



**FRIENDS OF ROCHESTER
CHORAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 38
November 2021**



Dear Friend

After a hiatus of over a year, I'm delighted to update you with Rochester Choral Society news and pass on details of our next concert at **7pm on 20 November 2021, at St Stephen's Church, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME4 6NS.**

The programme for this concert, comprising of music by three generations of modern English and Belgian composers, was originally due to be performed by the choir in 2020 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, but this plan was scuppered by the more recent war against Covid-19.



After a two-year wait since our previous concert, we'd like to welcome you back with an appropriate fanfare: the *Entrata Festiva for Organ, Brass and Timpani* by Flor Peeters (1903 - 1986), played by King's Brass with Jeremy Lloyd on organ. Jeremy is our accompanist, and also the Assistant Director of Music and Sub Organist at Rochester Cathedral.

Joseph Jongen's *Mass for Choir, Organ and Brass* was composed during the final year of World War II. Its contemplative style and shifting harmonies reflect the restlessness of the composer's adult life, spanning both World Wars and moving back and forth between Belgium and England. The work ends with a tranquil plea for peace.

In complete contrast, *The Sprig of Thyme* by John Rutter (born 1945) is a collection of folk songs of the British Isles. Rutter's fresh arrangements breathe new life into these songs on timeless themes of life, love and loss, showing the power of music to unite people emotionally.

Demonstrating this last point, after several months of not being able to rehearse in person, it has been a joy to be able to sing together again this term. However, with some technical wizardry we were able to rehearse online during lockdown. Our Musical Director, John Mountford encouraged us to keep singing, and with the help of a backing track, headphones, and smartphones, each week members of the choir sang a movement from Mozart Requiem, which was pulled together into an online concert in June 2020. Video rehearsals resumed in Autumn with some carols, and a mix of well-known and less well-known Christmas works.

Spring was welcomed in by a video performance of Vivaldi's Gloria. Unfortunately, I was not able to participate in that; having missed the first few weeks because of Covid, my voice took a while to recover. I'm usually an Alto but could easily have sung bass for a while!

With the relaxation of restrictions in May, our hardworking Committee planned tirelessly to work out a way for us to meet and sing together in person. Risk assessments were developed, re-written and refined in the face of ever-changing advice on whether it was safe to sing. In the end, and with thanks to King's School, we met in the playground of King's Prep School, standing 2 metres apart and singing in masks. Every week we started with Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, with a real sense of joy, followed by a mix of madrigals and short pieces. We were lucky with the weather, with only one or two cold and wet weeks.

After yet more risk assessments, the Committee all agreed our previous rehearsal venue was too small for us to be able to maintain adequate social distancing, and we are now meeting on Tuesday evenings in St Stephen's Church in Chatham, which is a much larger space. We will be holding our November concert there.

Tickets are £15 (£5 for school children and students in full-time education, and there will be the usual saving of £5 for RCS Friends. Please contact the Tickets Secretary direct on tickets@rochesterchoral.co.uk for Friends tickets.

Looking ahead to 2022, we will be starting rehearsals for **Handel's Messiah** in January, with the concert planned on **12 March 2022** in Rochester Cathedral, so please keep that date free. Our exciting programme continues into the summer with Mozart's Coronation Mass and Haydn's Schöpfungsmesse (Creation Mass) – final details and dates to be confirmed.

As well as looking forward to the season ahead, it's at this time of year that we remind Annual Friends that subscriptions are due (payable directly, please, to the RCS Treasurer, details below). If you pay by Standing Order then you need take no further action. The choir thanks you for your patience through what has been a very unsettling and uncertain period. Your continued support of the Choral Society as we move back to our normal routine of rehearsals and concerts is much appreciated.

The choir was saddened to hear of the death of one of our longstanding Friends, Derek Woolston, in January this year. His wife Faith is a Life Friend and has sung in the choir for many years, and we extend our condolences to her.

I could not close without expressing heartfelt thanks on behalf of Rochester Choral Society to Malcolm Moulton who stepped down as Friends Secretary in early 2020, but who remains a Life Friend and firm supporter of the Choral Society. Malcolm was Chair of the Choral Society for a number of years. Thank you, Malcolm, for all your help and support.

We look forward to seeing you on the 20 November.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah

Sarah Anderson, Friends' Secretary

Forthcoming concerts and events

(Please contact the Tickets Secretary on tickets@rochesterchoral.co.uk direct for Friends tickets)

Autumn 2021 Saturday 20 November 2021 at 7pm St Stephen's Church Maidstone Road Chatham ME4 6NS.	Peeters: Entrata Festiva for organ, brass and timpani op. 93
	Jongen: Mass op. 130 for choir, brass and organ
	Rutter: A Sprig of Thyme
Spring 2022 2 March 2022 Rochester Cathedral	Handel: Messiah
Summer 2022 Details to be confirmed	Haydn: Schöpfungsmesse (Creation Mass)
	Mozart: Coronation Mass

Tickets:

£15 (unreserved - nave)

£5 (for school children and students in full-time education - any seat).

RCS Friends save £5 off the nave seats (please contact the Tickets Secretary on tickets@rochesterchoral.co.uk direct for Friends tickets).

Friends Annual Subscriptions, benefits and payment

'Solo Friend': £30 for a year (life membership £300).

'Duet Friends': £50 per couple (life membership £450).

As a Friend, you receive:

- £5 off your centre-nave seat
- A free programme at each concert
- Newsletters, in the form of pre-concert mailings and
- An opportunity to socialise at our concerts.

You can pay via online transfer, cheque or standing order.

Our bank account details:

Name: Rochester Choral Society

Sort code: 40-39-02

Account n°: 21028936

If paying online, please let our Treasurer, William Little, know by e-mail:

rochesterchoral@gmail.com