

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Registered as a Charity No. 1026337

Minutes Book

President: Sir David Willcocks, CBE, MC.

Chorus Master: Jeremy Backhouse

Accompanist: Jeremy Filsell



Chairman: John Trigg, 13 Vicarage Gate, Onslow Village, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 5QJ. Tel: 01483 566341/823084

Secretary: Stephen Jepson, Clereholt, Falday Glade, Holmbury St Mary, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6PG. Tel: 01306 730383

Treasurer: Bob Cowell, 1 Penhurst, Shores Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4HP. Tel: 01483 770896

Membership Sec: Noreen Ayton, 51 Garrick Close, Hersham, Walton on Thames, Surrey, KT12 5NZ. Tel: 01932 221918

NOTICE

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the CHOIR

will be held at 7:30pm on Monday June 26th 2000
at Christchurch Hall, Waterden Road, Guildford

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Consideration of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Christchurch, Waterden Road, Guildford on Monday June 28th 1999, and, if agreed as a correct record, to adopt them.
3. Chorus Master's Report
With programme of Concerts for the 2000-2001 Season.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts.
If agreed, the adoption of the Accounts.
6. Election of Officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer & Membership Secretary.
All the retiring Officers are willing to stand for re-election. Other nominations must be received in writing, duly proposed and seconded, including confirmation of the nominee's willingness to stand, by Monday, June 19th 2000.
7. Election of Additional Committee Members: Not more than eight nor less than four additional committee members are to be elected.
The following seven retiring Committee Members are willing to stand for re-election: Jackie Alderton, Marion Arbuckle, Elizabeth-Claire Bazin, Margaret Dentskevich, Laurie James, Susan Ranft, Hilary Trigg. Other nominations must be received in writing, duly proposed and seconded, including confirmation of the nominee's willingness to stand, by Monday, June 19th 2000.
8. Appointment of Chorus Master
Jeremy Backhouse has indicated his willingness to continue.
9. Appointment of Accompanist
Jeremy Filsell has indicated his willingness to continue.
10. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts
Jenny Hasnip has indicated her willingness to continue.
11. Any Other Business
Which must have been notified to, and accepted by, the Chairman, at least 48 hours prior to the Meeting.
12. Date of next AGM

Stephen Jepson, Hon Sec, May 25th 2000

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Choir

Held at Christchurch Hall, Waterden Road, Guildford,

at 7:30pm on Monday June 26th 2000

The following were present at the Meeting.

John Trigg (Chairman), Jeremy Backhouse (Chorus Director), 9 committee members (including the 3 remaining officers) and 66 choir members whose names are on the associated register. Jeremy Filsell (Accompanist) was also present.

Apologies were received from: Elizabeth-Claire Bazin, Mo Kfourri, Francis Worpe, Nora Kennea, Ros Plowright, Val Leggatt, Terry Ellis, Alec Leggatt & Roger Penny.

1. **The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on June 28th 1999** were summarised by the Secretary and taken as read.

Matters arising: Chris Robinson presented a short item on the Choir's Constitution.

The Committee had attempted to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting on June 19th to amend Item 5b of the Choir's Constitution (of June 1999). The Committee's intention had been to seek the Members' approval for the removal of any reference to a time limit on a Chairman's term of office. The current wording limits his/her term "normally" to five years. Due to opposition led by Chris Robinson (who had been responsible for the preparation and wording of the current Constitution), the Committee had agreed to abandon the EGM.

Chris now explained why he believed it was both unnecessary and counter to the wishes of the majority of Members to change the wording of Item 5b. He pointed out that while it was healthy for the Choir to have regular changes of Chairman, the present wording did not preclude a person from serving more than five years in "abnormal" circumstances. Furthermore, the whole business of getting approval from the Charity Commissioners and the Membership for an unnecessary change was time wasting. There should be no change without a compelling reason, and he did not believe that this issue was a compelling one. The real issue was the lack of persons offering themselves for election to the post. His opposition to the change in wording was definitely not a criticism of John Trigg's tenure, which he felt had been admirable in every way. However, John had now served for five years and no one had come forward to give him a break.

While agreeing with Chris about the real issue, Stephen Jepson said that he had proposed the amendment because he (and the majority of the Committee) felt that the inclusion of the word "normally" in clause 5b made nonsense of the five-year limitation. He felt this was inappropriate in a Constitution. However, the Committee appreciated the strength of feeling against the suggested change and had therefore already abandoned the idea.

2. Chairman's Report.

John Trigg referred to the earlier statements regarding the position of Chairman and the fact that he had now been in office for his maximum "normal" term of five years. He pointed out that, not only were there no new nominations for the position of Chairman, but that there were less than the maximum number of nominations (8) for the Committee than the Constitution allowed. He also pointed out that all members of the Committee had spent the preceding months

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Website: <http://www.GuildfordPhilharmonicChoir.org.uk>

E-mail: Chairman...Secretary...Treasurer...Membership...@GuildfordPhilharmonicChoir.org.uk

trying to persuade other Choir members to stand for election. He thought that it would be difficult for a member who was not already serving on the Committee to take over the Chairmanship without gaining that experience first. While he was more than happy to continue doing the Chairman's job (which he enjoyed), he would be very pleased to relinquish the task if someone else was prepared to take it on. He would be very happy indeed to preside over an election made necessary by a plethora of nominees.

In his review of the year, JT paid special tribute to the professionalism and dedication of the "two Jeremies". Not many choirs could boast quite such consistently enjoyable rehearsals, and the special rapport between Jeremy Backhouse's inspired leadership and Jeremy Filsell's superb accompaniment - not to mention the exchange of musical jokes and contrapuntal wit - made the hard work a real pleasure. The recent performance of Belshazzar's Feast had been outstanding, winning rare praise for the Choir from the local paper's critic, and it was a pity that the Civic had not been more crowded for the occasion.

While musical success now seems to be regularly forthcoming, the fact that the Choir remains in a healthy financial position is a tribute to the hard work put in behind the scenes by all the officers and members of the Committee. As well as a tribute to them, JT also paid tribute to those Choir Members who have worked so hard to sell tickets. Without them, we would be singing to an empty hall. Again, he made the point that the selling of tickets is far and away the most important job that members do for the choir - as well as, not apart from, singing.

JT had great pleasure in January meeting with Robin Onslow, David Watts, Jim Miles and Nicola Goold to discuss the Choir's position in relation to the Borough over its activities. This resulted in the Borough's Grant to the choir now being made by the Borough itself (rather than the Philharmonic Office), plus an increase to £3000 for the ensuing year. In addition, the Borough has made various undertakings to the Choir, including better liaison with the Guildford Philharmonic Office, and a commitment to the annual joint concert with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra.

Referring to the "business" side of the individual concerts, JT made the following observations.

The "Creation" concert with the GPO had been a great success and a sell-out. Nicola Goold had been effusive with her praise.

The Mayor's Christmas concert, when JB had been struck down with the flu and Adrian Peacock had taken over at short notice, had had a more mixed reception. There had been difficulties in reconciling the Choir's musical requirements with those of the Guildford Symphony Orchestra, and there had been moments when the GSO seemed to be taking over the direction of the concert entirely. The audience was also down on the previous year. The absence of a "celebrity" presenter was still felt to be an improvement. Nevertheless, the concert was promoted by Guildford Rotary, meaning that the sorely overworked GPC Committee didn't have too much to do for it, and the decision had been made to go ahead again in 2000 with the GSO.

The February concert with the University Choir and Orchestra had been most enjoyable. The experience of working both with Professor Forbes and with younger musicians on the verge of professional careers had been good. It was hoped that there would be similar concerts with UniS in future, although probably not in 2001.

The St Matthew-Passion "Gala" concert with our friends from Freiburg had been the highlight of the year. For a start, the expected substantial financial loss failed to materialise. There had been interesting discussion between Freiburgers and Guildfordians about JB's choice of (essential) cuts, but in the end, all were agreed that the actual performance was a triumph. JT had been able to pass on (last week) lots of "best wishes" from the Freiburger Bachchor and great praise for Jeremy.

Finally, the magnificent performance of Belshazzar's Feast already referred to above. An excellent concert: What a pity about the audience size! Ticket Sales and more Ticket Sales, please.

To summarise, the year had been very successful for the Choir, with almost all comments being positive. The few comments about platform appearance were being worked on. One area which needed addressing was the erratic attendance record of some members at rehearsals, which Jeremy would touch on in his report. A good base from which to look forward to next year.

3. Chorus Director's Report.

The Chorus Director's Report (3 pages, including the draft programme of concerts for 2000-2001) is attached (on file).

4. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Accounts.

The Treasurer's Report and the Accounts for the Year ending April 30th 2000 are attached. The comprehensive nature of these was much appreciated. Adoption of the Report and the Accounts was proposed by Mike Jeffery and seconded by Les Harfield. The motion was carried unopposed.

5. Election of Officers.

Nomination forms had been posted on the Choir Notice Board for the previous three weeks. The retiring individuals were the only persons nominated for the offices of Chairman (John Trigg), Treasurer (Bob Cowell), Secretary (Stephen Jepson) and Membership Secretary (Noreen Ayton). Having been duly proposed and seconded and having expressed their willingness to continue, the Chairman asked the meeting if they should be declared elected. This was carried unopposed.

6. Election of Additional Committee Members.

Nomination forms had been posted on the Choir Notice Board for the previous three weeks. The following individuals, all retiring members, were the only nominees.

Jackie Alderton,	Marion Arbuckle,	Elizabeth-Claire Bazin,	Margaret Dentskevich
Laurie James	Susan Ranft	Hilary Trigg	

All seven had been duly proposed and seconded, and had expressed their willingness to continue. As the Constitution permitted eight Additional Members, the Chairman said he would accept late nominations. As none were forthcoming, he then asked the meeting if all those nominated should be declared elected, and this was carried unopposed.

7. Appointment of Chorus Director.

The re-appointment of Jeremy Backhouse was proposed by John Trigg and carried by acclamation, unopposed.

8. Appointment of Accompanist.

Jeremy Backhouse recommended the re-appointment of Jeremy Filsell. This was immediately carried by acclamation, unopposed.

9. Appointment of an Independent Examiner of Accounts.

Bob Cowell reported that Jenny Filsell had decided not to continue as Independent Examiner, and that he had not yet been able to find someone to replace her. He would welcome suggestions from anybody present as to who might be approached. It was agreed that, once a suitable Examiner had been found, the new Committee should make the appointment.

10. Any other business.

Tony Macklow-Smith had written to the Committee proposing that the Choir "should offer 10 complimentary tickets at each concert to one potential source of future members to such

choirs and schools as Farnham Youth Choir, Guildford Grammar School and High School". He asked that this should be raised at the AGM and the question answered about the Choir's future intentions in the matter of "maintaining our links with the young generation". John Trigg replied that the outgoing Committee had discussed the points TM-S had made and decided to pass the matter forward for discussion by the new Committee. On the subject of free tickets for young people, he commented that similar initiatives of this nature by several other choirs in the past had failed to produce a single extra young concert attendee, let alone a new singing member. The Choir already offered tickets at concessionary rates to all students.

Alan Batterbury asked if the Committee had considered changing the name of the Choir to avoid confusion with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra now that we were no longer officially related. John Trigg briefly explained the history of the separation and replied that the Committee had indeed considered the desirability of a name-change but had concluded that the right course of action would be to retain the name by which we were already known and to which we had a right.

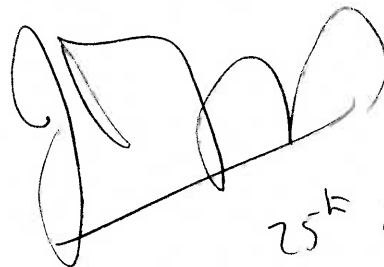
Chris Robinson re-iterated his earlier comments about the need to find a suitable Chairman to replace John Trigg.

Elaine Chapman asked if there was a "job description" for the post. Stephen Jepson replied that one had been produced in Neville Creed's time, but things had changed somewhat since then. He added that he felt that any good Chairman would work to his/her own individual strengths and delegate when it was advantageous to do so. John Trigg certainly did.

Norman Carpenter wondered whether a case could be made for a "professional manager". Hilary Trigg commented that her view was that the present Committee happened to work rather well together as a team, and that additions to the team would be the best way forward.

11. Date of the next AGM.

Monday June 25th 2001.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Trigg', written in a cursive style.

25th June 2001

Annual General Meeting
26 June 2000

*File
Minutes Book
FINAL*

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR
(Registered Charity No.1026337)
REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH APRIL 2000

Report of the Hon. Treasurer

- 1 The Committee and Jenny Filsell, the Independent Examiner, have considered the choir accounts and do not feel that there are any issues, which they are required to bring to the attention of the Charity Commissioners.
- 2 In preparing the accounts I have made every effort to show only income and expenditure for the year in question in order to obtain a clear annual picture. This has resulted in a change in the way the 100 Club is recorded. As a result, there was minimal declared income from the 100 Club since costs and most income for this year was included in last year's accounts. The 2000/2001 account will present a total picture on 100 Club.
- 3 The surplus for the year has increased to £10,533.50, which included £341.84 attributable to 1998/1999 (£10191.66 net). This is attributable to a large number of factors as can be seen on the presented accounts but it is worth noting, in particular, the amount attributable to fundraising and, in particular Jackie Alderton's efforts on car boot sales. We also increased income from tax refunds on covenants.
- 4 The Concert Sub-Account summary is as follows:-

	Income	Expenditure	Total
Chase Concert	7313	8019	(706)
The Creation	1613	1435	178
Bridge/Bruckner	575	650	(75)
St.Matthew Passion	12736	14246	(1510)

The Chase expenditure included a £4,000 donation to Chase. The St.Matthew figures include all hospitality income & expense and publicity costs plus an expected EU grant of €750 (about £455). I was particularly delighted with ticket sales on the St.Matthew Passion, which exceeded £8,500. A fantastic effort which we must maintain. The concert programme therefore had a deficit of £2,113, which has been offset by a grant of £2,090 brought forward from 1998/9. The final figures for Belshazzar (not in the financial year under review) are not yet available but early indications suggest a loss of around £3,700.

- 5 The fundraising sub-account made a profit of £1,245 excluding GBC concert ticket sales.
- 6 Looking to the future, the choir is in a sound financial position with reserves of £36,000 but, with costs generally rising we must always be vigilant. We will no longer receive a grant through the Guildford Philharmonic office but I am glad to

announce that we have received a grant of £3,000 from the Borough for the coming year (it was £1250 last year). We will receive less refund of tax per pound in the future due to the reduction in the standard rate of income tax. There has been a fundamental change in the handling of tax relief to charities. Although existing covenants may continue there is no longer a requirement to sign up for 4 years to benefit the choir. All that is required is for a donor to the choir to sign a declaration agreeing that the choir can claim tax back through Gift Aid on any donations or subscriptions paid. It doesn't cost you a thing so can I ask all members who pay tax or have a tax paying partner to sign a Gift Aid form so that we can maximise our income from the taxman.

I must re-emphasise the need for maximum effort on ticket sales by members. Sales by the Civic box office are a small proportion of sales (20% in the case of St. Matthew).

Finally Jenny Filsell, to who I am grateful for her advice and support, is unable to continue as Independent Examiner and I convey our thanks to her for her hard work.

Bob Cowell, Hon. Treasurer, 26 June 2000

Master Book
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FINAL

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

BALANCE SHEET as at 30th April 2000

	1999 £	2000 £
ASSETS		
Balances at banks		
Barclays High Interest account	5,243.84	352.73
Current account	3,252.48	2,989.92
TSB account	19,033.76	10,152.83
TSB Term account		18,000.00
Sub-total	27,530.08	31,495.48
Cash		
	329.57	329.04
Sub-total	27,859.65	31,824.52
Other assets		
Assets account	625.00	500.00
Prepayments	600.00	600.00
Stock	1,101.94	838.00
Sundry Debtors	2,932.78	3,649.76
Sub-total	5,259.72	5,587.76
TOTAL ASSETS	33,119.37	37,412.28
LIABILITIES		
Accrued 100 Club prizes	(650.00)	0.00
Accrued rehearsal costs	(2,455.00)	(715.00)
Advanced income	(2,437.39)	0.00
Sundry Creditors	(2,074.20)	(661.00)
TOTAL LIABILITIES	(7,616.59)	(1,376.00)
NET ASSETS	25,502.78	36,036.28
FINANCED BY		
Reserve fund brought forward	18,881.14	25,502.78
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year	6,621.64	10,191.66
Additional surplus from 98/99		341.84
Reserve fund carried forward	25,502.78	36,036.28

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th APRIL 2000

1 Accounting Policies

These accounts have been prepared under historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable accounting standards and the charities Statement of Recommended Practice; "Accounting by Charities".

2 Assets

The charity has contributed £2,500 to the Association of Surrey Choirs' purchase of staging for performances in Guildford Cathedral. This investment is now fully written off although the charity as a founding member of the ASC has a continuing interest in the staging.

In this past year, the Broadwood grand piano used for rehearsals was given to the charity by the Guildford Philharmonic Society at a nominal value of £500. It is NOT being depreciated as any depreciation would be immaterial.

3 In future, 100 Club income and liabilities will be recognised in the year to which they relate. The income for the current year (1 May 1999 to 30 April 2000) had already been included as income in the 1999 accounts. Income for the current year therefore appears low in the income/expenditure account.

4 Committee Members' Remuneration

No remuneration directly or indirectly out of the funds of the charity was paid or payable to any committee member or to any person known to be connected with any of them.

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th APRIL 2000

	1998/99	1999/2000
INCOME	£	£
Borough Grant	1500.00	1250.00
Concerts: GBC	706.00	1613.20
Choir	11699.49	21908.61
Donations		3271.05
Freiburg Twinning	2411.50	
Friends		140.00
100 Subscriptions	1088.00	77.00
General fund raising	823.02	1382.30
Sale of goods	517.20	162.24
Gross Interest received	785.41	134.79
Miscellaneous receipts	363.50	865.00
Music sub-account contributions	879.74	601.28
Patrons		590.00
Social events	603.00	729.72
Sponsors	607.60	850.00
Subscriptions	10170.00	10823.90
Tax refunds on covenants	2440.78	2778.36
TOTAL INCOME	34595.24	47177.45
EXPENDITURE		
Direct charitable expenditure		
Choir concerts	10294.23	21625.08
Freiburg twinning	3334.73	
Music sub-account hire charges	673.01	493.85
Rehearsal fees	6759.00	6754.00
Rehearsal room hire	3270.00	3145.00
Staging depreciation	625.00	625.00
Sub-total	24955.97	32642.93
Fund raising costs		
100 Club prizes	650.00	
Cost of stock sold	365.40	102.18
GBC concert ticket purchases	624.00	1435.20
Social event costs	66.00	274.32
Sub-total	1705.40	1811.70
Administration costs		
Bank charges	47.70	31.50
Miscellaneous	200.32	345.79
Presentations	317.99	
Publicity	572.22	1941.87
Subscriptions	174.00	212.00
Sub-total	1312.23	2531.16
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	27973.60	36985.79
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	6621.64	10191.66
Plus surplus attributable to 98/99		341.84
Total this year		10533.50

1999/2000 Concerts
01/05/99 Through 30/04/00 (in Pounds)

Category Description	1) May 1999	1a) Nov 1999	3) Feb 2000	4) Mar 2000	OVERALL TOTAL
INCOME					
Concert Inc:					
Buffet	0.00	0.00	0.00	126.00	126.00
Collections	0.00	0.00	0.00	216.10	216.10
Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,955.00	1,955.00
Programmes	0.00	0.00	0.00	661.51	661.51
Receptions	0.00	0.00	0.00	287.50	287.50
Sponsors	0.00	0.00	0.00	850.00	850.00
Tickets	7,312.64	1,613.20	575.00	8,639.67	18,140.51
TOTAL Concert Inc	7,312.64	1,613.20	575.00	12,735.78	22,236.62
TOTAL INCOME	7,312.64	1,613.20	575.00	12,735.78	22,236.62
EXPENSES					
Admin:					
Publicity:					
Adverts	0.00	0.00	0.00	178.50	178.50
Posters	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,211.44	1,211.44
TOTAL Publicity	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,389.94	1,389.94
TOTAL Admin	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,389.94	1,389.94
Concert Exp:					
Conductor	600.00	0.00	350.00	750.00	1,700.00
Hospitality	0.00	0.00	0.00	640.00	640.00
Orchestra	625.52	0.00	0.00	7,174.54	7,800.06
Programmes	578.68	0.00	0.00	676.27	1,254.95
Receptions	0.00	0.00	0.00	475.55	475.55
Royalties	260.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	260.83
Soloists	750.00	0.00	0.00	1,600.00	2,350.00
Staging	300.00	0.00	300.00	430.00	1,030.00
Tickets	0.00	1,435.20	0.00	0.00	1,435.20
Venue	787.90	0.00	0.00	825.11	1,613.01
Concert Exp-Other	4,115.60	0.00	0.00	285.08	4,400.68
TOTAL Concert Exp	8,018.53	1,435.20	650.00	12,856.55	22,960.28
TOTAL EXPENSES	8,018.53	1,435.20	650.00	14,246.49	24,350.22

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1999/2000 Concerts
01/05/99 Through 30/04/00 (in Pounds)

Category Description	1) May 1999	1a) Nov 1999	3) Feb 2000	4) Mar 2000	OVERALL TOTAL
TOTAL INCOME - EXPENSES	<u>-705.89</u>	<u>178.00</u>	<u>-75.00</u>	<u>-1,510.71</u>	<u>-2,113.60</u>

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

AGM – 26 JUNE 2000

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Well – it's been quite a year! When I started looking back at the season, I found that the rehearsals, and concerts especially, inevitably coloured by my personal highs and lows of the year; so you must forgive me if in this report, the personal features more strongly than usual!

We came back after the summer break to "The Creation", me happy in the knowledge that Sally was pregnant with twins, though she sadly lost one shortly after 12 weeks. The rehearsals for the Haydn went well and we were able to concentrate very much on style as well as assuring we were technically as good as we could be. This was the first time we had sung "The Creation" in many years I believe and a fine performance it was too. En Shao was his usual charming, inspirational and complimentary self – he's always so good to work with – and even the local press acknowledged that the choir was on impressive form.

Then it was almost immediately on to Christmas carols and the concert in the Dorking Halls for the Princess Alice Hospice. As before when we sang for them it was a wonderful, if slightly lengthy, evening. I'm sure we would all like to be involved in any of their concerts in the future.

Well, the next concert was the Christmas concert in the Guildford Civic, for which I was struck down with that wretched flu. But I understand Adrian Peacock did a good job and there was enjoyment on both sides. All this was against a background at home of collapsing ceilings, rain coming in through exposed areas of the roof, eleven buckets catching the floods in one bedroom, having to sleep in a sleeping bag on the sitting room floor, and so on, as our loft extension gradually – very gradually – took shape.

The New Year, New Millennium, began for some of us with a service in the cathedral. Let me just say that there were some very good moments but one less good moment! But it was an honour to have been asked to take part and good for our reputation.

It was then into the combined concert with the University forces, which was again an interesting programme and as with last year, it was invigorating to join forces with Sebastian and his choir and orchestra. Next year we won't be sharing a concert, principally because Sebastian is having a year's sabbatical and his replacement has his own ideas for this concert, but that will give us a somewhat less busy schedule around this time of year. We will assuredly collaborate again in the future.

Only a month later – with another moving cathedral service under our belts, courtesy of Adrian Peacock again – we welcomed once again our friends from Freiburg. Their knowing the St Matthew Passion as they do certainly helped our confidence and, as I said at the time, when all was going wrong during the afternoon rehearsal, it was the choir that I was able to rely on completely – quite a relief! In the event, the concert was wonderful – with some glorious solo and choral singing and a real sense of atmosphere. The whole stay of the Freiburg Bachchor was a great success, despite every attempt of fate to scupper it!

Just 4 days later George was born, Sally having been in hospital nearly three weeks by then. Meanwhile we were into the Walton and Vaughan Williams, the performance of which we gave just a few weeks ago. I must say I had been looking forward to conducting the Forest Philharmonic Orchestra again after the Mahler last year – and I was not disappointed: they really want to play well for themselves and us and that enthusiasm comes across strongly. The Walton is such a fantastic piece and you really pulled out the stops and responded to what I tried to give from the podium. Many of the orchestra were deeply impressed with what you were doing behind them. Having the Vasari Singers present I hope did not upset you: I decided on inviting them along to add weight to the choral sound, give extra confidence on some of the entries and complex rhythms, and to provide a really strong semi-chorus. I hope you enjoyed them being there – they certainly loved sharing the platform with you. Also having David Fanshawe there to oversee the first live concert performance of the symphonic version of his new fanfare and march provided added excitement. So, there was some beautiful and exhilarating playing from the orchestra, some glorious singing from our baritone soloist, and some brilliant singing from you, the chorus. This, for me, was the highlight of our year, despite the wonderful Bach concert earlier in the year. Perhaps part of the reason was that I was that very special moment when I was able to introduce George to you all during the rehearsal in the afternoon; I'm not sure he's a great fan of Walton yet though!

And so to the future ... we have four concerts during next season, a less frantic and tight schedule, which many may appreciate.

Saturday 28 October (Cathedral): Haydn: *Insanae et vanae curae*
Mozart: *Symphony No.40*
Mozart: *Mass in C minor (with Brandenburg Sinfonia)*
Sunday 17 December (Civic): Family Carol Concert
Saturday 10 March 2001 (Civic): Brahms: *A German Requiem* (probably with David Hill conducting) GBC
Saturday 12 May (Cathedral): Vaughan Williams: *Sea Symphony* + something (in discussion with FPO)

Confirmed dates further ahead include:

Saturday 3 November 2001 (Cathedral) likely programme: *The Messiah*
Sunday 16 December 2001 (Civic) for Family Carol Concert
Saturday 6 April 2002 (Cathedral) likely programme: *Mahler Symphony No.8*
Saturday 25 May 2002 (Cathedral) something small & light
Saturday 26 October 2002 (Cathedral)

In addition to this we hope to have at least one date a year with the Borough and the GPO.

So you will see that the schedule for this season coming is varied and exciting. Also, it is nowhere near as demanding as the last couple of years. For this reason amongst others, I would like to reiterate what I have mentioned in the past about rehearsal attendance that at times drops off dramatically and worryingly. My view of belonging to a choir is that, as a paid-up member, you participate fully in all rehearsals and all concerts. This is what I expect. There should be no question of picking which concerts you want to sing or not depending on the repertoire, nor of deciding how many rehearsals you feel it necessary for you personally to learn any given work. I can only do my job properly if I have you all there all the time and it is not fair on others who commit themselves totally to the choir. Of course, there will be occasions when family, or work or other non-avoidable circumstances detain you, on which occasions I try to be understanding – but please do not take advantage of my goodwill. I say again, I do expect all singers to be at all rehearsals and sign up for all concerts. OK.

As in previous years, I would like to take this opportunity thank various people for their support over the last year: Noreen and Pru who help out at all the auditions; Jeremy for his fabulous playing (including the warm-ups!) and his commitment to the choir; and to all the committee for working so hard on my and your behalf. It bears repetition saying that they do an enormous amount behind the scenes and as my appearances have been few and far between at committee meetings, they do a marvellous job of reading my mind and interpreting my wishes! I would like to thank especially John and Hilary for their personal and professional support over the year. In John we have a first-rate chairman, someone who does not just chair meetings, stand up in the rehearsal intervals and front public events; he works tirelessly for the choir out of hours, networking in the Borough, using his influence and contacts in Guildford and far beyond, and fighting the choir's cause vigorously when needed. He has been the guiding light to see us through to independence so successfully. I have to say I think it would be a weaker choir the day John decides or has to step down, especially if no natural successor exists. Such august institutions as the Bach Choir in London, the London Symphony Chorus and other major choruses do not see the need to impose a term of office on the chairmanship and my view is that we shouldn't need to do so either. We always have the mechanism to vote someone out if it is considered that change is necessary. If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your singing and working so hard over the last year. We have had a lot of rehearsals and done a good deal in them, and the results have been very gratifying indeed. I think the Guildford public is beginning to realise that, standing on our own two feet, we give real quality performances – we give them musical art, not entertainment – and there have been some fabulous concerts over the year. We should be very proud of our achievements as I am of you all as a choir.

Thank you very much.

[JB]

Concert schedule omitted as duplicated elsewhere