

# *Phil Me In!*

**Number 18: Summer 2020**

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**‘Any fool who doubts good music is being made outside the M25 needs to hear the Leeds Philharmonic.’  
says Simon Heffer in *The Daily Telegraph***

Dear Phil Colleagues and Friends,

## **Zooming in on History!**

It’s not often in its history that a major choral society like the Leeds Phil does something completely new and completely different – *Belshazzar’s Feast* back in 1931 was perhaps a notable exception in the public sphere. We’ve been around for almost 150 years but the rehearsal on **Thursday 28 May 2020** was the first ever to be conducted via Zoom. I dare say that – like me – the vast majority of the choir had never heard of Zoom, but it quickly became a familiar part of our lockdown lives.

*If you’re reading this in the Phil’s archives some years hence you may wonder what I’m on about. Maybe by 2050 you do everything by Zoom – or more likely its successors – but back in May 2020 we were in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic (look in your history books) and normal life was on hold throughout Yorkshire and the wider world. ‘Stay at Home’ was the official advice, social distancing – keeping 2 metres apart – was in force when we did venture out, and large gets-together were totally forbidden. All of which made our rehearsals at St George’s a big no-no. The last proper Phil rehearsal was on Thursday 12 March, some eleven weeks previously...*

I suppose it wasn’t really a rehearsal as there was no music in preparation. Our Beethoven concert on 16 May had, of course, been cancelled, and our next

performance, a return to Bolton Priory Church at the end of June, was never going to be a possibility owing to the social distancing rules in force, plus the fact that all churches were closed, which didn't help.

So what we did, after one of Joe's warm-ups (but with no chance of my flailing arms striking the person next to me, only the kitchen door) was to look again at Eric Whitacre's *Sleep*, a piece we performed in October 2018 at our previous Airedale Symphony Orchestra concert.

If it wasn't really a rehearsal, then what was it? A get-together – without actually getting together? Possibly. Anyway, I had looked forward to it, even trimming my beard the previous day as I didn't want fellow Phil members watching me chew my moustache, something which had been annoying me for a week or two. Luckily I had in one of my cupboards some electric clippers, bought from the middle at Lidl some years ago, obviously *in anticipation* of the pandemic-to-come.

So there we all were at home in our little Zoom rectangles – three screens' worth – some carefully lit, some rather dark, **Jill Foalks** silhouetted, and our plucky sailor and treasurer **Andrew Straton** broadcasting from the middle of the Atlantic. Or so it seemed.

Oh, but it was so good to see everyone!

The next week, **Thursday 4 June**, found us singing through Mendelssohn's *He that shall endure to the end* (surely a suitable piece for our present situation!) from *Elijah*. I logged on but had to remain invisible, as my laptop's camera was not sending its digital message. It was certainly working at my end. I did click on various icons several times to try to appear – and I was wearing a brand-new Joe Brown's top – but to no avail. I also seemed to have lost both ends of my voice, high and low, so it was a little depressing, rather like the weather this past couple of days. Still, my bad back was almost better!

I have mentioned in these columns before the idea of a conductor's sing/talk ratio in rehearsals, and it was obvious that Joe was working hard to get this right! It *is* very difficult, when you are holding the floor, not to think of lots of useful little things to say before we sing something again, but I liked the way that Joe kept telling himself off! The Mendelssohn is a splendid little piece, beautifully written, which only suffers from being in the key of F major.

The third of our virtual rehearsal sessions on **Thursday 11 June** didn't go quite so smoothly. It was what one of my oldest friends – we were at school together – would call '*Technology 1, Humans nil!*'! Unfortunately it was almost impossible to hear Joe because of loud interference which, I gather, was feedback owing the proximity of two devices – or something like that! It was a shame that we couldn't proceed, but it wouldn't have been much fun.

But it actually turned out well for me personally. It was my birthday that day, and Nitikant, a young chap who had studied GCSE Music with me at school in India and now works in Leeds, had arranged to call round at 6pm with his girlfriend to wish me well. Being Indian, they arrived about 30 minutes late, dangerously close to the start of the rehearsal, so their visit had to be curtailed. But to my great surprise and delight they had brought with them food and beer from one of Leeds' poshest Indian restaurants, so I was able to enjoy that treat rather earlier than expected!

The following week, **Thursday 18 June**, was a most miserable un-Juny sort of day. I made my usual Thursday morning trip to the newsagent to pick up the *Craven Herald* and next week's *Radio Times*, decoked the coffee machine, sorted out my pills for the next seven days, then spent time working on a French friend's transcription of a motet by Jean Richafort (1480-1547). He'd asked me to make a clear copy of his handwritten MS using the Sibelius program as he wanted his choir to sing it on Monday. Jo Cadilhon used to sing tenor for me in Vietnam in the early noughties while researching for a London PhD there, and – unusually for an agricultural economist, I suspect – is much into medieval and Renaissance music. Jo is currently a fairly senior French civil servant living in the south of France (lucky chap!) and runs a small choir there.

Then, having gone into the kitchen to sort out lunch, I decided instead to look through my CDs as I wanted to find a recording of the Mozart Requiem. With my CD filing 'system', this involves taking piles of CDs out of a cupboard and sorting through them. I found two recordings of the Mozart, discovered no fewer than five versions of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, a few more accidental duplicates, some long-unheard treasures and a couple of empty cases which matched CDs in my car stereo – where there is *still* a carol recording which has been there since Christmas 2018! (*Editor's note on 1 July: No, it isn't there anymore! I've cleared out the car's CD player, removed that Christmas recording and reunited the two cases with their discs.*)

During the afternoon I looked at the *Evening Post*. In an article headed '**Hundreds of council jobs face the axe**', a short paragraph said that Chief Executive Tom Riordan 'had hinted that culture and events may have to take a hit, as this was one of the few non-compulsory areas of council spending left to be cut'.

This is worrying for us, as up to now the city council – through LICs (Leeds International Concert Season) – has been a major provider and funder of cultural events in the city, including the Monday organ recital series and the 'big' concerts which we and the Leeds Festival Chorus put on at the Town Hall involving professional orchestras. For those events, LICs covers the cost of the Town Hall hire, the orchestra (around £20-25,000), soloists, conductor and publicity, so it's an enormous contribution.

I duly logged on just before 7 pm, only to find that my laptop's camera was not doing its stuff again (I wonder why?) and I was just a black square amongst the familiar faces on my screen. I suppose that being invisible did bring hidden benefits (I was able to go to the loo without being missed, for example!) but I felt that I wasn't taking a full part in the session.

Joe had promised (threatened?) a session on singing technique etc, which we duly received, and we sang three extracts from Beethoven's Mass in C. Apart from going through these with Joe (who kindly kept saying 'Very good,' in spite of the fact that he couldn't hear us) we sang along to a recording of the piece – which personally I found particularly useful as there were others singing the bass line besides myself!

The pronunciation of '*Kyrie*' was raised, and Joe asked us to sing '*Ki-ree-ay*', which is the usual pronunciation in 'English' Greek. I used to go to services at Essen Cathedral when I lived in Germany, and was interested to hear German choirs pronounce this word something like '*Courier*', which is presumably what Ludwig himself would have known.

One problem some of us had was finding the place in the score. As sometimes happens there were several editions of the Beethoven on the go; mine was the 'old red' Novello edition, which had neither bar numbers nor rehearsal letters as well as different page numbers from the version Joe was using, so much of my time was spent searching for the starting point!

On **Thursday 25 June**, however, I was unable to attend – or should that be 'attend'? – so I can't make any comment about the proceedings. Joe had

promised a lot of singing (rather than exercises or talking!) and the plan was to work on Handel's 1727 Coronation anthem *Let thy hand be strengthened*, the B-side to *Zadok the Priest*.

The final fling took place on **Thursday 2 July**. This date, I have to admit, caused a personal conflict of interest as my football team was playing Arsenal at 6 pm and I was following the live commentary on my laptop. 7 o'clock was drawing near at half-time, so the laptop was set up for Zooming, the music found – and the match commentary transferred (*pianissimo*) to my mobile phone.

After some warming up (and I couldn't shirk as my computer's camera had deigned to beam me up on this occasion) we sailed through Mendelssohn's *He that shall endure to the end* (still appropriate), Handel's Coronation Anthem *Let thy hand be strengthened*, and – finally – Eric Whitacre's *Sleep*. Which was where we began these virtual rehearsals on 28 May.

And *Sleep* it was – appropriately – that put the Phil's 2019-20 season to bed.

But what do you remember of this rather truncated 'season'?

Back in November we sang Elgar's *The Kingdom* twice, in Leeds Town Hall and a week later in Ely Cathedral on our splendid little tour to sunny Cambridge. Wasn't it good to see **Richard** again! Then in December we had our usual double-house stint in the Town Hall for the Lord Mayor's Carols and on Leap Year's Day, 29 February 2020, we squeezed in our American concert before life became difficult. 'And that, said he, was that.' (to misquote A A Milne).

At the time of writing in early July nobody has the slightest idea what next season will bring, but doubtless the Trustees will be considering the options and will let us know in due course!

But plans have been made; plans have indeed been made.

I remember learning the phrase *Homo proponit sed Deus disponit* in my Latin lessons at school some sixty years ago. The English translation I was taught is 'Man proposes but God disposes'. But in the summer of 2020, and with due deference to our clerical members, we might perhaps drop God and say *Homo proponit sed Coronavirus disponit* – 'We mere mortals might make plans, but it's up to Coronavirus how it all turns out'. And with that proviso, here are our tentative plans for the 2020-2021 season:

**Saturday 10 October 2020**

**St George's Church**

Singing Day

(likely to focus on Beethoven *Mass in C*)

**Saturday 7 November 2020**

**St Edmund's Church, Roundhay**

Programme in preparation, but likely to include

Russell Pascoe: *Secular Requiem*

**Thursday 17 December 2020**

**Leeds Town Hall**

Lord Mayor's Carols

**Saturday 19 December 2020**

**Leeds Town Hall**

Christmas Concert celebrating John Rutter's 75th Birthday

Possibly to include the *Gloria* and various Christmas Carols

Fine Arts Brass

David Hill, MBE (Organ)

Conductor: **John Rutter**

**Saturday 20 February 2021**

**Ev Stadtkirche St Reinoldi, Dortmund, Germany**

Edward Elgar: *The Kingdom*

Members of Leeds Philharmonic Chorus

Dortmund Philharmonic Chorus

Conductor: Granville Walker

**Saturday 13 March 2021**

**Leeds Town Hall**

**150th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT**

Igor Stravinsky: *Symphony of Psalms*

Francis Poulenc: *Gloria*

Philip Wilby: *Anniversary Commission*

The Hallé Orchestra

Conductor: David Hill, MBE

**Saturday 15 May 2021**

**Leeds Town Hall**

Edward Elgar: *Great is the Lord*

Edward Elgar: *Enigma Variations*

William Walton: *Belshazzar's Feast*

Orchestra of Opera North

with Leeds Festival Chorus & St Peter's Singers

Conductor: Simon Wright

The first performance of *Belshazzar's Feast* took place in Leeds Town Hall in October 1931, so this will be the 90th anniversary of this stunning piece! Let's hope it happens.

## **MEMBERSHIP NOTES**

As you will expect, no new members have joined the choir since the last Newsletter was published, but Jill has told me that we have welcomed back **Rachael Bratley** (Soprano 1) who has been on maternity leave.

## **DAME INGRID ROSCOE, PRESIDENT OF THE LEEDS PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY**



**Dame Ingrid Roscoe**, who sadly died on 28 June, was the President of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, and maintained a keen interest in the choir.

She was born (perhaps unusually) at Rugby School in 1944, and studied at Leeds University, gaining a BA degree in Art History and later a PhD, returning to the university to teach in the 1990s. She was a noted authority on British sculpture, the subject of her PhD, and was awarded honorary doctorates by both Leeds and Huddersfield universities.

Dr Roscoe became a Deputy Lieutenant for West Yorkshire in 1994 and ten years later she was appointed to the top job as Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the county, the first female Lord-Lieutenant in the north of England, retiring in 2018 after fourteen years of distinguished service.

The ancient office of Lord Lieutenant, which can be traced back to Tudor times, entails considerable responsibility on the part of its holder, whose role involves escorting royal visitors to the county, representing The Queen at events and presenting honours on behalf of the Crown.

In 2017 our President became *Dame* Ingrid when she was appointed DCVO (Dame Commander of the Royal Victorian Order) an award given by The Queen personally and not on the recommendation of politicians.



*Prince William investing Ingrid Roscoe with the DCVO in 2017*

## TRUSTEES OF THE LEEDS PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

At the virtual AGM on 21 May 2020 several new Trustees were elected. Here is a complete list of our current Trustees with their responsibilities:

Chairman	Ruth Shann (Friend)
Secretary	Philip Ratcliffe (Tenor)
Treasurer	Andrew Straton (Bass)
Membership Manager	Jill Foalks (Alto)
Concert Manager	David Lunn (Tenor)
Music Programme Mgr	Roger Shirley
Marketing Manager	Penny Dean (Soprano)
Income Generation Mgr	Tom Chilton (Bass)
Tour Manager	Rosemary O’Dea (Alto)
Trustees without Portfolio:	
	Rowena Herbert (Alto)
	Lewis Hemingway (Bass)
	Charlotte Mulliner (Soprano)

## INTRODUCING A NEW CHAIRMAN!

It’s now five years since we bade farewell to **Philip Meaden** as our Chairman, so it is with particular pleasure that the Trustees announced recently that they had found Philip’s successor in **Ruth Shann**.

I asked Ruth to introduce herself:

*Hi – I’m Ruth!*

*I’m currently Head of Operations at West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, in charge of operations, FM, marketing/communications and member services. I am an experienced operations manager and company director who has worked within both mid-size corporates and SMEs including high-growth businesses. I specialise in business development, strategic planning and change management.*

*I completed a full time MBA at Leeds University and also hold the Professional Qualification of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and a management consultant diploma. My previous roles have included running a timber and flooring company for 8 years, and working in a solicitors’ practice.*



*I grew up in a very musical household, both my parents being music teachers. Growing up, I played the piano, harp and flute as well as singing regularly in both choirs and in local musical theatre productions. I have a wide range of musical interests from ballet and classical to hip-hop and pop, even admitting to liking the 'odd' current pop song! Nowadays I spend a lot of time as 'mum's taxi', but when I have time for myself I enjoy baking, cycling and occasional gardening.*

## AND ANOTHER INTRODUCTION...



The early hours of Friday 22 May 2020 in Paris were doubtless disturbed for some by the arrival of this cute little chap on the left, **Alban Jacques Wilberforce**, probably the youngest person ever to be pictured in this Newsletter.

Congratulations to Mère et Père, and let's hope for the neighbours' sake that he doesn't (yet) have his father's prodigious lung power!

Recent editions of the Newsletter – including this one – have mentioned members of our community that we have lost, so it's delightful to record the birth of little Alban. I wonder what he'll be up to in 30 years time?

# Covid-19 has silenced choirs – we must find a way to restart singing together

Britain's once vibrant choral landscape faces an uncertain future, write **Bob Chilcott, John Rutter, Sarah Connolly** and other music directors, conductors and composers

We are writing in response to the heartfelt letter on behalf of classical music and musicians from Sir Simon Rattle and Sir Mark Elder to give voice to the millions of people who sing in choirs in this country.

Up until now we have had one of the most vibrant choral landscapes in the world. Our professional choral life, consisting of world-renowned chamber choirs, vocal ensembles, opera choruses, cathedral choirs and theatre ensembles, faces an uncertain future. The financial picture for such groups has always been challenging, even in the best of times, but the outlook now for such ensembles, mostly made up of freelance musicians, is not an optimistic one.

We have a world-leading cathedral and church choir tradition, largely made up of young boys and girls and paid adult singers who face financial hardship and also serious challenges of continuity. The amateur choir life of this country is huge, from the world-class symphony choruses and university choirs to community and school choirs, and all these groups face a time of great uncertainty.

We need church leaders to have the courage to speak out so that we can make singing together in churches work within certain guidelines. We need the government to show how we can restart singing together on an equal footing with opening theme parks, shopping and kicking a football around. It is imperative that we find a way for choirs in this country to resume as soon and as safely as we can.

Singing in a choir is not only about communality, social cohesion and harmony; for many it is an essential source of emotional wellbeing and positive mental health. Moreover it is a powerful expression of our culture and humanity, and it cannot be allowed to fade away.

**Bob Chilcott** *Composer/conductor*, **John Rutter** *Composer/conductor*, **Sarah Connolly** *Opera singer*, **Simon Halsey** *Chorus director, LSO, CBSO*, **Harry Christophers** *Founder, The Sixteen*, **David Hill** *Musical director, The Bach Choir*, **Gavin Carr** *Chorus director, The Philharmonia Chorus, Bournemouth Symphony Chorus*, **Matthew Hamilton** *Choral director, The Hallé*, **Ben Parry** *Conductor, National Youth Choir*, **David Temple** *Conductor, Crouch End Festival Chorus*, **Andrew Carwood** *Director of music, St Paul's Cathedral*, **Ashley Grote** *Master of music, Norwich Cathedral*, **Adrian Partington** *Director of music, Gloucester Cathedral*, **Robert Dean** *Guildhall School of Music*, **Jonathan Willcocks** *Musical director, Guildford Choral Society*, **Darius Battiwalla** *Musical director, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus*, **Leslie East** *Chair, Association of British Choral Directors*, **Aidan Oliver** *Conducto*

## **TAILPIECE: Out of the mouths...**

A musician friend recently sent me this classic 'Things they say' piece which I thought might amuse you. It was no 13 that started me giggling!

The following 25 answers to Religious Studies tests were written by children. They have not been retouched or corrected. Incorrect spelling has been left.

- 1. In the first book of the bible, Guinness. god got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.*
- 2. Adam and eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of ark. Noah built an ark and the animals came on in pears.*
- 3. Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.*
- 4. The jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic genitals.*
- 5. Sampson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah.*
- 6. Samson slayed the philistines with the axe of the apostles.*
- 7. Moses led the jews to the red sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.*
- 8. The egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to mount cyanide to get the ten commandments.*
- 9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.*
- 10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.*
- 11. Moses died before he ever reached canada then Joshua led the hebrews in the battle of geritol.*
- 12. The greatest miricle in the bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.*
- 13. David was a hebrew king who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelsteins, a race of people who lived in biblical times.*

14. *Solomon, one of Davids sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.*
15. *When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the magna carta.*
16. *When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manager.*
17. *Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.*
18. *St John the blacksmith dumped water on his head.*
19. *Jesus enunciated the golden rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.*
20. *It was a miricle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.*
21. *The people who followed the lord were called the 12 decibels.*
22. *The epistels were the wives of the apostles.*
23. *One of the oppossums was St. Matthew who was also a taximan.*
24. *St Paul cavorted to christianity, he preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marraige.*
25. *Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.*

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At this point I usually say 'Have a great summer and see you in September!' but – well – this year I'm not sure how to sign off. September isn't that far away, so I think we'll just have to wait for a decision to be made about when (or how) the phoenix of the Phil takes flight again.

Stay safe!

*David*

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the contributors themselves and do not necessarily represent the views of the Leeds Philharmonic Society.
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