

# YOUR FESTIVAL NEWS

Winter / Spring 2020

**Welcome** to *Your Festival News*, the newsletter of the Leith Hill Musical Festival which we will be producing twice a year. In the past the Festival used to produce a newsletter which both kept singers informed but also made them feel more involved in the Festival so this is continuing the tradition. If there is anything you would like to see included in future please do let us know by emailing [fundraising@lhmf.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@lhmf.org.uk) **Helen Mardell, Kate Ryder and Rosemary Bailey** ■

## THE LEITH HILL MUSICAL FESTIVAL IS CHANGING!

*If you sing in one of our choirs you will know about the changes to the April Festival days, but the Festival is changing in so many other ways, moving it forward to both meet the needs of the singers but also to bring it more up to date.*

*The Festival is being rebranded by an external company to include a new website and logo ready for 2021. Rebranding will make all Festival flyers, adverts, programmes and other communications identifiable, cohesive and attractive. More of an identity for our Festival!*

*Our new Friends and Patrons Scheme is outlined below and we do hope existing members will continue to support it, and new members will come forward as it is an important source of income to us.*

*The organisation of the Festival is changing to make it more fit for purpose following a Working Group looking into the current committee structure. Changes will be implemented soon, and we have several vacancies we are looking to fill! Please contact [mandychoir@gmail.com](mailto:mandychoir@gmail.com) if you are interested.* ■

## WANTED!

- Volunteers are needed in a wide range of roles to help in the running of the Festival.
- For instance if you have a couple of hours to spare over the Festival period you could help out by stewarding during a morning competition or selling programmes prior to a performance.
- We also need volunteers who can help throughout the year with the Festival organisation in a specific role. For instance we need a volunteer to help source music and distribute it to choirs. We also need someone to contact local papers, magazines and other organisations so they can publicise the Festival.
- There are lots of other ways you can help the Festival and all roles will be supported by the Festival Organiser. For more information email [mandychoir@gmail.com](mailto:mandychoir@gmail.com)

## How Can I Buy my Concert Tickets?

There are four ways to buy tickets for any of the concerts:

1. Bach B Minor Mass rehearsals: 45 minutes before the start on 19th January, 9th February and 23rd February.
2. Combined rehearsals: before the start of each rehearsal and during breaks.
3. From the Festival's own Box Office using the booking forms provided to all choirs or download from our website at: [www.lhmf.org.uk/events-and-tickets/buy-tickets](http://www.lhmf.org.uk/events-and-tickets/buy-tickets) or email [boxoffice@lhmf.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@lhmf.org.uk), phone 01403 240093.
4. From Dorking Halls, pop in, buy online at: [www.dorkinghalls.co.uk/booking-tickets](http://www.dorkinghalls.co.uk/booking-tickets) or phone 01306 881717.

Jonathan Willcocks on....,



## the Combined Rehearsals

As we approach the New Year, on the horizon towards the end of January is the first of the three 'Combined Rehearsals' which are at the heart of my work in partnership with the conductors of all the Leith Hill Musical Festival choirs. Our joint

aim is to enable the choirs to come together with the greatest musical confidence and authority to perform the terrific repertoire that we have planned for the three Festival concerts in April.

The first stage of this musical journey actually began last summer, when I prepared a copy of each vocal score with markings for conductors to incorporate into their rehearsals. This hopefully will enable the essential initial note-learning to be achieved by each choir. In the first combined rehearsal, my aim is always to cover all the choral music that we will be

performing, so that every singer can get a feel for the strengths and challenges of the music, and experience the fun of singing within a large combined choir. By the second rehearsal in February, I am hoping for strong general confidence with the notes, so that we can concentrate on musical interpretation and style. And then in the third rehearsal in March we can give a final polish to each piece, ensuring real choral confidence and vitality when we meet for the musical feast in April.

Of course the value of these sessions is totally dependent on maximum attendance by all our singers, so I hope that all three combined rehearsal dates are now firmly in everyone's diaries! A key element to each 'Combined' day is our much-loved and valued Festival accompanist Alan, who gives such authoritative pianistic support. And the final piece in the jigsaw? When I get home after six hours of intense rehearsing with the three Divisions of choirs, a large Jack Daniels on ice needs to be waiting...!! ■

## First Bach B Minor Mass Rehearsal

In an exciting change to the regular March rotation of concerts the Bach B Minor Mass was chosen by Jonathan Willcocks who, when asked why he chose it said "This work would be one of my Desert Island disc choices. If I had to choose just one choral piece to work on for the rest of my life, it would be this one."

180 singers, both from the Festival choirs and independents were signed in and issued music efficiently as always by Gill Moir and her team of helpers. We were singing from the 'Old Novello' edition which is out of print, but one happy tenor told me of the successful internet search for a second hand copy which his daughter gave him for Christmas.

From the start of the day there was a good buzz coming from happy, cheerful people who had come because, "I love singing Bach" and "It is a fantastic piece of music – overwhelming!" and "It is nice to sing something new." Some singers knew the work well, "This is about the 10th time I have sung this work. I am still learning it and still trying to get some parts of it right". For others it was their first sight of the music; one bass commented tongue in cheek, "Sight reading Bach is always fun" and from the back of the alto 2s, was heard, "We were close

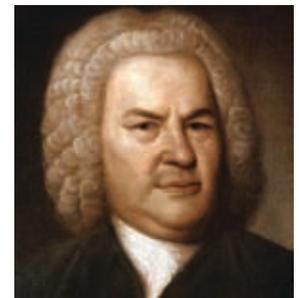
that time – only 2 beats behind!" and later "Well done, we got the last note at the right time".

At end of morning Jonathan promised us, that although this rehearsal had been fast paced, Ben Costello and Jean Douglas Tutt would be going over the piece thoroughly in the weekly rehearsals.

As for his comments on the day, Jonathan told us that he was 'encouraged'! Festival Organiser, Mandy Begg, summarised for all of us that the day had gone wonderfully well. A big thank you to Jonathan and all involved in making this a successful first rehearsal.

If you wish that you had put your name down to sing the Bach B Minor Mass, you could take up one of the few remaining spaces, but you must move fast and email Gill Moir, [gillmoir@btinternet.com](mailto:gillmoir@btinternet.com) All the details are on the LHMF website.

If you are not singing, this is a concert not to be missed, it will be fabulous! Details of ticket sales are elsewhere in the newsletter. ■



### HAVE A LISTEN:

Have you listened to *Soul Music* on BBC Radio 4? One piece of music, either classical or pop, is featured each week with the programme taking a look at either how it was written or the effect it had on contributors. It's on at 9am and 9.30pm on Wednesday or there are over 100 previous episodes available on podcast including *Faure's Requiem* featuring David Willcocks. To find the podcasts go to BBC Sounds, or just google 'Soul Music Podcasts'.

## DO YOU HAVE TIME ON YOUR HANDS, COULD YOU BE THE NEXT LHMFC CHAIRMAN OR FESTIVAL ORGANISER?

The Festival will be looking for a new **Chairman** when Graham Aslet steps down in October 2020. The Chairman is the public face of the Festival and at this exciting time of change in its structure will lead the officers and volunteers in its ongoing development. You will work closely with the Festival Conductor, the other professional musicians, the Festival Organiser and other volunteers as well as chair meetings. For more information contact Graham by emailing [graham.aslet@btinternet.com](mailto:graham.aslet@btinternet.com).

The Festival will also be looking for a **Festival Organiser** to replace Mandy Begg. Over the last few years Mandy has done a lot of work to streamline the Festival to reduce the work involved. Supported by many experienced volunteers, you will oversee the organisation of all aspects of the Festival Days and rehearsals, as well as liaising with the conductor, performers and choirs. An **Assistant Festival Organiser** is also being sought to help, particularly on concert days. Interested? email [mandychoir@gmail.com](mailto:mandychoir@gmail.com) for more information.

Obviously only a brief description of both roles can be given here, for more information please contact Graham or Mandy for a more detailed discussion.

### CHANGES TO THE FRIENDS AND PATRONS SCHEME

The Friends and Patrons scheme has always been an important part of the Festival which allows those that are able to support us financially to do so. However it has remained unchanged for many years so as part of the exciting changes being made to the Festival the scheme will be updated from this year. The proposed changes are:

As a Friend of the Festival and member of LHMFC you will have priority booking, a free Festival programme, free entry to the Festival competition mornings and (if wished) be listed in the programmes. To be a Friend you will donate a minimum of £60 a year.

Our Patrons will be major supporters of the Festival. Donors of £500 will sponsor a named soloist of their choice, or for £200, sponsor a named orchestral player. They will receive all of the benefits listed for Friends and will be invited for interval drinks with the Trustees.

Administration will be streamlined, so that all communication will be by email and all payments by bank transfer or standing order. To find out more about this new scheme, email Helen Mardell [helen.mardell@gmail.com](mailto:helen.mardell@gmail.com) ■

*Welcome to....*

**Richard Robbins** the  
new Music Director at  
Bookham

**and Jamie Sperling**  
new Musical Director at  
Buckland & Betchworth

## COME AND SING

This year's Come and Sing will be on Saturday 10th October. Jonathan Willcocks will be our leader and conductor and we will be singing John Rutter's *Feel the Spirit*. More details to follow.

# News from the Choirs and their members

## **Rosemary Scott, Buckland & Betchworth Choral Society**

Who could have thought that singing with Buckland could take me almost to the four corners of the earth: I certainly didn't. But it has, and I am forever grateful for the number of doors that opened for me when I started singing with that humble LHMF village choir in 1989. I knew I could sing, but had never had a music lesson in my life and the intricacies of musical notation were a total mystery to me. Music theory is still not my strongest suit, but I get by and have sung in famous venues throughout the UK and Europe, and as far afield as Beijing, Hawaii, Cape Town and the Seychelles. And have sung for auditioned choirs such as the Brighton Festival Chorus, the English Arts Chorale and now the Philharmonia Chorus.

Since 1989, I have sung in every Festival with (now) Buckland & Betchworth and occasionally with Horsley and Bookham. And I'm hugely disappointed not to be able to join my friends on stage for the Sea Symphony next April, but guess what I shall be doing! Singing the Sea Symphony in Prague... but never fear, I'll be back in 2021.

Rosemary Scott ■

## **Holmbury St Mary Choral Society**

We had an enjoyable Christmas Concert in Holmbury St Mary Church under the baton of guest conductor, Sarah Burston, who stood in during the September term for our regular conductor, Amy Bebbington. Amy will be back with us this coming term and we are looking forward to performing at the Festival in April. The choir is excited to see how the new arrangements for the Festival work out.

Our Summer Concert will be held on Sunday, 26th July in St James's Church, Abinger Common – more details anon. Margaret Yule ■

## **Leatherhead Choral Society**

One of Leatherhead Choral Society's more unusual social activities in 2019 was our involvement in the Song for Shelter project. This ambitious project was designed to raise money and generate publicity to support the charity's work in combatting homelessness.

The project was based around a song, 'A Place to Call Home' specially written by the composer Alex Woolf. In the first instance choirs were asked to video themselves singing the song and post it on the project's JustGiving page. This in itself was a lot of fun – we don't often see

what we look like singing and it was a bit of an eye-opener, but it's a catchy song and not hard to sing, so we managed to look, and sound, as though we knew what we were doing!

The culmination of the project was that we got to spend an exciting afternoon at the London Coliseum on 30th October along with many hundreds of other singers belting out the song for a commercial recording. It was particularly thrilling to work with the ENO orchestra and chorus and three amazing soloists, Sir Bryn Terfel, Lesley Garrett and Alice Coote on the recording. Before the recording Alice gave an emotional address about the experience of homelessness within her own family. It was a memorable, and moving, day. At the time of writing the recording has not been released so we haven't heard it but it should sound amazing. We certainly hope it helps raise awareness of the homelessness crisis. Ian Assersohn ■

## **Oxshott Choral Society**

Oxshott rose to the challenge of singing J S Bach's Magnificat for the first half of their sell out Christmas Concert. Their spirited performance captured the joy of this brilliant work and was greatly enjoyed by the audience. In the second half the audience joined the choir in singing well known carols as well as listening to our soloists performing solos and a rousing rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus by the choir.

A big thank you goes to our soloists and organists and of course to Val Beynon our conductor for planning a challenging programme for the choir and bringing the whole concert together superbly.

The Charity chosen for this year's concert was the Elmbridge Community Link, a local charity two of our members are involved with, which works to enrich the lives of young people and adults with autism and learning disabilities. The concert made £1620 for the charity which was a brilliant result.

Mike Newman ■



Oxshott Choral Society concert rehearsal