



MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

My report starts back in September 2021 when we all returned tentatively to rehearsal, socially distanced, masked, LFT'd, very much Covid aware and Covid careful. But back to full rehearsals it was and a great place to be once again. Voices were rusty – it felt somewhat strange after such a long lay-off. Not everyone felt sufficiently comfortable to return, but there was a goodly number who did and what a joy and relief it was to get back to singing together.

The work was Elgar's glorious *Dream of Gerontius*. It was wonderful to return to this magnificent work and for those who had not sung it before, a fabulous journey of discovery! Rehearsals went well and it was just great to be back singing! The concert was at Dorking Halls on 20 November. I like the venue – it suits us well and having the orchestra on the floor and the choir on the stage worked well. Facilities are good, but I understand some people find it too far from Guildford. That and continuing Covid nervousness perhaps accounted for a small-ish audience turnout. We tried out the West Forest Sinfonia for the first time as our accompanying orchestra. We were using a pro/am band to try to reduce the costs of putting on concerts, allowing us to spend more on pro orchestras for other concerts. I think it is fair to say that there was a big improvement in the playing between rehearsal and concert. We had three young soloists of the highest calibre in Rebekah Jones, Rhys Batt and Thomas Nießer. All in all it was a triumphant return to singing and concert giving – it felt so good to be back and with such a powerful work, passionately sung throughout.

Next came our Christmas concert for the Mayor of Guildford's charity on 12 December. Again, having had to cancel the event in 2020, it was a relief to be able to return to Holy Trinity and once again to enjoy some festive fun. With relatively few rehearsals to prepare for this concert, we did very well to put on such a fine and spirited performance.

On Saturday 29 January this year we assembled again in this Baptist Church for a truncated 'Come and Sing', looking at Elgar's *Coronation Ode* and the *Blest Pair of Sirens* by Parry. It was a successful day and despite some people getting caught out by the parking restrictions, there appeared to be little problem in administering the day. Once more, I think people who were now coming out to sing thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity, and Millmead certainly helped us out.

And then into something completely different! This was our long-awaited 'Best of Broadway' show in G Live on 26 March. Accompanied by the incredible and brilliant Friary Brass Band, it promised to be quite an event and something outside the normal comfort zone of many people. It is only by staging these more populist evenings that we can hope to get close to filling G Live. It was interesting to see how everyone gradually embraced the music. There was a lot of it and it a good deal of it was quite tricky. But embrace it we did and with some extra help and advice from the superb Kevin one week, we were ready to roll! As I say, this may not have been everyone's cup of tea, but I think it is fair to say that everyone who took part in the show had a real ball! The audience absolutely LOVED it and there was a palpable buzz around the place throughout the evening. It was fun and I think it's a great way to demonstrate the extent of our performance versatility. There will be another show like that before too long!

And then to our most recent concert: 'Majesty' in G Live on 28 May, an evening of celebration for our Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Again, we were joined by the West Forest Sinfonia and four young and enthusiastic soloists from the Royal College of Music. On the menu were Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, lots of lovely Parry, the choral section from Beethoven 9. It was a tough sing and especially the bucket-loads of vocal stamina required for the Beethoven. But we made a first-class job of it and despite there not being a huge audience, the reaction of those who did attend was extremely positive. Thank you for working so hard on the music and for giving of your very best.

And so to the tour to Northern Spain ... what a great tour it has been! After two years' wait, we finally boarded the plane to Bilbao full of excitement, only saddened to be leaving Becky behind us, she having tested positive for Covid in the couple of days before leaving – cruel luck! Little did we know that so many were to be affected whilst on tour and immediately afterwards. Such a shame for those whose tour was spoiled. The first concert was in the magnificent cathedral of Burgos – a brilliant first concert, in a large side chapel, with decent little organ and a huge and appreciative audience. Don Felix also did us proud! On to Palencia, where we sang in a massive church which was again packed with enthusiastic listeners. It was the best of the three concerts for me for the singing and communication with the audience. Sadly, the organ, despite being a fine instrument, was too far away. We were both inaudible and invisible to Willow Northeald, our valiant organist. Instead, we resorted to the Yamaha electronic keyboard, which, whilst it made life considerably easier, didn't do much to create quite the right atmosphere! Willow was in heaven however for the third concert in San Sebastián – a gorgeous Cavallé-Coll instrument. It sounded magnificent and finally Willow had an instrument which their talents deserved. The audience was pretty good, but definitely more touristy and there was less connection between them and us, which made for a slightly less special atmosphere. Nonetheless, three fabulous concerts with passionate and polished singing throughout, supported by faultless playing from our very own Willow. When off duty, we also had huge amounts of fun: Plenty of sight-seeing and culture, loads to eat and drink, fiesta and fireworks, and loads more besides. All this was brilliantly organised by the incomparable and indefatigable Tour Captain, James and ably assisted by the wonderful Tessa. A very special tour and I am working hard on James to do it one more time before I retire!

This year also saw my announcement that I was going to retire as your Music Director in the summer of 2025. By then I will have done 30 years in front of you and will be 68, and I think that is probably a good time to hang up my baton! When we announced that decision, we also put before the choir a 3-year plan of concerts so you could see what we had in mind to perform. We have made some changes to that plan since then, mainly because we feel we need to be aware of smaller audiences since the pandemic and the need to adapt to that. We also cannot continue hiring G Live, which is very expensive and not filling it. So venues

need to be chosen more judiciously and the repertoire that might fill those venues also more carefully considered.

With that in mind, I reproduce at the end of this report our latest thoughts on the season to come from November 2022 to July 2023.

So, in summary, it has been a year of re-establishing ourselves and getting back to singing together again – of gradually beginning to feel more comfortable with our rehearsal surroundings, less fearful perhaps of singing in concerts, close up and unsocially distanced; of the re-engagement with one another socially and musically; of feeling part of a choral team again; of remembering how good it can be to make music together - the joy of singing to a live audience. *Gerontius* was our magnificent “we’re back” concert; ‘Best of Broadway’ was brilliant and such a blast; ‘Majesty’ a great celebration of a great monarch. Plenty of variety and versatility. All magic concerts in their own way!

My personal thanks, as ever, to Francis for his unique, virtuoso and invaluable support at the piano, and to Peter and the whole committee for guiding us through a tricky year of getting ourselves up and running again. Thank you too to you all once again for sticking with it despite continuing challenges and coming out the other end so engaged and happy.

Jeremy Backhouse, *July 2022*

19 November 2022

G Live

with the National Symphony Orchestra

75th Anniversary Concert - also celebrating 150th anniversary of the birth of Vaughan Williams.

Vaughan Williams: O clap your hands/The Lark Ascending/Five Mystical Songs

Holst: The Perfect Fool (*orchestra only*)

Walton: Belshazzar's Feast

2+1.2+1.2/Eb+1.2+1 - A sax - 4.3.3.1 - 4 timps - 4 percussion - 2 harps - strings (10.8.6.5.3) - optional piano and organ - 2 brass bands of 0.3.3.1 each

FULL NUMBER OF PLAYERS = 80

11 December 2022 - date tbc

Mayor of Guildford's Christmas Carol Concert

18 March 2023

G Live

with a locally fixed band (to attract more audience and to tap into the local jazz network)

Bob Chilcott: A Little Jazz Mass (chorus, piano, drums, bass) 15.00

Will Todd: Songs of Peace (chorus, piano, drums, bass) 23.00

INTERVAL

Duke Ellington: Sacred Concert approx. 55.00

For Jazz Band, Choir, Soprano soloist, Dancer

Jazz band (17 players):

2 x Alto sax in Eb(doubling Bbclarinet)

1 x Tenor sax in Bb(doubling Bbclarinet)

1 x Tenor sax in Bb

1 x Baritone sax in Eb(doubling Bass clarinet)

4 x trumpets in Bb

4 x trombones

1 x piano

1 x double bass

1 x drums (snare drum, bass drum, tom-toms, suspended cymbal, hi-hat)

1 x percussion

FULL NUMBER OF PLAYERS = 17

20 May 2023

Holy Trinity Church

with a JH-B fixed orchestra

'The Italian Job' - working title!

Allegri: Miserere mei 12.00
SSAB soloists – SATB choir - unaccompanied

Pergolesi: Magnificat in B flat 15.00
SATB soloists – SATB choir
continuo (organ) - strings (4.4.0.2.1) there are no viola parts

Gabrieli: Jubilate Deo (ESM 16/118) 6.00
SATB choir only with organ accompaniment (optional strings)

Monteverdi: Beatus vir (1641) 10.00
SSTTB soloists (soloist could be from choir) – SATB choir
continuo (organ) - strings (4.4.2.2.1)

INTERVAL 43.00

Handel: Dixit Dominus (written when in Rome) 40.00
SSATB soloists – SATB choir
continuo (organ) - strings (4.4.2/2.2.1) there are 2 viola parts

FULL NUMBER OF PLAYERS = 16

40.00

23-25 June 2023 - date tbc

Tour in UK - Bath and Wells ???

Treasurer's report

After eighteen months of cancelled concerts due to the pandemic, Vivace Chorus returned in November 2021 with Dream of Gerontius at Dorking Halls. Unfortunately, due to the slow return of audiences, ticket sales were disappointingly low and, despite the lower costs of using the excellent West Forest Sinfonia, the concert made a loss of £9,647. The other concert of the year, Best of Broadway at GLive, had considerably better ticket sales and made a much smaller loss of £455. The Committee and Jeremy Backhouse continue to review future programming in light of the trend of ticket sales, suitability of venues, and the cost and quality of accompanying ensembles. The choir has reserves to cover some loss-making concerts but not indefinitely. The Come and Sing made a small loss due to a reduced number of attendees mainly associated with the pandemic.

Subscriptions for this financial year have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, due to the subs holiday which ended during the year, but with Gift Aid and patrons, these covered rehearsal costs with a small surplus £2,473 towards the year's concert losses.

During the year, for reasons of prudence the stock (uniform items and folders) held on the balance sheet was written off so future stock sales will be classed as income.

Vivace Chorus received a legacy payment of £7,545 from the estate of Laurence James, from which we received an interim payment in 2018. This legacy was instrumental in covering the concert losses, giving us an overall much smaller loss for the year of £1,725.

On the balance sheet, Advance Income of £62,367 and prepaid expenditure £25,084 relates to the once again postponed Spain tour. The remaining £898 prepaid expenditure relates to venue deposits and publicity for future concerts.

Overall, Vivace Chorus' return to live rehearsals and performances has been positive following a lot of uncertainty caused by the pandemic but undoubtedly the choir is reliant on the members' and patrons' subscriptions, along with the generosity of those who leave legacies to allow it to continue to perform its choice of music with strong ensembles in local venues where all associated costs are increasing.

I'd like to thank Marjory Stewart and Chris Newbery as the finance team, and Jeremy Johnson as Independent Examiner for their continuing support in making the role of Treasurer easier.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: AGM 2022

What a bounce-back year. After the enforced absence of lock-downs, we have had a full and energetic return to big concert singing, and more importantly the wonderful community of getting back together every Monday evening and focussing on singing together. The camaraderie and sense of community has been palpable.

It hasn't been plain sailing, with covid protocols enforcing distance-singing at Millmead and restricting attendance for some – especially heart-breaking for those unlucky enough to miss a concert (or the Tour)- but we've successfully sung a full year of concerts and events. Special thanks to our Membership Secretary Becky Kerby, and her helpers and the voice reps, who have done an heroic job in organising our rehearsals and dealing with all the covid issues that have arisen. Thanks also to our Zoom team (mainly Kate & Chris Peters) who helped us mitigate the impact of covid precautions. From September we expect to have returned to normal rehearsals.

Singing *The Dream of Gerontius* was, for me, a dream start, and a pleasure to be joined by some members of Epsom Chamber Choir. *Best of Broadway* took us into new territory that we ended up embracing energetically – and I can only say that Kevin Cripps's 'aaapple' has left both an indelible mark and a hunger for more such coaching experiences. Returning to some traditional big choral pieces in our Majesty concert was an exhausting but exhilarating close to our major concert singing. As for the Tour, the programme worked beautifully and I can only call the venues, audiences and organ playing by Willow Northeald as unforgettable – a legendary tour, and huge thanks to our Tour Manager, James Garrow. I'm delighted that the upcoming Cherry Trees concert gives everyone a chance to enjoy this lovely programme.

Our marketing and publicity returned in top-notch form, bolstering the quality of the choir with professional imagery and smart marketing campaigns – increasingly digital – thanks to our smart team of Hilary Trigg, Gill Perkins and Michelle Mumford.

I've had fun this year introducing the use of the projection system at Millmead to communicate to the choir– especially the voice-part competition to sell tickets to *Best of Broadway* (Choir members did a fantastic job of selling over 300 tickets). And we've made a real digital transformation, with so much of the operational side going on-line – thank you Phil Stanford and others for working this change. I certainly have noticed very little queuing or bits of paper.

Recruitment of new members has been very pleasing, with 15 singers joining us through the year, and total membership at 134 has held up well in this uncertain return-to-singing year. It's understandable that some members opted out of concerts this year, leaving us with only

100 committed to each concert, but going ahead we really need members to sign-up for every concert and support each other. Be seen and be heard!

This year we have also resumed our position in Guildford civic life: singing on Remembrance Sunday at the War Memorial with the robed and chained Guildford dignitaries, Armed Forces representatives, and youth groups; performing the Mayor's Carol concert at Holy Trinity for the 70th year running; singing at the Investiture Ceremony of The Order of St. George who added a little colour to Guildford life; and having Guildford Borough Council support our Majesty concert. It was also a pleasure to sing at the Memorial Service for Michael Jeffrey, a stalwart of the choir for eons, under the emergency and appreciated baton of Roy Rashbrook.

A satisfying part of Choir Life is being able to raise funds for local charities through collections at concerts and events, and I'm delighted to say that amounted to almost £6000 this year (including one collection for the DEC Ukraine fund). We have very generous audiences, and it is good to connect with and support local volunteers in our community.

Having bounced back, we can now look forward to a brilliant programme of concerts in our next year. It starts with a grand celebration of 75 years of great singing, music and companionship with a Feast! – Belshazzar's Feast to be precise, on 19th November. In March we get a new experience with Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts, adding another dimension to our singing breadth. And in May we have a lovely programme of Italian music, featuring Handel's Dixit Dominus, which we will perform at Holy Trinity. It's not confirmed yet, but we are hoping to have a mini tour 23rd to 25th June to sing in Wells Cathedral and Bath Abbey.

The May concert in Holy Trinity is a refinement to the programme we set out in March, and gives us the opportunity to rehearse wonderful music and perform it in a lovely setting with a small professional orchestra, without the pressure of high costs and the effort for everyone to bring in a very large audience. We aim to field a full choir, so audience capacity will be reduced, but it will be good to find ways to make the venue work for us and to have on our roster.

As the Treasurer has said, while the Choir's financial position is sound, we cannot absorb deficits indefinitely and the Committee and Music Director will continue to review future concert programmes and venues to best match our resources. Legacies are a generous and thoughtful boost, but are somewhat unpredictable. Our most reliable source of funds is subscriptions, which have remained unchanged for four years. After careful consideration by the Committee, next year's membership subscription fee has been increased to £180, equivalent to £60 per term.

I have had a busy year getting to grips with what it means to be Chairman of Vivace Chorus, and I like what I see. A large number of members contribute to the operation of the choir, making my job possible, from small occasional tasks through to more regular and larger ones, and on behalf of us all I thank them. The Committee, of course, deserve a big thank you for all the work and thought they put in, year round, and I'm very grateful for the support they have given me. But it is also good that Committee members are allowed a rest, and that others step in, and I'd like to thank Mary Moon, Simon Dillon and Suzanne Cahalane for their extensive contributions to the Committee as they step down. I am delighted that both Mary and Simon are continuing as Patrons Secretary and Concert Manager respectively.

During the year we also had a successful handing-on of the Librarian baton from Catherine Middleton to Fiona ^{Wimblett} Willett. Bravo to Catherine for some 7 years in such a vital role that she has carried off so effectively, and bravo to Fiona who has picked it up so gracefully and smoothly. All our librarians (that includes Mary Clayton and Richard and Mary Broughton) are unsung heroes that enable the choir to function. *Also Sarah Smithies in dealing with vocal scores.*

And as a new Chairman, let me say that planning the future and taming the present has been made immeasurably easier by Jeremy's friendly support and deep expertise as Music Director, and as a singer let me also say how much I and the choir appreciate both Jeremy and Francis who make making music such a joy.

And finally, we come to June Windle who is stepping down as Honorary Secretary after 10 years in the job. She has done so much for the choir, and I am particularly grateful for her considerable role in helping me navigate my first year. She is calm, efficient, knowledgeable and comes with a great sense of humour and commendable lack of drama – great attributes for the role – and it's been a joy to work with her. I am delighted that she has agreed to put herself forward for another year on the committee.

In conclusion, a most satisfactory year, successfully navigating a difficult environment, with some really high moments. I feel we are ready to tackle a big year next year with our customary Vivace verve – after a well deserved summer break.

Peter Norman

Chairman, Vivace Chorus

Vivace Chorus Income and Expenditure accounts

Income

	2021/22		2020/21	
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted fund				
Concert deficits:				
May	-		(337)	
November	(9,647)		(282)	
March	(455)		-	
Sub-total, concert deficits	(10,102)		(619)	
Rehearsal costs	(24,025)		(17,975)	
Net concert deficit (per Concert Income and Expenditure report)		(34,127)		(18,594)
Income from charitable activities:				
Subscriptions	19,685		17,706	
Patrons	2,704		2,804	
Gift Aid	4,109		3,060	
Come and Sing deficit	(148)		-	
Fundraising	614		630	
Other	25		-	
Total income from charitable activities		26,989		24,200
Interest received		17		73
Total income		(7,122)		5,678
Expenditure				
Insurance		368		-
Stock write down		1,400		
Other		391		947
Total expenditure		2,158		947
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, unrestricted fund		(9,280)		4,731
Legacy fund				
Income				
Legacies		7,545		-
Interest received		10		25
Total income		7,555		25
Expenditure				
Total expenditure		-		-
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, Legacy fund		7,555		25
Total net surplus/(deficit) for the year		(1,725)		4,756

Vivace Chorus Balance Sheet

As at 30 April 2022

As at 30 April 2021

Stock of Goods	-	1,442
Debtors	11,228	-
Accrued Income	95	3,238
Prepaid expenses	25,983	24,803
Cash at bank	130,515	110,803
Petty Cash and floats	-	31
Current Assets	167,821	140,317
Accrued Expenses	5,362	45
Advance Income	62,367	38,455
Current Liabilities	67,729	38,500
Net Current Assets	100,092	101,817
Represented by:		
Opening Other Reserves	64,699	59,968
Result for the Year	(9,280)	4,731
Closing Other Reserves	55,419	64,699
Opening Legacy balance	37,117	37,092
Interest income	10	25
Legacies	7,545	-
Closing Legacy balance	44,673	37,117
CLOSING RESERVES	100,092	101,817

Vivace Chorus
 Concert Income and Expenditure
 For the year ending 30 April

	2022						2021
	Cancelled	Cancelled	Dream of Gerontius	Best of Broadway	Carols	Rehearsals	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
Ticket sales	-	-	3,588	11,228	-	-	14,816
Net programme income	-	-	275	110	-	-	385
Other income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total income	-	-	3,863	11,338	-	-	15,201
Expenditure							
Conductor	-	-	1,325	1,325	-	-	2,650
Instruments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orchestra / other musicians	-	-	6,340	850	-	-	7,190
Soloists	-	-	1,350	-	-	-	1,350
Venue	-	-	2,598	4,680	-	-	7,278
Staging	-	-	724	372	-	-	1,096
Publicity	-	-	312	536	-	-	848
Scores	-	-	-	1,000	-	-	1,000
Miscellaneous	-	-	861	3,030	-	-	3,891
Total expenditure	-	-	13,509	11,794	-	-	25,303
Net direct concert income/(expenditure)	-	-	(9,647)	(455)	-	-	(10,102)
Donations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rehearsal costs	-	-	-	-	-	(24,025)	(24,025)
Total concert income/(expenditure)	-	-	(9,647)	(455)	-	(24,025)	(34,127)

Rehearsal costs of which are legacy expenditure							
Rehearsal costs	-	-	-	-	-	(24,025)	(24,025)