

For the Diary

Concerts

Saturday 16 December 2017 at 7:30pm
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick
Performing Handel's Messiah Part 1 and Christmas Music

Saturday 10 March 2018 7:30 pm
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Warwick
Performing Bach's St Matthew Passion

Social Events

Saturday 20 May 2017 from 2:00 to 4:30 pm Plant Sale, Kenilworth

There will also be bring and buy refreshments

Sunday 2 July 2017 Sunday lunch at the Windmill, just past the Allesley exit of the A45 towards Birmingham

Price for tickets will be £15 for a three - course lunch. Partners, guests, visitors are all welcome and there will be a raffle and a quiz

Sunday 20 August 2017 Family picnic at a venue to be confirmed but probably Ryton Pools

An informal gathering for choir members, family, friends and dogs. Further details in due course

Rehearsals

We rehearse every Thursday evening at Quinton Park Baptist Church Hall, Quinton Park, Cheylesmore, Coventry CV3 5PZ. Rehearsals start at 7:15pm and finish at 9:30pm. We will start rehearsing the Messiah from mid May and the St Matthew Passion from September.

Summer Term 21 April – 21 July 2017

Winter Term 5 September – 21 December 2017



Vale, Arrivederci, Au Revoir, Auf Wiedersehen ... and Farewell!

It's not often that such an exuberant and ambitious programme as the Puccini Messa di Gloria and romantic opera choruses is taken on with such vivacity by a choral society. But the Coventry Philharmonic choir proved at Saturday's performance that they aren't just any choral society, they are a fantastic one! What a concert!!

The performance of the choir was measured and responsive, marrying precision with drama and operatic flare, suitable to the programme. And a special mention must go to Wendy Whyte for her FABULOUS rendition of the Habañera from Carmen.

What a tremendous occasion, and for me, a wonderful send off as I lay down the figurative baton of the Musical Director. Thank you 'Phil'ers, it's been marvellous to lead you over the last two years. I send you all best wishes for your future programme, and I'll see you all again soon!

Matt

Matthew Sandy
Musical Director

Reflections on the Choir's performance of Puccini's Messa Di Gloria and Opera Choruses which took place on Saturday 13 May 2017 at St Mary's Church

Contents

- Page 2 **Matthew Sandy: In Profile**
Bowled over by Skittles Evening
- Page 3 **Antoine Mitchell: Une Biographie**
Caption Competition
- Page 4 **Singing or Sailing?**
Useful Information
A Thought from our Treasurer

Matthew Sandy: In Profile



Matthew has been the interim Musical Director of the Coventry Philharmonic Choir for the past two seasons. As a well respected tenor he is first and foremost a performer. He enthusiastically describes his career to date as tremendously varied and full of opportunity, citing as examples his role as a bunny rabbit in opera and performing at the Beatification of John Henry Newman during the Papal visit of Benedict XVI in September 2010.

One of Matthew's latest challenges was to deliver a lecture for the Discovery Series at the Red House in Aldeburgh (March 30th) in which he explored the creative partnership of Britten and Pears linking it to their personal relationship and resonances in modern gay culture and performed a recital of music composed by Britten especially for his Peter Pears (March 31st).

During his teenage years Matthew was a member of the Coventry Philharmonic Choir and readily acknowledges the support the choir gave him as he "learnt his craft" and in regularly inviting him back as a soloist. However, as Matthew said "directing a large non-audition choral society is a completely different experience from being a choir member and working with small professional choral groups." During the past two years he has come to better understand that choir members have diverse interests in singing and reasons for being involved and that the primary role of the Musical Director is to establish a balance between facilitating the members' enjoyment and learning and encouraging them to achieve the highest standards of singing and performance possible.

When he was asked what he thought the legacy of his time as Musical Director might be, he replied: "the choir was fantastic when I started but perhaps more attention to dynamics and more comfort singing in a diversity of languages." As he said: "It has been an enjoyable, occasionally stressful and challenging learning experience" which will "help me in the future as an educator to better understand the continuum of interest and involvement in music making of individuals not destined to become professional

performers and to effectively explain the process of singing and teach vocal techniques."

Matthew has been particularly impressed with the high standard of the choir's concert performances that, more importantly "really demonstrated the choir's shared commitment to choral music and their collective love of singing."

Matthew was interviewed by Chris Carpenter (Alto)

Bowled over by the Skittles Evening



Well done to the Social Committee for organising the Skittles night on February 3rd. My husband plus four friends had such a fun evening that they said they would come to similar events as it was so well organised. The food was either Chicken and Chips or Brie and Beetroot Wellington.

The activities opened with a game of Heads and Tails and I am embarrassed to say that I won this, in spite of never having heard of it before! No skill involved, just luck and my prize is waiting to be drunk, but it needs a very special occasion.

This was followed by teams competing in a skittle alley and table top skittles, the latter of which required some dexterity. Including the raffle, with lots of prizes, the profit raised was £129.00.

We will certainly be coming to the quiz night on 18th November 2017, so save the date.

Maureen Robinson (Soprano) – third from left front row

Newsletters

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

Antoine Mitchell: Une Biographie



In 1956, a two year old boy sitting on a kitchen floor in Paris pulled a radio on to himself by the trailing flex because he was very upset that the music had stopped. Whether his mother had switched it off or there'd been a power cut is unimportant; the thoughts his mother had following the incident are what made the difference to his life. She decided her son really had to have piano lessons. He started these at the age of four. She couldn't have known that, due to her perception and determination, one day her only son might find himself meeting the King and Queen of Spain after conducting a gala concert for the centenary of the Spanish Press Association, or be taken on a private visit to the great pyramid of Giza as thanks for conducting the Cairo Symphony Orchestra in Egypt, or being interviewed live on Polish TV as conductor of a Polish Orchestra, or conducting the off-stage trumpets in an open air performance of Aida in Rome.

Well, that all sounds very impressive, and indeed it is! Antoine Mitchell has had an interesting life, by anyone's standards. And he would go on to do all but one of those four very impressive things. Everyone likes a challenge, so pause for a second and workout which of those you think false and then read on to see if you are right!

His English father, Gus, and French mother, Claudie, moved back to England when their son was 6 where his love of music grew under the influence of his teacher, Margaret Ashton. By the time he was 15, Antoine had outgrown Mrs Ashton, by her own admission, and he started at the Trinity College of Music in London. From there, he went on to the Royal Academy, under the phenomenal direction of George Rogers.

So here he is in 1975, graduated from the Royal Academy and with no job, but pretty handy on the ivories. George Rogers suggests to him that there is always need for pianists at the Royal Ballet and before long he finds himself as a rehearsal pianist there. This was the beginning of a career which has taken him all over the world.

In the following years Antoine conducted the Royal Ballet, the Portuguese National Ballet in Lisbon and the London Festival Ballet, on a couple of occasions.... During his time in Lisbon, he was invited to Poland as a guest conductor of the Lublin State Philharmonic Orchestra, shortly after which came the need for a permanent conductor there, which was a post which lasted five years, but entailed 'commuting' to Poland which eventually, unsurprisingly, became unsustainable. So by 1987 he landed in Essex, where he stayed for over 20 years having a quieter existence conducting the Essex Symphony Orchestra, Essex Youth Orchestra, Southend Symphony Orchestra and Brentwood Youth Orchestra, though not simultaneously! It was there that he met Dina, a German lady and shortly afterwards the love of his life came along, his son Phillip, now 16, with whom he spends most Saturdays, as Phillip lives with his mother since his parents' amicable separation. In 2004, Antoine moved to the Warwick area where he, literally, bumped into his old friend Steven Russell in Coventry and, thus, we are blessed to have him as our very well-travelled, highly accomplished, multi-linguistic, and wonderfully humorous French accompanist!

It won't come as a surprise that Antoine speaks several languages; Spanish, Polish, German, Italian and gets by in English and French too. His favourite composers are Verdi, Berlioz, Debussy and Chopin. His favourite piece of music is the one he is playing at the time and now to the really important stuff: his favourite colour is blue, he loves cooking, tennis, literature, has a passion for living history, history in general and loves the Plantagenet period. If he could only have five foods for the rest of his life he would have camembert, tuna, lentils, ratatouille and champagne.

To pay the bills, Antoine teaches piano at the Croft School in Warwick. He lives in Wellesbourne. One day he might get to conduct the off-stage trumpets in an open air performance of Aida in Rome, but it hasn't happened yet!

**Antoine was interviewed by Elizabeth Egan
(Alto)**

Caption Competition

You may recognise Henry Whitney in the photograph on the next page. There have been a few suggestions as to exactly what Henry and his brother might be doing which prompted us to think – Competition! So creative hats on and your funniest captions please to news@covphilsoc.org.uk by 31 May 2017. Entries will be anonymised before judging by the Committee, and the winning prize, apart from the kudos, is a sailing trip with Henry. Winner will be announced at the Summer Sunday Lunch on 2 July 2017.

Singing or Sailing?



I've been missing, presumed lost, too frequently for comfort over the past couple of years because I'm a lucky man; I've got a sailing boat; a 37ft Beneteau for the technical. I bought her, with my brother, in Croatia three years ago. In the first year we sailed her in the Adriatic and the Ionian seas; visiting places like Venice, Dubrovnick, Flores and Corfu. In the second year we sailed the Western Aegean; Corinth, Athens, Crete, Santorini and Rhodes and many other lovely Greek islands. Last year it was the Eastern Aegean, Turkey, and the Black Sea; Thessalonika, Ephesus, Constantinople, and the cheaper parts of Bulgaria. This year we have to bring her home; before Brexit bites and we have to pay an export fee. So; back to Athens, the Corinth canal, Kefhalonia, Malta, Sicily, Elba, The Balearics, Gibraltar, Cadiz, Lisbon, Corunna, the Bay of Biscay, Ushant, Guernsey, Cherbourg and Portsmouth.

Does it sound like bliss? Well, if you like that sort of thing (and my brother and I obviously do) it is. We've been to places we never expected to visit (I have run on the original Olympic track, consulted the Oracle at Delphi, seen where Rupert Brooke is buried, visited Ithaca, the legendary island of Homer, and sailed the Bosphorus). We've seen things we never expected to see; dolphins and porpoises playing in front of the prow; turtles laying their eggs; one wonderful sighting of a sounding whale, and sea eagles taking fish from the water.

Not all easy, however; we were menaced when we arrived in Albania (they wanted a bribe) and were in a marina bar in Istanbul watching football on the telly when the attempted coup took place. We came back to the ship after an evening on shore and found she'd gone; the anchor had dragged but we recovered her a mile or so downwind without damage. The Turkish coastguard became interested in us, suspecting, we think, that we were people or drug smugglers and you only have to be boarded at night by armed men a couple of times to get the hint. The usual storms have made us a little nervous but the Mediterranean is a forgiving sea with plenty of ports of refuge and we've never been in serious trouble.

Regrets? We've had a few, but then again; too few to mention, really. We regret not doing many more things than we regret doing.

Useful Information

Committee Members

John Atkins (Chair), Peter Snaith (Secretary), John Thompson (Treasurer), Celia Lewis (Membership), Henry Whitney (Librarian), Neil Kingdon, Clare Samson, Margaret Parkinson, Hilary Ward, Rachael Bermingham, Sheila Cowen, Heather Payne, Margaret Jakiel, Mike Ward (Front of House)

Publicity - Heather Payne, Margaret Jakiel

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

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

We sail with crew who are usually family or friends, usually not very experienced, who have to be collected from a port near to a "cheap flight" airport on a certain day and dropped off at another one a week or so later and we can't therefore take the chances that we might otherwise have taken which has restricted the distances we can sail and the places we can reach. But overall; joy! We're lucky that we're rich enough and fit enough to do it and the health won't hold out forever (and nor, for that matter, will the money!) So when the choice is a wet Thursday in Cov knocking out the Verdi Requiem and being shouted at by the boss, or a life on the open wave; well; can you blame me?

Henry Whitney
(Tenor)

A thought from our Treasurer

As you are no doubt aware a new 12-sided £1 coin has been introduced and replaces the familiar round coin, which has been in circulation since 1983. From October 15 the round coins will cease to be legal tender, giving people six months to spend, bank or donate them. So, if any members have old coins in jam jars or piggy banks please consider donating them to our Society before October 15 where they will be used to boost our limited resources. Such donations will be eligible for Gift Aid so please present them to me, your Hon. Treasurer so they can be recorded for Gift Aid. Whatever you do – don't get stuck with them after October!