps set up & clear away for rehearsals and concerts in the Minster; we pride ourselves in leaving the Minster neat and tidy and ready for Sunday morning worship. Also those who make the rehearsal interval coffee; run the weekly raffle (*You have to be in it to win it!!!*), those who make the concert interval refreshments and Young Singers supporters, those who sung in the Bridges, in fact everyone who mucks in and helps in any way - these things don't happen by magic and all money raised keeps the society going!

Finally – well – I just know you're waiting for some humour, so here are some *rules* for ensemble singing!

*Everyone should sing the same piece.*

*Take your time turning pages.*

*Do not worry if you do not have perfect pitch - you may find singing less stressful without it!*

*The right note at the wrong time is the wrong note.*

*The wrong note at the right time is still a wrong note.*

*A wrong note sung timidly is still a wrong note.*

*A wrong note sung with authority is an interpretation.*

*A true interpretation is realized when not one note of the original remains.*

*If you happen to sing a wrong note, give a nasty look to your neighbour.*

*If everyone gets lost except you, follow those who get lost.*

*If you are completely lost, stop everyone and start an argument about repeat marks.*

*Strive to achieve the maximum notes per second - that way you at least gain the admiration of the totally incompetent.*

*If a passage is difficult, slow it down. If it is easy, speed it up. Everything will work itself out in the end.*

*Markings for slurs, dynamics, ornaments and breathing should be ignored. They are only there to embellish the score.*

*When everyone else has finished singing, you should not sing any notes you may still have left.*