



## Newsletter - Summer 2024

## Notes from the Musical Director



After an incredible season celebrating our 50+ seasons we look forward to another year of exceptional works by Fauré, Britten and Bach. It is 100 years since the death of French composer Gabriel Fauré and, as a tribute, we will be singing his Requiem, the best-known and loved of his large works.

In this seven-section Requiem, the French composer Gabriel Fauré distilled some of the most beautiful melodies he ever composed. Anyone looking for morose themes is searching in the wrong place. Instead, here we find musical solace in a work that focuses not on the morbid, but on the supposedly restful and fear-free nature of death.

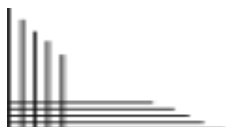
The work will be accompanied by one of Britten's most popular works, his cantata *Rejoice in the Lamb*. This is a setting of words by Christopher Smart, written whilst he was in an asylum. The poem depicts idiosyncratic praise and worship of God by different things including animals, letters of the alphabet and musical instruments. The work is renowned for its uniqueness and incredible text setting.

In the Lent term, we will begin work on one of the greatest choral works, Bach's giant, the St. Matthew Passion. From the sounding of that first e minor chord, a dramatic and heart wrenching musical journey ensues. The chorus is central to the drama and sets the mood throughout. The road will be bumpy, it's hard music but like every other big work we have tackled, we will grow as a choir and the end result is always enriching and inspirational.

Listen to different recordings, read the text, reflect and immerse yourself in the brilliance of this epic work.

I can't wait.

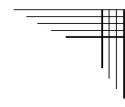
## Andrew



# Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

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



## Notes from the Chair (email [chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk))



For me, the summer seems to have flown by and it is almost time for our first rehearsal of the new season - Tuesday 3rd September 7.45pm. It will be lovely to be back with everyone again singing an interesting selection of music for our next concert in November. I wonder if I am the only one whose favourite out of the three is *Rejoice in the Lamb*?

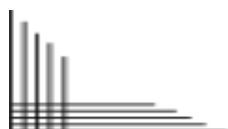
The last season for the choral society was absolutely fantastic. We started it still celebrating our 50 years of existence, performing to a really high standard two of the all-time classics of the choral repertoire. The B minor mass is actually probably my all time favourite. I've sung it a number of times but absolutely love it each time. And then the Verdi Requiem - which we actually performed almost exactly 50 years (within a couple of months) after the first time I ever sang it (as a **very** young treble!).

The fact that we also sold out both these concerts was also amazing. We will speak more about this when it comes to the AGM. The confidence that this gives us in planning future programmes is immense, so a very big thank you to you all for helping to sell tickets. If this continues we may soon need to find a bigger venue than St John's!

Of course audience support also relies on putting on the right programmes. This was brought home to me at the end of July when I was playing the organ at Canterbury Cathedral for a week with a visiting choir. The services were really well attended with a congregation made up of regulars and visitors. They also (largely) stayed seated listening to the voluntary at the end of each service and then applauded..... Except for the evening I played a piece by Messiaen - which was followed by a deadly silence! I don't *think* I played it that badly. Perhaps it was a harder listen than they expected (although it actually matched the music in the rest of the service pretty well) but I do think it is important to broaden horizons. Similarly, we don't want to be the sort of choral society that only does Messiah and Crucifixion and so need to produce programmes that balance the familiar with the new and bring our growing audiences with us on a journey.

The start of a new season also of course means we will shortly be holding our AGM and electing a new committee. As always, even when existing committee members are happy to carry on, we welcome new members - either to one of the formal positions or as a 'without portfolio' member. If you think this might be for you do feel free to speak to any of the committee to learn more about what is involved.

Heather, who has served on the committee for many years in some of the most important roles has expressed a desire to step down this year. She will be a hard act to follow, but we definitely need to appoint a successor as concert manager. In addition we need more help with our publicity - particularly via social media and online.

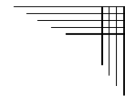


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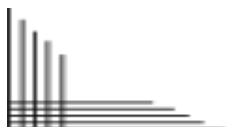


The AGM itself will be held during the rehearsal on September 24th. Anyone wanting to stand for election should complete and return the nomination form which can be found in the downloads section of the website:

<https://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/RCS%20Committee%20Nomination%20Form.pdf>

Finally just a small plea about rehearsal refreshments. We rely on members to help prepare these, so please do sign up on the list when it comes around and save Sue having to go around twisting arms. Also a reminder that it does make things easier (and enables those helping each week to get back to the rehearsal more quickly) if we all bring our own mugs for tea and coffee which we then take home to wash up. Similarly, if you like to have a drink to hand during the rehearsal itself please bring your own water bottle. Many thanks.

**Huw**

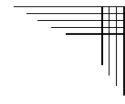


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## Notes from the Treasurer (email [treasurer@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk))



### Subscriptions for the new season

We have continued with our custom of increasing subscriptions by a modest amount each year, to avoid the situation we have faced in the past, where we have had to ask for a large increase after a period of no movement at all. Subs for 2024/25 will increase by £5 per year to £165 (if paid annually) or £67 each for the first two terms of the season and £41 for the third if you have attended for the other two.

The easiest way to pay that is online; the bank details are:

Account name: Royston Choral Society

Sort code: 30 97 16

Account number: 00202356

Alternatively, you can bring cash or a cheque to the first rehearsal. That week is quite busy with music etc, so if it's cash, it's helpful if you put it in an envelope with your name on it, please.

If this subscription is difficult for you, please remember that you can speak to me confidentially and we will work something out. We all have periods when things are tight, and some of us have more challenging financial circumstances than others. We turn no-one away from choir on the grounds of affordability.

### Gift Aid

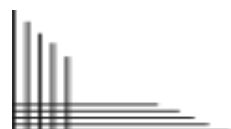
As I prepared the gift aid claim for this year, I noticed that some of our declarations are rather old and I spotted one where I happen to know that the address is out of date. If you have stopped paying tax, or you have moved house since you signed a gift aid form with RCS, please let me know. There are still one or two for whom I have not received declaration forms at all. If you are not a taxpayer, please let me know, and I will make a note in the file and stop nagging you!

The form is available from the downloads section of the website

<https://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/RCS%20Gift%20Aid.pdf>

### Music

The music for the autumn term is Faure's Requiem (Novello), Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens (Novello, double choir edition) and Britten's Rejoice in the Lamb (Boosey & Hawkes). There will, as usual, be enough library copies for everyone, but some members prefer to buy their own. If you are willing to do that through RCS, you pay the usual price, and we retain the bulk discount we receive to help with choir funds.

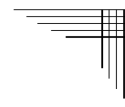


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I have put in one order for music, but I'm sure there will be some who have not yet let me know they would like to buy copies through RCS. If you would like me to order music for you, please let me know as soon as possible, so that I can get it before the start of term. The cost is £7.50 each for the Faure and the Parry, and £13 for the Britten.

Following the summer concert, we have a handful of pieces of music which are not ours, one of which appears to belong to the Elizabethan Singers! If you bought a copy and did not put your name on it, or used your own copy, please check that you still have it. I will bring these copies to the first rehearsal so that they can be claimed. Any that are not claimed will go into our RCS library. Thank you.

**Caroline**

**RCS 100 Club** (email [juliec2157@outlook.com](mailto:juliec2157@outlook.com))



The choir would really benefit from having some more members of the 100 club. It's not just open to choir members but your friends and family too, who would like to support us.

Subscriptions are £20 per year. Each member is allotted a number which is entered in a draw each month between September and June, with prizes of £25 and £10 each time.

If we ever had 100 members, this would raise £1650 each year towards the choir's funds. We currently have just 41 members so there's plenty of opportunity for more people to join.

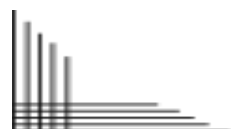
There is an application form on the download section of the RCS website

(<https://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/100%20Club%20application%20form.pdf>), or just email me or collect a form from me at rehearsal.

For existing club members, the majority of your subscriptions are due in September, so please come and pay me or add £20 to your choir subscription, but please tell Caroline that is what you are doing. If you are not sure if your subs are due or if you have any queries about the 100 club, please contact me [juliec2157@outlook.com](mailto:juliec2157@outlook.com)

Please round up your friends and family to support us in this way - there is a very big chance you will win at least some of your subscription back!

**Julie Clements** (you'll find me in the sopranos)

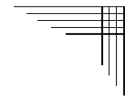


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## Notes from the Part Reps



**RCS Soprano Part Rep – Brigid Hickey** (email [partrep.soprano@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:partrep.soprano@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)) writes:

As we return to another exciting Autumn term, I do hope you've all enjoyed the wonderful summer break. I was very taken by an article in the Royston Crow recently.

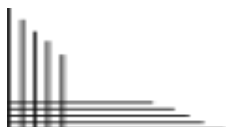
**Clare Shaw**, the founder of *Mini Mozart*, says there are ways to keep children's brains engaged without them noticing.

Her top tips for keeping children entertained:

1. Homemade musical instruments. Getting involved in sensory play stimulates the senses. Encouraging the children to make their own instruments, from cardboard tubes, pots, spoons etc.
2. Expressing oneself through song, music
3. Musical arts and crafts. Musical rhythm enhancing memory. Songs, alphabet, numbers etc
4. A trip around the world. Talking about what you like to hear, how you feel, and what the words in the songs mean.
5. Dancing games. FUN
6. Singing together. Rhythmic patterns and song, helping pronunciation and intonation. Sing one's instructions into your child's favourite melody.

I am sure there is something here for any of us looking after or caring for children. But maybe there is also something we could all think of using?

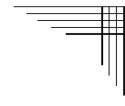
Meanwhile I look forward to singing with you all again very shortly.



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RCS Alto Part Rep - Sue Pegram (email [partrep.alto@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:partrep.alto@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)) writes:

Wow, what a fabulous 50<sup>th</sup> season we have had! Bach B Minor Mass was a sell-out, as was the Verdi Requiem concert, and we had great audiences for Christmas and Summer concerts too. It is so rewarding and such a joy to sing to a full audience!

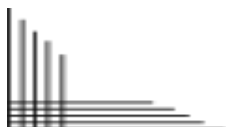
We welcomed four new altos to the choir – Alyce Merry, Lyn Grove, Kath Cooper, and also Pauline Rowe who had transferred from the soprano section.

In July, I was very fortunate to be able to spend a week with [RunBySingers](#) in Burgos, northern Spain, where we performed a concert in the cathedral there – this was also a “sell-out” with around 400 in the audience. The programme included Tomás Luis de Victoria’s Requiem Mass, and other pieces by Victoria, Lobo and Guerrero. The local food and wine were excellent too...

Then in August, I attended a summer school at Lincoln University, also with [RunBySingers](#), singing jazz/swing from the Great American Song repertoire – something completely different, but such fun! Always good to step out of one’s comfort zone occasionally... Another group of singers were working on Early Music and at the end of the course, each group performed to the other in an informal concert of contrasting styles in the Alive Church Lincoln.

Now looking forward to performing more great concerts with RCS – especially the Bach St Matthew Passion in April. Can we equal, or even surpass ourselves this next season?

Burgos  
Cathedral:



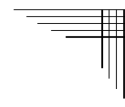
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RCS Tenor Part Rep - Chris Lee (email [partrep.tenor@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:partrep.tenor@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)) writes:

## Nothing succeeds like success – the tenors

If success is about numbers we – the tenors and the whole choir - have had a very successful 2023-24 season. Not only have we had a record number of tenors singing in our section – 13 – the choir has also had two ‘sell-out’ performances. Concert-goers are increasingly booking in advance ‘to avoid disappointment’ and positive audience feedback reinforces this sense of appreciation and achievement. We are also reaching new supporters with some assuring us they plan to return!

I asked my fellow tenors for their reflections on the past season and their responses were suitably positive. James Boyle (one of two James Bs in our section) conjures up the anticipation before each performance.

*“As I stand in black tie, elated, surrounded by fellow amateur singers, with a full orchestra in front of us and a full house as an audience, it does make you think. How did I get here? How can a small town like Royston make such fabulous occasions?”*

*Of course RCS is led by talented people, who care about music and are prepared to put in the hard work needed. But it’s the unassuming, non-judgemental, supportive way they go about it.*

*There is a great range of ability in the choir, but even when we are stretched, everyone wants to make it great. We do it not because it is required, but for the joy of it.”*

Tenor Alan Bateman, who has sung with a number of choirs through a long life in music, chooses his favourite performance...

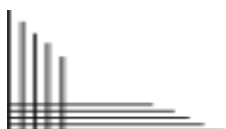
*“I thought the Verdi [Requiem, April 2024] was the highlight of the time I have been with the choir. I thought the standard was really good and justified all the hard work put in. Andrew is an excellent trainer and conductor - hence the standard we reach for our performances. RCS is the highlight of my week!”*

Relatively new tenor Neil Marshall highlights what keeps him coming back each week.

*“What I find so impressive about the RCS is the male/female sound balance. About a third of the choir comprises tenors and bases, which simply works so well. And being one of 13 tenors brings a great sense of ‘family’ (and fun), as well as an impressive contribution to our performances”.*

Finally, Jason Sanderson summarises his season with the choir in five words – “Exciting! Challenging! Thought-provoking! Amazing!” and continues...

*A few words to describe this year... I almost gave up at one point with the Bach [B Minor Mass, November 2023], but I was encouraged to carry on and LOOK WHAT WE ACHIEVED TOGETHER! Thank you to each and every member of this fantastic choir.”*



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**RCS Bass Part Rep - Anthony Pigg** (email [partrep.bass@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk](mailto:partrep.bass@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)) writes:

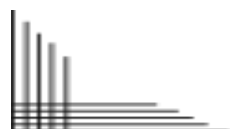
This has been another splendid year for the Royston Choral Society which was thoroughly enjoyed by all the members of the bass section. We would like to express our thanks to the Director, Assistant Director and Committee for enabling the choir to achieve so much during the year, not just the obvious musical achievements but the social events too.

There have been 22 names on the Bass register during the year and we have usually had around 12 - 15 participants at both the rehearsals and concerts.

The Bach B Minor Mass which we studied and performed in the Autumn of 2023 was a challenge for some but was most interesting and rewarding. The Christmas concert was a delight as always and in the spring of 2024 we worked on and performed Verdi's Requiem, still hard work but a wonderful piece to sing and a great sense of achievement once completed; who could not enjoy singing the Dies Irae! The last concert of the academic year was centred on Vivaldi's magnificent Gloria which was a most welcomed choice. The works by Finzi, although at first not to everyone's taste proved interesting and personally speaking sparked an interest in a composer who I had hardly listened to in the past.

A number of the bass singers mentioned how good it is to have such a nice venue and to be anchored in one place. I also think that this has contributed to the growth in audience numbers. The only comment or suggestion for improvement that I have received is that we could perhaps have a more considered approach to the division of the bass section when it is split into two parts, especially when pitch isn't an issue.

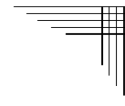
We are all looking forward to next term, working on Faure's Requiem and the works by Parry and Britten. I especially like Fauré's "In Paradisum" I don't think there is much for the bass section to learn in that particular section of the Requiem, we can enjoy listening!



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## Choraline

I know a number of you use rehearsal materials from Choraline to help prepare for our concerts. They have just sent this email with details of a useful discount off their usual prices.

### CHORALINE DISCOUNT - Autumn Term 2024

#### 20% Discount Code reduces the cost of £9.99 down to £7.99 per rehearsal recording

If you order 'EasyPlay' via the ChoraLine website you will receive an email with a [blue link](#) to click and use on your PC/Laptop and the rehearsal recording **will also** upload into the 'Purchased Music' section in the [App](#) to use on your Tablet/Phone.

The 20% discount code is: **EXISTING**

#### STEP 1

Visit the [CHORALINE WEBSITE](#) to select the rehearsal recording you require.

#### STEP 2

Click in the circle by your voice part & then click in the circle by 'EasyPlay'

#### STEP 3

Click 'Add to Basket'

#### STEP 4

On the Shopping Basket Page type **EXISTING** in the discount code box and click the green arrow to activate the code.

#### STEP 5

Complete the transaction and use your rehearsal recording on all your devices:

**Phone & Tablet & iPad:** The recording will upload into the 'Purchased Music' section in the [App](#).

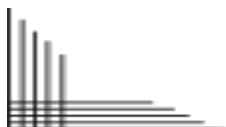
**PC & Laptop:** You will receive an email with a blue link to click to use EasyPlay. [Please click here for tips](#)

### THE CHORALINE APP

We recommend the [App](#) as the best way to use ChoraLine when rehearsing at home.

Please [click here](#) to watch a film about how to use the ChoraLine App.

Please [click here](#) for a 'step by step' guide on installing theApp.

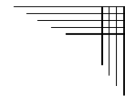


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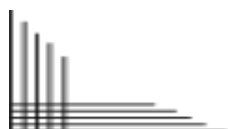


## Key Dates for 2024-25 season



<b>Tuesday 3rd September 7.45pm</b>	First rehearsal of the season.
<b>Tuesday 10th September 7.45pm</b>	Open Rehearsal
<b>Tuesday 24th September 8.45pm</b>	AGM
<b>Tuesday 29th October</b>	No rehearsal - half term
<b>Saturday 16th November</b>	Concert - Faure Requiem, Parry Blessed Pair of sirens, Britten - Rejoice in the Lamb; Afternoon rehearsal
<b>Saturday 14th December</b>	Christmas Concert. Afternoon rehearsal.
<b>Tuesday 7th January 7.45pm</b>	Rehearsals resume
<b>Tuesday 14th January 7.45pm</b>	Open rehearsal
<b>Tuesday 18th February</b>	No rehearsal - half term
<b>Saturday 5th April</b>	Concert - Bach St Matthew Passion. Afternoon rehearsal.
<b>Tuesday 29th April 7.45pm</b>	Rehearsals resume
<b>Tuesday 6th May 7.45pm</b>	Open rehearsal
<b>Tuesday 27th May</b>	No rehearsal - half term
<b>Saturday 5th July</b>	Summer Concert Afternoon rehearsal.

All rehearsals and concerts are currently expected to take place in St John the Baptist Church Royston (Royston Parish Church).



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