

WATFORD PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2nd OCTOBER 2023

SECRETARY'S REPORT TO THE SOCIETY ON THE 88th SEASON

The Society's 88th season was the ninth under the guidance of our conductor Michael Cayton and the second full season under the leadership of Chair Pam Allanson. The choir's rehearsal venue moved to St Luke's Church, Watford after many years at Watford Girls' Grammar School. The Society presented four choral concerts and a separate orchestral concert:

29th October 2022 at the Grand Hall, Bushey: The Society performed a double bill of Modern Sacred Classics, featuring the Requiems composed by John Rutter and Gabriel Faure, as well as Elgar's *Nimrod* from the Enigma Variations and a Pavanne by Faure. Two of the Society's favourite soloists, Emily Rowley-Jones and Peter Willcock, were in fine voice for the occasion, which was much enjoyed by performers and a near-capacity audience alike.

10th December 2022 at the Grand Hall, Bushey: The annual Christmas concert featured the usual festive programme with a record audience for the venue playing their part to the full. The soloist was soprano Emily Kirby-Ashmore, making her debut as a performer with the Society but familiar to the choir as a replacement rehearsal conductor. As always, the wood-panelled Grand Hall provided an intimate and atmospheric setting for the occasion.

25th March 2023 at the Grand Hall, Bushey: The Society's Spring concert was the surprise hit of the season, featuring Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne*, with *The Thieving Magpie* as an overture. It was one of those rare occasions when everything came together to create a memorable evening of top-quality musical entertainment. The choir and orchestra were on sparkling form and there were four outstanding soloists in Galina Averina, Miranda Westcott (both making their debuts with the Society), Peter van Hulle and Geoff Williams.

1st July 2023 at the Grand Hall, Bushey: The Society's Summer concert consisted of three works in an unusual combination: Bernstein's challenging *Chichester Psalms*, *Misa Brevis* by our own Musical Director Michael Cayton and Howard Goodall's *Eternal Light*, which proved very popular. The soloists were treble Jasmine Bor, still at school and making her professional debut, and the tried and tested combination of Emily Rowley-Jones and Peter Willcock.

Orchestral concert: On 3rd June 2023 at St Luke's Church, Watford the orchestra presented an afternoon concert of popular light music and some chamber ensembles which gave individual players the chance to show off their talents.

Workshops: Members of the choir took part in a series of pre-concert Workshops to enhance their concert performances and increase their musical confidence.

Raffle: the weekly raffle survived the move to St Luke's and continued to raise valuable extra funds, which this year were used to purchase new music folders.

Social events: a successful social event, postponed from Christmas, was held on 3rd July.

Obituaries: Terry Edwards, President of the Society and Musical Director from 2006-2014, died in September 2022, aged 83. The Autumn performance of John Rutter's Requiem was dedicated to his memory.