

Newsletter - Summer 2025

Notes from the Musical Director



I hope you have all enjoyed a restful summer. We ended last term on such a wonderful high, with a brilliant concert that showed the choir at its very best. The step-out solos from within the choir were a joy, our visiting soloists sang superbly, and the ensemble was vibrant and assured. The warmth of the audience's response confirmed what we all felt on stage: it was a special evening, and I couldn't have been prouder.

Now we look ahead to a new season full of journeys both by sea and in spirit. We begin with Britten's *St Nicolas* — a story of voyage, faith and wonder — paired with McDowell's radiant *Ave Maris Stella*. December will be upon us quickly, bringing our Christmas concert, full of familiar carols alongside new repertoire to discover together.

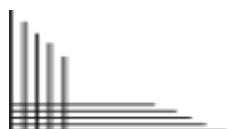
In the Lent term, we return to Brahms' *Requiem*, a work close to the choir's history as it was the first piece I conducted with you back in 2014. Revisiting it now will be a deeply rewarding experience as we have grown in so many ways. Alongside it we sing Stanford's stirring *Songs of the Sea*, continuing our thread of music inspired by the ocean and the human soul.

Our summer concert will bring this theme to a glorious conclusion: a choral version of Elgar's *Sea Pictures* alongside *The Spirit of the Lord*. We will also explore Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* and works by Howells (*Like as the Hart* & *Hymn for St Cecilia*) and John Ireland. It promises to be a programme of richness and depth, weaving together sea, spirit, and song.

In addition, I warmly invite you to join my singers at St Edmund's College for a performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana*. It will be an exhilarating occasion, and we would be delighted to welcome Royston Choral Society singers to take part. More information about this is further on in this newsletter.

I am so proud of all that we achieve together, and I look forward to the energy, commitment and joy that you bring to every rehearsal and performance. Here's to another memorable year of music-making together.

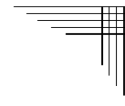
Andrew



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Notes from the Chair (email chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)



The nights are drawing in. That can mean only one thing - Royston Choral Society will soon be back rehearsing. In fact our first rehearsal is on Tuesday 9th September at 7.45pm. I hope to see you all there.

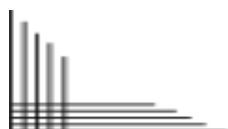
Andrew writes above about what an exciting and varied programme we have for the coming season. I am particularly looking forward to Britten's St Nicolas in our first concert - although it is somewhat shocking to realise I sang it for the first time (as an alto) 49 years ago!

Over the last couple of seasons we have continued the steady improvements of the last few years. That is clear from our increased confidence going into performances, but is confirmed even more by the size of the audiences we are now generally performing to. That has been wonderful to see and the impact on our finances will be clear when we review those shortly at the AGM. We must keep up the hard work rehearsing so that performances to the standard of the St Matthew Passion this season are just the expected norm.

Continuing to enjoy capacity audiences is also of course about publicity and marketing. The current committee feels it lacks the expertise and/or time to do a better job on this, but feels having the publicity office position filled is a really important aspect for our future. We have spoken about this before but there is a short article further in this newsletter talking more about it. Please think hard as to whether you (or perhaps someone you know because the person does not necessarily have to be a singer with the society) could fulfill this role. If we don't get volunteers we will waste a lot of time at the AGM talking about this and potentially trying to twist arms!

I have mentioned the AGM a couple of times now. Just to confirm this will take place during the rehearsal break on September 30th. As always, even when existing committee members are happy to carry on, we welcome other people applying for roles. It would certainly be novel to have to vote on the night between candidates for chair for example rather than just accepting the same one again! If you think joining the committee might be for you do feel free to speak to any of the current members to learn more about what is involved.

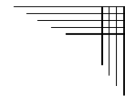
There was lots of good live music over the summer. I hope you managed to catch some of it - whether at the Proms, 3 choirs festival or wherever. I know many of you were also involved in making music either abroad or in this country and do hope that was a fulfilling experience for you (and any audience involved!). I had my now usual 2 doses of pretending to be a cathedral organist with different choirs. Firstly in Ripon where the organ is just ludicrously loud (and the organist sits literally in the middle of it!) and then in St David's where the choir had the challenge of singing the



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



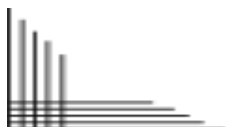
beginning of Faure's requiem (from memory) whilst processing uphill through the Nave of the cathedral. It's harder than you would expect!

You will have noticed that for the last few years the various sections of this newsletter have musical headings. I wonder how many of you actually try singing them and wonder or identify where they come from? As a bit of an incentive I will give a small prize to the first person (other than Andrew) to email me the precise places where all the musical quotes in this newsletter come from. As a clue they are all from pieces in this year's programme. And just to be clear it is the chair's decision as to whether your definition of the place is precise enough!

A number of you have commented that, as the choral society grows, it is increasingly hard to remember everyone's name. As a consequence we will have sticky labels available at rehearsals at least until the AGM. Whilst it is not compulsory we would encourage everyone to take one each week and write their name on it. That way we can all become better at 'putting a name to a face'.

Finally a reminder about rehearsal refreshments. We rely on members to help prepare these, so please do sign up on the list when it comes around and save Sue having to go around twisting arms. Also remember that it does make things easier (and enables those helping each week to get back to the rehearsal more quickly) if we all bring our own mugs for tea and coffee which we then take home to wash up. Similarly, if you like to have a drink to hand during the rehearsal itself please bring your own water bottle. Many thanks.

Huw

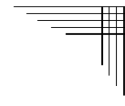


Fine music, made locally

Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Notes from the Treasurer (email treasurer@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)



Subscriptions for the new season

We have continued with our custom of increasing subscriptions by a modest amount each year, to avoid the situation we have faced in the past, where we have had to ask for a large increase after a period of no movement at all. Subs for 2025/26 will increase by £5 per year to £170 (if paid annually) or £70 each for the first two terms of the season that you attend and £42 for the third, giving a discount only if you've been singing with us all year. Payment can be made online to the usual bank account, or you can bring a cheque or cash to rehearsal in September. It can be rather busy at the first rehearsal, so if you're bringing cash it's helpful if it's in an envelope of some kind, with your name on it.

Gift Aid

As I mentioned in a rehearsal recently, we are now allowed to claim 100% of our subs for gift aid. I've made this year's claim on that basis, and, if you're a higher rate tax payer, you will be able to reflect that in your tax return and reclaim the higher rate of tax you've paid.

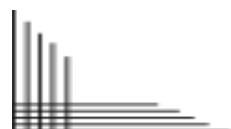
If you've stopped paying tax, or you've moved house since you signed up for gift aid with RCS, please let me know. There are still one or two for whom I haven't received declaration forms at all. Even if you aren't a tax payer, please let me know, and I'll make a note in the file and stop nagging you!

Music

The music for the autumn term is Britten's St Nicolas and Cecilia McDowall's Ave Maris Stella. There will, as usual, be enough library copies for everyone, but some members prefer to buy their own. If you're willing to do that through RCS, you pay the usual price, and we retain the bulk discount we receive to help with choir funds.

A number of you have bought music, but I'm sure there will be some who have not yet let me know they'd like to buy copies through RCS. If you would like me to order music for you, please let me know as soon as possible, so that I can get it before the start of term. The cost is £25 for the Britten and £12.50 for the McDowall. Payment can, as usual, be sent to the RCS account.

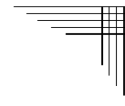
Caroline



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



RCS 100 Club (email juliec2157@outlook.com)



Have you joined the RCS 100 Club yet?

Anyone can join. Your friends and family too.

This is a good way of raising money and supporting our choir.

The details:-

- Annual subscription £20 per year.
- Monthly draw with prizes of £25 and £10 (Sept - June).
- Maximum number of members 100 (we currently have just 38, so would welcome many more, to boost the choir's funds.)
- There is an application form on the download section of the RCS website (<https://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/100%20Club%20application%20form.pdf>) or just email me or collect a form from me at rehearsal.

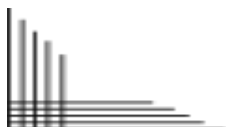
Existing club members - the majority of your subs are due in September, so please come and pay me or add £20 to your choir subscription, but please let Caroline know this is for the 100 Club.

If you're not sure if your subs are due, then contact me, or come and see me at rehearsals.

RCS would really benefit from, and welcome, your support in this way, and there's a very big chance you could be a winner!!

Julie Clements

You'll find me in the sopranos!

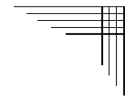


Fine music, made locally

Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Sing all about it!



People support successful organisations and, by any standard, the 2024-25 season has been a successful one for Royston Choral Society. We are now looking for someone to help us share that success with the wider Royston community and the surrounding villages.

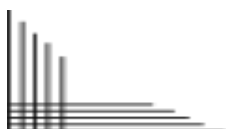
Do you know that person?

We have ambitions to:

- Increase our connection with more people, including younger audiences, to nurture their musical appreciation, through targeted marketing
- Make our website more interactive rather than 'just' an online brochure
- Tap into appropriate social media – to start and sustain online conversations that make people feel they're a part of RCS
- Ultimately, to build a core of advocates – to promote the choir for us - and to possibly lay the foundations for a 'Friends of RCS' programme.

To do this, we need help! Do you know anyone – friend, family, work colleague – with relevant marketing experience (beyond pure publicity) who might work with us to develop our supporter base as a Publicity Officer?

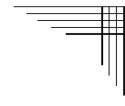
If so, please invite them to express their interest and share relevant experience in an e-mail to chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk ideally before the end of September. A role description is available.



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Notes from the Part Reps



RCS Soprano Part Rep – Brigid Hickey (email partrep.soprano@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

A Double Celebration! 🎵

This year marked two incredible milestones for our choir.

50 years of choral music and 10 years under the leadership and inspiration of our brilliant conductor Andrew. Not forgetting, too, Michael for his encouragement and belief in us in recent years and now we have the incredible Jonathan.

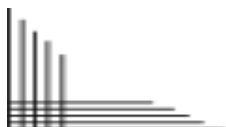
Thank you Andrew for making all of this happen. For half a century, our choir has brought voices together in harmony, creating unforgettable performances and treasured memories. Enjoyed by the people of Royston, surrounding villages and further afield. We look forward to celebrating these achievements with you at our upcoming events.

We have welcomed 3 new soprano members during the last year - Anne Purvis, Ann Foxwell and Anna Blackwell. We look forward to welcoming Bridget Ford this term.

I hope all my colleagues have had a great summer break and perhaps had the chance to listen to some great music.

My summer has been busy with family and grandchildren. Looking forward to next term.

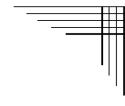
Best
Brigid.



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



RCS Alto Part Rep - Sue Pegram (email partrep.alto@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

Another great season with a variety of music to keep us on our toes! We welcomed three new altos to the choir – Rosemary Heald, Isobel Clegg and Tracy Kirk, and also two other new ladies, Jane and Liz, who joined for the St Matthew Passion concert.

I really enjoyed the summer concert of Purcell pieces, with Dido and Aeneas pushing us a little further away from our usual style - particularly with witchy characterisation! And there were great performances from our own “in coro” soloists and instrumentalists.

During the holiday break I spent a few days at the RunBySingers summer school at Lincoln University, singing Songs from the Musicals - a variety of music from Edelweiss and Send in the Clowns, to Defying Gravity and more. Dido and Aeneas had helped to put me in good stead to change character, singing in (exaggerated!) upper-class mode for Ascot Gavotte from My Fair Lady, to Cockney in a few bars of One Day More from Les Misérables.

Some interesting summer activities from other altos:

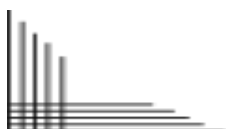
Heather spent a week in Uppsala, Sweden (another RunBySingers holiday), singing music by Swedish composers and even singing the Sunday Mass in the cathedral in Swedish! She also sang weekend services in Ripon Cathedral with Priory Singers, but of course this time it was in English!

Lyn spent a few days in Aldeburgh, visiting Snape Maltings and The Red House – home of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. Great timing given RCS will be performing Britten’s St Nicolas this autumn!

Now looking forward to the next RCS season - we seem to go from strength to strength, thanks to Andrew’s patience and expert guidance!

Sue

Lincoln Cathedral, view from Brayford Pool

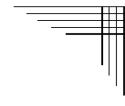


Fine music, made locally

Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



RCS Tenor Part Rep - Chris Lee (email partrep.tenor@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

I've long said that Royston doesn't know how lucky it is to have a fine choir on its doorstep, but I think that's changing. After a very successful 2024-25 year in terms of numbers and performances, I now believe that concert-goers and the wider community are appreciating what we're offering!

Meanwhile within the tenor section our numbers have remained steady (a little stretched when we were 'halved' for St Matthew Passion) and we have even attracted some new singers, including Martin Atkinson. Martin had this to say about the past 12 months. "An enjoyable inaugural year with RCS, filling in some gaps in my musical repertoire - Britten, Bach's St Matthew Passion and Purcell's Dido & Aeneas. Nice to find a good local choir."

Our best wishes go to those who have left/ are leaving the tenor section – William Baines, Graham Palmer, Tibor Pollerman and Chris Warenus.

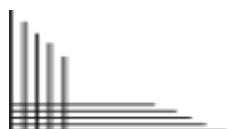
Speaking as one of the longer standing tenors, I think the choir has never sounded better and the positive feedback from sell-out audiences is the inspiration to go further. But I hope we don't lose the informality and familiarity that makes the choir so welcoming.

Another tenor, Jason Sanderson, describes the past year as his toughest. First Jason had to miss two concerts because he was out of the country, then he was unable to sing St Matthew Passion for health reasons. Despite this, he managed to find a silver lining in the cloud...

"Not singing [St Matthew Passion] was a low point for me, but something came out of it which became a high point. The opportunity to sit and listen to others perform this amazing work. A work that has been in my heart since I was in my 20s. That performance by RCS evoked many emotions in me.... awe.... adoration,,,,, pride... happiness and a few tears. Being able to listen to beautiful music created by such an amazing choir is a stroke of fortune for me and for many others."

Thank you tenors for being brilliant.

Chris



Fine music, made locally

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



RCS Bass Part Rep - Anthony Pigg (email partrep.bass@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

Once again, the bass section has had a thoroughly enjoyable year, and the members are looking forward to the coming terms and the new repertoire with anticipation and enthusiasm.

Although membership fluctuates from term to term, there has typically been 20 singers on the bass register during the year and about 15 at each rehearsal and concert.

We are pleased to have a regular venue for both the rehearsals and the concerts and our strong links with St. John's church are most highly valued.

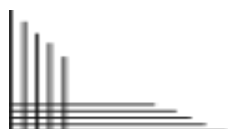
Faure's Requiem was a delight to sing, as was Britten's Rejoice in the Lamb and Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens. The Christmas concert is a real annual treat although, and I doubt if it's possible, a few more weeks to practice would be appreciated, it falls so soon after the November concert. Bach's magnificent St. Matthew Passion was a difficult piece to work on, but we all need an extra push and a challenge like that certainly helps us to improve, individually, as a section and as a choir.

The summer concert rounded off the year nicely, Purcell's *Come Ye Sons of Art* and *Dido and Aeneas* were not too demanding, and we felt pleased with our achievement and how lovely it was to hear *Dido's Lament* sung so well!

It is good to feel that the choir is improving and to see the concerts being so well attended. The Bass section would like to thank all those who make the Royston Choral Society so enjoyable and such a success; the Musical Director and the Assistant Director/Accompanist for their hard work, The Chairman, Secretary Treasurer and Committee for keeping the choir running smoothly, all those who contribute to the news mailings, attend to the refreshments, look after the music library, run the social events and help in any way, it is much appreciated.

I would write more but my music for next term has arrived, I must start work on it straight away!

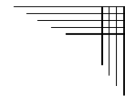
Anthony



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



🎵 **Join Us for a Spectacular Performance of *Carmina Burana*!** 🎵

St Edmund's College and Prep School warmly invite staff, parents, local choristers and alumni to join us for what promises to be a truly memorable concert of *Carmina Burana* on Wednesday, 19th November in Hertford.

- Rehearsal: From 3:30 PM
- Concert: 7:30 PM

Whether you're a seasoned performer or simply passionate about music, we'd love for you to be part of this exciting event!

If you're interested in performing, please complete this Microsoft form:

<https://forms.microsoft.com/e/Z1BivdPJup>

If you require further information, please email:

✉ musicadmin@stedmundscollege.org

We're planning three Monday evening rehearsals from 7:30–9:00 PM. All are welcome to sign up!

- September 22nd
- October 13th
- November 3rd

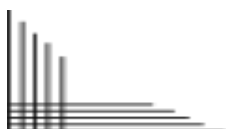
Link to score:  [Carmina Burana - Carl Orff \(partitura coral\).pdf](#)

Link to click tracks with all the different voice parts: [Carmina click tracks](#)

🎵 Already familiar with the work but can't make the rehearsals? No problem—just get in touch!
Let's come together to make this a night to remember!

Andrew O'Brien

Director of Music, St Edmunds's College & Prep School



Fine music, made locally

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Key Dates for 2025-26 season



Tuesday 9th September 7.45pm	First rehearsal of the season.
Tuesday 30th September 8.45pm	AGM
Tuesday 28th October	No rehearsal - half term
Saturday 15th November	Concert - Britten <i>St Nicolas</i> ; McDowall <i>Ave Maris Stella</i> Afternoon rehearsal
Saturday 13th December	Christmas Concert. Afternoon rehearsal.
Tuesday 6th January 7.45pm	Rehearsals resume
Tuesday 17th February	No rehearsal - half term
Saturday 28th March	Concert - Brahms <i>Ein Deutsches Requiem</i> Stanford <i>Songs of the Sea</i> Afternoon rehearsal.
Tuesday 14th April 7.45pm	Rehearsals resume
Tuesday 26th May	No rehearsal - half term
Saturday 13th June <i>(corrected from earlier edition)</i>	Summer Concert - Elgar <i>Sea Pictures</i> , <i>Spirit of the Lord</i> Parry <i>Blest pair of sirens</i> works by Howells & Ireland Afternoon rehearsal.

All rehearsals and concerts are currently expected to take place in St John the Baptist Church Royston (Royston Parish Church).

