



## VERDI REQUIEM GRAND CHORUS NEWSLETTER No. 5

### Thanks from the Chairman

The Verdi project has involved four main choirs who put in funds to get the project off the ground, these were Thornbury, Tyndale, Wycliffe and Yate Choral Societies and we should all be grateful to the committees of those four societies who had the prescience to back the project with their cash at an early enough stage to ensure the project took place.

A big thank you from me to Julia who has been a tower of strength and a useful sounding board for some of my crazier ideas, to Lisa who has done a fantastic job with the publicity, evinced by the nearly full Abbey, to Ian, our Treasurer who has stage managed our finances so that we have showed a profit on the venture and pursed his lips with great reluctance at the prospect of parting with even an unnecessary penny, and to David our Concert Manager.

My thanks also to Alison, Catherine, Rosemary and Philip as the invaluable liaison officers between the very small number running the event and the greater membership. Finally my thanks to John for setting up the website which certainly functioned as a way for the public at large to get in touch with the committee.

Bristol Concert Orchestra certainly helped make the day for all of us, particularly those who had not had the thrill of standing behind a symphony orchestra in full swing. A big thank you to Stefan who prepared the orchestra and to the hard working Phil who liaised between the Big Sing committee and the orchestra and also found all the players.

Our rehearsal conductors Chris and Steven did a fantastic job in preparing the two separate choirs and I am very grateful to them

The icing on the cake was certainly the decision to ask Nigel Perrin to take on the whole venture. I know that you, the singers, found him inspirational and we are certainly going to ask Nigel to be involved in future projects.

Finally thanks to all who signed the card which will be a treasured memento - I have made copies of the card and sent them to all the relevant people.

Jos

### Facts and figures

Choir:	175 sang out of 187 registered, plus 3 guest tenors.
Audience size:	577 tickets sold, ca. 550 in attendance (as far as we can tell).
Retiring collection:	Jessie May Trust £665.87, MNDA £724.10 (plus cafe income)

### Concert recording

The recording is with the soloists for their blessing. It sounds really impressive and our very professional sound recordist Lloyd Silverthorn did an excellent job. When this blessing has been received (looking on the positive side), the recording will go to the lab for production.

**Absolutely the last call for orders! Act today!** Cheque for £8 (Thornbury Choral Society) to  
*Jos Gregson, 18 Willoughby Close, Thornbury, BS35 3RW.*

You may be interested to know that we didn't pay a fee for the recordist's work - his fee comes out of the copies ordered - hence the price of £8 per double CD. He and his colleague worked a twelve hour day, and the kit looked like mission control at Houston. We are fortunate to have secured his services. The recording will be a wonderful memento of a great day.

## **Photographs**

Our photographer, Emma, was very busy taking photos as the choir arrived, during rehearsals and during the concert. We are hoping to put these in a blog and will advise you all of where on the net to find them when this has been done.

## **Website genius wanted**

Tyndale CS has till now hosted the web presence of the SCCG but has now withdrawn the facility due to their chairman/webmaster's pressure of work. So we need to find another solution. If any of you are web literate and could help provide a website for the SCCG, we'd love to hear from you!

## **LOST PROPERTY?**

1. Valente mobile phone case in black with plush interior
2. Calvin Klein light weight jacket in black with fine purple lines
3. Loose black woollen top with no maker's mark

## **Next concert...**

A large number of suggestions for future works were handed in and these are summarised below:

Bach B minor Mass (9)  
Bach Christmas Oratorio (2)  
Bach Matthew Passion (3)  
Bach St John Passion (2)  
Beethoven Missa Solemnis  
Beethoven Symphony No. 9 (Choral)  
Berlioz Requiem (Grand Messe des Morts) (6)  
Borodin Prince Igor  
Brahms German Requiem (2)  
Britten War Requiem (2)  
Debussy Images  
Delius Sea Drift  
Elgar Dream of Gerontius (10)  
Handel Israel in Egypt  
Haydn Creation (2)  
Holst Hymn of Jesus (2)  
Jenkins Armed Man Mass (3)  
Mahler Symphony No. 8 (Symphony of a Thousand) (3)  
Mendelssohn Elijah (5)  
Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 (3)  
Mozart Requiem  
Orff Carmina Burana (2)  
Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony (6)  
Verdi Te Deum  
Walton Belshazzar's Feast (2)

Some of these however can easily be done by our individual choirs. Nigel Perrin also has some ideas of his own but all will be considered, and Nigel Perrin, Chris Swain and Steven Kings consulted, and a decision will be made which will be passed on to you all. Whatever it may be, we'll have fun!

## **Keeping in touch**

A reminder that in an early newsletter we mentioned that your contact details will be held by the SCCG secretary (whoever that may be) after the Verdi Requiem, so that we can invite you to participate in future SCCG events. If you wish to be deleted from this list, please inform the secretary in writing at any stage.

## **Reviews and reports**

### ***From Nigel Perrin***

What an exciting, fulfilling, uplifting and memorable day!

The choir sang magnificently under quite challenging conditions and the atmosphere was buzzing with excitement.

The orchestra had a couple of anxious exposed moments, but working with them was a great pleasure – they were very focused and responsive – so please pass my congratulations and thanks on to them.

I hope you feel all the effort was worthwhile and are now savouring the joy of its success – certainly most deserved

Kate (sop) gave me a couple of nervous moments but the soloists were all lovely to work with, especially Kate (mezzo)

Wow – its going to be hard to follow that!

Thank you for asking me to conduct it – it was a privilege and a joy to be involved.

With admiration for your vision, generosity of your time and perseverance.

Nigel

### ***From Phil Ellwood, Secretary Bristol Concert Orchestra***

This project was a great example of what inspired amateur music societies can do when they collaborate. Not only was it a joining-up of choral societies, as explained in your programme notes, but also quite a meld of orchestral players. Around 40% of BCO was made up of guests from other orchestras, coming from various parts of our region: Bristol & Bath, Somerset, Cheltenham, Hereford, Forest of Dean, South Wales, and even Birmingham. All feedback has been very positive and we would be keen to do something like this again in the future!

Best wishes,  
Phil

### ***From our main sponsors Smith & Williamson***

Well done on producing such a memorable event! It was extremely well received by all our clients, who were bowled over by the magnificence and power of the performance, as was I. It is a testament to your perseverance to organise something of this size, so you are due many congratulations!

The venue for the drinks party beforehand was perfectly acceptable and the size of the room turned out to be ample for our requirements (over 40 people). Your lovely daughters were both excellent chaperones, so please pass on my thanks to them too.

With kind regards,  
Justin Ogilvie  
Investment Manager  
Smith & Williamson Investment Management

### ***From Chris Swain, Stonehouse Rehearsal Conductor***

Many congratulations on bringing the Verdi project to such a triumphant conclusion – everything seemed to go brilliantly and this was in a large measure due to your meticulous planning and organisation. All the singers and audience members I have spoken to rated the performance very highly and it was great to see a full abbey. You must have been thrilled with how it went and I hope that you are now able to enjoy a few days of relative relaxation after what must have been an exhausting few weeks. Well done and thank you.

Chris

***From the Chairman of Thornbury Choral Society***

On behalf of all Thornbury singers, thank you very much indeed for enabling us to have such a perfect and exciting evening performing the Verdi last night on such a pleasant summer's evening - just like going to concerts in summer in Europe!

Thank you for all your hard work, attention to detail, careful planning and excellent sponsorship allowing everything to run so smoothly. Well done! Have a good rest today before planning the next one!!

Please relay my thanks too to all singers, helpers and other choirs, not to mention conductors! A very uplifting experience!  
Alison

***From the Chairman of Wycliffe Choral Society***

What a wonderful day !

It exceeded all my expectations and was a delight to take part in. Without the immaculate organisation it would have been a shadow of its eventual success. Well done.  
Peter

***From the Chairman of Tyndale Choral Society***

Congratulations on a very successful event.

I enjoyed it personally and the feedback from Tyndale members has been positive.

From your original concept to the triumph on Saturday you guided and managed the project to a successful conclusion; a job very well done.

Thank you.  
John

***From Andrew Borkowski, Chairman of Friends of Welsh National Opera***

Dear Jos,

Thank you so much for doing us proud in so many ways on Saturday. I do hope that you enjoyed the evening as much as we did. W thought it was a most splendid performance of the Requiem - chorus, orchestra, soloists and conductor all giving of their very best to produce a fabulous sound and stirring performance. The setting was superb too and added to the drama of the work.

Congratulations and a BIG thank you for a very special evening.  
Margaret and Andrew

***From the USA Trips organiser***

A very enjoyable day yesterday. Well done. In the end we had 71 people.  
Trevor

***From Dr. Jean Waters, Motor Neurone Disease Association***

Just thought you would want to know that the grand total, including the takings from the coffee shop amounted to £1677.90, so it was a good day's fundraising all round! We are very conscious that it was helped hugely by the support of the coffee shop by members of the choirs and orchestra, so much appreciated!

Best wishes  
Jean

***From Emma Kenton, Community and Events Organiser, Jessie May Trust***

We are so grateful for your kind donation of £665.87 following the success of your choral evening. Your on-going commitment and dedication to Jessie May is helping us to support and care for life limited children and their families at home.

Your support enables us to plan for the future and means that the Jessie May Trust can continue to be at the heart of home respite care for children with a terminal illness in our community. Your support will also enable us to work towards our vision of ensuring that every local family with a terminally ill child has the level of respite care and support they need at home.

We are so grateful for your support and hope to work with you again in the future. Please thank everyone involved, you are making a real difference to real people.

Kindest regards  
Emma

### ***From other audience members***

It was a great performance - much as I enjoy listening to soloists I just love to be overwhelmed by such full, rich sound. And we were certainly that! Utterly thrilling. And all three of us enjoyed mulling it over on the way home.

Barbara Adams

You were great! Well done, all of you, and thank you for a glorious experience. My husband and I were in the front row of the nave, and were almost flying in the heights of the abbey during the *Dies Irae*. And yet the ensemble work in the "whispered" passages was electrifying. The soloists were excellent and I should think Nigel Perrin was a sensitive conductor to work for. The rehearsal conductors did an amazing job and you and the orchestra really did sound like a single unit which had been performing together for years.

You must have been totally exhausted afterwards, but how worthwhile was all that hard work and planning. I hope that one day in the future I will have the pleasure of singing with the SCCG,  
Margaret McIvor

I don't know whether the SCCG was your idea as you are Chairman, but it works! It was a wonderful concert in a beautiful venue and must have been so uplifting to be a participant. All the voices and orchestra blended so well and of course the acoustics in the Abbey are amazing. The soloists were perfect. Verdi's Requiem is one of our favourite pieces and when we knew it was to be held in Tewkesbury Abbey where we have attended many concerts, we were quick off the mark in buying tickets. I hope that you made lots of money for the very worthy charities and we look forward to 2013.  
JJ (Thornbury)

### ***From singers who took part***

My friend (a very old friend from undergraduate university days) had come all the way from Hampshire to stay over for the concert. Her verdict..."stunning!!!!". She sat in for quite a lot of the rehearsal too and said that was a fascinating experience as well. Can I just add my personal thanks for all you have done to make it all happen, it was a most wonderful experience, one of the most enjoyable I have ever sung in. It was a masterful feat of organisation, and your attention to all the little details that matter all added up to make it so memorable and happy. And of course my thanks too to all the stalwarts who helped you put the show on the road.

Please add me to the list of willing helpers for the next one.

RB (Thornbury CS)

Heartfelt thanks again for making the Tewkesbury concert such an absorbing experience.

Many thanks  
LF (Thornbury CS)

A big thank you for such a wonderful weekend in Tewkesbury Abbey. I felt privileged to be a part of such a spine tingling event. It really was great fun and very special.

The organisation of the rehearsals leading up to the performance and the day itself were so expertly executed I have to applaud you. I could see that a lot of thought, time and effort had gone into this extravaganza.

Thank you once again. I really enjoyed myself and had a brilliant time.

Best wishes,  
PC (Wycliffe)

ps I'm looking forward to the next one!

Congratulations on the concert. Everyone seems to have thoroughly enjoyed it both choir and audience. It has been a tremendous organisational feat and we are all full of admiration for you both. I trust you now get a good rest (though I know you are already planning).

RR (Wycliffe)

A big thank you to yourself and the rest of the SCCG for all your hard work in putting together the Verdi Requiem concert. I feel privileged to have been able to participate and really appreciate all the effort you and the rest of the team have gone to, to make it happen. Well done!

With best wishes  
CK (Thornbury)

Thanks to you both for all you did to make yesterday happen ... and for getting John to sing – as always he really enjoyed the concert, and this time also enjoyed the rehearsals.

Our friends thoroughly enjoyed the concert, from our conversations in the Bell afterwards as did other people I spoke to briefly at the end.

It was a magnificent achievement and I look forward to 2013 .... though I expect you will be glad of a rest!

Once again congratulations to all involved in making yesterday such a great experience.  
MMcG (Thornbury CS)

What a wonderful experience yesterday; thank you very much for all your organisation and hard work. I thoroughly enjoyed it and look forward to the next event.

ME (Alveston Singers)

Brilliant concert, such great fun and wonderfully well organised.

J T (Wycliffe)

What a terrific evening on Saturday! I thoroughly enjoyed it and the music has been going through my head ever since!

LL (Tyndale)

Thank you and thank you again for all your brilliant organisation for yesterday. Wow, what an occasion, what a venue - total magic. We have both been singing Verdi today, I think it will take a while to get it out of our minds. Forgive us for not joining you for a drink afterwards - I got as far as Steve, made the mistake of sitting down beside him, realised how tired I was and never moved until we all got up to go home. I'm not quite sure how I drove home but did manage it without going to sleep at the wheel!

love and thanks,  
SJ (Thornbury CS)

I am so glad I said yes to the opportunity advertised at Cirencester Choral Society resulting in that wonderful experience yesterday. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned. Everyone played their part so diligently, and a special word to Nigel, he was truly, uniquely, inspiring.

AJ (Cirencester CS)

Thank you so much for the opportunity of singing with the SCCG. I enjoyed the experience immensely. Onwards and upwards to 2013.

BK (Fairford &DCS)

A big THANKYOU to the SGCG team for arranging Saturday etc so successfully. A good time was had by all and from the choirs' point of view it was a great success. Even the tourists were inspired by their insight into choral music, judging by their comments overheard as we left the afternoon rehearsal. 'Did you see those soloists did all that without microphones!' was one comment overheard

FN (Tyndale CS)

I just wanted to thank you and all others involved, for the fantastic job you did in organising our Verdi Requiem concert. It was truly brilliant and an example of how well things can be organised to ensure everything goes according to plan. Certainly many other members commented on how impressed they were with the attention to detail and it made such a difference to know exactly how to get to every rehearsal, what we would be doing and the timing of it all. The day of the concert itself was most enjoyable and it was wonderful to feel well rehearsed, especially by Nigel whom I thought was just a fantastic conductor with such attention to detail but making it all so enjoyable at the same time!

Please pass on my congratulations to all concerned as I know many more people are needed 'behind the scenes' to organise these big events. I look forward to hearing about the next big sing - I had meant to put my suggestion of Carmina Burana forward but never got to hand in my slip of paper so I'll add it now, for what's its worth.

Finally thank you for making what is my favorite classical work such an outstanding success.  
SN (Cirencester CS)

Thank you so much for organising such a wonderful concert on Saturday evening and for giving us the privilege of joining in with you all. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience - practices, workshops and all! In fact, I felt quite forlorn this evening...  
CA (Tewkesbury CS)

### **And finally... from your Secretary**

#### **An object lesson**

I hope you were all watching the mezzo Kate Woolveridge during the afternoon rehearsal (you couldn't see it so clearly when she was in full evening fig) - you could see her singing with every fibre and muscle from her toes upwards, and when she hit the top notes she elevated to the tips of her toes and EVERYTHING was very obviously clenched to support the voice. Fabulous. Glorious. So if you were standing on your heels with the department of a sack of King Edwards, take her example.

#### **A nightmare moment**

To illustrate that not everything goes smoothly, a little anecdote. At one of our Thornbury rehearsals, Jos proudly showed me the final, accepted, signed-off-in-blood proof of the concert programme. The printing process had had the green light and for all we knew, the run had started. I turned the first page, and the first thing that leapt off the page was, "There will be a 15 minute interval after the Lacrymosa" Aaaaaaghhhh! Nurse, the screens!!!! How had we not seen it? Luckily, we were able to correct it in time. Phew! However, henceforth, the chorus will be referred to by me as the 'Lacey-rimosa'.

#### **Hot tip**

A hip flask of sloe gin (home-made, aged) gets you through the second half of a Verdi Requiem and makes you very popular with your neighbours on the staging. Anaesthetises the throat a treat, warms and relaxes the parts that water just doesn't reach. F# for altos? Movendi sunt! Bring it on!

#### **Thank you**

for all your kind words, for responding readily to cries for assistance, for reading the newsletters and not asking too many questions, for your good humour, for complying with requests with very good grace. (Well, most of you!) It makes the life of the organisers so much easier.

#### **If he will allow me**

I would like to say what a joy it has been to work with our Chairman, Jos, for the last three years on this project. It started in 2008 with a trip to visit Nigel Perrin for a chat over coffee about what pieces might be possible, and culminated with the applause in the Abbey on Saturday night. In all my working life, paid and voluntary, I have never before had the privilege or good fortune to work with such an energetic and dynamic boss, who isn't afraid to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty. Everything from finding a major sponsor and venues, to buying cake for the workshop and making sandwiches for the rubber party; from getting the programme to the printers, hosting the stuffing of the finished article with gift aid envelopes, to shifting nearly 50% of the tickets sold. Appreciation has been expressed by many regarding the amount of work involved in this project - but perhaps I am best placed to tell you that Jos has done the lion's share, and whatever you think was involved in terms of man hours, I reckon you can triple it!

And he does it all with good humour. A veritable star. May his tribe increase. But don't tell him I said so.

Hope to see you at our next event - which might be sooner than you think...!

Julia xx