

**Aylesbury Festival Choir
Musical Director's Report
2019-2020**

Until recently AFC continued to be the highlight of my music-making week; and we all know what brought that to a halt!

Speed of learning and attention to detail have been excellent throughout the year and the standard of singing still continues to rise.

Autumn 2019 saw us with a popular Choral Classics programme. This was an outstanding concert in every way: fabulous tuning in the two a cappella numbers (*God so loved the world & Locus iste*), stunning singing from our soprano soloist, Felicity and (the highlight, for me) a roof-raising finale in *Blest Pair of Sirens* with Ben in magnificent form on the organ. The Come & Sing *Hallelujah Chorus* had a fabulous response on the night, and I was also delighted with AFC's performance of my commission: *Gloria del Fuego*.

It was only a short hop from here to our Christmas Concert. It was (for a second time) quite an achievement putting it together in so little time. The combination of a good body of people who either know pieces, or can learn them very quickly, coupled with a real joy in making music in ANY form was very helpful! We had the friendly & skilled players from the Galliard Band again – if they carry on like this, they may even convert me! We also had St Mary's Brass for the first time. Talented, loud and fun would probably be them in a nutshell. The audience was down on the previous year but then we were battling some other events which we knew nothing about in advance. I'm sure, with careful marketing, we could make the event more self-sustaining, financially.

Then, in the New Year, we started work on our April Programme. Lollipops Galore! Progress here was terrific and much of what I thought I already knew about the choir was confirmed in an evening Workshop with Greg. He gave me some fresh pointers for the future which we started to put into place almost immediately. I have no doubt that this concert (with brilliant soloists & chamber orchestra) was going to be an absolute corker, and then...

As I write this I have absolutely no idea what the future holds & how long it will be before we can resume our music making. It's amazing just how much the population are relying on 'The Arts' to see them through this time. One hope I have is that those same people will fight for those arts in the future instead of allowing them to become something only for the wealthy & privileged.

Huge thanks, as always, to our very own Rowena. She continues to dazzle us with accompaniments that really aren't friendly to ordinary humans! Her support of me, as MD, and the choir during rehearsals & concerts is invaluable.

Lastly, my thanks to all the committee for the hard work that they all put in on our behalf. I hope Mike won't mind me saying this...but I know, for absolute certainty, that his meticulous way of working is one of the bedrocks of the society. His leadership of a dedicated team of volunteers is massively appreciated!

Here's to the future – whatever it holds!

Nick

April 29th 2020