

Rotherhithe & Bermondsey Choral Society

Your community choir, where local people come together to sing



RBCS Chair's Report February 2014 AGM

2013 felt like a 'coming of age' year. The choir's musical confidence grew as did our profile in the community. Sue Heath Downey's leadership was increasingly deft, taking us well beyond our comfort zones at times, and inspiring us to make wonderful music. The Committee's work, behind-the-scenes was smooth and practised.

Music

What a range of music we sang, from baroque to contemporary, popular musicals to high classical! In springtime we sang in the Bavarian highlands courtesy of Elgar and floated to spiritual heights in Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms. In the summer, we stayed close to home with Edward German's Merrie England and the History of Bermondsey in Song, including Gregorian chant, folk songs, hymns, music hall, the Dockers' strike song and musicals. At Christmas we rejoiced in Vivaldi's Gloria and proudly delivered the first performance of a carol composed especially for us by Michael Bonaventura.

We sang in the Brunel Tunnel Museum shaft, at the Salmon Youth Centre, the Bermondsey Street Festival, the Community Council, and at Trafalgar Square, carols, raising £120 for the Anthony Nolan cancer charity.

Audiences

In the summer and Christmas concerts, choir members swallowed their nerves and stepped into the limelight to sing solos, which really got our audience rooting for us. So although audience numbers have been very variable, those who come to hear us are most appreciative and supportive. At our Christmas concert, we experimented with free entry and we had pretty much a full house at St Mary's which was good to see.

Funders

We had generous funding from The Bermondsey Square Community Fund, for the History of Bermondsey in Song project, and from our patron Prem Goyal, which paid for the chamber orchestra at the spring concert. We thank Time & Talents for rehearsal space and to St Mary's and St James churches for concert venues.

Scores Library

We have added to our scores library, Stravinsky, Gounod and donations from choir members past and current. The scores are now all stored in one place.

Publicity

Sadly, our publicity officer Lydia Beadsworth left us in the summer, but Penny Barrett and Ruth Kaye have taken over successfully. The website is a great shop window and our profile on social media has improved. We continue to publicise concerts with posters, flyers and on listings. As ever, the most effective publicity is by choir members telling colleagues, friends and families about us and bringing them to concerts.

Good practice

The choir continues to be a member of Making Music which keeps us up to date with good practice. It remains an objective to become a registered charity, so that we can apply to more organisations for grant funding, but it has been less urgent as we have been successful at raising funds locally.

And to come in 2014

2014 starts with a musical challenge, Verdi's wonderful Requiem, to be performed in St James church with chamber orchestra, continuing Ada Salter's 100-year-old tradition of live classical music in St James.

Thank you once again to all, singers, committee members, our musical director, patrons and supporters for making 2013 such a memorable year.

Clare Birks
RBCS Chair 2013-14

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