# In Tune 2024 Newsletter

#### **Editorial**

We have had an amazing year, this year: we have produced 3 concerts, highly contrasting and very exciting; two of the concerts this year were with orchestra. Despite this additional expense, we have done well financially, more-or-less breaking even, though this has been more because we have had a couple of generous donations rather than that we have had sufficient subs and ticket sales (though these haven't been bad); and - for me, at least - I think have had a particularly good year for having fun and enjoying our rehearsals together as well as staging the great concerts. I am particularly grateful, and I'm sure that I speak for the whole of the society, to Jeff Stewart and his passion for singing which comes from the heart and also reaches the hearts of the listeners and performers both. His direction has been inspirational and, indeed, his contribution to much of the musical 'scene' in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire is terrific; for example: his work in delivering vocal lessons online, in-person, as part of holidays (such as the Bolton Abbey break) and through individual guidance and support. As always, we have consistently and brilliantly, also been supported by our terrific repetiteur, Colin Spinks. We are fortunate, in my view, to have the best accompanist at both rehearsals and concerts of any choir for miles around. Who can forget his stunning organ playing during the Dupré Magnificat before Easter?

I made the point in last year's *In Tune* that we have a great responsibility in bringing music alive to both our members and our audiences. I wish to repeat that message as, whilst we love our music-making together, it is our role to enliven, inspire, challenge, bring joy, and enhance physical and mental health within our community. When you think of it like that, we should all be proud of what we achieve but, also, be challenged to build on our achievements, increase our influence and seek further support to enable us to do this (e.g. through advertising, sponsorship, publicity, donations, etc.).

Let us, also, see if we can get more of the people of Aylesbury and the wider area involved in music - both by joining us in the choir and/or by coming along to our concerts. We are a very good choir and we are worth singing with and listening to. Let us not put up with, 'oh, I don't know whether I might be free or not on that evening', and let us be more persuasive (myself, included). The committee are also considering how we might encourage more sponsorship and involvement from outside the choir (more on this in a mo and at the beginning of term). Be as proactive as you can in supporting this and other initiatives.

Our first concert of 2023-24 was earlier than usual - at the end of November - in order to get in an additional couple of rehearsals for the Easter concert before Christmas, as Easter this year was so early. This November concert of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* was magnificent and we received views that the music was particularly lively and exciting, which not all performances of Bach are. The concert was enhanced by one of the best 'orchestras' we have ever had together with some really talented and enthusiastic soloists.



Aylesbury Choral Society In Tune 2024

#### Contents:

Editorial: from the Chair	1
Dates for your Diary	1
From our Musical Director	3
From our membership secretary	4
From our Treasurer	5
ACS on Social Media	5
ACS's social life & quiz	6
Calendar & Programme	6
A Poem: 'The alto's lament'	7
The good news and the bad	
news (subs and tocket prices)	8
Notification of AGM; & finally	10
Quiz answers	10

#### **Dates for your Diary**

Tuesday September 3, 2024 Rehearsals commence Fairford Leys, 7:30 – 9:30pm

Tuesday September 17, 2024 AGM, Fairford Leys, 7:30pm

Saturday December, 2024 Rossini's "Mass" Concert St Mary's, 7:30pm

Tuesday January 7, 2025 Rehearsals recommence @ Fairford Leys, 7:30 – 9:30

Saturday April 5, 2025 Mozart & Martines Concert St Mary's, 7:30pm

Tuesday April 29, 2025 Rehearsals recommence

Saturday June 21, 2025 Summer Concert (music tbc)

Open rehearsals for all prospective new members and interested others:

Tuesdays, 10 September, 2024 14 January, 2025 6 May, 2025

#### **Aylesbury Choral Society**

Registered charity no. 274768 Web: www.aylesburychoral.org.uk Email: acschairman@gmail.com

Then, in late March, we staged a rather unusual concert for us, though I think it worked very well: a concert with a theme. The theme in this instance was 'Magnificat' with a performance of seven contrasting magnificats (and two nunc dimittis): those by Bach, Vivaldi and Pärt as 'concert' choral works, Dupré's organ magnificat (with plainsong verses), and two church service magnificats and nunc dimittis by Walmisely and Purcell, both specially orchestrated for the occasion. The audience (a pity it couldn't have been larger) was extremely appreciative and the after-concert feedback was most congratulatory and enthusiastic. Have you read the review in the 'Bucks Herald'? Both the Christmas and Easter concerts received a review in the e-version of the Bucks Herlald...

Christmas Oratorio.

Magnificat

Both of these reviews are by Simon Pogson - thanks, Simon!

https://www.bucksherald.co.uk/arts-and-culture/aylesbury-choral-society-kicks-off-the-christmas-season-in-style-4435645
https://www.bucksherald.co.uk/arts-and-culture/a-magnificat-performance-from-aylesbury-choral-society-4567717
are by Simon Pogson - thanks, Simon!

...The choir's Walmisley and Vivaldi were an absolute delight, and with the success of Pärts unaccompanied Magnifcat under their belt, they excelled at the interspersed choruses of Dupres organ recital. ('Magnificat' concert)

The [choir] started as it meant to go on, enveloping the exuberant atmosphere and encouraging the audience to come now with gladness, and welcome the morrow. Throughout the performance the joy of Bach's work was etched on the faces of the singers, and this very much carried through in the music of the evening. ('Christmas Oratorio' concert)

Finally, in June, we performed a concert of two halves: the first consisted of a cappella music by Palestrina and Bruckner. Rather unsually for ACS, we performed a large-scale unaccompanied work in Palestrina's *Missa Brevis* and this was extremely beautifully sung. We will soon be including a sort recording from the *Kyrie* onto the website - it's not a good recording, unfortunately,



Bach's Christmas Oratorio, November 2023

and goes 'in-and-out' of clarity - but it is possible to make out how good the singing was. The mass was complemented with three great motets by Bruckner. The second half, for the second year running, took on a lighter form, including songs such as *Stranger in Paradise*, *Three Minute Messiah* (great fun!) and *Shanandoah*. The music was largely cappella and it was lovely to have Colin Spinks supplementing the tenor line but, where an accompaniment was required, he was, as always, magnificent. It would be good to have a larger audience for the summer concert, especially as much of the music is so attractive to a wide number of people but, those there greatly appreciated all that was heard.

OK, so what are we going to be preparing for this coming season?

Firstly, December 7th will see us putting on the lovely *Petite Messe Solennelle* by Rossini. It is a number of years since we sang this last and it is such a beautiful and enjoyable work. Rather unusually, Rossini scored his work for an accompaniment of piano and harmonium and we intend to follow this recommendation for our own concert. We start rehearsing this on Tuesday 3rd September at The Church on Fairford Leys. Let's see if we can encourage some new or returning singers to join us. Then, on April 5th, we will perform the much-loved *Coronation Mass* by Mozart, sung with an orchestra, together with the virtually unheard *Quarta Messa* by a brilliant female composer, a contemporary of Mozart, Marianna Martines. This will be a fantastic venture for us - the first time we will have sung a large-scale work from a great female composer but also an opportunity to stage a work that will be new to so many people in the Aylesbury/Buckinghamshire area - and alongside such a wonderful work as the *Coronation Mass*. So, make sure that you advertise it now and secure us a large audience. Finally, on June 21st will be our summer concert. The precise programme is still to be finalised but we are strongly considering a programme of music from the musicals, so this should be a really enjoyable and popular evening to once again invite your friends and acquaintances to attend.

How about encouraging people to purchase season tickets this year? What a great season of music! They will save money and get a free programme for each concert, as well as a free termly newsletter.

In addition to the concerts, the social committee are planning at least two social activities: (1) a further quiz night during the Autumn - rapidly becoming a fun annual event; and (2) a members' entertainment evening in

Aylesbury Choral Society In Tune 2024

the Spring. This will be *your* (yes - you!) opportunity to prepare your 'party piece' for a fun evening to which members and friends can be invited to come along to: it can be a reading of a poem or book extract, juggling, a magic trick or two, a piece of music to play or sing, a comedy sketch, and so on, and so on. Then, we are considering inviting a semi-professional group to entertain us in the summer (like the comedy evening we had in 2022), though this is yet to be arranged. We are planning to invite a fantastically funny musical comedy duo called *Victor and Albert* (some of the older of you may remember the last time they entertained us quite a few years ago).

One further thing that I should now mention is that the committee has decided to raise the subscriptions for ACS for 2024-25 and these are detailed below in a separate item. The 'headline' figure to highlight now, though, is £90 per term (there are the usual reductions for two terms and for the whole year). We would like to encourage members to seriously consider taking out annual subscriptions. This has benefits to the choir in that it makes our programmes easier to plan and we can guarantee a more consistent membership across the three concerts; and benefits the members in that you will pay less (£225 for the whole year, instead of £240 for each term separately). We would really appreciate it if members did not 'pick and choose' the terms they would like to sing in because we are singing their 'favourite' music or music they are less keen on - it would be preferable if you consider that you are a consistent member of the choir, whatever the programme (unless, of course, there is a good reason for opting out of one particular term, such as sickness).

I finally thank, as always, all those members of the committee who work so hard on our behalf and without whom the society would be much diminished. In no particular order: Moira Dlugosz (membership secretary), Sue Oswell (concert management), Pat Starr (treasurer), Jenny Ion (secretary), Sally Barham (our out-going librarian), Sarah Jex (social media), John Chantler (technical advice and marketing), Mary Oliver (social events), Helen Green (venue liaison) - well done and thank you all so very much. We also have three subcommittees and teams to whom thanks are due: (1) music: Chris, Jeff, Colin +; (2) marketing: John C +; (3) social events: Mary, Moira, Chris. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome to the committee Lucy Jenkins who will be taking on the librarianship from Sally from September. Also, above all, thanks to Jeff and Colin who contribute so much to the work of the committee and to the choir more generally. We would not be the choir we are without them.

Chris Dalladay, Chairman

## From your Musical Director, Jeff Stewart

This has been a remarkable year for ACS. The choir isn't as big as it once was: old age and Covid have taken their toll on our numbers but, nevertheless, the choir has continued to improve and set higher and higher standards for itself.



It's a great joy to see, some younger members in the soprano and alto sections. It would be lovely to think that we could do the same in the tenor and bass ranks. In our last concert, many people who don't normally dare to step outside their comfort zone, actually went for it and, in particular, the sopranos really looked as if the music was their own. The more we can make that our normal way of singing, the more people will join us, and the more people will want to watch us and listen to us. Music is about so much more than getting notes right, getting rhythms right and being in tune. Of course, those things are important, but they are not the end we should be seeking to reach, they are the beginning of the story. That said, if we strive for much more than those things, they will be included in our performance anyway, because I truly believe that a person who is singing from their heart, is unlikely to sing out of tune.

We spend plenty of time making sure the notes are correct and there are now tremendous tools available to each person to make sure that they can take responsibility for getting the notes right if they haven't achieved that in rehearsals. We owe it to each other to master, in private, the passages we

haven't quite got hold of in rehearsals. I desperately want people to reach and surpass the levels of performance that they did last term, not for my sake, but because, however good or bad your life may be outside of your singing life, your singing can only enhance it when we sing with that much love. If we sing in that way, our audience will also have their lives enhanced. This is how we are serving them.

So, let's take last term both as the reaching of a goal and the setting of a new goal to go yet further and get more involved with the music we're singing.

I'm looking forward to the coming term immensely.

Have a lovely summer!

**Jeff Stewart** 

## From Moira Dlugosz, our membership secretary

This has been a good year for membership numbers, with the prospect of a little over 50 members for the start of our next season, which isn't all that different from our numbers pre-Covid. However, the distribution of voices could be much improved, being approximately 25 sops, 16 altos, 5 tenors and 6 basses – assuming there's a full turnout next term. So, we need to keep up our recruitment efforts. Tenors and basses are always in short supply, but – cue the music- II where have all the altos gone? II

We've been very pleased to have Claire and Auriol (sopranos) return to us following a couple of years' break, and we've been delighted to welcome Judith, Katharine, Lucy, Louise and Susy to the soprano section, Romana to the altos and David to the basses. We're also grateful to Greg (bass) for helping us with the summer term concert, when some of our regular basses, and tenors for that matter, were not available to sing.

We've also greatly missed a few long-standing members who were unable to sing with us last term or, in some cases, for the whole season for reasons of their own health or that of loved ones, bereavement, other commitments and so on, and we do hope you'll be able to be back with us in September. A special thank you to those who supported us by coming to our concerts when not singing. It's been really appreciated and it's also been lovely to catch up with you on those occasions. And I know from my email/phone contact with "absentees", that you wish the choir well and are always with us in spirit, if not in person, which is so good to know – thank you!

So, here's looking forward to another successful season for ACS with inspiring music, great company and, of course, a lot of laughs. Do keep spreading the word and sharing what a great experience it is to sing with ACS! And remember, "One who sings, scares away his woes" (Miguel de Cervantes 1547-1616).

#### Moira



In rehearsal

.... and, also from Moira: a poem....

Her final note has now been sent,
Her final chord's undone.

After life's gloom, death should present
Her moment in the sun.

Alas, she has the worst of fates —
She must in Limbo stay
And wait outside the Pearly Gates
Forever and a day.

She's not shut out because of sin
Her virtue's plain to see.

It's just... she never knew when to come in,
And could never find the key.

Aylesbury Choral Society In Tune 2024



## ...And, from our Treasurer, Pat Starr.....

We have seen an increase in membership during the year and probably as a result, ticket sales have increased too! We have also had a couple of substantial donations which have added to our income. We only had one fund raising evening for members this year (we had two in 2023, one of which was particularly successful). Total income is around £25k which, subject to what we receive in gift aid tax, is a bit more than in 2023. The ability to claim a further 25% on our subscriptions from HMRC is an important part of achieving this income. Please make sure that if you do pay income tax, you complete the form that Moira or Roger will ask of you!

Costs increased as we had two concerts with orchestras and there was an agreed increase in rehearsal costs. With some costs still to be added, it seems unlikely that we have done better than break-even over the year. The year end is 31 July. More detailed accounts will be presented at the Annual Meeting in September.

You may be interested to know how the major sources of income - our subscriptions and ticket sales- contribute to total income. In 2024, if we exclude gift aid tax, subscriptions contributed about 41% to total income. Ticket sales contributed about 32%. The proportions in 2023 were 37% and 30%. Fund raising including raffles and refreshments both at concerts and during rehearsals are still important contributors to income. Thank you to those who get involved with the organisation of fund raising events and activities.

Pat

#### **ACS on Social Media**

If you use either Facebook or X (formerly Twitter), do please Follow ACS and *Like* or *Share* posts where you can, to help spread awareness of what we rehearse and perform and the ethos and enthusiasm behind our singing.

You can find us on Facebook at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/AylesburyChoral">https://www.facebook.com/AylesburyChoral</a> ...and on X (Twitter) at <a href="https://x.com/AylesburyChoral">https://x.com/AylesburyChoral</a>

The ACS Facebook account is currently run by Sarah Jex with support from Moira Dlugosz, so speak to either of us or DM us via the ACS Facebook page if you see other organisations posting things of interest or if you have ideas of posts we can put up ourselves to garner interest from future audiences and choir members. We have recruited at least two members via Facebook recently and potential members will be interested to see current choir members commenting positively, so do join the conversation if you can, even if it's just by giving a thumbs up!

Sharing Facebook posts within local community Facebook groups also really helps to spread the word, whether it's about booking for our next concert or joining us to sing. Aylesbury organisations and media have also reposted our content in the past, so if you know of anyone working on a local newspaper or tapped into the local social media scene, do let us know so that we can contact them.

We're less active on X but follow other choirs and music organisations, so if you see posts that you think may be of interest to us to look at or repost, do tag us into the comments of that post.

Thank you!

Sarah Jex, social media manager

# See All Photos FOR YOUR DIARY: There - Trest referred of automate of the photos WILS EN REHEARS Truesday 23 Truesday 23 Truesday 23

#### ACS's social life

Many thanks to everyone who attended our social events last year. I'm willing to bet that I'm not the most proactive social secretary that ACS has ever had, but I enjoy doing my bit, and I am poised to write a few rounds of questions for our upcoming quiz in the Autumn term. Our past couple of quiz nights have a been lots of fun and, of course, have helped to supplement our funds significantly. If you feel you need a taste of my brilliance (hah!) before deciding whether to sign up to the next one, here's a list of anagrams for you to solve. They're all related to music we've sung over the past two years. Please disregard the capitalisation & punctuation marks:

- 1. Jabber Mitten Inn
- 2. Faint magic!
- 3. John, head spy
- 4. Charisma or risotto?
- 5. Loners ruminated
- 6. Err ... cool pet
- 7. Nosy filly jug!
- 8. Goblins Onboard
- 9. Bravo, twine hero

The answers are on the last page of this august journal.

Mary Oliver, our social secretary

# The Calendar & Programme for the 2024-25 season and

**beyond** (as at 1<sup>st</sup> August)

#### Put these dates in your diaries NOW

#### September 2024

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> first Tuesday rehearsal, Church on Fairford Leys (CFL), 7:30 – 9:30pm open rehearsal - prospective new members and interested others welcome Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> AGM (first half of the evening) & rehearsal (second half)

#### October 2024

Date to be finalised - you will be informed soon: "Come and Sing" event, all day on a Saturday

#### November 2024

Date to be finalised - you will be informed soon: Quiz Night, one Saturday evening.

#### December 2024

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, 2:00pm onwards, concert at 7:30pm

#### January 2025

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> rehearsals re-commence, CFL, 7:30 – 9:30pm Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> open rehearsal - prospective new members and interested others welcome

#### March 2025

Date to be finalised - you will be informed soon: Member's Entertainment Evening

#### April 2025

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: Mozart *Cornonation Mass*, 2:00pm onwards, concert at 7:30pm rehearsals re-commence, CFL, 7:30 – 9:30pm

#### May 2025

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> open rehearsal - prospective new members and interested others welcome

Aylesbury Choral Society In Tune 2024

June 2025

Saturday 21st Concert at St Mary's, programme tbc, 2:00pm onwards, concert at 7:30pm

September 2025

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> first Tuesday rehearsal, CFL, 7:30 – 9:30pm

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> open rehearsal - prospective new members and interested others welcome

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> AGM (first half of the evening) & rehearsal (second half)

December 2025

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: Bruckner: *Mass in E* 

minor, Tippet Spirituals, etc., 2:00pm

onwards, concert at 7:30pm

March 2026

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: Fauré & Duruflé

Requiems

June 2026

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: programme tbc

November 2026

Saturday 28th Concert at St Mary's: Bach B minor Mass OR Mendelssohn Elijah, still tbc

March 2027

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Concert at St Mary's: Mozart Requiem

#### Summary of the programme of music coming up.....

**Autumn '24** Rossini: *Petite Messe Solennelle* (with piano and harmonium)

Spring '25 Mozart: Coronation Mass, Marianna Martines: Quarta Messa (with orchestra)

**Summer '25** programme tbc but possibly to include songs from Musical Theatre

**Autumn '25** Bruckner: *Mass in e minor*, Tippett: *Spirituals from A Child of our Time* (with organ)

**Spring '26** Fauré and Duruflé: Requiem (with orchestra) - tbc

**Summer '26** programme tbc

Autumn '26 Bach's Mass in b minor OR Mendelssohn: Elijah (with orchestra) - tbc

**Spring '27** Mozart: Requiem (with orchestra)

# A Poem.... (courtesy of Sue Oswell)

#### The Alto's Lament

It's tough being an alto when you're singing in the choir, The sopranos get the twiddly bits that people all admire, The basses boom like big trombones, the tenors shout with glee, But the alto part is on two notes – or, if you're lucky, three.

And when we sing an anthem and lift our hearts in praises
The men get all the juicy bits and telling little phrases.
Of course the trebles sing the tune – they always come off best,
Whole the altos only get three notes, and twenty-two bars rest.

It does not matter what we sing, from hymn book or from psalter,
The Choir Master looks at us – our voices start to falter,
Too high, too low, too fast, too slow – you held that note too long –
It doesn't matter what we do, it's certain to be wrong!

Oh shed a tear of altos! They're the Marthas, and they know In ranks of choral singers they're considered very low. They are so very humble that a lot of folk forget them. How they'd love to be sopranos, but their vocal cords won't let them.

And when the final trumpet sounds and we area wafted higher, Sopranos, tenors, basses will be in the Heavenly Choir.

While they sing 'Alleluia! to celestial flats and sharps
The altos will sit in the corner, polishing up their harps!



'Magnificat'

#### The Good News and The Bad News

As mentioned in the Editorial at the head of this 'In Tune', the committee has agreed to raise the subscriptions for the 2024-25 season and, in the process, have granted both Jeff and Colin a raise in their payments as well. The subs for this coming year will be as follows:

 Autumn Term
 £90.00

 Spring Term
 £90.00

 Autumn & Spring Terms together
 £165.00

 Summer Term
 £60.00

<u>The Whole year</u> <u>£225.00 - this is the preferred option, please</u>

Under 25 years of age £45.00 for each of the Autumn/Spring terms; £30 summer Full time students £22.50 for each of the Autumn/Spring terms; £15 summer

We rehearse for around 34 weeks of the year. These subs represent just £6.62 per week for the full 34 weeks. This is incredibly cheap compared with, for example, evening classes.

We do not wish for any member to be troubled by financial matters if it promises to prevent them from being able to enjoy singing. Please speak in confidence to Chris or Moira if this is the case and we will be as flexible as we can.

We are recommending for this coming Autumn Term that you pay your subs <u>after</u> 17th September (the AGM) as we wish to bring to the members' attention and discussion a plan which subsists with at least one other local

Ayleşbury Choral Society In Tune 2021

choir where the subs will be higher than those quoted above but where each member will have one 'free' ticket for each concert to give to whomever they choose. This will guarantee at least 50-60 ticket 'sales' for each concert before we start the official ticket selling period. This will make the 'base-rate' subs £108 for each of the Autumn and Spring terms, and the other figures above adjusted accordingly. Do feel free to pay your subs as soon as you wish but, if the agreement of the AGM is that we include the ticket 'idea', an extra amount will become owing in due course. Please think about this suggestion and be prepared to vote one way or the other at the AGM.

Ticket prices for concerts are also increasing from the current £16 (£6 for under 18s) to £18 and £7. This is in line with a selection of other local choral societies. Prices on the door will be £20 and £8.

Season tickets for all three concerts of the 2024-25 season will be offered at the reduced rate of £50 for adults (c.£17 per concert) and £20 for under 18s. Additional benefits for season ticket holders include a free programme for each concert and a termly newsletter. Please consider getting your loved ones a season ticket - a great advanced Christmas present!

Tickets for our Christmas Concert are available online now - go to our website - and will be available 'hardcopy' from our first rehearsal on 3rd September.



# **AGM Notice**

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Tuesday 17th September, 2024 at The Church on Fairford Leys at 7.30 pm. The agenda for the meeting will be forwarded by email and will be posted on the website in due course.

The first rehearsal of the New Season takes place on

# Tuesday 3rd September @ 7:30pm at The Church on Fairford Leys

# And Finally...

Thanks to all the newsletter contributors and to those involved in its distribution. As ever, comments on this newsletter gratefully received – good or bad! For the most up-to-date information on the Society, be sure to visit <a href="https://www.aylesburychoral.org.uk">www.aylesburychoral.org.uk</a>

Answer to Mary Oliver's anagram quiz:

- 1. Benjamin Britten
- 2. Magnificat
- 3. Joseph Haydn
- 4. Christmas Oratorio
- 5. Morten Lauridsen
- 6. Cole Porter
- 7. Sing Joyfully
- 8. Orlando Gibbons
- 9. Over the Rainbow