

Potters Bar Choral Society

Registered Charity No. 1098892

Chairman's Report for the Season 2006/7

I am pleased to report on another successful season musically, socially and financially. For us to flourish, it is vital that we do well in all three areas to remain a strong society that achieves its aims of singing, performing and most of all providing enjoyment for both members and audience.

I would like to think that if Dorothy Langmaid was still with us, she would be proud of the society she formed in 1951 and delighted by how far it has progressed musically. In the early years there were only two concerts a year but with the advent of aids such as the rehearsal tapes and CDs (and even MP3 files for many members) we can perform three times a year and consequently sing music from many varied genres. The Christmas concert is always popular with the audience and again this year was a near sell out. Our guest soprano, Sara Jonsson, sang really well and her solos provided a welcome rest for the choir in a challenging concert. The Christmas Oratorio is a difficult piece of music and members will be relieved to hear that we do not have any Bach planned for next season! We made £290 and the audience went away happy (judging by their comments to me afterwards).

The 'Choral Classics' concert in March attracted a large audience, although we had been worried by pre-sales, but many people bought tickets on the night. David Ruddom's narration of Tony Hurford's commentary really added to the performance and is greatly appreciated by audience members. Yet again, many members worked hard to decorate the hall and greatly enjoyed doing it together. The first half of this concert was one of the best that the society has given in years. In retrospect the second half was a tad too long but never the less the audience enjoyed themselves - 'Brilliant!' was one comment made to me a complete stranger. At long last we got to sing the Armed Man suite, which was a big attraction to the audience and also to a few temporary singing members. As always Michelle Harris was her attractive, vibrant self.

As a change from our normal routine, almost half of the choir sang as guests of the Hemel Hempstead Singers in a concert of Handel's Coronation Anthems and Dixit Dominus in March. The pieces were very well sung and we have made many new friends with HHS. The day out, complete with bus (including a geographically challenged, non-English speaking driver) and meal at a Mexican restaurant, was invaluable for creating a sense of camaraderie between members and proved 'A Grand Day Out'. HHS returned the compliment by singing Dvořák's Mass in D and Handel's Dixit Dominus with us in May. They also commented on how much they had enjoyed themselves and particularly valued the time they spent socialising with each other at Maranita's restaurant. The performance went very well, augmented by four excellent soloists and a very able orchestra. All of the audience members who I spoke to praised us. A particularly valuable comment came from one of the professional musicians from the orchestra who sought me out to say 'well sung' to the choir. The audience was again disappointingly low, but better than pre-sales had predicted. There are probably many factors to explain this, but I think this is probably in large part due to some members lacking confidence in being able to produce a good performance and therefore not selling tickets to friends. This lack of confidence was certainly not justified, as the combined forces of PBCS and HHS produced a very competent performance. We really have to trust our abilities to make it 'all right on the night'.

We have been very active on the fund-raising and social fronts. This included the Oakmere stall, barbecue, produce table, accessories sale, quiz supper, plant sale/coffee morning and raffles combining to produce income of almost £1900. These have all been very enjoyable and increased the sense of togetherness of the choir. Combined with the gift aid and increased membership our overall balance is an increase in reserve funds of about £1000. Next year will be more financially challenging for several reasons. The May concert will require a much larger orchestra and in addition expenses will rise in all areas. On the income side we cannot guarantee the same level of membership as we had this year as some joined temporarily just to sing the Jenkins. However we have managed to keep membership rates down to a very modest level, asking only for a £5 increase.

Finally I would like to thank all those who contributed much over the year: Allun and Simon, for making this society such fun whilst we learnt and performed our music to a high standard; the committee Louise, Betty, Jane, Julie, Brenda, Pat and Jenny who quietly and effectively make this society function; people from the choir who have made special contributions to fund raising or concert organisation: Pauline, Tony, Barbara, Jonathan, Liz Shepherd and Dave. Last but not least thanks to you the choir for supporting myself and the committee - it really makes a difference.

Gary Brook, May 2007.