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SCALING THE HEIGHTS - SINGCLUDE BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS FOR DISABLED SINGERS

On Wednesday 25 January, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus will open up exciting new possibilities for mobility impaired singers, when BBC Radio 4's Disability Affairs Correspondent Peter White launches its SINGCLUDE PROJECT. Funded by Big Lottery Awards for All, Singclude is centred around the use of a portable electric stair-climber to enable singers with severe mobility impairments to access the, often temporary, seating areas provided for choirs.

Singclude has been a collaboration between the Chorus and Sheffield International Venues Ltd., who are kindly making the City Hall Memorial Hall available for the launch. Richard Hunter, General Manager of Sheffield's City Hall said: "We were very happy to help provide access to the Chorus's performance area for a member who needs to use a wheelchair. Singclude provided the solution and we are delighted that one of SIV's venues is, so far as we know, the first in the UK to employ a stair-climber for this purpose". Chorus Chairman Julie Smethurst said: "It is increasingly well-known that singing is good for you, and singing as part of a choir is even better! Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus aims to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, and our ground-breaking Singclude project takes this to a new level as it opens up choral singing at the highest possible standard to a, so far, very under-represented group of people". Julie added: "We do hope this initiative may inspire others to offer singing opportunities to people with significant mobility impairments thus allowing them to partake of the massive wellbeing benefits of choral singing. Locally we also hope to be able to share our stair-climber with other musical organisations whose members might be able to benefit from using it".

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The Chorus is leading the Cultural Olympiad *Alight* festival on 3 March in the city and would love to see the stair-climber used to ensure that singing colleagues with mobility issues are able to fulfil their dreams of performing at the city's most prestigious concert venue. As Julie adds "In the spirit of this special 2012 year, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus are proud to be able to help local people and we'd love any singers with mobility issues who wish to be a part of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get in touch, and we'll do our very best to help ensure inclusivity for all."

Full details on the Chorus and their Singclude project can be found at www.sheffieldphil.org and tickets for the *Alight* festival shows are available from the City Hall on 2789789 or via the web at <http://www.sheffieldcityhall.co.uk/events>

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Useful Links

Home site - www.sheffieldphil.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT SINGCLUDE - Further details on Singclude are available in the attached document.

PHOTO - A photograph and brief biography of Peter White is attached which may be used in conjunction with this article.

ABOUT SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS

The Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus was founded in 1935 as the resident chorus for the new Philharmonic Society's series of concerts in Sheffield City Hall and was formed from two Sheffield choirs whose origins date back to the 1860s.

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Chorus membership now stands at nearly 200-strong which reflects the increasing profile and quality of this highly successful symphony chorus. Their 75th Anniversary Season of 2010-11 included: five live performances at the City Hall, a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* at Leeds' Town Hall, four shows in the UK leg of the international *Star Wars: In Concert* tour, being featured on 5 December 2010 in BBC One's flagship religious programme *Songs of Praise*, and two broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, Beethoven's 9th Symphony and Liszt's Dante Symphony, both conducted by Gianandrea Noseda.

2012 promises to be a very exciting year for the Chorus, with a performance of Fauré's *Requiem* in the City Hall on 11 February and, on 28 April the first performance in the City Hall of Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man – a Mass for Peace* with the world-famous Black Dyke band. The chorus is also proud to be leading the *Alight* festival, part of Music Nation, a Countdown event for the London 2012 Festival, the finale of the Cultural Olympiad, on 3 March. Their afternoon concert will include rarely-heard works and a brand-new commission by Chorus member Yaron Hollander of Sassoon's "Everyone Sang" in the Victoria Hall as part of this most exciting and prestigious event. In September the Chorus partners with the BBC and the Coventry Cathedral Golden Jubilee festival to perform Sir Arthur Bliss's *The Beatitudes*, which was composed for the opening of the Cathedral, but never actually performed there. Finally, next Christmas will see a welcome return of Handel's *Messiah* to the City Hall when the Chorus performs this much-loved work on 15 December.