

WE'LL MEET AGAIN....

It was a tremendous disappointment to have to cancel the performance of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis very late in the day in March, particularly as David had been working with the choir for many months on rehearsing this challenging but rewarding work and he was very pleased with what was being achieved. The orchestra was also ready to demonstrate its prowess after a marvellous Russian concert in February and to start working on Mahler's 3rd Symphony for performance during the Norfolk & Norwich Festival.

As you will understand, the COVID-19 pandemic has put huge question marks over our future rehearsals and concerts.

The Phil Committee has met three times online already to discuss options, taking into account guidance from the Government, research into the virus and its effects, and most importantly the safety of Phil members and our audiences. Further meetings will be held as events progress and the Committee is in a better position to make decisions about the forthcoming and future seasons. This will inevitably be an iterative process as the experience of easing lock down and allowing wider activities in this and other countries progresses and is evaluated to assess what is and isn't safe. Sadly, at the moment, there are particular concerns about choirs meeting to sing (although some of the research posits that infection rates rose during socialising activities rather than during the actual singing) and the 'spray effect' from different instruments – some of which is surprising and more or less than might have been thought. Social distancing in itself will also provide challenges although there is variable advice on the distance in different countries.

Performing members will have seen the planned

programme for the 2020/21 season (see also on the next page). The worst case scenario would be that we have to cancel the whole season of performances as we cannot be certain about the safety of performers and audience members and/or rehearsal and performance spaces are not available to us due to policy restrictions. At the moment, we really hope that this will not be the case but we will not start to promote the season and

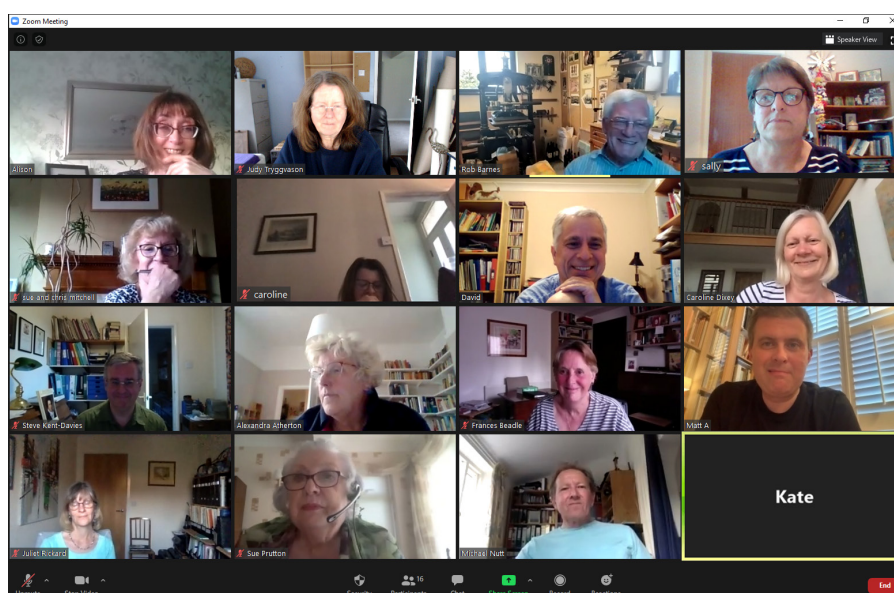
try to sell tickets until there is more clarity. As you know, rehearsals would normally start in September and the committee will continue to meet over the summer and make plans as the situation becomes clearer. When we have formulated some tentative plans, we will also want to hear the views and concerns of all members

too. At that point emails will go out to identify your willingness to sing or play in rehearsals and concerts.

Our initial focus will be on making sure that our members can participate safely in music making whether or not it is possible to put on an actual performance. This may involve some early preparation taking place using online resources if it is not deemed safe to meet in September. This would be contingent on being able to obtain copies of scores – which is not currently possible as the music libraries are closed. If this is not practical, we will look at other options for some form of participation. I'm sure that you will all appreciate the complexities of the options, proposals and decisions which the committee will be going through and want to reassure you that we will be proactive and imaginative in developing ideas.

It's impossible to know exactly what the future holds at present, but when it's safe, we **will** meet again, to share and perform the music we all love so much.

Caroline Dixey



Phil Committee Zoom meeting

Message from Matt Andrews

Hello everyone,

Despite my newly-honed skills (bread-maker, gardener and Year 6 teacher), I can't say I'm a fan of 'new normal'! I'm sure, like me, after the initial frustration of our cancelled musical endeavours you find the long separation from our musical lives and music community to be extremely difficult.

In the last few weeks I've been involved in several virtual performances. Aside from learning that video editors seem to get paid a great deal more than musicians(!), it's been an informative experience learning new technologies and how they can assist - and all too often hinder - musical collaborations. It has reminded me in the most vivid way, of the unique value of live music-making at every level... making it all the more frustrating that there's no obvious route back to it at the moment.

But rest assured, we are looking at every possibility for how we can return to live music-making. Initially, it may not be back to business as usual. But we might find new opportunities - perhaps repertoire that doesn't normally fit in a regular Phil season. Whatever form it takes, I know we'll all be counting the days until we're playing and singing together again.

Until then, stay safe and well.

Matt.

(P.S. My other duties: the Diva asked me to cut her hair! She may need a few more months before returning to public life!)

Programme for 2020-21

This was the programme agreed before the pandemic took hold. Now subject to review as matters progress.

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| 7 November | Dvořák Golden Spinning Wheel
Orff Carmina Burana |
| 12 December | Sibelius Karelia Suite
Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto
(Sophia Prodanova, violin)
Nielsen Symphony No.4 |
| 22 December | Family Christmas Concert |
| 6 February | Respighi Fountains of Rome
Dohnanyi Variations on a Nursery Theme (Martin Roscoe, piano)
Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony |
| 20 March | Mendelssohn Elijah |



Message from David Dunnett

Dear All

As the lockdown drags on, despite the gradual easing, time seems to be flying by! Countless thousands of choral singers the world over have been locked out of an activity which provides them with great fulfilment and enjoyment. I have seen numerous amazing virtual projects but they are no match for the real thing and I know we are all looking forward to the day when we can gather again in rehearsal. How I miss that collective groan at the end of rehearsal when I say 'let's all stand up and sing that section one more time...'!

As you know, we are having to be very flexible about the time and nature of any restart but I am trying to think optimistically about the Autumn and Carmina Burana and hope that we will be able to do something – even if it is only online sectional rehearsals! Remote rehearsals may suit some people anyway – it reminds me of the conductor lightbulb joke (probably familiar to some of you) – How many conductors does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but then again, who's really watching?

Hope you all manage to stay safe and well over the summer.

David

Future Plans

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions, it will not be possible to hold our AGM this summer. It has been postponed until later in the year.

But we wanted everyone to have the opportunity to hear about the Phil's current plans, and ask any questions they have about rehearsals and concerts in these difficult times.

The Phil Committee are appointing a **Working Group** to put together a **Plan** for the forthcoming season. It will take into account the next scheduled Government announcements on the easing of the lockdown in early July.

It is hoped the Plan will be finalised by mid July, after which it will be sent out to all members. Questions and comments about the Plan are welcome, and we will aim to respond to any received within a couple of days.



Our Super Secretary Sue is retiring!

After over 12 years of tireless service to the Norwich Phil, the Society Secretary Sue Mitchell is stepping down.

Sue has done a fantastic job over the years on multiple administrative fronts. Thank you Sue, for everything you have done. To show the Phil's appreciation, Sue is being presented with one of Rob Barnes' lovely lino cuts.



...and welcome to our new Super Secretary, Alison

Hello. My name is Alison Rhodes and I am taking over from Sue Mitchell as Secretary to the Norwich Phil Committee, from June, 2020. I joined the Phil as a SOP1 in 2016 – in time for Mahler 8 - having previously sung with Beccles Choral Society and the UEA Choir. During my career, I worked for three Universities, latterly as a Director of University Services at UEA, and am now retired. I have been Secretary to a range of Committees, including a University Senate, and am

currently Secretary to a Parochial Church Council.



Sue will be a hard act to follow – especially at this challenging time – but I shall do my best. We are working together to ensure as smooth a hand-over as possible.

Quiz and Chips

Seems like an age ago but congratulations to Pat's Choir team who won our Quiz back in January. Will our Quiz next year be a virtual one on Zoom?

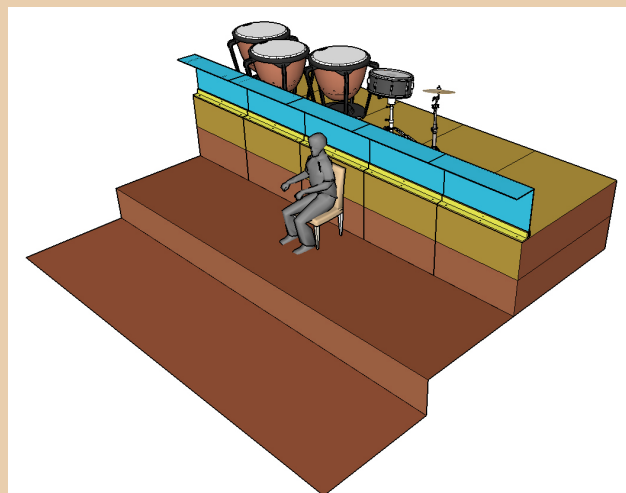


Acoustic Screens

As you may be aware, there is a growing concern about the potential for permanent damage to the hearing of musicians as a result of sitting in close proximity to loud instruments. We are fortunate to have in the Orchestra a professional acoustic consultant **Andy Thompson**, who has been working with Mike Nutt and members of staff at St Andrews Hall to find out how we can best protect the hearing of our members.

The biggest concern is the level of sound produced by the percussion section. So tests have been done using a prototype row of low screens as displayed in the picture. Measurements were taken as for a member of the woodwind section, as for percussionists behind the screen and in the centre of the hall. When a percussion instrument was played, the results showed a halving of subjective loudness for woodwind players, and significantly, the more damaging higher frequencies were much reduced. Reassuringly, the sound did not increase for percussion players due to sound bouncing back to them from the screens, and sound levels in the centre of the hall showed a reduction in level of 2dB(A), which is small, and unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the audience experience.

The results have convinced the Phil Committee that screens like these would be a valuable addition to our playing environment. The screens fold away for easy storage, and are quick to install before a rehearsal or concert at the Hall. They are being built over the summer to be available for use as and when our concerts start again.



Steve takes over as Phil Concert Manager



Thanks to Ron Jackson who is stepping down

In recent seasons we have been very fortunate to have the enthusiastic efforts of violinist **Ron Jackson** as our Concert Manager. This was a new role we created to take on the vital aspects of practical staging arrangements on concert days, as well as sitting on the Orchestra Sub-Committee and Society Main Committee.

As you probably know, a huge amount of planning and organising goes into putting on our concerts but few members of the Phil may be aware of the fine details that need to be taken care of on concert day - whether it's setting out the right number of players' seats and music stands, making sure we have the right rostra in place, getting the celeste out from store on to stage

or liaising with the hall-keepers to ensure the correct lighting levels are set.

Ron has diligently done this - and much more - for a number of seasons and we are very grateful to him for all he's done now that he's stepping down from the role due to ill-health. We are delighted to say that **Steve Kent-Davies** - another violinist - will be stepping in to replace him and we look forward to having Steve taking an active part in Phil committee business too. Thanks again Ron - and welcome Steve!



Welcome to Steve Kent-Davies, our new Concert Manager

Mike Nutt

Koblenz 2021

The 19th collaboration between the choir and our friends at the Musik Institut in Norwich's twin city of Koblenz is planned for 12 March 2021 in Koblenz. We hope that we will be in a more normal world by then and that a good number of members and friends will travel to Koblenz to perform just ahead of the performance of Elijah in Norwich. Watch out for further details.



Date for your diary

There will be an **online talk** about the life and work of Benjamin Britten available from **12:30pm on Tuesday 23rd June**. The talk will be given by Dr Christopher Hilton from the Britten Pears Archive, and will share fascinating examples of the holdings of the Archive, providing rare insight into the early career, personal life, and unpublished works of Britten.

The talk is hosted by the Norfolk Record Office, and you can view the talk any time after the release on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM43NkkOrTjbTMmGcOB8eQQ>. Enjoy!

