

RSCM VOICES: MIDLANDS & SOUTH WEST

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27th July, 2011

Dear All,

Another year goes by – the end of my first full season as Voices director. Firstly, thank you all for a very enjoyable season, with some fine performances throughout the year. Greene and Howells in Tewkesbury and Philips in Malvern were particularly memorable, and I'm pleased to say that the Philips will be getting a future outing! Thank you to this year's bench of organists – Neil Fortin, Sean Tucker and David Thomas, and to Laurence Blyth, Andrew Kirk and Colin Davey for conducting.

Without doubt, the quality of sound in the choir has improved over the course of the year, and we are getting to a stage where we can all pay really close attention to small details in rehearsal. It is these details – vowel sounds, phrase shapes, voice placement etc, that make massive differences in the quality of performance, and mean that we can tackle a wide variety of music with conviction and panache. In order to ensure we can rehearse in such a manner, it is crucial that notes are learned well in advance of rehearsals. Many of you are very diligent in doing this, but still it seems that the quality of our performance only really hits the mark half way through the season, when all the sets of canticles and responses have been covered. So in order to enable us to hit the ground running this year, we are having a training day in Salisbury on 1st October. During this day we will work on the four sets of canticles, and two sets of responses for the year, as well as setting aside time for a vocal workshop to improve sound quality and flexibility. This day should really set us up well for the year, and full attendance is crucial if we are to make the most of it. Please let us know on the response form that you will be attending.

It is crucial to our work as an educational choir that we embrace a wide repertoire, and learn to perform it appropriately. Our anthems this year are diverse – early music by such composers as Lodovico Viadana and Samuel Scheidt, and music by living composers including Eric Whitacre and Jonathan Dove – as well as a few stalwarts of the Cathedral tradition. I hope you will want to come particularly to those events where there is music that you not already know – all these pieces are works that I have a particular passion for, and I can't wait to share it with you.

I'm particularly looking forward to the event on 28th January. We are inviting all those who have passed Voice for Life Awards in recent years to sing with us at a celebratory service in Bristol Cathedral. The event will recognise the achievements of the many young people who sing in parish churches in the region, and give us all a wonderful opportunity to rejoice in our musical gifts. It may even encourage a few new people to join the group.

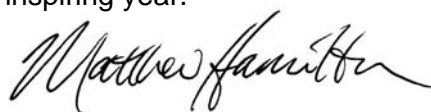
Speaking of which, we have welcomed a few new members this year, which is great news, but we are still the smallest of the Voices groups by quite some way and we have a way to go before we can be confident of fielding a well-balanced choir at each event. Do spread the word in your parishes and beyond!

The area covered by Voices MSW is a large one, and I recognise that many of you travel great distances to attend events that aren't really in your part of the region – thanks especially to the parents of younger members who go to great lengths to get them there. Do let us know if transport becomes a problem – there may be other people in the choir who can offer lifts etc.

Before I sign off, I must, as last year, give a huge vote of thanks to John and Janet Henderson for their tireless work in support of the choir. It quite literally would not happen without them. A small committee has emerged this year, which should enable the load to be spread. Thank you to those involved, and to those who write to John and I with ideas and feedback. The more people who spend time thinking about Voices activities and getting involved, the more we will be able to achieve, and the quicker we will be able to grow.

I look forward to an inspiring year.

Yours,



Administrative Matters

Existing members should return the signed *Application Form* and *Availability form* to Janet with subscription cheque by **26th Sept.**

New members hoping to join MSWV should **ONLY** send the application form (without cheque) to Janet. After successful audition we can complete the paperwork. Applications from new members can be received at any time through the year.

As last year we will be using two different sets of Evensong Responses. For each event we do show on the repertoire list which set of Responses is to be used, but there were several occasions last year when singers arrived with the wrong ones and it may be easier to bring both sets to every singing day.

Please use the editions of music specified. If you decide to use an alternative or a free CPDL download then it is your responsibility to make any necessary alterations to the notes and word underlay to make it compatible with the "official" edition. We wasted a lot of valuable rehearsal time last year trying to sort out discrepancies – you could have a busy lunch hour making all the changes!

When checking to see if you already have the music, do remember to look in the various anthologies. We usually have several repertoire items each year taken from the *Oxford Book of Tudor Anthems*, the *New Church Anthem Book* and *European Sacred Music* – this year there are four items from the latter alone and none of these are available separately. I have indicated on the music order form which CPDL editions are the same or very close. Many singers have invested in these books and many churches have copies to borrow.

Matthew mentioned in his letter the special recruiting day on Jan 28th in Bristol Cathedral. We are personally inviting every RSCM Bronze, Silver and Gold winner in our region for the last 5 years to this day for an *Award Winners Festival*. Hopefully a few may enjoy the experience and want to join us.

Thanks to Chris and Jan for acting as Deputy Administrators this year, they will also active at some singing days this year. Any Child Protections issues should be raised with Christopher Joseph and money queries go to Nancy McGiveron and our thanks go to both of these.

Best wishes for a musical year.

