

David Clover Festival of Singing Friends

News Bulletin – no.1 for (May 2023)

Festival Weekends 2023

Immediately after the Festival Weekends of 2020, Covid caused major disruptions in DCFS activities as well as everyone else's; and in 2021 not even the Festival Weekends could take place, which in turn had repercussions for 2022. This year things began to return to something approaching normal, with approximately the same numbers of entries as in former years.

The quality of the entries ensured the Weekends were a great success and, with predominantly local performers, the Finals Evening for the Festival Weekend attracted a good and appreciative Sheffield audience. This was not so for the Singers' Platform Finals' Evening: and it did not get the support it deserves. Inevitably, these young, would-be professional SP singers who come from far and wide in the UK or even abroad, do not travel with friends and relatives to hear them perform. So the audience tends to be small. While the musical directors of local choirs attend and jump at the chance of talent-spotting of soloists for their future musical programmes, relatively few local music lovers come along, as audience, to appreciate quite excellent performances, often of international standards. The DCFS committee has been struggling with this for years. Anything you, as DCFS Friends, could do to swell the numbers for the Singers' Platform Finals Evening would be very much appreciated.

That the Festival Weekends could take place at all was in itself a success, since Music Festivals throughout the country are folding for lack of support. And that is quite tragic given diminished Arts Council grants and squeezed schools' budgets which all work to the detriment of the provision for the creative arts including music. In such a climate the David Clover Festival of Singing Weekends and what they represent are more important than ever.

DCFS Principles

The encouragement of singing in all its forms for the physical and psychological wellbeing of performers lay at the heart of Sheffield Music Adviser David Clover's initiatives and practice many years ago, and has remained central to our activities ever since. Encouragement, support, and guidance, these are the principles which underlie everything we do, and the response from questionnaires over the years suggests that we have some success: singers get to enjoy taking part, gain in confidence and profit from receiving the detailed comments of our professional adjudicators. As bonuses, we provide audio recordings to all who take part in the Finals Evenings, and a number of the soloists receive invitations to perform at later concerts. This year four soloists sang again on March 18th in the Upper Chapel as part of Classical Sheffield's festival weekend, and others again will do so at the Showcase on July 7th, at St. Andrew's church, Psalter Lane, starting at 7.30, organized in collaboration with Sheffield Music Makers. More details on the website in time.

New Developments

DCFS does not rest on its laurels. For the **Festival Weekend** of 2024 two new classes - for performers under 16, and over 40 – are to be introduced for singers who have little or no experience of singing solo. As a less daunting alternative they may sing duets or in a small ensemble of up to 6 singers. They will receive written comments on their performance and after everyone has sung they will take part in a workshop led by the adjudicator, where they will be given further ideas and vocal tips on how to improve.

In the **Singers' Platform** a new class has been created for singers aged 14-19 studying at a specialist Music School or a Conservatoire Junior Department. Hitherto, such singers didn't fit comfortably into either the Festival Weekend or the Singers' Platform, being too well qualified for the one and not quite ready for the other. From 2024 they can compete appropriately with their peers for the new Elizabeth Hampshire Award.

Such is the reputation of the DCFS that when the Mozart International Competition Festival, London, unfortunately recently folded, agreement was reached for the residue of their funds being directed to us; many thanks due to negotiations by our President Professor Mark Wildman. The result is that in 2024 we are able to create a new class in the **Singers' Platform** – Repertoire by Mozart – and can award a substantial prize funded for six years in the first instance.

We advertise our activities on Facebook, Twitter, on flyers, on the Classical Sheffield website and above all on our official website www.davidclover-festivalofsinging.org.uk which we recommend you consult. Further to that you can consult me, Tony Trippett, anthonytrippett5@gmail.com as publicity officer.