

MEET THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES

The recent changes in the structure of SFP's management have resulted in the appointment of two new membership secretaries, Claire Jackson and Ian Norton. Claire sent us this message.

I'd like to say hello on behalf of Ian and myself. In September we took on the voluntary role of membership secretaries for the organisation. Within this job there are three main areas of responsibility:

Administration - taking payments and giving a gentle nudge when it comes to renewals.

Data handling - this is our legal responsibility to you, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Membership development - we're keen to put your suggestions forward to the board of management and trustees. We speak on behalf of you, so let us know what you think. Our aim is to encourage members to take an active part in the organisation. We can't improve without your help and support!

So that's briefly what we will be doing, but who are we?

Ian is an IT consultant, a Geek, a Tenor who has been singing for many years, and has done numerous conducting courses but keeps coming back for the singing. A coffee connoisseur.

Claire is a Music teacher, who has been playing Cornet for over 20 years, has a BA (Hons) from Leeds College of Music, a mezzo soprano who is currently on the Intermediate 2 conducting course.

We will no doubt see you at many of the courses and singing days. Please feel free to come and speak to us, just allow Ian to have his morning coffee first!

Claire Jackson

SfP 5-DAY CONDUCTING COURSES

We're now full swing into our 5-Day conducting courses and, with 8 courses running across the country, we've never been busier!



Our 5-Day courses are becoming ever more popular with people who have family commitments or lead busy lives and can't take part in the SFP weekend courses or Summer School. Many students also enjoy the opportunity of putting into practice the skills they have learnt on Day 1 before moving

on to Day 2, and so on. Each day consists of a warm up, technique sessions and conducting workshops where students use simple repertoire to develop their skills. The progress made over a 5-month period can be quite remarkable!

New this year to all our 5-day courses is the addition of the Intermediate 1 level. This level is ideal if you already have some experience of conducting but would like to develop your skills over a period of time. Students now have the option of selecting either Foundation or Intermediate 1 levels or, for more experienced conductors, there is also an Intermediate 2 course running in London.

If you think a 5-Day course might work for you and you want to know more about it, please contact Ula Weber (Head of Events) or Manvinder Rattan (Head of Conducting). Or perhaps go along as an observer to one of the courses nearest you and see for yourself! Go to www.singforpleasure.org.uk for a full list of dates and venues.

Ula Weber, Head of Events

SfP SOUTH CHOIR FESTIVAL

SfP's Choir Festivals offer an alternative to competitive festivals as they allow choirs to receive constructive feedback without the pressure of competing. Christine Hale, one of the adjudicators, sent this report.

The SfP South Choirs' Festival 2011 was extremely well attended, with eleven choirs taking part. This event was a non-competitive celebration of choral singing, held for the second time at Farnham Maltings. It included singers aged between 8 and 80, and we were treated to a wide range of music from choirs of all abilities and levels of experience. It was also a great opportunity for some wonderful massed choral singing, with Alan Bullard's 'Pictures of Night' and a lovely selection of SfP core repertoire.

As adjudicators, Manvinder and I were looking for a number of different qualities from the choirs:

Presentation: A choir is on show from the moment it steps onto the stage and therefore the performance begins before the singing starts. Good posture, smiles and an air of confidence (even when nervous) also go a long way to setting the scene for the performance.

Communication: The choir should have an excellent connection with both the conductor and the audience; watching the conductor is important and reassures singers of entries and dynamics. Making eye contact with the audience really draws them into the music, so that the choir achieves good stage presence and adds sparkle to the performance.

Technicalities: Correct harmonies, tone, blend and musical interpretation should also be taken into consideration, and the key here is to choose repertoire which suits the singers and their abilities. For the less experienced choir the formula is to keep the music simple and achievable and they will then have the confidence to add smiles and sparkle to give a stunning performance.



Adjudicators Christine Hale and Manvinder Rattan watching the choirs perform.

Listening to today's performances, the choirs are certainly to be congratulated for their efforts! It was a lovely to hear such a wide variety of choirs and a very pleasurable way to spend a cold Saturday in February. The musical choices were generally very suitable and covered many styles. There was a lot of impressive music making and each of the choirs valued the opportunity to hear each other without the pressure of a competition. Occasional uncertainties in entries, endings and pitching during the first performances showed great improvements during the final concert, and the advice about communication with the audience made a big difference to many of the groups. There were some lovely sensitive moods, some lively spirited singing and some entertaining fun pieces. Thank you so much to Hilary Vaill and the South Region committee for all their efforts in setting up and running the event.

We must continue recognising, celebrating and championing the invaluable benefits of singing, as it keeps the brain active, challenges us, releases endorphins to create that 'feel good' factor and promotes fellowship, friendships and unity. Festivals like today really help us to do this, so keep on singing and smile!

Christine Hale

SUMMER SCHOOL 2011

What is Summer School?

Summer School is a full week's course for singers, conductors and vocal leaders that offers unparalleled opportunities to people who love learning and performing choral music.

Where is it held?

The course is held at Keele University, which has a large and beautiful campus, excellent teaching facilities, splendid food, comfortable study bedrooms and extremely helpful staff.

Who should come to Summer School this year?

Summer School really suits choral enthusiasts who want to sing a vast array of music and further their own skills in the company of like-minded people. Whether you have a little or a lot of experience as a singer or conductor there is a course that suits and challenges you. Be prepared to throw yourself into it and you will gain an enormous amount during the week. If you haven't sung in a choir before you might find it tricky, so do talk through your application with us to see if we are providing what you are looking for.

Which course?

The Singers' course is relaxed and friendly, with a good mix of workshop sessions and free time to relax and explore the surrounding area during the afternoon. There are plenty of opportunities for extra afternoon singing sessions for those who want to sing non-stop, and there are choral concerts to listen to or perform in on most days. The Conductors' courses are graded from Foundation through to Advanced levels and follow the SfP Conductor Training Programme. This caters for conductors who are complete beginners right through to those who are tackling advanced repertoire and working with orchestras.

Why choose SfP?

SfP courses are friendly and relaxed, encouraging individuals to develop their talents in a supportive environment. People often come to Summer School year after year and this engenders a sense of community and mutual support which makes our courses really stand out. Come and join us this year!

When is it?

The course runs from the afternoon of Saturday 13th August to the morning of Sunday 21st August.

How do I apply?

Apply using the online application form via the events page www.singforpleasure.org.uk or send in a paper application form.



Final rehearsals for one of the 2010 Summer School concerts.



The members of the Advanced Conductors course on last year's Summer School.



One of the concerts at last year's SfP Summer School.

CHRIS GREEN AWARDED MBE

My first Sing for Pleasure summer school in 1984 as a conductor trainer was life changing in more ways than one. Firstly, having only recently discovered the pleasure of singing myself (I was brought up as an instrumentalist and I had never known singing could be so much fun), it fundamentally influenced and altered my career. Secondly I met my husband, Chris Green, and this article is about him, not me.



Chris quietly played a really important role in that summer school. He was bursar and at the time I had no idea what a significant role that was. He ensured everything ran really smoothly, and I now know he had worked extremely hard to make everything about the week as economical as possible to keep the cost of the summer school affordable. Without that I certainly would never have attended

it. What I was aware of was a fun loving man who, although he was not a trained musician, kept popping up to lead silly songs, as well as crazy games that kept us all in fits of laughter when we were not desperately preparing music for the next conducting session. That week was one of the best in my life.

Chris was also honorary treasurer of SFP. An amateur singer, he had first met SFP when he was looking for songs he could teach to children who attended Colony Holidays. This was an organisation he set up early in his career who over 20 years took 80,000 children on activity holidays. And so began a long association with Sing for Pleasure. Chris remained Honorary Treasurer for 30 years, during which he spent inordinate amounts of time keeping the accounts in order and probably keeping Sing for Pleasure afloat. In those days committee meetings took whole weekends, often to his exasperation, and I remember hosting a few and providing many meals for committee members. When I met Chris he had left Colony Holidays and was teaching again. Frustrated at the lack of progress in the area of children's holidays nationally he left

teaching again in 1995 to set up a successor body to Colony Holidays called Active Training and Education (ATE). For 15 years he worked on a voluntary basis building the organisation up from scratch in a very different world from the one in which Colony Holidays had begun. Although the numbers of children attending never reached the numbers in Colony Holidays, there are thousands of happy people who have been to ATE holidays and experienced and learned so much from attending them. Thousands of young people have worked for Colony Holidays and ATE and many have told Chris how much their professional lives have been enhanced because of what they learned from him. Always as part of these holidays have been the songs the children have sung, many finding a singing voice they were reluctant to use in more formal situations. Chris always liked partnering with other worthy organisations and one of the spin offs from this has been the SFP children's singing holidays and weekends that ATE have been an integral part of. Once again hundreds of children have had the pleasure of singing in a holiday atmosphere in a safe environment their whole experience being enriched by the ATE connection.

This year in the New Year Honours Chris was awarded the MBE for his services to education. Accolades have been flooding in ever since from all sorts of people who know him now or who have known him in the past and the message that has come through has been almost unanimously: "About Bloody Time". So congratulations Chris. I know I am biased, being his wife, but perhaps I know more than most people how much work he has done for so many people in such a selfless manner.

Carol Green

SING FOR PLEASURE BLACKPOOL WEEKEND

Last year our school choir took part in a Sing for Pleasure day. In the morning we sang in a school with three other school choirs. One of the highlights of the day was the when all different choirs merged into a bigger choir and we all sang as one. In the merged choir we got to sing different types of songs, for example pop songs. This was different to what we normally sing in choir, which made the day a lot of fun. It was also a good experience because it allowed us to sing in different parts.

We also got to watch the other school choirs perform one of their own songs, all the choirs were different – this meant

we got to listen to a variety of songs with different voices. The whole day was really enjoyable because everyone was really relaxed and supportive of each other.

In the afternoon we all went to Blackpool Pleasure Beach. We got unlimited wristbands and the weather was great, so overall it was a really fun day.

This year I'm looking forward to going to the day again with choir because it allowed us to relax and enjoy ourselves, and also sing in a different environment with different people.

Helen Tainsh

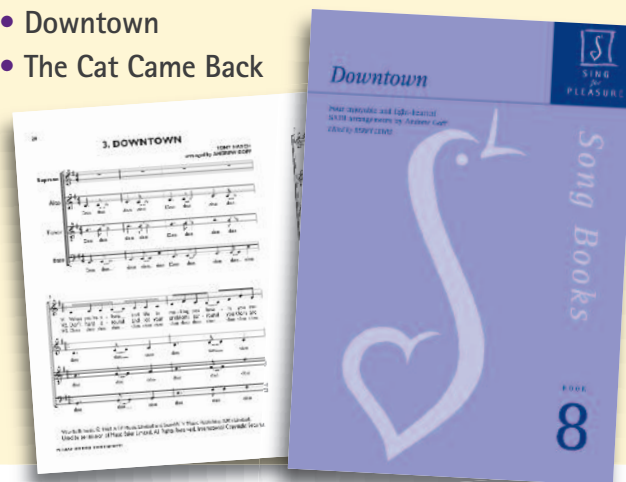
REPERTOIRE SPOTLIGHT: DOWNTOWN

A set of four wonderful, light-hearted pieces arranged by talented composer and arranger Andrew Goff. These pieces are clever, witty and great fun to sing. Suitable for SATB choirs and always popular with audiences and choirs alike. Andrew handles the melodic material with panache and sensitivity, sharing the melodies between each voice part and ensuring that everyone in the choir has something humorous and enjoyable to sing. By not specifying the tempi and dynamics he encourages each conductor to experiment and craft an individual performance.

Each of the pieces have been thoroughly road-tested and are excellent, light-hearted concert finishers and encores.

'Downtown' is available via the SFP shop at £4.95 per copy.

- A Windmill in Old Amsterdam
- How Much is That Doggy in the Window
- Downtown
- The Cat Came Back



BUILDING CONFIDENCE AT THE NOVEMBER WEEKEND

I attended the Summer School last summer (2010), and had such a good time I wanted to have another taste of Sing for Pleasure magic, so when the November Weekend came round I couldn't resist. Who would say no to a weekend away from the children, in the pleasant surroundings of the Bolton Music Centre?

I had successfully completed the Intermediate 1 conductors' course in the Summer, but I felt I needed to consolidate what I had done on that course, and I didn't feel ready for anything more challenging at that point. So I enrolled on the Intermediate 1 course again, and was pleased that a couple of my other Int 1 colleagues were also repeating the course so it was good to have some familiar faces to catch up with when I arrived.

The course was led by Jane Edwards, who gave us lots of encouragement and reminded us of some of the gestures and techniques to use with the singers. It was great to have a different tutor from the other two courses I have been on, to give different pointers, but to also see that the Sing for Pleasure methods are used consistently by everyone.

We sang some lovely part songs together, and as it was coming up to Christmas we sang some fun Christmas songs. I conducted a piece in the final concert, which was nerve-wracking, but I felt so supported by everyone that it felt really good to be up there!

We had also had some good social time, including a traditional northern meal of pie and mash on the Saturday night, and a few glasses of wine we had a great evening together. We had some informal singalongs of SFP repertoire pieces, which is always good fun, and I thoroughly enjoyed being with such enthusiastic singers! Jane Hampson and all the team from Bolton were very welcoming, and we had a great weekend.

I have enrolled on the Intermediate 2 course for the February weekend (I must be a glutton for punishment!!) but I feel that I have made such progress that I am ready to try the next step. We'll see how that goes after the weekend! And in Manvinder's capable hands I am sure I will learn lots!

Eleanor Rusbury

This course was a milestone for me as a conductor. I have to say my biggest issue is self confidence leading and obviously fear of just waving my arms around like a mad gorilla and getting frowns back from the singers. So far I have been ok. It is great to have feedback not only from tutors but also from fellow conductors who are in the exact same situation.

I have to say this course has made me realise I really want to be good at this to the point I have had my nose glued to a music theory book for the last 2 months trying to make sure I know everything there is to know about music to help me in my journey.

This course has also made me realise that my biggest issue, confidence, is slowly being tamed but I still need to have my feet super-glued to the ground (the tree trunk) but I'm working on that. Lovely local food, wonderful touch arranged by SFP enthusiasts such as myself and lets not forget the Dinner lady - Manvinder. Should try to put a hair net on next time... I now have a small church choir and I sing with another, who would of thought I would be doing this 13 months ago? Thanks SFP!

Paulo Gomes

The Lowry Girls

Supported by Sing for Pleasure
Invite you to join them for

SONGS BESIDE THE SEA

A one day singing workshop conducted by
Stephen Gregson

On Saturday 2nd July 2011, 9.30am – 4.00pm
At The Bulson Hall, St Faith's Church,
Victoria Square, Lee on the Solent PO13 9NF

COST: £12.50
including light refreshments am and pm

Enquiries to Jean O'Shea at 02392 326 738
cjoshea2@talktalk.net

NEXT ISSUE

If you have any comments or articles for inclusion in the next issue of Vocalise, please contact The Editor: **Katy Cooper** – email: katy@singforpleasure.org.uk

Alternatively, please telephone or write to SfP – details at the bottom of the page.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

For information about events in your region please use the contact details below.

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SING FOR PLEASURE SOUTH

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CHORAL TIPS: #1 INTERNET REPERTOIRE RESOURCES

The internet has truly changed the world. The wonders of internet banking, shopping and social networking like Facebook and Twitter allow us to communicate and operate in ways we couldn't have imagined even 5 years ago and the world of choral music is no exception. We thought we'd take the opportunity to highlight a couple of free repertoire resources which focus on public domain material. This means that the music is free for you to print and use with your choirs.

The **Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL – www.cpd.org)** is a free, web-based portal with over 8,800 scores available legally for free download and performance. The site includes not only scores, but also texts and lyrics, translations, and information about various composers. In addition to hosting a large number of files itself, CPDL also indexes various other databases of public domain music including the Werner Icking Music Archive (WIMA).

The **International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP – www.imslp.org)** describes itself as an 'ever-growing musical community of music lovers for music lovers' and currently has around 85,000 scores. Unlike CPDL, IMSLP does not focus on choral music, but on any music that is in the public domain, for any instrumentation. However, it does have a large number of choral scores.

Both these sites allow you to download scores in PDF format (a format that almost all computers should be able to open), in addition to a number of other file formats. The sites introduced new ways for the choral leader to plan rehearsals and receive new repertoire. For instance, the ability to browse through unfamiliar pieces of music, sometimes almost all of a composers output for choir, allows you to plan a varied and unusual programme. The ability to search the text of pieces allows you to select pieces of music that really match the theme of your programme. And the ability to listen to many of the pieces, particularly on CPDL means that you can get an idea of the sound of a piece very quickly, and you can use this as a learning tool for your choir.

"I am a regular user of CPDL and IMSLP and find them a fantastic free, high quality resource for solo performance and choral repertoire."

Ben Fowler, Organ Scholar, University of Glasgow

"IMSLP is a fantastic medium, allowing people to find digital copies of wonderful pieces of music. A shared resource that is made for the music community with the help of the community. Being able to get music in the digital format takes music into the twenty first century."

Claire Jackson, Music Teacher



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