

## MUSIC IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

Who would have believed that the whole world would be so disrupted by the impact of Covid 19? The past two years have been unprecedented for the Phil and we have had to be inventive with continuing to give members opportunities to play and sing together and with our programming and use of venues. During the 2021/22 season we managed to put on six concerts and had to cancel one at the last minute, so we actually offered more to audiences than in a conventional season and allowed our members to perform as much as possible. Covid made us think creatively about the programmes to avoid crowding on stage and, especially for the Choir, it was exciting to perform works and settings of works which we would not have done in a normal season. We were also fortunate to be able to use the Arena at the Norfolk Show Ground for two of the orchestral concerts. There are reports later in this newsletter about the performances and overall, it has been exciting to participate in live music making and to hear live performances. Matt and David have been marvellous in keeping up morale and encouraging high standards despite absences caused by Covid and a few members not feeling comfortable participating, for understandable reasons. Members of the Society have put in a lot of time to ensure that rehearsals and concerts run smoothly and we are very fortunate to have such a capable team.

With the AGM coming up in June, we have some vacancies on the Committee – currently for a choral rep, orchestral rep, two public reps and a publicity officer. If you are interested in putting your name forward or want to know more about what is involved, please contact any of the existing Committee members. The Phil is a charity and members of the Committee are trustees of the charity. The Committee generally meets five times per year and has currently decided to continue meetings via Zoom as this has proved to be effective and convenient.

I have been Chair of Norwich Phil since 2005 and have thoroughly enjoyed the role and working with many tremendous Committee members and others as well as our peerless conductors. Catrina Nixon, our Vice Chair has served for the past three years.

Paying careful attention to the requirements of our Constitution, the Committee has discussed the situation and proposes the re-election of Catrina and myself to our current positions. If members are happy to support this proposal, we would be delighted to continue to serve for another three year term, if there are any other proposals, please put them forwards. We do need to look to the future and would welcome any indication of interest in preparing to take on these important roles for the Phil in subsequent years.

Caroline Dixey



Matt Andrews and Caroline Furniss will be back to host the Phil's Annual Quiz on

**Friday, 27th January 2023**

Put the date in your diaries, prepare by second-guessing what the rounds will be about and doing the appropriate research, and working out what high-end cuisine you are going to bring by way of snacks. Will this be the year the Orchestra Team storm through to regain the Challenge Cup???

*Online*

Date for your diaries:

**AGM**

The Phil's Annual General Meeting will be held on  
**Tuesday, 28th June, 2022**  
at 7.30pm, via Zoom

Watch out for the agenda and papers which will be circulated at the end of May. This is your opportunity to approve the Financial Report and Accounts, to elect Committee Members, to raise any issues and to look forward to next season.

## Programme for the 2022-23 Season

5 November 2022

Dani Howard **Argentum**  
Vaughan Williams **In the Fen Country**  
Orff **Carmina Burana**

10 December 2022

**The Paris Connection**  
Franck **Symphony in D Minor**  
Poulenc **Piano Concerto**  
Stravinsky **Firebird Suite (1919)**  
*Piano soloist - Mark Bebbington*

20 December 2022

Family Christmas Concert

11 February 2023

Prokofiev **Pushkin Waltzes**  
Martin **Symphonie Concertante**  
Rachmaninov **Symphony No 2**

25 March 2023

Mendelssohn **Elijah**

We have a wonderful programme of music lined up for next season but probably the single most exciting thing is the fact that the Orchestra and Choir will be performing together again at long last - for the first time since December 2019 to be exact! And we will be doing it in style in our opening concert with that most thrilling of choral and orchestral works, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* on 5 November. It's always a huge hit with audiences but it's great fun to perform too.

In the same concert the Orchestra open the programme with a wonderful piece by the exciting young British composer Dani Howard, her effervescent



*Dani Howard,  
composer of Argentum*

*Argentum*, followed by a tribute to Vaughan Williams in his 150th anniversary, *In the Fen Country*.

For our December concert, it's a visit to Paris and a programme of works all with connections to that city in the 19th and early 20th century. On the exact date of his 200th anniversary we perform Cesar Franck's magnificent *Symphony in D Minor* and then we slip into the 20th century for Poulenc's *Piano Concerto* with soloist Mark Bebbington, who has recently recorded the work to great acclaim with the RPO on Resonus. Stravinsky wrote his first great ballet score, *The Firebird*, for the 1910 Paris season of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company and the Orchestra perform the Suite from the ballet in Stravinsky's 1919 version.

The Phil's Family Christmas will feature both Choir and Orchestra and then in February the Orchestra play Rachmaninov's rhapsodic *Second Symphony*, full of soaring melodies, lush harmonies and deep emotion. It is paired with two rarities – the *Symphonie Concertante* by Swiss composer Frank Martin and the *Pushkin Waltzes* by Prokofiev, originally from his ballet score for Romeo and Juliet.

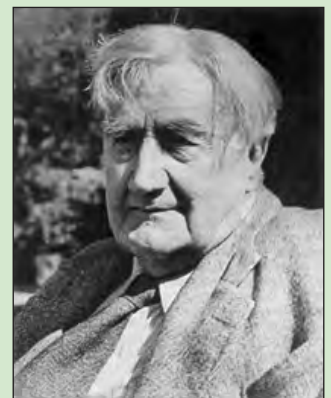
For the season finale, the chorus are looking forward to singing Mendelssohn's ever-popular oratorio, *Elijah*. With the Orchestra accompanying, it again brings together the two wings of the Norwich Phil, finally, we hope, putting the horrors of Covid behind us!

Catrina Nixon

## Celebrating Vaughan Williams

In 2022, music lovers across the world are celebrating the 150th birthday of composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). The Norwich Phil Choir are making their own contribution with a performance of his **Five Tudor Portraits** as part of this year's Norfolk & Norwich Festival. Set to words by one-time tutor to Henry VIII, John Skelton from Diss, Vaughan Williams' lively music captures the mischief and rhythm of Skelton's poetry. The Choir join forces with the Britten Sinfonia for the performance, and the concert also includes Vaughan Williams' *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* and Mozart's *Divertimento in D major K136*. The concert is on **Sunday 29th May**, and there will be a **pre-show talk about the Five Tudor Portraits** led by James Hardie of the Festival. Tickets from the N&N Festival.

We continue to mark this notable anniversary in the opening concert of the new Phil season on 5th November when the Orchestra perform one of Vaughan Williams' earliest and rarely heard works, the 'symphonic impression', *In the Fen Country*. Inspired by the wide and often bleak landscapes of West Norfolk and Cambridgeshire it has something of a local connection for us and yet it has never before been performed by the Phil. It's a beautiful, haunting piece which one writer describes as "combining magical transcendence with a moving expression of human fragility."



*Ralph Vaughan Williams*



## Liz Marjoram to retire

So that we have good time to find a replacement, Liz Marjoram has announced that she plans to retire as leader of the Norwich Phil Orchestra at the end of next season. Thank you for everything Liz, you are actually irreplaceable, but we will try!

## Special message from soloist Zoë Beyers

And talking of strings, **Zoë Beyers**, our fabulous soloist for the **Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto** back in December, sent us a lovely message about the concert. We'd passed on positive comments from Orchestra and audience to her. She doesn't often reply to emails, so this was a particular pleasure:

*I can honestly say it was the most enjoyable concert I've done in ages! The Orchestra was so sensitive and*

*supportive, and it was a real treat to play the Tchaikovsky with you. I think the Phil is going from strength to strength. I felt there was a lovely 'buzz' - good energy both in the band and in the audience. I always love coming to play with the Phil, and thank you for your very kind and supportive words.*



## Martin Roscoe to return

It was three years ago that concert pianist Martin Roscoe delighted us with his performance of Gershwin's *Piano Concerto*. We thought he was so good that we've asked him back. He will be playing **Dohnányi's Variations on a Nursery Tune** with us in .... December 2023! You have to book soloists well in advance these days!



Martin Roscoe

## High Praise for Arnold Symphony

It was with great pleasure that we welcomed Katherine Arnold, daughter of **Sir Malcolm Arnold**, to our orchestral concert back in December. She and her husband had particularly wanted to come and hear our performance of her father's *Symphony No. 5*. Afterwards, they stayed to meet with conductor Matt Andrews, and later her husband wrote to express their appreciation:

"I thought The Norfolk Philharmonic's performance showed such understanding of the piece, from the heartrending 2nd movement, through to the amazing climax of the 4th movement followed by the question mark raised by the last few bars. Amazingly, I have been to six live performances of the 5th Symphony in the last twelve months - all have been different, which is the joy of live performance, but none have been better."



Christopher Austin with Matt Andrews and Katherine Arnold

Composer/Conductor Christopher Austin also wrote a very favourable review in the Malcolm Arnold Society's newsletter:

"The impact of the Norwich Philharmonic's Arnold Symphony No.5 was unforgettable: a performance of unwavering commitment which vividly projected Arnold's disturbing, complex vision. There were moments that clearly tested the orchestra – the angular melodic writing for the cellos in the first movement, for example – but this didn't matter in the slightest. Hugo Cole once remarked that Arnold's music is constructed like a Land Rover – able to cross the roughest of performing terrains successfully – but the fact that Arnold's music sounds well in pretty much any circumstances is not just due to the technical astuteness of the writing but the strength and directness of his ideas and their presentation.

The Norwich Philharmonic performance made the four movements of the Symphony cohere as part of a single drama. The loving cliché of the slow movement's big tune was played by the strings with real dignity and tonal warmth, and the journey into nightmare and back was handled superbly. The scherzo's savagery was well served, and the finale's manic conflation of ideas which run throughout the symphony was handled in such a way that the return of the second movement big tune instantly transcended the undeniable Hollywood tropes of its arrival and presentation. The subsequent, precipitate collapse into E minor was devastating."

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## A Choral perspective

As the Chorus gathered together in September, there were many emotions running throughout the gathering. It was great to meet to sing together again after nearly two years silence: but would our voices cope with the return to exercise, and would we all be able to read, think, and create the right notes as our Maestro directed us? On top of all that, we were marshalled into the Walter Roy Theatre under Covid rules: wear a mask when moving about (but not when singing), wear extra clothing because doors and windows were being kept open to help fresh air circulate, and sit spaced well apart – something we basses always do anyway! So, there was a level of anxiety associated with the early rehearsals, and although the seating arrangements (supervised brilliantly by Sally and members of the Committee) suggested a good turnout, it did seem that some of our regular members had decided it was too soon to return to singing.

However, the promise of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* did nevertheless provide a sense of cheer once we got going. Maestro Dunnett quickly pointed out that this piece was neither "petite" nor particularly "solennelle", and Covid concerns quickly faded into the background as we stuck to the task of learning the notes. One reason for choosing the Rossini was that it had originally been composed to be accompanied by two pianos and harmonium (played by the redoubtable Tim Patient working both hands and feet to keep the machine pumped with enough air!), which would allow the chorus to be more "spaced out" in the St Andrew's Hall. This proved popular with the chorus and, despite it appearing as though the pianists were underprepared in the dress rehearsal, it was alright on the night – well, except for the tenor soloist having half of one of his arias being cut short by a pianist who had had two pages turned over at once by his wife! But we were all smiles at the end and a good audience had clearly enjoyed their experience.

The promise of a Christmas Concert suggested that we were almost back to normal, and much fun was had rehearsing the traditional mixed fare for this event, but it was decided at the eleventh hour to cancel the concert; too many members of the audience were withdrawing because of Covid, and it seemed unlikely that the Chorus would be in full attendance. At least we can look forward

to revisiting the Maestro's great arrangements next year – we already know what to expect!

Despite Covid still hanging over us in January, the Committee decided to go ahead with the Annual Quiz night. Table numbers were reduced and 'fish&chips' were off the menu to comply with Covid restrictions, and Caroline Furniss was able to supervise the whole event superbly, despite the absence of her partner-in-crime, Matt Andrews. And yes, the Chorus Table were able to retain their trophy over the Orchestra, allowing Alex Atherton to hide the Trophy again in her airing cupboard again!

The highlight of the year was of course the Duke Ellington's "Best of the Sacred Concerts". To those of us who had never performed this before, it did sound a bit strange, but not difficult to learn. And although DD kept on telling us how "great this bit is as the band go wild at this point!"), I for one found it impossible to overcome a certain scepticism about the choice of work, until the arrival of the "Echoes of Ellington Jazz Orchestra" on the Saturday afternoon. This time the Chorus were mentally "spaced out" by the quality and excitement generated by the band in particular, and I am

sure that I was not alone in wanting to sit amongst the audience to get the whole effect. It was an unforgettable event for all sorts of reasons: a good audience turned up, many not knowing what to expect, but in the end they leapt to their feet, demanding the encore Pete Long, the band's conductor, had predicted; ten minutes of tap dance solo (Bradley Wray), as well as the vocal soloists Louise Marshall, Mary Carewe and Cleveland Watkiss, were all excellent, but it was the passion and outstanding quality of the Band itself that made the event truly unforgettable - Oh, and the fact that 47 out of the 81 members of the Chorus who got Covid after the concert!

We are now in the midst of rehearsals for our performance of Vaughan Williams' *Five Tudor Portraits* with the Britten Sinfonia at the N&N Festival at the end of May. There are many reasons for singing this – RVW 150th anniversary, it was originally commissioned for the N&N Festival in 1936, and it uses text written by a Norfolk Cleric about some Norfolk folk – I am sure it will be fun, but one can see why it is not performed too often! I suspect the audience will love it, but not as much as they loved the Ellington!

Paul Henderson



## The Quiz returns from the Ether!

Following 2021's online quiz fundraiser, this year saw a return to the real thing. At the last minute Co-Quizmaster Matt Andrews could not attend for covid reasons, but Caroline Furniss bravely went it alone, and the Quiz was as much a success as ever. No fish and chips this year, but hopefully they will be back to sustain us through future quizzes. Well done to the Choir Team, winners of the Challenge Cup. A good time was had by all.



Challenge Cup winners: Steph, Helen, Paul, Roger, Paul, Alex and John (taking the photo)



Caroline Furniss tots up the scores

## Long Service Awards

This year we presented Long Service Awards to David and Nicky Dunnett for their amazing work over 25 Years. Colin Pordham, who has been with the Choir for 29 years was also awarded his Long Service Award in 2020.



Nicky and David Dunnett are presented with their Long Service Awards by Caroline Dixey

## Dominic Hopkins



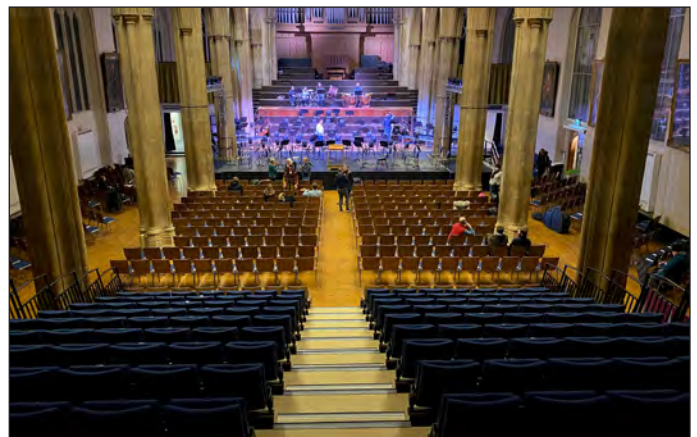
It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Dominic Hopkins in January this year.

Dom had been involved with numerous musical activities in Norwich for most of his life, had been a member of the Norwich Phil from 2006 to 2016 and leader of the Orchestra for most of that time. He was much loved and respected by the whole Orchestra, who dedicated the February concert this year to his memory. Thank you Dominic, for all your talent and enthusiasm over the years. You will always be remembered with the greatest affection.

## Big improvements at The Halls

We have been delighted to see some new improvements at The Halls over recent months. These include new audience seats in the stalls, new retractable seating for the West Gallery and new stage lighting rigs as well as new orchestra chairs and a new conductor's podium. We have recently heard that the City Council has received a large grant through the government's Towns Fund and part of this will be invested in further improvements to the Halls.

We do not know yet what exactly this will comprise but we are hopeful it will improve the experience of concert going at the Halls for both performers and audiences alike. Watch this space!





## Farewells

It's always sad when singers and players decided to retire from the Phil. Great friendships formed, great music played. Here are some of the people we said goodbye to this year:



Victoria Aylton (far left), at her last concert in November. This season we also said goodbye to other Choir members Anne and Robin Friend, Sarah Norman, Gwen Stewart, Margaret Halls and Phil Tuckwood.

Our long serving tuba player (and keen steam engine buff) **Andy Murray** first played in the Phil in 1972 for a couple of years before he went off to music college. He rejoined the Orchestra when he came back to Norfolk in



Andy Murray

1986 to become a peripatetic brass teacher with Norfolk Music Service and he has stayed with the Orchestra ever since!

Percussionist with the Phil for 50 years!! **Andrew Ansell** has finally hung up his cymbals and retired. He was presented with one of Rob Barnes' linocuts in appreciation of his sterling contribution to the percussion section,



Stephen Cox

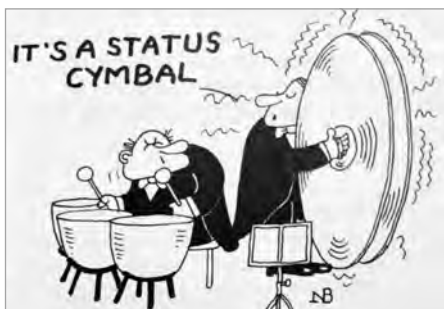
Horn player **Stephen Cox** has been a stalwart of the Phil horn section for 30 years, latterly as 4th horn. Recently retired from the UEA where he was a professor of Computing Science, Stephen is also a keen pianist and particularly enjoys accompanying singers – including a long-standing

role as accompanist for the Bramrocks' annual Christmas Panto in Rockland St Mary!

and a Certificate of (very) Long Service. In fact we believe only ex-leader Colin Clouting may have been with the Phil for slightly longer (unconfirmed).



We are hugely grateful to Andrew, Andy and Stephen for their long service to the Orchestra and they will all be much missed. Although it won't be with the Phil, we hope music making will continue to bring you much pleasure and enjoyment.



## Subscriptions



Having held subscriptions at the same price for the last 2 years, the Committee has decided that it is now time for a small increase of £6 to **£75 pa** to reflect the increased costs incurred to put on concerts. We hope you will agree that this is still excellent value for money.



# Memories of an Unusual Season

With Covid19 still very much around, the 2021-22 Season was not our typical offering by any stretch of the imagination.

Social distancing was something the Phil took very seriously, from our orchestral rehearsals and mini performances at the Showground last summer, through the separate orchestral and choral concerts in October, November and December to the cancelled Christmas concert, and then again separate Choir and Orchestra offerings in February, March and April. The pictures below should stir some memories:



*Rehearsal for Malcolm Arnold Symphony No.5, 29 June 2021 - serious social-distancing!*



*'Concert performance' of Liszt Piano concerto No 1 with Alexander Ullman at the Norfolk Showground on 27th July 2021*



*Popular classics concert at the Showground on 23rd October...*



*The Choir keeping their distance in Rossini's 'Petit Messe Solennelle'*



*...with added 'cannons' for the 1812 Overture*



*Arnold, Walton, Delius and Enigma Variations in December*





The Christmas Concert unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the surging Omicron variant



Back with Zoë Beyers, the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto and Shostakovich 9 in February



Duke Ellington Sacred Songs were a blast!



And the kids just adored our Family Concert, with Peter Wilson narrating Peter and the Wolf, and The Composer is Dead



Lilly (10) is learning the double bass

