

HALIFAX

Choral Society

**The world's oldest choral society
Making music continuously since 1817**

After (approximately) 45 zoom rehearsals, 15 socially distanced rehearsals, (with half of us present and the other half tuning in on YouTube) three outdoor rehearsals, (two of them quite chilly!) three cancelled performances and two videos, the most chaotic season on record has finally come to an end - and we are still making music! Thanks are due to the members and supporters of the choir for their huge commitment over this period, and above all to Philip and Jenny who have steered us undaunted through a myriad of ever-changing rules and regulations. We are now ready to look forward to an exciting new season starting in September. You can read more about our future plans in this edition of our Newsletter.

Summer concert at Piece Hall



At last! our first unrestricted rehearsal in our normal venue, Carlton United Reformed Church, for our performance at the Piece Hall, Halifax, on 24th July.



The weather was kind to us, and a group of 38 singers, accompanied by the Black Dyke trombone quartet, performed a mixed programme for an hour to a receptive audience in Piece Hall's courtyard. Kicking off with a rousing rendition of the 'Hallelujah Chorus', the programme included a capella versions of the *Gentleman Jack* theme song, 'Lullaby of Birdland', 'Hail, Smiling Morn' and a Nigerian song, 'O-re-mi'. Mozart's 'Ave Verum' was particularly appreciated. The trombones contributed three pieces and accompanied the jazz classic, 'It don't mean a thing', and the concert ended with chorus and band joining together in Verdi's 'Va Pensiero'. The event was free, but a bucket collection raised £150.

Join us to sing Handel's Messiah!

Halifax Choral Society is immensely proud of its unbroken record of annual performances of *Messiah*, dating back to 1818. We even managed to perform it in early March 2020 not realising that restrictions were about to stop us rehearsing. *Messiah* will be back this year - with a slight twist. We will be running a 'Come and Sing' *Messiah* on **Saturday 18th September**. This will involve a morning's workshop and an afternoon rehearsal, followed by a full performance of the oratorio. The concert will take place in Halifax's beautiful Minster, and we will be accompanied by a professional orchestra - [Skipton Camerata](#). We are hoping that this event will generate plenty of interest in the society and help to recruit new members. We are eager to welcome anyone who has a working knowledge of *Messiah*, or is a good sight-reader, to join us for this, so if you are interested, please contact us for more details and a registration form. The day will cost £15 for singers, which includes light refreshments, and audience tickets for the performance are £10, payable on the door.

Contact us at coordinator@halifaxchoralsociety.co.uk

Handel's Messiah - Did you know ...?

Handel is better known these days for the *Messiah* rather than for his operas, of which he wrote nearly 50 between 1705 and 1738, but the fashion for foreign, and specifically Italian, opera was under attack by the late 1730s. Hogarth's satirical painting [The Rake's Levée](#) of 1734 includes the depiction of a harpsichord player, identified by the initials F.H. on the score of an imaginary opera *The*

Rape of the Sabines from which he is playing. In the [engraving](#), made a year later, a long scroll draping over the shoulder of the harpsichordist lists extravagant presents made to the opera stars of the day, but ironically identifies scandal-laden sopranos in the roles of 'pure' virgins, and three castrati as 'ravishers'.



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With opera no longer in demand Handel started writing oratorios, which were very much in vogue at the time, completing about 30, from *Saul* in 1738 to *Jephtha* in 1751 when failing sight prevented him from working. *Messiah* was completed in 24 days, which has been calculated at 15 notes per minute, continuously for 10 hours per day! Handel shared Hogarth's philanthropic support of the Foundling Hospital, in London, giving a benefit concert of *Messiah* annually from 1749. He donated his portion of the proceeds from the first performance in Dublin in 1742 to a debtors' prison and hospital in that city. Although it was not immediately popular in England, *Messiah* has since become one of the best known and most performed choral works

More dates for your diary:

6 September: rehearsals start at Carlton

6 November: The beautiful "**Requiem**" by French composer Maurice Duruflé, with organ accompaniment, plus some other exciting French music.

28 November: Our annual "**Carols and Brass**", with Black Dyke Band

We would like to thank our patrons who have helped us through this difficult period

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We would also like to acknowledge with grateful thanks a gift from Lady Margaret Shutt of over £700 being the residual amount from Lord David's Personal Charities Foundation account.

If you have any suggestions for what you would like your Newsletter to include, or any queries about HCS, please email

coordinator@halifaxchoralsociety.co.uk

We will shortly be launching a new website, so watch this space! In the meantime you can visit our website [here](#)

[Visit our localgiving page here](#)

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