

## AGM - 24th September 2024 Report from chair - Huw Jenkins

We started celebrating Royston Choral Society's 50 years of music making in the 2022/23 season and continued doing so into this season. And what a celebration it has been. A record number of singers in the society and having two of the four excellent concerts in the season sold out. On behalf of all of us, I thank you all for the work put into publicising our concerts and selling tickets. That is so important to our continuing success. Combined with our increasing confidence as a choir we should have a very exciting future in front of us.

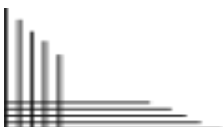
Our first concert of the season - Bach's momentous *Mass in B minor* - was a welcome return to a work we were on the brink of performing when the coronavirus pandemic hit in 2020. It is a challenging work but the performance was very well received. We were supported by a wonderful quartet of soloists and some excellent orchestral players. The society is fortunate that Andrew has the contacts to be able to engage musicians of such quality.

Our Christmas concert took the usual format with a mix of audience and choir carols. Since we were putting on 2 full orchestral concerts during the season we didn't engage the brass quintet and performed with just the organ at this concert. This allowed Michael Smith to contribute a couple of festive solos which were particularly well received as they also represented Michael's swansong having decided to reduce his regular commitments by stepping down from being accompanist. We were fortunate to have had his understated talent for the last few years and wish him all the very best for the future.

In January work started on Verdi's *Requiem* and we were also very fortunate to have Jonathan Lilley join as our new accompanist. A work to frighten many a pianist, but which Jonathan handled with panache and totally unfazed - admitting that every choral society he has accompanied has done it at some point! Eli Rolfe Johnson and David Webb joined us again as soloists along with Rebecca Afonwy-Jones and Frederick Long. Along with the large orchestra (even in a cut-down orchestration!), including off-stage trumpets, and some excellent singing from the chorus it made for one of our very best concerts ever. And perhaps one of the loudest ever performed in St John's?

The summer concert combined Vivaldi's joyous *Gloria* with some staple choral gems. In his first concert with us, it gave Jonathan a chance to shine (particularly by contributing the virtuosic *G minor scherzo* by Bossi). However we were also very lucky to have a number of members of the choir who took the various solo parts. This was particularly appreciated and commented on by members of the audience so our thanks and congratulations to all involved.

We are a friendly society as well as a musical one. It is good that we are able to keep the tea rota staffed so that we get a chance to chat mid-rehearsal each week. Also thanks to Fay for once again organising an excellent winter social at The Banyers and a follow-up summer one at The Old Bull.



# Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

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



The success of our concerts owes a lot to the preparation everyone puts in learning the music. However, it is also a consequence of the work a number of people put in the background. Carole's tenacity chasing grants paid off once again, making a significant difference to the finances. Penny's artistic talent continues to result in eye-catching posters and programme covers which a number of people have commented on. Tom (and his trailer) have made the task of moving the staging and chairs out of, and back into storage much easier and Tessa and Paul have done a grand job again of organising the bars at the concerts which are another useful source of additional funds. In addition we are very grateful for the jobs performed by 'family and friends' helping to staff the bar, check tickets and the like.

It is always a risky business to thank some people by name because of the danger of missing others. However, the other person that deserves our particular thanks for many years of very proactive support on the committee is Heather. Most recently she has been concert manager, helping to ensure the smooth running of concert days. Before that she was chair for many years with all that involved. She has, quite reasonably, decided she deserves a break and is coming off the committee. We are fortunate that she will still be singing with the altos but Heather, on behalf of us all, thank you all very much for all you have done.

So to close, I just want to say what a pleasure it is being chair of this society. The friendliness of you all and the support you give is very much appreciated. I say it each year, but we are so fortunate to have Andrew as our conductor. As well as his musical skills, his patience and good-humour makes Tuesday evenings such a pleasure. With the St Matthew Passion we have a challenging time ahead but I am sure we will all pull together and have another exciting and fulfilling year.

Huw

