



NEWSLETTER

2008 - 2009

Number 35

1 September 2008

www.wcos.org.uk

WELLS CATHEDRAL ORATORIO SOCIETY NEWS

COMMITTEE AS AT 1 SEPTEMBER 2008 (Members may contact officers by phone, letter or email as shown)

Chairman:	Robin Walker (tenor) 01749 674004 Park House, 3 Lovers Walk, Wells BA5 2QL email: <i>robkaywalker@tiscali.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) 01749 674800 13 Penn Close, Wells BA5 3JQ email: <i>janejames.wcos@yahoo.co.uk</i>
Librarians:	Mrs Maureen Pickford (sop) & Alan Rayfield (bass)
Programmes:	Mrs Pam Booth (soprano)
Publicity:	Mrs Elizabeth May (alto)
Subscriptions' Secretary:	Dennis Johnson (bass)
Members' Secretary:	Mrs Pamela Pye (soprano)
Patrons' Secretary:	Mrs Sue Gould (soprano)
Making Music Rep.:	Robin Duys (alto)
Programme advertising:	Nancy McGiveron (soprano)

I have been Hon. Secretary since 2004, and have had enormous satisfaction from working with Matthew, Robin, Dennis, and David. However, of late I have been finding my life getting more and more involved with other matters, and I feel I can no longer give the necessary commitment to the choir. I therefore intend to retire from the Committee at the forthcoming AGM. Frank Fisher, tenor, has said that he is willing to be nominated in my stead. I am sure he will be a very efficient Secretary, and I shall, of course, be here to help him find his feet during the hand-over period. As regards singing in the choir, I shall certainly continue to do this, especially with two of Bach's best works and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* to look forward to!

Sue Gould has also decided that she must retire from her role as Patrons' Secretary so we need to replace her. If you are interested, please get in touch with Sue on 673764, and she will give you more details of what is a most rewarding job.

Please be an active member and volunteer, or complete a nomination form which can be found at the back of this newsletter. Nominations must be received by the Hon Secretary on or before 22 September 2008 (i.e. one week before the AGM, as per the Constitution accepted December 1988).

As always, there is a slip at the back of this newsletter for making suggestions to the Music Sub-Committee for works for future concerts. Various influences have a bearing on what works we can afford to do - size of orchestra, number of soloists, audience appeal, etc. But all suggestions are welcome and discussed.

The Verdi *Requiem* last term proved that the right work can draw an enormous audience - we managed to fill the Cathedral, including half the South Transept (something no Oratorio members can recall happening before). It was enormous fun working with UWE's choir and orchestra, and it was extremely rewarding for some of us to be able to sing a work twice, once in Bristol Cathedral and once at home. Hopefully next time we collaborate with them more of us will be able to sing at the "away match", possibly in Colston Hall, as was originally planned this year.

Next term we are back to the Baroque era in the shape of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. We shall be welcoming the Chameleon Arts Baroque Orchestra back to Wells. It is always a joy to hear a baroque orchestra playing on period instruments. The soloists will be led by Patricia Rozario, a soprano much in demand both on the concert stage and as a recording artist. Louise Tucker (Mrs Stephen Foulkes), will be singing the alto part, and Richard Rowntree will be coming back to Wells as our tenor soloist. Finally Stephen Foulkes will be singing bass. So, all in all, a great line-up of well-known local and international soloists!

The Committee has spent much time lately considering what we should sing in March 2009. Some of you may have heard that we were thinking of performing some extremely modern pieces but, in the end, these were ruled out in favour of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. Matthew Owens is, therefore, deep in thought over his holidays deciding which soloists would be the best for this particular work. So you will have to wait for a while to see who will be singing with us. I'm sure he will find an excellent Angel (mezzo-soprano), Gerontius (tenor) and Priest and Angel of the Agony (bass). Sarum Orchestra will be completing the line-up for this concert.

For December 2009 the concert seemed to choose itself: Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, last performed by the Society in 1991, will be a real thrill to work on and perform.

All of these works will prove quite a challenge to the choir. However, Matthew has improved our singing technique so much during the time he has been with us that I think we all feel quite confident in taking it up. Our only problem, as always, seems to be a shortage of men, particularly tenors. If there are any gentlemen out there who would like to come and join our ranks, do please get in touch.

Sam Hudson, our accompanist and assistant conductor for the last two years, is leaving us, as he comes to the end of his time at the Cathedral. We shall miss him greatly for his patience and sense of humour, as well as his accomplishments on the piano and organ and as a sectional coach. We wish him all the very best for the future, and hope that whatever choral society he ends up directing will appreciate him as much as we have! The new Senior Organ Scholar, Oliver Walker, will take his place next term.

We have been glad of the company of the Cathedral tenor choral scholar, William Blake, who has sung with our tenors this year. He seemed to enjoy singing with us (I suppose it was a very different situation from his normal liturgical singing) and we wish him the very best for the coming years. His replacement in the Cathedral choir, Andrew Hayman, has already agreed to come and sing with us next term.

The "Come & Sing" day this year was quite exciting. The work at St Cuthbert's was meant to have been finished in good time for our day there, but it was not to be, so Matthew conducted from a podium in a sea of rubble. A good day was had by about 150 singers, though, and we thoroughly enjoyed working on the Mozart's *Requiem*. Next year we shall be working on Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man", a piece well-known to Classic FM listeners. Please, everybody, note that the date has had to be changed to Saturday 13 June. Details will, of course, be on our website, www.wcos.org.uk.

Finally, as always, a huge thank-you to Matthew Owens. He takes us from strength to strength with remarkable skill and good humour (most of the time!). I shall miss the close association I have had with him as Secretary, but will enjoy just being an alto for a change. I know you will give the new Secretary lots of support, and I wish him all the very best. I'm sure he will get much satisfaction from the job as I have.

Jane James, Hon. Secretary

Conductor's Report

What a wonderful year! I have, as ever, very much enjoyed working with the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society. You all rose to the varied challenges of the December programme – Mozart, Haydn and Britten in a concert which probably had something for everyone, including audience participation! However, the particular highlight for me this season was Verdi's *Requiem*. What a piece – when can we do it again...?! It was wonderful to have some extra time for this work and I felt that the choir continued on its upward curve in terms of sound, response and overall delivery; many congratulations.

I am greatly looking forward to next season's music-making: Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with period instruments *and* in its original language, German (and remember, unless you were prepared to sing Verdi's *Requiem* in English, you should have no problem with singing Bach's work in German), and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* are both magnificent works. Then there is our "Come & Sing" day which is a wonderful opportunity to spread the word about WCOS and have a rewarding time whilst so doing.

There are still challenges for the years ahead: we need to recruit more tenors and basses (particularly the former) and we still need to make even more of an effort to encourage friends, family and colleagues to attend our concerts so that the attendances can be as rewarding as the Verdi audience was.

My special thanks go to Samuel Hudson as he moves on, and to all the committee for their hard work, especially Jane James who 'retires' as Secretary.

I look forward to seeing you all in September, refreshed and raring to go.

Matthew Owens

From the Chairman

Welcome to the start of a new season. I am pleased to report that the Society is in increasingly good shape both artistically and financially. Our concerts in December 2007 (St Nicolas by Haydn and Britten) and May 2008 (Verdi's requiem) were very well received critically, whilst good audiences helped financially. Our collaboration with UWE in May proved particularly fruitful and enabled us to enjoy the benefits of their orchestral resources at very low cost. Your Committee will be exploring the possibility of a future collaboration with UWE. Overall the Society's financial reserves (see the Treasurer's report) have increased significantly during the year.

I am sure the standard of singing in the choir is going up year by year. Here we must express our enormous gratitude to Matthew, our Musical Director, whose attention to detail, all-round training skills and commitment are having a very beneficial impact. Also a big "Thank you" to Sam Hudson, our accompanist, who is moving on to pastures new. He has been a great support to the choir at the piano and sectional rehearsals, etc. We look forward to working with Oliver Walker who is scheduled to take over from Sam in September.

Behind the scenes no one has worked harder than our Secretary, Jane James. Jane has indicated that she intends to step down as Secretary at the AGM but will remain a singing member. To Jane I extend our grateful thanks for her strong commitment and loyalty to the Society. Also stepping down is Sue Gould, our Patrons' Secretary. Sue has played an invaluable role in maintaining the Society's links with our Patrons. Thank you.

Looking to the new season we have two major works to tackle: Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in December and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in March 2009. Both works will stretch us, but I believe the Society has the capability, enthusiasm and resources to perform these "peaks" of the choral repertoire.

Robin Walker

From the Treasurer

It is a great pleasure at this time of year to be able to declare that this has been a financially successful season for the Society. We have been able to bring our total reserves up to £20,000.

This surplus is due to several factors. Firstly, the popularity and low costs of the *Saint Nicolas* concert realised a comparatively small deficit of £4150. The arrangements with the University of West of England limited our costs for the Verdi which, with the large audience we attracted and the generous sponsorship from John Morton Associates, gave us a performance deficit of only £1181. Our income has also been supplemented by the profits of the "Come & Sing" workshop, which came to nearly £500, the generous monthly contributions from members of the Society and the fund raising social activities. With the income from subscriptions (and Gift Aid tax relief), therefore, our income has exceeded expenditure by £7220. This will provide a safety net which will allow us to do slightly more 'risky' works in terms of orchestral size, soloists and popularity. However the next concert, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, should also provide a further healthy income, without risk.

I would like to thank the members of the society who have signed the Gift Aid clause on the annual membership application. Because of the improved take-up our funds have been boosted, courtesy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, by £500 above last year's figure. It might interest you to know that the much talked about 10% tax band also affects our Gift Aid claim. It was intended that the refund would be reduced by 6p in the £ from 2008 as a result of the removal of this tax band. However the latest agreement is that we shall be 'compensated' for the loss back to the 28p level for the next 3 years.

I would also like to remind members that we have a Corporate Patrons scheme for the local commercial sector of Wells. If any of you can give me a personal introduction to a senior member of any local business I would like to hear from you.

You will all be only too aware of increasing costs everywhere. This includes the cost of orchestras, the hire of the Cathedral and, of course, the honoraria we offer to the professional musicians who enable us to achieve our acclaimed standard of performance. I am sure you would not wish to consume our hard won reserves to pay these costs as this would bring us back to a fragile state, susceptible to a single heavy loss. Conversely, I also believe that increasing the costs of our tickets would have a detrimental effect on the size of our audiences. I shall therefore be recommending to the Committee this year that we also raise our subscriptions in line with the Retail Price Index of 4.3%. This would bring the annual subscription to £63. I hope you will not find this increase diminishes your enjoyment of the Society. I look forward to an equally successful (and enjoyable) season next year.

There will be an opportunity at the AGM to ask me any questions concerning our financial status.

David Cooke

DATES FOR SEASON 2008 - 2009

Rehearsal times are as follows on Monday nights starting at 7.30pm and finishing at 9.30pm. The north-west door is opened at 7.00pm and locked again at 7.40pm. If you know you will have to arrive after this time on a particular day, it is helpful if you can let Jane James know; otherwise, if you do get held up unavoidably, then please make sure you “rattle” the latch loudly - we shall probably hear you!

6 DECEMBER 2009

BACH: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO (Peters edition)

Monday 8 September	Beginning of term
Monday 29 September	AGM <u>7.00pm</u> sharp, followed by rehearsal
Monday 20 October	Half term - rehearsal as normal (thanks to Matthew)
Monday 27 October	Half term - no rehearsal
Friday 5 December	Rehearsal - normal times
Saturday 6 December	Rehearsal 1.00pm - 4.00pm
	Concert 7.00pm
Monday 8 December	Social gathering in Chapter Room 7.30 for 8.00pm

28 MARCH 2009

ELGAR: DREAM OF GERONTIUS

Monday 5 January	Beginning of term
Monday 9 February	Half term - no rehearsal
Friday 27 March	Rehearsal - normal times
Saturday 28 March	Rehearsal 1.00pm - 4.00pm
	Concert 7.00pm
Monday 30 March	Social gathering in Vicars' Hall 7.30 for 8.00pm

COME AND SING SATURDAY 13 JUNE 2009

KARL JENKINS: *The Armed Man - A Mass for Peace* St Cuthbert's Church, Wells, 9.30am - 6.00pm

Please note that the date for this “Come & Sing” day has had to be changed owing to various unavoidable circumstances.

We had an excellent crowd for the day on 17 May this year. About 150 singers squeezed into St Cuthbert's Church and, in spite of the dust and rubble still around the church, we were made to feel welcome by the team at St Cuthbert's. It must have been so frustrating for them that the building works were not finished on time, but they still managed to provide toilets (albeit outside) as well as seating for a small loyal audience of loyal who came to listen to us in the evening. We are most grateful to them.

Do put this date in your diaries now, and encourage your friends and relations to do the same. For a day of this sort to be successful we do need a good turnout, as we had this year, so please advertise it widely by word of mouth. May I also encourage more members of the choir to attend next year. This year it followed hot on the heels of the Verdi, and I think many of us were feeling quite “sung out”. Next year there should be no such problem, so do book your tickets in good time.

5 DECEMBER 2009

BACH: MASS IN B MINOR with Chameleon Arts Baroque Orchestra

Dates will be announced at a later time.

BOOKING DATES 2008 - 2009

Saturday 6 December 2008 at 7.00pm

BACH - CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Chameleon Arts Baroque Orchestra

playing on period instruments

Patricia Rozario - Soprano

Louise Tucker - Alto

Richard Rowntree - Tenor

Stephen Foulkes - Bass

Booking Dates:

Patrons' Direct Priority Booking must be received by Wednesday 8 October 2008
in order to qualify for 10% discount (via Hon. Secretary)

General booking opens Monday 13 October 2008 (Cathedral Shop/
TIC, Wells)

Saturday 28 March 2009 at 7.00pm

ELGAR - DREAM OF GERONTIUS

Sarum Orchestra

Soloists yet to be confirmed

Booking Dates:

Patrons' Direct Priority Booking must be received by Monday 2 February 2009
in order to qualify for 10% discount (via Hon. Secretary)

General booking opens Saturday 7 February 2009 (Cathedral Shop/
TIC, Wells)

USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR BOOKING

Hon Secretary: Mrs Jane James
13 Penn Close, Wells BA5 3JQ
Tel. 01749 674800
email: janejames.wcos@yahoo.co.uk

Cathedral Shop Booking Office: West Cloister, Wells BA5 2PA
Tel. 01749 672773
(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 SAE and daytime telephone number

Dear Patrons,

Many thanks once again for your continuing support, and particularly for updating your subscriptions to the new minimum of £15 per annum so promptly. If anyone has not managed to do this yet, Patrons who pay by Bankers' Order can notify their banks directly, or I have forms if necessary.

The number of Patrons hovers around the one hundred mark. We have gained a few new members and also lost a few who have supported us for many years, but are no longer able to attend the concerts for various reasons.

The Patrons' Direct Priority Booking Scheme is most successful, with 10% discount off all tickets booked directly from the Society. Please remember that if anyone introduces two new Patrons, they will receive a complimentary ticket for our next concert.

I am retiring from the Committee as from the end of September 2008 after five very interesting and enjoyable years as Patrons' Secretary. Apart from the personal contact with Patrons, it has been fascinating to learn more about what is actually involved in keeping the Society going and putting on a concert. I recommend spending some time on the Committee to everyone in the Oratorio Society.

I hope you enjoy the next season, and thank you again for your support as Patrons.

Sue Gould, (Patrons' Secretary)

PATRONS' DIRECT PRIORITY BOOKING SCHEME

We have been working with the coloured ticketing system for nearly two years now. For the most part it has worked well for us, and I think our audience likes the ability to book reserved tickets within the main part of the nave. During this time RPI increases have meant that our costs have gone up substantially. The Committee has discussed whether we should put up the price of all our tickets to help compensate for this, though we do want to keep them as low as possible.

We have decided, therefore, to increase half of the nave prices from next year. You will notice on the Patrons' booking forms opposite that we shall make the whole of the front half of the nave £18 (£16.20 under the scheme) and the whole of the rear half £14 (£12.60 under the scheme) as from the start of 2009. Many of our Patrons will not pay any more for tickets, as many of you buy tickets in the front section of the nave anyway. Prices and colours of side aisle seats will remain unchanged.

We have been asked by the Cathedral Shop to allow them to sell tickets for our concerts earlier than in previous years. Please note, therefore, that the closing dates for Patrons are earlier than they have been in the past. Forms should be given or sent directly to the Hon. Secretary, and MUST be received by the stated closing date. 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 date.

Please feel free to say which row you would prefer to sit in. We cannot guarantee being able to accommodate you in this, but will do our best - and the sooner you send your order in, the more likely you are to get the seats you would prefer. All requests for both concerts are dealt with strictly in order of receipt, and you are welcome to order tickets for both concerts at once if you prefer to do so. If you prefer to order for both concerts, but not to pay for both at once, feel free to send us two separate cheques - we shall hold the one for the March concert back until we deal with the orders in February.

Jane James (Hon. Secretary)