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□ **Chair:** TBA

Secretary: Philip Mayles **Treasurer:** Steve Williams

Musical Director: Lloyd Buck **Librarian:** Maisie Kench

A Final Summer Message from a Retiring Chair – July 2022

Dear Members and Friends of EPMS,

This is my fifth Summer Newsletter as Chair of EPMS, and it is also my last. Many, most of you will know that I have decided to step down from chairing EPMS, and have effectively done so as the April 22 concert finished. However, the committee made it quite clear to me that I must pen this summer newsletter, as a means not only of rounding off my tenure but also to ensure that you all know what is happening as the new EPMS season starts again in September.

It has to be said that the 2021-22 EPMS Season was most rewarding in terms of how the choir has rekindled and rebuilt itself after the pandemic hiatus. The membership understandably dropped from the pre-pandemic figure of around 100, but much less than the committee expected and we have had around 70 paid up members during this season. Some of those people were not ready to sing in a group again but wanted to show their continued support for EPMS, for which we thank you. Come and sing again now!

Smaller numbers meant a re-think of what we could perform and perhaps more critically, where we could perform. St Thomas and All Saints, the parish church of Ellesmere Port, welcomed the choir with very enthusiastic open arms, first for the Christmas concert, with organ only accompaniment, and then for a chamber orchestral concert in April. The committee has always been keen to keep concert venues within the Ellesmere Port area and the April concert showed that St Thomas's has much to recommend it for our future concerts; location, size, facilities, cost....it will certainly be in consideration for the future.

The catalyst that brought us to St Thomas's was, indirectly, Lloyd's commissioned work, 'We Celebrate the Light'. The beautiful poem for this piece was written by Julia McGuinness, not only the Poet in Residence at Chester Cathedral, but also married to Rector Gordon McGuinness of St Thomas's. She suggested that we look at the church, and it all fell into place! We were so very pleased that we were able to squeeze the aforementioned orchestra into the church, allowing us to perform 'We Celebrate the Light' in the church at the April concert. Those of you who attended the concert will, I am sure, agree that it was the most wonderful, uplifting piece (I will confess that at one point I had to stop singing as I got all emotional about it!) and gave a real marker to the fact that EPMS is back, as good as ever and ready to sing on into the next years! So I would also like to say thank you to the very many people who sponsored the composition; I hope very much that there will be a chance to sing it again, perhaps in April 2023, the 70th Anniversary of the choir.

So now looking ahead into the 2022-23 Season, there are a few changes and plans for you to note.

Changes: Clearly, I am no longer chairing EPMS and at present there is a vacancy for that role. Until it is filled, the stalwarts of The Committee will continue to run the choir as efficiently and effectively as always.

I have also relinquished the role of Registrar. Sandie Rowlands is now taking on the Registrar role, so from now on communications on all matters relating to membership and registration will come from Sandie, whom I know will do an excellent job, as usual via the registrar@epmsonline.co.uk email address.

The Committee have recently reviewed the membership subscription for the coming season, and have decided that a modest increase is in order, to keep the financial picture on an even keel, especially given the smaller choir membership. The subs have actually been held at £100 per year since 2018; from September 2022 the subs for the first half of the season will be set at £52.50, with the opportunity to gauge members'

views on the figure for the second half of the season. As always you will be asked to pay this either on-line, or if needs be by cheque. Sandie will communicate further about this in the lead up to the start of the season.

The 2022-23 Season: The new season starts on Monday 12th September, with rehearsals from 7.30 – 9pm, at the usual venue of Whitby School. (The end time will be subject to input from the members once the rehearsals start.) The important date for your diary is of course the concert date, which is Saturday 10th December, and will be at St Thomas's Church. And a reminder of the programme:

- Chilcott: Songs and Cries of London Town
- Stanford: Tee Deum in B Flat
- Whitacre: Seal Lullaby
- Gjello: The Ground
- Lauridsen: Sure on this Shining Night

I have just dug out the first summer newsletter I wrote, in August 2018. The first line reads *'I have come to the end of the first year of the three that I agreed to, in taking on the privileged and, I have to say, very full-on role of chairing EPMS. What did I let myself in for?!.....'*

What indeed? Five years on it has been a privilege, but also at times a challenge, and maybe harder work than when I was actually employed! But it has also been lovely to work with such a great group of people, The Committee, who have been every bit as hard working as me. It has been equally positive (though probably through wearing the Registrar hat as well) to feel that I know every single member of the choir. So I just want to say thank you to each of you for putting up with my bossiness at times, my whittering on at others and to wish EPMS the very best of continued music making going forward.

Marian McCarthy

July 2022