

DERBYSHIRE SINGERS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Tuesday 30 April 2024

Musical Director's / Principal Conductor's Report for
2022-23 (49th Season)

Having re-established the choir in the previous season, this was the year to get back to some semblance of 'normality'.

'**Messiah**', so familiar, yet so easy to underestimate, saw our return to oratorio performance complete with four stunning soloists (Rowan Pierce, soprano, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, mezzo, Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks, tenor and Tim Mirfin, bass) and a wonderful orchestra (Derbyshire Sinfonia). 'Messiah' is a big sing and we certainly had to build up our stamina and vocal agility to cope with all those semiquavers and the frequently high tessitura. The hard work paid off and the audience clearly enjoyed it – resulting in a standing ovation.

Yet again venue problems arose, resulting in the cancellation of our **Christmas Cracker**, hugely disappointing for choir and audience alike.

A very generous legacy by the late Alan Medlock (a member of the bass section of Derbyshire Singers from 1985 – 2018) enabled oratorio performance to continue in our March concert. **Mozart's Requiem** is a classic in every sense. His short 'Veni Sancte Spiritus' (written when he was just 12 years old), opened the programme, leading into the popular **4th Horn Concerto** played superbly by soloist Alexi Watkins. The choir achieved drama and dance, once again ably accompanied by the Derbyshire Sinfonia. Soloists Alison Rose, soprano, Beth Moxon, mezzo, Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks, tenor and Tim Mirfin, bass, once again delighted everybody.

Our season finished in July in the beautiful surroundings of St Mary's Church, Cromford – cramped for the choir, but wonderful acoustics and a capacity audience. Repertoire for '**On the Lighter Side**' brought very different challenges with rapid changes of mood, jazzy rhythms and intricate harmonies. Not easy, but successful in the end! Who can forget the incredible performances of Lizzie Ball (violin) and James Pearson (piano) of Ronnie Scott's fame, especially in James's superb arrangement of the West Side Story medley?

When Covid finally caught up with us in May 2023 Jonathan Francis stepped in at very short notice to take two rehearsals for the July programme. The progress made by the choir under his direction was clear to hear. Thank you, Jonathan.

Our aim has always been to give top quality performances whilst experiencing a variety of musical styles. Choir members have been extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work with truly international soloists and ensembles. The positive comments about the choir's performances received from such talented musicians indicate our hard work pays off.

We cannot prepare for such performances without the support and assistance of a highly talented rehearsal accompanist. Amanda – thank you! We truly appreciate all your preparation and hard work.

We also thank all the Trustees for all the work they do behind the scenes. The tasks are many and varied – too many to list here – but the choir could not function without these being dealt with. Thank you one and all.

We are grateful to everyone who has helped in any other ways such as hosting soloists, giving lifts to and from stations, helping to set up / strike down on concert days – whatever. Again, we are appreciative.

Keep up the good work!

Lynne and Joe. April 2024