

# In Tune

## 2017 Newsletter



### Editorial

#### Introduction:

I have just completed my first full year as Chairman and this is my first Editorial for 'In Tune'. As it is, I shall take as a model for this year, the structure used by my predecessor, Gus Orchard, with a promise to do something 'different' next year. In consequence, as Gus always did.... The weather is sunshine and showers, but when the sun shines it's glorious and there's nothing better than a ramble in the Chiltern woodlands with the sun dappling through the trees and the sight and sound of the Red Kite – wonderful!

#### Committee:

Right at the end of this year we were saddened with the tremendous loss – to the committee and the whole choir – of Nigel Jones. As well as supporting the bass line with his wonderful voice, he was also our marketing and publicity co-ordinator and what a job at this he has done this year. We have increased our social activity and fund-raising, partly through his suggestions and we have, at Nigel's instigation, for the first time in many a long year, a beautiful flier which we can advertise ourselves and our concerts through. You will be able to pick up copies of these by the handful (we have 3000) to deposit in libraries, tourist offices, churches, etc. throughout the county and its neighbours (I shall try depositing some in Blackwell's music shop in Oxford shortly).

We will also be saying 'goodbye' from the committee to Angela Sanderson and to Alison Roberts (also saying 'goodbye' to the choir – more on this anon). This leaves us with a number of vacancies for roles, advertised elsewhere in this newsletter. Please consider what you might be able to offer. The choir can only function effectively through the efforts of its membership so, please don't simply leave it to others to respond.

Ray Cook has also left us in the last year as repetiteur and deputy conductor and we are all missing him, including the bass line. However, he is now singing widely in the Cirencester area and there is the possibility perhaps of joining with his choir in a future event at some time.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee with my whole heart for their work, their support and their wisdom – thanks very much.

#### Aylesbury Vale Arts Council:

Some of you may know already but AVDC has stopped supporting a number of its subsidiary groups due to a funding crisis and this has included the local Arts Council. Over many years, AVAC has supported a large number of arts events and organisations throughout the Aylesbury Vale, including our own esteemed choir. These funds, though not enormous, have frequently meant the difference between breaking even and making a loss. AVAC now has to run independently of AVDC. It was considered whether it could raise supporting funds elsewhere but finding funding for a group which would then re-distribute the funding to other groups is not proving possible. Therefore, it seems that AVAC will survive

*Aylesbury Choral Society  
In Tune 2017*

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#### Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday September 5, 2017  
**Rehearsals recommence**

Tuesday September 12, 2017  
**AGM & Rehearsals**

Tuesday September 19, 2017  
**Open rehearsal**

Saturday November 18, 2017  
**Autumn Concert**  
at Aylesbury Academy  
*Schubert Mass in G, Rutter  
Gloria*

Tuesday November 21, 2017  
**Rehearsals recommence**

Tuesday January 2, 2018  
**Rehearsals recommence**

Saturday March 24, 2018  
**Spring Concert**  
at St Mary's Church (tbc)  
*Bach: St Matthew Passion*  
with orchestra

tba  
**Summer Concert**

#### Aylesbury Choral Society

Registered charity no. 274768  
Web: [www.aylesburychoral.org.uk](http://www.aylesburychoral.org.uk)  
Email: [info@aylesburychoral.org.uk](mailto:info@aylesburychoral.org.uk)

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only as long as its remaining funds do – possibly until about Autumn 2018 – after which it will disband and local authority support for arts organisation will be, to all intents and purposes, non-existent. This is a very sad state of affairs but little can be done to mitigate it.

### Music:

So to the music – what, at the end of the day, we are all here for.

The past year has been exciting throughout, including several ‘firsts’ for me, personally. In December, the baroque music by Pergolesi, Durante and Monteverdi was, for me at least, right up my street. I just love this period of musical history and the pieces we sang, selected for their general appropriateness to the season, were exuberant and delightful. They weren’t particularly difficult in terms of the notes but, to get the ‘feeling’ just right, needed focus and some sense of the meaning within the music. Jeff helped us to achieve this well and the whole evening was full of light and beautiful sounds.

Then, at Easter, was the concert which, for me, was much more challenging and ‘new’, though no less exciting for that. I knew the Durufle well through recordings and it is a deservedly much loved and admired piece. Knowing it from recordings, however, didn’t completely prepare for singing the music which I had never done before. In my view, at least, it is a more accomplished and sensuous piece than the more known and more famous requiem by Faure (not that this is not also lovely). The Poulenc I barely knew at all, except through a BBC Music Magazine cover recording I have, but rarely listened to. This is not naturally my forte but I really enjoyed learning the music (not always as difficult as it appeared or sounded, partly through frequently doubled parts) and performing it. The concert was crowned with some fantastic soloists, all of whom I’m sure all of us would welcome back with open arms in some future concert.



With my own little vocal group, we have been singing items from ‘In the Mood’ and ‘Encores for Choirs’ for some time as they suit us well. With the reduced (but still larger) forces of the choral society, this music was magnificent. I am aware that the style of these songs and arrangements are not everyone’s ‘cup of tea’, but those of us who sang had such a whale of a time and the audience at Dinton Church loved it. The concert made for a perfect summer’s evening and I think that many of us who performed thought that we had rarely sounded better. The music is tricky to learn and some of the harmonies tricky to pitch but we all did remarkably well.

What a fantastic year and I look forward to another one coming up – more on this later... However, I will conclude this section by offering particular thanks to both Jeff and Colin, without whom we would not be who we are. Jeff’s passion for getting us to ‘feel’ and express the inner meaning of the music (including lyrics) is inspiring; after all, getting the notes right but with little insight into the composer’s intentions and feeling for the music is, at the end of the day, rather pointless. We are extremely fortunate to have an accompanist of the talent and skill of Colin who can not only transpose with unimaginable skill but can also lend a hand with both conducting and singing at times. Thanks to both of you.

### Members:

I have already alluded to the passing away of Nigel Jones above, but we also remember two other members and past-members who have passed away during this last year: Rosemary Wallace and Audrey Cumming. I acknowledge here their great contribution to the choir in their years with us and we are very sorry to hear of their families’ loss. We send the respective families our condolences and our love and best wishes. It is sad when we lose members who have been such an integral part of the Society.

Other members, of course, have also left the society due to changing commitments and/or moving away from the district; rather more than I can list here. We wish them good fortune in their next endeavours – please don’t lose touch completely. In balance, we have also had several new members joining us this year and you are most welcome and I hope that you will be with us for a long time to come.

### Open Rehearsal:

We all need to make a concerted effort to get new members – we need members in all parts but, perhaps, as usual, especially men. Remember: we are to have an open rehearsal on the 19<sup>th</sup> September and this will be

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an ideal time to invite people who might be interested to see what 'we're like'. More details on this elsewhere in 'In Tune'. Make sure that you pick up and distribute liberally some fliers about this as soon as they become available – later in August.

### **Social activity, fund-raising and financial thoughts:**

We have continued to have our raffles, led by the different vocal parts, several times each term and these have been successful in supplementing funds as they often are. Thank you to the organisers of these, including Sheelagh who continues to work tirelessly for the Society and who, I know, is planning something of a surprise in the up-coming year – see her article elsewhere in 'In Tune'.

We have also had two other events over the year. In the Autumn, we held a social evening, the first of its type for a long time, I believe. In this evening, several of the society's members performed musical and other items to the delight of the audience. It was a pleasure to see how many of our members have talents which we do not often see on a week-by-week basis. There's so much talent 'out there' and it will be good to develop this in other events in the future.

Then, in the Spring, Angela Sanderson and her husband, Charles, once again held a Quiz Night and fish and chip supper at the Bernard Hall in Cuddington. This was, as always, superbly organised, very well attended and enjoyed by all; though I'm still uncertain as to why my team did not win – it can't be because they had me as a handicap!! The event raised around £500 – thanks very much to Angela and Charles, and to their team.

Raffles at concerts have also been productive of additional funds this year, largely due to the better range of prizes and the improved organisation that we are now having. I do not have the figures to-hand as I write, but the income has been most welcome to swell the coffers.

There are rumours that some members of the choir feel that, with the additional funds we receive through the events listed above, we are in a better position to have larger and more frequent orchestras to join us in concerts. Much as these funds are invaluable in supporting the work of the choir, I also believe that some of us have little idea as to the budgets we work to (despite being outlined at AGMs). I will attempt to explain a little more in the next AGM but, for example, the orchestra for the St Matthew Passion next Easter, whilst we are still in negotiations, may be as much as in the region of £6000 (the quote we have at the moment) and, with other concert expenses, the total budget may be as much as around £9000. At £15 per ticket, this means we need to sell 600. We have no venues where, even if we could sell that many, we could fit them in



and, on average, our normal audience size is around 250-300. This means a considerable loss. Our subscriptions from members almost entirely goes into supporting the hire of Fairford Leys for rehearsal and the services of Jeff and Colin for rehearsals only. Therefore, whilst fund-raising events are a vital linch-pin in our finances they are no where sufficient to support the costs of frequent orchestras. If members wish to see this then (1) we need to seek large venues, (2) we need to seek other significant strategies for raising money and (3) above all, we ALL need to make more concerted efforts in marketing the Society and selling concert tickets. We all have to do it!

There's more on advertising and marketing elsewhere in 'In Tune'.

### **AGM:**

Attached to this copy of In Tune is a notice for calling the Society's Annual General Meeting for Tuesday 12th September at Fairford Leys. There will be a music rehearsal in the second half of the evening but please make sure that you come for whole evening – your vote and interest counts at the AGM.

### **Subscriptions:**

GOOD NEWS – There will be no change in subscription levels this year.

### **The Coming Season:**

The coming year's music is going to be yet more exciting even than last year's.

Our autumn concert is early – in November (to allow for additional Spring concert rehearsals as Easter is early). We will be singing Schubert's Mass in G and Rutter's Gloria. The scores for hire will be available at our first rehearsal on 5<sup>th</sup> September. As the rehearsal season this year is somewhat 'constricted', it is vital that members commit to as full a set of rehearsals as possible. Both of these works are new to me but I'm

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looking forward to them tremendously and I trust that you are as well. Please note that the concert will not be at St Mary's. We are still finalising the venue as I write but it is likely to be the 'theatre' at Aylesbury Academy in Quarrendon. This has raked seating for 400 so there's plenty of opportunity to sell a record number of tickets in order to partly fund the Spring concert.

In the Spring, we will be singing Bach's St Matthew Passion. This is a colossal work in so many ways – its scope, its length, its drama, its musical vision, and so on. We are also planning to have a professional orchestra (see concerns re expenses above). We will almost certainly need to 'cut' the work a little but this will be a concert to really look forward to and start marketing now! It's a few years since we sang the St Matthew and it's also some time since I sang in it last myself.

The summer is still a little 'open ended' at present but, on the cards, is a 'Proms' evening, which should be tremendous fun. So, get your flags, streamers and funny hats out of the loft and polished off in readiness!

#### **In General:**

**POSITIONS VACANT:** We are in need of four positions (all with places on the committee): website maintenance, librarian, publicity/marketing, and deputy chair-person. See the adverts below. Be prepared – you may be personally invited to take on one of these roles but don't let that stop you from volunteering yourselves.

If you do have any ideas, concerns or whatever regarding the society, please let me or any other committee member know. We are here to serve you. Many thanks to all of you for your support for the Society over the past year and, in anticipation, thank you for your support in the coming year. It is my personal view that we are the finest amateur choral group between London and Oxford; we have a lot to shout about and recommend us, so please do let people know about us (open rehearsal on the 19<sup>th</sup> would be a good start) and about our concerts (distribute the bi-annual leaflets which will be available on the 5<sup>th</sup> to all and sundry).

*"Ah, music... a magic beyond all we do here!"* (Albus Dumbledore aka J.K.Rowling)

See you on the 5th September at Fairford Leys

**Chris Dalladay, Chairman**

## **From your Musical Director**

I'm not going to spend my whole article repeating comments about your prowess this year. The December concert was lovely. The energy with which you sang the splendid music of Durante, Pergolesi and Monteverdi was terrific and I think we all learned something in the build up to the rest of the programme, which also turned out splendidly. I also learned lessons from the way the orchestra worked out, but overall, it was terrific.

The Duruflé/Poulenc concert was a joy. Amazing music, expressively sung with glorious Soloists and Colin accompanying us with his usual flair.

My favourite concert was perhaps the summer one. Although we had fewer people, those who joined in worked incredibly hard to produce a wonderful evening of great music.

I've recently been in discussions with a fairly well known soprano who had the courage to say how much torture she puts herself through with nerves before a concert. It prompted others, myself included, to talk about our own experiences of nerves and how to overcome them. I think that, in the case of solo singers, people try to solve all problems technically rather than understanding that their body knows how to react in order to express the music as the composer intended. The result is that performances become a damage limitation exercise.

The same is often true in choirs. People worry that they can't make the high notes, can't sing the long phrases, won't make a nice sound and all manner of other things which cause them, subconsciously, to place limits on



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the way they sing. Singing becomes a damage limitation exercise, to try and get through without being noticed or letting the side down. To an extent, many people broke that in the summer concert, and we had such fun doing it. This year, I would like to use the winter concert to make that possible for everyone and then perhaps we stand a chance of carrying that forward into a truly expressive performance of the St. Matthew Passion.

I'm looking forward to it all immensely.

**Jeff Stewart**

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## From your Vice President

It's a couple of years since I last contributed to InTune. It is twenty years since I first joined the Choral Society. I found the members were friendly and welcoming. The conductor at that time was Steve Dummer and he left soon after I joined ( I don't think it was anything I said). Jamie Burton then became our next conductor. It was during this time that I was persuaded to take over the chairmanship .This was a very interesting time for me; all the work involved in putting on a concert was very enlightening. I was very lucky in having an excellent committee.



Jamie resigned, giving us very little notice of his intention. We advertised for a new conductor, and received 22 applications. The committee (including myself) shortlisted six of the applicants, who were invited to audition with the choir and were also invited to an interview with the committee. Members of the choir were then asked to vote for their preferred candidate. Peter Leech was the overwhelmingly successful one.

Peter Leech stayed with us for 10 years and then was replaced by our present conductor, Jeff Stewart. Six candidates were required to take a short session with the choir and then members of the choir and the committee voted for their preference. Jeff was the successful candidate. Each conductor has an unique style and I have learnt a lot from them.

During Peter Leech's tenure, Gus Orchard, after a little persuading took over from me as chairman and did a stalwart job for 10years! He then encouraged Chris Dalladay to take over the role.

Fund raising has been an ongoing commitment, with monthly raffles, table top sales, a market stall at Christmas, an auction run for us by Charlie Ross (of BBC fame) and, of course, the Pantomime. It is a few years since we last trod the boards, and some members of the choir have indicated that they would like to revive this money-making event . So, in September, I will be looking for volunteers to take part. All would-be thespians are encouraged to volunteer. It is fun! (well most of the time) - more details in September.

Hope you are all having a good summer and look forward to seeing you all soon.

**Sheelagh Nolan (Vice President)**

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## Some Schubertian thoughts

Given that I don't think we've sung any Schubert since I joined the Choral Society, it's a nice prospect that we'll be singing his Mass in G in November and that got me thinking about the man and his music.

He was remarkably prolific, writing over 1,500 works in his short career. His compositional style progressed rapidly throughout his short life. The largest number of his compositions are songs for solo voice and piano (over 600). He also composed a considerable number of secular works for two or more voices, namely part songs, choruses and cantatas. He completed eight orchestral overtures and seven complete symphonies, in addition to fragments of six others. While he composed no concertos, he did write three concertante works for violin and orchestra. There is a large body of music for solo piano, including fourteen complete sonatas, numerous miscellaneous works and many short dances. There is also a relatively

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large set of works for piano duet. There are over fifty chamber works, including some fragmentary works. His sacred output includes seven masses, one oratorio and one requiem, among other mass movements and numerous smaller compositions. He completed only eleven of his twenty-stage works.



And all this in 31 years...and we can probably discount his writing much before his teens!

When Schubert died he had around 100 opus numbers published, mainly songs, chamber music and smaller piano compositions. Publication of smaller pieces continued (including opus numbers up to 173 in 1860s, 50 instalments with songs published by Diabelli and dozens of first publications by Peters), but the manuscripts of many of the longer works, whose existence was not widely known, remained hidden in cabinets and file boxes of Schubert's family, friends, and publishers. Even some of his friends were unaware of the full scope of what he wrote, and for many years he was primarily recognized as the "prince of song", although there was recognition of some of his larger-scale efforts. In 1838, Robert Schumann, on a visit to Vienna, found the dusty manuscript of the C major Symphony (D. 944) and took it back to Leipzig where it was performed by Felix Mendelssohn. An important step towards the recovery of the neglected works was the journey to Vienna which Sir

George Grove (widely known for the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) and Arthur Sullivan made in the autumn of 1867. The travellers rescued from oblivion seven symphonies, the *Rosamunde* incidental music, some of the masses and operas, several chamber works, and a vast quantity of miscellaneous pieces and songs. This led to more widespread public interest in Schubert's work.

Schubert's music has been used extensively in films since the silent era. In 1930, Buñuel used the Unfinished Symphony in *L'Age d'Or* (1930), his Ave Maria features in Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), Kyrie in *Tortilla Flat* (1942), the Unfinished Symphony in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) and *Double Indemnity* (1944), the Marche Militaire in *Brief Encounter* (1945), Der Erlkönig in *Bugs Bunny Rides Again* (1948), the ballet music from *Rosamunde* in *Rear Window* (1954), Der Neugeborene in *Marathon Man* (1976), 'Wohin?' from *Die schöne Müllerin* in *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* (1982), the D537 piano sonata in *A Room With a View* (1985), the D960 piano sonata in *Withnail & I* (1987), Sei mir gegrüsst! in *The Remains of the Day* (1993) and the impromptu in B flat major (D 935 no. 3) in *The Lady in the Van* (2015), amongst many others. Move over, John Williams!

## Gus Orchard

## It could be you!

Vacant positions. Job descriptions will be distributed in due course.

**Publicity / Marketing** – due to the sad loss of Nigel Jones (see Chairman's notes at the beginning of this edition of 'In Tune', we need someone to take over this important role and to lead the various marketing initiatives already started by Nigel (e.g. the advertising fliers now available for distribution)



**Librarian** – to order scores, arrange for their collection and distribution and, generally, to keep track of them. Initial training from Alison Roberts will be available (see her article below).

**Web-site management** – to review and maintain the Society's web-site. Again, intinial training will be available from Alison Roberts.

**Deputy Chair** – to share some of Chris's role.

Aylebury Choral Society can only operate successfully and efficiently through the contributions and efforts of its members, so please do seriously and generously consider whether you might be able to offer one of these roles. None are particularly onerous and support is available. Membership of the committee is automatic.

## A Poem

By Angela Sanderson

It's the night of the concert and all through the church  
There are people arriving, and Ray's on the search  
For two naughty singers who've not learned their parts -  
He needs to rehearse them before the thing starts!

Here's Chris – he's our Chairman, and he's looking worried  
The tenors aren't ready and will not be hurried;  
At the door there is Sheelagh – she's selling tickets, and  
Busy Helen's reviewing the seating she's planned.

Into the Church ACS members file,  
Gus Orchard steps up with a welcoming smile:  
He's promised to do his air hostess bit:  
"Please turn off your phones, and there is the Exit!"

At last we are ready, let music commence.  
All our eyes are on Jeff for it's an offence  
Not to watch our conductor from beginning to end.  
It's Bach and then Handel, composers who tend  
To be thought of as brilliant, and certainly masters  
Of toccatas and fugues that go faster and faster!

A cantata by Haydn and then it is Britten,  
I wish I could understand what he has written!  
A song by Vaughan Williams completes the first part,  
It's all about lovers and one broken heart

During the interval there's wine and there's juice - we  
Oughtn't to drink too much, but Charlie and Lucy  
Are very persuasive; though some are more careful  
As we eagerly await the results of the raffle.

Then it's back to our places for a short piece by Rutter;  
It's over quite quickly, then some of us mutter  
"Now for the long one" - it's really quite scary  
But it sounds pretty good in this Church of St Mary.

## From the Treasurer...

Our decision to increase ticket prices boosted concert revenues, although date clashes for both the Christmas and spring concerts did not! The choir's contribution to the Dinton organ restoration fund, as a result of the June concert enjoyed by many of you, did not, of course, add to our own bank balances. These are nonetheless increasingly healthy. Some costs rose, and others will follow suit over the next year. Fund raising activities such as the social evening and the quiz night were very successful, giving some members the impression that we can now afford to stage concerts with larger or more prestigious orchestras. These can be very expensive, so this is not an option the choir finances could withstand on a regular basis. So, for the new year, additional members and ticket sales would really help.

**Val Turnham**

## ...and our out-going Librarian

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who has helped me this year. Giving out scores, retrieving them, rubbing out parties. There are between 60-120 scores that need monitoring, and getting back to the libraries in a timely manner. Without your help, I could not do the job. I also had a 100% return rate for getting the scores back to me, this year. Again, thank you for this! I am usually on a tight time constraint to get everything back, and just you putting your scores in the box at the end of term helps enormously.

Feedback from the rubbing out parties was that sometimes there are heavy markings on the scores. Could you please use light pencil. And..... if you could review your score before the performance, rubbing out any unnecessary markings. I say this, having had to rub out someone's shopping list! Seriously, just this simple task, before the Saturday, will help the Rubbing out party enormously.

A few of you will have heard that I am leaving Choir (*boo-hoo – chairman sobbing!*). To avoid any misunderstandings, the reason for this is that I find singing too difficult, so am not joining another Choir. You all know - and I have been very open about this - that I cannot sight read, and I found I was spending hours each week trying to learn the pieces off by heart. I was loving going to Choir each week, but I would return home despondent that I couldn't sing to a level acceptable to myself. So, the decision to leave was actually made quite easily, although still with a heavy heart. I hope that makes sense.

ACS will need a new Librarian (*see elsewhere – chariman*). The role of a Librarian is a rewarding job. You get to know everyone, and are included in the Committee discussions and decision making. You do have to be organised though, and be prepared to harry and pester people where necessary! Please, if there is anyone who thinks that they would like to take the role on, please let any of the Committee know. I shall be there for the first two weeks or so, to hand out this term's scores, so you will have a hands-on experience on what is required.

I leave with a sad heart, but in the knowledge that I have loved my time with ACS, that I have made some wonderful friends and that the Choir will continue to perform to an exceptional level. No doubt I will be seeing many of you again "somewhere", and I send my very best wishes to you All.

**Alison Roberts**





## Open Rehearsal

The Choir's rehearsal on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September will take the form of an 'Open Rehearsal'. This is an opportunity for you to invite those who might want to 'try us out' or think that they might be interested. Leaflets will shortly be available for you to distribute to any and all; but please make a real effort to invite as many people as possible for this 'taster' session and for some fun!



## AGM Notice

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Tuesday 12th September at Fairford Leys Church at 7.30 pm. The agenda for the meeting will be forwarded by email and will be posted on the website.

The first rehearsal of the New Year takes place on  
**Tuesday 5th September @ 7.30pm**  
**The Church on Fairford Leys**

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## And Finally...

Thanks to all the newsletter contributors and to those involved in its distribution. As ever, comments on this newsletter gratefully received – good or bad! For the most up-to-date information on the Society, be sure to visit [www.aylesburychoral.org.uk](http://www.aylesburychoral.org.uk)