

WATFORD PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 2ND OCTOBER 2017

SECRETARY'S REPORT TO THE SOCIETY ON THE 82ND SEASON

The Society's 82nd season was the third under the guidance of our conductor Michael Cayton and the first under the leadership of Chairman David Pollak. As usual, the Society presented four concerts:

29th October 2016 at the Watford Colosseum: A Remembrance concert to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. It featured a special appearance by the Western Front Violin, made from wood collected from the battleground of the Somme by Kenneth Popplewell, a former leader of the orchestra, and borrowed for the occasion from the Imperial War Museum. The violin was played by the current leader of the orchestra, Jeanne Mann, in a performance of Massenet's *Meditation from Thais*. Another violinist, 16-year-old Yasmin Stevens-Chen, gave an assured reading of the Bruch violin concerto before orchestra and choir came together to perform Mozart's *Requiem*.

14th December 2016 at the Watford Colosseum: The Society's annual Christmas concert featured the usual blend of Christmas carols old and new. Theo Kennedy sang an extract from *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs arranged by Howard Blake and including *Walking in the Air*. Cassiobury Junior School's Year 5 Choir, conducted by Nicola Lloyd, performed some modern carols with great panache, while the choir and orchestra's repertoire included *Joy, Joy, it's Christmas*, composed by WPS member John Mackenzie-Corby.

29th April 2017 at the Watford Colosseum: The WPS choir and orchestra accepted the challenge of performing Sir Arthur Bliss's rarely-performed choral symphony *Morning Heroes*, which was inspired by Bliss's experiences in the First World War. The Society's patron, Andrew Shore, took the role of the orator but was not well enough to be the soloist for the *Five Mystical Songs* by Vaughan Williams and was replaced at short notice by Peter Allanson. The orchestra performed *Finlandia* by Jean Sibelius and the *Theme from Schindler's List* by John Williams.

18th June 2017 at the Clarendon Muse: Unusually, the choir had the night off and the orchestra took central stage, performing "a box of orchestral delights" that evoked memories of an age when the wireless was the principal source of domestic entertainment. The concert was held in the more intimate surroundings of the Clarendon Muse.

Workshops: Pre-concert choral workshops on Mozart's *Requiem* and *Morning Heroes* were organised at the Bushey Arena, each attracting around 100 members of the choir. Meanwhile the orchestra continued to work through Beethoven's symphonies, tackling the Sixth (Pastoral) and Seventh during the season.

Training: Michael Cayton organised some training on sight reading, which was held before choir rehearsals during November. Voice coach Debbie Miles-Johnson attended a rehearsal to give some early pointers on Bach's *B Minor Mass*, which will form part of the 2017-8 season.

Come and Sing: An intrepid group ventured as far as Birmingham to sing Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the CBSO and Simon Halsey in March.

Summer Party: The season concluded with a garden party kindly hosted by Pam and Peter Allanson and enjoyed by many of the members, along with their partners.