**MD Annual Report for Aylesbury Festival Choir 2022-2023**

This could well be a short ‘do it yourself’ report: start with “AFC were” and then insert many superlatives!

It’s been a fabulous season! Messiah was terrific fun and AFC showed just how agile they can be when they try. They also managed to conserve energy enough to get through such a long programme!

Carols were good but weren’t particularly well attended – personally I’d like us to do a more formal concert – coupled with some more ‘aggressive’ marketing for ticket sales & membership. Something to consider as we move forwards.

Taking a small group out into the community (Bullingdon Prison’s staff Remembrance Day Service) was a positive experience and I think we might have a regular annual ‘gig’ there.

Our (almost all) French programme was quite remarkable – totally different challenges to Messiah: complex and close harmonies, rhythmically taxing, huge dynamic range required plus sensitivity to changes of tempo. And that was just the 3rd movement of the Duruflé!!

AFC certainly rose to the challenge and, with Ben’s superb accompaniment, the concert, musically speaking, was a huge success. I don’t think I’ve ever been prouder to be AFC’s MD than after that concert.

Our summer programme is shaping up nicely with a very contrasting set of songs. This will also be a ‘tester’ stylistically speaking – early indications, however, are excellent.

Next season will bring new and exciting challenges: a very mixed bag of choral classics in the autumn and then a programme of music from 5 British composers (2 of whom are still alive and 1 of whom will be at the concert) in the spring of 2024. I have no doubt that AFC will tackle all these with their usual enthusiasm.

Please be ambassadors for AFC and spread the word – we DO need to increase our numbers. Another 10 members would bring increased subscriptions and bigger audiences. If those 10 included 2 more basses and 3 more altos, the balance of the choir would be better & we could probably save on importing ‘bumpers’.

My thanks to all the committee who continue to be incredibly supportive, to others who help behind the scenes to make AFC run smoothly, and to all of you for your continued enthusiasm! Here’s to another year of fabulous music making!

Nick Austin (May 2023)