



Dancing Bear Academy of Music Newsletter

January/February 2008

Artistic Director - Bro. Paul Francis

A View From the Podium

Hello and welcome to the very first printed Edition of the *Dancing Bear Academy of Music Newsletter, January 2008*.

Christmas saw the first performances proper of both the *Chamber Choir* and *Polyphonic Choir*. These were lovely, joyous occasions and we received good and encouraging feedback from our audiences. Not bad after only four rehearsals! And we convincingly managed to do a complex motet by Byrd, and - maybe not so convincingly(!) - John Tavener's challenging *The Lamb*. Bitonality (ie. being in more than one key or 'mode' at the same time) is so bloommin' hard to pull off! Some of the other music, such as the *a capella* carols, were quite exquisite. I think my highlight was seeing our beloved 8 year old God Daughter, Anna, signing *Away in a Manger*.

We are indebted to the organizers of the Christmas Service at *All Saints* in Kings Heath for inviting us to sing and for their generous contribution to our funds.

Thanks also to Rev. Chris Dowd and the MCC team for such terrific hospitality at *Nine Lessons & Carols* and at the *Crib Service* on Christmas Eve. Well done everyone; you did *gooooood!*

In the future I have it in mind to visit various fine churches and cathedrals to perform a handful of *Vespers* and *Choral Evensongs*. I'm exploring the possibility of performing *Catholic Vespers* and an *Anglican Evensong* as part of the *Harvington Festival* and at the *Three Choirs Festival*. Truly lovely places to perform.

David's first rehearsal of *DBO - Dancing Bear Opera Co.* - went very well, and people who were downstairs watching *Torchsong Trilogy*, & those of us doing Music Theory, were deeply moved by the blissful interpretation of *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves*, from Verdi's opera *Nabucco* as it wafted down the stairs.

Rehearsals etc. on the first & third Sundays seem to have fallen into a natural rhythm, with *DBO @ 12.30-3.00pm*; *Music Theory for Beginners @ 2.00-3.00pm*; *DBCC - Dancing Bear Chamber Choir @ 3.00-4.30*; *DBPC - Dancing Bear Polyphonic Choir @ 4.30-5.45pm-ish* (with a possible move to the downstairs lounge around 5.20pm) and; our lovely post-rehearsal drinkies @ *The Loft Lounge* at around 6.00pm.

Thank you for all of your hard work and assistance in getting *Dancing Bear* off the ground. Here's to a 2008 that is full of glorious music making and good friendship.

Bro. Paul Francis

DBSO - Dancing Bear Symphony Orchestra

I am delighted to report that after our *Community Profile* appeared in *Midland Zone Magazine* I have been inundated by GLBT/Mixed instrumentalists keen to get started. I'm looking into the possibility of commencing rehearsals soon at MCC on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 12.30-3.00pm. I'll keep you posted.



Possible design for our Dancing Bear Academy Performance T - Shirts? Comments please.....!

DBO - Dancing Bear Opera Co. Many thanks to those who were able to attend our first rehearsal at what was effectively very short notice.

I'm very excited by future possibilities and looking forward to our next rehearsal. This will be an opportunity for all those who want to be involved in the Company to suggest scenes and numbers that they want to be part of, so put your thinking caps on and come armed with plenty of ideas for operatic repertoire.

David Naylor-Gray, Artistic Director DBO Co.

Pride Concert May 2008

We are hoping to make our first major performance as part of the celebrations around the time of *Birmingham Pride/Mardi Gras, May 2008*. I am looking to book our local *Eastside* church – *St. Martin's in the Bullring* for a choral concert with orchestra & organ possibly consisting of the following works:

Part the First (1 hour)

Handel *Zadok the Priest*
(a choral & orchestral showpiece)

Handel *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* from *Solomon*
(an orchestral showpiece)

Monteverdi *Pur Ti Miro* from *The Coronation of Poppea*
(a love duet for two men or women)

Handel *As From the Power of Sacred Lays* from *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* (just amazing!)

During the next Set the lights will gradually be turned off and the audience's candles will be lit, slowly illuminating all

Ave

Byrd *Ave Verum Corpus*
Parsons *Ave Maria*
Mozart *Ave Verum Corpus*
Bro. Paul Francis *O Salutaris*

Byrd *Mass in Three Voices*

Interval with wine & nibbles
(30 minutes)

Part the Second (50 mins)
Faure Requiem



Your MD at Play; O Behave Baby

Let's Have a Scene!

We are liaising with *The Custard Factory* about the possibility of *DBO Co.*

staging a *Pride/Mardi Gras Benefit Performance* of Scenes from a variety of operas - eg. Bellini's *Norma*; Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*; *Opera Choruses* by Verdi, Wagner, Bizet & Puccini; Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* and – maybe – the whole of the First Act of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (or 'Magic Fruit' maybe!?)

There is a choice of two lovely performance spaces at *The Custard Factory*: Either, the 104-seater theatre (perfect for chamber-size opera) or, more excitingly, the exquisite *Old Library*, which is opposite the entrance of *The Custard Factory*, and is a charming Gothic, Victorian space with a beautiful acoustic.

As part of the lead up to *Pride* there is about a two month period when groups such as ours are invited to work on making costumes and props/scenery *free of charge* to support the marvelous outpouring of colour and campery that is *Bham Pride*. Obviously this will be a marvelous opportunity for anyone who is interested in creating costumes to make their own

Dancing Bear Academy offers 1-1 Singing Lessons & 1-1 or group Piano & Instrumental Tuition. Plus Training in Music Theory, Musical Composition, History & Analysis etc. Prices are highly competitive. Learners of all ages - from 3-90+ yrs welcome. Prices: 30 mins £12.50; 45 mins £18.75; 60 mins £25.00. In most cases (*but not singing*) lessons can be given for an exchange of energy along the lines of the *LETS* scheme. We can offer you City Centre lessons at the *MCC Building* at any and all times of the day.

Vocal Tip of the Month

We will be doing a lot of *legato* (smooth) singing over the next few months. The key to this is to keep the support firm!! This means keeping the tummy muscles strong, but not tense, and firm. Other things to keep in mind are to put the final consonant of each word on to the start of the next word and to keep lots of space at the back of the mouth, ie. don't let narrow vowels shut off the sound. *David*



Dancing Bear Polyphonic Choir @ The Opening of the MCC Building

Anecdote of the Month

Ethel Merman was born 100 years ago this month. She had quite a big voice! A reviewer writing in the "New York Times" once wrote. "I had the pleasure of hearing Ethel Merman singing last night. I was standing in a bar across the street from the theatre at the time."

Letters & Adverts

Dear Mr. Bear. My Choir Conductor is always telling us that we are singing too loud. Then he tells us that we are singing too quietly. Can you tell me how we can sing just right? Yours truly,

Mrs Trellis (North Wales)

Dear Mrs. Trellis,

Never quieter than audible. Never louder than lovely.

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