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LEADING - NOTES

Issue 16 : June 2006

Chairman's Ramblings:

At the risk of repeating what others may write, I'd like to thank Andrew Vaile for all the work he put in to the Choir Members' Survey. To compile the questionnaire, collate the responses and condense them into accessible form took him many hours and much effort. Thank you , Andrew.

All that would not have been possible unless members had taken the trouble to fill in the forms. So many thanks are also due to the 72 who did so. The really hard part begins from now on: putting the suggestions into practice. The committee has made a start on this; we hope that you will support our efforts, and keep us up to the mark.

Which brings me to the summit of this ramble: you committee needs you! Several of us are leaving the committee after the next AGM in September: Marion Stein, Betsy Tyler-Bee, Britta Urban, Howard Hicks and I are all stepping down. Fortunately Beth Sinclair, Brian Jones, Toby Blundell, Vicki Pike, Sarah Cobb and Andrew Vaile have said they will stand again, but we need at least another four volunteers to share the load of committee work.

There are a few weeks to decide about this; please think hard, and help if you can.

Editorial Mutterings:

If we read Roger's Ramblings (see above) aright, and barring any committee cabinet reshuffle , the September exodus will leave holes to be filled in the Money Department, the Library, the Database list: and (after how many years , Howard?) we will need a new Comptroller of our (Good) Friends' Account. Something maybe to incite a little conscience-examination as we sun on the beach at Cannes, Frinton (or wherever) during the dog-days.

Thanks are due to all retirees. To Marian who has kept a tight rein on the business of issuing and collecting scores, which we are sure can be a chore particularly when chasing missing copies. To Betsy and her safe monetary hands, who instituted the perfectly legal wheeze to make our subs. go a long way further. To Britta for her monitor-gazing; to Howard, who from time immemorial has tended the all-important list of Friends: and of course to our retiring after five-years Chairman who has kept us advised , informed, fluent in German, and suitably ticked-off when necessary, always with a smile and a quip. A chairman of even teno(u)r .He has done much in so many departments to ensure that the Society runs smoothly. (LN thanks him in particular for willingly taking on the role of print house management !) Our best wishes to all.

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Shauni

When Marian and I joined the Choral Society in September 1993, Shauni was already well-established as Assistant Conductor to Stewart Taylor. We quickly realised what an asset she was, at first as an outstanding rehearsal accompanist. But it soon became obvious that her qualities went far beyond that. Her sheer professionalism, coupled with infectious enthusiasm and an ability to communicate, made rehearsals with her a real joy. She had high standards and was quite ruthless in making us reach for them. And yet she did so in a way that made sense to us amateurs: her delighted smile when, at last, we did what she was aiming for, made all the effort worth while. It made a refreshing change to learn Latin pronunciation via Italian food: *RAH-VEE-O-LEE AHND SPAH-GE-TEE...*

Much of Shauni's most valued work went on in countless phone calls -later, e-mails - which succeeded in producing those glorious orchestras and soloists for our big concerts. The modest title *The Cotswold Baroque Players* concealed some of the top names in period-instrument music. Our first experience of this was in the *B Minor Mass*, but there were many others both before and after. *His Majesties Sagbutts and Cornets* in the Monteverdi *Vespers*, Nancy Argenta in the two Bach *Magnificats*, and my own personal highlight, James Gilchrist as the Evangelist in the *St Matthew Passion*.

There were also times when Shauni took over as conductor. *Music for a Summer Evening* in 1997 introduced us to that rare bird, an

opera by Scott Joplin. Her personal triumph, has to be the brilliant conducting of a Mozart double bill in May 1999: *Requiem* and the *C minor Mass*.

And then there is all her work for the Music Festival, her organising of the carol singing in the hospital - one could go on. But I cannot close without mentioning her stalwart support of post-rehearsal socials in The Fox. Cheers, Shauni! We'll miss you.

Roger Stein

A word about William Smith - and All Saints, Churchill

Driving into Churchill, as locals I'm sure we will be unfazed by the sight of the miniature version of Magdalen tower in Oxford as it hoves into view.. Pevsner says that the church is an 1826 rebuild, and 'is the usual Georgian preaching box'! But I shall make a special point of locating the memorial to Churchill-born William Smith. The son of a local blacksmith, his early passion for 'reading the earth' led to a brilliant career, and the eventual making of a definitive and beautiful map of the geology of England. His modern accolade as 'The Father of Geology' was hard earned, having had to fight the established academic opinions of certain members of the London-based Royal Society. He had always been a 'hands-on' man, and I'm sure that the 'great monolith of local stone' is as fitting a memorial as could possibly be.

PEB

LOOKING BACK

Since we seem to be in retrospective mood, we thought you might like a reminder of what has been achieved over the last ten years - (thanks to Roger for the research..)

1996-7	November	Fauré <i>Requiem</i> (from scratch)
	March	Handel <i>Israel in Egypt</i> (Stewart Taylor's final concert)
	July	<i>Music for a Summer Evening</i> (conducted by Shauni)
1997-8	November	Dvorak <i>Mass in D</i> ; Kodaly <i>Missa Brevis</i> (Peter Hunt's first concert)
	March	Monteverdi <i>Vespers</i>
1998-9	December	Britten <i>Ceremony of Carols</i>
	May	Mozart <i>Requiem</i> and <i>Great Mass in C Minor</i> (conducted by Shauni)
1999-2000	December	Handel <i>Messiah</i>
	March	Rutter <i>Requiem</i> ; Andrew Carter <i>Benedicite</i>
2000-1	February	Bach <i>St Matthew Passion</i>
	May	Sullivan <i>Trial by Jury</i> ; and lighter pieces
2001-2	December	Charpentier <i>Messe de Minuit</i> ; Fauré <i>Requiem</i>
	May	Brahms <i>Songs of Love</i> ; Elgar <i>From the Bavarian Highlands</i>
2002-3	December	Bach <i>Christmas Oratorio</i>
	May	Rossini <i>Petite Messe Solennelle</i>
2003-4	December	Bach <i>Sleepers Wake</i> ; Vaughan Williams <i>Fantasia on Christmas Carols</i> Mathias <i>Ave Rex</i>
2004-5	December	Vivaldi <i>Gloria</i> ; Haydn <i>Little Organ Mass</i> ; Hummel <i>Mass in B Flat</i>
	June	Tippett <i>A Child of Our Time</i>
2005-6	December	Carols and Readings
	April	Stainer <i>The Crucifixion</i> ; Stanford and Parry anthems
	(June	Purcell <i>Dido and Aeneas</i>)

An evening of musical entertainment and summer refreshment
including

Henry Purcell
Dido and Aeneas

Conductor: Peter Hunt
All Saint's Church, Churchill
Saturday 10th June 2006 at 7.30 pm
Tickets £10 (£9 before May 24th)

Neem zingen is gemakkelijk waar!

Hmm, doesn't make too much sense if you're not up with your Dutch! Translated it means *sight singing is easy*. But it would only make sense if you're able to understand the language. If you don't understand the language, it's just a lot of gobbledegook. And that's the crux of the matter. To sight sing confidently, fluently and accurately you must be able to understand what you see – just as you're understanding these words as you read them.

So, first of all, let's identify the ingredients that require understanding. You must know how rhythms go - not approximately, but exactly. This means two things – you need to be able to establish and sustain a steady pulse (the heart beat of music) and you need to know precisely how the various rhythmic patterns then relate to that pulse. And that's about it really! Lots of rhythm practice then is essential (and, if you'll permit me – you'll find just the appropriate kind of rhythmic exercises in my series *Improve Your Sight Singing* [pub. Faber Music]). Spend time going through the rhythmic exercises – until you're really secure in the knowledge that you *know them precisely*.

Then we need to understand the melodic shapes. Fundamentally understanding melodic shapes means knowing intervals and, like learning the sounds of letters and combinations of letters it's just a matter of practice and thought. Again the exercises in *Improve Your Sight Singing* will help. Work carefully at intervals; think about them and spend a lot of time hearing them in your head. In practice it should always be from your musical (inner) ear to sound. *Never sing before you know what you're going to sing!*

Do some sight singing practice everyday, Chose your method book (it may be the one I've already mentioned or another similar) and then work at one exercise each practice. The secret of success is in the preparation. First hear the rhythm in your head (perhaps tapping the pulse as you do). Then, similarly, hear all the various intervals. Work them out carefully. Then hear the exercise in your head. Finally, when you think you've got it, sing it out loud. Play it on a piano (or another instrument) to check. Repeat this progress regularly and you'll improve your sight singing in no time!

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Thanks to Graham Pike for obtaining this contribution.

One or two things you may possibly know about Henry Purcell

- 1.) He was born in 1658 (possibly! Not much is known of his private life), the year that Oliver Cromwell died.. Charles II came to the throne two years later, the power of the Puritans broken; luxury and profligacy became passwords at court. Theatres began to re-establish in the city.
- 2.) Became a chorister in the Chapel Royal, until his voice broke at age 15.
- 3.) Was given £30 p.a. 'with fine holland, handkerchiefs, and a felt hat' as tuner of Westminster Abbey organ. In 1679 succeeded Blow as organist there.
- 4.) By 1680 was composing fantasias for strings, official choral pieces, and music for the thriving London theatrical scene.
- 5.) '*Dido and Aeneas*' first performed at a Chelsea girls' school in 1689 (possibly!. Could have been 5 years earlier.) Earning a good living, married Frances Peters from a well-known family in the parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster (see below)
- 6.) Official choral works include '*My Heart is Inditing*' for the coronation of James II; pieces for the coronation of William III, and music for the funeral of Queen Mary in 1695, the year of his own death at the age of 37.
- 7.) The general consensus places Purcell along with the 'Greats', certainly of English music. His '*Dido and Aeneas*' broke new ground in its sensitivity and emotional depth. Modern scholarship tends to the view that his true genius manifests itself best in his instrumental writing.
- 8.) Benjamin Britten had always acknowledged his indebtedness to Purcell (e.g. in '*Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*'); other moderns influenced include Pete Townsend, and the makers of the films 'A Clockwork Orange' and 'Pride and Prejudice'.

And a couple or so things maybe you didn't ...

It is almost certain that Henry Purcell died from consumption; which did not prevent two other theories being put forward, viz:
a) He was in the habit of keeping 'late hours and merry company', and one night 'heated with wine and returning from the tavern at an hour later than prescribed him' his wife had locked him out. The resultant chill carried him off b). He consumed too much chocolate.

Consulted: '*Lives of the Great Composers*' / Gollancz 1935
Oxford Dictionary of Music / OUP 1994

Have you visited the ONCS website at www.cnsc.org.uk?

Leading Notes Editorial
via The Red Box
or to barberpandw@onetel.net

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Privileges of membership include advance notice / reserved seats at concerts; complimentary copy of 'Leading Notes'; £1 discount on up to 2 tickets per concert. Ring Howard Hicks on 01608 737017

Friends of the Society are currently:

Mrs. Naomi Bowen; Mrs Christine Brennan; Mr Anthony Cable; Mrs Nancy Catling; Mrs Paula Clarke; Mrs Ann Crabtree; Mrs Ann Dent; Mr Maurice George; Mrs Katherine George; Mr Brough Girling; Mrs Catherine Hitchens; Ms Claire Jarvis; Mrs Joan Mann; Mrs. Cynthia Oliver; Mrs Ann Paton; Mrs Rita Perry; Mrs Margaret Savigear; Mrs Ann Symons; Mrs Lucia Turner; Mr A Webster: Mr John Wheatley.

Bookshelf

The Music of the Primes by Marcus de Sautoy

Who could resist a book with such a title? Especially if first encountered at a public lecture given by the author himself, rushing on stage with his trumpet to offer a live (and lively) demonstration of the link between music and mathematics.

Subtitled "Why an unsolved problem in mathematics matters", much of the book tells the story of the eccentric and brilliant men who sought the solution to the puzzle of the primes that would revolutionise fields as diverse as e-commerce, quantum mechanics and computer science. But for me the most enjoyable aspect of the book are the passages like this one: "Ever since Pythagoras' discovery of an arithmetic connection between mathematics and music, people have compared both the aesthetic and physical traits shared by the two disciplines... Euler believed that it was the primes that lay behind the beauty of certain combinations of notes. Many mathematicians have a natural affinity with music. Euler would relax after a hard day's calculating by playing his clavier. Mathematics departments invariably have little trouble assembling an orchestra from the ranks of their members. There is an obvious numerical connection between the two given that counting underpins both. As Leibniz described it, 'Music is the pleasure the human mind experiences from counting without being aware that it is counting.' But the resonance goes much deeper than this.... The flash of illumination that mathematicians crave often feels like bashing notes on a piano until suddenly a combination is found which contains an inner harmony."

contributed by Naomi Bowen

The Music of the Primes by Marcus de Sautoy / pub. in paperback by Harper Perennial ISBN 1 84115 580 2

Incidentally.....

Andrew Vaile's thorough research threw up a great deal of helpful data and comment, the fruits of which are already beginning to appear. Eds. were particularly intrigued by some of the takes on our proudest moments, e.g.

- getting the transition right between the Shepherds Watched versions (apologies, Eds. didn't)
- wearing scarlet cassocks
- peaking on the night
- miraculously peaking on the night
- end of every concert

If you find the book review opposite of interest - and once again Eds. are indebted to Naomi Bowen for the contribution - you may have noticed that (quite coincidentally!) Melvyn Bragg's Radio 4 series of discussions ('In Our Time') gave a thorough airing to this fascinating topic of maths. and music in a broadcast during the last week of May. If you missed it, all is not lost, because the BBC have made the whole series available for download, plus further food for thought in Mr. Bragg's newsletter, to which you can subscribe gratis. For the website try

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio 4/history/inourtime/ for the download (MP3 file) go to http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio 4/history/inourtime/inourtime.shtml and for M.B.'S newsletter http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio 4/history/inourtime/newsletter/signup.shtml

The County Set - Tonsor's prize puzzle

There are 43 possible answers to the 12 cryptic crossword-type clues below, since they are all English counties. Some may be in recognised abbreviated form: eg Cambs for Cambridgeshire.

- 1 Deer mate here?
2 Hound sound shire?
3 Herby mixture dries.
4 Alphabetically, two-letter girls.
5 People of the North?
6 Determine gender.
7 Rods, or provides workforce.
8 Soundly deprive of breath, Kate excepted.
9 Sound of clocks being put forward?
10 Neuter?
11 Rose upset between old Penny and Teresa initially?
12 Tourist promotion begins with letter urging visit to Italian region?

>>>>> The County Set Puzzle

Open to all, whether member, Friend, overseas subscriber, or you just found it in the recycle bin. E-mail your answers to barberpandw@onetel.net. or pop it into the Red Box at the first rehearsal in September. Either way, please ensure you add name and phone number. Nice bottle of Burgundy white (Bouzeron) to first correct answer out of the hat on that day in September.
