



Friends' Newsletter

From the Chairman

April 2003

Miranda Seaman

It may be a cliché but as one gets older the years seem to pass more quickly, and this seems even more true when recalling the history of the choir! Nearly a year has passed since our 10th anniversary celebrations in May 2002, and I know many of the choir, and I hope Friends, have fond memories of the Festal Evensong at Christ the King, followed by our anniversary dinner at The Tavistock Hotel. It was particularly fitting that on this occasion we should sing Evensong at Christ the King, this being the place where the ULCC was born. As I write this, the choir is close to completing its 11th year since formation.

The choir has seen many changes since 1992, having had three conductors and various accompanists. One of our first 'gigs' was in September 1992, when we sang Evensong at All Saints' Church, Stock, Essex. At that stage the choir was still very much in its infancy, and with only an Acting Director of Music, no regular rehearsal venue and few formal members, we were very uncertain indeed how things would pan out. The choir will always be grateful to those who gave of their time freely during that period. Although these were insecure times, I look back fondly on those days, as I believe that in many respects, the way that the ULCC emerged from this period demonstrates many of its better attributes. Although we were and are extremely fortunate to have so many musically talented members willing to give their time and commitment without monetary reward, I know many members value more highly the lasting friendships that they have made during their years with the choir. Without such strong friendships I do not think that the ULCC, starting life as disadvantaged as it did, would have survived – and survive it did, with much laughter along the way.

'Few formal members' – how times have changed! We now have a flourishing membership, together with an expanding pool of 'singing Friends' to call upon to sing, whether at a small parish church or at a large cathedral. In common with most choirs, we are thinner on altos, tenors and basses than we are on sopranos and this can, on occasion, lead to the choir being top-heavy. Bryan and I are aware of this and this term the committee has been looking at ways in which this issue can be addressed without destroying the unique ethos of the choir. At present the choir is open to all and has no formal audition policy. I believe this is a tremendous strength. Several years ago when a now long-standing member of the choir first came along, I asked him what had made him join the ULCC. He replied, 'What hope do I have of joining another choir of this standard with my voice!' I believe that says it all!

This year has been very busy musically; Bryan's article mentions some recent events. Looking to the future, in June 2003 we have been invited to sing at Lambeth Palace for The Archbishop's Diploma/MA Award ceremony. We have sung at this service before but this time we shall meet Dr Rowan Williams, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, for the first time. Also in June, we return to All Saints', Stock for its annual Flower Festival Celebrations; and in August we visit Wells Cathedral for the first time. Our engagement diary is booking into next year and beyond, and this gives me great confidence that in 2012 we shall be celebrating our 20th anniversary!

With grateful thanks to Liz Watkins who has once again done a great job in editing our twice-yearly newsletter. We hope you find the newsletter informative as to what is going on both musically and socially. We greatly value the Friends' support, both moral and financial, and thank you once again for supporting us.

VOCAL COACHING DAY, SATURDAY 7 JUNE

Free for full members with a small charge for others; followed by this year's choir dinner.

For more information, please contact Richard Corser or Geraldine Warner.

The View from the Podium

Bryan Almond, Director of Music

Being the musical director of a choir such as the ULCC is an enormous privilege. The musical rewards greatly outweigh the work that a director needs to put in to ensure the choir performs to a high standard and functions efficiently. The musical rewards of the Spring term 2003 were no exception, starting with a most enjoyable weekend at St Albans Cathedral and a wonderful party hosted by Richard and Anthea Corser. Those brave souls who ventured north to a freezing cold St Alphege's, Burnt Oak on the first Saturday in February gave a most memorable concert; warm thanks to everyone for visiting an old haunt of mine on such an inhospitable day. Further on in the term we visited Southwark and Canterbury Cathedrals with some excellent singing, Canterbury on a beautifully clear early Spring day just prior to the enthronement of Archbishop Rowan Williams.

As time goes by from term to term a choir must grow. Not necessarily in numbers but musically, socially and in terms of new venues, events etc. This is very important as without growth a choir stagnates and may eventually die. A lack of growth can lead to disillusioned choir members with reduced team spirit and a dearth of fun. Fear not as I don't believe this describes the ULCC, but I do believe we must not be afraid to look at ourselves as a choir occasionally and take stock of what we are about and where we're going. A good deal of choir dynamic perhaps comes from the top and I always take this very seriously. We have had a welcome chance to look at ourselves as a choir in committee meetings this term and I should like to encourage all members to be open about voicing concerns to myself or Miranda. Rest assured that we do take note and act, if necessary, following consideration and consultation.

I believe one of our great strengths is being versatile enough to sing Choral Evensong at a major cathedral one weekend followed by a welcome return visit to Holy Cross, Cromer Street or St Anne's, Soho the next. Our work at parish church level in central London may not be as attractive as a cathedral visit, but we must not forget that this is the core work of the choir and the prime reason we exist. My own view is that we must achieve a consistent standard of performance whether we are visiting a small parish church or a large cathedral. Viewing the parish church work as less important is, I believe, a mistake and I know that most members will agree with this view.

Recently, we have had the luxury of many soprano members when visiting cathedrals. Balancing the choir is my responsibility and I will admit that on some occasions we have been top-heavy. Some members very kindly offered to sing other voice parts which I gratefully accepted at the time, but I regard this as sub-optimal and I do not wish to encourage it except for those members who are particularly keen to do so. Even then, we must ensure that those members who do change part are well rehearsed. Members can help here by ensuring that their rehearsal and event attendance is up to date on the ticklist organised by John Watkins. This really is the best tool we have for keeping track of balance prior to events, please help myself and the committee by letting us know your likely attendance well before rehearsals and events.

Another of our great strengths is the fact that we are open to everyone. We do not hold auditions (unless I believe they are necessary). This cannot and must not be undervalued. We are an inclusive choir rather than exclusive. Exclusive choirs are run with different aims, usually with semi-professional/professional performances in mind and it is entirely right that they set standards of attendance to ensure good results. The musical performances we achieve we can be justly proud of with our inclusive approach but I believe we should communicate our expectations of members more clearly. With this in mind, the committee and I shall be working towards a clarification of our expectations of members over the next term. We shall also be looking at improving members' expectations of the choir as well in terms of organisation and rehearsals etc. Don't hesitate to speak to myself, Miranda or any committee member with any concerns or issues regarding the running or performance of your choir.

Huge thanks to Peter Wright for organising the Spanish Renaissance singing day recently. We had a lovely day exploring music by Ortiz, Guerrero, Morales and many other Spanish composers interspersed with a bit (OK, too much) chat from me. I hope those of you who attended this event enjoyed it and I look forward to a repeat performance with music from another country in the Chester book of motets series.

It was also a particular pleasure to see the choir return to St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe for Advanced Sunday School Evensong. 'Old lags' will have been saddened to hear of the death of Rector John Paul who was incumbent at St Andrew's for many years. His successor, the Revd Dr Alan Griffin, is most keen to involve us more in the life of St Andrew's.

The coming Summer term takes us to venues old and new and promises to be as rewarding as ever. Do let us know your availability as early as possible (preferably by email to John Watkins, copying me). With our Summer tour to Wells Cathedral, it will be a scorcher (musically speaking!).

Finally, on behalf of Jo and myself, thank you all so much for your very kind words and lovely cards on the announcement of our engagement. We're overwhelmed with your love and best wishes, and currently enjoying preparations for our wedding on Saturday 30 August this year near Dover. Sadly, space in Jo's village church is limited and this means we shall not be able to invite everyone, but we hope to involve as many ULCC friends as we possibly can.

Looking forward to some glorious music-making!

News of ULCC Friends Old and New

Anthea Corser

The ULCC Cupid seems to have been firing his arrows again as the engagement was announced earlier this year of BRYAN ALMOND and JOANNA JOSLIN. Jo was actually a member of the choir long before Bryan in her undergraduate days when we were based at Christ the King. It was lovely to celebrate with them at the concert in St Alphage's, Burnt Oak which is Bryan's parents' church.

On a sunny autumn day in Cambridge last year the wedding took place between LINDA STOLLWERCK and DAVID BOULTON. Some members of ULCC joined other singing friends of Linda and David's to make up the choir and at the reception afterwards we were entertained by the 'Close Shaves', David's barbershop group. It was really nice to see BETTY and LUDOLF STOLLWERCK again who entertained us so well on our mini-tour to Düsseldorf a few years ago.

Congratulations to FIONA and JEREMY PORTER on the birth of their second son JAMES in February. If we keep going at this rate we will soon be able to have a line of boy trebles! And we wish LIZ and JOHN WATKINS well for the birth of their

baby this summer; it will be the first tour they have missed in years!

We also send warmest wishes to RUSTOM BATTIWALLA and IZZY WOOLLEY on their engagement. Although officially members of our 'rival choir' the Bristol Graduate Singers, we have been very pleased to welcome Rustom tinkling the ivories for us and hope they will keep in touch as they settle in Bristol.

Our summer tour this year will be to Wells Cathedral in Somerset. Quite a few of our friends are old boys of the school and we would be very happy to see them there!

We were sad to learn of the death of the Revd JOHN PAUL who was Rector of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe where we regularly sang Evensong a few years ago and have done so again recently.

If you have any news that you would like to share with ULCC friends then please send it to rich-anth@eclipse.co.uk

Ten Years Ago

John Watkins, Secretary

More snippets from the ULCC archives...

Ten years ago the ULCC was finding its feet. We had successfully found a Director of Music in Richard Goodall; Richard conducted an Evensong at St Mary's, Osterley (7 February 1993), and found such favour with the choir that he was persuaded to carry on. February was a busy month, with two memorial services at Christ the King, a Candlemas service at St Pancras and an Evensong at St Peter's, Pavenham, Bedfordshire. The rest of the Spring term consisted of a service at the American Church, Tottenham Court Road for the 'Induction of the Moderator', a BBC Radio 4 Morning Service at St Margaret's, Lothbury (behind the Bank of England) and a Confirmation service at Holy Cross, Cromer Street – the first of many visits there!

The Summer term opened with first of several evening services at Westminster Abbey. These came about as a result of our Chairman, Jeremy Caddick, being a Priest Vicar at St Margaret's, Westminster. Then came the Lambeth Diploma service at Lambeth Palace Chapel and the 'Body service' (commemorating those whose bodies have been used for medical research) at Christ the King. In June we sang services at two churches that became regular venues during the mid-90s – Holy Trinity, Sloane Street and St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe – before finishing off the month with a concert at the Stock Flower Festival conducted by Simon Over, with Graham Alsop on the organ.

In August we had our first ULCC summer tour to Truro Cathedral (a booking we had accepted the previous year as the Christ the King choir). This was preceded by a Saturday concert and Sunday Eucharist at St Peter's, Oakford, Devon, home to Mark Hill's parents. Old members will be able to recall the delights of singing 'Uproarious Devon', Mark Hill's Welsh impersonation in 'The English are Best' and Roger Mullis and Carol Gibbs (now Goodall) singing 'Sound the Trumpet'!

ULCC SUMMER TOUR 2003: WELLS CATHEDRAL, 18–24 AUGUST

Accommodation will be in the choir school; if you'd like to join us, please contact Anthea Corser or Victoria Foster.

Even if you're not able to sing with us, we'd love to see you at Evensong and in the pub afterwards!

There will be an all-day rehearsal for the tour on Saturday 26 July; more details soon.

New Faces

Liz Watkins, Friends' Secretary

A warm welcome to those of you who have become full members of ULCC since the last edition of the newsletter was published: LIZ TOWNSHEND, EMILY and MATTHEW MCGUINNESS and SARAH WALKER. A big 'thank you' to those of you who have recently renewed your Friends' subscriptions; the minimum subscription for Friends' membership remains at £15 per calendar year, and the support we receive from our Friends is enormously important for the continued survival of the choir.

On a personal note, John and I were delighted to be able to announce a couple of months ago that we're expecting a baby in August. We were overwhelmed by the love and support we received from our ULCC friends when I lost our first baby last year, and it's wonderful to be able to share this news now with those of you that we don't see very often.

Forthcoming Events

For up-to-the minute details of rehearsal and service times see the ULCC website at <http://www.ulcc.org.uk/events.php> or ask to be put on the regular e-mail database.

For those of you without internet access, John or Bryan will be happy to answer any questions.

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| Sunday 4 May, 6.30pm | Eucharist, Southwark Cathedral |
| Saturday 7 June | Vocal coaching day followed by choir dinner (venue tbc) |
| Sunday 8 June, 11am | Eucharist, St Anne's, Soho |
| Monday 9 June, 2.30pm | The Archbishop's Diploma/MA Award ceremony, Lambeth Palace |
| Saturday 21 June, 8pm | Concert, All Saints', Stock |
| Sunday 22 June, 5pm | Evensong, All Saints', Stock |
| Saturday 26 July | All-day rehearsal for Wells tour, St Mary-the-Virgin, Primrose Hill |
| Monday 18–Sunday 24 August | Wells Cathedral summer tour |
| Sunday 14 September | Mass, Holy Cross, Cromer Street |

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| Monday 30 August–Sunday 5 September | Chester Cathedral summer tour |
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