

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2005

By Dean Powell, Publicity Officer
& Honorary Archivist

FEBRUARY

Thursday February 24 **Llantrisant Parish Church**

The Choir's first concert in Llantrisant Parish Church was organized by Dean Powell and all proceeds went towards choir funds. An overfull audience packed the Norman church in the centre of the hilltop town. A large choir also filed into the church and from the very first note the concert was hailed a major success.

Choristers Ray Daniels and Dean Powell were soloists for the evening while Dean acted as Master of Ceremonies in his hometown concert. Andrew Badham and Jan Ball were conductor and accompanist for the evening's proceedings.

The concert opened with rousing renditions of *Cwm Rhondda*, *Laudamus* and *March of the Peers* much to the obvious pleasure of a very enthusiastic audience. The concert was also video-recorded with a copy being donated to the choir archives.

Other highlights included *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves*, *Fantasia*, *Morte Christe*, *A Valley Called the Rhondda*, *Tydi a Roddaist*, *Comrades in Arms* and the ultimate showstopper, *My Way*.

Following the concert, which raised more than £700 for choir funds, choristers enjoyed a social evening in the nearby Cross Keys Hotel.

MARCH

Saturday March 5 **Newent Community School**

The Choir's first visit to Newent near Ross-on-Wye saw them perform in Newent Community School with guest artists, The Newent Community School Senior Jazz Band. Andrew Badham conducted the choir, with Jan Ball as Accompanist and Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies.

It was a triumphant debut performance in Newent. Coaches left Treorchy at 4pm and a short rehearsal was held in the school prior to the performance. The choir performed two spots in the first and second half, with the band performing the middle spot each time.

As always the choir gave a first-class performance of favourites such as *Llanfair*, *Laudamus*, *Cwm Rhonda*, *Lord's Prayer*, *Unwait Eto*, *Memory* and *Anthem from Chess*. The impressive band of young and very talented players also hugely impressed the audience and choir alike with their varied repertoire of big band medleys and modern arrangements. The choir retired to a local social club for a buffet and drinks following the concert.

Tuesday March 15

The Choir's Annual General Meeting allowed choristers the opportunity to honour four of their fellow members. Alun Morris, Philip Edmunds, Idris John and Ivor Williams were all awarded the Long Service Membership Certificates in recognition of 21 years service to the choir. Following the many elections held during the night, Gareth Evans was voted as the new Choir Chairman.

Friday March 25

Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The choir's Good Friday Concert in its hometown with the Parc and Dare Band was another resounding success. The performance of both organizations was of the highest musical standard and the witty repartee between bandmaster Craig Roberts and Choir Master of Ceremonies Dean Powell proved a riot with the audience and performers alike. The concert was also just a few days after Wales' triumphant Grand Slam victory, so naturally both comperes had great delight in making fun of the losing rugby sides!

The choir opened with a selection of rousing Welsh hymns and for the first time in almost twenty years performed the *Easter Hymn* from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. It proved a firm favourite with the capacity audience. A combined performance of *Morte Christe* completed the first half of the concert.

During the second half the choir opened with *Comrades in Arms* and *Kings of Swing*, followed by a selection of light music and finishing with *Tydi a Roddaist*. The band and choir completed the concert with a combined performance of *Gwahoddiad*.

MAY

Tuesday May 3

St Peter's Church, Pentre

The choir spent an evening in an empty church recording shots for the forthcoming DVD *Singing from the Heart*, produced by Sean James Cameron. Choir CDs were used for the recording and the choir merely dubbed over the top of the tracks. They filmed four or five tracks altogether. Idris John (2T) was taken ill during the filming and paramedics were called. Fortunately he soon recovered.

Sunday May 8

Bwlch Mountain, Rhondda

The making of the *Singing from the Heart* DVD recording continued on the Bwlch y Clawdd mountain, Cwmparc. Two sites were chosen, one on the mountainside, the other on the road, while police closed the road to traffic. The weather was showery, but fortunately it remained dry during the performances. With the spirit of joviality that pervades the off-beat locations, the two-hour filming passed by with a smile and a song.

Wednesday May 18
Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

Tonight's return to the hometown theatre was to perform a charity concert in memory of Gerald Coleman (1937-2004), one of the co-founders of Buy As You View. It was a poignant evening for the many family and friends of Mr Coleman who attended the concert, which was sold out weeks in advance.

The Choir was invited to perform along with their friends of the Buy As You View Cory Band and all proceeds from the performance went towards the Valleys Kids charity. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was an old friend of Mr Coleman's, Selwyn Jones.

It was a notable evening for the choir also because it marked the final performance of Edgar Taylor as Deputy Conductor, He led the choir in a selection of items during the evening, while Andrew Badham conducted the remainder of the concert while Jan Ball was accompanist.

Music for the evening was selected by the Coleman family because they felt it was a selection that Mr Coleman would have enjoyed. Some of the most thrilling renditions, were the joint items of band and choir such as *March of the Peers* and finally *Men of Harlech*. Presentations were made during the evening and following the concert performers and audience alike enjoyed a relaxing few hours in the theatre bar.

Saturday May 21
St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Lavenham

Leaving Treorchy at 9.30am, the choir bus traveled for six hours to Suffolk, arriving at a Travel Inn motel by 5pm. With an hour to spare, choristers changed and prepared for a short journey into Lavenham and the venue for the evening concert. The concert was held in aid of Lavenham Village Hall Appeal and held in the magnificent St Peter and St Paul Parish Church. Andrew Badham was Conductor, with Jan Ball as Accompanist, Ann-Louise Straker was Soprano with Hilary Morgan, who originated from Ystrad, as her Accompanist. The concert was opened by John Wyn Roberts and the Master of Ceremonies was Dean Powell.

The magnificent surroundings of the Parish Church provided a marvelous setting for the evening performance. The choir certainly gave a thrilling performance, and the audience seemed absolutely thrilled with the overall affect.

The Welsh hymns of *Cwm Rhondda*, *Llanfair* and *Arwelfa* made a fitting opening selection, with other highlights including *March of the Peers*, *Lords Prayer*, *Steal Away* and *Memory*. The choir also performed the *Easter Hymn* to rousing applause.

Following the concert the choir was entertained in a local hostelry before returning to the motel for the overnight stay. On the following day both coaches left after breakfast, with the late bus stopping in a pub in Newbury for the afternoon.

JUNE

Friday June 10

The Wyvern Theatre, Swindon

The choir's performance in Swindon was organized by the Rotary Club of North Wiltshire, who were celebrating their centenary this year. The proceeds went towards the local Prospect Hospice in Swindon. Andrew Badham was conductor, while Jan Ball was Accompanist, Susan Coates was the soloist and Dean Powell was Master of Ceremonies for the evening.

Highlights of the evening performance included *March of the Peers*, *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves*, the Welsh hymn tunes and *My Way*. The capacity audience were delighted by the concert, following which choristers were entertained in a local pub.

Saturday June 25

Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon

The choir's return visit to Brecon after five years proved a major success. Andrew Badham was Conductor, Jan Ball as Accompanist, Eloise Routledge was the soloist while Dean Powell acted as Master of Ceremonies. This intimate auditorium proved a perfect setting for the concert which was enjoyed by all those in attendance. Sean James Cameron also showed part of his DVD in the main foyer of the theatre prior to the concert to help promote its publication later in the year.

The evening concert saw the return of *Bryn Myrddin* and *You'll Never Walk Alone* to the repertoire, much to the delight of the audience. It also featured a selection of firm favourites, including *March of the Peers*, *Fantasia*, *Lord's Prayer*, *Ar Hyd y Nos* and *My Way*.

Tuesday June 28

In a special presentation ceremony in the Choir rehearsal room, Honorary Membership of the Treorchy Male Choir was bestowed on Nigel Chivers. A beautiful bouquet was also presented to his wife, Judy. Similarly, presentation gifts of a beautiful decanter, glasses and an inscribed silver tray were presented to Edgar Taylor on his retirement as Deputy Conductor and a bouquet was presented to his wife, Gloria.

JULY

Tuesday July 5

A special presentation ceremony was held in the Choir rehearsal room this evening. Honorary Membership of the Treorchy Male Choir was bestowed on Adrian Dix, while his wife, Val, received a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Life Membership of the Treorchy Male Choir was also bestowed on five "veteran" choristers, namely William Watkins, Peter Morris, David Powell, Reg Stephens and Len Gale. Finally, Life

Membership of the Treorchy Male Choir was also bestowed on Publicity Officer and Honorary Archivist, Dean Powell, while a bouquet was presented to his parents, Carole and David.

Saturday July 9

Church of St Michael and All Angels, Somerton

The choir's first visit to Somerton was welcomed by a sold-out audience. This beautiful village also boasted the most exquisite 12th century parish church where the choir gave their concert. What impressed them the most was the incredibly ornate ceiling for all to behold. It was a special concert indeed. The audience was thrilled from the first note while the choir remained on top form throughout the whole evening.

Kate Woolveridge absolutely surpassed herself this evening not only as a soprano, but as a comical entertainer also. It helped make the concert all the more memorable for everyone concerned as both the audience and choir were enraptured by her performance. Andrew Badham conducted, Jan Ball accompanied and Dean Powell was Master of Ceremonies for the concert, held as part of the Somerton Summer Festival.

The concert came as the country celebrated the 60th Anniversary of VJ Day and in memory of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, For the Fallen was performed. But there was also another reason foremost in our minds this evening, and that was the tragic events in London on Thursday July 7 when suicide bombers attacked Underground Stations and a double decker bus. Following the performance of this item the audience were asked not to applaud and a moment's silence was held.

The remainder of the concert was also a total success and following the final item, choristers met with members of the audience at a local hostelry in this wonderful, picturesque little village. Unbeknown to all concerned, this would also prove the final concert conducted by Andrew Badham following eight years as Musical Director of the Treorchy Male Choir.

SEPTEMBER

Thursday September 8

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Treorchy Male Choir was held in the rehearsal room. The outcome of the meeting was that a new Musical Director be found following the impending resignation of Andrew Badham.

Saturday September 17

St George's Church, Halton

The return visit to Halton just a year or more since the last visit, was in aid of a very good friend of the Choir. Ann and Robin Woodruff had organized several concerts in Aylesbury in aid of the Blackberry Farm Animal Shelter. Sadly, last year Ann passed away following a long battle with cancer. In memory of Ann, her husband

Robin decided to hold this celebratory concert of her life, with all the proceeds going towards The Friends of Florence Nightingale House where she was cared for. It was an incredibly worthy cause and the choristers were delighted to have been asked to attend.

Leaving Treorchy at 1.15pm, the three-hour journey to Halton in Buckinghamshire allowed choristers the opportunity to contemplate the evening ahead. There was certainly an air of nervousness amongst the choristers because life within the ranks of the Treorchy Male Choir had certainly changed during the past few weeks.

A week ago Andrew Badham resigned as Musical Director of the Choir and concert was growing whether performances would have to be cancelled altogether. However, in the meantime accompanist Jan Ball took to the helm of the choir and agreed to conduct the concert. With Helen Roberts as Accompanist and Kate Woolveridge as Mezzo Soprano, the concert went ahead as planned.

The choir gave a hundred percent of total concentration on the concert stage, watching every move that Jan made from the podium. They were transfixed throughout the concert and without doubt the performance was of an exceptionally high standard. Dean Powell acted as Master of Ceremonies for the evening and the overall performance was heralded a major success.

Following the concert, the choir retired to the Sergeant's Mess at RAF Halton for a few hours before returning to Wales, safe in the knowledge that despite the many changes, the future of the Treorchy Male Choir was safe indeed.

OCTOBER

Saturday October 1

St John's Church. Coleford

The choir made a very welcomed return to Coleford for a concert in the beautiful St John's Church. This lovely building provided, one more, a more than suitable acoustic for the choir's evening performance before a capacity audience. Jan Ball conducted this evening's concert with Helen Roberts as accompanist. The soloist for the evening was Kate Woolveridge and Dean Powell compered the proceedings.

The concert, in aid of the Great Oaks Hospice, opened with some rousing Welsh hymns including *Cwm Rhondda*, *Bryn Myrddin* and *Deus Salutis*. Kate was at her very best, entertaining the audience with her witticisms, charm and lovely voice as always. Speed Your Journey and Comrades in Arms were superb, along with more rousing Welsh numbers to conclude the first half, such as *Laudamus*, *Ar Hyd Y Nos* and *Unwaith Eto*. With the second half came the *Easter Hymn* - sounding wonderful in this acoustic - along with *Valley Called the Rhondda*, *Lord's Prayer* and *My Way* to end. An encore of *We'll Keep A Welcome* left the audience wanting more - a perfect way to end a splendid concert.

Thursday October 6

Park and Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 24th Annual Autumn Concert at the hometown theatre saw the choir join forces with the wonderful talents of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bodringallt. The winners of the Urdd National Eisteddfod 2005 proved a tremendous hit with the choir and audience alike and certainly helped to ensure a "full house" for this special night in the choir's calendar. It was a joy to hear the singing of this marvellous ensemble of youngsters and a pleasure to involve them in our annual concert.

Former accompanist Jennifer Jones took to the stage as the choir's guest conductor for the evening and it certainly marked a return home for her also - she last conducted the choir on this very platform almost twenty years ago during John Cynan Jones' illness. On that occasion she was accompanied by Bryan Davies, but tonight it was our ever faithful Jan Ball who played the piano. Dean Powell compered the proceedings.

The choir gave some really beautiful, delicate performances of *Arwelfa*, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, *Gwahoddiad* and *Jacob's Ladder*. Sadly, we were unable to perform the final item of *Softly as I Leave You* as Jennifer had to rush off stage because she had a sweet stuck in her throat! Over all the choir could feel confident in giving a first class performance with two very talented ladies at the helm.

Saturday October 15 **Assembly Rooms, Bath**

The glorious setting of the Bath Assembly Rooms provided the perfect venue for the choir's return performance. Only a year ago we last entertained a capacity audience in this lovely building and yet again the crowd turned out in force for a joint performance with the Silver Ring Choir.

Treorchy was conducted this evening by another new guest conductor, this time the distinguished founder conductor of the Ardwyn Singers, Helena Braithwaite. She was an absolute joy to work with and it was a real pleasure to perform under her leadership. Helen Roberts, making a homecoming visit to Bath, also accompanied the choir for some of the concert for the welcoming audience before us. Jan Ball also accompanied a number of the items on the concert programme. Grenville Jones compered the Silver Ring Choir section of the concert while Dean Powell compered for Treorchy.

The sheer professionalism of the choristers and music staff ensured a first-class concert despite only being allowed the shortest of time to rehearse. *Morte Christe*, *Bryn Myrddin* and *Tydi a Roddaist* allowed the choir to fill the auditorium with a glorious sound. Helena appeared delighted, ensuring she enjoyed the evening as much as everyone else did. The performers then retired to The Bear Hotel for refreshments to celebrate the victory of song!

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 11 **Millennium Stadium, Cardiff**

It was the largest live audience the choir has ever performed before in its 122-year history - and what a spectacular event it was! For weeks prior to the big day the choir had painstakingly rehearsed new arrangements and words of a whole host of Welsh choral classics, along with some fun rugby anthems for the crowd. The invitation to perform this very unique engagement came from Dr Haydn James, Conductor of the London Welsh and the well-known musician who introduced male voice choirs to Welsh rugby internationals through the WRU.

This time it was Treorchy's turn and what better occasion than one of the biggest games of the season? The Wales vs New Zealand rugby international at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium was sold out, with a colossal 74,000 tickets gone altogether and the many hundreds of thousands watching the big game on screens across the world. It also marked the centenary since the famous All Blacks match in 1905 when Wales clinched the title, therefore this anniversary game was all the more important for our country.

On the day of the big game the coaches arrived on Westgate Street, Cardiff by 1.30pm in preparation for a 2pm rehearsal with Dr Hayden James in the stadium. Beforehand the choristers were shown to their seats in the stands - a great view of the field was had by all for sure! The rehearsal took place in the "Dragon's Mouth" of the stadium, complete with The Regimental Band and Drums of the Royal Welsh Regiment and a small selection of choristers from the North Wales Choir, Hogia'r Ddwylan.

As Dr James took us through our paces, the choristers were delighted when the beautiful sopranos arrived to rehearse their respective national anthems. Firstly came Haley Westerna, the wonderful New Zealand singer, followed closely by our own Welsh beauty, Katherine Jenkins. With a satisfactory rehearsal behind us, it was time to prepare for the emotional performance on the pitch.

The choristers held their breath as they were marched three abreast up the long ramp to the hallowed turf of the Millennium Stadium. The sight of tens of thousands of spectators crowding every stand was staggering. It was impossible not to feel incredibly emotional at the sight and the atmosphere on the pitch. As we stepped on the green one elderly man from the stand took a chorister's arm and smiled, saying, "Sing for Wales bach!". That was enough to make the tears flow!

The choir and band sang a selection of items at each of the four stands, including *Calon Lan*, *Cwm Rhondda*, *Sospan Fach* and *Delilah*. The response each time was astounding until the choir reached the centre of the pitch and as the All Blacks dashed onto the field, we burst into a rousing rendition of *Men of Harlech*, much to everyone's delight. If they can do the hakka, we can sing! With just minutes before kick-off we stood to attention alongside our national rugby players and performed the two national anthems. The New Zealand anthem came first and was filled with emotion. However, nothing prepared us for the reaction to *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*. To perform this beloved anthem in this magnificent stadium and on such an important day was quite simply unforgettable. Tears flowed in torrents from all concerned and

as we left the field to glorious applause, we felt prouder than ever to be Welsh. Sadly our team lost to the visitors but it didn't dampen this remarkable day.

Following the game we were guests of the Woodenspoon Society at their marquee. The free bar allowed choristers time to relax before performing two spots to the appreciative crowd who filled the tent. This was followed by a second concert in the nearby County Club before departure from the capital at 10pm. It was certainly a day we would all remember for a very long time indeed.

Saturday November 19 **Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl**

It was a lengthy journey to Rhyl in North Wales for this rather special return concert in the Pavilion Theatre. Only a year ago we last ventured to the "Gogledd", only this time it was to share the stage with a new Welsh star in the making. Katherine Jenkins has enjoyed a phenomenal career over the past few years and is now ranked as one of the most popular singers in the world.

However, it was not the first time for us to perform with her. More than a decade ago she was a little schoolgirl in a youth orchestra conducted by former conductor John Jenkins! How she's progressed! It was with some concern we reached Ludlow only to hear on the radio on the bus that Katherine was singing at the Millennium Stadium. Wondering how on earth she would reach Rhyl in time, we were rather relieved to hear that a helicopter would rush her to the venue within 50 minutes - unlike our five hour journey! The other soloist for the evening was talented tenor Rhys Meirion who enjoyed a rapturous applause from his hometown audience. Undoubtedly, we were all impressed by the pianist, Annette Bryn Parri whose performance at the piano was absolutely astounding.

The choir's performance was up to its usual high standard of musical excellence as we performed under the baton of Jennifer Jones and were accompanied by Jan Ball. *Soldier's Chorus* and *Speed Your Journey* provided the perfect opening, with memorable numbers including *Arwelfa*, *Sanctus* and *Myfanwy*. Members will never forget the previous performance in Rhyl when Andrew Badham failed to conduct *Myfanwy* before a packed crowd. Tonight, before an equally as large audience, the choir gave a first-class performance of the much-loved Welsh classic.

A series of lighter arrangements concluded the first half and we opened the second with *March of the Peers*, followed by the delightful *For the Fallen*, which was followed with a moment's silence. Also on the programme was *Jacob's Ladder*, *Kings of Swing* and *Softly as I Leave You*. The audience seemed delighted with the overall show, which was jointly compered by Dean Powell and the manager of the concert hall. We retired to the theatre bar for a few drinks before beginning the long journey south to our homes.

Monday November 21 **Wales Millennium Centre**

A ROYAL Command Performance to celebrate the Treorchy Male Choir's Diamond

Jubilee Year was a dream come true for the choristers of our beloved organisation. The invitation to perform at the 77th Royal Variety Show arrived during the summer and for the next few months the involvement of the choir in the evening's proceedings grew week on week it seemed. By the final rehearsal choristers were involved in a total of four individual items in this prestigious engagement and nervousness, mixed with excitement, spread throughout the ranks. To be invited, by Royal Command, to appear alongside some of the world's biggest entertainers, was one of the greatest honours ever bestowed on our famous male choir.

When news arrived that for the first time the show was being staged in Wales, and not London, then we realised how magical this evening would be. It also marked the 110th anniversary to the very week, that the original Treorky Male Choir was invited, by Royal Command, to perform for Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the Royal Family at Windsor Castle. This time there would be no need for special train carriages and a journey to London however, it was a mere hour from the top of the valley to the impressive new building on Cardiff Bay.

The choristers first visited the auditorium on the Sunday evening prior to the performance for a rehearsal. James Sunderland, Producer, was on hand to give relevant order, along with Frank Smalley, his Assistant. It was all carefully choreographed by Gary Lloyd and with John and Sarah as the choir runners, the arrangements seemed spot on. On arrival at the Centre the choristers enjoyed the opportunity of visiting the magnificent auditorium, and the venue for our Diamond Jubilee Concert in June 2006.

We were treated to a rehearsal by operatic group Il Divo before being ushered into Rehearsal Room 3 to meet comedian Joe Pasquale and his friend, Coronation Street star Bradley Walsh. With Bradley in charge and Joe (whom the former called "Squeaky") playing the typical comic, the choir rehearsed a fun sketch which involved their performance of *I Know A Song That Will Get On Your Nerves!* Satisfied that all would be well for the following day, choristers relaxed in the large canteen back stage and watched the sheer army of backstage crew rushing to and fro.

The arrangements for such a prestigious night were unfathomable. Police and soldiers guarded every exit. Airport-type security welcomed every performer and back stage crew member as they entered the building. Armed snipers lay on rooftops around the Bay. It was run with the precision of a Swiss Watch, until the arrival of a certain Welsh diva that is. Dame Shirley Bassey successfully managed to upset the entire rehearsal schedule for the Sunday evening by demanding more and more time to rehearse her work. It affected the running time of the rest of the night and at 10pm it was decided that we could leave the theatre and make our way home to relax before the big day ahead.

On Monday morning the choir returned to the Wales Millennium Centre at 9am. It was the start of a memorable day as the choir rubbed shoulders with the star-studded cream of the showbusiness crop at our landmark theatre. The audience of 2,000 had each paid in the region of £200 for the privilege and with camera crew setting up in all directions, the need for perfection was greater than ever. At first it appeared that the choir would only perform a choral arrangement of *God Save the Queen* with Bryn

Terfel, but over the coming months Treorchy's involvement grew to include *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* and the comedy routine with Joe. More music had to be learned, including a choral arrangement of *Music Is My First Love* with Dame Shirley Bassey as soloist.

Arriving at the theatre by 9am it took an hour or more to enter the building, standing in long queues on this frosty morning to be searched and marched through airport-type scanners. Security was at its highest possible level. It was the start of a memorable day, one in which we queued for tea with Il Divo, cracked jokes with Bryn Terfel, listened to Bocelli rehearsing in the corridor and laughed at the antics of Sharon and Ozzy Osbourne in the canteen. This entire mix of people gathered backstage, giving it a warm, happy atmosphere. Bocelli and Terfel almost literally brought the house down with their duet from *The Pearl Fishers* and we all sat breathtaken at this beautiful sound created by these giants of opera.

Then there was the arrival of Charlotte Church and Gavin Henson – the former staying well out of the way of Dame Shirley Bassey who'd been rather outspoken about her some weeks earlier. Dame Shirley, playing the temperamental diva, remained in her dressing room and it was clear this was a lady who was not to be disturbed! Katherine Jenkins was as radiant as ever, with just about everyone falling a little bit in love with her. She departed from her usual repertoire to perform a rendition of the Donna Summer hit, *I Feel Love*, wearing an A-line flashing, multicoloured dress. She was to return later in the show for a new arrangement, in Italian, of *The Bodyguard* theme tune *I Will Always Love You*.

Sir Cliff Richard was as down to earth and approachable as any could imagine, surprised that he had been asked to join such a talented Welsh line-up to perform a medley of his favourite hits. And Michael Parkinson stood in busy corridors chatting to all who came by, amazed at the beauty of Wales's proud new auditorium. He was one of the co-presenters of the show along with Sharon Osbourne who, when asked whether a male voice choir could appear on next year's X Factor, said: "Oh just imagine it, there's bloody loads of you!". Parky was fascinating as choristers stood with him for lengthy periods discussing his famous TV chatshow guests of the 1970s like Muhammad Ali, Fred Astaire, James Cagney and Henry Fonda. Will Young obviously demanded some privacy, unlike Eastenders heart-throb Nigel Harman (aka Dennis) who sat among the dancers drinking coffee.

McFly were surrounded by members of the West End cast of *Guys and Dolls* backstage in a large canteen area that easily accommodated several hundred diners. It was there that the cast of dancers and singers combined all day long in between rehearsals and busy schedules. Coffee and tea flowed in torrents while a large flat screen showed all that was going on from the stage to the crew behind. The excitement prevailed all day. Singers were tuning up in packed corridors, transvestite ballet dancers twirled around the backstage scenery at every turn. Near-naked dancers painted gold and men wearing blue rubber masks ate egg sandwiches on adjoining tables.

The Royal Regiment of Wales Band, dressed immaculately in their red and black uniforms, armed with their instruments, marched across the gymnasium-like rehearsal

room – one of many in this vast rabbits' warren of a backstage area. It was also a place where everyone, including Bryn Terfel, Il Divo, McFly, comedians Alan Carr and Catherine Tate, sat among us all, watching the show before they were called to appear.

Costume designers and make-up artists were called, many painting the bald heads of the Rhondda choristers to stop glaring reflections from the overhead lights. The 7pm call saw the Treorchy men and Bryn await the arrival of the Royal couple to sing both *God Save the Queen* and *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*. Bright lights, overhead cameras, curtain calls and hidden microphones helped make this experience as exciting, thrilling and nerve-racking as anyone could expect to have encountered. The Queen – wearing a red chiffon gown with a grey woollen shawl – and Prince Philip were welcomed into the stadium. An honour guard was provided by four Welsh Guards, dressed in full ceremonial uniform. It was the start of a magical night of music, laughter and song.

The Joe Pasquale sketch, complete with Bradley Walsh impersonating the King – who was literally in the altogether (apart from a lengthy beard to his knees) – proved one of the favourites of the night and the choir excelled themselves throughout. With every show, it was the finale that so many will remember. The choir, orchestra and a group of dancers in red-feathered headgear awaited the arrival through a trapdoor of Dame Shirley, the Tiger Bay girl done good. Her arrival was typical showbiz as she walked through the crowd of entertainers to perform *Music Is My First Love*.

The audience's reaction was breathtaking. "It's wonderful to be back home in Tiger Bay, now Cardiff Bay," she told them before Sharon Osbourne stepped forward and led the theatre in a hip-hip-hooray for Her Majesty. Within a mere forty seconds the stage was cleared and a large horseshoe shape was formed for all of the performers and representatives of the larger groups. Dean Powell represented the Treorchy Male Choir and was the first in the line-up to be introduced to Her Majesty the Queen. "I'm delighter you were all able to be here," she smiled before being introduced to the next in line. The Duke of Edinburgh followed closely behind as the capacity audience looked on. A night of ovations, applause, thrills and experience. A night none of us would ever forget.

Wednesday November 30 **Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

For the last engagement of 2005 the choir returned home to the Parc and Dare Theatre, sharing the stage with the famous Umfolosi song and dance group from Zimbabwe and the Rhondda Cynon Taf Youth Choir. The choir's conductor was Helena Braithwaite with Janice Ball as accompanist. The choir opened the concert with three items. The introduction of the Umfolosi group brought a heart-warming, welcoming reception and they soon displayed the reasons for their popularity by their glorious singing, versatile dance routines and infectious sense of fun. To end the first half the combined choirs sang Old Time Religion which saw the Treorchy choir on the move for the first time with the raising and waving of arms in the final bars! This brought a tremendous response from the audience.

The Rhondda Cynon Taff Youth Choir contributed, in no small measure, to the evening's enjoyment with their wonderful renderings, together with individual girl and boy choristers performing dance routines with members of the Zimbabwe group. The involvement of the audience with joining in the singing, waving of arms and swinging from side to side in their seats underlined that this was a most happy and delightful audience.

In admiration of their performance and the ties of friendship formed between the Umfolosi group and the choirs and audience, a Treorchy Male Choir shield was presented to the Umfolosi group. This most uplifting, totally enjoyable and unforgettable engagement ended with the singing, in their native tongue, of the Zimbabwe National Anthem.