

TOWCESTER

CHORAL SOCIETY

May 2008

The Editor's Bit.....

This is the final newsletter of yet another successful year in the life of TCS. We have performed a great variety of music throughout the year supported by the hard-working committee, accompanied by our talented and long-suffering pianist and led by our hard-working MD, Mary.

Some members have moved on and others have recently joined, and some have taken part in choral days and outings. The Choral trip to Madeira, which a number of the choir took part in, was much enjoyed as you will see from the photos and accounts in this newsletter.

However, the ladies seem to be the centre for fun—do we really make that much noise Ray (see the story further on) and are the tall hats in the photo on this page, really a good idea for a new outfit?

Have a lovely summer, everyone!

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A suggestion for a new choir outfit.....?



How many members of TCS does it take to change a light-bulb?!?! Roy to the rescue and we all enjoyed the show!

Thanks to Carol for snapping this one with her mobile phone camera.

The Choir in Madeira



THE "END PRODUCT"

After all the hard work of finding the right choir, working on the tuning and blend of the voice, making new friends and maybe even helping to run the choir we come to the end product - the performance.

As with everything else concerning public appearances the need to look professional is important and, as we all know, this can be harder than one would imagine! Pre-performance nerves probably affect each and every one of us but when there are 50+ choir members it becomes even more of a challenge, as we all have differing personalities which can react in opposing ways to the same situation. Some, as I do, want to be quiet, others become hyper-active and want to chatter and others need to rush to the loo! There are as many versions of these dreadful "nerves" as there are performers and only you will know how you are affected. Unfortunately, once the curtain has gone up (or, in our case, we are seated) and we are in full view of the audience, we have to show a united and calm face to the people who have paid to hear us sing. This doesn't preclude smiling, of course, but chatting and waving to Auntie Flo in row 5 is definitely not allowed!

You are all well aware that I like our concerts to have an "informal" feel to them but that takes as much effort as the more formal performances. Making the audience feel relaxed and comfortable is important and relatively easy at our concerts in Towcester as it is our home town and people know us, but elsewhere we have to work harder. Like the swan, everything has to appear serene and under control even if we are paddling like mad under the water!

Our faces become very important in performance, especially as we hold music and therefore cannot move about too much. They are the only way to show our feelings and, as with all stage work, because we are distanced from the audience, the emotions have to be slightly more exaggerated or they will go unnoticed. Naturally, this principle applies in reverse if there are any problems! If we have done our job properly there shouldn't be any, of course, but the best laid plans etc.... and if anything does go wrong the audience should not be able to tell from the look of panic or horror confronting them. Cheerful smiles (albeit through gritted teeth) are the order of the day!

The times between the items in a concert are also "working" spaces for us to get ourselves in the right frame of mind for what we are about to sing. The verbal meanderings of the conductor are there for you to make use of and also to try to set the scene for the following piece. A priceless diamond in the wrong setting may well be overlooked and a song deserves the same care. As long as the choir and audience are in the same mood all will work well. Can you imagine the discomfort of singing "In Paradisum" to an audience waiting to hear "Roll out the barrel" or vice versa?

Aural music is vibration and the energy produced by it is an incredible thing. Spiritually, the conclusion of a musical performance should be greeted with complete silence until the resonance dies down but we all know how hard it is not to applaud when a piece has been performed well and has moved us. In India they show their appreciation by waving their hands in space, thus making no sound. How lovely - I wonder what our audience in the Town Hall would say if we suggested such a thing?! However, we, as performers, should keep music and bodies completely still at the end of a song until the conductor indicates otherwise. Hopefully, she will remember to do so!

When one sits down and looks at all the different aspects of singing in a choir (and I have only touched on a few of them over the past year) it is amazing just how much effort goes into producing the performance that becomes "The End Product". For TCS it is probably more difficult than for a choir with a repertoire that they have built up over the years. We cannot repeat songs too often as we sing regularly to the same audiences and because of this we don't have the luxury of being able to polish the songs as we would like to. However, we can, and should, always give value for money to our audiences. This means hard-work for all of us but, hopefully, some fun along the way too!

Good Luck with the Spring Concert!

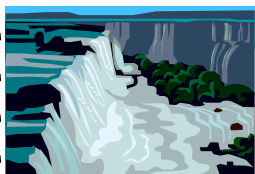
Mary

Make your own HOT SPOT

A long suffering M.D., addressing the choir one evening, said she had been to the Niagara Falls recently. They are the world's largest waterfalls and their sound and intensity is so high that even 20 supersonic planes passing by could not be heard.

"Now!" she said, "May I request the Sopranos to keep quiet so that we can hear the Niagara Falls?!"

Ray Dines



Having returned home absolutely frozen from yet another rehearsal in a freezing church and as my feet and legs started to thaw out I began to think how to stop this happening!!

My body was layered with Damart, jumpers, cardigans, coats and scarves, with my hands thrust into my pockets at every opportunity (gloves prevent page turning!) The thick tights, socks then long warm-lined boots did little to stop my feet freezing!!

WHAT COULD I DO??

The cold was in the stone flags of the floor and had been there for hundreds of years! I knew it was a church and I knew it was Easter but I needed a miracle! Tossing and turning in bed that night the only thing I could think of was how to get my feet warm! I finally fell asleep.

But when I woke in the morning, UREKA – I knew just what to do! Into the attic, scissors at the ready.....

That evening, standing on the same spot as the previous evening, my feet were as warm as toast! No Easter miracle, just a brain-wave to stop the cold from seeping up from the flagstones – A SMALL PIECE OF FOAM-BACKED CARPET!! Easy to roll up and fit into my music case. So now do your worst you freezing churches, my feet are warm!

Ann Whatton

Diary Dates

02 June 08	Rehearsal in Town hall	7.30 pm
03 June 08	Spring concert in Town Hall	7.30 pm
09 June 08	Rehearsal Roade Parish Church	7.30 pm
10 June 08	Spring Concert Roade Parish Church	7.30 pm
21 June 08	Midsummer Music, St Lawrence Church	
01 July 08	AGM(motions in to Lynne by 10th June)	7.30 pm
13 July 08	Armed Man, Albert Hall	
15 Nov 08	Messiah, Albert Hall	
15 / 16 Dec 08	Xmas Concert, Town Hall	

From the Archives

A CHORAL CONCERT

in the

TOWN HALL, TOWCESTER

on

WEDNESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 1958

Soloists:

Joan Gascoyne (Soprano)

Graeme Dreadon (Tenor)

At the pianos: Dorothy Hulbert and Georgina Pace

Conductor: Keith Ward

As our Spring concert approaches, I thought you might be interested to know what you would have been singing had you been a member 50 years ago. One or two of you were members then, but as far as I can tell from the performers listed in the programme, were not singing in this concert. If the programme is inaccurate, please let me know.

The programme seems to have been a little more serious than today's, or, at least, pretensions to seriousness, with works by Schubert, Haydn, Handel, Dvorak, Purcell and others with a classical bent. The tone is lightened, or lowered, depending on your point of view, by a few Gilbert & Sullivan numbers, as well as by arrangements of *The oak and the ash* and *Oranges and lemons*.

The programme was as follows:

Choir:	Three operatic choruses Crown him ruler The foolish lover squanders All men acclaim thee	Handel	
Solos:	Graeme Dreadon I'll sail upon the dog-star Silent worship Piercing eyes Sailor's song	Purcell Handel Haydn Haydn	
Solos:	Joan Gascoyne (accompanied by Mr George Miller) Art thou troubled? The ballad monger Songs my mother taught me The lass with the delicate air	Handel Martin Dvorak Arne	
Choir:	When the budding bloom of May (Haddon Hall) Strange adventure (Yeoman of the Guard) A regular royal queen (Gondoliers)		Sullivan Sullivan Sullivan
Solos:	Graeme Dreadon Limehouse reach The maiden blush Oh that it were so Orpheus with his lute	Head Quilter Bridge Vaughan Williams	
Choir:	The oak and the ash Oranges and lemons	Arr. Wadely Arr. Wadely	

INTERVAL

Choir: The Song of Miriam Schubert
Soloist: Joan Gascoyne

The National Anthem Arr. Elgar

According to the press review, "Both soloists and the choir achieved a high standard and the concert reached the same level as in recent years." Joan Gascoyne's tone is described as "perfect" and her renditions of *Art thou troubled?* and *The lass with the delicate air* "made the deepest impression. New Zealand tenor Graeme Dreadon was "well received". The choir, on the other hand, "did well", although it "shone" in the second half as accompanist to Miss Gascoyne. I can't help feeling that there are some rather backhanded compliments in this.

Does anyone know anything about Miss Joan Gascoyne or Mr Graeme Dreadon? Or about any other of the dramatic personae, come to that? If so, I shall be pleased to know.

Margaret Hawkins. Archivist

Towcester Choral Society

TOWCESTER CHORAL SOCIETY

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(Soprano) (Tenor)

At the Pianos : Dorothy Hulbert and Georgina Pearce

Conductor : Keith Ward

PROGRAMME : : SIXPENCE

The members of the society wish to thank all those friends who have helped in the arrangements for this Concert.

B. Denny, Printer, Towcester.