

# NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2007

Welcome to this year's newsletter, especially to new members of the Society. I hope you will enjoy the news and views expressed. My grateful thanks to all of you who have contributed. *Sue Munks*

### *Letter from Musical Director John Naylor*

I hope you have all enjoyed the 2006/7 season as much as I have. We have covered rather a lot of musical ground together! The excellent performance of Monteverdi's Vespers at Bunbury was a great start to the year (with amazing instrumental playing and very disciplined choral singing), and the Christmas concert was a great success, musically and regarding audience numbers. We all enjoyed working on Andrew's Christmas sequence – we should perform it again before too long. A special feature of the Singing Day was the antiphonal singing of Shutz Psalm 100 in the galleries of the Methodist Church: we must repeat the experience before, sadly, it is too late.

Messiah in February was one of the best I can remember – our colleagues in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Concert Orchestra certainly inspired us to produce memorably light and precise choruses. The Chichester Psalms certainly enlivened us all, and the Fauré Requiem performance was most moving. As for The Armed Man – all I can say is that

the whole thing, musically, socially and I hope financially, was stunning.

To have performed all this music within one season to such a high standard is very creditable. To have performed four concerts with professional instrumentalists in one year is possibly unprecedented in the Society's history, and to have ended the year with our finances in as healthy a position as when we began is rather remarkable.

Thank you all so very much for all your hard work and support. It is a great privilege for me to work with you on such wonderful music and I hope you have enjoyed it all as much as I have. I'm really looking forward to the 2007/8 season, and whilst I have lots of ideas for musical projects after that, please do let me know if there's anything you really would like us to perform in the future.

In the meantime enjoy the (shorter than usual) summer break.

With very best wishes, *John*

## Letter from Chairman Anne Barnard

What a busy year we have had! The Mâcon experience was quite unexpected when this year's programme was planned. However, as I write, the concert in Nantwich is in the future and when you read this it will be history! So I hope it will live up to our expectations.

I am indebted to Sue Munks for compiling this newsletter: it is very important that we should have a means of communicating ideas and observations. There is just not time on rehearsal evenings. We do, however, have a small social gathering on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, after the rehearsal, in the Cronkinson Farm pub, which is at Stapeley: there is usually a good mix of members. If you would like to come along, you would be most welcome.

We restart rehearsals on **Wednesday September 5<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30 in Malbank School. We will be rehearsing Mozart's Requiem, (Duncan Druce completion, if you prefer to have your own score – it must be The New Novello Choral Edition) together with a Choral Suite by John Benson. The AGM will be on **Wednesday September 26<sup>th</sup>** commencing at 7pm, probably at the Methodist Church, Hospital Street.

I would like you to consider volunteering to join the committee – the Society cannot function without 3 Officers and

a Committee – we meet once every 5/6 weeks on a rehearsal night. The infrequency of the formal meetings is due to frequent e-mail contact, when most of the discussion takes place. We need at least two new members to join us who have ideas and are keen to see the Society move forward under the direction of John. Nomination forms will be available at the first rehearsal. I look forward to adding your name to our Committee Contact List!

This year the summer break has been particularly short due to the celebrations to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning of Crewe and Nantwich with Mâcon.

I hope that you will have a enjoyable break, and I look forward to seeing you very soon! *Anne*

### THE SOCIAL SIDE

In February, we had a highly successful dinner for members and their partners at Legends in Crewe, with good food and excellent home-grown entertainment. Perhaps we may look forward to a similar event this coming year? Meanwhile, as Anne has said above, there is a small social gathering at the Cronkinson Farm pub on the **1st Wednesday** of each month after the rehearsal, so do go along!

## Members - News and Views

### Happy to be back!

When I left Cheshire in 1995 one of the sad parts was leaving Nantwich Choral Society where I had happily been a member for several years when Stephen Buckman was the conductor and I often looked back with nostalgia at our rehearsals and concerts. I sang then with Bolton Choral Union and with Salford Choral Society but nothing seemed to mark the start of the Christmas season so well as singing the Messiah in St. Mary's Church at the beginning of December!

When I returned to Cheshire I met up again with my old – or should I say longstanding – friend, Anne Barnard who suggested in ever such a persuasive way that I might like to return to the fold. I thought long about it before I finally made up my mind and re-joined in January this year.

I have made new friends of course, especially in the second altos, but was pleasantly surprised to see many familiar faces in all sections of the choir. I have been astounded and delighted not only to be recognised by so many members but also to be given such a warm welcome back and I can honestly say that it is a real joy to be singing with NCS again and under such an accomplished and friendly conductor as John Naylor. Definitely a happy and joyous experience!

*Alice Blackburn*

### Honoured - Joy Roberts

At our concert in July, a presentation was made to Joy Roberts in recognition of the 25 devoted and hard-working years she spent as the Choral Society's former accompanist, and in gratitude for all the support she has given. Joy was presented with a Citation and was made NCS's first Honorary Member. Congratulations and thank you, Joy!

### THE COMMITTEE

NCS can only function with the work of its Committee, to whom special thanks are due. Would you consider joining them? 2 new Committee members are needed, as Anne explains in her letter on page 2. Please think about it before the **AGM** which is on **Wednesday September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm** (probably at Methodist Church, Hospital St., Nantwich - Malbank n/a)

It was with great sadness that we learnt earlier this year of the death of a longstanding member of the altos, **Isobel Hope**, who had been ill for some time.

A number of members were able to sing at her funeral. We send our sympathy to her family.

## NCS TWINS WITH MÂCON

2007 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the twinning of Crewe and Nantwich with Mâcon, and NCS played its part with a visit to Mâcon by Choir members in May and a return visit by some of the French Choir in July: on both occasions the highlight was when the combined choirs performed Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man".

### Parlez Vooo....? By Diane Disbury

When my husband and I visited Macon this May it proved quite a challenge to our language skills! Unlike some of our group, we only had our school French to draw on. However we had a wonderful time with our hosts who were so hospitable, generous and fun!

Several times during our visit I provoked much laughter by my mistakes and not a little embarrassment on my part! The first mistake came when we were invited out by a lady for a meal. I asked her if I could visit the 'salle de bain' and then was dumb-founded to be handed some towels and expected to take a shower. Then I caused almost hysteria from our hosts when I came back from the market with some little souvenirs I had bought. I was quite proud of remembering the word for basket 'corbeille', but couldn't understand why they were laughing so much. Apparently by pronouncing it 'cor-bye' instead of 'cor-bay' I had just informed them that I had purchased two hamsters!

My crowning moment came on the last day. By this time our poor brains were getting really tired with trying to retrieve such long-lost information. My husband was even coming out with German words instead. After an outing I was trying to explain that I was going to change my clothes for the eve-

ning event and used the word 'Deshabille' only to be told I had announced I wanted to take my clothes off!

All this has proved that in order to communicate, one needs most of all a good sense of humour and a willingness to give it a try. I do believe that even a few words in someone else's language goes a long way to opening the doors to mutual understanding and relating across the barriers. I hope that when our French guests visit in July we will welcome them with a good chorus of 'Bonjour' and a French dictionary at the ready!

### Notes from Mâcon:

Language you would expect to be perhaps the greatest difficulty on a foreign exchange trip. The versatility of the members of the Choir knows no bounds. During a gap in the proceedings at St. Vincent Cathedral in Mâcon, a number of NCS members were conversing in French with some members of the Mâcon choir. After a few minutes, an observant NCS member said, "Why are three English people talking to each other in French?" Names withheld to protect the guilty!

Ron Kelley



### Mâcon Visit to Nantwich:

I am sure that you will all agree that it was a splendid weekend. Thank you to all of those who helped make it a success. I know that a number of you were disappointed that you could not be more involved but I am sure there will be future opportunities. The weather was not kind, but even so, Monday's trips to Bentley and Liverpool went very well (a highlight was John's organ-playing at the Metropolitan Cathedral). If the feedback from my French guests is anything to go by, they all had a marvellous time. Thank you. Ron.

*Note from Anne Barnard* The visit of our friends from Macon was hugely successful. I was delighted to see so many members taking part in the various activities and I want to thank you all for your contribution, however small, in making it a truly outstanding weekend. I have received many messages of congratulations and thanks, which are addressed to you all. The performance of The Armed Man was spine chilling, what a thrill to take part in it, especially with an absolutely full St. Mary's Church! Asking Joy Roberts to accept an Honorary Membership was an historic event in the life of NCS.

### 'The Armed Man' in Nantwich

The last event of our NCS year was in July, when members of the Ensemble Vocal Arpège de Mâcon came to stay, and our thanks go to

all those who worked hard to plan for the visit, especially Ron Kelley and Anne Barnard.

Some 27 guests were hosted by NCS members, with much fun and laughter and shared interest and experience on all sides. Anne and Peter Barnard arranged a highly enjoyable social evening at Church Minshull on the Saturday, and on the Monday there were most successful visits to Liverpool or Bentley for members and their French guests.

However the focal point of the weekend was our joint performance of Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man", for which we all rehearsed hard and then gathered at St. Mary's on the Sunday evening, wearing lovely red rose buttonholes made specially for us by John Naylor's wife Jenny. The church was packed – there were well over 500 in the audience.

It was a fantastic concert. As people went out at the end, there was universal praise and appreciation of the performance, as well as of the work itself. To sing in it alongside our French friends was a marvellously uplifting and moving experience. Thank you to our Musical Director John and all the musicians of the orchestra, and to all our friends from Mâcon, for making this such a very successful and memorable concert.

Sue Munks

## World Premieres

Whilst rehearsing Andrew's Christmas work last December, my thoughts turned to world premieres that I have heard or sung. When I lived in the South, I used to attend concerts at the Crystal Palace where they were minded to try out new works. One challenging work came to a grinding halt after the conductor (also the composer) turned over two pages by mistake and then failed to realise that he was not actually conducting what the orchestra was playing! Another literally blew away in the wind, presumably never to be heard of again.

I also recall taking part in two premieres at the Church Colleges' annual festival. The first was composed by a non-musical student colleague. We all had serious misgivings, but our Director kept faith with the composer and it worked, bringing thunderous applause (and not a few sighs of relief) from all concerned.

And then in Winchester I took part in a work that involved a choir of hundreds at one end of the cathedral, a rock band at the other, a string quartet in one nave and a hunting horn in the pulpit. The conductor (and composer) stood in the middle and had to perform pirouettes as each section rested and came in at different times. But again it worked, although I have not subsequently heard this work or any other by the composer on the classical radio networks!

And now of course I have John S Benson to look forward to...

Martin Jones

## JOHN BENSON

John Benson, whose work *A Choral Suite* we shall perform in November, was the accompanist of John Naylor's chamber choir, The Lydian Singers, for over 20 years, retiring from that post only recently. He has a distinguished musical background as an organist, teacher and composer: details can be seen on his website. His compositions include music for brass bands as well as choral music and settings for the Church of England Common Worship services.



Stop me if you've heard this one before....

Boy with father at concert: What's that man with the stick doing?

Father: He's reading the score.

Boy: Oh, who's winning?

Q Why can't many singers get through the door?

A. Because they can't find the key or they don't know when to come in.

## Maire Pedder asks for your views on CONCERT DRESS:

I have been asked to 'pen' a few words about Concert Dress for the ladies. Since I joined the Choral Society in 2001 there have been quite a lot of grumbles about having to wear all black for concerts. There have also been comments from members of our audiences that we look drab, colourless, sombre, etc.

In the time of our previous MD there was always emphasis on presentation. Presentation, surely, includes how we look/dress, and not just the way we present the music and conduct ourselves.

Concert dress will be on the agenda for discussion by your Committee in the early autumn and we would like to have your views and suggestions. If you would like to make these known at our Committee Meeting at the beginning of September please give me a call on 01270 620284. Views and comments relating to this subject are not restricted to ladies only. One of the basses has already expressed his views and those of his wife, who is often a member of our audience.

P.S. For those who may be curious or vaguely interested, 'Maire' is an Irish derivation of Mary. It is pronounced 'Moia' and not Mare, which I often get! I was named after an Irish love song called 'Maire My Girl' (words by John Keegan Casey, music by George Aitken) and, gosh, having only given me the one name, haven't my parents got a lot to answer for!

## One View of a Conductor....

'You're Fired!' - a conductor of international repute was not given to using exaggerated hand gestures whilst conducting. This caused problems with seeing him in the further reaches of the orchestra.

A percussion playing member decided to do something about it and brought in a pair of opera glasses to a concert rehearsal. At one particularly difficult time, he raised the glasses to his eyes, and, bingo, he could see exactly what the conductor was doing.

Flushed with success, he decided to repeat the process during the actual concert. At the same point in the work, he raised his glasses to his eyes, and at the same moment, the conductor reached ever-so-delicately into his pocket with his free hand, and produced and held up a tiny slip of paper with the words "you're fired" on it.

The concert continued. Hopefully this has never been or never will be a problem for NCS?! (with acknowledgements to a Classic FM listener).

Martin Jones



#### NCS Dates for your Diary

Wed. Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> : 7.30 - rehearsals restart at Malbank

Wed. Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> : AGM, probably at Methodist Church,  
Hospital Street, Nantwich

Sat. November 3<sup>rd</sup> : at Bunbury - *Mozart Requiem*  
*John Benson Choral Suite*

Sat. December 15<sup>th</sup> : at St. Mary's, Nantwich  
Christmas Concert

Sat. March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008 : Mendelssohn *Hear My Prayer*  
Brahms *A German Requiem* at St. Mary's, Nantwich

Sat. April 26<sup>th</sup> : 2pm: John's 60<sup>th</sup> Party (see below)

Sat. June 28<sup>th</sup> : Opera Gala Evening  
at St. Boniface, Bunbury

#### An Invitation to us all...

All members of the Society have been invited by John and Jenny Naylor to join them in celebrating John's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2008**, commencing with a not too formal concert in **St Swithin's Church, Cheswardine** (south of Market Drayton) at about 14.00. Tea will be served in the Village Hall. We will join John's two other choirs, Newport & District Male Voice and The Lydian Singers and perhaps the choir of St Swithin's. It will be quite a vocal gathering. This will be a splendid opportunity for us to show our appreciation to John and Jenny for their tremendous support of the Choral Society. Do please make a note of the date in your 2008 diaries. John will give more specific details of choice of music etc. nearer the time. *Anne*

[www.nantwichchoral.org.uk](http://www.nantwichchoral.org.uk)