

Chair's Report 2023

I am pleased to be able to reflect on another successful year for AFC, in my first stint as Chair of the Choir. My grateful thanks are especially due to Mike for leaving the Chair's position in such good order and for supporting me (i.e. telling me what I ought to be doing) throughout the year, I couldn't have wished for better guidance.

The world seems to have moved on from Covid at last, although there are still cases cropping up every now and then as a reminder of what we went through. We're fortunate in having had a very good health system to deal with that and hopefully we will have learnt much to help us deal with a future pandemic, should we be unlucky enough to have another in our lifetimes.

Musically, we have had a good year – fantastic performances of 'Messiah' and the two Requiems, with a carol concert and performance at Bullingdon Prison thrown in for good measure. The summer term is a nice contrast to the rest of the year. I am glad that we as a choir are able to perform such a wide variety of music rather than sticking to the 'old favourites', although this presents its own issues regarding attendance at concerts.

I will echo Nick's words here in emphasising the need to increase our numbers – not only to help ensure the survival of the choir in terms of subscriptions, but also to avoid the necessity of having to use 'bumpers' in the concerts. If you've had a chance to look at Lyn's Treasurer's report you will not have failed to notice that AFC would be in a much more precarious financial position were it not for some very generous donations over the last few years. Our concerts rarely make a profit, audience numbers and concert costs being what they are. I was especially disappointed with the audience numbers at the last concert in April; I thought we performed really well and it was a great shame there were relatively few people there to see it. This is the responsibility of all of us in the choir, we can't sit back and say 'other people will sell tickets' – it's down to each and every one of us to do our best in this regard.

To continue this point, we on the Committee are always ready to hear about any ideas for publicity, advertising, ticket sales etc; please don't feel that you need to be on the Committee to suggest ideas, we are all in this together in our desire to see AFC keep thriving.

We continue to be extremely fortunate in our Musical Director Nick and Accompanist Rowena, their expertise and talent is remarkable and we should all be very grateful that we have them on board. I can't imagine how the Duruflé might have gone under some previous Musical Directors I have known... I think their enthusiasm and belief in us is a massive boost to how we do perform and I would like to thank them hugely on behalf of the Choir for the work they do.

My thanks also go to everyone on the AFC Committee, they do a fantastic job behind the scenes keeping our collective show on the road. Many thanks also to Frankie for keeping our tea breaks supplied with the necessary comestibles!

I look forward to another successful and exciting musical year.

Kate Atherton