



# Orpheus News

January 2017

## ***A message from our Conductor!***

Dear Choir, welcome back to our summer session. Firstly let me say how much I appreciated your excellent performances at Trinity Westhill Church and Craigiebuckler Church. Allan Cooper's crit of your performance captures perfectly everything I would have hoped for in our concerts. Congratulations!

A warm welcome also to our new members Alison, Janice, Maria, Stephen and Steve. We hope you will be very happy with us.

We have three concerts in May; Skene Parish Church, Craigiebuckler Church and finally the Deeside Community Theatre in Aboyne. To continue to achieve a high standard I rely on everyone being present at every concert where possible. Two of our concerts feature a guest artist, the fine guitarist, Ian Watt.

I hope you will enjoy all the music I have chosen for you and I look forward to a busy and happy session. Best wishes, Jane

## ***Craigiebuckler Christmas Concert 2016 – review by Alan Cooper***

Nearing the end of their sixtieth year, the Aberdeen Orpheus Choir founded by Alex Elrick in 1956 is in good hands under their congenial and warm hearted conductor Jane Murray. She made the capacity audience that turned out to hear the choir feel so welcome. We all really wanted to please her by joining heartily in those carols which invited audience participation.

The choir seems to have more men these days and they were on raised platforms so we could see as well as hear them. The result was that the choral performances were particularly richly blended and especially in the final carol, Lo! He comes with clouds descending, the choral singing was thrilling and all-encompassing even before the huge audience joined in the final verse. The choir, singing their hearts out, looked as if they were really enjoying themselves. The concert opened with a well known hymn, Rejoice the Lord is King. The tune was familiar but the organ introduction played by Allan Bicket was complex and quite modern – a really nice surprise.

Jane Murray had invited two young guest musicians to take part in the concert. Harpist and flautist Rachel Groves has appeared with the choir before and it was great to welcome her back. She had a very special gift for the choir in her capacity not only as a performer but as a composer. Along with her, Nathan Fenwick was another young accomplished musician playing not just violin but later in the concert, piano as well.

The two of them, Rachel on flute and Nathan on violin joined with pianist Erika Fairhead in accompanying the choir in Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes, by Constantin Christian Dedekind, a German poet, dramatist, librettist, composer and bass singer of the Baroque Era. This was an unusual piece but with the blend of instruments and choir an absolutely delightful one. It was followed by Glory now to Thee be given, by J. S. Bach, a more familiar work sung with particularly refined balance by the choir. We all joined with a will in O come, all ye faithful, before the choir delighted us with the first of two pieces by John Rutter, the Sans Day Carol, the words of which are related to the Holly and The Ivy but with a different and equally attractive tune.

As in last year's concert Graeme and Karen Morrice were drafted in from the choir as incidental percussionists in Tomorrow shall be my dancing day. The male voices excelled in Mendelssohn's There shall a star from Jacob come forth from Christus and then Silent Night was twinned with a modern carol Night of Silence. This was a gorgeous combination given an extra lift by the accompanying blend of both piano and organ.

The second half of the concert opened with an award winning composition by Rachel Groves. Her carol Joy, composed for her father Jonathan who sings in the tenor section of the Orpheus Choir was voted joint winner by the judges of the Times Carol Competition. We were honoured to be hearing its world première even before it is performed in London. It was a beautifully well-crafted piece with an attractive and expressive melody and splendid choral crescendos sung beautifully by the choir. It sat well alongside three Christmas classics by composers

whose names are associated with particularly attractive choral settings, Bob Chilcott, Eric Whitacre and of course John Rutter. A Christmas concert just isn't a Christmas concert without John Rutter.

A traditional Shaker Hymn, Simple Gifts, which has been used by several composers in particular Aaron Copland, was next. Rachel and Nathan gave the choral singing a special touch of colour in this piece with their contributions. Deck the hall was sung unaccompanied by the choir displaying the perfection of their blend followed by I will lead you home, by Chris Eaton and Amy Grant. It had a particularly delightful introduction for flute and piano. This led up to that glorious choral performance of Lo! He comes with clouds descending, and to send us on our way rejoicing, God Bless us every one, from Disney's "A Christmas Carol" What an amazing concert to have everything from J. S. Bach to the film composer Alan Silverstri and all of it sitting so well together. Well done Jane Murray.

But that was not all; our excellent guest soloists entertained us royally with two solo items each. Rachel gave us a performance on harp of Debussy's First Arabesque, originally written for piano. I'm sure Debussy himself would have been delighted with Rachel's performance; it worked so well on harp. In the second half, Rachel played a piece entitled Baroque Flamenco by Deborah Henson-Conant. The spirit of the flamenco was all there in this exciting atmospheric piece, even the stamping of the dancer's feet was recreated on the body of the harp used as a percussion instrument. Nathan gave us a wonderfully well detailed performance of Bach's Allemande from the Partita No.1 in b minor, BWV 1002 for solo violin and in the second half he moved to piano in a rousing performance of the Rhapsody Op.79 no.2 in g minor by Brahms. No one can say that this concert didn't have something to please every taste. I look forward to the Choir's summer concert at the end of May when their special guest will be the ace guitarist Ian Watt.

### ***Introducing Caroline Daniel***

I was a bit flummoxed when Gordon asked me to write a short piece about my musical history but here goes....

For much of my life I've been the church organist, out of necessity, rather than for any great competence. I had piano and organ lessons in Whitby as a youngster, mainly so I could play the hymns at chapel. I only learned the prescribed paragraph out of my little red 'Rudiments of Music' book on the journey to my lesson on a Saturday morning, whilst

the rest of the family went out to lunch. Although my father was a member of the Dalesmen male voice choir, and had a wonderful voice, somehow it never entered my mind to sing, other than at chapel on a Sunday.

I moved up to Aberdeenshire to work at the North of Scotland College of Agriculture on King Street and the first cottage I moved in to was rent free – in return for milking the cows one weekend a month. This seemed like a good idea but as the only heating was from an open fire that also heated the water, the winter months were no fun when having to get up at 4 am to milk cows! The next cottage was a much better proposition, a reasonable rent and a wonderful landlady who enlisted my services for the organ rota at Udney Green church which has a lovely Harrison & Harrison pipe organ which I still play once a month.

A few years ago we decided that we really should worship in the parish in which we'd been living for many years and so we joined Belhelvie church and I was delighted to find that they already had a very good organist and choir. Before long I'd been invited to join the choir and was surprised to find how much I enjoyed singing, though I didn't feel like I was very good at it. Eventually I decided to have a singing lesson just to find out if I really could sing in tune. I only had the one lesson but was encouraged to find a choir that had a wider repertoire and the Aberdeen Orpheus Choir was one of the suggestions. I contacted Jane and it was with great trepidation that I came along to Crown Terrace for an audition last February and was invited to join in with that evening's rehearsal. Everyone has made me feel so welcome and I enjoy it so much that since joining I don't think I've missed a Wednesday night's rehearsal!

### ***Choral Quips – 'Of course we all watch the conductor'***

An American choir had just arrived in Europe for a two-week tour. One hour before the first concert, the choir conductor became very ill and was unable to take to the stage - the choir suddenly had to find a substitute. The choir manager asked everyone in the choir whether they could step in and conduct and the only person who was willing was the last chair alto.

The manager was obviously somewhat nervous about this. "We can't audition you" he said, "and there's no time to rehearse. You'll have to do the concert cold."

"Don't worry" said the alto "I'm sure I'll manage fine."

The alto conducted the concert and it was a big success. Since the director remained ill for the duration of the tour, the alto conducted all of the concerts to great acclaim.

At the next rehearsal back home, the conductor had recovered and the alto took her place at the back of the alto section. As she sat down, her partner asked her, “Where have you been for the last two weeks?”

### ***Ian Watt***

As Jane said in her introduction, we are going to be joined by the guitarist Ian Watt for 2 of our summer concerts. 25 year-old Ian hails from Fraserburgh and in 2009 at the tender age of 18 won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at the Parkening International which is the world’s preeminent guitar competition.

Ian has performed solo across the world and has also joined orchestras such as the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia. The Classical Guitar UK magazine has called Ian a, ‘a guitarist of outstanding skill and originality’.

As well as performing, Ian is also, despite his young age, an in-demand teacher and has given masterclasses in, amongst other countries, China and Germany. If you’d like to find out more about this exciting artist, visit his website at [www.ianwattguitarist.com](http://www.ianwattguitarist.com)

### ***The benefits of choral singing***

There is an increasing body of research and evidence that shows choral singing is beneficial to your health – both physical and mental. I’m sure you’re all aware of this to some degree and if you want to find out more the internet can provide plenty of reading material.

I wanted to highlight one thing in particular however. According to a 2005 study, singing “can produce satisfying and therapeutic sensations even when the sound produced by the vocal instrument is of mediocre quality”. I can already hear the collective sigh of relief emanating from the basses...

Ed.

## Aberdeen Orpheus Choir

### Dates for the Diary

## 2017

Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> January	New session starts 7.15pm
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> April	Social Evening - Fish Supper and Bingo night. Ashvale Restaurant, Gt Western Road. 7pm
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Rehearsal - Queens Cross Church Hall 2pm - 5pm (TBC)
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> May	Christian Aid Concert - Skene Parish Church 7.30pm
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> May	Rehearsal at Craigiebuckler Church 7.15pm
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> May	Summer Concert 7.30pm - Craigiebuckler Church 7.30pm
Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup> May	Summer Concert at Aboyne



**HOLIDAYS!!**