

AGM - 13th October 2020 Report from Musical Director - Andrew O'Brien

To begin with, I would like to thank Huw, Caroline and the committee for all their work in supporting the life and development of the choir. Without these wonderful people the choir would not be in such a positive place. I would also like to thank Michael, Richard and Laurence for all their unstinting support.

After a positive first term, it has been tough reflecting on a year in which we have been able to do very little. Looking back, our performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* was truly stunning. It was amazing to immerse ourselves in this glorious and beautiful work and another opportunity to get our choir involved in a high profile event.

The 'Mid-winter' Family Carols that followed was a great success. I really miss performing in Royston Parish Church but, even in its absence, we have managed to deliver enjoyable carol concerts that were all filled with the warmth and spirit of the season. This year it was great to welcome back the accomplished and charismatic J50.

Bach's B Minor Mass is an extraordinary work and I was saddened that we were not able to perform this masterpiece. It is a tough work, but a challenge the choir needs. I think it is incredibly important that we continue to step out of our comfort zones as well as mingle with the familiar. I very much look forward to getting back to this piece at some point.

The Lent season was memorable not only because of the impact of Covid-19 on the world but also the adoption of our son. At the beginning of February we went on Adoption leave (the cocooning period as the services call it) and we were not allowed to see anyone for seven weeks. Five days after we finished our leave, Boris announced that the country would go on full lockdown. I look back at this special family time with fondness but also will never forget how tough it was with no physical support from the social services, family or friends. The final panel was held over Zoom in May but the final court hearing was delayed because of a massive backlog within the family courts. On a more positive note, I can say he is doing really well and is so very happy.

Rome was sadly postponed but we will eventually get there. Italy has done a marvellous job and is seemingly flourishing. I would feel safe taking a trip there. Again, we have Huw to thank for his sterling work in steering us through this process.

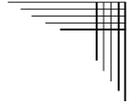
I hope in the not too distant future to begin rehearsals once again. After Christmas, it would be great to start singing in sections. I hope that our return to singing as a full group will coincide with



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rededication of Royston Parish Church. Our main issue at the moment is space! Hertford Choral have started back sectional rehearsals but this is in a rather large hall.

It has been a tough time for us all and over the coming years we are going to have to rebuild trust amongst our audiences and act as a flag ship for bringing the arts back to life in Royston. We have a great choir supported by a great committee and our approach must be confident and sensible with no hint of nescience.

Andrew

