



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2006

LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

My Dear Friends

As I am writing this letter the sun is shining and the birds are singing. It makes us all feel so much better, doesn't it?

I think the May Show "I did it my way" was another great success. A shame we didn't quite sell all the tickets. I feel confident that we will sell these tickets next year for the "Kentwood Showboat".

I can now relax a bit after a very busy run of events. The choir sang at the Courtyard Theatre at Hereford, the Corporate Games at Lydiard Park, Bingham Hall, Littlecote House for the Grenadier Guards, a Golden Wedding plus 2 Soprano and a Piano at the Arts Centre ALL in the month of June. All wonderful evenings.

We will also be busy singing at three marriage celebrations this summer. Congratulations are in order for Helen Fisher, Beverly Clayton Gale and Robert Harman.

The new CD entitled "A Collection for Christmas" is well underway and will be on sale at the Christmas Cracker on 3rd December.

Well, enjoy the summer and see you all soon.

Love

Sheila

CHOIR GIFT BUYS COMPUTERS

Burton Hall School was presented with a cheque for £1,000 from Kentwood Choir Director, Sheila Harrod, The money which will be used to buy computer equipment was handed to headteacher Harry Dicks as part of Friday's celebrations on the final day of term. Burton Hill is a non-maintained school for children with special educational needs because of their severe physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Most students, aged between eight and nineteen, are in wheelchairs. Fundraising coordinator, Sarah Davies, said the donation, which came from the choir's Christmas Cracker concert, would be a massive boost. It's a huge amount of money for us that would buy almost two touch screen monitors.



REVIEW OF THE MAY SHOW “I DID IT MY WAY”

(taken from the Swindon Advertiser)

“Now that was something else”. Those aren’t my words but those of my 18 year old daughter who accompanied me on this first night of the Kentwood Show Choir’s annual show at Swindon’s Wyvern Theatre. “I Did It My Way” was the title of this musical feast from Sheila Harrod and the guys, gals and kids of, in my opinion, one of this country’s premier show choirs. I didn’t think that after all these years I would be able to say that this was quite possibly the best I’ve seen of this choir; from what started out 40 odd years ago as a few girls learning to sing in Sheila’s dad’s lounge.

These singers pass all expectations. You can just sit back and know that you are not going to hear a bum note. The members of the choir, junior, senior and tiny ones too are amateurs. Most of the senior choir have families and day jobs and yet they can produce a show with such professionalism that most singers, young and older, performing solos or duets, could grace any West End stage. Indeed, this show had lighting by David Wicks that enhanced it to the point of that extra factor needed for West End status. Everything about it, from the simple but effective movement staged by Polly-Ann Tanner, the band with original superb arrangements, to the way the singers were dressed (not always the case in the past) smacked of getting it right. When you have so many shapes and sizes on stage it is so important to get the dress right. This time out it was really classy.

I couldn’t pick a favourite song of all. There was something for everyone. Each member of the enthralled audience would have had their own personal choice, whether it was one of the soft ballads, comedies, quartets, solos, duets or stirring choir numbers: whatever. When the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and there is no movement in the auditorium of any kind except rapturous applause at the end of every song then you know it’s special. Don’t just take my word for it, ask anyone who was there.

Sheila will never fail to amaze me with her undoubted talent and her ability to pass that on. Her motto is: “Music is a fair and glorious gift from God”. I couldn’t agree more. This show took hard work and devotion. Oh and just a bit of that old thing called talent too.

Ros Hollands

Here are some of the comments taken from the many letters and card received following the show

“What a way for us to complete a year as Mayor and Mayoress of Swindon by attending the Annual Concert of the Kentwood Show Choir at the Wyvern Theatre. As ever, the performance was stunning. In being so well entertained, one is apt to forget the huge investment in time and talent and all the (literally) behind the scenes activity that takes place. We would like to thank and congratulate you all not just on our own behalf but also for a very grateful people of Swindon.

Ray & Christine

.....We were treated to all the glitz and glamour of any West End show and star performances from start to finish. We are truly blessed in Swindon for the wealth of talent in the town and the jewel in the crown surely must be the Kentwood Show Choir and their musicians.

Betty Young

I have seen (with family and friends) all your shows at the Wyvern since the beginning. This last show must be one of the best. We gave you a standing ovation on Friday. Well done.....

Mrs D Hyde

I felt I must write to say how much I enjoyed the show. The mix of music was wonderful and the execution faultless - thank you very much for an excellent evening's entertainment. It was lovely to see the Junior Choir too and I was transported back to the years when Pollyanne was amongst that number. She is in her last term at Leeds College of Music and soon will be out into the world of music teaching and hopefully inspiring others as she was inspired by your teaching in the past.

Hilary Strange



FURTHER VENTURES

CHOIR TO SING IN OPERA

Twelve members of the Kentwood Junior Choir have been brushing up their Italian to sing in the Puccini opera La Boheme with the Opus 1 Music Limited at the Wyvern Theatre. David Heathcote, artistic director of the opera company said: "We are delighted to have the support of the young singers from Kentwood Junior Choir and hope they really enjoy the experience of performing with Opus 1. Those taking part from the choir were: Alice Dixon, Lucia Szczepanek, Katy Embling, Franky Wicks, Amanda Downes, Catherine Forty, Natasha Marvell, Helen Mack, Lauren Durrant, Georgia Pennock, Gemma Hayes and Sophie Goldsworthy. Sheila said: "It was the first time the youngsters had been involved with professional opera. They clearly enjoyed the experience although they found it challenging". Sheila was assisted by Rebecca Jankinson and Helen Dixon taught the youngsters Italian. Both are members of the Show Choir.

TWO SOPRANOS AND A PIANO

Sheila is nothing if not versatile and her latest foray into entertaining is a new show called "Two Sopranos And A Piano". The concert had Sheila, Gill May and Kathy Hobson having a little light-hearted romp through a pretty varied repertoire.

Kicking off with the powerful John Lennon's Imaging, the girls showed their incredible singing ranges and mastery of the keyboards. The mood changed instantly into a medley from West Side Story including 'I Feel Pretty', 'Something's Coming' and 'A Boy Like That'. A trip back to the westcoast sounds of the 1960s with 'California Dreamin' and then a real challenge as the singers performed operatic highlights 'Lakme' and 'Pearl Fishers' to end the first half. The second half had a rich harvest, including 'The King and I' and a piano solo from Sheila called 'Time To Say Goodbye'.

This concert was in aid of the Prospect Foundation and took place at the Arts Centre on 10 June which reportedly was the hottest night of the year. So very well done to Sheila, Gill and Kathy and many congratulations for a great evening.



AN EVENING AT LITTLECOTE HOUSE FOR THE GRENADIER GUARDS ANNUAL REUNION

What a night! I am talking about the concert at Littlecote House, Nr Hungerford. It was a glorious evening and luckily for us the coach was air conditioned. We arrived at Littlecote House where Sheila was waiting for us.

She informed us excitedly that the photographer was going to take some pictures in the grounds but we could have a quick drink first! Out in front of the house for our first shots then we had our buffet tea. It was very nice and lots of it. Alison, Penrose and I made a bee-line for the brie and cranberry sandwiches, very healthy!! Next we changed into our finery for the photo in the gardens. We had a short break before going through to the ballroom for the service. The hall was full of ex Grenadier Guards and their families and this was their Annual reunion. The vicar, who had served with the Grenadier Guards from 1954 to 1956, took us through a Remembrance Service with the Flag Bearers marching in to stand either side of a large screen which was showing a film slide of the war years. Next to march in were six Grenadiers from different regiments each giving their name, rank and number. A few of them would have had a "Harrod" glare and some movement lessons from Terri had they been in the choir! No really, I am only joking. It was all very moving and they were so proud. There was also a lone Chelsea Pensioner who marched in, apparently all the others had had to go back earlier but he had been given a late pass. The bagpipes were played as everyone marched out at the finish. After the service we had a break to make use of the benches to admire the grounds or just relax inside.

Next up our cabaret spot with Paul Maguire on piano, Steve Wilshire on bass and Ashley Pullen on percussion. We sang some upbeat numbers and also the Glenn Miller medley for the occasion. They loved us and the atmosphere was great and the reaction from everyone helped us cope with the heat (the air con system had broken down that morning). Only one person had heard us before and he was the gentleman who had booked us in the first place. How great for the choir, a few hundred new fans old and young.....ish. We finished the evening with a sing-a-long. I am sure the ladies won easily.

We were cheered off and people who we met in the corridor were saying how wonderful we were. It makes quite a difference when you have such a receptive audience. Back onto the lovely cool coach and we were home in no time.

Sue Allen



FUTURE CONCERTS

2006

6 August	Hilton Hotel - Macmillan Nurses. Gill Thornton (01367 252535)
1 September	St Bart's Church, Wootton Bassett. Stella Taylor (01793 852361)
15/16 September	Kentwood Juniors at the Arts Centre (01793 614837)
29 September	Shrivenham Memorial Hall. Elaine Ware (01793 783026)
4 October	Lawn Community Centre. Batchelor (01793 487698)
21 October	Melksham Assembly Hall. Simon White (01225 704428)
27 October	St Andrews Church, Chippenham. Basil Jones (01793 523949)
5 November	Remembrance Festival Wyvern Theatre (01793 524481)
22 November	Chippenham Arts Festival. Jane Clarke (01249 721171)
3 December	Christmas Cracker - Wyvern Theatre, Swindon (01793 524481)
16 December	Chepstow Male Choir. Dave Higgins (01291 689646)
21 December	Roves Farm (01793 763939)

2007 (For booking details see next Newsletter)

3 February	St Peter's Church, Penhill
23 February	Lechlade Memorial Hall
12 March	Haydon Centre
20 April	Malmesbury Abbey
27 April	Oliver Tomkins School
3 - 5 May	May Show - Wyvern Theatre
2 December	Christmas Cracker
15 December	Debenhams



**Editor: Mrs Yvonne Walker,
23 Bourton Avenue, Stratton St Margaret,
Swindon SN3 4LY.
Telephone: (01793)823849
e-mail: walker365@ntlworld.com**