

MUSICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2023

When I was first invited to join the Faringdon Singers as their new musical director, I was promised that this was the friendliest choir in Oxfordshire and I have not been disappointed! It has been an absolute pleasure to become involved in a choir of wonderful musicians who have been so generous in their welcome. Thank you all. I am also very grateful that Terence has been willing to stay on as our accompanist, which he does with enormous skill and sensitivity.

Our Christmas Concert 2022 was held in Blessed Hugh Catholic Church. We opted for one concert that term, which in retrospect was fortunate since nearly a quarter of the choir were sadly absent due to illness. Nonetheless, it was a lovely concert of familiar Christmas repertoire as well as some beautiful Advent pieces including Villettes's *Hymne a la vierge* and pieces by Bruckner and Byrd. Meg Greenwood recited two lovely poems and there were the usual carols with the audience. It was a very enjoyable first concert for me as MD.

Our Spring Concert included more ambitious repertoire, on the theme of 'A journey through the Psalms'. We covered pieces from the early Renaissance to the present day, including John Rutter's 'The Lord is my light and my salvation' with clarinet obbligato by Vicky Lewis. The second half of the concert included Monteverdi's *Beatus Vir*, which was accompanied by two violin soloists, Anna Nemchuk and Katherine Payne. Anna and Katherine also delighted us with a performance of Bach's *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor* and Shostakovich's *Five Pieces for Two Violins and Piano*, both accompanied by Lynette Stulting. We held two concerts, one at St Mary's Uffington and one at St Mary's Buckland and the audience were warm and appreciative at both venues.

Faringdon Singers has had a long-standing association with John Ridgway and it was therefore a pleasure to be invited by Phil Johnson to perform at John's retirement concert at the Parish Church in Wantage on 29th April. We performed two pieces that John composed/arranged for FS and 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day' with the Wantage church choir.

Our final concert of the year was held at St Mary the Virgin, Longcot, on a beautiful summer evening. Our theme was 'Dreams of the Countryside' and covered music by Vaughan Williams, Saint-Saens, and various arrangements of folk songs. Richard Benwell (tenor) and Sophie Stainer (soprano) performed the beautiful duet *As Steals the Morn Upon the Night* by Handel, accompanied by Debra Warner (piano), Vicky Lewis (clarinet) and Lyn Williamson (bassoon). We also heard two exciting pieces by Peter Warlock, *Pretty Ringtime* and *The Lover's Maze*, performed by David Willey (tenor) and accompanied by Debra Warner. There was a particularly poignant moment in the concert when the choir performed an encore of *Sure on this shining night* by Lauridsen. This was dedicated to the memory of Diane Blease, whose husband, Dennis, welcomed us to the church.

I am delighted that Phil Singleton, local composer and conductor of the Marlborough Concert Orchestra, is going to be taking on the role of Musical Director while I am on maternity leave. I am certain that the choir will continue to go from strength to strength under his leadership.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to the committee, especially Sjoerd, for everything they have done behind the scenes, and to each member of the choir for making this first year such an enjoyable experience.