



# Ashford Choral Society

**Celebrating over 160 years**

*Conductor: Paul Young - Deputy Conductor and Accompanist: Matthew Raisbeck*

*Chairman: Alan Paterson - Secretary: Virginia Brown*

**Newsletter 4 – June 2019**

## **WELCOME TO THE NEW SEASON - PAUL YOUNG**

I am very much looking forward to working with Ashford Choral Society as Conductor this coming September. It almost goes without saying that stepping into the breach left by Mark Deller's 50-year tenure is a daunting one and the contribution that he has made to the Society over the years has been enormous. Nevertheless, I will do what I can to continue the great work he has done and I hope to maintain the musical strength of the Society.

The recognition of the joy that can come from group music-making for those of all abilities would seem to be paramount. Balancing programmes that present the familiar with less well-known works, being able to celebrate the repertoire of the great masters whilst providing stimulating challenge should be at the heart of any conductor's aims and I fervently hope that members will enjoy and be rewarded by the music we shall be singing in future concerts.

To that end, our first concert unites two great composers of different eras and styles - Handel and Britten. Handel's Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day using text by John Dryden was written for that feast day in 1739 and marked the beginning of his theatre season of 1739-40. This was to be significant in that Handel was to present music entirely in the English language in the oratorio manner. It came about because of the recent competition of rival Italian opera companies, which had caused him to divert from presenting Italian opera himself. Various musical instruments are portrayed in the solo movements for soprano and tenor, whilst the choruses are characteristically full of Handel's melodic gift and sense of drama.

Benjamin Britten's Saint Nicolas ideally brings together a number of different vocal and instrumental forces, employing alongside the main chorus a gallery choir, three 'pickled boy' soloists, strings, piano duet and percussion as well as the central character of Nicolas (tenor). There is the expectation too of audience participation in the hymns that mark the end of the 'halves' of the work, showing Britten's ideologically community-based stance. Like Handel, Britten had a gift for drama, wrote his own setting dedicated to Saint Cecilia and indeed was born on November 22nd.

The editions we will be using are:

- *Handel Ode - New Novello edition edited by Donald Burrows*
- *Britten St Nicolas - Boosey & Hawkes*

These will be available for hire in the usual way in September at our first rehearsal on Tuesday 3rd September or if you would like to buy your own copies, Virginia will send details with the Programme in late summer. You can also learn your own part for either of these works using [choralia.net](http://choralia.net) and [cyberbass.com](http://cyberbass.com).

Another good source is [johnfletchermusic.org](http://johnfletchermusic.org), but for this site you would need to register and pay £10 to access music in copyright (for example the Britten; the Handel has free access).

I very much look forward to seeing you all in September - by which time you will have received the full and exciting programme for 2019/20 from Virginia.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTERING

Each rehearsal begins at 7.30pm and ends at approximately 9.15pm. There is usually a break of about ten minutes enabling singers to stretch their legs, time to draw the raffle and give out any notices – it is also important for registering your attendance. Registers are kept as a record of singers' attendance at rehearsals. One member of each voice section is responsible for marking the register, making new members welcome and ensuring their names are added and contact details given.

On each register there is a column marked "Concert". It is vital that members let the keeper of the register know whether or not they are taking part in a concert at least 3 weeks before the event so that names can be listed in the printed programme and numbers of singers taking part can be given to the conductor.

If a singer has been unable to attend 75% of the rehearsals, they need to ask the conductor's permission to sing in the concert.

At the end of each rehearsal the registers are collected by Mary Waite who checks them and is responsible for collating the number of singers for each concert.

## FAREWELL PARTY FOR MARK DELLER

A farewell party for Mark took place in Wye Church on the evening of Friday May 10th - scene of many ACS concerts conducted by Mark (as well as his work with Stour Music choir and Wye Church Choir).



The enthusiastic performance of "Mrs. Beeton's Household Management - a music-hall guide to Victorian living" (written by Mark's friend Michael Hurd in 1983) was very well received. This piece was commissioned

for the Petersfield Festival - of which Mark was Festival Director. Rachel Cook also sang a comic song, in character as Florence Foster Jenkins - but mercifully much of her solo was drowned out by the bell ringers!



John Tattersfield wrote a brilliant farewell song for Mark - with words sung to the tune of "I am the very model of a modern major general" by Gilbert and Sullivan from "Pirates of Penzance".

*"He is the very model of a musical condu-u-ctor  
Of every kind of choral work a veteran instru-u-ctor"*

John sang the three solo verses and the choruses were performed with gusto, lots of rolled "rrrrs" and facial expressions, by the Society's Committee, accompanied of course by Matthew. The last verse encapsulated what everyone at the party felt:



*"And now his fifty years  
are up, goodbye to dear  
Mark De-e-ller,  
His lucky singers never  
could have had a finer  
fe-e-ller."*

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