

Voice of the Valley celebrating 100 years

Chris Pilgrim writes about our 100th birthday



Our centenary celebrations took place at a venue - sorry - 'The Venue', a conversion of part of Bower's Mill (an old textiles mill just outside Halifax) into a space for events.

After tea and coffee in a curtained-off area of the main hall, in which the evening event would be held, we moved into our rehearsal room for our first of three sessions.

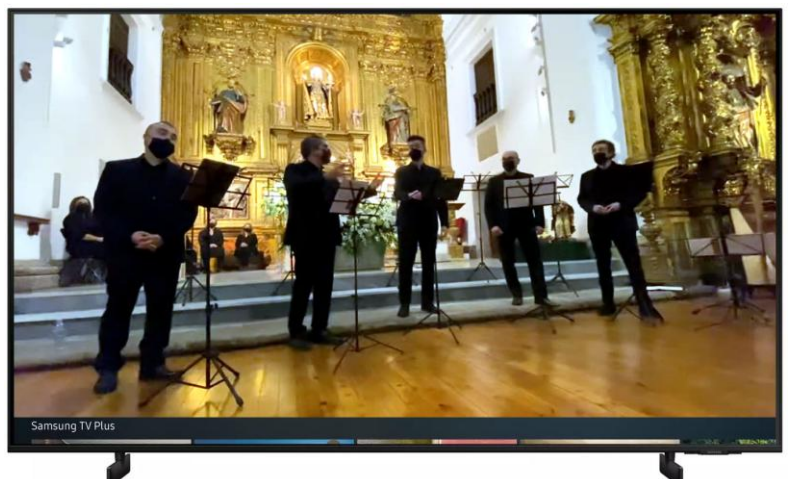
For this session, we split up and the tenors went with Chris to another room while the Basses and Baritones stayed with Thom in order to make a start on our 3 new pieces.

The first of these was 'Ave, Maris Stella' (meaning, 'Hail, Star of the Sea') a hymn dating to at least the middle ages, with authorship attributed to a number of people from the 6th to 12th centuries.

*It has been arranged by many composers since then, including Byrd, Grieg, Liszt, and even the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. It was also adopted by settlers to Acadia, a colony in modern-day Canada, and it is from this tradition that our arrangement, by Canadian composer **Diane Loomer**, is drawn.*

Readers can get a taste of how this piece will sound, when the Choir has got it rehearsed, by clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZly2nX9ivo>

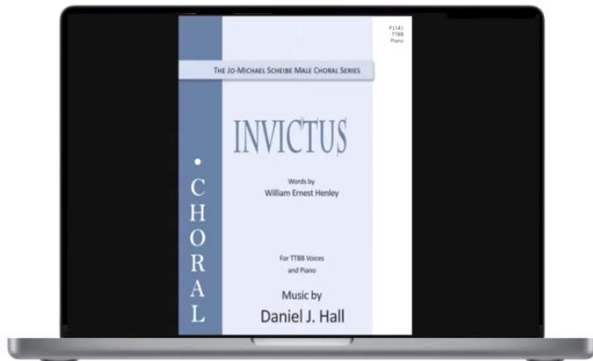


Next was *'Invictus'*, a setting by **Daniel J. Hall** of the poem by **William Ernest Henley**. Meaning 'Unconquerable', it was written in 1875 while Henley was recuperating from multiple surgeries to save his right leg from amputation, having already had his left amputated at the age of 16, due to tuberculosis. It is an evocation of defiance and fortitude in the face of adversity.

VotV reckons it will be a very dramatic, uplifting addition to our repertoire in the coming months.

There's an OK version of this piece on this link.

<https://youtu.be/dv1Qij7iMVI>



*"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

Finally came *'I Dreamed of Rain'*, by American songwriter **Jan Garrett** and arranged for choir by Canadian composer **Larry Nickel**.

Written in 2002, wild fires were raging across America. Garrett was troubled by the political situation, with the US on the verge of the Iraq invasion; she felt "as if the whole world was on fire" literally and metaphorically.

In the midst of this, she began to dream of rain and wrote this piece about that. Jan Garrett is a **'Wilderness Vision Quester'** who "claims the natural world as her birthright" - which is nice.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muTABuD0ngA>

Voice Coach Session

After a brief coffee break, we then commenced our second session with vocal coach **Joyce Tinsley**. To start, to give her an idea of our sound, we gave her a rendition of '**Away from the Roll of the Sea**'.

One thing she put emphasis on was trying to keep all our vowels consistent across the choir. To this end, she got us to try singing 'O' sounds in a slightly different way, with the mouth in a much narrower "kissy face" configuration. This can be achieved by forming your mouth as though you've got a large straw, or perhaps a biro, in your mouth but then opening up wider (taller).



She also told us about oblique, side muscles, which are not used much, in order to protect the spine, but which are important in support when singing and showed us an exercise to help strengthen them.

On the subject of vibrato in a choir setting, she suggested that none should be added, beyond the natural vibrato we all have; though, I suppose, the alternate suggestion that "a sufficient abundance would be satisfactory" is not necessarily contradicted by that. She also suggested that those with older voices should be actively using it six days a week in order to maintain it. She then informed us, I'm sure to the horror of many, that a voice was considered to be an 'older voice' by the ripe age of 35!

At the end of this session, we broke for lunch, for which a buffet had been set out with sandwiches (Ham, Beef, and Cheese), fidget pies, scotch eggs, a selection of cakes and scones with clotted cream and jam.

After lunch we started our third and final session with Thom. For this session, we went over our three new pieces, this time the whole choir together, while trying to put into practice all that we'd learnt with Joyce. By the end of this session we had done a run through of each of our pieces, ending a very productive and enjoyable day.



Celebration Dinner

Of course, this was not the end of the day's festivities, and mere hours later we were returning for our evening event: a black tie dinner. As we arrived, red carpet laid out for us, we were greeted with music from a marimba duo, who entertained us as we assembled and waited to be seated.

When finally **Raymond Ellis**, our master of ceremonies, struck his gong and announced we were ready to be seated, a curtain was pulled back and a jazz trio struck up to entertain us; our starters: a choice of carrot and coriander soup or smoked salmon with celeriac roulade.

This is baritone, Andrew Ripper with Amy, looking fabulous, arriving at 'The Venue'.

And this is baritone, Kieran Chadha, with Chris Pulleyn, both looking equally fabulous.



And looking happy to be there is bass, David Clarke with partner, Christine, chatting with Noel's sister and fellow guests before food is served.



After this, we were entertained by a baritone and soprano from **Opera North** (accompanied by our own Chris Pulleyn) who regaled us with songs from opera and musicals, including the Toreador song from Carmen, in which we raucously joined (many of us had had varying amounts of the complimentary bottles of wine assigned to our tables). Sometime during this, we were served our mains, either chicken with a tomato haricot bean cassoulet or a celeriac and mushroom wellington.

Then came dessert, either lemon tart or lemon posset, followed by speeches. First up, chairman **Joe Stones**, who talked about our illustrious past hundred years, and also looked to the future and what we need to do to ensure a similar celebration taking place at our bicentenary in another hundred years. When he was done, **Thom** got up to “waffle a bit longer” (his words, not mine) about what the choir means to so many people and, in his 33 years as conductor, to him personally.



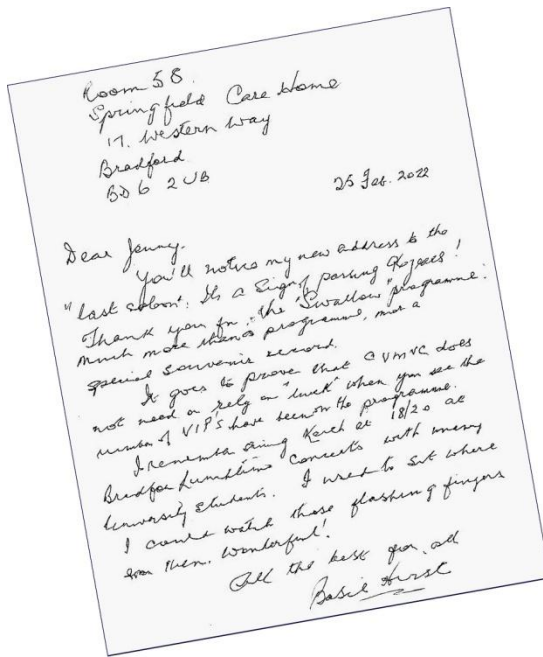
At this point, the singers started their second set, finishing with our oft sung arrangement of ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’, in which all joined. After this, the jazz trio got back up to play us out, ending a fantastic celebration of a wonderful hundred years.



The full set (over 100) of these fine event photographs by Connor Lennon can be downloaded on this link (<https://we.tl/t-4NuELTvzxR>). This will cease to work after a few days so readers should then email the Editor (cvmvc_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk) who will happily send you a personal copy.

VotV offers a big thank you to Connor and Chris Pilgrim for recording this wonderful event.

Basil gets in touch



Retired second tenor stalwart **Basil Hirst** has been in touch. He tells Secretary Jenny, he's just moved into a care home in Bradford and wants us to know his new address.

He says he was glad to get the souvenir programme produced for the concert to mark Keith Swallow's retirement and recalls seeing Keith at Bradford lunchtime concerts seventy odd years ago. "I used to sit where I could watch those flashing fingers - wonderful"

Trevor Bowers tells *VotV* he dropped by the Springfield Care Home the other day to visit - says Basil is as bright as a button and in good spirits.



Basil has just turned 96, which seems appropriate in this Jubilee Year - the Queen is 96, too.

A busy summer ahead

Monday 27 June

'Colne Valley Lions' charity concert – annual evening event in Slaithwaite

Sunday 3 July

Afternoon concert with Noel Clarke at Holmfirth Parish Church

HOLMFIRTH PARISH CHURCH
PRESENTS
COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR

Summer Song



MUSICAL DIRECTOR
Thom Meredith

ACCOMPANIST
Chris Pulleyn

Holmfirth Parish Church
Sunday 3rd July 2022
2:30pm

Tickets £10
Available on the door
or contact Kay Booth on 07803 627979

Sunday 17 July

Joint concert with **Marsden Silver Prize Band**

at Marsden's S^t. Bartholomew's (tbc)

Saturday 20 August

Concert at **Scarborough Music Festival**

in Queen Street Methodist Church - for the first time in three years



Saturday 1 October

- details to be announced - **Special Evening Concert at Huddersfield Town Hall**

Sunday 16 October

Afternoon concert with Slaithwaite Band

at St James's Church (tbc)

then

Sunday 11 December

Christmas concert at Huddersfield Town Hall

with guests Brighouse & Rastrick Band

Saturday 17 December

Christmas concert: guests again of **Marsden Silver Prize Band**

at Marsden Church (tbc)

David Morrison's 'Rudiments of Music'

Leader of the second tenors, David Morrison lent our Editor a tea towel with some music theory jokes on it that had tickled him and partner, Judith.



Unable to scan the tea towel, VotV has dug up a few gags David might approve of

What musical keys do cows sing in? Beef flat

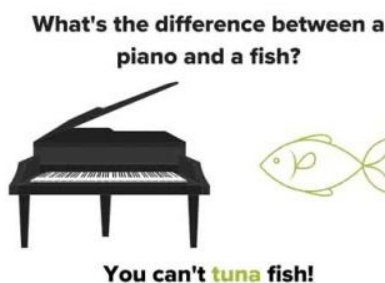
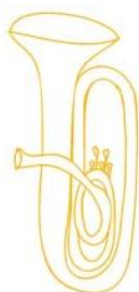
Someone scratched the music teacher's car. Fortunately, the damage seems to B minor.

Middle C, E flat, and G walk into a bar. "Sorry," the bartender says. "We don't serve minors."

What do you get when you drop a piano on an army base? A Flat Major

Schoenberg walks into a bar. "I'll have a gin please, but no tonic."

How do you fix
a broken tuba?
With a tuba glue.



And remember VotV always welcomes reader contributions.



colnevalleymvc.org.uk

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