

A BOY WAS BORN/ BENJAMIN BRITTEN/ CONCORD SINGERS

Concord first performed **A Boy was Born** in December 1970 at St Martin-in-the-Fields. A scan of the programme cover is shown below. At the top of the cover you will see: **Hon. Patron: BENJAMIN BRITTEN**. He remained a Patron for just over three years. We cannot be sure why he agreed to be a Patron but maybe he was impressed by the contents of Concord's invitation letter in 1967 which included:

"The name "Concord" was taken from the second of the Choral Dances, and this particular piece we are always happy to perform as our "signature tune". Singing the Gloriana Dances we won our class with one of the highest marks awarded to any choir in the (Pantfedwen) Eisteddfod. ... We were awarded the Public Prize (Montreux International Choral Festival) by an audience vote, mainly we feel, for the tremendous impact made by the Gloriana Dances again. In fact, the audience stopped the performance at the end of Concord with their applause."

Note that until late 1970 Concord was just Concord Singers. The London was added when it was pointed out by the BBC that another choir – in Maidstone - was also named Concord Singers.

Britten tendered his resignation in 1971. He had always noted that he could only be a "very sleeping partner" but now felt that "... you must really have someone to fill this position who is more use to you and who can attend the occasional performance." A scan of his letter dated 22nd March 1971 is included below.

A letter from Hon. Secretary Mrs P M Cottle regrettably accepted the resignation.

The **Choral Dances** have been performed many times by Concord over the years. It is interesting to note that the first performance of **Gloriana** was on 8th June 1953 at the Royal Opera House – just six days after a 12 year-old **Malcolm Cottle** sung at the Coronation – as a St Paul's Chorister.

Although **A Boy was Born** was composed in 1932/3 it was revised by Benjamin Britten in 1955. This revised version was first performed at the **Grosvenor Chapel** in November 1955. It is perhaps fitting that Concord are performing this work again at the **Grosvenor Chapel in December**.

Other Concord performances of **A Boy was Born** are:

December 1980: St James Piccadilly

December 1999: St John's Waterloo.