

## **Chantry Quire - Chairman's Report**

It is salutary to reflect that our last full-blown concert took place on 9 November 2019 at St Mary's, Petworth and our last outing in public was at Fletching that December. If we thought 2020 was a difficult year for choral singing, and of course it was, 2021 has seen a continuation of Covid-related restrictions and advice which meant that we have been unable again, until now, to put on a programme of concerts. Choral singing continued to be blighted by government injunction and advice that lacked clarity and practicality, coupled with conflicting guidance from a range of sources. The upshot has been that, throughout the year, we have felt hamstrung. Resort has been had to Zoom - with mixed results - but, overall, as a choir we have achieved as much as we could. Against such a background may I express on behalf of us all our continued gratitude to Peter Allwood for his leadership and guidance.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly our individual recording of a number of well-known pieces for *Passiontide* which were edited together, as a video, by Nick Moodie. The result was an online concert, available until the end of April, of which we can be justifiably proud (the individual pieces, though not the *Allegrì*, are still available on our website). Again, our thanks are due to Peter for prompting and leading us through the technicalities. This exercise also raised funds, as you will see from the accounts; we shall use the amount collected in excess of the costs of the video in order to support some of the many young singers and musicians whose careers were adversely affected by the pandemic.

We also actively planned a concert to take place in May at St Mary's, Horsham but this had to be abandoned because our numbers exceeded the Covid-safe level imposed at that time by the church. The seemingly constant changes in Covid restrictions and advice have been a burden but we have benefitted hugely from the professional advice of Dr Kate Whitfield who has drafted guidance for us to deal with all eventualities. Our thanks to her, and also to all who helped prepare rehearsal venues to ensure that we sang in as Covid-safe a manner as possible.

For the record, when we last sang, the choir comprised 24 paid-up members. Since then, 5 have discontinued their membership; however, I'm pleased to say that 14 have since joined (or rejoined), several specially for the Brahms - they are all, of course, very welcome.

Over the course of the year, the Committee – with the help of the publicity and marketing group - has reviewed the design and content of the website, and the way the choir presents itself. Naturally, our meetings often concentrated on Covid-related matters as well as finance and the continuing need for sponsorship. We need your help in identifying potential additional corporate sponsors – please let me know of any personal leads you may have. My thanks to Sally for her work as Secretary and for continuing in the role of Webmaster – she stands down from the former role following this meeting.

Thanks to Committee members past and present, for their individual commitment and determination to keep the choir together – we have had to operate until recently by Zoom, which has required much patience and tact. Thank you all very much.

One of our longest-serving members, Geoff Simmonds, retires tonight as Treasurer. Thank you, Geoff, for your unstinting efforts, not only with keeping the accounts over so many years but also for beginning to grapple with the technology!

I would also like to thank particularly the ongoing and often unseen efforts of Nick and Eleanor Steinitz - Nick as our Librarian and Eleanor whose flair and dedication have contributed so much to the choir over a number of years.

As we prepare for our return to Petworth on 27 November, with the joys and challenges of Brahms' *Requiem*, we can look forward to a fresh year of opportunity, with exciting proposals for future programmes, trusting that no further Covid visitations will curtail our aims. Thank you all for your commitment and enthusiasm.

***Philip Jones***