

Potters Bar Choral Society

Registered Charity No. 1098892

Chairman's Report for the Season 2007/8

The 46th season of the Society was memorable for many reasons. The three concerts were great value for the audience in terms of musical quality and sheer variety of content. The concert in May was one of PBCS's largest ever - probably second only to 2003's Verdi Requiem. At the beginning of the season we decided to involve more young musicians and this aim was successfully achieved, giving Lucy, Lydia, Eleanor and Rebecca the opportunity to perform, and greatly enriching our three programmes. Most of all though, we continue to have a spirit and camaraderie which means that being a member of the society is fun.

The Christmas concert was, judging by the very positive feedback, both entertaining and of a high standard. A pity therefore, that the audience numbers were a little down on previous years. Those that didn't come missed the virtuosity of the young Australian soprano Lucy Bailes, as she sang pieces from composers as varied as Handel, Britten and the modern Australian composer, Alan Tregaskis. They also missed a delightfully mixed programme that included Old English Carols, Finnish Songs and beautiful Christmas arrangements by Carter, Warlock and others. Even so, we made a modest surplus and sent many people home very happy. Lucy's mother heard a recording of the concert and commented that we are an extremely well balanced choir.

The 'Opera Classics' concert in March attracted a larger audience. We had been worried by low pre-sales, but many people bought tickets on the night (this is the same sentence I used last year!). It was, again, great fun coming together to decorate the hall, which considerably enhanced the atmosphere. The Committee really appreciate the help members gave us putting it together. The show was unusual this year in that as well as the wonderful Michelle Harris, we were also joined by the talented sopranos, sisters Lydia and Eleanor Hart. The variety this brought to the concert made it one of the most entertaining in memory and of course David Ruddom's narration of Tony Hurford's commentary complemented the performances perfectly. Many superlatives were used by appreciative audience members with phrases like 'best ever' and 'the choir just gets better and better' being typical.

With our friendship with the Hemel Hempstead Singers firmly fixed last year, it was nice to welcome them back for the May concert. I know a lot of the PBCS members had viewed this concert with great trepidation at the thought of not only singing a very tricky piece, but in German to boot. As always, they needn't have worried as we produced a performance befitting this masterpiece, accompanied by a large and extremely professional orchestra. Julie Gray sang beautifully and baritone Chris Bull coped admirably at short notice. Rebecca Taylor's playing of the Shostakovich Piano Concerto was spellbinding and, with the wonderful performance of the Academic Festival Overture, this made it an extremely entertaining and varied evening. This concert was certainly on a grand scale, and required enormous dedication from the many people who helped logistically, as well as from the performers themselves. We couldn't afford to do something similar every year, nevertheless, it was more than worth all the effort and expense. One audience member who came to me at the end of the concert was clearly very delighted saying 'at long last Brahms' Requiem has come to Potters Bar' in its full undiluted glory! Congratulations for the choir were also received from the Orchestra manager Mary Spiers and from Julie Gray. The pre-sales of tickets were low but clearly our advertising mysteriously worked as so many people came on the night that we were five people short of a sell out.

Fund-raising and social events have continued, with income from these sources at a creditable £1500 (approximately), a little down on last year due mainly to a few less tables sold at the Quiz Supper. These events are always enjoyable and increase the sense of togetherness of the choir. Our overall balance fell this year by only £465 but would have been much greater had we not received a very generous anonymous donation of £1000. This larger-than-budgeted deficit is explained by a few other factors including less income from membership, less tickets sold at Christmas and the May concert being more expensive than anticipated. We still remain financially sound and look forward to an enjoyable, if somewhat less financially ambitious, season to come. Finally I would like to thank all those who contributed much over the year: Allun and Simon; the Committee: Louise, Betty, Jane, Julie, Brenda, Pat and Nick; people who have made special contributions to fund raising or concert organisation: Jenny Ashby, Tony, Barbara, Jonathan, Liz Shepherd, Robert, Dave, Stella, Alastair and Trish. A special mention goes to Betty who has been a bed-rock of the society and retires after many years as treasurer. She has been a delight to work with and PBCS would not be where it is without the substantial contribution she has made. Finally thanks to the choir for supporting the Committee - kind words and commitment to the society really makes a difference.

Gary Brook, June 2008