

Welcome to the 2017 edition of Chester Music Society's Newsletter. The Celebrity concert section continues to engage performers of exceptional ability and the Club provides a showcase for local Chester talent, but sadly 2016 saw the demise of our Youth Choirs. More about this on page 2: we make no apology for giving this sad event a whole page. Inevitably this newsletter is looking back to the events of 2016, but even so we should not miss this opportunity to remind you not only about the rest of the 2016–17 season, but show you something of the 2017–18 season as well. It's all on the back page. You can keep up to date with all our activities by being included in our regular updates by email. Just email 'Subscribe' to info@chestermusicsociety.org.uk or Telephone 01244 383455. Our web site (www.chestermusicsociety.org.uk) also provides a wealth of information on our activities and programmes.

Chester Music Society stalwart wins Lady Hilary Groves Prize

In our last Newsletter we reported that in May 2015 the Lord Mayor of Chester had presented Lila Hallett with the Outstanding Contribution Award in the first ever Community and Voluntary Arts Awards at Chester Town Hall. Now she's done it again! Making Music, the National organisation for amateur music societies, has announced that Lila Hallett is the recipient of its Lady Hilary Groves Prize for 2016. Awarded to one individual in the UK each year, the Lady Hilary Groves Award is presented to a member nominated by their group for their outstanding contribution to music in the community.

Lila has worked as programme secretary and committee member for Chester Music Society for 32 years and devoted her life to participating in and involving others in the field of music, particularly young people. Now in her 80s, Lila has been a piano teacher and accompanist since she was 17, as well as a music teacher in four Chester schools for 20 years and a lifelong accompanist to musicians for concerts and examinations, and for ballet classes.

Over the years, she has organised numerous musical events for fund raising activities for charities such as The British Heart Foundation, Friends of the Phil and the Breast Care Unit at the Countess of Chester Hospital.

Lila was instrumental, as accompanist and supporter, in helping to establish the Youth Choir in 1988, and in proposing our Chester Music Society Young Musician of Chester competition.

Numerous individuals and organisations in Chester owe much to Lila's support, and the Lady Hilary Groves Prize recognises her enormous contribution to Chester's amateur music scene over many decades.

John Gough, senior tutor in piano at Royal Northern College of Music said:

In my view music in Chester and district would have been much poorer without Lila's considerable and unstinting input and foresight.

Lila was presented with her award at the Celebrity concert on 14 December by Mr Peris Roberts, Making Music Board Member (below).



The Club Gala concert

will be back at St Mary's this year. The date for your diaries is Wednesday 10 May 2017 when we will have the pleasure of hearing our good friend John Gough playing Rachmaninov, Ravel and Haydn. A superb evening is in prospect. Tickets, which include wine and light refreshments, will be £15 and are available from Mick Clarke: (07494 559468) or mick@mpfclarke.me.uk



Youth Choirs David Woods writes:

It had been decided, after a great deal of heart-searching, to call time on the Youth Choirs and finish at the end of the 2016 season. This was a difficult decision but one that the committee thought long and hard about.

The Youth Choir started in 1988 and Preludes in 1994; both as a response to the lack of opportunity to sing or play an instrument in schools. We wanted to promote a lifelong enjoyment of music and singing, develop qualities of teamwork self-confidence and leadership and to aim for excellence in performance. At its peak we had approaching 100 members across both choirs but over the years access to singing and instrument tuition both in and out of schools has increased significantly and now most schools have choirs and offer opportunities to learn instruments.

As a result the numbers in both choirs had dropped significantly over the years. In earlier days we were able to undertake overseas tours and enter competitions up and down the country; this was an important part of the choir's development as well as being very enjoyable and great fun. Our smaller numbers had made this impossible.

However, it was business as usual for the 2015-16 season. In April we were joined by the Waite Collective, an a capella folk group, for our Spring Concert. This was a great evening. One of the members of the Waite Collective had been in the Youth Choir and sings with the Alumni and had one child in Preludes and one in the Youth Choir.

In July our final concert was a celebration of the 28 years of the youth choirs and was quite an emotional event with much sadness but some great memories. We invited lots of people who had been involved in the choir over the years and had reflections from several who gave their memories in between some great singing. It is important to acknowledge the work of the choir team who over 28 years supported the choir. The work they did was captured by Katrina Turner at the farewell concert when she said, *"The choir is so much more than the musical direction of Jaqueline, Martin, John, Helen, Ross, Steph, Rhiannon, Katie and Helena. It is more than the brilliant accompaniment of Lila, Christian, Steve, Will, Anne and Fiona. It is even more than the hundreds of young people who have sung with these choirs over the years, and worn polo shirts, red ribbons, green ribbons, blue ribbons, blouses, silver flowers and of course not to forget the turquoise scarf. I think they speak for all of us when they said 'we have enjoyed every note of every song'."*

For the final concert we commissioned Louie McIver to write a piece to perform entitled Laughing Song, with words by William Blake: a first at the last.

The concert finished with an invitation to everyone who had been involved in the choir to come up and sing one final song; something that had been in the repertoire throughout the 28 years; something that everyone who had been in the choir would have sung at some time: "The Lord Bless you and keep you" seemed to be the most appropriate as a final song.

To summarise: between 1988 and 2016 the Youth Choirs recorded two cd's and commissioned work from Bob Chilcott, Phillip Cooke, Brian Hughes and Ronald Corp; they undertook 6 overseas tours and 23 residential week ends in North Wales; they had 5 conductors (plus two who took on the role on a temporary basis); they had 6 different accompanists. The Preludes had 4 conductors from 1992 and 2016 and just one accompanist, Fiona Rushforth. There were numerous people involved in the committee and providing the day to day support to the smooth running of the choir. The last four standing were Liz Young, Wendy Hollifield, Pat Dayananda and I. Thanks are due to all the people who over the years worked so selflessly to make the choir work. A particular note of thanks to Pat Dayananda who stepped up to offer support at the first rehearsal on the 29th September 1988 and remained until the end.



Although sad to finish, we can be proud that Chester Music Society enabled hundreds of young people to learn to sing and develop a life-long love of music.

The Last Hurrah



Choir The choir had a bumper year, beginning with Walton's Belshazzar's Feast, coupled with Elgar. Then in May we put together a mixed evening of varied items; from early 18th century (Pergolesi) to the 20th in the shape of composer Morten Lauridsen (known on the other side of the pond as America's answer to John Rutter) whose Lux Eterna turned out to be most approachable. 2016 also saw another successful tour, this year to Dubrovnik, with a group of 47, of whom 37 were singers, flying from Manchester to take advantage of the hot weather and the hotel pool, and with plenty of time to tour Dubrovnik Old Town.

Their first concert was at St Nikolai Church in Cavtat, a 40 minute coach ride from Dubrovnik along the beautiful coast road: a pretty coastal town with pavement cafes and boats moored along the front.

Tuesday saw them travelling along the coast to Kotor in Montenegro, another attractive walled town with interesting history, with free time for a short tour and visits to the good local restaurants. Our concert in beautiful St Tryphon's Church was well attended.

The final concert was in Dubrovnik Cathedral that evening, again well attended, followed by a stroll through the town to a restaurant outside the walls for a farewell meal.

The music programme was compiled from the May concert in Chester: Mozart, Pergolesi, Haydn and Lauridsen: from a Spring evening to hot summer evenings.

Back home in Chester the choir put together a superb performance of Messiah in November with a highly appreciative audience of almost 700, our highest number for an autumn concert for over ten years. Christmas Crackers over two evenings in December rounded off a successful year with a very welcome return visit by Ian McMillan whose brand of Yorkshire humour went down well with an audience of over 1250 (again, the highest for many years).

In May we elected a new Chairman. Clive Cooper writes:

"There is a well-rehearsed maxim: never volunteer for anything. Well, I did.

"I believe that anything one does voluntarily should be fun and enjoyable. In leading the Choir, I therefore endeavour to sustain and develop the quality of performance and professionalism which led to my joining its ranks in the first place; within an atmosphere of wit and humour between the exigencies of practice and performance."



Ian McMillan

Celebrity Concerts Celebs' programme notes celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Society in early 2016

with a historical review of the artists over the 70 years. In the early years there were a remarkable number of vocal soloists and vocal concerts. Subsequently, the piano, string quartets and trios dominated plus solo violin and cello. The list of artists was amazingly impressive with recitals by Kathleen Ferrier, Moura Lympny, the Amadeus Quartet, Vladimir Ashkenazi and literally scores of other celebrity artists.

Over the year just ended we had return visits by Jessie Ann Richardson, cello and later, Sarah Jane Bradley and John Lenehan came again to play viola and piano music by Brahms, Bach and Benjamin Dale.

February found us in French mode with Pascal and Ami Rogé playing a programme of music based on "Satie et les six". Pascal is world famous for his interpretation of Satie's works and we were treated to *Gnossiennes* as well as *Gymnopédies*, plus duets with his wife. We are sure he will remember playing here as he wanted to take the piano home with him, but also because he had to return the following day from the Lake District to collect his music....

And there were two piano trios. We finally had the Gould piano trio in March, having tried to engage them the previous year. Odysseus were new to us, but gave an old favourite - Dvorak's *Dumky* trio plus works by Mozart and Fauré.

We had a wind quintet in December. The Aurora Ensemble excelled verbally and musically with excerpts from Walton's *Façade Suite* and a variety of other works. As part of our outreach programme they also gave a stimulating workshop for 90 children at Eccleston Primary school.



Aurora at Eccleston

Club The club section had another full and varied programme of concerts over the last year starting in January with the now regular performance by winners of the Young Musicians Competition. (More on this on page 4.)

We also had visits from King's School, the Jan Modelski Orchestras, Queens Young Voices, Chester Youth Symphony Orchestra, Wrexham County Youth Choir and finally in November the City of Chester Brass Band.

Of these the Wrexham County Youth Choir and City of Chester Brass Band both stood out, presenting us with a fine evening of music with performances of the highest standard.

In April, the gala concert had a very successful return to Eaton Park after several years break. It was well attended, with an audience of nearly one hundred enjoying an excellent evening of music from the Arlington String Quartet, who are all members of the Hallé Orchestra. This was followed by a sumptuous buffet with wine and soft drinks.

Young Musician Competition

The Club season began in January with the presentation by David Woods of awards to the winners and runners-up of the Competition held in November 2015. This once again proved to demonstrate the wonderful ability of young musicians from our area. All the artists were outstanding. Particularly of note were Imogen Royce on flute, William Bracken and Louie McIver both on piano. Louie is also a talented composer in the making.

Then on to November 2016 for the next Competition.....

Typical! You wait ages for an oboe, and then four come along at once. Twenty one young performers, ranging in age from 10 to 18 performed on a wide range of instruments (including the four oboes) and showed an astonishing level of skill and musicality

We dispensed with the vocal section this year, and divided the entrants into three instrumental classes dependent on age and the grade levels they had attained, ranging from Grade 3 up to Grade 8.

At level 1, up to age 12, a number of outstanding youngsters gave interesting performances, including Thea Phillips-Kayes, Kirsten Attfiels and Edward Dobbs. Runner up was flautist Ella Scott with (another) flautist, Jeremy Bailey, the eventual winner. Jeremy only began playing the flute in September 2015 and had progressed astonishingly rapidly to Grade 4 with Distinction by September, only a couple of months before the competition.

We had nine competitors in Group 2 with 13 year-old Jessica Ellis, oboe, coming in second place. Winner of the group was 15-year-old Holly Clark, playing the cornet.

The five contestants in the senior group, Grade 8 and up to age 18, inevitably showed a high degree of maturity and performance skills. Louie McIver was particularly noteworthy on the piano, but second place was taken by eighteen year-old Maria McNamee. Originally from Northern Ireland, where she began

learning the harp at age 9, Maria is now studying at Chethams.

The overall winner of the Group, and of the title of Chester Young Musician, was last year's runner-up, 17 year-old William Bracken who gave virtuoso performances of Bach, Haydn and Prokofiev.

All six of these winners and runners up will be in concert again for the Society on 18 January. Do come along – you are in for a treat.



L toR: David Woods, Louie McIver, William Bracken, Jamie Read, Adrian Hutson-Hill, Imogen Royce



EVENTS FOR 2017

This listing of events for calendar 2017 is by no means complete. For more information, and to be added to the circulation for next season's brochure, just email info@chestermusicsociety.org.uk

11 January	CELEBRITY	Daniel Shelvey baritone, with Dylan Perrez piano
18 January	CLUB	Winners and runners up of the Chester Young Musician Competition (see above)
1 February	CLUB	Dale Culliford cello, accompanied by Catherine Riley
8 February	CELEBRITY	Alessandro Taverna piano
18 February	WORKSHOP	Open Choir Day singing Verdi <i>Requiem</i>
1 March	CLUB	Abbey Gate College Choir and Musicians
8 March	CELEBRITY	The Escher String Quartet
25 March	CHOIR	Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams
8 April	WORKSHOP	Chamber music workshop at Abbey Gate College
26 April	CLUB	Bethan Griffiths harp and Charlotte Thomas flute
10 May	CLUB	Gala concert with John Gough piano
20 May	CHOIR	<i>The French Connection</i> : Gounod, Fauré and Franck
11 October	CELEBRITY	Fujita Piano Trio
8 November	CELEBRITY	The Heath String Quartet
25 November	CHOIR	A Night at the Opera (<i>Part II</i>)
13 December	CELEBRITY	Early Music Group <i>Passacaglia</i>
20,21 December	CHOIR	Christmas Concerts with our guest, Rev Richard Coles

Chester Music Society

President:

Terry Waite CBE

Vice Presidents:

The Lord Bishop of Chester

The Lord Mayor of Chester

The Dean of Chester

Lord Lyndon Harrison

M J P Cooke Esq

J I Morris Esq

Martin Roscoe Esq

Chester Music Society

A Company limited by guarantee

Registered in England No 4793760

Registered Charity No 1099094

Registered Office:

UHY Hacker Young, St John's Chambers, Love Street, Chester CH1 1QN

www.chestermusicsociety.org.uk

