

SPRING NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2008

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Following the recent survey about the delivery of the newsletter, many of you will now be receiving this newsletter by email. This will mean a labour and financial saving for the Association, freeing more funds for the promotion of events. Stephen Miles is co-ordinating this and anyone who wishes to add their email to the list should contact him. He currently holds 103 email addresses in the group. His email can be found on the Patricia Routledge Competition information, as Stephen has also kindly taken over the administration of this event. (www.aofess.org.uk).

The Catherine Lambert Junior Recital Prize was held recently at Trinity College of Music with Catherine judging the event, with Teresa Cahill, on her eighty-ninth birthday. The Association presented Catherine with a cake which she shared with the whole audience!

The AGM and Dinner will be held at the Royal Overseas League on Sunday 16th March. Details are in this newsletter. If you have anyone to nominate for the committee, or for the chair, a form is included. If there are any matters that you wish raised as Any Other Business, please contact our Honorary Secretary, Judy Hildesley, whose address is on the Nomination form.

Please come to the meeting if you can - and to the dinner. The format will be the same as last year with the AGM at 4.30pm, entertainment at 6.00pm, drinks at 6.30pm and dinner at 7.00pm, with James Bowman CBE a guest speaker.

The Patricia Routledge National English Song Competition Final will be held at the Royal Academy of Music on May 14th at 7.30pm. It is possible that HRH the Duchess of Gloucester might attend the event but this depends on her other commitments.

Events centred on the work of Robert Saxton, one of our Presidents, and Betty Roe are being planned at present and an AESS member will give a masterclass at Birmingham Conservatoire at some point, as part of the prize for the winner of the Junior Recital.

Other events supported by the AESS include a possible recital by Rhona McKail in the Chelsea Schubert Festival (which includes English Song!) in September and a recital in the Tardebigge English Song Series given in part by Iestyn Morris (2006 winner), sponsored by two anonymous AESS donors. More details of these will appear in future newsletters and on the website.

Please contact me or any member of the committee if you have ideas for future events, or indeed any concerns or criticisms.

THE CATHERINE LAMBERT JUNIOR ENGLISH SONG PRIZE

The **Preliminaries** for this competition were held in **Manchester** at Chethams's Music School on Sunday November 18th 2007 and **London** in the concert room at Tagg's Yard on the same day.

Sadly, in **Manchester** there were only three entries this year, all girls this time, and these were judged by Patrick McGuigan and Caroline Crashaw. Harriet Eyley was chosen to send down to London for the finals who had, unbeknown to the judges, been the 2nd place winner in the 2006 competition.

In **London** we had fifteen candidates, again sadly no young men, and, amazingly, all had chosen different subjects for their programmes including, 'The Power of Music', 'Myths of the Classical World', 'The Ages of Man' and 'Madness'.

Patricia Williams and Leslie Cooper were the judges for our **London** Preliminaries. It was a very difficult task to choose up to seven candidates as they were all of a very high standard. Eventually, after nearly four hours of performing in all, they finally chose six for the finals. A couple from private tutors, a couple from The Royal College of Music, a St Paul's School pupil and a Trinity College of Music student.

We would like to thank Judy Hildesley, our Honorary Secretary, and her family for allowing us to use the Concert Room in their home again this year.

The **Finals** took place on Sunday November 25th 2007 in the Peacock Room at Trinity College of Music. Catherine Lambert and Teresa Cahill were the Judges for the finals. It was Catherine Lambert's 89th birthday and Graham Trew, our Chairman, had very thoughtfully brought a cake to share and The Barbershop Choir sang Happy Birthday. A very unusual birthday for a thrilled Catherine and her family who were in the audience of about forty people and were very impressed with the standard of singing over all.

After a lot of deliberating the Judges spoke to each candidate as they went along the line up of seven and then chose, in reverse order:

3rd place to Jessica Hughes from The Royal College of Music,
2nd place to Rhyanne Acott from The Royal College of Music,
1st place to Harriet Eyley from the Birmingham Conservatoire.

Many thanks go to Marion Friend, Head of Junior Music at Trinity and her staff as well as The Barbershop Choir, for all their help with the venue, refreshments and overall help in the smooth running of the afternoon.

Carolyn Richards

FUTURE EVENTS

LUNCHTIME CONCERT

Patricia Williams presents a programme of song, piano music, poetry and prose entitled "Spring Fever" as a coffee concert at St George's Church, High Street, Beckenham on Saturday February 23rd. The programme is a treasure trove of words and music celebrating Spring. From Handel to Gershwin, from Shakespeare to Betjeman - a programme with something for everyone!

As implied the concert happens at coffee time, 11.00. a.m., and coffee will indeed be available at the back of the church. Admission is free but there is usually a retiring collection in aid of the church.

THE PATRICIA ROUTLEDGE ENGLISH SONG COMPETITION FINAL

The Final of the Patricia Routledge English Song Competition will be held at the Royal Academy of Music on May 14th at 7.30 pm.

A SONG IN THE STICKS

It had always been the plan but now it has come to pass that five dogs, a newly retired teacher and a tenor have moved to Norfolk (Fakenham area) cutting ties with the big city. What to do? Well, first wait for the builders to leave after eight months and then attempt to unpack just before Christmas. In the meantime I have wheedled my way into the Norwich Cathedral Choir and conned a choral society into giving me a concert. Their revenge was to ask me to do "Crucifixion", a bleeding chunk of the "St Matthew" Evangelist and part two of "Messiah" all in one night. Still, it went well and seems to have put me on the Norfolk map somewhat.

A neighbour is Head of English at Gresham's School of which both Britten and Auden are alumni. She has heard the recitals I give for the church with Alan (the retired teacher) and our trusty Clavinova. Through her good offices I receive an invite to give a cabaret concert for the school's In Praise Of Auden weekend in September. Details are sketchy (including the fee) but I am to crown the festival by singing at the black tie dinner after the lectures are over. There is to be quite a line-up of high-powered speakers and then moi. What to do, indeed! My remit is to come up with an Auden programme at the centre of which would be the Britten "Cabaret Songs" (bit low for a tenor). However, after that no-one knows what they want so I give myself a free hand. Talk has been of a speaker along with me but I do my own chat during recitals to help connect with the audience. It also means you don't have to sing so many numbers. How can I keep the evening light and user friendly, given that many compositions would be a shade adventurous in a dinner setting, and how can I second guess what my producers want when they don't even know? I decide to do a journey around the life of Auden using some settings of his poetry and other pieces that either distil the sentiments of a particular story in his life, or ones that give a feeling for the period and setting. Included in this is a definition of the term 'cabaret'. Eventually it is decided that the audience would talk due to ennui during the proceedings (no-one yet knows of my animal magnetism on stage) and I am

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given a recital slot and asked to reprise bits during the banquet.

Thus A Cabaret of Audenilia is born. I am fortunate to be offered a setting of "If I Could Tell You" by the American song-writer Dennis Livingston. It is a difficult poem but the music has a great way of leading the hearer in and out of the poet's unanswered questions. Dennis' site is well worth a visit. Adam Stanworth on the music staff also has done a great jazz setting of "Jam Tart", a piece that has an affinity with Cole Porter's "You're The Tops". I make a trip to the Weimar Republic with "If You Could See Her Through My Eyes" from Kander & Ebb's "Cabaret". It links perfectly with the fact that Auden had married someone to save her from the Nazis. I have also found a sad vignette, told by Natasha Spender, of Chester Kallman's amorous wanderings which are reflected in "Stormy Weather". By this time the four Britten songs acquire an interesting slant sung through the male voice. "Comedy Tonight" sets the recital up for no other reason than it is a great opening number and the short encore "When You're Feeling Like

Expressing Your Affection" brings the proceedings to a gentle and humorous close. Some more rehearsal with the pianist would be welcome but school teachers are busy folk. However everyone is pleased and the fee is sorted.

Not a bad start for my first few months in the sticks and, now I've got some mud on my boots, perhaps the work will come in. If not, there is always the train to London from Norwich.

Stephen Miles

A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

I had been a member of AESS for years, but rarely managed to attend anything. Then our chairman put out a plea for help. Realising that perhaps this was the only way to become involved I volunteered, and found that I do indeed attend events, meet colleagues and enjoy being a member as a result of becoming membership secretary.

I was assured this was not an onerous task.

1. Send out subscription notices.
2. Receive cheques and send membership card in s.a.e. which members provide.
3. Record who has paid.
4. Process new applications.

Fine!

But it is not quite that simple. I send out 120 requests in February. About one third are returned promptly. Thank you! (Some even have the requested s.a.e. Thank you again!)

Then the trouble starts. A few more cheques trickle in, often without s.a.e. or the accompanying form, which means delving into records and hand writing envelopes. Some just have a business card, which doesn't fit in my file. Some have nothing with them and some are in a married name while the member is registered under a professional name.

In June about 50 reminders go out and a few more errant cheques appear, or sometimes a claim to have paid already. I check the records and occasionally find to my shame that I have made a mistake, *but* often it is simply that time passes quickly from one year to the next so it *seems* you

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only paid yesterday. Sometimes guilt-stricken members send extra amounts for unspecified years left previously unpaid. Add to this the confusion of those who have forgotten to tell us that they have moved, *or* changed their phone number *or* email address, *or name*, *or* forgotten that they joined, *or* that they resigned (sometimes all of these, but not necessarily in that order) and you might begin to get the picture.

So this is a frantic plea from a well-meaning but beleaguered volunteer. Please return your subscription form and cheque promptly *filling in all appropriate sections*; and, by the way, that little old stamped addressed envelope not only saves me some pen-pushing but also saves the Association money to devote to funding competitions, masterclasses and meetings.

Having had my little grouse I will repeat that I still enjoy being involved and attending meetings, which are often entertaining, informative, FUN!!!

The Annual General Meeting followed by the Annual Dinner 2008

will be held on **Sunday 16th March**
at the Royal Overseas League, Park Place,
St James's Street, London SW1A 1LR

The **AGM** will commence at **4.30pm**
At **6.00pm** a concert will be given by the
Junior Trinity Barbershop Group
directed by **Mark Griffiths**
The bar will be open for the purchase of drinks from **6.30pm**
and the **Dinner** will commence at **7.00pm**

The AESS is delighted that the Guest of Honour and Speaker will be

James Bowman CBE

Tickets to include a three course meal and a glass of wine are priced at £37.50.
They are available until Friday 7th March (no refunds after this date) from
Jean Hornbuckle, 1 Hillfield Road, West Hampstead, London NW6 1QD
Tel: 020 7794 2395 email: jean@jhornbuckle.orangehome.co.uk

Application form for tickets for the **AESS Annual Dinner** on **Sunday 16th March**

Name(s)_____

Address_____

Tel: _____ **email** _____

I would like.....tickets at £37.50 and enclose a cheque for..... made payable to AESS, together
with a stamped, addressed envelope.

Special dietary requirements?.....

To: Jean Hornbuckle, 1 Hillfield Road, West Hampstead, London, NW6 1QD

Annual General Meeting 2008

Nominations for Chairman

Nominee:

Proposed by:

Seconded by:

Signed:

Dated:

Nominations for Committee

Proposed by:

Seconded by:

Signed:

Dated:

**Nominations should be submitted by the 29th February to the Secretary:
Judy Hildesley, Tagg's Yard, 23 Woodlands Road, Barnes, London SW13 OJZ**