

Vocalise



SfP MANAGEMENT TEAM 'ONE YEAR ON'

Members attending the AGM during Summer School heard reports from each of the new 'one year old' Management Team about progress in their areas. Summarised below, it shows an organisation in a strong position, moving ahead and responding to member ideas.

The organisation is governed by a body of Trustees who oversee the charity and ratify key decisions, masterminded by the Management Team who organise the day to day running of SfP, and ably assisted by a team of volunteers who devote an astonishing amount of time to their projects on a regional and national basis. If you are interested in offering help in any of these areas please get in touch. We would love to hear from you!

Finances are sound, with a modest surplus for 2010 providing opportunities to reinvest money into our events, training and publications. The membership team of Ian Norton and Claire Jackson is establishing a new database, which will make our membership systems work more effectively and enable some of our 'back-office' systems to run more efficiently and accurately. Our international reputation is widening within our sister organisation, A Coeur Joie, and the partnership is being strengthened. A plethora of ideas, new developments, improvements and marketing strategies are under consideration. Watch this space...

*Catherine Beddison, Chief Executive
admin@singforpleasure.org.uk*

Conductor numbers are increasing each year, with more people than ever coming to improve their own skills and, indirectly, the skills of their choir, by studying with SfP. More than 170 places were filled on our conducting courses during 2010 and this year looks even stronger. There is an ethos of personal improvement which applies to both staff and conducting students, and a regular review of training notes and syllabus content helps to maintain the integrity that SfP is so respected for. Bursary funds are wholly used up at each event, and students report back to John Lewis to demonstrate the ways in which their skills have improved. Tutors are also asked regularly to work on consultancy projects within other institutions and music services to deliver training and workshops to their staff, which spreads the SfP word more widely.

*Manvinder Rattan, Head of Conductor Training
conducting@singforpleasure.org.uk*

Events organised nationally have been as successful as ever, with 2010/11 including the November Weekend in Bolton, an overseas choral and orchestral trip to Athens, nine separate 5-day Courses held at venues around the UK, the February Weekend in London, a range of singing workshops and weekend courses for children, and another hugely successful Summer School at Keele. Regional events have had strong support in all areas and the involvement and range of activities is increasing everywhere. As well as the continuation of our established events, future plans include the addition of Repertoire Days to encourage those who work with young children to use our fantastic junior song book resources, and a non-residential week for vocally talented youngsters in the Midlands.

*Ula Weber, Head of Events
events@singforpleasure.org.uk*

Progress this year has been largely to do with collating, processing and deciphering information to enable understanding and consistency of the key aspects of **publishing**. Issues that have been focused on include maintaining the SfP house style, ensuring fair rates of pay and royalties, upholding copyright laws, developing sales initiatives and initiating marketing strategies. The new publication 'O Lux Beata' launched at Summer School has already sold over 900 copies and hits a niche in the market of flexible arrangements to suit individual choir needs. Forthcoming ideas include a teenage songbook, a renaissance compendium and a book of 'Golden Rounds' to celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

*Don Gillthorpe, Head of Publications.
publications@singforpleasure.org.uk*

ALL THAT GLITTERS...

We are starting to brainstorm ideas for a fantastic year of celebrating our Golden Anniversary. SfP will be fifty years old in 2014 and we are starting to plan a series of choral events for singers across the whole country, so that as many SfP choirs, singers, conductors and enthusiasts as possible can come together and celebrate. The past fifty years have seen many wonderful things developing, and we now have every opportunity to build on them

and spread the joy of choral singing even more widely.

We will need your help!

Can you suggest a fabulous venue? Can you offer you help to start planning the big event in your region? Can you start sowing the seeds of participation with your choir? Contact your regional team and let them know you are keen to help.



Bulk buying a set of SfP songbooks for your choir?

10% discount and free postage for choir sets of music!

To take up this fantastic offer email admin@singforpleasure.org.uk and place your order.

Terms and conditions apply.

SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

Summer School 2011 once again saw us return to Keele University, and was another fantastic week for singers and conductors. Our correspondents sent us the following reports!

Foundation

Conducting is one of the most sophisticated forms of non-verbal communication there is, short of sign language, ballet and mime.

After reading this at the top of the first handout, we set about discovering just how to compete with Darcey Bussell and Marcel Marceau. This consisted of pulsing, pommung and, somewhere in between, an umbrella handle (or Nike tick, depending on your outlook on life). As well as conducting, the time we spent singing for the rest of the workshop was really useful; all the things we were learning were cemented and we were able to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. Singing for the staff was also informative – they all served as excellent models for teaching efficiency and clarity of gesture whilst running an enjoyable rehearsal. Our conducting climax was each leading a piece in the chapel – an excellent opportunity to conduct under a little more pressure than our workshops offered. Perhaps if we had a reunion in the coming months the report would read something like this:

"One winter's night we had a lovely evening dancing around the juniper tree. Ding dong went the bugler, striking his silver trumpet like a bell: 'there's one more river!' Pick a bale o' cotton, get some cockles and mussels down you and we'll be laughing. Or singing, since singing is so good a thing, especially when there's rain. It's the wind that gives us peace. How good and pleasant it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity.

Farewell good friends, we've got to haul Joe away down the red river valley and swing low, round to Eriskay."

Colin Danskin and Vicky Simmons

Intermediate 1

This type of training will be invaluable in my day to day work as a Music Teacher and Vocal Animator in my work for both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Music Services. The work that we did over the week, going right back to basics, using gestures and eye contact, preparation of material and learning new songs was enlightening. I was pushed out of my comfort zone but in a very supportive environment, where it felt safe to make mistakes. The course was very well thought out and structured in a way where we could learn lots of technique at the beginning of the week and then put it into practice later on.

The skills I obtained over the Summer School week will make a very positive impact on my conducting and I am looking forward to building on this new knowledge by attending other SfP courses in the future.

Natasha Thompson

Intermediate 2

After having had a great time at the London five day course I was inspired to try the 'real deal' at Summer School. Before going I was little apprehensive about the whole experience – the music I had been sent was a massive leap up from Foundation Level and

I went in knowing no-one but Manvinder, which was quite scary but at the same time, very exciting as I didn't know who I was going to meet.

Summer school kicked off with a bang as we sung a service in the Keele University Chapel

– a really good way to get into the singing mood! It was amazing to sing together in the first choral session and to try some of the new pieces from *O Lux Beata* which were to become course favourites for the rest of the week!

The next day we got straight on with trying to teach our first piece. I felt really strange because teaching adults is weird when you're a teenager as it is a total role reversal to everyday life, but I was treated as an equal by everyone else. We were all at the same level and all in the same boat. After a couple of sessions of note bashing we got our 30 strong choir together, which was an absolutely exhilarating experience.

Another wonderful thing about Summer School is the opportunity to perform in a friendly environment. I had never conducted in a concert before so I was really nervous beforehand, but when I got up there and saw a sea of encouraging smiling faces it made the experience actually quite enjoyable – though I was concentrating so hard I probably didn't show it!

The best thing about Summer School was the people. Everyone was so enthusiastic about the music and I spent many evenings debating the merits of different composers. Unfortunately I didn't do much swaying of opinion – instead I was swayed by Oliver Tarney making sure I would rue the day I ever said a bad word against Herbert Howells. To sum up, Summer School was a fantastic week of music making in which I made lots of new friends and improved not only as a conductor but as a musician. All I can say is roll on next year!

Harry Bradford

Advanced

"Poke, poke, *bonk*," cried our tutor, waving her arms around with enthusiasm. The advanced conductors exchanged nervous glances, which quickly disintegrated into giggles, as it dawned on us that we in fact knew exactly what Sarah was trying to demonstrate...

And so our sessions continued throughout the week: moments of extreme anxiety when faced with thirty or so singers desperately grappling with pitching Poulenc interspersed with occasions of uncontrollable mirth. A number of standing jokes quickly established themselves, for example certain tutors' comical attempts at rendering Brahms, certain accompanists' sending up of said Brahms, and the fact that yours truly had encountered a sheep in a public lavatory during the journey to Keele.



Our sessions with Sarah, Manvinder, and Catherine threw light on various technical issues in such a way that enabled us to overcome them without too much trauma, and I think I can safely say that we were all immensely proud of each other and ourselves (not to mention those who sang for us) when things finally came together in the three concerts in the Chapel.

Having been before, I knew how stimulating and educational the morning 'choral' and more informal evening sessions would be, not just in terms of learning new songs, but also grasping the fundamentals of how to teach something to 100 or so singers of differing experience and backgrounds, skills I have come to value extremely highly. Having to direct 'choral' ourselves may have seemed a little daunting, but it was soon evident that the choir at our disposal genuinely wanted us to succeed, and with such a supportive atmosphere it was nigh on impossible to fail at the task in hand.

Our last rendition of the *Circle March* (from *O Lux Beata*) in the bar after the final concert would not have been complete without Catherine's surprise announcement that 'We could go for a walk, that'd be quite funny – keep going!' And so off we all danced, perhaps to the astonishment and consternation of the bar staff.

I will never forget the tremendous exhilaration of singing Parry's *I was Glad* at the front of a big choir at full throttle; equally special were moments such as everyone gently singing *Liverpool Lou* during the first informal concert. Singing together with the entire course generates a real warmth of feeling, and having been involved with SFP since 1998, its importance is instilled very deeply within me.



Yet again I came away from the course having grown both as a person and as a musician, with plenty of friendships rekindled, and new ones gained as well. I also learned that it is a good idea to make sure you have access to a corkscrew before buying three bottles of wine that do not have screw tops, consuming a full cooked breakfast and porridge just before trying to sing is not always advisable, and that I am indeed capable of reaching a top B-flat, even if large quantities of alcohol and being in a bar packed with people on a post-concert high is required.

Louisa Denby

Singers' Course

My 5th year attending Sing for Pleasure Summer School Singers' Course, and once more, for the price of less than a typical week's holiday we had en-suite accommodation in the lovely university grounds, 3 meals a day plus tea/coffee breaks with delicious biscuits, and the most amazing tuition for 8 days. Our tutors this year were Suzzie Vango, voice coach and professional singer, and Alain Louisot a French conductor who hails from Lyon, and trained us very patiently in French pronunciation when teaching us his chosen repertoire. This included Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* and *L'ame des poetes*, both gorgeous pieces that were a joy to sing, and "not so difficult", as Alain liked to comment!

Suzzie treated us once again to her great coaching style and got amazing results from a group of singers with a wide range of experience, some of whom felt distinctly out of their comfort zones to begin with but who found the whole experience, particularly the performances, so uplifting, that they really loved it.

The singing training and the varied repertoire on the Singers' Course means that you come away with an increased confidence, much improved sight-reading, and a renewed love of singing – plus a huge admiration for all the musicians that you rub shoulders with. One of my favourite moments was listening in on an impromptu rehearsal of the soloists for the Saturday night concert – what talent!

I now can't imagine the summer holidays without Summer School – roll on 2012!

Hilary Bremner

SING OUT FOR MARIE CURIE

Looking for a performing opportunity for your choir? Interested in making money for charity? Sing Out is a great way to bring everyone together, whether you're singing with a choir or with friends, family, your church, or a club. The money you raise will help ensure that Marie Curie Nurses can continue to care for terminally ill patients throughout the festive period and beyond, giving people the chance to spend this special time in the comfort of their own homes, or in one of our nine hospices.

We have slightly amended the format for this year and hopefully there are many more opportunities for your members to sing for Marie Curie Cancer Care this winter by hosting or attending a musical fundraising event. Please take a look at the many ways to get involved in Sing Out 2011;

- Create your own festive musical event for Sing Out and ask people to make a donation to attend.

- Hold a Sing Out collection at the end of your established event or carol service.
- Sing your hearts out at an organised Marie Curie Cancer Care street collection during November or December and help boost donations from the public.

Every £20 you raise will help provide one hour of Marie Curie nursing in a patient's home. With your help, Marie Curie Nurses can provide more care, free of charge to patients and their families.

To find out how to hold a Sing Out event, simply visit www.mariecurie.org.uk/singout, or call 08700 340 040 to receive your FREE fundraising pack, including inspirational ideas, fundraising tips and other resources to make your event a success.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2012...

With the Olympics just around the corner, we thought we'd tell you about our exciting plans for 2012.

For more information about all these events, please see our website, where you can also book online for all courses.

5-day courses for choral conductors and vocal leaders

Throughout the UK, February – June

Our popular 5-day courses offer a series of five single day sessions spread across the first half of the year. They are especially popular for those who like to consolidate their skills, because they provide continuous ongoing support and allow students to put their skills into practice between sessions. On a practical level they also offer a good alternative to attending our residential or weekend courses.

Courses are available at Foundation and Intermediate 1 levels across the UK, with an additional course for Intermediate 2 conductors being held in London and Bolton.

NEW VENUE FOR 2010 – Norfolk

Steve Gregson will be leading this course in Thetford. We are very grateful to the Neil Webster Music Trust who are financially supporting this course.

Weekend for singers and conductors including conducting Masterclass

London, 19–20 February 2012

Join us for a weekend of conducting and singing with a masterclass element.

MASTERCLASS GUEST TUTOR: Ralph Allwood

Ralph Allwood is a conductor and was Director of Music at Eton for 26 years. He founded the Eton Choral Courses in 1980.

Summer School (Keele)

19–27 August, 2012

Our annual course for singers and conductors at all levels will once again be held at Keele University. Book early to avoid disappointment!

PLEASE NOTE – this year's course begins on a Sunday and is running a week later than normal in order to avoid clashing with the Olympics.

O LUX BEATA UPDATE

'O Lux Beata' was published by SFP in August 2011 and contains four flexible pieces by Katy Cooper, edited by Don Gillthorpe. The book has been selling extremely well. In fact, we've almost sold out of the first edition!

You can hear the first performance of the songs, recorded at Summer School's Tuesday night concert on the accompanying web resource: www.madrigirls.org.uk/sfpbook9

This webpage also includes demonstrations of how the songs might be adapted for choirs with different arrangements of voices (female choirs, SAB choirs etc).

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who has been using these pieces with their choirs this term. If you'd like to send a recording (mp3) to us, we'll include it on the page. Email your recording to sfpvocalise@singforpleasure.org.uk

To order a copy of 'O Lux Beata' email admin@singforpleasure.org.uk or telephone 0800 0184 164

"I have already taught 'Circle March' to my upper voice youth choir and 'O Lux Beata Trinitas' sounds great as an SATB piece. The songs are fairly easy to learn and could be picked by ear for those choirs who don't use music. For a chamber choir, this little book could provide some charming encore pieces. My youth choir could manage them all, with a bit of hard work and S.A.B. choirs will find them a valuable addition to their repertoire. All pieces are unaccompanied but I have added a part for hand bells to Circle March."

Sue Hollingworth



JOHN COATES BATON

Many congratulations to Shaun Pirttjarvi (Advanced course) on receiving the John Coates Memorial Baton at Summer School.

The John Coates Memorial Baton is awarded to the conducting student who the tutors feel has made the most progress during Summer School, and is awarded in memory of long-standing SFP tutor John Coates who died in 1995. The recipient can be chosen from any of the conducting levels (Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced).



JAMES WILD MEMORIAL MUSIC STAND



The James Wild Memorial Music Stand was this year presented to Katy Cooper.

This award is made annually to a person who has contributed most to the development of Sing for Pleasure in the preceding year and the roll call of previous winners makes impressive reading. Katy works largely behind the scenes pulling together articles and details for the SFP newsletter 'Vocalise'. I know what a time consuming process it can be and her patience and persistence are qualities that are much admired. She also has been developing ideas for content and unusual focus articles to make us all think a little bit more. This is a much valued and often unsung part of SFP's development and we are all very grateful for Katy's hard work.

Catherine Beddison

SfP NORTH: NIDDERDALE SINGING DAY

With Imelda Shirley and Jane Edwardson.

Saturday 24th March 2012, Pateley Bridge Methodist Church

You are warmly invited to join us for this new event for the North region, at which we will learn and rehearse Carl Jenkin's *The Armed Man* and Sing for Pleasure common repertoire for an evening concert. The day starts at 10am with registration and coffee, followed by daytime rehearsals and meal breaks. The concert is at 18.30 and will include performances from visiting choirs.

Participation fees per person):

SfP members - £12; Non-members - £15; Students in full time education - £5

Groups of 10 or more participants - £10 per person (all participants in the group must apply and pay at the same time to qualify for group discount)

Further enquiries: me.mitch@btinternet.com

Margaret Mitchell, SfP North, Lindisfarne, Wath Rd, Pateley Bridge HG3 5LN

DO YOU LIKE US ON facebook.YET?

Look up the SfP facebook page and keep in touch with the friends you know from events and courses.

With regular updates and ideas to use with your choir, you will be able to see what is going on in the organisation and be up to date with new developments. Add your own choral memories and share opinions with other enthusiasts.

LE GRAND TOUR - OUR TRIP TO LYON

This year's Sing for Pleasure trip with the John Lewis Music Society saw us brushing off our school day French and heading over to Lyon to perform Rutter's *Magnificat* and orchestral pieces by Handel.

We joined forces for an all day rehearsal at the John Lewis offices in London with the singers being led by Catherine Beddison and the orchestra looked after by Manvinder Rattan. It was great to catch up with the now familiar faces from previous trips and getting to know some 'first timers' too.

On the day it was quite an early start for some to get to St Pancras to catch the Eurostar. There was an air of excitement and anticipation, and some trepidation, as many of us hadn't travelled on the Eurostar before. Getting on the train went quite smoothly, once Bessie, our well travelled harpsichord, was comfy. The early start kicked in for a few who rested their eyes, whilst the rest tried to work out whether we were actually in 'the tunnel' or not!

Arriving in Lille we had a very short three minutes to get ourselves and all our kit out of one carriage ... the end result was Bessie's stand and one person being left to head to Brussels. Not to worry though, as Bessie's stand got back to London and the errant Alto (who shall remain nameless) made it to Lyon in time for dinner.

We managed to squeeze our first 'French' rehearsal in before heading out for the first night group meal. We entertained some of the other diners by singing a couple of rounds and then headed home to rest up for the following day of rehearsal.

On the Friday morning we started with a good long warm up and spent the day with

Catherine working the singers really hard. We worked not only on how to pronounce the words, but how to say them with the right expression. One of my favourite things that I learnt was about singing the quiet sections with the right look on my face, so that the audience know that I am meant to be singing quietly and it isn't that I don't know what I am doing! That was great advice and I hope that we managed it on the night.

The church where we were to give our concert was a beautiful building and on arrival, we met all of our 'Alter Echo' (the French choir we were working with) colleagues for the first time. For me, the rehearsal was a great opportunity to write into my music when to expect the big cymbal crashes in my ear, so that I didn't jump 10ft in the air when they happened! After the rehearsal we headed in different directions to find food and experience some French culture.

Saturday was mainly free before the concert in the evening. The master plan involved not doing too much walking and having a nice meal with plenty of time to digest it before singing. So my little group of friends and I ended up on the open top bus - Le Grand Tour - taking in the sights and sounds of Lyon. We went up to the top of the hill to the cathedral that is meant to look like an upside down elephant (which I couldn't really see myself). The sun was shining and it was another beautiful day. The afternoon ended with another lovely meal followed by a gentle stroll back to

the hotel for another rest (read power nap) before getting ready for the concert.

The first half saw Mark Jordan and the orchestra perform Handel's organ concerto, and three soloists singing arias from Handel's first London opera, *Rinaldo*. All of this was very beautiful and sounded amazing. Alter Echo then took to the stage and sung some virtuosic *a capella* works from their favourite repertoire. Thanks to Alter Echo and all their hard work with publicity, we had a really good, appreciative audience. The interval was followed by the choir taking to the stage to perform Rutter's *Magnificat*. The performance went really well and the audience seemed to really enjoy it, as did the orchestra and choir.

We headed back to the hotel where we had a post concert party. We had a wonderful time and it was great to experience singing with a local choir. Everytime we go away something new happens which makes each trip unique. This was one of the most relaxed trips and I very much enjoyed it - so much so I have started saving for next years sojourn in Dubrovnik.

Lindsay Edge

Interested in joining the trip next year?

Planning for next year's trip to Dubrovnik in Croatia is already underway. The dates are 27-30 September. Keep an eye on the website for more details!

LOOKING TO INSPIRE YOUR CHILDREN'S CHOIR?

Consider attending a lively residential singing weekend, with specialist pastoral care provided by Active Training & Education (ATE) and singing workshops led by enthusiastic and experienced SFP tutors.

WHAT HAPPENS? Each weekend starts with supper on the Friday evening and ends after lunch on the Sunday with an informal performance of the weekend's music. There is an energetic and invigorating programme of singing sessions, games and activities with plenty of opportunity for the children to socialise.

REPERTOIRE. The music will cover a wide range of styles and genres, from singing games and action songs to rounds and more substantial part-songs, selected at a musical standard to suit yet extend the existing experience of the participants.

MUSICAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS.

Each event aims to inspire better singing through a concentrated shared experience in order to help raise the profile of singing back in schools as the enthusiasm and new

ideas are passed on. Experience has shown such weekend events to be highly motivating, with the residential basis giving children time to bond with friends and form a lasting impression of singing as a hugely rewarding and enjoyable activity.

"Can I thank you once more for the fantastic weekend... our pupils were full of it and have already performed in school and our staff are fired up to take part in new activities." (Head Teacher)

"The weekend has clearly been a phenomenal success in every respect and there is no doubt that the children have benefited enormously..." (Head Teacher)

VENUES. We use a range of venues around the country, which include Youth Hostels, local authority residential centres and boarding schools. Children usually sleep in



dormitories with the accompanying staff in adult rooms nearby. Great care is taken to ensure that the venues have sufficient rehearsal and activity space for children to feel free and relaxed in their environment. Regular venues include Wilderhope Manor in Shropshire, Cliffe House near Huddersfield, Streatley-on-Thames Youth Hostel in Berkshire and Smallwood Manor near Uttoxeter.

HOW DO WE BOOK? Each year a number of weekends are organised in response to demand from individual schools and groups. Email admin@singforpleasure.org.uk to discuss prices and begin arranging your bespoke event.

SFP BOLTON WEEKEND NOVEMBER 2011

By the time the November weekend rolled round this year I was itching for some more Sing for Pleasure fun, as I was unable to go to Summer School this year, and it had been far too long since February. So, it was great to meet up with some old SFP friends and to make some new ones, as I embarked on the Intermediate 2 conductors course for the second time.

I first took this course in the Spring, and I found it very challenging indeed, and realised I would need a lot more input at this level if I was to feel confident in my conducting skills. It was great to have Jane Hampson leading the course, as I found her approach very encouraging and supportive, while at the same time giving excellent teaching tips and showing me good examples of how to improve my gestures and rehearsal planning. The repertoire we had was very challenging, both for the singers and for the conductors, so we were all put through our paces, and we all did very well, considering the short time we had to teach and learn our pieces.

The other attendees on the course were a fantastic support too, something I always find really valuable. Watching them developing their skills over the course of the weekend was fantastic to observe, and having such supportive and positive



singers in the group made them a pleasure to work with. Thanks everyone!

I really enjoyed the choral sessions this time round, learning some of the new pieces from 'O Lux Beata' compiled by Katy Cooper – I will definitely be trying some of the pieces with my youth choir! We also had a fun session with Ula Weber singing some Christmas favourites and generally having a hoot, especially with the Lapland 'Oik'!

Thanks to Jane Hampson and all the staff who made the weekend run so smoothly, and for ensuring SFP continues to inspire my love of singing!

Eleanor Rushbury

NEXT ISSUE

If you have any articles for inclusion in the next issue of Vocalise, please contact **Katy Cooper** (Editor). Email: vocalise@singforpleasure.org.uk or telephone the National Office number below.



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