



## CONCERT SEASON 2025 - 2026

### WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

150 choral voices Starting at 7.30pm

Saturday 22 NOVEMBER 2025

## DURUFLÉ REQUIEM

## ELGAR ENIGMA VARIATIONS

## HAYDN INSANAE ET VANAE CURAE

## BOULANGER VIEILLE PRIÈRE BOUDDHIQUE

Saturday 6 DECEMBER 2025

## HANDEL MESSIAH

in support of  
charitable causes



Saturday 21 MARCH 2026

## MENDELSSOHN ELIJAH



### TICKETS £10 - £29

www.WFCS.online / 0333 666 3366

Worcester Festival Choral Society is a Registered Charity No 506826

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## CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Summer is drawing to a close and autumn beckons us to our new exciting season. We have much to look forward to in old, well-known and new pieces of music planned for our opening concert. Our committee have been hard at work putting into place the many 'cogs' that need to be lined up for the coming season and my thanks go to them all for the time that they spend preparing in our 'down season' for a smooth, well organised set of concerts. They don't happen without a lot of organisation!

This year, in addition to *Choral Chronicle*, we are going to trial a regular digital newsletter which Jessica (Ticket Secretary) has kindly offered to oversee, so that members can have a copy to refer to. It will basically be ongoing items of news or information that need to be shared with members from time to time, and of course will highlight local concerts or events that members want to share.

I hope you enjoy reading this *Choral Chronicle*, and join me in thanking Sally Rees for editing and producing what is her last one! Many thanks Sally! We are very fortunate to have a new editor in Ellie Peberdy so this popular biennial publication will continue in good hands - thank you for offering Ellie.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our first practice in September.

Sue White (S)  
Chairman



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC



**WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY**

# DURUFLÉ REQUIEM

**WORCESTER CATHEDRAL**  
Saturday 22 November at 7.30pm

**ELGAR ENIGMA VARIATIONS**  
Haydn *Insanae et Vanae Curae*  
Boulanger *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*

**WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY**  
**MERIDIAN SINFONIA**

**Alexis Hutchinson** mezzo soprano  
**Charne Rochford** tenor  
**Samuel Hudson** conductor

**TICKETS £10 - £29**  
[www.WFCS.online](http://www.WFCS.online) / 0333 666 3366  
Local call rate. Booking fees apply.  
Worcester Festival Choral Society is a Registered Charity No 506826

Welcome back to all WFCS members! We have an exciting season ahead this year, starting with our autumn concert featuring the sumptuous *Requiem* by French composer Maurice Duruflé. Members may well have heard or sung this with the (famously difficult!) organ accompaniment, so it will be wonderful to present it in its full orchestration (which, as it happens, still has a very involved part for the organ!). This work will be paired with, alongside two shorter pieces by Haydn and Lili Boulanger, Elgar's magnificent *Enigma Variations*. While there is no part for chorus in this work (and I must ask you to refrain even from humming along...!), I hope members will enjoy the magical experience of hearing this music in our beautiful cathedral, which is a natural home for so much of Elgar's music.

In the spring we turn to one of the choral greats – *Elijah* by Mendelssohn. Being an unapologetic Mendelssohn fan, I am looking forward to this very much indeed. I hope you will be to, and look forward to seeing you soon for what I'm sure will be a wonderful season!

Samuel Hudson  
WFCS Director of Music & Conductor /  
Worcester Cathedral Director of Music



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

It seems a long time since our last WFCS rehearsal but I'm now finalising the registers for the start of the 2025/26 season. We have 7 potential new members joining us in September, some of whom will be joining us following our Come & Sing day in April.

Auditions will be held for 33 people in the few days before our first rehearsal of the term, and I hope that this will reduce the amount of time that Sam needs to be released from rehearsals. There will still be about 6 auditions that need to be completed once term starts.

Most people responded promptly to my email about availability for audition and, for this, thank you. It makes my job so much easier. A couple of people took a number of weeks to respond, and one still hasn't responded, so I'm presuming perhaps that they have decided not to rejoin us in September. This is a plea from me for a prompt response to emails whenever you can, please.

I always enjoy receiving your emails (well, almost always!) and I love to hear your news. The photos of new babies and holidays in faraway places are a privilege to receive. Some of you have been having a very difficult time in the last few months. It is very humbling that little about your difficulties is brought to rehearsals, but we all seem to feel better after singing and music-making together. Your news is not shared with others, apart from very occasional sharing of essential information about your possible needs which I might share only with committee members if necessary. Sometimes your emails make me smile, or even laugh, when I receive them. Thank you for those, and please keep them coming.

Please read to the end of emails that I send, particularly noting any request to “respond using a link” rather than replying to me. It’s flattering that you think I can do so many things, some of them simultaneously, but even though I send out the emails, which is a quick job, it would be really helpful not to have to redirect replies about Come & Sing days and concerts of other choral societies, or how to buy tickets, to the correct person. Email addresses for all committee members are in the Choral Chronicle and also at the front of every concert programme, so if you need to contact anyone you can find their details easily.

I’m really looking forward to seeing you all again at the start of September and am excited by this term’s music, particularly the Duruflé. Let’s hope this season is a good one for all of us and, if you’ve had a time fraught with difficulty, that this is a better year for you, or at least gives you a break and some time to forget those difficulties.

Enjoy your singing!

Alison Riddell (S)  
Membership Secretary



## TENORS WANTED!

**Know a local Tenor (or Bass) who is looking for a fresh challenge with the best large classical choir in the region?!?**



Worcester Festival Choral Society still has a few vacancies for additional Tenors (and a couple of Bases) to join our highly regarded chorus in September.

“If you sing Tenor and think you’d enjoy learning and performing the ‘classical choral greats’ with us in magnificent Worcester Cathedral, we’d love you to try us out!” says chairman Sue White. “We’re a very friendly lot, of all ages and backgrounds. You don’t necessarily need previous choral experience, but some ability to read music is an advantage. The main thing is a love of music!”

As we all know, singing with WFCS is an incredibly rewarding experience, as well as a social opportunity. So please ask around amongst your singing friends and invite them to come along for our first rehearsal of term, with no obligation.

Interested singers should contact Alison Riddell at [membership@wfcs.online](mailto:membership@wfcs.online). Rehearsal dates and concert details are as shown elsewhere in this newsletter. More details at [www.wfcs.online/members](http://www.wfcs.online/members).



## TREASURER'S REPORT

### Some figures from the income and expenditure of WFCS in 2024-25

<b>Concert income</b>	40600	Figures rounded to the nearest £100
<b>Concert costs</b>	66800	
	-----	
<b>Loss on concerts</b>	<b>26200</b>	
<b>Other costs</b>	<b>6200</b>	Insurance, non-reclaimable VAT etc
	-----	
	<b>32400</b>	
	=====	
<b>Other income</b>		
Members' subscriptions	19100	Fundraising includes profit of 1700 on Come and Sing, a legacy of 2000, over 1000 from raffles, 1750 from 100 club
Patrons' subscriptions	4000	
Fundraising and donations	6500	
Gift aid on subscriptions	3400	
Other sources of income	5900	This includes bank interest of 4700
	-----	
	<b>38900</b>	
	=====	
<b>Profit on the year's activities</b>	<b>6500</b>	
	=====	

Having read the above information about the income and expenditure of the society during the season 2024-2025, you will have seen that we made a profit on the year's activities of approximately £6500. Note that a big part of this profit is bank interest of £4400 from fixed term deposit accounts that were invested for a period of 20 months at a time of high interest rates. This must be considered as a one-off bonus.

We know that our costs, such as cathedral charges and soloists' costs, will continue to rise. The committee feels that a gradual increase in members' annual subscription is better than a sudden larger increase and so it is proposed that the subscription for 2025-26 should increase to **£140**.

**I encourage members to pay their subscriptions online. However, you are welcome to continue to pay by handing a cheque to me at a rehearsal. If you can pay online, please quote the WFCS account number 01268312 and sort code 30-99-90 with the reference of WFCS Sub.**

The subscription covers the whole season irrespective of how many concerts a member sings in and must be paid by 1<sup>st</sup> October. Whilst we encourage everyone to pay the full amount by this date, it will be possible, by prior agreement with the Treasurer, to pay in two instalments, the second being paid by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026. The Treasurer can also be approached on an individual basis for a reduced sub in cases of hardship.

Finally, please continue to support the weekly raffles and the 100 Club and do keep up your efforts in selling tickets to our concerts



Barbara Ford (A)  
Treasurer

## TICKET INFORMATION FOR 2025-2026 SEASON

Due to ever-increasing costs, we have had to increase some ticket prices. We have also adjusted the price bands. Children 16 and under continue to be free, if accompanied by an adult. Concessionary rates are applied to under 30s. There is no longer any concession for over 60s.

		Full Price	Concession
Front Nave		£29	-
Centre Nave		£27	£20
Rear Nave	Front 12 rows	£24	£17
	Back 5 rows	£20	£13
Side Aisle		£16	£10

If you have any queries about tickets, please email [tickets@wfcs.online](mailto:tickets@wfcs.online)

### Chorus Discounts

We are offering two discounts to Chorus members this season:

1. **20% off the cost of 3 tickets if you buy one ticket for each of the three concerts.** Tickets need to be booked in one transaction before the November concert and the discount only applies to one ticket per concert.
2. **Buy 6 tickets for the cost of 5.** The six tickets must be for the same concert, Tickets need to be booked in one transaction and the 'free' ticket will be the cheapest one.

**NB These offers are not available on TicketSource. If you wish to take up either of these offers, please email [tickets@wfcs.online](mailto:tickets@wfcs.online) with the following information:**

- How many tickets in total you would like for each concert.
- Where you would like to sit.
- Whether any of the tickets qualify for concessionary rates.
- How many concert programmes you would like to pre-order for each concert.
- If any of your audience members have any special access requirements.

Or, you can complete this Google form: <https://forms.gle/AwD6UyCzMP8bvXja9>

### [Ticket Request](https://forms.gle/AwD6UyCzMP8bvXja9)

After you fill out this form you will be contacted to go over details and availability. Payment will need to be made, ideally by bank transfer to the usual WFCS account, before your tickets are sent out to you.

[forms.gle](https://forms.gle/AwD6UyCzMP8bvXja9)

Jessica Dormer (S)  
Ticket Secretary



## CONCERT NIGHT **VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED**

Do you have a spouse, relative or friend who will be at all three of our concerts this season, and who would be willing to help out at the Box Office on concert nights?

We need someone to help sell tickets on the door. They would need to arrive as the doors open, or a little beforehand, and would be working with the Tickets Secretary until such time as she has to leave the Box Office to get onto the staging, so they would have to cover the last 5 or 10 minutes before the concert starts on their own. They would also need to hang onto any cash taken until the end of the concert, when they can hand it over to either the Ticket Secretary or the Treasurer.

To give you an idea, we tend to sell about a dozen tickets on the door, the vast majority of which are for the unreserved seating, so it is not too hectic, but we do need someone there to cover right up until just before the concert starts.

If you think you might know someone who could help, please email [tickets@wfcs.online](mailto:tickets@wfcs.online)

Jessica Dormer (S)  
Ticket Secretary



## THIS SEASON'S **MUSIC**

For anyone seeking to source their own music, the 2025 – 2026 season is as follows:

### **Autumn Term 2025**

Durufle, *Requiem*, Durand

Boulanger, *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*,

(available to print from

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page) )

Haydn, *Insanae et Vanae Curae*, Novello

### **Spring Term 2026**

Mendelssohn, *Elijah*, New Novello, Pilkington.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in September.



Julie Greenwood (A)  
Librarian



**ELIJAH**

**MENDELSSOHN**

**WORCESTER CATHEDRAL**

**Saturday 21 March** at 7.30pm

**WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY**

**MERIDIAN SINFONIA**

Sarah Fox  
Jeanette Ager  
Dominic Lee  
Edward Grint

soprano  
mezzo soprano  
tenor  
bass baritone

Samuel Hudson

conductor

**TICKETS £10 - £29**

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Local call rate. Booking fees apply

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## TIME TO SAY **GOODBYE**

Some of you already know that I have decided not to return to WFCS this autumn. It was a very difficult decision as I have been a member for many years. I have had many and various roles from selling raffle tickets to editing the website, membership secretary and finally newsletter editor. I have sung with four different musical Directors from Dr Donald Hunt to our current excellent director, Sam. I have enjoyed every minute of my time singing with you all but I think the time has come to make way for someone younger. I wish you a very happy and prosperous season and I look forward to seeing you all at your concerts.



Sally Rees (S)

## CHANGE OF **EDITOR**



Ellie Peberdy (S)

For several years now, one of our long-standing chorus members, Sally Rees (pictured above), has edited this twice-yearly WFCS members' e-newsletter, *The Choral Chronicle*. Sally has however decided not to return to WFCS this season (we'll miss her!) – and with it, is standing down as Editor.

I would like to give a huge vote of thanks to Sally for running *The Choral Chronicle* so marvellously. She has worked extremely hard to collate and prepare this always-interesting newsletter for us at the start and end of each season, producing a varied, informative and eye-catching read. It has been really appreciated by every one of our members. So thank you Sally!

Happily, however, stepping into Sally's shoes going forward is Ellie Peberdy (S). Ellie is extremely invested in all the good things our Society brings, and has produced newsletters in her professional life. Thanks, Ellie, for taking on the Editor's mantle!

Michelle Whitefoot (S)  
Marketing and PR Officer





## YOUR SOCIETY **NEEDS YOU!**

We know how much you all enjoy singing with us but as many of you are aware, prices in every sphere of living are rising. There is now a charge for using the Cathedral for weekly practices, and the price to hire the venue for concerts is being significantly raised, alongside rising costs of soloists and the orchestra. There are many ways in which you can help to boost our funds with very little cost to yourselves [Ed]

### **SELL SELL SELL!**

Your support is vital to get those bums on seats

With WFCS's many operational costs continually escalating, we need absolutely every ticket sale we can get in the coming 25-26 season, to ensure we can continue to perform and share the joy of choral music long into the future. All of the usual elements of the marketing mix will be working hard for us once again in the coming months, from posters and PR to marketing emails and social media, and much more.

**But of course, we'll also need the active support of EVERY chorus member to help spread the word about our concerts and sell as many seats as possible! Please be one of our 150 marketing advocates by...**

- Picking up some A5 and A4 flyers for each concert as they become available, and putting them up on your local neighbourhood, shop and church noticeboards etc. (But not in the 'Scene' display units located in various Worcestershire arts and tourist venues... we already have those covered.)
- Handing out our eye-catching annual WFCS bookmarks to your music-loving family and friends. Bookmarks will be handed out to everyone at our first rehearsal
- Share details of our WFCS website and social media news wherever possible

**Other ways you could support the Society in small, but important ways that add to our funds, include:**

- Becoming an Annual Patron or Friend (or buying one as a gift for someone)
- Buying raffle tickets at rehearsal each week
- Joining the 100 Club
- Shopping on Amazon via our special link
- Playing the weekly Worcestershire Community Lottery

More details on most of these can be found later in this issue. Or visit our website 'Support us' page.

**Here too are your key online resources for seeing and sharing our news far and wide:**

- Website: [www.wfcs.online](http://www.wfcs.online)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WorcsChoral](https://www.facebook.com/WorcsChoral)
- Instagram: [www.instagram.com/worcschoral](https://www.instagram.com/worcschoral)
- X (Twitter) [www.twitter.com/worcschoral](https://www.twitter.com/worcschoral)

**And last but not least, of course, BUY TICKETS! Our 2025-26 season Box Office is already open. Visit [www.wfcs.online](http://www.wfcs.online) or call 0333 666 3366.**

THANK YOU!

Michelle Whitefoot (S)  
Marketing & PR Officer





## SHOP VIA AMAZON



Did you know that you can also add to the Society's funds at no extra cost to you, when you shop online with Amazon? As an 'Amazon Associate', WFCS can earn a small commission from any qualifying Amazon purchases you make. To do this, simply go to [www.wfcs.online/support\\_us](http://www.wfcs.online/support_us), click on our exclusive Amazon link and start shopping! (But NB to achieve commission for WFCS, you MUST click on this link directly from our WFCS website, not by copying/pasting the link into your browser.)

## PLAY THE WORCESTER COMMUNITY LOTTERY



Did you know that you, your friends and family can help support WFCS funds by buying tickets for the Worcester Community Lottery? Thanks to Worcester Community Lottery tickets bought by a small number of loyal supporters to date, around £400 has once again been raised towards WFCS funds through this route in the past year. But with even more players supporting us, we could raise so much more. Several of our supporters have also won money and extra free Lottery tickets along the way and one year, a lucky WFCS member matched 5 numbers and scooped the £2,000 prize!

- Worcester Community Lottery is a weekly online lottery that aims to raise money for local charities and good causes
- Every ticket costs £1. Of this 50p goes directly to the local charity selected by the player. A further 10p goes to other local charities
- The draw takes place every Saturday night at 8pm
- The top prize is £25,000 if 6 numbers are matched, £2,000 if 5 consecutive numbers are matched, and so on.
- The average odds of winning a prize are estimated at 50:1
- Minimum purchase is 1 month (5 wks') worth of tickets (£5 spend)
- Tickets are purchased online at [www.worcesterlottery.org](http://www.worcesterlottery.org)

So please consider playing, and telling your friends. Simply choose Worcester Festival Choral Society as the charity you want to benefit, to help contribute to staging our wonderful concerts.

### HOW TO PLAY

1. Buy your tickets at [www.worcesterlottery.org](http://www.worcesterlottery.org)
2. Choose WFCS from the list of charities you wish to support
3. Check the winning numbers online each Saturday, 8pm

Thank you to all players and  
**GOOD LUCK!**

## JOIN THE WFCS 100 CLUB

Invitations are extended to any of you who would like to support the Society by joining the WFCS 100 Club. Members pay a quarterly subscription to purchase 'shares' which are drawn thrice annually. There are four winners per draw and at least 30% of subscriptions are paid out in prizes, so the more members, the larger the prizes (this year over £40 each).

The funds raised currently pay for about one and a quarter soloists per year: it would be great to make it two! They are not cheap, and are very necessary to our concerts!

We are incredibly grateful to the 40 members of the 100 Club who currently sing with WFCS, and also to the 18 ex-WFCS members who continue to offer their support in this way. Please contact Kate Harrison (alto) [kate.harrisonx@gmail.com](mailto:kate.harrisonx@gmail.com) if you would like to sign up; shares cost just £1 per month each, and can be purchased either singly or in multiples.

## BECOME AN ANNUAL **PATRON OR FRIEND**

### **THERE'S STILL TIME TO APPLY**

**Could you, or a music-lover you know, become an Annual Patron, Friend or Corporate Sponsor of Worcester Festival Choral Society?**

As an independent, self-funding charity, WFCS relies on income from many directions to help us continue to bring top quality concerts to Worcester. So, if you, a friend or relative love choral music, and would like to help its educational, cultural and wellbeing benefits to continue here in our wonderful city, please consider becoming an Annual Patron or Friend of WFCS for our 2025-26 season!

#### **ANNUAL PATRONS: £145 / season**

The traditional way to support what we do, while enjoying whichever concerts you wish, premium tickets included:

- Front Nave ticket at each concert, with priority seat selection (until 15/9/25)
- Complimentary concert programmes
- Interval refreshments with chorus & guests
- Your name in our programmes (optional)
- Biannual WFCS e-newsletter
- Invitations to any WFCS talks & social events
- Open invitation to WFCS rehearsals

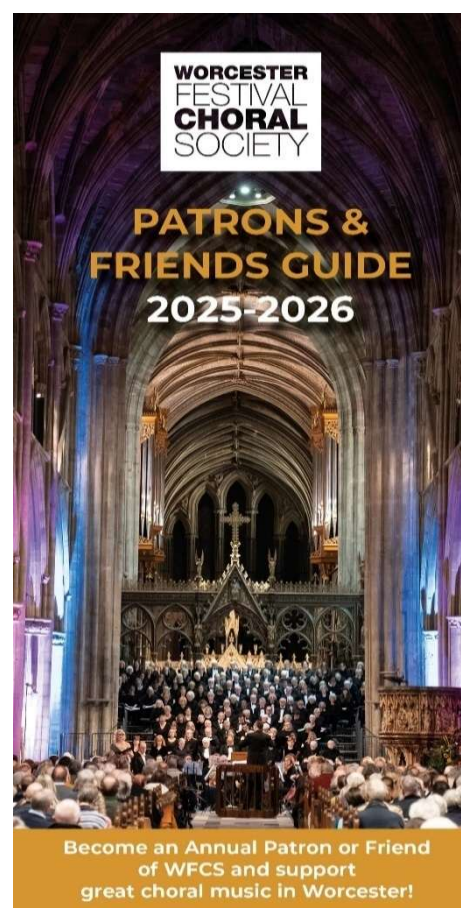
*Special note:* In addition to our growing number of Annual Patrons, we have been delighted to welcome the following as WFCS Honorary Patrons this year:

- Beatrice Grant                      Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire
- Charles Moyle                      High Sheriff of Worcestershire

#### **NEW! FRIENDS: £5 / month (£60 / season)**

A new scheme that's an easy way to support Worcester Festival Choral Society, without the commitment of attending concerts, but with the option of priority booking if you do want to buy a ticket. Payable as a single payment, or £5/month instalments (min 12 months). In thanks, you'll enjoy:

- Priority seat selection on any bookings (until 15/9/25)
- Your name in our programmes (optional)
- Bi-annual WFCS e-newsletter
- Invitations to any WFCS talks & social events



#### **WAYS TO APPLY**

- Complete a printed copy of our 2025-26 season Patrons & Friends Guide leaflet (available at rehearsals from our Marketing Officer Michelle Whitefoot)
- Download a PDF Patrons Guide leaflet from our website Patrons Page <https://www.wfcs.online/pg/become-a-patron/11/>
- Email your interest to our Patrons Ambassador Brian Boswell at [patrons@wfcs.online](mailto:patrons@wfcs.online).
- Corporate sponsorship and display advertising enquiries are also welcome. Email David Haddock (B) at [sponsors@wfcs.online](mailto:sponsors@wfcs.online) to enquire.

## IN MEMORIAM

Sadly recently we have lost three valued friends and colleagues. We remember them here.

### **Melanie Gunn** BMus (Hons) 14 Feb 1964 – 28 May 2025

Mel was a singer, a pianist, a wife, a mother, a teacher, a rower, a gardener and a friend to many many people.

She met and married her husband while at Birmingham University while studying Music and was still married to him when she died. She was mother to two daughters, Felicity and Penelope.

Having sung in the University Choir, Mel joined the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus, performing with them until a move to Bewdley in 1993 made that impractical. Looking for a more local choir Mel joined Worcester Festival Choral Society as a Soprano, relishing not only the regular concerts but also the Three Choirs Festivals which she sang in every time it was at Worcester.



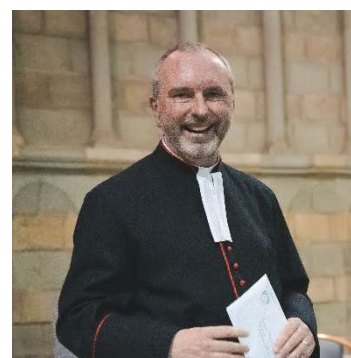
### **Edgar Green** 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1941 – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023



About 30 years ago Edgar's wife, Mary, spotted a small advert in a local newspaper inviting applications to audition for the Worcester Contingent in the Three Choirs Festival Chorus. Having always sung in church choirs and choral societies, Edgar applied, passed the audition and sang in the 1996 Festival in Worcester. He then joined WFCS and has been a valued friend and colleague in the Tenor section ever since, until ill-health prevented him from making the weekly journey from Kingswinford to Worcester for rehearsals. Edgar was a man of many talents and interests embracing natural history, astronomy and sculpture to name but a few and this was apparent among the attendees at his funeral in early June. WFCS was well represented and our singing with the church choir was much appreciated. He is already sorely missed in the tenor section both for his high clear singing voice and his infectious laugh and pints will continue to be sunk in affectionate memory of him.  
RIP Edgar.

### **Canon John Paul Hoskins**

John Paul, 50, was installed as Worcester Cathedral Precentor in January 2022 and had particular responsibility for the Cathedral's music and liturgy. He joined the Cathedral Chapter from the Diocese of Gloucester, where he was Priest-in-Charge of Winchcombe and previously a Minor Canon of Gloucester Cathedral and Chaplain to two Bishops of Gloucester. He was ordained in the Diocese of Derby in 2007 and served his curacy in the Bakewell benefice. Before ordination he was a Lay Clerk at Guildford and Durham Cathedrals.





## OUR FIRST *MESSIAH* BENEFIT CONCERT

Did you know that Handel's magnificent *Messiah* has been doing good in society since 1742? The composer ensured he made each of his *Messiah* concerts a fund-raising benefit performance... making a profound impact on 18<sup>th</sup> century health, well-being and social change by inspiring the world's first purpose-built maternity hospital – the Rotunda, Dublin – as well as London's Foundling Hospital.

Now, echoing that spirit, Worcester Festival Choral Society is delighted to announce a special fund-raising partnership with the [Worcestershire Community Foundation](https://www.worcestershirecommunityfoundation.org.uk) that aims to support the health, well-being and education of children and young people across our county.

Through charitable donations made with ticket purchases, and additional philanthropic donors, we hope to raise a significant sum for the Worcestershire Community Foundation each December. This local grant-making charity supports Worcestershire by championing smaller community groups, and connecting donors of all kinds with local causes that really matter. In 2023-24 it distributed over £600k of funding, supporting 93 county projects ([www.worcscf.org.uk](https://www.worcscf.org.uk)).

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY

The inaugural performance of  
**HANDEL'S MESSIAH**  
in support of charitable causes

WORCESTER CATHEDRAL  
Saturday 6 December at 7:30pm

WORCESTER FESTIVAL CHORAL SOCIETY  
MERIDIAN SINFONIA

Amy Carson	soprano
Frances Gregory	mezzo soprano
Simon Wall	tenor
Tim Dickinson	bass baritone
Samuel Hudson	conductor

WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**TICKETS £10 - £29**  
www.WFCS.online / 0333 666 3366  
Local call rate and booking fees apply  
Worcester Festival Choral Society is a Registered Charity No 506826

We therefore invite you to celebrate *Messiah*'s musical and philanthropic legacy by adding a charitable donation when buying your *Messiah* tickets – no matter how small, and if you feel able to do so. Every penny raised (subject to 5% TicketSource processing fee) will go to Worcestershire Community Foundation funds, for distribution in grants to the most deserving youth-related causes in our county. Thank you for your support.

### How to donate

Our TicketSource Box Office has now been set up to offer the option of making a voluntary donation to the Worcestershire Community Foundation when purchasing *Messiah* concert tickets.

In addition, if you know of any companies or individuals who might be interested in becoming independent philanthropic donors, please contact Anne Renshaw at [development@wfcs.online](mailto:development@wfcs.online).



The picture on the left shows some members of the Monday Night Club. Just one of the Worcestershire charities supported by the WCF.

## THREE CHOIRS **HEREFORD**

From Palestrina to Blackford in 8 Days!

Hereford 2025, what a blast! Having been in the Three Choirs Festival Chorus since 2009, I have sung a wide repertoire. Every year I love the challenge of learning new repertoire, and testing my singing ability to the max. As always, there are works which are not to my taste, and so then, at the concert it is difficult to be hugely enthused. This year, during the rehearsals I did have question marks over the Bliss and the Coleridge-Taylor. There is always a fear when one hears the phrase “rarely performed” or “re-discovered”. For me, “*Mary of Magdala*” by Bliss was not a highlight, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. “*The Atonement*” by Coleridge-Taylor however came to life with the orchestration and really is a work worthy of resurrection. Sam was at his best at the helm, and the rapturous applause went on and on.



*Worcester contingent of the Three Choirs Festival Chorus 2025* © Delish Photography

This year, the chorus was absolutely on its mettle and every concert received superb reviews commenting on the precision and high calibre of the chorus.

For me, there was an unexpected highlight, and that was being a caterer to the Royals. Their Royal Highnesses, The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester came to hear Handel’s “*Alexander’s Feast*” sung by the Cathedral Choirs. They had contacted The Three Choirs office saying that they would like sandwiches or something similar as they wouldn’t have time to stop to eat on their way, but in particular could the Duke have chocolate brownies. So, I ended up as caterer, and my brownies gained Royal approval!

During the week, it is lovely to catch up with Festival friends and members from the other cities. This year, following on from the popular refreshments organised by Sue White last year at Worcester, all the contingents provided cakes etc for the massed rehearsals. It was a wonderful, friendly competition between the three cities and helped unify us all to become one chorus.



There are so many highlights it is impossible to mention them all, but suffice to say, it was a wonderful week for everyone involved, and we the Worcester contingent as always were very proud to take part. Roll on Gloucester, and then in 2027 Worcester again!

Ben Cooper (B)  
Worcester City Choir  
Three Choirs Festival



Copies of the Chorus photo can be ordered on request to Delish Photography:  
email photographer Ben Whatley at [delishphotographyuk@hotmail.com](mailto:delishphotographyuk@hotmail.com)  
or complete the online contact form: <https://delishphotography.co.uk/contact>

## THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

We are most grateful to Katie Neale (A) for her generous sponsorship of the Alto soloist, Frances Gregory, at our performance of *Messiah* this December. Katie made this donation to thank WFCS and her friends in the chorus for supporting her through a very difficult time. The gift is indeed a wonderful gesture that will mean a great deal to all of us. Katie has kindly agreed that I can share her story with you below [Ed]

I have been a member of WFCS for around ten years and although choral singing is something I have done since my schooldays, lots of travelling for work and a spell working in Dorset meant that I had missed out on singing with a choir for the better part of twenty years. When I returned to Worcestershire, joining a choir was a priority and after dipping my toe back in choral waters with Pershore Choral and Stratford upon Avon Choral Society, my first concert with WFCS was Bach's *B Minor Mass*. This may have seemed ambitious but in fact I had sung this with Stratford the previous season so it felt like just the right moment to join. Singing with WFCS, for me, has always been about doing something once a week that is sacrosanct. It is my opportunity to leave work at the cathedral door, empty my mind and concentrate on lovely music. I am of the firm belief that singing is good for your physical and mental health. It is impossible to allow worries to creep in when you are concentrating on a difficult but glorious piece of classical music. .... Even when fingers and toes are in danger of frostbite in the cathedral in the depth of winter!



Katie Neale (A)

In summer 2024, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and have been receiving treatment ever since. The doctors wouldn't allow me to sing with WFCS last season due to the risk of infection during chemotherapy and this was one of the hardest sacrifices I had to make. Almost as difficult as losing my hair. But over the last year, despite not being able to sing with the choir, membership of WFCS has been nothing less than a lifeline. The support I have received from various members of the committee and choir members has been absolutely wonderful. I would like to single out in particular some of my fellow altos, a number of whom have been through breast cancer treatment themselves whose constant support over the last year has been fantastic. Somehow, one or another of my fellow altos always managed to email me or message me at the just the right moment in the depths of treatment. Several of them made a point of coming to see me in person to have a cup of tea and keep me from staring at the four walls wondering when all this would be over. We've



even had a lovely afternoon tea together to celebrate my getting the all-clear on a beautiful sunny afternoon last month.

I cannot thank my WFCS friends enough for helping me get through the last twelve months but as a way of expressing my heartfelt thanks, I will be sponsoring the alto soloist for our Messiah concert. I've always known that choral singing is good for you but being part of a choir has proved to me that this is the case in so many ways beyond singing. I still have some recovery to get through but I very much hope to join you all again in September and I cannot wait to be singing with WFCS once again.

Katie Neale (A)

## PATRON'S MEMORIES

I am indebted to former WFCS bass and now Annual Patron Geoffrey Fearnough for this fascinating insight into the concert halls of the past. [Ed.]

It all started in a circus.....yes, a circus and furthermore a circus in a zoo! My musical life had perhaps an unusual start. Manchester's Free Trade Hall had been bombed in the war, and the only place where concerts could be held was the circus in Belle Vue Zoo. As an 11-year-old boy, concerts were very appealing because they were preceded by a free visit to the zoo. The circus was a timber building with seating all around the central circus ring. It was here that John Barbirolli and the Halle Orchestra held regular concerts and the 5000 seats were always fully booked.



The Orchestra and conductors came on stage via the usual entrance for lions and elephants and the aroma from the previous night's circus can be easily imagined! Ventilation was provided by huge fans installed in

the walls. The only problem was they were fitted with flaps to stop backdrafts and in strong winds the regular banging noises provided unwanted percussion. More extra percussion was evident when rain fell and the noise on the roof often obliterating quiet music. Still, this did not put off such artists as Moiseiwitsch, Solomon, Isobel Bailey, Kathleen Ferrier, and the Berlin Philharmonic. In the early 1950s, the Free Trade Hall was rebuilt and was a delight, although reputedly with a rather dry acoustic. It was there in 1958, that I first heard *Mahler's Symphony No.2* and became a lover of his music ever since.

Milton Hall in Manchester was another hall I experienced where the BBC Northern Orchestra, as the BBC Philharmonic was called, broadcast its live concerts. My father knew one of the leaders of the orchestra and arranged for me to sit in on a number of broadcasts conducted by Charles Groves in his early days. So, there was the orchestra at one end of the hall and at the other end was a large open area with me in my short trousers, if you can imagine, sitting alone facing the orchestra and waiting for the red light to come on.

Moving to the NE introduced me to one of the worst concert halls I have experienced. The Newcastle City Hall was a 1930s style Civic Hall and the local authorities decided to influence the already dry acoustic by carpeting the whole floor with disastrous effect. The other problem was that the concert hall was connected to the adjacent swimming baths with the result that regular springboard diving introduced unwanted drum-like percussion during concerts. Also, the heating could not be isolated from that in the swimming pool, which, being hot, was stifling in the hall. There was no air-conditioning except on one wall where windows could be opened but being directly alongside a main road with motorbikes and cars added more noise. Also, there were double fire doors all along that side and when visiting orchestras came, their coaches would park with engines running for up to half an hour, filling the hall with Diesel fumes. Unfortunately, we left before the new Sage, Gateshead was completed.

We sang in the 80-strong chorus for about eight operas in the lovely Victorian Newcastle Theatre Royal. At least it was lovely in front of the proscenium but backstage was rather smelly affair with makeup paint and old drains. One occasion, however, is worth recalling. *Turandot* required a number of men to stand for a long time clad in faux armour. Unfortunately, one of them appeared to faint straight forward to the edge of the stage and collapsed down a considerable height into the orchestra pit demolishing a cello. Fortunately, being protected by the armor, he was unharmed although I don't know the fate of the cello! We all feared that part in the opera in following performances, in case someone else should be afflicted.

Newcastle did have the advantage of being within travelling distance of Edinburgh, and we enjoyed the wonderful Usher Hall, and concerts with renowned artists (such as Brendel and Curzon) and international orchestras. One of these was noteworthy because the LSO under Abbado were broadcasting the Berlioz *Te Deum*. This demands a major part for organ but the hall was not that wonderful because the organ broke down days before the concert. This was solved by placing about 36 large loudspeakers along the back of the stage and relaying the organ played by Gillian Weir in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, over a mile away. It was a great surprise that at the end the organist appeared on stage to receive her applause, having been driven by police escort from the cathedral to the Usher Hall.

When we moved to Malvern, we had the wonderful advantage of the Birmingham Symphony Hall within reach with the CBSO, and we have enjoyed many concerts in the eras of Rattle, Oramo and Nelsons. The hall was an eye-opener in its visual appeal, and more importantly, it's wonderful acoustics.

Finally, what highlights? Well, too many to list but I'll just mention one or two - *Mahler 2nd and 8ths* (also singing in both) and Monserrat Caballé in *Maria Stuarda* at Naples Opera.

Geoff Fearnough, Tenor 2 and Bass1 (retd.)

## WFCS DIARY DATES 2025-26

Any ongoing revisions will be notified to members and published on our website Members page.

### Autumn Term 2025




September	Mon 8	19.30	<b>St Andrew's</b>	First rehearsal (arrive early to collect music)
	Mon 15	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 22	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 29	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
October	Mon 6	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 13	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 20	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	<b>Mon 27</b>	-	-	<b>HALF TERM</b>
November	Mon 3	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 10	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 17	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	<b>Sat 22</b>	<b>13.30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>Compulsory rehearsal (ends 16:30)</b>
		<b>19.30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>AUTUMN CONCERT (line up 19:00)</b>
	Mon 24	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
December	Mon 1	19.30	<b>St Andrew's</b>	Rehearsal
	<b>Sat 6</b>	<b>13.30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>Compulsory rehearsal (ends 16:30)</b>
		<b>19.30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>MESSIAH CONCERT (line up 19:00)</b>

### Spring Term 2026

January	Mon 5	19.30	Worc Cathedral	First rehearsal (arrive early to collect music)
	Mon 12	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 19	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 26	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
February	Mon 2	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 9	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	<b>Mon 16</b>	-	-	<b>HALF TERM</b>
	Mon 23	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
March	Mon 2	19.30	<b>St Andrew's</b>	Rehearsal
	Mon 9	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	Mon 16	19.30	Worc Cathedral	Rehearsal
	<b>Sat 21</b>	<b>13.30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>Compulsory rehearsal (ends 16:30)</b>
		<b>19:30</b>	<b>Worc Cathedral</b>	<b>SPRING CONCERT (line up 19:00)</b>



## WFCS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

 <p><b>CHAIRMAN</b> Sue White (S) chairman@wfcs.online 07970 597229</p>	 <p><b>TICKET SECRETARY</b> Jessica Dormer (S) tickets@wfcs.online 07939 695113</p>
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### **PRESIDENT**

The Acting Lord Bishop of Worcester  
The Rt Revd Martin Gorick

### **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT**

The Dean of Worcester  
The Revd Canon Dr Stephen Edwards

### **VICE PRESIDENTS**

Dr Christopher Robinson CVO CBE  
Adrian Lucas MA FRCO (CHM)  
Dr Peter Nardone  
Christopher Allsop

### **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

Samuel Hudson

### **ACCOMPANIST**

Nicholas Freestone

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