

For the Diary

Concerts

Saturday 19 January 2019 7:30 pm
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick
Performing Gounod's *St Cecilia Mass* in Amnesty
International concert presented by Oriflamme
Orchestra

Saturday 18 May 2019 at 7:30 pm
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick
Performing Mozart's *Requiem* & Haydn's *Missa
in Angustiis* "Nelson Mass"

Saturday 16 November 2019 at 7:30 pm
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick
Performing Orff's *Carmina Burana*

Social Events

Saturday 26 January 2019 at 7:00 pm
Skittles evening at Ansty Social Club, Grove Road,
Ansty, Coventry

Sunday 14 July 2019
Sunday lunch at Kenilworth Golf Club, Crewe Lane,
Kenilworth

Rehearsals

We rehearse every Thursday evening from October to
July at Quinton Park Baptist Church Hall, Coventry.
Rehearsals start at 7:15pm and finish at 9:30pm. Tea,
coffee & biscuits are available at the interval.

Find us Online

Our official website is at <http://www.covphilsoc.org.uk/>
and our official Facebook page is at
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/27912395845/>

Membership enquiries

Email: secretary@covphilsoc.org.uk, or you are
welcome to join us at one of our Thursday evening
rehearsals

Happy New Year!



Winter Term 2018 was another busy season for the Choir. We performed two major choral works: Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in September and then Handel's *Messiah* (see page 3) in November. It seemed no time at all until we were performing our annual "Christmas with the Phil" concert, this time in King Henry VIII School Hall, accompanied by the Midland Brass Ensemble.

Outside of our "big" concerts, we were kept occupied with providing support to the WWI Centenary Commemoration at the Remembrance Sunday service in Coventry's War Memorial Park, and Christmas music performances in Victoria Mews Care Home and the Family Chapel at Stoneleigh Abbey. It looks like 2019 is going to be just as "active".

Rachael Bermingham
Chair

Contents

Page 2	Ein Concert für den Frieden
Page 3	The Messiah for Zoë's Place
Page 4	Other News

Ein Konzert für den Frieden (A Concert for Peace) Berlin, November 2, 2018



I responded, while in Greece in early July, to an invitation to participate in a massed choir performance of *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by Sir Karl Jenkins. My application, which included a rather ghastly unaccompanied rendition of *Nel cor piu non mi sento* that has since been destroyed, was rather surprisingly accepted. As a result, I became the sole representative of the Coventry Philharmonic Choir joining nearly 2, 500 choristers from over 30 countries at a concert in the Mercedes-Benz Arena, Berlin on Friday, November 2, 2018.

Most participants arrived five days before the concert for rehearsals, in groups of 500, on Tuesday and Wednesday under the direction of Nicol Matt, an enthusiastic and inspiring European choir conductor. It was at this point, hearing the many different languages being spoken, that we all began to understand the enormity of the project.

On Thursday morning the whole choir was assembled and seated in the Mercedes-Benz Arena. The Cov Phil may have some organisational issues on concert days but 'you ain't seen nothing' until you have seen 2,000+ people all trying to get seated in the correct sections, jockeying for the best seat to see and be seen, a seat next to friends or on the aisle etc and do you think participants remembered (as asked) their seat row and number for their return in the afternoon? I had enormous respect for Rondo Media (from Caernarfon), the event

organizers and, in particular, the representative Gwawr Owen who was tasked with communicating with the choir and who seemed completely unflappable throughout. Even on concert night it took one and half hours to get everyone in their seats, and no amount of reminders and warnings prevented the use of mobile phones right up to the start of the concert! It was an amazing people watching experience!

On Thursday afternoon we rehearsed without the orchestra with Sir Karl Jenkins who was conducting us. Sir Karl needed to synchronise the choir and orchestra with the archival film and photos projected on five massive screens behind the choir. He had a 'clicker' in his ear that marked the timing used by the audio-visual technical staff. His only communication with us during the rehearsal occurred when he wanted us to sing. Aside from singing the massed choir was remarkably silent. Steven would have been impressed!

During the week I had a series of very interesting conversations with individuals from Australia, Canada, Germany, France, the UK and Malta but, unless they were in the alto section, I rarely saw them again! I had the pleasure of spending time with an English alto and her friends including one of the basses Guy Wilson. The *Armed Man* was commissioned by the Royal Armouries Museum for the Millennium celebrations and Guy Wilson was Master of the Museum at the time. I was impressed to learn that he selected all the texts that we sing and, in fact, wrote some of them.

For Friday's afternoon rehearsal we wore our concert clothes - white shirts and black trousers - as a documentary about the concert, involving BBC presenter and newsreader Huw Edwards, was being filmed. The choir's excitement and slight nervousness that afternoon were almost tangible and it was wonderful to sing with the members of the World Orchestra for Peace who had arrived that day. We heard Part 1 of the concert for the first time during the rehearsal and many of us were not prepared for our emotional responses to the music and soloist performances. I was particularly affected by a new work entitled

Lamentation: A Lament for Syria by Karl Jenkins being premiered at this concert. The text was based on a poem written by Amineh Abouh Kerech, a 14-year old girl who emigrated to the UK from Syria in 2016 and who, in 2017, was the recipient of the Betjeman Poetry Prize for young poets aged 10-13. Ms Kerech read her poem in the concert prior to the *Lamentation* being performed.

How to describe the concert experience without sounding trite? I think we were all acutely reminded of the universality of music, of our



common imperative for peace, and how singing together transcended, if only for a moment, ideological differences and

the global conflicts that are so troubling. On November 11th I watched the concert on television and relived the pleasure of participation with the addition, this time, of the audience's perspective. It was an amazing and unique experience.

If you didn't catch the televised concert in November, it is now available on YouTube and, in my somewhat biased opinion, it is perhaps the best performance of *The Armed Man* you are likely to see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZyHbfXmnU8>

Christine Carpenter
(alto)

Newsletters

We would love to hear from you with suggestions for articles. Our next issue will be published in April so if you have any articles, events, photos or other contributions for this one (deadline end of March) or future issues please email news@covphilsoc.org.uk or speak to any committee member.

The Messiah for Zoë's Place

In November, our Secretary, Colin Simmons, realised an ambition to stage a performance of *The Messiah* in Bedworth and raise funds for Zoë's Place Children's Hospice. Colin planned and organised a very successful concert which raised a substantial amount for the charity. This is the charity's press release:

"It was the end of an era when a spectacular production of Handel's *Messiah* took to the stage at The Civic Hall in Bedworth on Saturday, November 3.

It was the final charity concert co-ordinated by Colin Simmons after 40 years of fund-raising events which have raised more than £250,000 for good causes over 40 years and will boost Zoë's Place Baby Hospice in Exhall which provides palliative care for children with life limiting conditions.

Colin said: "I was asked if I would consider producing a concert in aid of Zoë's Place and

after a visit with the Chairman of the Coventry Philharmonic Choir decided that it was a very worthwhile cause, and with the agreement of the Musical Director and committee they performed at The Civic Hall with professional orchestra and soloists.

I would like to thank all the many people, performers, customers and companies who have supported my efforts over the years and especially with this concert which raised an amazing £8232.30."



Jane McGaffney Community Fundraiser for the Hospice said "I was delighted when Colin first contacted me about raising funds for us. He was hoping to raise about £5000 which would have given us 200 hours of care. The amount they have raised has given us 330! This will really make a difference to us and we can't thank Colin and all who took part in this amazing evening for their wonderful support".

Other News

At the start of Winter Term, our Chairman and Secretary both stepped down. At the Annual General Meeting of the Society in October, the membership elected a new Chair, Rachael Bermingham, and a new Secretary, Colin Simmons.

Our Social Committee members were active as always, organising a Quiz Night with a Fish & Chip supper which not only made a substantial contribution to Society funds but also was a very enjoyable evening. The Knit & Stitch Group also went into creative overdrive and produced sufficient handicrafts to supply a number of pre-

Christmas sale events and generate a lot of cash for the Society.

On December 18, a small group of choir members were invited back to sing Christmas carols at the Victoria Mews Care Home, after providing a mini concert last year. They looked particularly festive.



Finally, on December 21 thirty members of the choir performed in the second of their annual



concerts in the Family Chapel at Stoneleigh Abbey. The theme this year was "Back Home For Christmas" in recognition of the Centenary of the ending of WWI.

Useful Information

Committee Members – Rachael Bermingham (Chair), Colin Simmons (Secretary), John Thompson (Treasurer), Celia Lewis (Membership), Sheila Cowen, Henry Whitney (Librarian), Neil Kingdon (Ticketing), Jay Durrant, Clare Gelsthorpe, Margaret Jakiel, Hilary Ward, Mike Ward (Front of House)

Publicity - Margaret Jakiel, Heather Payne & Nathan Field (social media)

Social Committee - Sheila Cowen (Chair), Liz Chester, Jay Durrant, Margaret Thompson, Hilary Ward, Glenda Way