

VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS SEA SYMPHONY GRAND CHORUS NEWSLETTER NO. 4

IF YOU ARE FEELING THE PRESSURE...

Quote from a soprano who sang the Verdi in the Abbey in 2011, uttered at the Sea Symphony Saturday workshop: “after childbirth, [the Verdi concert] was the most fantastic experience of my life”. Secretary Julia, at the concert day rehearsal in 2011, sitting at the top of the staging looking over the whole choir and orchestra, was so overwhelmed when the sun shone in through the West End window and painted the pillars of the Abbey like a Jackson Pollock, that she burst into tears. The day was THAT good. So keep with it! All will be well.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...

...TO PRACTISE! If the Nigel Perrin Workshop exposed any weaknesses in your knowledge of the score, then you know what must be done. Get together with friends for an additional sing-through, sing along to a recording, listen to a recording, read the score, use cyberbass.com or learnchoralmusic.co.uk for your voice part, use Choraline rehearsal CDs, keep at it till it sinks in. Only then will you be able to free yourselves up to watch Nigel Perrin and respond to his very expressive direction, contribute to the success of the performance, and really enjoy yourself.

We don't want the final rehearsals to be swallowed up with tedious note-bashing - we should be polishing the performance and applying all those instructions which we soaked up on workshop day. Be good eggs and do your homework. You know it's the right thing to do. Then we can all look forward to a fantastic, dramatic, thrilling performance and the satisfaction of knowing we did our very best for ourselves, for each other, and for the audience.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...

...TO SELL TICKETS! Sales are very slow compared to the last event, and we really do rely on all singers to do their very honest best to encourage friends and family to come and hear us. One enterprising bass has emailed all his friends and neighbours about the concert, and this has generated requests for tickets. Cast your bread upon the waters...! A pdf of the concert poster is sent with this email - please email it to your friends.

Secretary Julia will have a box of tickets with her at all times. The correct money, or cheque payable to Thornbury Choral Society would be appreciated. Apart from the joy of singing to a large audience, can we remind you that any funds generated will go back to the partner choral societies; it's in a good cause. Also, the Air Ambulance and Motor Neurone Disease Association will benefit from a large audience by way of the retiring collection and the cafe business respectively.

Your kind words of appreciation to the organisers are most welcome, but ticket sales would put an even bigger smile on their faces!

Please take a few moments (probably longer - you may need a pot of tea) to read through what follows; it will be impossible to answer individual questions about concert arrangements from every choir member.

Contacts

If you have any queries at all, would members of the four partner choirs please try their liaison person in the first instance, thereafter contact either:

Jos Gregson (01454-411652, email jos@josgregson.plus.com) or

Julia O'Connor Beach (01454-260877, email secretary.sccg@gmail.com).

who will be pleased to help. Jos and Julia attend all rehearsals.

DAVID JOYCE is your Concert Manager - davidjoyce@doctors.org.uk - you'll find him in the bass section.

IAN STEWART is your Assistant Concert Manager - you'll find him in the tenor section.

Friday June 28th Full Choir Rehearsal

Attendance at this rehearsal (7.30pm, Catholic Church Thornbury - directions below) with **Nigel Perrin** is absolutely essential, as is the Saturday Abbey concert day rehearsal. The Abbey rehearsal is more for the orchestra/soloists than for us, so Nigel will be putting us through our paces on the Friday evening. If you have any problems with this, please contact Julia.

The seating for our final joint rehearsal at Thornbury (Christ the King Roman Catholic Church) will be identical to that at the performance at Tewkesbury. If you have serious problems with climbing the staging please discuss this with David Joyce or Ian Stewart (the concert management team)

Directions Christ the King Catholic Church, 11 Castle Street, Thornbury BS35 1HA.

From the south, A38; at the traffic lights (Hyundai Berkeley Vale Motors ahead) turn left on the B4061 towards Thornbury and proceed down Alveston Hill to the roundabout at the bottom (passing Thornbury Leisure Centre on your right and Thornbury Golf Club on your left). Proceed straight on at the roundabout into Thornbury High Street. The street broadens and you will pass

the White Lion pub. Shortly after this turn left (chip shop on corner, turn before pedestrian crossing) and you will come to the Castle Street Car Park....

From the north, exit J14 of the M5, turn right to the junction with A38, and turn left onto A38. In 1.6 miles, after Falfield, turn right at the B4061 and continue into Thornbury centre and a small roundabout, turn right (The Plain) and then road curves left into the High Street. Access to the Castle Street Car Park is on the right, just after the pedestrian crossing....

Park your car and return to Castle Street. Turn left and you will pass the front of Christ the King Catholic Church. The entrance is to the rear. Turn left into the driveway and the church entrance.

CONCERT DAY

It's a very long and tiring day. Get a good night's sleep, be well organized, and you will conserve your energy for the performance.

Timetable: (rough guide - always subject to tweaking by managers)

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1.00pm | Green room open for you to leave your change of clothes etc. |
| 1.15pm | Orchestra arrives. Please keep out of their way while they attend to their instruments and seating arrangements. |
| 1.45pm | Be in the Abbey no later than 1.45pm to allow us to do a practice run getting on and off the staging. |
| 2.00pm | Rehearsal starts - Lark Ascending |
| 2.20pm | Elgar |
| 2.30pm | Parry |
| 2.40pm | VW 1 & 2 |
| 3.20pm | Break |
| 3.40pm | VW 3 & 4 |
| 5.00pm | Rehearsal ends. Vacate the Abbey. Have your picnics.
MNDA café suppers may be in two sittings.
Use green room to change.
Please can some change early; don't all leave it to the last minute. |
| 7.00pm | Abbey North doors open for audience .
Singers PLEASE USE SMALL SIDE ENTRANCE (to left of the main North door) as the ushers will be very busy, and don't need us to make things more difficult. |
| 7.15pm | Line up at East end of Abbey according to Concert Manager's instruction, ready to process to performance positions. |

- 7.30pm All eyes on the man on the podium.
If you don't know it now, it's too late! If in doubt, be a goldfish!
- Interval After the Lark has ascended, we descend from the staging. There won't be a huge amount of time, but if you need the loo - be quick.
- 9.30pm approximate time of end of concert.
We need to clear the Abbey promptly as the staging will be struck after the concert.

CDs

Ex-BBC recording specialist Lloyd Silverthorne will be making a double cd of our performance as he did for 2011's Verdi Requiem. This means that any coughs must be actively stifled – hand tightly over mouth; if you don't, it sounds like a car backfiring. If you've nobly and stoically suppressed a cough till the end of a section, count to two before letting rip – otherwise the recording will be affected.

The CDs will be available a short while after the performance at a price of £8 for the double cd. Order forms will be available at the next Thornbury and Stonehouse rehearsals as well as on concert day, only prepaid orders will be accepted. Please give all order forms and cheques to Jos Gregson (all cheques made out to Thornbury Choral Society).

Programmes

There are sufficient programmes (which are free of charge) for all audience, orchestra and choir, so don't panic – you will be given your own copy at rehearsal.

Please pitch in and help

We will have to get some large jobs done quickly at the Abbey in a short space of time; such as, putting the free programmes on seats after rehearsal, collecting scores and folders, and clearing up dropped tickets, programmes, gift aid envelopes etc when the audience has left, taking stuff back to vehicles. Please respond to any requests for assistance. It's your gig too!

(Julia was not too happy in 2011, having just finished loading stuff into cars after the concert with half a dozen stalwart others, to find dozens of singers just ending a very jolly, relaxed and convivial session in the pub... the new rule is, NO-ONE drinks till Julia has a pint in her hand!!!!)

Stewards and Ushers

The Abbey has its own team of stewards, who man the fire exits in case of emergency. St John's Ambulance will also be in attendance.

As in 2011, we have arranged for a team of experienced volunteer stewards from St George's Bristol, a busy and prestigious concert venue, to help us with front-of-house matters, such as ticket tearing, seating the audience, dealing with latecomers (there are always one or two). They will have SCCG Usher badges, so that you can recognise them. They are doing what

we usually ask our spouses and friends to do; we thought it would be nice to allow our long-suffering supporters to relax and enjoy the concert for once!

Concert Dress - Lest there be any lingering doubt!

Ladies: WHITE top with three-quarter or longer sleeves, black full length skirt or black evening trousers. If you need a warm layer on top, then a black jacket would be fine.

Gentlemen: black bow tie, white shirt, dinner jacket (and trousers, please). If you haven't a DJ left over from a cruise you took in 1973, then a very dark suit will suffice (with a WHITE shirt and a black bow tie, please) If in doubt, check with the concert management team..

Footwear: we have been warned - more than once - that even in summer months the Abbey fabric can drain the life warmth from you, starting from the toes. Our Abbey contact is a singer, and says she wears woolly socks and crocs under her posh skirt. Skimpy sandals will result in your teeth adding to the already well-manned percussion section and probably frostbite.

Folders

We are grateful to Stroud for allowing us to use their folders for the event. These will be handed out on Friday night's eve-of-concert rehearsal. They are to be returned after the concert before you leave the Abbey.

On the staging

We will be a snug fit. Keep it simple: just you, your score folder, and water in a small plastic bottle. Perhaps a hankie. There is no room for clutter, handbags, etc., which may be a trip hazard, or get kicked over and lost under the staging, or look unsightly from the audience's point of view.

Common courtesy and choral discipline

Sorry to mention this, but we must.

In rehearsal, if you are not singing, please respect those who are and maintain silence.

Nigel Perrin has an exhausting time of it on concert day. He gives absolutely 100%. He has an enormous amount to get through, and it's the first and only rehearsal with orchestra and soloists. We can make his day easier if we are attentive and disciplined. Please conduct yourselves (no pun intended) in a professional manner at all times. Let's do ourselves proud.

Changing facilities/Choir green room

We have the use of a large room on the ground floor of the cafe building - on the left as you enter (cafe to right, loos straight ahead). We all have to muck in and get on with it. There will be screens to separate the men from the ladies. If you think ahead, and keep the costume change to a minimum, it will make your life easier. If we stagger our changing times, all will be well - so don't leave it to the last minute.

As there aren't a huge number of loos, a Very Dim View Indeed will be taken if ladies hog the stalls to get changed. Find your Blitz spirit, and make do with communal living.

Loos - These are in the cafe building. There are not many.

Valuables

The changing room will be locked while we are rehearsing and during the concert. The concert management team will tell you who is the keyholder should you need access at other times. However, we cannot take responsibility for valuables left in the changing room. You are responsible for your own property.

In 2011, there was a collection of left property after our event. PLEASE check you have everything before you make a dash for the back seat of the coaches.

Catering - ie, self-catering

DO remember to bring water in plastic bottles to keep your whistle wet during the rehearsal and concert. No other liquids allowed, as the floor of the Abbey stains and costs a fortune to clean.

If you arrive early for the afternoon rehearsal you can eat at the Abbey cafe (run by MNDA for the day for funds), or indeed anywhere else in Tewkesbury. Or bring a picnic to have by the river or in the grounds of the Abbey. If it's raining, use the green room.

For the gap between rehearsal and concert, you can either bring your own picnic (which we recommend) or find something in Tewkesbury (but some establishments may be shutting down at that time of day). Safest bet is to bring your own. The MNDA cafe is now fully booked for the supper period, we believe.

Returning Scores and Folders

After the performance before leaving the Abbey, PLEASE make sure that you put your hired scores (and folders) in the boxes provided, preferably in the envelope you were given at the outset, so that we can process them quicker. If you walk off with them, you will be expected to return them to Thornbury at your inconvenience and cost on the following Monday!

The vexed question of pencil markings: the scores weren't perfect when we received them, but we must do our best. If you can keep your own markings to a minimum, and with a very soft pencil, it would be appreciated.

There will be an erasing party in Thornbury after the concert to clean up the scores that we have used. If you fancy joining in the "Rubber Party", please tell Jos or Julia.

We are planning to have a couple of stewards at the exits so if you are in singer's garb you may be asked whether you have handed in your score/folder.

Charities

There is a retiring collection for the Great Western Air Ambulance. Please do donate something if you can.

Buses:

Stonehouse - please see Rosemary Robinson. It is not clear at the time of writing whether numbers make a bus viable. Car sharing might be the best option.

Thornbury

The Thornbury bus departs from outside Aldi at 12.30pm. Make sure that you park your car correctly in the Long Stay section of the car park as the wardens are red hot on earning their commission on fines. Alison Makepeace is Bus Monitor and will have a complete list of everyone booked on the bus, bring your tickets. The bus WILL depart at 12.30, if you are late please make your own way to Tewkesbury as we need every singer.

Please let Alison know if you are making your own way home to Thornbury, ie not making the return journey on the coach, then the bus will not hold up everyone else waiting for you.

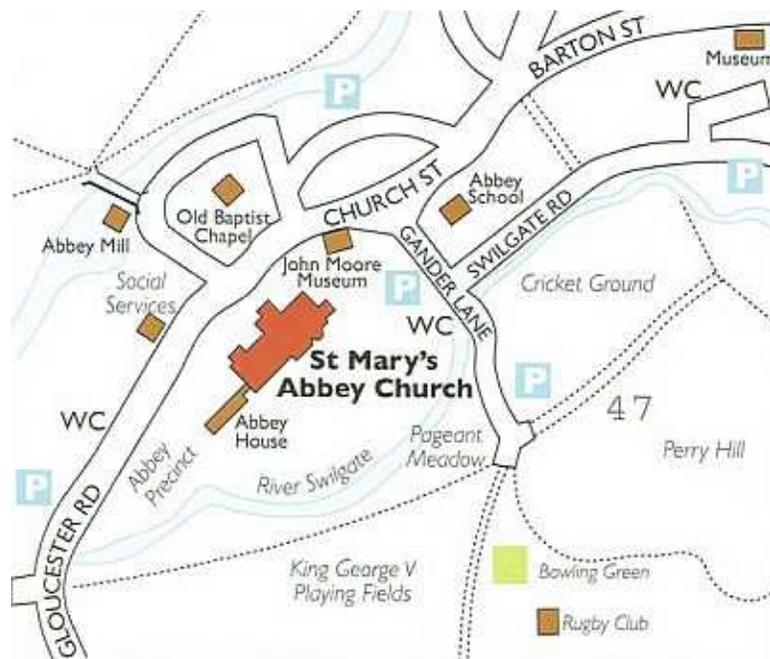
Wheelchairs

If you are bringing a guest who is in a wheelchair, or who has other special requirements, please let us know. We have to advise the Abbey in advance.

And finally

We thank everyone for their support, their help, their kind words of appreciation, their good humour.. We hope you have enjoyed the experience, that you have made new friends, and that you will store up happy memories of performing in the Abbey.

Parking



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