

Dear Friends,

You will very soon receive your annual membership package – to be sent by email this year – with as much information about the 2020/21 season as we are currently able to provide. Although potentially good news that performing spaces are now being encouraged to open, there is still a lot of uncertainty about their commercial viability alongside the requirement to adhere to safe practices for both performers and audience. We are very grateful to all who completed and returned our short questionnaire, helping us to get a clearer picture of **your** concerns and preferences for rehearsals and concerts should we find ourselves able to get going again, albeit with appropriate modifications to our venues. **If you haven't already sent your responses to Nikki, it's still not too late to do so.**

So, with the future somewhat uncertain, this issue of Corona Chronicle has assumed a touch of nostalgia for the past – prompted by the sad news that the Watford branch of John Lewis is to close after many years of trading in the town. Some of you will remember that we were invited to perform in the store in the summer of 2011 to help celebrate its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Below are a few images of that glittering occasion, with choir and orchestra gathered on the ground floor, led by Terry Edwards, and appreciative crowds around the entrance and hanging off the escalators!

Further back in the Society's history, visits were arranged to Bermuda to join forces with our Conductor Emeritus Graham Garton, who was based there for some years. **Jean Hinks** recalls the fun of those times. We also feature musical autobiographies from **Pam Allanson** (together with her Desert Island choices), **Rosemary Reed** and **Roger Prangnell**, together with another selection of Desert Island discs from **Rosemary Mackenzie-Corby**. More castaways and their lists to come next month!

Bringing us right back to the present, **Jeanne Mann** (leader of our orchestra) shares her experiences of lockdown – showing commendable versatility and resourcefulness – but we all hope she will be picking up her fiddle again before too long.

Stay safe and stay in touch,

Judy



**John Lewis 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday  
2011**

Here's a little brain teaser from Sheila & John Malin – they say it's quite easy when you get the hang of it!

27 B in the N T	240 O P in the P	999: E T N	15 M on a D M C	64 S on a C B
M, M, L & J: 4 G	29,002 H of M E in F	13: U for S	1929: W S C	6 B in an O
37 P by W S	12 D of C	90 D in a R A	4 J: A I D	21 S on a D
P 205	22lb B S: H of S H	80 D to go R the W	93 M M to the S	L of a M = 26 M
G S and M	22 Y: L of a C P	T of 2 C	1917: R in R	18: V A
21 S in a G	S Y: W 1212	1440 M in a D	26 L in the A	8 F in a M

Answers will be posted on our website and published in the next issue of Corona Chronicle!

### Tales of a fiddler in lockdown – Jeanne Mann, leader of our orchestra



So one day I am an orchestral violinist with a pretty full diary for this coming year and the next day I'm not so sure what I am as my diary now has endless empty pages. It was a bit of a shock. It could have been a time when I could catch up with my own technique and maybe learn those pieces at the back of the cupboard that I neglected when I did have time - but it didn't work out that way.

After the shock of losing all musical work and of isolation at home from early on, after the first few weeks I thought there must be something I could do to help out especially after seeing scenes of NHS workers struggling to keep going in the news. So I got together by email with a couple of other crafty ladies and we formed a group called East Hearts Scrub Hub, setting up an efficient sewing club making scrubs, wash bags and various other items for NHS staff. Each person has a role to play - somebody made a website, others worked on fund raising and publicity, somebody bought the fabric from the East End, another made the patterns, another cut them out - a few of us sewers made them up, then there were overlockers, quality control, washers and finishers and eventually delivery

drivers. In total we have made and delivered over 400 items for Hospitals, nursing homes, ambulance service and clinics. Amazing results when we didn't meet in person until last week!

It's been a real privilege to help key workers who were struggling to get hold of uniform and we are all really inspired now and keen to carry on sewing. So if anybody wants anything sewing up - let us know.

For me one of the enjoyable things about being a 'freelance' musician is being able to drive around the country visiting places that I don't know and I usually come home thinking that I must go back there sometime without my violin and have a real look around. Many of the seaside towns have lovely small theatres which give a sense of days gone by, many now shabby and run by volunteers but where you can still see a good Summer show. Let's hope these places have survived the last few months. The other good thing about the job is that no matter where I go to play a concert or show I usually come across somebody who I know - maybe from years ago, from the Royal Academy or with whom I have worked in a previous concert. I really miss this aspect of music making - and oh yes - I miss the music too !

Where I live it was so unusually quiet as I live next to what is normally quite a busy road and also on the flight path for planes taking off from Stansted Airport. At first there seemed to be a dead feeling around as neighbours of all ages were worried about going out and if you did see anyone in the street they would give you a furtive look and cross the road to avoid you. Also, with the stockpiling of groceries going on and queues at supermarkets I have avoided them ever since and have resorted to my mum's wartime cookbook to eke things out and I even started digging for victory! Now I'm picking my own veg so am saving a lot of cash that way too...

All in all I've had quite a busy lockdown even though very little music has been played (apart from a few sessions of fiddle music to keep my brain alert) but now I'm really looking forward to the new season, have dusted the instruments off and can't wait to see you all again in person as soon as we can.

### Jean Hinks remembers Watford Phil trips to Bermuda



During the 1990's a number of us from the 'Phil' had the opportunity to visit Bermuda three times to join our Conductor Emeritus, Graham Garton. Due to early retirement, Graham had accepted a position as conductor of the Bermuda Philharmonic Chorus. He invited a group of us to join the choir there to perform several works requiring a larger chorus. These were opportunities of a lifetime. Those of us who signed up saved hard for the air fares & were accommodated by members of the Bermuda choir.

In 1990 we performed the Verdi Requiem; in 1993 it was Beethoven's 9th & in 1997 The Dream of Gerontius. On each occasion we had time to enjoy the white sandy beaches & swim in the turquoise waters and also visit many interesting places on the island.

These were really unforgettable & fun times & we made many friends. The picture here was a selfie (taken before mobile phones) when we had to set the camera position & wait for the click. The picture shows Muriel Popplewell, Kate Wortham (former members of the Phil) & – still going strong – Maureen Fitzpatrick & Jean Hinks. (1st Altos). On this occasion, 8 of us shared two apartments and had just returned from a performance of the Verdi Requiem. Memorable moments indeed.

*A very jolly looking bunch! Have they really just been singing the Dies Irae? (Ed.)*

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### From the archives

We think this photograph dates from the early 1960s, when **Leslie Regan** was still our Conductor. It was given to Tim by the daughter of **Armored Wykes** who led the cello section for many years under **Graham Garton**. Armored died last year. Do you recognise anyone – and do you know when the photograph might have been taken?



## Rosemary Mackenzie-Corby shares her Desert Island discs



**No. 1 Queen of the Night aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*:** Our grand-daughter Poppy studied this aria for her A-level Music. Her task being to write a similar aria, we took her to see the opera at the Hackney Empire. It was a long journey but we were rewarded not only by a wonderful production directed by Thomas Allan but also by unexpectedly and literally bumping into him on the Underground coming back home and he and his beautiful wife had a little chat with Poppy. We were all thrilled!

**No. 2 *What a wonderful world* sung by Louis Armstrong:** My 'Inheritance Track' – for my children, their partners and my four grandchildren, to remind them just how amazing our planet is, despite viruses etc.!

**No. 3 Elgar, Cello concerto in E Minor:** Evokes deep, deep personal emotions.

**No. 4 *Every Time we say Goodbye* sung by Ella Fitzgerald:** Reminds me of when I ran the Jazz club at Hendon Technical college when I was undertaking a secretarial course in 1958!

**No. 5 Piano concerto No. 2 – Rachmaninoff.** This helped me get through hospitalisation for a life-threatening operation in 2000.

**No. 6 *Song without words – Lost Happiness op. 38 no. 2 – Mendelssohn.*** This piece of music stirs my soul!

**No. 7 *The Enigma Variations – Elgar.*** Whenever I hear this, it awakens my National pride and despite any mumblings and grumblings I might have been expressing, particularly with regard to the management of this current pandemic, I really, truly, would not want to live anywhere else and am proud to be born a British citizen.

**No. 8 *The Blue Bird, Stanford.*** Hearing this brings back memories of the Bushey Heath singers – a group of around 16 voices who would meet weekly in our home from the 1970s through to the 1990s. We won awards in the Watford Music Festival on numerous occasions. The soloist in this was a soprano by the name of Heather Shepherd who had the voice of an angel!

I would be quite happy on my desert island as, being an only child, I am quite content with my own company. I would, however, like to take with me – as well as the Bible (of course!) – the novel "War and Peace" as I am fascinated with Russia at the time of the Tsars. I would also like a CD player with long-life batteries so I can play all of my large CD selection – especially "Sinatra/Basie". In his teens, our son, Iain, "borrowed" my LP of this: he never returned it, but eventually replaced it with the CD! This recording influenced him in becoming a professional Jazz Singer and to create a glittering career – up until Covid-19, that is! ...but we are confident in his future success, as for all musicians currently suffering the effects of Lockdown on their careers.

**Editor's Note:** Rosemary & John's son is **Iain Mackenzie** – principal male vocalist with Ronnie Scott's Orchestra and a popular and very talented jazz singer. Coming from a pedigree line of British jazz musicians to have passed through the Guildhall School of Music, Iain is one of the most 'in demand' jazz, lounge and big band singers in the UK, critically acclaimed as 'Straight from the Cool School of Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and Mel Tormé, Iain Mackenzie is a star of awesome technique, ears and delivery.' Check him out at <http://www.iainmackenzie.co.uk>

Bard of our time, **Tim** regularly sends me little ditties chronicling life in Chorleywood. Here are two of them!

To her dog, what did Ma Hubbard say  
As she looked at her shelf in dismay?  
That she'd been on the phone  
To order a bone  
But could not get a van slot today.

My barber is open once more.  
Such a thrill to walk back through his door.  
What a marvellous trip  
When he makes the first snip  
And I see my lock down on his floor.

I assured Tim that this one would definitely make the cut! (Ed.)

## Rosemary Reed's musical autobiography – and the jinx of the black blouses!



I was born in Canterbury and grew up in a rambling unheated bungalow surrounded by 3 acres of fields and orchards, which my father turned into a market garden, growing fruit and vegetables years before the advent of “pick your own” . Produce was sold at the front gate to passers by, often harvested by us children while Mum talked to the customer. I have vivid memories of sitting on a little stool under a blackcurrant bush, picking the fruit.

I went to an all girls' grammar school in Canterbury and then King's College London, somehow acquiring a Geography degree along the way. A career working with maps is the only thing I have ever wanted to do and I have been fortunate to have spent 40 years looking after maps (at the Royal Geographical Society) and making maps (for Local Government and with two private mapping companies).

I have never played a musical instrument (other than the recorder) though had always fancied learning the clarinet. However, the thought of having music lessons in the tiny “projector room” above the main school hall with a male music teacher, put me off and I was never brave enough to start. Nor was I brave enough to join the choir at King's though they had a beautiful chapel to sing in. So when I joined the choir in 1998, I had sung very little since school days.

I came to the Phil's Christmas concert in 1996 and remember thinking how smart and professional the choir and orchestra looked and sounded and was quite convinced that I would never be allowed to join. Instead, in 1997, I joined the Abbots Langley Singers though in the end only sang in one concert with them. One of the pieces we performed was Herbert Howells Motet “A Sequence for St. Michael” which everyone in the choir said was one of the most challenging pieces they had sung, and which I found a very daunting re-introduction to choral singing, especially as the choir had only 6 sopranos.

1998 turned out to be a difficult year. I had a major operation in January and my father died in March. I then spent much of the rest of the year supporting mum and attempting to keep the garden from being consumed with weeds. By October, my doctor persuaded me that it was time I did something for myself, so I joined the choir. On the first evening, I sat in the back row of the second sops, next to Catherine, (who I still sit next to), and with Sylvia and Glennis, all of whom are now wonderfully supportive friends. While I was working in Central London, it was often a struggle to get to rehearsals on time and many times I sat in the car in the school carpark, eating sandwiches while listening to The Archers, unable to get home for a meal beforehand. I always found that a Monday rehearsal started the week “on the right note” so was determined to be there. Several of the pieces we have sung over the years I have found challenging, some have been beyond me, and most have been new to me, but the majority I have thoroughly enjoyed and consider joining the choir one of the best decisions I have ever made and I miss it so much.

There have been many highlights and memorable concerts, not least the Christmas concert in 2010 staged at Woodside Leisure Centre when the Phil was “on tour” while the Colosseum was being refurbished. On that day the heaviest snow blizzard in years fell in the morning and Watford rapidly ground to a halt. I managed to catch the last bus to make the whole journey from West Watford to Woodside, a journey that took over two hours. The snow was so thick, you couldn't tell which was road and which was pavement. Only 50 of the choir made it, a very small number of the orchestra and 6 from the junior school choir who were to sing with us. We rehearsed in the afternoon and after discussions about whether to cancel or continue with the performance, in the end we performed the whole concert to an audience of less than 50. One of the pieces was “The Snowman” - very appropriate in the circumstances. Some of our sopranos sang with the school choir to help them out.

The ladies' uniform when I first joined was a white top and a black skirt and, over the years, I bought several blouses until I had a selection that were smart, comfortable and cool for the often baking heat of the Colosseum. I also bought pastel coloured and vibrant coloured tops for our summer concerts, as well as “Christmas coloured” tops, so that I was well supplied with clothes for every occasion. When it was announced that our uniform was to be changed to a black blouse, to be worn for all concerts, in a fit of pique, I bought the cheapest three-quarter sleeved T-shirt I could find in C&A and gradually gave all the white and coloured tops to charity shops. Last Christmas, when we could again wear a sparkly top, I bought one, only to find a couple of weeks later that our Christmas concert had been cancelled!

Earlier this year, I finally decided to treat myself to a new black blouse and after hunting several shops, eventually managed to find one I was happy with. Two weeks later, our April concert was cancelled. Swiftly followed by June and October's. So I am beginning to wonder whether I might have caused the cancellation of our concerts, having jinxed them by buying new garments! At least I have two pristine new blouses ready for the next one.....

### Rickmansworth Singing Academy

Co-founder **Emily Rowley-Jones** was to have been one of our soloists this season. A graduate of the prestigious opera course at the Guildhall School of Music, Emily has been a member of the Royal Opera House Chorus since 2016. With her husband, Julian Alexander Smith, she is offering a variety of tuition opportunities for singers of all ages. Lessons are tailored to each person - a young singer starting out, someone taking up a hobby in retirement or an experienced singer wishing to hone their skills. Everyone is welcome.

More details from <https://www.rickmansworthsingingstudio.com>



**Pam Allanson, our dedicated Publicity Manager, shares her musical autobiography and tracks for that Desert Island**

**Born:** London NW10, moved to Pinner aged 18 months.

**Education:** St Joan of Arc Convent School, Rickmansworth; Cassio College, Watford: Business Studies; Open University, BA History of Art/Classical Studies graduated age 60! *Excellent, Pam! Lifelong Learning at its best. (Ed.)*

**Worked** in publishing as Production Manager for Hamish Hamilton Children's Books, producing Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* and many of Quentin Blake's picture books. (discovered soprano buddy, Irene Dubuis also worked for main HH at the same time!)

**Family:** 2 sons, 1 daughter. No musical talents, but all have eclectic tastes - the house was always filled with music. Married to Brian for 28 years before being widowed. Unexpectedly met and married Peter, live in Chorleywood and have 5 children and 4 grandchildren between us.

**Music:** attempted piano as child, but hated teacher and gave up. I regret that now! Always sung with church and school choirs (child and parent) and with the Malcolm Sargent Choir performing concerts in London, nationally and on foreign tours. Joined WPS and was quickly coerced by Tim Venner to take over Publicity! *Good work, Tim! (Ed.)*

**Musical tastes** range from Tina Turner to Wagner! The radio is on constantly: I enjoy diverse programmes – discussions, plays and I adore *I'm Sorry I haven't a Clue!* A child of the 50's we were brought up on *Round the Horne* and *The Archers* (afraid I've gone off the boil with that recently though).

**Hobbies:** SINGING!, gardening, art history (galleries, exhibitions, NT), reading, concerts, theatre and as I'm married to an ex opera singer we see quite a lot of that! My lovely dog needs plenty of walking on Chorleywood Common and surrounding areas. I have bouts of grandchild care for my son's urban terrorists. Outings with 2 children and the dog can get quite exciting!

Until lockdown – my life was really quite busy. I can't wait for it to return – like everybody. Meanwhile, here are my Desert Island discs:

**1. *One for my Baby (and one more for the road)* Frank Sinatra**

This reminds me of many late nights snuggled up on the sofa with a glass of red listening to Frankie with my first love!

**2. *Radio Ga Ga* – Queen**

Then there were children! Breezing across the Severn bridge in the sunshine, all the windows down and everyone singing at the top of their voices. What fun!!

**3. *Overture to The Merry Widow* – Lehár**

I joined Pinner & Hatch End Operatic Society (PHEOS) after Brian died and started 15 years of treading the boards in musicals and G & S operetta. My stage debut was in the Merry Widow, and I met the MD for the first time – one Peter Allanson. The rest is history!

**4. *Serenade to Music* Vaughan Williams**

I was introduced to this by Peter when he conducted a performance with 12 soloists for the Pinner Music Festival. I loved it and was delighted when Michael chose it for a WPS concert and we sang it at the Colosseum.

**5. *Siegfried's Funeral Music* – *Götterdämmerung* Richard Wagner**

We were lucky enough to be able to go to Bayreuth to see Andrew Shore's wonderful performance as Alberich in The Ring Cycle. The acoustics (and heat) in Wagner's theatre were astounding and the sound of the brass instruments pulsating through the auditorium is something I shall never forget.

**6. *II Andante Piano Concerto No 2 F Major* Shostakovich**

This is just for me – it is something that takes me away from the stresses of life and allows a moment of complete calm.

**7. *Te Deum* – Tosca Puccini**

Dramatic, exhilarating, exciting – truly hair-raising and wonderful to listen to. It is so sad we were not able to sing it this year at *A Night at the Opera*.

**8. *Simply the Best* – Tina Turner**

Says it all about so many moments and the special people in my life. I've been very lucky!

PS. I could have easily chosen another 8 – perhaps they can be my 'luxury'!

## Roger Prangnell writes about his lifelong love of singing



Music has been a connecting thread throughout my life. In 1945 at my first school our lady teacher taught not only the 'Three Rs' but singing round the piano. So I discovered a liking for singing folk songs, including French ones such as 'Frère Jacques' and 'Au clair de la Lune'; she thought we should also learn basic French and it's easily done at the age of five. While on bus-rides with my parents I bored them by repeating the same songs over and over until they exclaimed 'Roger, **do** change the tune or else keep quiet.'

I grew up in Hailsham, Sussex, where the Welsh headmaster of my Primary School taught us to read music, for which I have always been grateful as it opened up a whole new world. However, when I went on to Bexhill Grammar School, where boys were assigned to either the music or woodwork class at the whim of the teachers, I was put into woodwork for which I had no aptitude at all. Fortunately, in Hailsham I had begun to attend church and friends invited me to join the 'Youth for Christ Choir'. As my voice broke I enjoyed singing

the bass harmonies of hymns and took part in some of their public performances.

I chose to specialise in science at school and missed the chance to sing in the school choir. However, the 6th form pupils always put on an entertainment for the end-of-year Social; in my final year a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Trial by Jury' was decided upon. As extras were needed to augment the choir I was recruited as a member of the jury, somehow being cast as an elderly man! This involved greying my hair with powder every night - a very messy business! I thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsals and learnt the other parts almost by heart which gave me a lifelong love of G & S.

Going on to read chemistry at Bristol I chummed up with others who also loved classical music; in our final year we found time to join the University Operatic Society as light relief from intensive studying. The five-day run of 'The Gondoliers' was just up my street. My voice had settled into a natural tenor range by then, for which I am grateful, as tenors always seem to be in more demand than other voices - sorry basses!

After graduating, my first job was at the Research Centre of Reed Paper Group near Maidstone, Kent. Not finding an outlet for singing there I decided to take up an instrument and enrolled for flute lessons at the excellent Maidstone School of Music. Five years later I transferred to Reed's subsidiary at Wilmslow in Cheshire and joined English Folk Dance classes at the Wilmslow Guild (adult education institute). This introduced me to folk festivals around Manchester where I learnt a bit of Morris and English Sword dancing.

I finally left Reeds to take up a post at the Building Research Station (now better known as BRE) in Garston, and discovered that Watford was a surprisingly musical area with a number of country dance groups and also folk song clubs, as well as several in St Albans. On joining the country dance group at Beechen Grove Baptist Church I met Audrey Grey (soprano) who, hearing I was a singer, said 'Why not come along and try Watford Philharmonic Society?' The rest is history as they say. I joined the Phil in 1969 and now have my Fifty Seasons' Service Certificate!

I also had a short course of singing lessons at Watford School of Music and have been a member of the choir at St James's Church, Bushey for a number of years.

**Editor's Note: Roger's Desert Island choices will follow next month.**

**Next issue will feature contributions from Chrissie Russ, Chris Robinson, Martin Fletcher, Keith Bevis – to name but a few!**

