



ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY

www.altrincham-choral.co.uk

Registered charity no 500729

April 2004 Newsletter

For unto us a young man
came
His small black car
From afar
A foreign land
Well, York-she-are
For unto us a young man came
And the charge
To us was given
'Feel the force'
'You must have rhythm'
And the basses live a dang'rous life-
Their technique does not pass muster
And the altos lead a close-knit life-
An ever-growing cluster!



So lets sing the refra-ain:-
Wonderful
Altrincham
The thirsty choir
With everlasting tea-breaks-
A cake stall please!

For unto us a young man came
Ten years gone
(He's getting on)
Were you there
When he had hair?

For unto us a young man came
Mixing up
Auditions too
Wand'ring round
List'ning to you!
And the rare breed that are tenors -
There is nothing new to faze them
And sopranos singing silly notes -
Which sometimes does amaze them!

So let's sing the refra-ain:-
Wonderful
Altrincham
The mighty choir
With everlasting pauses

....
....

And damn top b's!

Melanie Preston

LONDON MARATHON

Many thanks to all the ACS members who have agreed to sponsor our son, Andrew Taylor, in this event on 18th April. He is running to raise funds for NCH (formerly National Children's Homes), in memory of a baby they lost, and as a personal challenge before he is 40 in July. Please may we collect your sponsorship money - cheques payable to "NCH" preferred, or cash - 19th April or 10th May onwards. If you missed our sponsorship forms before, any further contributors to NCH would be very welcome.

Elizabeth & Brian Taylor

March 04 - Handel Messiah

The cost of borrowing copies for this concert came to 29p per member.

Most members had their own copies, so we only needed to hire 25 copies.

These came from the Centre for Youth Music, which is part of Trinity College of Music.

Kath Whyte

CHOIR RULES IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS 1915

The practice shall commence at 8.30 or at such later time as a sufficient number shall have gathered together. Members are thought more of if they arrive late.

The choir meets one evening a week for the following purposes: to discuss politics, tennis, scandal, or church affairs: to arrange socials, excursions, etc., and to flirt. NB. If there is any time not occupied in the foregoing manner, and if the members feel inclined, it might be desirable to have a little singing.

The choir shall consist of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. All those ladies who cannot read music shall sing alto. Should any lady with a high voice object to singing alto, she is recommended to consult a voice specialist, who will be almost certain to pronounce her a deep contralto, with a faulty method of production.

the tenors shall consist of many fair gentlemen, who do not mind straining their voices. All the gentlemen left over are required to sing bass.

Basses are at liberty to sing tenor, if they feel that their extensive compass is not duly recognised. He must be a poor worm of a bass who cannot sing tenor if he likes.

No notice should be taken of the conductor. Do not trouble to look at his beat. He should tap. What your next door neighbour is saying is sure to be of greater interest to you.

The conductor is always pleased to receive advice from individual members. He like to receive hints as to choir management, suggestions as to 'tempo' and expression, and is delighted to be instructed in the elements of musical grammar. If you think he has made a mistake, tell him so!

Members of the choir are recommended to take home copies of music to look over at their leisure. It really doesn't matter if they don't bring them back, because choir funds are usually in a flourishing condition, and more copies can always be bought.

HALE AND FAREWELL

We love our new Altrincham venue
Fit for Steven's second decade
So much less embarrassing when you
Find you arrivals a little delayed.

Our new rehearsal location
Is much cheerier than was Oak Road
No risk of asphyxiation
Altogether a more pleasant abode.

The place where we now do our singing
Is a source of moderate delight
The doorbell doesn't need ringing
And the gentlemen's loo has a light.

Steven we see so much better
And he can see who is to blame
But the law's not applied to the letter
And the tea tastes - well, much the same.

John Greenan

NUMBER CRUNCHING

During the recent cabaret (all of it wonderful) held to celebrate Steven's 10th anniversary, the aged Bass Mr Cyril Cordwainer (who had been in ACS since 1948 - about the same time as Audrey Smallridge!) mentioned that a young woman* had asked his age - "what does she want to know that for?" he asked our Jonathan Ross lookalike interviewer.

Every year we lose a few members - move away from the area, other commitments, illness, age and sadly in cases through death. However, last September we lost 6 Sopranos, 3 Altos, 2 Tenors and 2 Basses (we can ill afford to lose the gentlemen but ladies are 2 a 1p!). This meant we dropped to 91 members but with the welcome advent of the 10 new members who joined us in January 2004 we are now up to 101. Although we are still nowhere near the largest number of members at any one time, 126 in both 1998 and 2000, I believe this is the largest influx of new members in one term, so we must be doing something right.

By compiling the ages of the choir we can 'guesstimate' the turnover of members due to age - as you know there is no upper age limit to being a member - just the ability to be able to sing! The average age of the choir is 58 - the youngest is 23 and the oldest 83 (both 2nd sops). It will come as no surprise to find that the First Sopranos are the averaged youngest section (it's our beautiful young voices) and that the Basses are the averaged oldest section (to get those really low notes).

However, whatever our age, experts agree that singing keeps you fit (and young) - it's all that breathing - and judging by the number of times I was taken by surprise when someone told me their age (you all look so much younger) take my word that there must be something in it.

By September 2004 half of the choir (51 members to be exact) will have been in ACS for 10 years, with 23 of those 51 having served 20 years plus. As you know members who have served 20 years and more continuous service now merit a * by their names in the programme (unfortunately a printing error in the Nov. concert meant some people lost their * but the recent Messiah programme is correct). Seven of the starred members have actually been here for 25 years or more. This is a wonderful achievement but tributes must go to Joyce Crimes who is now our longest serving member having joined back in 1967, (Sheila Duckham who left last term had been with the choir since 1966) and not forgetting John Greenan (not Cyril) who is the longest serving male having joined in 1973.

Although we have had 10 new members join us we still need more to come along - more members mean larger audiences, more money for orchestras etc. We need to think of ways in which we can make choral music appealing to younger members to make the choir viable in another twenty years time.

*John, thanks for the compliment. Twenty years ago that accolade would have been true because when I joined in 1984 I was then the youngest soprano - I can't claim that now although I am still way under the average age of the choir!

Pat Arnold
Secretary (10 years)
Membership Secretary (6 years)

WORDS AND MUSIC

Amazing that the work of two bewhiskered Victorians survives in the age of gangstarap - not that the rappers are likely to have heard of Gilbert and Sullivan - the young will generally not have much truck with them. Possibly a texted version of HMS Pina-4 would appeal. One might fairly observe that the expert delivery of a G&S patter song makes the rap artist seem positively tongue tied.

A wacky Pirates of Penzance has just closed in London. Jonathan Miller's Mikado, which pretty well does away with the Japanese lacquer, has just opened, and sounds great fun. Not so long ago Mike Leigh's film Topsy Turvy, and affectionate tribute to the famous duo, played it straight down the middle. Amateur societies ensure that the Savoy operas are still very much alive, sometimes with a little updating. Ko-ko's "little list" in Mikado is irresistible. The aforementioned Jonathan Miller production refers to "George Bush's poodle". Who could it be? Obvious targets among the plethora of current phonies are spin doctors, lifestyle consultants, and John Prescott.

Why Gilbert before Sullivan? Perhaps it is just a matter of euphony, and certainly it would be wrong to be dismissive of Sullivan's music, even if he felt at times that he was capable of better things. Nonetheless, W.S. Gilbert's words are what distinguishes the Savoy operas from anything before or since. Some of the satire has necessarily dated - we are not too engaged by the lampooning of the aesthetic movement in Patience, but for much of the time the main target is the British establishment, even though the ostensible setting may be somewhere exotic. That institution is still ripe for ridicule. We still have the House of Lords and bewigged judges, our Right Honourables, our garter orderers and bath commanders. Gilbert could have a field day with the cult of celebrity, and with the shenanigans of the royals and other tabloid fodder.

Trial by Jury was the first collaboration of G & S and their only opera without dialogue. Not all of it is scintillating - we don't exactly fall about at the malapropism of "burglary" for "bigamy". The central axis of the work, a breach of promise case, is defunct, but the arcane usages of the law are well pointed up in the defendant's plea that in him, unprepossessing, a drunkard and a woman beater, Angelina has lost little to be reflected in damages. This "Dramatic Cantata in One Act" will give some scope to the dormant acting talent within our ranks and is not without some good tunes, though they may not be amongst Sullivan's Greatest Hits. If I'm any judge our G & S evening will please many, including a few of the performers.

John Greenan.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Please come and support Lydia, our marvellous accompanist, who plays with Yolande Wrigley in a Piano Duo Recital at St Ann's Church, Manchester on Tuesday 13th July at 7.30pm.



Admission £5.00 (concessions £4.50) (inc. refreshments)