

Welcome to the 2019 edition of Chester Music Society's Newsletter. The Celebrity concert section continues to engage performers of exceptional ability and the Showcase section provides a showcase for local Chester talent, while the Choir continues to attract good audiences to our cathedral concerts. Inevitably this newsletter is looking back to the events of 2018, but even so we should not miss this opportunity to remind you not only about the rest of the 2018–19 season, but show you something of the 2019–20 season as well. It's all on the back page. You can keep up to date with all our activities by being included in our regular email updates. Just email 'Subscribe' to info@chestermusicsociety.org.uk or Telephone 01244 383455. Our web site (www.chestermusicsociety.org.uk) also provides a wealth of information on our activities and programmes.

CHOIR

Another successful year. Choir numbers are holding up well, and although inevitably some members drop out our patron good fairy always seems able to round up new people. Including new tenors. Word obviously gets around that we are a good organisation to join.

We opened the Season with "An Evening with Mozart", singing the Solemn Vespers and the infamous Requiem Mass, Mozart's last uttering left incomplete. Both works were superbly and sensitively sung by the choir and our excellent soloists, including our old friend Brian Bannatyne-Scott – recently returned from performing "Peter Grimes" in Monaco – who was particularly complimentary about the chorus. We also had the pleasure of a return visit by John Gough playing the A major concerto – probably Mozart's most popular – which he delivered with style and insight.

In April we went to try out Storyhouse. This was very much an experiment 'to find the pitch of the hall'; we joined forces with Chester Bach Singers and Chester Male Voice Choir for an early evening concert where each group performed in their own style and repertoire. Altogether a rather mixed result for us.

Then in May Graham Jordan Ellis put together an eclectic pot-pourri programme of music for our Spring concert to celebrate Kings Queens and Princes, ranging from the early period (Purcell) to the very modern (Paul Mealor). With accompaniment and organ solos by our own Graham Eccles and from a brass ensemble of trumpets, sackbuts and trombones.



Three Choirs at Storyhouse



In June 52 singers, plus supporters, decamped to Portugal for our biannual tour. Of which more on last page of this newsletter.

If you prefer a large orchestra – and many clearly do – then our performance of Elgar's Dream of Gerontius in November was the one to go for. The choir really excelled in this, and we received many expressions of praise, both from audience and our fellow performers. It was a most moving occasion. Thanks particularly on this occasion to the Choir of Chester cathedral for providing the semi-chorus.

Christmas brought yet more success and praise with an audience over two nights of more than 1500 who crammed into the cathedral to hear Ian McMillan with his colleague Luke Carver-Goss. Once again he had them rolling in the aisles with a stream of wit and poetry to bring our busy and fulfilling year to a triumphant end.

SHOWCASE SECTION

Mick Clarke writes...2018 started on a rather sad note for both the Showcase section and indeed Chester Music Society as a whole, with the passing away of Lila Hallett in January. As most people involved with music in the Chester area will know, Lila was a principal force in the encouragement of music making for young people and also amateurs. Over many decades she taught piano to countless budding artists as well as being involved with the running of the former Club Section of the society and the Celebrity Concerts and other organisations outside of CMS. Her enthusiasm was infectious and over many years she built up a group of many friends and was always interested in how things were going for them. (Of which more below.)

As a consequence several of our Showcase concerts over the last year were dedicated to her memory. In particular the concert in November by Abbey Gate College Chapel Choir included performances from friends of Lila. Stewart Smith,

long time director of the choir, returned from retirement and gave us anecdotes from his many encounters with Lila. Over the year our Showcase concerts have been the usual mix of solo, group and choir performances mainly by students and schoolchildren of all ages sprinkled with performances by more mature local artists. Particular favourites in the winter /spring period were the outstanding Wrexham County Youth Choir conducted by Tim Jones and Chester Youth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jan Modelski who gave a complete performance of Rachmaninov's 2nd Piano Concerto with Josh Kelly as soloist.

Jonathan Guy and Leanne Cody gave excellent renditions from the standard clarinet repertoire for our annual Gala Concert.

So far in the autumn/winter period we have had an extremely polished and mature performance from Imogen Royce on Flute with her accompanist Imma Setiadi. Imogen is one of our former Young Musicians winners, as you will read below.

Our final concert for 2018 featured three Brass Bands from the City of Chester: Chester Brass Band, Training Band and a new innovation, the Junior Training Band. The Bands' musical director explained that Chester has one of only a few hundred brass bands that are still active in the country, in massive contrast to a few decades ago when there were

CELEBRITY CONCERT SERIES

David Woods writes: the celebrity concert series has had a great year with membership, Friends and audiences all up on the previous year.

The year started with an outstanding concert given by a relatively young and emerging clarinettist Matthew Scott, alongside pianist Daniel King-Smith. February brought us the outstanding Violin and Piano Duo of Jack Liebeck and Katya Apekishiva.

We were delighted to welcome Jess Gillam fresh from her performance at the last night of the Proms to our October concert. She gave an outstanding performance to a full house. Guy Johnston and Sam Haywood were stunning in November, my favourite piece being the Franck Sonata in A Major.

Another full house with the ever-popular Original Panama Jazz Men in December.

My personal highlight of the year was Charles Owen's performance of Bach's Goldberg Variations. Charles gave a really interesting preliminary talk on the piece followed by playing the whole variations without a break. Quite a feat of stamina and concentration. It was an exceptional concert.

Many of last year's artistes commented on the warmth of the welcome they received from us. They really appreciated the intimacy of St Mary's as a venue. Charles Owen wrote to us to say he was "*delighted by the incredibly focused response from the audience at CMS. The Goldberg Variations are such a journey for performer and listeners alike. A memorable occasion.*"

As ever, thanks to everyone who contributes so much to the success of our concerts. Without their support concerts would not happen. Particular thanks to those who provide accommodation for our artistes; we know how much of a difference this makes to them. Far nicer than another anonymous hotel room.

several thousands. However, the future for Brass bands in Chester is looking good.

LILA HALLETT

It is with great sadness that we have to record the death of Lila Hallett in January 2018 at the age of 86. As a member of Chester Music Society for many years she was instrumental in inaugurating our Young Chester Musician competition and – as accompanist and supporter – in enabling the Chester Music Society Youth Choir to become established in 1988. She continued as a committee member of both Showcase and the Celebrity Concerts up until her death.



Jane, Lila and Claire

Lila devoted her life to participating in and involving others in the field of music, particularly young people. She was delighted to be awarded the Outstanding Contribution to the Arts award at the first Cheshire West Voluntary Arts awards in 2015, and then in 2016 she received the Lady Hilary Groves Award by Making Music for her outstanding contribution to Music in the Community.

To celebrate her life her daughters, Claire and Jane, organised an impromptu concert at St Mary's at which her many friends and colleagues were entertained by other friends with music of many styles.

This was very much a fun evening with contributions from sopranos Rachel Payne and Brenda Flanagan and tenor Stewart Armstrong and with Jane Hallett herself playing cello duets with John Gough, who in turn accompanied Claire's son Sam with piano duets.

Sam Hallett-Rourke was not the only one of John Gough's pupils performing: former students Jeremy Heald and Louie McIver (our Young Musician winner from 2017) also took part with solos, duets, and even six hands on one piano. We even unearthed old recordings of Lila herself to remind us of her brilliant piano playing. A great celebration of a notable life in music. The event was rounded off by a eulogy from Berkeley Ranby in which he



Louie McIver, Jeremy Heald and John Gough in piratical mood

highlighted the many contributions Lila had made to the musical life of Chester over the years.

YOUNG MUSICIANS – WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In 2011 the Music Society inaugurated its own competition to find Chester Young Musicians. Since then we have discovered many outstanding and talented young people, several of whom have gone on to great success. We thought this would be an opportune time to highlight the careers that some of them are now following. Keep a good lookout: you will be seeing and hearing more of them in future.

The inaugural Chester Young Musician of the Year Competition in 2011 was won by King's School student **Selim Ungut**.

Currently, Selim is studying for a PhD in chemical engineering at Newcastle University.



Tom Blomfield (2012).



After leaving North Wales Tom studied at the Royal Academy of Music

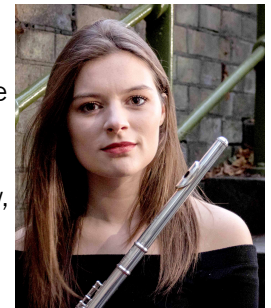
As principal oboe in a number of projects with the Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra Tom has worked with Edward Gardner, Oliver Knussen and Sir Mark Elder. In his second year, he was selected to play principal oboe in the Royal Academy of Music Soloists Ensemble with Trevor Pinnock, in a project that culminated in a release on Linn Records of Mozart's Serenade for 13 Winds in B Flat.

Tom has appeared as guest principal oboe with the London Symphony Orchestra and BBC Symphony Orchestra, and has performed with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Sinfonia Cymru. In 2017 he was appointed Joint Principal Oboe by the Philharmonia Orchestra. *(With acknowledgements to the Philharmonia Orchestra website)*

Imogen Royce (2015) is now studying at the Royal College of Music.

She has performed regularly as an orchestral musician, as principal flute for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, the BBC Proms Youth Ensemble and various orchestral projects at the RCM. Recent highlights include a performance of Brahms' 2nd Symphony with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

As a soloist, Imogen made her European debut in 2017 in the Recital Hall of the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, as part of the Netherlands Flute Academy, led by Emily Beynon. She also recently performed in a live-streamed masterclass led by Sir James Galway. Imogen has recently been awarded a place on the English National Opera's Evolve Scheme and the Academy of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.



Since winning the Chester Young Musician competition in 2016 **William Bracken** went on to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he is studying piano with Martin Roscoe and Ronan O'Hora and Jazz piano with Barry Green. Although still a student William is in great demand locally: in July 2017 he gave a memorable concert at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall with the Crosby Symphony Orchestra under Juan Ortuno playing Rachmaninov's 3rd piano concerto. The following year he returned with the CSO at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall for a performance of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. Some highlights of 2018 have been a concert with the Wirral Symphony Orchestra and Jonathan Small, playing Saint-Saëns 2nd piano concerto and Prokofiev's 1st piano concerto, and an evening recital at Frodsham Music Festival.



Louie Mclver (2017) has just started his undergraduate music degree course at Girton College in the University of Cambridge. He is a member of the Chapel Choir and the Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra. He also organised and took part in the annual freshers' concert. He is also taking the composition module and will be writing a chamber piece possibly for string quartet. He says he hopes to have many premières in the future!



SHIRLEY HAYES – A long-standing Choir member remembered

Jane Owens writes...Members of Chester Music Society and especially of its choir were saddened to learn of the death of Shirley Hayes last August, a long standing member of the Choir who also served two consecutive terms as a member of its committee.



Born in 1937, Shirley attended The Queen's School from 1947 to 1954 where during her adult career she taught Domestic Science, later Home Economics, for many years. As a girl, Shirley was encouraged in her singing by the then Head of Music, Miss Whittam. Indeed Miss Whittam was on the founding committee of Chester Music Society and both she and Shirley's parents were involved in the Society's management until the 1960s.

Shirley had a deep love of a wide range of music. She attended Music Society concerts whenever she could and sang in the Chester Music Society Choir for well over 40 years where she was a faithful and enthusiastic member of the first altos. During her latter years she became the longest serving member of the Choir and was a great supporter of its work and development.

Shirley's health deteriorated in her latter years but she persevered, despite struggling to cope with getting on and off the staging. Her poor health eventually forced her to give up her choir membership much to her sadness.

Shirley has over many years made a very considerable contribution to the life and growth of the choir. She will be remembered by those who knew her for her kindness, generosity and integrity and above all for her unstinting support for Chester Music Society and its choir.

THE CHOIR ON TOUR

Clive Cooper writes...Armed with a selection of choral works by Parry, Gounod and Handel, sixty-six members of Chester Music Society Choir left the UK on the biennial tour in late May 2018, destination Lisbon.



Of Lisbon's attractions as a cultural and historical centre of great repute there can be no doubt; qualities which the touring party fully acquainted itself with in no small measure. Exploration of the city, the royal pleasure grounds at Sintra, the ancient walled town of Obidos, the great monastery of Batalha and two celebratory dinners were all highlights of the trip. However, making choral music in Portugal does bring challenges.



The choir gave performances in three great churches: Leiria Cathedral, São Vicente de Fora and Dos Matires. These are all very imposing Baroque edifices dating from Portugal's imperial heyday. Their echoing vastness presented considerable acoustic challenges and the organs within them are much prized old instruments which are jealously guarded. On two occasions we had to rely on keyboards of somewhat dubious quality when organ lofts were denied to us. Even when the organ was made available, its Baroque dynamics were far more suited to the work of Handel, perhaps not surprisingly, rather than to

pieces by Parry and Gounod.

Nevertheless, the outstanding leadership of Musical Director Graham Jordan Ellis, together with the brilliance and adaptability of accompanist Graham Eccles, saw delivery of three concerts to combined audiences of over 750 people; two of these receiving standing ovations.

We left Lisbon charmed by its delights, better educated in the heritage of Portugal and utterly won over by the warmth and wonderful hospitality of the Portuguese people. We were also secure in the knowledge that the musical reputation of our own city had been considerably enhanced.



EVENTS FOR 2019

This listing of events is for calendar 2019 so includes events which are not yet in our general publicity. A privileged preview for you. For more information, and to be added to the circulation for next season's brochure, just email info@chestermusicsociety.org.uk

9 January	CELEBRITY	Pixels Piano Trio (Sophie Rosa, Jonathan Aasgaard, Ian Buckle)
16 January	SHOWCASE	A recital by local young musicians
6 February	SHOWCASE	Cantabile Overleigh School choir; Latchen Kinghorn-Perry, clarinet
13 February	CELEBRITY	Clare Hammond piano
2 March	WORKSHOP	Open Choir Day: "Inspired by Shakespeare"
13 March	CELEBRITY	String Octet: Wihan Quartet with Sacconi Quartet
20 March	SHOWCASE	Marija Scott piano and Linda Clayton soprano
23 March	CHOIR	J S Bach: St John Passion
3 April	SHOWCASE	Chester Youth Symphony Orchestra
6 April	WORKSHOP	Chamber music workshop at Abbey Gate College
8 May	SHOWCASE	Gala concert with John Gough piano, Laurie Ashworth soprano and Rachel Fillhart clarinet
18 May	CHOIR	Haydn: The Creation
9 October	CELEBRITY	Piers Lane piano
13 November	CELEBRITY	Jennifer Pike violin
23 November	CHOIR	Carl Jenkins: The Armed Man
11 December	CELEBRITY	Pentagon Brass Quintet
18, 19 December	CHOIR	Christmas Concerts with Roger McGough

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