

BEDFORD SCHOOL'S EAGLE CHOIR – A YEAR IN REVIEW

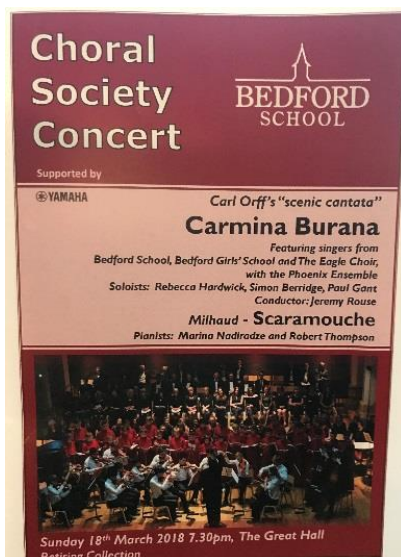
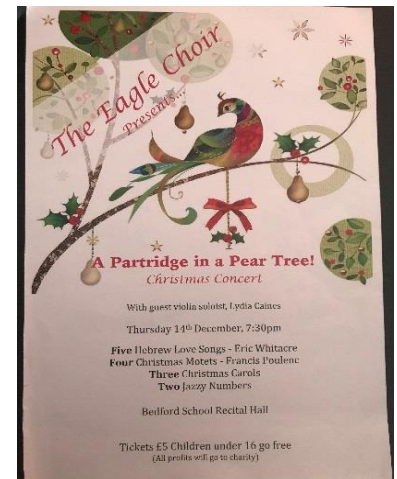
Who we are

Last year the Eagle choir celebrated its 20th anniversary! The choir was formed by Charles Martin in 1998, and, chiefly comprising parents, former parents, staff and friends of Bedford School, it has enjoyed singing and performing ever since. We have been led by several excellent choirmasters over the years and performed 100s of fantastic musical works. Many of the choir members have been singing with the choir for the whole 20 years. It is testament to those members, to the skills of the choirmasters and to the generous support of Bedford School who have provided a weekly rehearsal venue and other practical and financial assistance, that the choir has been in existence and been able to flourish for so many years.

We sing a wide range of choral music, from traditional and sacred music to lighter contemporary arrangements and jazz, so there is something for everyone. We perform large works with orchestra and we also perform concerts with a programme of shorter pieces where we sing *a Cappella* or with piano. The emphasis is on enjoyment, although performances are taken seriously and we do not shy away from ambitious works. We meet on a Thursday evening in the Recital Hall at Bedford School from 7.30pm to 8.45pm where we always enjoy socialising over a glass of wine afterwards. The following gives you an idea of our activities last year.

Our year 2017/18

After the usual excitement of the **Christmas** concert, a ***Partridge in a Pear tree***, (5 Hebrew Love Songs by Whitacre, 4 Christmas Motets by Poulenc, 3 Christmas carols, 2 Jazzy numbers and 1 Partridge in a Pear Tree)...

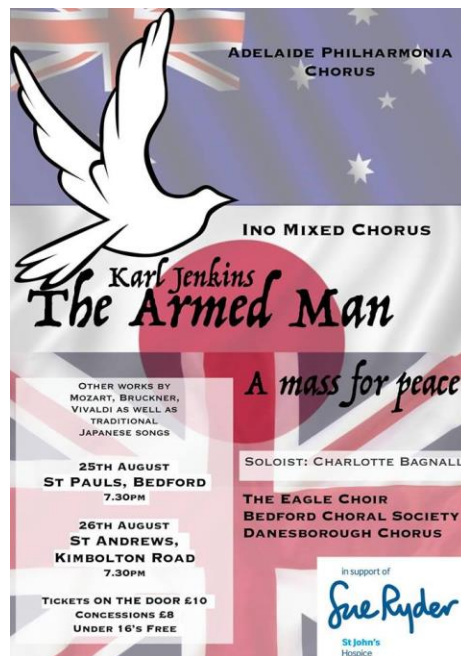


... the choir started the **Spring term** rehearsing in earnest for a concert in March. Each year the Eagle choir joins the Bedford School's Choral Society together with singers from Bedford Girls' School and the Chapel Choir to perform a grand concert in the Great Hall at Bedford School. This year we performed Carl Orff's famous ***Carmina Burana*** accompanied by guest soloists and the Phoenix Ensemble and school orchestra. It was a wonderful occasion where the choir enjoyed joining with other musicians and being part of a large scale musical event.

The **Summer term** saw the choir return to a smaller scale performance in Bedford School's Recital Hall with just a piano accompaniment by Luke Howard. We performed some traditional individual works by Bruckner, Mozart and more and a choral suite from Karl Jenkins ***The Armed Man*** – a wonderful mass for peace which was particularly apt in the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1. The choir were to perform this latter piece twice more during the year.



The **Summer holiday** is usually a fairly quiet period for the Eagle choir but this was not to be the case last year! In the last weekend of August we had the great excitement of singing together with two choirs visiting from the other side of the world. The brain-child of our then Musical director and choirmaster, Andrew Groom, (also the Musician in Residence at Bedford school), who organised the whole event, we had the unique experience of performing in a fabulous **Tri-Continental concert**. The Eagle choir (ably supplemented by singers from the Bedford Choral Society and the Danesborough Chorus) were thrilled to sing alongside the Adelaide Philharmonia Chorus from Adelaide, Australia, and the Ino Mixed Chorus from Ino, Shikoku Island in Japan. We were accompanied by the De Parys Players with Lottie Bagnall as a soprano soloist. We performed the complete mass, ***The Armed Man***, with fantastic arrangement of the instrument parts by Andrew Groom, together with some individual pieces by Mozart, Bruckner and Vivaldi, all conducted by Andrew and two pieces brought and conducted by the Musical Directors of the visiting choirs.



Andrew organized a long weekend of activities with our visitors including local sight-seeing, some impromptu singing in Bedford town centre and rehearsal sessions plus performances for two evening concerts at St Paul's Church and St Andrew's Church in Bedford. The weekend was rounded off by a farewell dinner at the Park Inn Hotel. The Tri-Continental concerts were well received in the town, even reported in the local press, and played to full audiences each night. The event raised nearly £1500 for the Sue Ryder St John's Hospice in Moggerhanger. All the choir members in all three choirs enjoyed the experience of meeting other singers and performing together. Naturally the two other choirs wanted to know when the Eagle choir would be visiting Australia and Japan...!!!

The concert was a very fitting triumph marking the choir's 20 years existence but members felt it was only right to also celebrate with a **20th Anniversary party**. Sixty or so members, old and new, with some of their partners,



congregated at a gathering in September for drinks and finger food at The Pavilion in Bedford Park. It was good to catch up with old friends and reminisce about all those varied past performances. It was a fun evening.

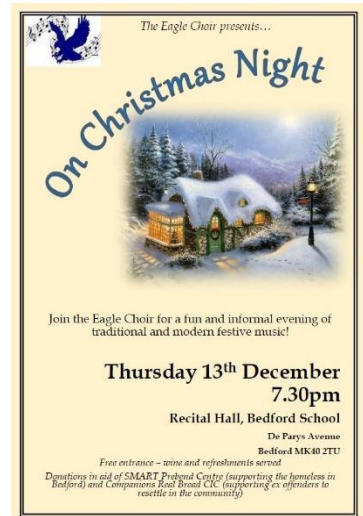


In the **Autumn term**, October sadly saw us bidding farewell to Andrew Groom as Musical Director and choir master. After a very successful three years leading the choir and culminating in the fantastic Tri-Continental concert, Andrew has now taken on further responsibilities and roles at Bedford school as well as new outside musical ventures. Eagle Choir is grateful to Andrew for all his commitment and enthusiasm in developing the choir and wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

The choir has been very fortunate to secure the services of Harry Bagnall as our new Musical Director and choirmaster. Harry trained as a tenor at the Royal Academy of Music, and has worked for many years as a professional concert and choral singer, vocal teacher and conductor. He has proved to be a welcome addition and we look forward to him moving the choir forward onto new musical challenges.

The choir was busy again in November at St Mary's Church, Buckden, where we were invited by the local British Legion Association to perform **The Armed Man** on November 11th as part of their 100th year celebration of the end of WW1. Harry conducted the choir for the first time and we enjoyed a further performance of the now very familiar piece. £900 was raised for the Poppy Appeal and both the packed audience and the British Legion were very appreciative of our efforts.

That bring us back round to **Christmas 2018!** We were pleased to be asked to perform some carols at the Bedford Girls' School Christmas Fayre and then finished off the term with our own **On a Christmas Night** concert. Here we performed some up tempo seasonal songs together with some more traditional choral carols and welcomed the usual audience participation for the more well-known carols. The concert was well-attended and raised £200 for two local charities – Smart Prebend Street which supports the homeless, and Companions Real Bread Bakery which supports and rehabilitates ex-offenders into society.



So...all-in-all, a busy and eventful year for the Eagle choir. And we have already begun in earnest in 2019, currently rehearsing to join the Bedford School Choral Society for a concert in March where we will be performing Bernstein's **Chichester Psalms** and Sanders' **Urbs Beata**. Future plans for 2019 include a Summer concert at All Saints Church in Turvey, a return to St Mary's Church, Buckden in November and a Christmas concert at Bedford School with possible collaboration with pupils from the Prep. School in the following year.

The choir is always looking for new members. We have been pleased to welcome a number of new parents from Bedford Girls School this year and hope to encourage more new members from Harpur Trust schools but equally anybody from the community is welcome. Do you love to sing or have you ever wanted to find out if you do? Have you been a regular choral singer or are you looking for a new hobby? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the Eagle choir would love to hear from you. The above gives you a flavour of what we do. Whether you are an experienced singer or a complete beginner you would be welcome. We are a friendly bunch! No audition is necessary – just come along to rehearsal and try us out. We are currently well into the rehearsal for the March concert so a good time to join us would be the beginning of the Summer term when we will be starting on our new pieces for our summer concert. Please contact our choirmaster, Harry, now, at harry@eaglechoir.org.uk who will be happy to give you further information about joining next term.

You can also find further information about us on our website, www.eaglechoir.org.uk or visit our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eaglechoir/>

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