

Chronicle Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ambitious spring concert



● Nantwich Choral Society chairman Kay Foster, publicity officer Elizabeth Lea and music director John Naylor have unveiled a new programme of entertainment starting with a star-studded concert at the Civic Hall on March 26

NANTWICH Choral Society has unveiled a programme featuring some of the country's most well-known classical performers.

Rehearsals are currently in full swing for an early Easter concert including big name singers and the Northern Concordia Orchestra at Nantwich Civic Hall on March 26.

Mendelssohn's *Elijah* will see famous names from the London opera scene join the 100-strong choir in its most ambitious spring concert for decades.

Classical recording star, Dingle Yandell, a bass baritone, will join tenor

Peter Kirk, mezzo soprano Hanna-Liisa Kirchin and Cheshire soprano Alison Phillips in presenting the composer's masterful oratorio depicting events in the life of the Biblical prophet.

The concert will be conducted by Nantwich-based John Naylor - regarded as one of the region's most experienced music directors after performing with world-class choirs.

Society spokeswoman Elizabeth Lea said: "Our Easter concert is normally staged in St Mary's Church but we needed a larger venue on this occasion to accommodate

the orchestra.

"Thanks to a donation from society benefactor, we have commissioned a full professional orchestra and highly acclaimed singers for what will be a truly memorable night."

In July, the society will return to St Mary's with their French counterparts from Macon for an exchange performance of John Rutter's *The Sprig of Thyme* and *Magnificat*.

October 22 will see the choristers travel to Victoria Hall in Hanley for a joint concert with The Ceramic City Choir.

● For ticket information, visit www.nantwichchoral.com.



● Nantwich Choral Society welcomed a sell-out audience to the town's Civic Hall

Biblical piece heralds the spring in choral society's latest concert

MUSIC lovers turned out in force for a sell-out concert by a local choir.

The Nantwich Choral Society's Spring Concert was held this weekend at Nantwich Civic Hall, when they launched their spring and summer programme with a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* featuring big-name singers and the Northern Concordia Orchestra.

Classical recording star, Dingle Yandell, a bass baritone, joined tenor Peter Kirk, mezzo soprano Hanna-Liisa Kirchin and Cheshire

soprano Alison Phillips for the performance, depicting events in the life of the Biblical prophet.

Society spokeswoman Elizabeth Lea said: "Our Easter concert is normally staged in St Mary's Church but we needed a larger venue on this occasion to accommodate the orchestra.

"There was a last-minute flurry of ticket sales and we were delighted to see many people buying them as a treat for Mother's Day.

"The Civic proved a bright and airy venue and with the sun

streaming in, the concert was perfect way to mark the launch of spring and a busy ahead season for the society."

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Choral society renew French connection

By Ned Bristow
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NANTWICH Choral Society is marking the 60th anniversary of special twinning links between Crewe and Nantwich and Macon, in France.

Choir members will travel to Macon to perform a concert with their French counterparts as part of an exchange commemorating their lasting friendship and love of music.

The Nantwich group has held weeks of rehearsals, and will on Saturday, May 27, join L'Ensemble Arpege de Macon to perform John Rutter's 'Magnificat' in front an audience.

Following the trip to Macon, famous for its Chardonnay wines, the society will welcome the French singers back to Nantwich in July.

Outings to places of interest are planned and the society, in partnership with Crewe and Nantwich Twinning Association, will put on a joint concert on home soil.

Elizabeth Lea of the Nantwich society said: "The notion of twinning, known elsewhere as sister cities or friendship towns, is a tradition stretching back almost a



Nantwich Choral Society has set off to France

century in the UK.

"The practice took off in earnest after World War II, with community leaders keen to heal the divisions of conflict and seek support in rebuilding a post war spirit of reconciliation.

"There are almost 2,000 formal twinning arrangements in the UK, and 50 per cent are with France.

"This very special twinning between Crewe and Nantwich

and Macon has promoted friendship and mutual understanding since 1957.

"It remains untarnished by politics of the day and our two choirs have a strong bond cemented by our love of culture, music and art.

"We are excited to be going to Macon again and to welcome the choir here to Nantwich in July."

A Nantwich Civic Hall reception is scheduled for Fri-

day, July 14 to welcome the Maconnais guests.

Tickets for another joint concert – at St Mary's Church in Nantwich on Saturday, July 15 – as well as more information about the society are available at nantwichchoral.org.uk.

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October 2017 John Naylor's Review of the Veri Requiem

Dear Friends,

It was all Sue Marrs' fault!

Several years ago, just after NCS had performed 'The Dream of Gerontius' at Chester cathedral in which Sue sang beautifully as the Angel, she asked me that if I ever conducted Verdi's Requiem, please could she sing in it.

Thus the germ of a plan was formed, and it took a long time to come to fruition. The coincidence of a significant improvement in NCS finances, a serendipitous exchange of messages between Anthony Rose (CCC's Music Director) and me, and the enthusiastic support of our committees all combined to get the ball rolling.

NCS approached the CCC committee with a proposal (which they accepted) to share the costs of putting on a performance of this expensive work on the basis that NCS could underwrite it. A planning committee, chaired by Kay Foster, was formed which included members from each choir.

Martin Jones coordinated an application for funding to The Arts Council which unfortunately was declined. Undismayed, Martin submitted a revised application to cover most of the expected financial deficit: happily this was approved.

CCC's experience of working with the Victoria Hall proved invaluable, and working enthusiastically together over several months we were able to draw up all the plans which made the occasion a great logistic success.

Importantly, it was a great musical success. The challenges were considerable, especially since CCC had other repertoire to prepare and NCS had a big commitment during the preceding summer months to the exchange concerts with our friends in Macon whilst CCC were beginning their rehearsals much earlier in the summer term.

The four soloists and the orchestra had been booked more than a year ahead. As often happens in these projects there were several changes. Two examples stand out: the original tenor withdrew after receiving the offer of a leading role in a new opera at Glyndebourne. The third bassoon fell ill the day before the performance, but was replaced by the very recently retired principal bassoonist of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. These things do happen – we just take them in our stride and my experience is that sometimes we are even better off because of the changes which are forced upon us.

We had held two joint choir rehearsals and these proved invaluable in integrating the performance of the two choirs.

We had a good audience. All of those to whom I spoke afterwards were amazed that the choirs, soloists and orchestra came together for the first time on the day of the performance.

And what a performance it was!

The soloists and orchestra were superb. Emma Smith soared above everything with some thrilling high top Cs, Sue charmed us all with some mellifluous moments, especially the opening of the moving 'Lacrimosa', and Luis Gomes thrilled everyone with his wonderful tenor voice. He is a potential star in the making, as is Dingle Yandell (already known to NCS) who sent a chill through us all at 'Mors stupebit' and excited us at 'Confutatis'.

The trumpets (on stage and offstage) were tremendous, as were the whole of the brass section. Will we ever forget the opening bars of the stupendous 'Tuba mirum spargens'? The strings, led by the excellent Julie Edwards who is a real pleasure to work with, produced excitement and pathos in equal measure: the assured technique of the woodwind was simply breath-taking.

The chorus were absolutely magnificent: the weeks of rehearsing separately and then all together paid off handsomely: *Dies Irae* was stunning each time it occurred, the *Sanctus* was incredibly exciting for all the right reasons and the last fugue *Libera me Domine* reached a suitably shattering climax at the end of the last movement. Throughout the whole work, the choral singing was of a very high standard indeed and the result was a huge credit to every singer who took part.

So many people were involved in planning and executing the logistics of the performance that it would be invidious to single out anyone individually. Suffice it to say that it was a wonderful example of talented and like-minded people all working together and contributing to an experience which performers and audience will treasure for a very long time indeed.

For me, it was a huge pleasure and privilege to have been entrusted with conducting such a memorable performance of one of the greatest works in the choral repertoire.

I very much enjoyed it and I hope you did also.

With many thanks and very best wishes to everyone,

John