



NEWSLETTER 2006/2007

Number 33

September 2006

Welcome back, everyone, and a particular welcome to all new members.

You will notice from the above heading that the “logo” for the society has changed somewhat. With the advent of a new conductor and the creation of a website, the committee decided that it was a good time to change the appearance of the society’s image. The old logo had done sterling work over the past decade or so, but was looking a bit tired. It therefore needed revamping, and the decision was taken to replace it completely. We hope everyone will like the new design. When used “as an original” it appears as a colour called “teal” (a bluey sort of green) but it can also be used in monochrome for items such as this which have to be copied.

I hope everyone has managed to have a look at the new Website. Peter Crossley has very kindly taken on the management of it - an enormous task as we try to create an attractive, informative set of pages. It is very much in its infancy, but should improve as we manage to add information to it. The address, in case you have not yet found it, is www.wcos.org.uk.

After our first full season with Matthew Owens at the helm, we are all settling down to knowing what is expected of us. We are extremely fortunate to have such a talented conductor in charge, and the standard of our performance is improving all the time under his guidance.

We were also very lucky to have Cathy Lamb, who was Cathedral Acting Sub-Organist, as our accompanist for most of last year. Cathy has now moved to Christchurch Priory in Dorset, and we all wish her well in her new venture. Samuel Hudson has now joined the Cathedral staff as Senior Organ Scholar, and we are delighted that he has agreed to bring his considerable talents to the job of acting as our accompanist for the coming year.

We held an inaugural Post-Concert Social after the spring concert. It seemed to be popular, and everyone who attended appreciated the chance of having a chat over a glass of wine - we seem to spend so much time singing and so little time getting to know our neighbours that this made a pleasant change. It also gave the Conductor a chance to give his comments on the concert two days after its performance. We have therefore booked Vicars’ Hall for the evenings of Monday 4 December 2006 and Monday 26 March 2007. We hope that everyone will put these dates in their diaries, as it would be good to make this a regular part of our programme.

New members are welcome to join us at any time of year. They should ensure that they acquire a copy of the letter for new members which sets out the rules for joining, subscription rates, and so on. Together with this newsletter, it should answer most questions they may have.

May I reiterate our gratitude to our Patrons and friends for all the support and encouragement they give us. We should be unable to continue without it, and we hope that everyone will continue to enjoy attending our concerts, details of which appear on pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter. We shall hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Jane James (Hon. Secretary)

Verdi Requiem 2008

Plans are still afoot to join with the choir of the University of West of England to perform the Verdi *Requiem* in the Spring of 2008. Performances are planned for 26 April in Colston Hall, Bristol, conducted by Martin Freke, and 3 May in Wells under the baton of Matthew Owens.

The plan is to use this concert as our spring concert, rehearsing as usual, but with two extra Mondays in the summer term (i.e. 14 and 21 April). At this stage we do not have details of how many rehearsals will take place in Bristol.

Future Annual Programmes

Changes are being made to the programme of events taking place around Christmas in the Cathedral. The dates we have been offered for the next two years (2/12/06, 1/12/07) cannot be changed, but we must carefully consider what we are to do from 2008 onwards.

In future the Choristers will be performing *Messiah* on the first Saturday in December each year, i.e. one week after our concert. For some time we have been making a significant loss on the December concerts. When one takes into account Candlelight Concerts and various Carol Services (including the Boxing Day service which is to be moved to the week before Christmas) this may have a disastrous impact on our audience figures.

It seems that we have a three-way choice:

1. We leave the date as it is. If the impact of the extra Christmas events is as bad as we think, then we shall have to increase membership subscriptions to help cover our losses. (Each £1000 lost is equal to £10 per member increased subs!)
2. We could move the concert earlier, in order to get out of the pre-Christmas rush. Because of half term and other major events, this would probably mean moving it to mid - late October. One way to accomplish this would be to rehearse during June (say four or five rehearsals) breaking the back of the note-bashing. We could then have our normal summer break, returning in September for a further six rehearsals before the concert, which could be held just before half-term. We could then use the second half of the Christmas term to start preparing for the spring concert. This would make about sixteen rehearsals for the March concert, giving us the opportunity to work on more complex pieces.
3. We could move the concert into the spring term. As the chairs are removed from the nave of the Cathedral during January each year and replaced on Candlemas (2 February), this would mean having our concert at the end of the first week in February. This would give us our normal term in the autumn, followed by about four rehearsals in the spring term. We would therefore have a longer rehearsal time for a more complex work for the February concert.

After the concert we would then have a break for a week for half-term, returning to start work on the spring/summer concert for about five weeks before the Easter break, followed by five or six weeks at the beginning of the summer term. This would give us ten or eleven rehearsals during which we could aim for a simpler, less demanding work in May.

At the back of this newsletter you will find a form (yes, another one!) on which we would ask you to indicate which of the above possibilities you prefer. We realise that two of them mean singing for about a month in the summer - a very popular idea for many people, though perhaps not for all. There will be an opportunity to put questions to the Chairman at the AGM, and we shall then ask that ballot forms be returned by the following week, 9 October. This should give everyone a chance to have a good think about it all.

FROM THE CONDUCTOR

This past season has been a challenging but enjoyable one. The Brahms *German Requiem* is one of the finest works in the repertoire and the choir rose to the challenge of its demanding vocal writing. It was an exhausting evening but well worth it. I am pleased that we sang the work in the language after which it is named, despite the challenges in so doing. I would like to pay particular tribute to the tenor section which was smaller than usual – for a variety of reasons – and which had no extra assistance. The Brahms *Alto Rhapsody* is a beautiful and haunting work, and one which isn't heard enough in concert, so I was pleased that we were able to include this in the December programme along with the more familiar *Variations on a theme of Haydn*.

The spring saw two works that the WCOS had never performed before: Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. For these works it was good to work with the staff and students of Wells Cathedral School. For a first foray into singing in Hebrew, I think we made a quite a good job of the Bernstein. The Orff got a wonderful reaction from the large audience and, I thought, was great fun to perform.

I think that we should look at the challenges for the years ahead and seek ways forward: the main ones, as far as I am concerned, are to recruit more tenors and basses (particularly the former) and to make even more of an effort to encourage friends, family and colleagues to attend our concerts. With so much hard work going into rehearsals and preparation for the concerts, it is a pity to see the cathedral anything but full.

I am greatly looking forward to next season's music-making and to seeing you all in September, refreshed and raring to go.

Matthew Owens

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to another season. Last year we performed works in German, Middle German with some Latin and Hebrew, this year it's all English - with only notes and timing to worry about it should be easy!

The outcome of the Charity Concert is difficult to assess. It was successful in giving us some more weeks of singing, and the opportunity to meet members of other choirs. It also raised a very pleasing sum of £1500 for the Young Carers' Project. However as a fund raising event for WCOS it was nowhere near as good. Unfortunately, the unfamiliar format and limited rehearsal time led to a performance well below our usual standards.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee for their efforts over the year. Gill Tucker, who worked so hard on the early note bashing for the Charity Concert, is taking a couple of years' break from the Society, so we will require at least one new Committee member. Jenny Lunnon is prepared to continue for one more year as Subscription Secretary (unless anyone offers to take over this year). The Chairman will be happy to stand down in favour of any other candidate, and will definitely be resigning from office at the end of this season in the absence of any volunteers.

Finally many thanks to Sam Hudson our new accompanist, and of course to Matthew our musical director. I am sure they will both be invited to continue in those positions at the AGM.

Dennis Johnson

FROM THE HON. TREASURER

Despite a disappointing financial result for our first concert, the overall reserves of the Society have increased by about £1,300 during the year to just over £15,000. (Of course, all figures carry the usual Treasurer's caveat that 'all figures are approximate, as the accounts have not yet been closed at the time of going to print'.) Our Brahms concert made a loss of £7,800 (which filled the apprentice treasurer with gloom!). However the *Carmina Burana* concert was relatively inexpensive to stage and with a good audience we made a loss of only £500. These large events really do shape the financial state of the Society, irrespective of the relatively small changes to other sources of income, such as membership numbers, patronage and donations.

The Charity Concert in June raised over £800 for the Society while the Somerset Young Carers Project cheque, augmented by their retiring collection, reached a laudable £1,500. We have received a letter expressing their great appreciation but we hope to have a representative with us early in the Autumn term for a more formal presentation, perhaps with publicity for both of us. The money raised for the Society during this concert was about half that raised during the previous Charity Concert in June 03, although there are differences in the way the money was distributed so the figures should not be directly compared.

Whilst our reserves look healthy, the margin of safety is putting some constraints on our selection of future works. We have to be mindful of the size of orchestra, number of soloists and the popularity of the work. It is not always possible to predict the response of the public on the day and it does not take many losses like the one we experienced earlier in the year to reduce our reserves below a critical limit.

The Society is most grateful to those members who regularly donate beyond their subscriptions by making a Standing Order of £10 per month over the year. The number of members who make this contribution has increased this year but there is space for even greater growth. We are always looking for support of the local businesses, such as Chalmers HB this year, which either make a significant sponsorship commitment or make smaller contributions for specific concerts. I would like to hear from any members who have contacts with a local firm which may be prepared to participate in these schemes.

David Cooke

FROM THE PATRONS' SECRETARY

Very many thanks to all Patrons who continue to support our Society. This year the numbers have remained fairly static, and it would be wonderful if everyone could encourage a friend to become a Patron for next year. Two friends, of course, entitle you to a complimentary ticket!

The incentive of Direct Priority Booking (and a 10% discount) on all tickets ordered directly from the Society applies to Patrons only. The forms for this, which are at the back of this newsletter, must be sent to Jane James, not to the Cathedral Booking Office, by the date shown.

May I remind those who pay by cheque or cash that the subscription of £10.00 is now due. The majority of Patrons now pay by Banker's Order and, if anyone else wants to change to this method, please ask me for the appropriate form. I think that everyone is aware of the benefits of signing the Gift Aid declaration form if they are a UK tax payer. Please let me know if you have not yet done this - the Society receives 28p in every pound from the Inland Revenue.

Finally, may I wish you all a very happy and enjoyable season and thank you once again for your loyal support. We could not manage without it!

Sue Gould

WELLS CATHEDRAL ORATORIO SOCIETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE AS AT 11 SEPTEMBER 2006

Members may contact officers by phone, letter or email at the addresses shown below:

Chairman:	Dennis Johnson (bass)	01934 712656
	Bockingford House, Westham, Wedmore BS28 4UX	
	email: <i>dennis@bockingford.fsnet.co.uk</i>	
Hon. Treasurer:	David Cooke (bass)	01934 742768
	Pilgrim's Rest, Cliff Street, Cheddar BS27 3PN	
	email: <i>david.cookebs27@btopenworld.com</i>	
Hon. Secretary:	Mrs Jane James (alto)	01458 831099
	8 Rowley Road, Glastonbury BA6 8HU	
	email: <i>janejames.wcos@yahoo.co.uk</i>	
Librarians:	Mrs Maureen Pickford (soprano) & Alan Rayfield (bass)	
Programmes:	Mrs Jane Mayers (soprano)	
Publicity:	Mrs Elizabeth May (alto)	
Subscriptions' Secretary:	Mrs Jennie Lunnon (soprano)	
Members' Secretary:	Mrs Pamela Pye (soprano)	
Patrons' Secretary:	Mrs Sue Gould (soprano)	
Fundraising Co-ordinator:	Mrs Gill Tucker (alto)	
Gift Aid Secretary:	Francis Dewar (bass)	
Making Music Rep.:	Robin Duys (alto)	

Gill Tucker is taking a break from the Society, and therefore retires from the Committee at the AGM on 2 October 2006. We need to elect a replacement with immediate effect. We should like this post to include organising advertising for the programmes, a job which has not been covered since the illness of Peter Walker. **Please be an active member** and volunteer or complete the nomination form at the back of this newsletter. Nominations must be received by the Hon Secretary on or before 25 September 2006 (i.e. one week before the AGM, as per the Constitution accepted December 1988).

After ten years' service, Jennie Lunnon plans to retire from the Committee at the AGM in September 2007. We shall therefore be seeking a Subscription Secretary from that time.

Sadly, Dennis Johnson has also informed the membership that owing to outside pressures he wishes to retire from the post of Chairman from September 2007. We are hoping that a willing member will take up the position of "Shadow Chairman" as soon as possible, in order to effect a smooth transition. Dennis has worked extremely hard for the Society and we shall miss his quiet but effective manner. If anyone is interested in learning more about the post, please do come forward and have a word with Dennis.

Music Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee has been hard at work this year, trying to plan concerts which will be enjoyable for members to learn and perform, as well as being attractive to audiences and reasonably priced from the point of view of orchestra and soloists. The programme for 2006-2007 has been discussed at great length, both in Sub-committee and Committee, before being finalised, and the outcome appears over the page.

Once again, there is a Suggestions Form at the back of this newsletter. Works considered do not have to be long enough to make up a complete concert; we do not have to have sung them before; or they may be old favourites which we have not performed for some time. **Please do fill in the form** and let Dennis, David or Jane have it as soon as possible. Discussions are well under way for 2008 (see p. 2), and we shall have to start thinking about 2009 before long.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR SEASON 2006 - 2007

The change of rehearsal times instigated last season seems to be working well. We certainly seem to have more time for practising which can only be a good thing when one realises that, in an average "term", we only have about ten Monday rehearsals.

All rehearsals will therefore continue to take place in Wells Cathedral on Monday nights starting at 7.30pm and finishing at 9.30pm, unless indicated below.

The door (north-west) is opened at, though not before, 7.00pm. Please arrive in good time and help with chairs.

MENDELSSOHN'S ELIJAH - 2 DECEMBER 2006

Monday 11 September	Beginning of term
Monday 2 October	AGM 7.00pm sharp, followed by rehearsal
Monday 23 October	Half term - no rehearsal
Monday 30 October	Half term - no rehearsal
Friday 1 December	Rehearsal - 7.30pm
Saturday 2 December	Rehearsal - 12.55pm - 3.55pm (with break) Concert 7.00pm
Monday 4 December	Social get-together in Vicars' Hall at 7.30pm

PURCELL & HANDEL CONCERT - 24 MARCH 2007

Monday 8 January	Beginning of term
Monday 19 February	Half term - no rehearsal <u>(N.B. changed date)</u>
Friday 23 March	Rehearsal - 7.30pm
Saturday 24 March	Rehearsal - 12.55pm - 3.55pm (with break) Concert 7pm
Monday 26 March	Social get-together in Vicars' Hall at 7.30pm

COME AND SING - HAYDN'S NELSON MASS - SATURDAY 9 JUNE 2007

The Society has decided to hold a "Come and Sing Day" on 9th June 2007, in aid of choir funds. Robin Duys has kindly taken on the organisation of the day, which should be enormous fun as well as helping to raise money for the Society.

We have decided to work on Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. Some members will remember performing this in 2001, others will never have sung it - either way, don't be put off! The idea is that we should have fun working on the music throughout the day, with a "sing-through" with soloists in front of a small audience at the end of the day. The cost of a singing ticket for the day will be £10, and the audience will be charged £1 for the privilege of listening to the outcome!

St Cuthbert's Church, Wells, has been booked for the day, with the ladies of the church providing coffee and tea at appropriate times. Matthew Owens has agreed to take the day, with Sam Hudson accompanying us as normal.

We hope that everyone in the Society will come and sing, as well as inviting - and encouraging - their friends to join us. So, please, put it in your diaries now!

Application forms will be available from the start of the new choir year, and further details will be available from Mrs Sue Gould, 18 Tor Street, Wells, BA5 2US.

BOOKING DATES 2006 - 2007

Saturday 2 December 2006 at 7.00pm

MENDELSSOHN - *ELIJAH*

Sarum Chamber Orchestra

Soprano: Angharad Gruffydd Jones

Alto: Arlene Rolph

Tenor: Christopher Watson

Baritone: Quentin Hayes

Booking Dates:

Patrons' Direct Priority Booking	<u>must</u> be received by 25 October 2006 in order to qualify for 10% discount	(via Hon. Secretary)
Patrons' & Postal Booking	from Monday 30 October 2006	(Cathedral Box Office only)
General Public	from Monday 6 November 2006	(Cathedral & TIC, Wells)

Saturday 24 March 2007 at 7.00pm

HANDEL - *CORONATION ANTHEMS*

PURCELL - *COME, YE SONS OF ART*

BACH - *CANTATA 51*

Soprano: Susan Hamilton

Alto: Stephen Taylor

Booking Dates:

Patrons' Direct Priority Booking	<u>must</u> be received by 14 February 2007 in order to qualify for 10% discount	(via Hon. Secretary)
Patrons' & Postal Booking	from Monday 19 February 2007	(Cathedral Box Office only)
General Public	from Monday 26 March 2007	(Cathedral & TIC, Wells)

New Ticketing procedure from January 2007.

We have just heard from the Cathedral Administration that, "with effect from January 2007 the Cathedral is adopting a colour block seating plan for concerts instead of individual reserved seat tickets being sold. This will be true for all concerts booked in the Cathedral over the next two years."

We have therefore had to revise our ticket prices to take into account the division of the Cathedral into six colour blocks. For the foreseeable future, therefore, the front nave will comprise gold tickets at £18 for rows A to H, and green tickets at £16 for rows J to S. The rear nave will comprise red tickets at £14 for rows U to CC and blue ones at £12 for rows DD to KK. The side aisles will be divided into brown tickets at £10 for the front half and white tickets at £8 for the remainder.

We hope this will not cause too much confusion for Patrons using the Direct Priority Booking Scheme. It will simply be a case of ordering tickets of the colour which covers the rows you prefer. Then, as far as we can tell at the moment, the tickets of that colour will entitle you to sit anywhere within that colour block. The 10% discount, reflected on the order forms, will still apply. If you have any queries about the Patrons' booking system, please don't hesitate to contact Jane James (details on page 8).

PATRONS' DIRECT PRIORITY BOOKING SCHEME

(as from September 2005)

The system of Direct Priority Booking for Patrons seems to be working extremely well, and we plan to continue this for the coming year. We believe that it gives our Patrons the best chance of acquiring tickets for their preferred seats, as well as letting them take advantage of a 10% discount on the price of any tickets they may buy by this system. This should all still apply under the new Cathedral ticketing procedure. We shall be able to give patrons clearer details in January.

Patrons only may use the Direct Priority Booking Scheme. Ticket orders should be given or sent directly to the Hon. Secretary of the Society, Mrs Jane James, and **MUST** be received by the advertised closing date for Direct Priority Booking for the concert concerned. We do have to be strict about this, as the rest of the tickets have to be handed to the Box Office immediately after this closing date.

Patrons also qualify for a 10% discount on Direct Priority ticket orders only. A cheque in full payment, made out to "Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society" should be enclosed, together with a stamped, addressed envelope. Please use the forms opposite.

Tickets may be applied for at any time in advance of the closing date for each concert, but will not be sent out until after that date. They will, however, be dealt with strictly in order of receipt. Those patrons who prefer to book tickets for both concerts at once will have their order held carefully until booking opens for the spring concert.

For the December concert, if Patrons have any preference for where they sit in the Cathedral, they should make a note of this on their booking form. We shall do our best to cater for any specific requests, though it is obviously not always possible to please everyone!

USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR BOOKING

Hon Secretary: Mrs Jane James
 8 Rowley Road
 Glastonbury BA6 8HU
 Tel. 01458 831099
 email: janejames.wcos@yahoo.co.uk

Cathedral Booking Office: Open 2.00pm - 4.30pm Monday to Saturday
 West Cloister
 Wells BA5 2PA
 Tel. 01749 832201
 (if booking by Credit card, please add £1)
 (cheques should be made payable to
 "Wells Cathedral Publications Ltd.")

Tourist Information Centre: Open 10.00am - 4.00pm daily
 Market Place,
 Wells BA5 2RB
 Tel. 01749 672552

FOR ALL POSTAL BOOKINGS PLEASE INCLUDE A STAMPED, ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

**WELLS CATHEDRAL ORATORIO SOCIETY
PATRONS' DIRECT PRIORITY BOOKING APPLICATION**

To Mrs Jane James, 8 Rowley Road, Glastonbury BA6 8HU

From: Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode: Tel:

I confirm that I am a Patron of WCOS and that I wish to order tickets for the "Elijah" Concert on

2 December 2006: tickets @ £14.40 = £

..... tickets @ £10.80 = £

I enclose a cheque made payable to WCOS in the total amount of: £

Please return together with cheque (and SAE if you wish tickets to be posted out) to the above address by 25 October 2006

**WELLS CATHEDRAL ORATORIO SOCIETY
PATRONS' DIRECT PRIORITY BOOKING APPLICATION**

To Mrs Jane James, 8 Rowley Road, Glastonbury BA6 8HU

From: Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode: Tel:

I confirm that I am a Patron of WCOS and that I wish to order tickets for the Spring Concert on

24 March 2007: Gold £18 tickets (Row A - H) @ £16.20 = £

..... Green £16 tickets (Row J - S) @ £14.40 = £

..... Red £14 tickets (Row U - CC) @ £12.60 = £

..... Blue £12 tickets (Row DD - KK) @ £10.80 = £

I enclose a cheque made payable to WCOS in the total amount of: £

Please return together with cheque (and SAE if you wish tickets to be posted out) to the above address by 14 February 2007.

N.B. Tickets may be ordered for both concerts at the same time. Any advance bookings received for the spring concert will be held over until booking opens in February 2007.

THE WELLS CATHEDRAL ORATORIO SOCIETY.

Nomination for the Committee: Date:

Proposer: Second:

Signature of nominee: Date:

Nomination for the Committee: Date:

Proposer: Second:

Signature of nominee: Date:

Please hand this form to the Hon. Secretary, Jane James, on or before 25 September 2006

SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKS TO BE PERFORMED AT FUTURE CONCERTS

Composer/s:

Name of work/s:

Suggested by: Voice:

Please hand this form to Dennis Johnson or Jane James Date:

POSSIBLE FUTURE ANNUAL PROGRAMME CHANGES

Name:

Option 1 - leave the December concert date as it is, with the possibility that this will adversely affect income and therefore result in increased subscriptions.

Yes No Possible

Option 2 - move the Christmas concert to mid - late October, with the proviso that we shall have to rehearse for approximately four or five weeks during June.

Yes No Possible

Option 3 - move the December concert to the end of the first week in February, with the proviso that the spring concert will need to move to mid - late May.

Yes No Possible

Please hand this form to Dennis Johnson or Jane James on Monday 9 October 2006