

everyone has a good view (important to those of us who are 'vertically challenged'.)

I wonder how many choir members know about The Oxted & Limpsfield Music Society? Now approaching its 58th season, and hosting over the years such luminaries as the Amadeus Quartet and Moura Lympany, for many years its President was local resident Eileen Joyce; pianist Philip Fowke now holds that position. In addition to the five major concerts between October and April there are Club Evenings - musical *soirees* or talks - in the homes of members: if you've admired them from the outside, now's your chance to see inside Godstone Place, Oxted Place and Sheepland in Detillens Lane.

The O&L Music Society is too good a secret to keep to oneself! Details will be on the notice board in September. Oh, and the \* applies if you book for all five concerts, though each one can be booked separately at prices from £10 up to £16 for Imogen Cooper's recital: well, Concert Grands don't come cheap, nor yet grandees!

Sue S.

## A Message from our President, Della Jones.

It was such a joy to be able to come to your summer concert, especially as I'd had to miss the previous few because of my own performances. You were all in excellent form and I felt nothing but pride for my choir. It was lovely to join you at the party afterwards. With Ian's expert conducting and Jan's super playing I know you will continue to go from strength to strength. And yes, I will be delighted to do another concert with you. Enjoy your holidays, but take the Bach with you! Much love to you all,

*Della*

## A letter from the Chairman

Another fairly successful year, musically if not financially, has come to an end. Our two new venues seem to be working in spite of being out of the area. Croydon High School, although sounding attractive and willing to have us, proved to have too many complications. These included difficult disabled access, parking along the road in Sainsbury's and the need for security from 1.30p.m to 10.30p.m. John Kensett has done wonders arranging everything and his contacts from Sainsbury's, acting as guards, seemed to enjoy themselves. So much so that they have helped at our subsequent concerts. John and Margaret Dale and their van are a godsend for moving the rostrum, staging and musical instruments. They also deserve the 'Order of the Rubber Gloves'

for washing up always on rehearsal evenings.

I thought that the Spring Concert was one of our best. "Springtime in Fyn" by Carl Neilson which was translated from the Danish by our own Karle Simpson (or even 'our very own Karle Simpson' as they would say on Classic FM – *trivial comment by Jackiè*) was very successful. I believe Karle has had one or two enquiries from other choirs wishing to do it. It was also lovely to hear the Caterham Prep School Choir bringing a younger flavour to the concert. Part 1 of Messiah at Christmas made me realise that I didn't know it as well as I thought. Della Jones, our President, said after the Summer Concert that she could have brought Joe Horowitz to it if she had known. Perhaps it's as well that he did not come. Della said that she would sing with us again next summer, engagements permitting.

The Committee have had many compliments on how well the two parties went. This is due solely to Christine Willmington and Sue Miller and their helpers. The food was excellent and we all had

a good time. The choir owes a great deal to the various members of the Committee for their hard work, which ensures the smooth running of the choir. Thanks are also due to Joan, Ann G., Keith, Tree, Jackie and Mollie for their money raising efforts and to John Kensett for his social events. This will have an effect when we come to discuss subscriptions for next year.

Looking forward to seeing you all in good voice on September 6<sup>th</sup>. Bring along any friends who may enjoy evenings full of music, jokes and sociability.

*Cathy*

## From our Conductor

In a few days' time I shall be en route to Japan for a ten-day visit with the BBC Singers, during which time we shall present four concerts, in Kyoto, Kamakura and Tokyo. Japan is hosting a major choral convention, with choirs from all round the world in attendance, so this should be a very exciting project. I anticipate that I shall be witness to some fine choral singing. For one concert we shall be joining forces with about 30 local singers – not all from the same choir – to sing a programme of Brahms and Mendelssohn – sorry, Blahms and Menderssohn! – which could prove quite a challenge for the German conductor. Achieving a good choral blend and unanimity of style is never easy, but with one team of established British professionals and another group of ad hoc Japanese amateurs/semi-pros, time may not be on his side!

During my 10-year tenure at ESCS, one of my major objectives has been to develop awareness in the choir of certain critical aspects of good choral singing, such as blend, tonal colour, intonation, rhythmic accuracy and energy etc. I am in no doubt that as a body our overall quality is much improved on that of a decade ago. However, confidence is not always sufficiently secure to enable consistently good singing to emerge and at times I feel we have been known to let our standards slip. Without specific reference to any one concert or any one particular work, the 2004/5 season typified such an up-and-down standard and I think we have to address, with far greater determination and conviction, certain aspects of choral discipline which are well within our grasp. Most of these will be covered in our weekly rehearsals, but some can be examined in more general terms. One in particular is a worry – maintaining numbers and balance in all sections for all concerts. Our summer programmes regularly suffer from having fewer singers available. This year was no exception. Whilst I am well aware that some members opt to take holidays early in the summer rather than clashing with school vacations and whilst there will, almost inevitably, be one or two last minute withdrawals through illness, I am greatly concerned about the frequent shortfall in numbers for the final concert of each season. Programme content is generally decided well in advance of the rehearsal/concert period and planned with a full complement of singers in mind. If

On a (marginally!) lighter note, many thanks to those who came to my Garden Morning. The morning was grey, the deer and rabbits had done their worst and my timing was awful – the garden looks fifty times better now (she would say that wouldn't she!) – but it was lovely to see those who came.

The programme for the Christmas Concert looks very promising and I'm certainly looking forward to singing the two Bach pieces. I'm looking forward too to starting rehearsals again but intend to enjoy the rest of the summer in the meantime, as I hope you will.

Jackie

## 6 Molly's Repairs

For the last nine years, Molly has run a very useful clothes alteration and repair service, including lengthening, shortening, widening, taking in, inserting zips etc. ( in fact, her slogan is 'If it can be done, I can do it.')

Half of her very reasonable charge is donated to the choir, so let's keep her busy!

Q.

Where can you hear Imogen Cooper, the Maggini Quartet, the Tagore String Trio with oboist Sarah Francis, pupils from the Yehudi Menuhin School and the up-and-coming Moldovian pianist Stanislav Coschug - and for only £8.80\* a time?

A.

At Hazelwood School, Limpsfield. That was where we had the pleasure of an evening with Crispian Steele-Perkins during our 40th anniversary year back in 2002. It's not so good for public transport but the parking's easy and, with the hall's well-raked seating,

The idea for the Really Big Chorus started back in the 80s with three professors at Imperial College, just down the road from the RAH, and a performance of *Messiah*. They hired the hall, paid for two professional soloists and some publicity - and then no doubt chewed their fingernails while waiting to see if *anyone* would come or whether they'd have to negotiate a second mortgage on their homes. But come they certainly did, and for the next couple of years too, though after that the administration passed to a professional company. My information comes from a school friend who is writing the history of ICL for its centenary in 2007. 'They paid the conductor, surely' I said. 'Oh no, one of *them* conducted'. Surely the ultimate ego-trip!

The ESCS used to book up regularly for groups of all voices each time back then, but after a while most of us had been there, done that *and* got the red (alto) or blue (soprano) T-shirt. Perhaps it's time to advertise it more widely again. We'd be lucky to get more than the odd returned ticket for November's *Messiah* now, but there's another *Requiem* next May ... Anyone for Verdi?

Sue Simpson

### Treasurer's Report

This year, our expenses have exceeded our income by about £600, which is almost entirely due to our decreased membership. This affects not only the subscriptions but also such things as ticket sales and fund raising. We are helped by the willingness of those who are able to Gift Aid their subscriptions (rebate from the Inland Revenue was £923. The interest from our Higher Interest Account is also very useful - £810).

It was decided at the last AGM that subscriptions would remain the same for the coming season but our expenses are certainly going to be higher than they were last year. More Gift-Aiding and more enthusiasm about selling concert tickets would help to minimise a probable increase in subscription rates for the following season (i.e. 2006-7). For those who wonder how we will manage, the answer is to look at the accounts or at least glance at them – you would, perhaps, if you knew how long they take to prepare and to audit!

we subsequently lose a significant number of singers during the course of a rehearsal period, then the potential effect on the concert standard is highly detrimental. Somehow we have to ensure that commitment to ESCS is guaranteed – if our improving standards are to be maintained. As members of a team, it simply is neither logical nor fair to others for an individual member to opt out of a programme because he/she thinks the work too difficult (whether personally or for the choir as a whole), or simply does not like the piece.

Maybe we should once again examine alternative dates for our programmes to try to ensure that we maximize membership numbers. There are often clashes with other local choirs, which can be harmful to all parties. The major problem with reorganizing our normal diary pattern is that it could well mean loss of valuable rehearsal time and additional cost for longer hire periods. The point I am trying to make is that we have to maintain a consistent numerical nucleus of singing members throughout the year if at all possible. Coupled with this, we really do need to recruit and boost our male voices and, if possible, strengthen the soprano section. "And what of the altos?" I hear you cry! Presently "never louder than lovely" is my response – something of a back-handed compliment to them as the most consistently blended section over recent months – but also an encouragement to them to suppress their innate shyness and apply a little more theatre and daring in both thought and execution!

Next season we have some challenging works facing us – Bach and Brahms are rarely straightforward, so I do beg that commitment to and concentration in rehearsals are a priority for all singers. Once again, no matter what your personal feelings are about your own ability, or indeed about the repertoire being rehearsed, I urge you to have the courage to have a go and sing out; please don't be afraid of making mistakes – and if you do, please let me hear them so that they can be corrected! I firmly believe that ESCS has still some way to go to achieve its true potential quality. Perhaps at times we have surprised ourselves with the standard we have produced – maybe the unaccompanied Moeran songs testify to that?! To those of you who may feel that I am expecting professional standards from an amateur group, let me assure you that, no matter who I am working with, I try to extract the very best; I am simply not prepared to accept standards that are well short of any performer's/group's potential – and I see no reason why choir members should think any differently! (Any comments on this remark should be addressed.....elsewhere!) Attention, concentration and focus are not always evident in every singer when in performance – a fact that has been noted not only by me but also by members of our audience! Brahms' "Requiem" will be the major work in our March concert next year - largely in response to repeated requests over several years from choir members - so please, in both that and the autumn Bach programme, let us all give 100% and prove how good ESCS really can be.

I should hate anyone to think that I am moaning for the sake of it; nothing could be further from the truth. I am as proud now to be associated with ESCS as I was when first I took over from Michael, but I do admit to some frustration and feel that I should share my feelings with you. In the 2004/5 season we presented a varied and sometimes demanding programme to which audience response was generally positive. To all who contributed to the concerts last season, my sincere

thanks and congratulations. As always, Jan deserves special mention for her unstinting support and hard work, which is greatly appreciated. The committee members, too, deserve great credit for their dedication and efforts on behalf of the choir. And, once again, sincere thanks are due to our President, Della Jones (and husband Paul), not only for her continued support and interest in our activities, but also for offering to sing with us again next summer. (Music for the summer concert is yet to be decided, by the way.) We are immensely fortunate to have such a commitment from an international soloist whose diary, I am sure, already allows her little enough time at home— yet she is prepared, even keen, to sing with “her choir”. Let us ensure that next season is another one to make Della, and all our other loyal supporters, proud to be associated with ESCS.

Enjoy the remainder of the summer. I shall look forward to seeing you again in September, when Jan and I shall start work with you on Bach's Magnificat and “Sleeper's Wake” Cantata.

*IAN KENNEDY*

*Musical Director, ESCS*

## Letter from the secretary

I've been an enthusiastic member of the audience for the last two concerts and felt very proud of the choir both times. The spring concert was a joy, especially as the weather was so in keeping with the theme. The summer concert also came over well, although I know some sections were under strength. We were fortunate to have Della in the audience, adding glamour and cheering everybody on. Listening to both concerts helped me to think about ways we can raise our game in the next season.

As you know there was a discussion during the year of choral discipline and how to improve it. On reflection I think ‘choral etiquette’ might be a better way to think about it. Rehearsals should always be fun and at ESCS they are. They also need to be effective so that we can give the best concerts of which we are capable. All of us can improve our concentration during rehearsals and make better use of the time. From my own observations I'd say the sopranos and altos, especially (blush) the altos, have most room for improvement.

Brian Hobday, Richard Horn and Jill Kensett, who worked so hard on the bar on concert nights and always cleared up so beautifully afterwards.

Special thanks to Sue Miller – my catering partner in crime – who, despite not belonging to the choir this season, has helped me with the catering at both parties.

Christine Willmington

Catering Co-ordinator

## BIGGER & BETTER ORFF?

O ... For-*tu*na ... And oh, how *fortunate* we were: a group of Altos gathered in that amazing venue, the Royal Albert Hall, just three days after the tragedy of the terrorists' bombs, to lift our voices with hundreds of other singers in glorious ... I was going to say 'harmony' but perhaps that's too gentle a word for the sound produced by such a huge choir, combined with an equally huge orchestra, in Orff's *Carmina Burana*. There are those who say it isn't music, but no one could deny the raw energy of the work and, my goodness, it's *fun* to sing! With Brian Kay at the helm (it needed nerves of steel, I imagine, when that vast choral ship was powering full steam ahead) and first rate soloists - including the ever-green James Bowman, alias the roasting swan, who was really hamming it up for his appreciative audience - it was an amazing evening from start to finish and a splendid affirmation of life in our capital city.

We Altos had met a couple of months previously at the same venue to sing Mozart's much-loved *Requiem* under the baton of Sir David Willcocks. There was hardly a spare seat in the Hall that evening and the choir was even bigger, taking up perhaps two thirds of the entire seating - and some *children*. (Can you believe that Health & Safety had apparently precluded their presence at what could have been a life-changing, certainly life-enhancing, experience for the last three years?) It's back to *Messiah* next November. Wasn't it the Victorians who started these mega-choral events in the Crystal Palace? I'm sure the dear Queen would have been glad to know they continue in her beloved Albert's mega-Hall (and maybe she would have been amused by the words: she wasn't so *very* straight-laced).

try to sing.

When electric currents go through them, guitars start making sounds. So would anybody.

The most dangerous part about playing cymbals is near the nose.

And one for Ian:

Anyone who can read all the instrument notes at the same time gets to be the conductor.

Sue

## Report from Catering Coordinator:

For those of us who observed members of the "ESCS Orchestra" tucking into the buffet tea on the Christmas and Easter concert days, it was clear how valuable that bit of catering is! They are always very appreciative, especially of any home-made cakes and pies.

At the Christmas and Summer Parties, ESCS Choir members are equally enthusiastic about home-made food, principally the delicious home-made puddings.

So I would like to thank all those who have willingly made and brought food for either of the above – including Keith Cook and John Kensett who organised meats, cheeses and drinks.

Thanks also to our concert "bar people", especially Dennis Deadman,

The principles are simple, you've heard them before and many of you already stick to them faithfully. But let me remind you anyway:-

### REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

If the conductor is waving his arms (condition green):-

- Watch
- Sing the way he's asked you to
- Count rests

When he drops his hands (yellow alert):-

- Stop singing straight away
- But keep watching

When he speaks (RED ALERT):-

- Listen to what he says
- Write it in your copy

If we all just stop singing immediately when Ian drops his hands we'll gain the equivalent of an extra rehearsal a term. If we do all the above we'll be better prepared and more confident by the time of the concert than ever before. It will also give some encouragement to Ian, who does at times get frustrated at having to repeat himself so often. Indeed, he has been known to threaten that he'll cut short the coffee break by anything up to five minutes if we don't behave – and we wouldn't want that.

I hope everyone is looking forward to the Bach, and will be listening to it as much as possible over the summer so as to hit the ground running on 6 September. We will also be trying some madrigals again, with a view to performing them at the DIY concert in October.

Thanks again to Ian and Jan and all who work hard to keep the choir running. Have a great summer, see you in September.

Ruth Thorpe

## Fundraising

Raising funds from individuals or organisations not directly involved with E.S.C.S. is difficult. This is especially so when potential donors learn how healthy the finances of the Society are.

However, we stand a better chance when we can present a specific project. A possible project could be the workshops which are currently under consideration.

Any ideas or contacts you have to raise funds will be very welcome.

Keith Cook

From The Times – sent in by Sue

Q. How are members of an orchestra paid? Do violinists, who play more than

brass players, consequently get paid more?

A. The horn section earns the big brass, but those on the fiddle prefer to be paid in used notes.

2. Letter to The Times from Mr. Martin Davies:

Sir,

When I taught CSE music many years ago candidates were required to study extracts from 20 set works and then, in the exam, to identify recorded extracts by title of work, then the composer, followed by "further information".

One year the Violin Sonata by Cesar Franck was one of the set works (the one with the canon between violin and piano in the last movement).

One boy's answer read: "Violin Sinatra - Frank - the old gun bit".

3. Motorist of the week:

Police who stopped a driver for speeding in Traunstein, Germany, found he had been steering with his legs so he could play the flute. The 52-year-old musician said he needed to practise.

4. More exam howlers, this time from the USA:

A virtuoso is a musician with real high morals.

Refrain means don't do it. a refrain in music is the part you better not