

CHORAL INSPIRATIONS

When you're in a choir, it's about blending into how everyone else sounds.

Jamila Woods

I truly thought I was going to be in pop music. And then I joined a choir to meet girls and everything changed in the first rehearsal.

Eric Whitacre

Group singing is cheaper than therapy, healthier than drinking, and certainly more fun than working out. It is the one thing in life where feeling better is pretty much guaranteed.

Anonymous

Of all the arts, music is the one communal art. It requires for its existence extensive cooperation and organization...Singing together the greatest choral music of all time is the surest way of developing in a community that sense of quality and reverence for beauty, which is the basis of a musical culture.

Edgard Varese

I have such happy memories of performing in a choir and I don't think I'd have got where I am today without all that experience. Choral music at any level teaches you so much about musicianship and blending your voice.

Katherine Jenkins

A choir is made up of many voices, including yours and mine. If one by one all go silent then all that will be left are the soloists. Don't let a loud few determine the nature of the sound. It makes for poor harmony and diminishes the song.

Vera Nazarian

I belong to a gospel choir. They know I'm an atheist but they're very tolerant.

Brian Eno

Sing, then. Sing, indeed, with shoulders back, and head up so that song might go to the roof and beyond to the sky. Mass on mass of tone, rich with quality, every single note a carpet of colour woven from basso profundo, and basso, and baritone, and alto, and tenor, and soprano, singing and singing, until life and all things living are become a song.

Richard Llewellyn

I'm not a great deductive thinker, but I will admit to having competence in a very wide range of things – not being afraid to try to write about baseball, choral music and dinosaurs in the same week and see connections among them.

Stephen Jay Gould



ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

2023-24

President

Marcus Farnsworth MA DipRAM ARAM

Vice Presidents

Sasha Johnson Manning

Stephen Threlfall

Stephen Williams

Musical Director

Neil Taylor

Vision for the Future

St George's Singers has the reputation of being one of the leading choruses in the North West. I am committed to maintaining the highest possible standards in the Choir and developing the musical skills of its members. I also want to continue to expand the repertoire of the choir, providing audiences with performances of the highest quality of works drawn from all periods and genres, from Monteverdi to jazz.

Neil Taylor

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SOME RECENT CONCERTS

Mahler Symphony No 3, with European Doctors Orchestra, Bridgewater Hall, September 2023

Duke Ellington *Sacred Concert*, with Mary Carewe and the Cottontail Orchestra, The Stoller Hall, June 2023

Walton *Belshazzar's Feast*, Huddersfield Town Hall and Gorton Monastery, with Slaithwaite Symphony Orchestra, June 2022

Mahler Symphony No. 8, Bridgewater Hall, with Chetham's Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, as part of Chetham's 50th Anniversary celebrations, July 2019

Bach *Mass in B minor*, Gorton Monastery with Northern Baroque, Rebecca Lea, Eleanor Gar-side, Joyce Tindsley, Richard Dowling. Marcus Farnsworth, March 2019

Mahler Symphony No. 2, with Slaithwaite Symphony Orchestra at Gorton Monastery, Sep-tember 2018

John Rutter's Christmas Festival, Bridgewater Hall, with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The King's Singers and John Rutter, 2017

Diamond Anniversary Concert, 'Six Centuries of Song', RNCM, 2017

Brahms *German Requiem*, RNCM, with Elizabeth Watts, Marcus Farnsworth and Northern Chamber Orchestra, 2016

Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*, Gorton Monastery, 2015

Bach *Magnificat*, Buxtehude *Membra Jesu nostri*, RNCM, 2015

Handel *Dixit Dominus* and Vivaldi *Gloria*, Gorton Monastery, 2013

'Spanish Gold' – Spanish and South American choral works from baroque to modern day

'Vivat!' – music for royal celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee at Gorton Monastery, with Fine Arts Brass, 2012

Handel *Messiah*, Gorton Monastery, 2011

'Britten at 100' – 2013 centenary celebration concert at RNCM

Bach *St John Passion* at Bridgewater Hall, with Manchester Camerata, with Julia Doyle, Clare Wilkinson, Andrew Staples, Mark Stone, Matthew Hargreaves, 2011

'Eastern Voices' – Janáček, Górecki, Kodály and Dvořák, Gorton Monastery, 2011

Monteverdi *Vespers*, Gorton Monastery, with Chetham's Baroque Orchestra, 2010,

Will Todd *Mass in Blue*, Royal Northern College of Music, 2009, with Tina May and RNCM Jazz Ensemble and on tour to Costa Rica, 2017

Bach *Mass in B minor*, Bridgewater Hall, with Manchester Camerata, Nancy Argenta, Rebecca Outram, Tim Mead, Mark Wilde and Michael George, 2008

Rachmaninov *Vespers*, Gorton Monastery, 2008 and The Stoller Hall, 2017

Bach *St Matthew Passion*, Bridgewater Hall, with Manchester Camerata and James Gilchrist, Christopher Purves, Joanne Lunn, Alexandra Gibson, Robert Murray and Andrew Foster-Williams, 2006

USEFUL CONTACTS

Chair	John Smith	01422 359073
Secretary	Jacqui Smith	01625 857437
Librarian	Gwyneth Pailin	0161 483 2924
Soprano Rep	Gillian Banks	01924 213949
Alto Rep	Sue Mason	01625 427882
Tenor Rep	Mark Warrington	01625 611915
Bass Rep	Paul Burfitt	01625 829213

Choir website www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

Members' area Username Saint
Password Georges

There is a link to the members area on the public site, but it can also be opened directly by going to: www.take2theweb.com/pub/manchester/sgsmembers/

Announcements lighton@btinternet.com

Events mpdennis1@hotmail.co.uk

News for website stgeorgessingers.johnsmith@gmail.com OR
Peter.giles@zen.co.uk

Hemiola joannabluck@gmail.com

WELCOME TO ST GEORGE'S SINGERS



A very warm welcome to St George's Singers – and to what I hope will be many years enjoyable and exciting music-making with a group of people who will I am sure become your good friends.

We are a large choir, with over 100 members, and for new members it can be quite daunting getting to grips with the organisation. So to help new Singers feel at home more quickly, we have put together in this Handbook all the important information you need to know about how the

Choir runs itself, our ambitions and the principles on which we operate, lots of practical guidance about rehearsal and concert arrangements, as well as ways in which you can contribute to our continuing reputation as one of the North West's leading choral groups.

There may be a lot of us, but we are a friendly bunch, receptive to change, so if you have any suggestions for improvement please do not hesitate to feed your thoughts back to me, or through your Section Representative. This will help us to continue our drive towards greater professionalism and choral excellence.

I look forward to singing with you and once again a warm welcome. Enjoy your time with us and ask anyone if you have any questions!

John Smith
Chair
St George's Singers

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' MISSION STATEMENT

St George's Singers (SGS) is a registered charity whose purpose is to perform, promote, educate and advocate for a broad range of choral music, and to provide an arena in which members can enjoy and benefit from high-quality choral singing. We support the artistic endeavours of all musicians, amateur and professional, especially young musicians, through commissions, appointments, guest performances, joint concerts with schools and colleges, workshops, singing days, Choir tours and other opportunities.

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' CORE VALUES

Enjoyment and Advocacy – We strive to instil and foster a love for the choral arts and a passion for singing in our members and audience through high-quality performances, varied and innovative programming, and each member's full engagement in the rehearsal process. To help achieve this, the Choir is led by a professional director of music and supported by a professional accompanist.

Friendliness and Sociability – We seek to achieve high standards of performance within an enjoyable, inclusive and friendly organisation. Members attend rehearsals for the challenges and rewards of singing as part of an ensemble, the enjoyment of the music and the support and friendship of those they sing with.

Education and Development – We value our reputation as an organisation dedicated to high choral and performance standards. To support this, we hold auditions for prospective members and regular re-auditions for existing members, [and support members' individual musical education and development with vocal coaching sessions](#). Through partnerships with local school groups and music educators and colleges, we provide opportunities for young musicians' career development in performance as singers and instrumentalists and in choral training as assistant musical directors.

Community Engagement – We strive to raise community awareness of a wide range of choral music and to engage with other organisations in support of choral performance within both the local (Poynton and South Manchester) and the wider community.

Financial Stability – As a registered charity, we maintain financial viability, with fundraising activities and expenditure aligned to regulations and appropriate to achieving our objectives.

Well-being and Reputation – We wish to contribute to the well-being of individual members, and the Choir as a whole, through our supportive and thoughtful behaviour towards each other, respecting diversity, and maintaining high personal standards. Our reputation as a Choir is important to us, and we expect members to be vigilant and mindful of this in all external interactions such as through social media, or through any contact with other organisations.

CONCERT VENUES

We give our concerts at a number of venues around the Manchester area, depending on the scale of the work, the acoustics and atmosphere that matches the music, and the likely audience. Amongst our regular venues are:

St George's Church, Stockport

The regular venue for our carol concert, we usually give a couple of concerts a year in this impressive church of cathedral proportions.

The Monastery, Gorton

Following a multimillion-pound renovation, The Monastery at Gorton is an amazing space in which to perform, and is particularly suitable for a capella choir and chamber orchestra concerts.

St George's Church, Poynton

Our home church is small, so not suitable for major concerts. We hold our Singing Day here each year, and occasional community events.

Bridgewater Hall

The Choir likes to put on a major concert at the Bridgewater Hall every few years, with internationally renowned soloists and orchestras, as well as collaborating with other choirs and orchestras.

Royal Northern College of Music

We often give concerts at RNCM with members of the various College orchestras and ensembles, ranging from classical to jazz.

Manchester Cathedral

Recent concerts in the Cathedral have included Ellington's *Sacred Concert*, works by Gabrieli, Pärt and Schütz, and Poulenc's *Gloria*/Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* in 2024.

The Stoller Hall

This new concert hall adjoins Chetham's School of Music in the centre of Manchester, and we were invited to perform there as part of its inaugural season.

St Michael's Church, Bramhall

[A new venue for us in 2022, with a lovely acoustic quality and a welcoming atmosphere for singers and audience alike.](#)

You will be given directions to concert venues, and all details of timings and organisation arrangements at least a week before each concert.

SOCIAL EVENTS

We are an active and sociable choir with formally organised social events per season and a myriad of informal get-togethers, concert outings etc. Don't wait to be asked – send round an email and organise it! Post-rehearsal drinking takes place either at the Cask Tavern or the Farmer's Arms on Park Lane in Poynton.

Come and Sing

Once a year we open up rehearsal to anyone who wishes to come along for the evening and join in with the Choir. This is usually in the spring term. If you know of anyone who is thinking of joining St George's Singers, or who just wants to find out what goes on at a choral rehearsal, please encourage them to come along.

Tour

St George's Singers tour most years, alternating between foreign and UK tours, usually on the last Bank Holiday weekend in May to suit as many people as possible. As well as a packed singing agenda there is a great amount of fun had by all! Recent tours have visited Bristol, Belgium, North Wales, Costa Rica (special Diamond Anniversary tour), Paris, the Malverns, Prague, Dublin, Hungary, Suffolk, Finland and Estonia. Touring is entirely voluntary, and details are announced well in advance. Non-singing partners are welcome, and usually contribute greatly to the enjoyment, as well as taking photos, selling programmes, and rounding up audiences!

Listening Group

Once a month a music appreciation group gathers on Zoom to listen to and discuss a piece of music: choral works, chamber music, song cycles, symphonies and concertos have all featured. The group is open to all Choir members and Friends of the Choir, and if you wish to join in, contact Rosemary Broadbent (alto) who leads the group, and provides stimulating and fascinating background to the music.

Social Evening

An end-of-season social event is held on the Tuesday after our final concert of the season, at which Choir members are invited to show off their talents, and say farewell to friends before we leave for the summer break.

Choir Mascot

Our Choir mascot is the elk George, who met us on our 2004 tour to Finland, moved to the UK, and comes to all our concerts.



CHOIR HISTORY

St George's Singers was formed in 1956 by Rev Eric Chapman, Vicar, and Geoffrey Verney, Organist and Choirmaster of St George's Church, Poynton where the Choir still rehearses every Tuesday night.

After Geoffrey Verney's sudden and untimely death in 1964, Duncan Eyre, Organist and Choirmaster at St Peter's in Hale came to 'help out' – and stayed for twenty years. He was supported by Tim Hill, accompanist to the Choir for 23 years. During this period the Singers, now grown to 100 voices, performed all the major works of the choral repertoire, highlights being *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1969 and *St Matthew Passion* in 1973.

Ray Lomax, principal timpanist with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, became Musical Director of the Singers in 1987 and expanded the repertoire of the Choir considerably, giving British premieres of works by Scandinavian composers Otto Olsson and Ingvar Lidholm. In December 1993 the Singers performed to critical acclaim in a Classical Spectacular at GMex (now called Manchester Central) in Manchester before an audience of 9,000. Ray also took the Choir to Germany in 1989 and Belgium in 1991, which began a tradition of regular touring.

When Ray left the Choir in 1996 to pursue other interests, St George's Singers was extremely fortunate in attracting Stephen Williams to become its Musical Director. Stephen was a chorister at Carlisle Cathedral for five years, and after Leeds University, he studied singing and conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music. Under Stephen's dynamic and inspirational leadership the Singers went from strength to strength, expanding in numbers, repertoire and reputation. Highlights included an exciting interpretation of Bach's *B minor Mass* at the Royal Northern College of Music and a moving *St John Passion* at the Church of the Holy Name in Manchester, both with the Northern Chamber Orchestra. The Choir's most ambitious venture during this period was *Elijah* in November 2004 with Sir Willard White, Mark Padmore and Manchester Camerata in a sold-out Bridgewater Hall. The *Manchester Evening News* reported that 'it was the superbly drilled massed voices of the chorus which made the performance', a judgement with which the audience enthusiastically agreed as the Choir rose for its bow.

In 2006, Stephen's career took him away from conducting and back to education, as he was appointed Director of Music at Uppingham School. Once again though, the Singers were fortunate to find an outstanding conductor in Neil Taylor.

Since his appointment as Musical Director in September 2006, Neil has continued to build on and expand the Choir's tradition for innovation and excellence. Under his

leadership, the Singers have performed works by 20th-century American composers such as Whitacre, Lauridsen and Bernstein (including *Chichester Psalms*), presented a programme spanning all decades of English choral music in a concert entitled 'Elgar and After', and presented two performances of Rachmaninov's *Vespers* in the newly renovated Gorton Monastery – the second by popular demand following the sell-out first concert. This was followed by something completely different – Will Todd's *Mass in Blue*, accompanied by the RNCM's Jazz Ensemble and jazz vocalist Tina May, whilst Haydn's *Creation*, and Handel's *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah* have represented the more traditional repertoire.

In June 2008 Neil made his debut at the Bridgewater Hall with St George's Singers and Manchester Camerata in Bach's *Mass in B minor*, with a line-up of international soloists including Canadian soprano Nancy Argenta and Rebecca Outram. In 2010 Neil directed the Choir in another sell-out performance at Gorton Monastery of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, described by one critic as 'a concert that was inspiring to both performers and audience: one to be savoured and remembered for a very long time'. More recently, we have celebrated Britten's centenary and Shakespeare's 400th anniversary at RNCM, commemorated the end of the First World War with a special commission from Sasha Johnson Manning, raised the roof of Gorton Monastery with Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, joined in the Queen's Jubilee festivities with *VIVAT!* and sung in Spanish, Italian, French, Czech, Russian – and Quechuan! In 2016–17, our Diamond Anniversary season, we celebrated in style with one of the UK's leading sopranos, Elizabeth Watts, in Brahms' *German Requiem* and Verdi's *Requiem*, and finished the season with a tour to Costa Rica.

As a Choir, we are committed to working with young people to encourage their interest in choral music and provide them with opportunities to nurture their talent. To this end, we have developed close and rewarding ties with Chetham's School of Music, Royal Northern College of Music and local schools. We are regularly invited to perform with other musical ensembles in prestigious events. Recent collaborations include performances of Mahler's Symphony No 2 [and Walton's Belshazzar's Feast](#) with Slaithwaite Symphony Orchestra, [Mahler's Symphony No 3 with European Doctors Orchestra](#), John Rutter's Christmas Festival with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Beethoven's 9th Symphony with Stockport Symphony Orchestra, Mahler's Symphony No 8 with Chetham's Chorus and Orchestra, and Bach's *St John Passion* with Manchester Camerata. We also support contemporary composers, both local and internationally known, and have commissioned works from composers including Will Todd, Sasha Johnson Manning, Martin Bussey and David Jepson.

[tions. See the Treasurer for more information.](#)

- The profit on hot and cold drinks sold during the rehearsal interval accumulates to a significant sum by the end of the season.
- Talent sales – members are encouraged to use their skills and sell their talents or products to other members and donate the proceeds to choir funds.
- Second-hand books and CDs – these are on sale each week at rehearsal.

If you have any ideas for, or would like to get involved in fundraising, please get in touch with any of the committee members.

Online Charity Shop

St George's Singers has an online charity shop, on which we receive commission on all sales. Retailers include major high street and internet stores, travel, holiday, insurance and other companies. Please consider using this shop – it costs you nothing, but raises funds for the Choir. You can access the shop through the Choir website (go to 'Online Shopping'), or directly at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/st-georges-singers/. [To date the Choir has raised well over £1,900 through our charity shop. Please support it!](#)

The Cheshire Consort

Drawn from members of St George's Singers, The Cheshire Consort sings at weddings and other events throughout the year in the Cheshire/North Wales area. The choir performs a wide repertoire of sacred and secular works. All proceeds raised go to fund St George's Singers' work in promoting choral music. Any member of the Choir can join The Cheshire Consort, but please be aware that once you are committed to sing at an event (for which we get paid), you must be sure that you will be able to attend. Ali McLay (soprano) coordinates The Cheshire Consort, and announces forthcoming bookings as they arise. The website of the Consort is www.cheshireconsort.org.uk.

Friends of St George's

Please consider inviting your friends or members of your family to support the Choir by becoming 'Friends of St George's'. For further details, see Barbara Forshaw (alto). Becoming a Friend is also a way of maintaining contact with the Choir if you are unlucky enough to have to move away!

Sponsorship

We are actively seeking individual, lottery and corporate sponsorship. If you have any experience of this, or know anyone who can help (employers, business contacts, friends or relatives), please contact the Chair.

PUBLICITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We encourage all Choir members to be proactive in seeking out marketing and publicity opportunities. However, any opportunities identified should always be directed to the Committee or the Publicity Secretary in the first instance to ensure any proposed activities are in line with our marketing strategy, and do not conflict with other marketing actions being taken.

St George's Singers has official Facebook, Instagram and Twitter/X accounts. Jean Egerton (alto) is in charge of Facebook, and Pete Durrant manages Twitter and Instagram. Please help to publicise the Choir and our concerts by linking/sharing posts on both these accounts to your own pages.

Please be extremely careful about any comments you make on your personal pages about the Choir, or individual Choir members, which could be regarded as detrimental to our reputation. Do not post any close-up photos of members of the Choir without asking permission of the individual(s) concerned. **On no account** post photos of children or young musicians who may be performing with us.

If you or someone you know has made an unofficial recording of any St George's concert or event, do not upload it to social media (such as YouTube) before the Musical Director is given the opportunity to review and comment on the recording. We want to ensure that everything that we do is, and is seen to be, of the highest possible quality.

Occasionally (eg at specific venues, or for concerts in which we have been invited to perform) Choir members are offered tickets at discount prices, or may benefit from other special deals. These special deals apply only to St George's Singers, and should not be offered publicly through social media.

FUNDRAISING

We frequently perform concerts in prestigious venues and usually use professional soloists and orchestras. This is very expensive, so we are constantly looking for ways to raise extra funds.

There are lots of ways Choir members can help with fundraising, whether it be large sponsorship or pennies each week:

- The 100 Club – shares cost £15 each and you can purchase as many as you wish to increase your chances of winning a cash prize, drawn annually. You can buy a 100 Club share when you pay your subscription.
- [If you sign the Gift Aid form we reclaim tax on your subscriptions and dona-](#)

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' MUSICAL TEAM

MUSICAL DIRECTOR – NEIL TAYLOR



Neil is a sought after and renowned choral director, organist, piano accompanist, teacher and coach, based in the North West of England.

After winning a Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, Neil held cathedral appointments in St Albans, Norwich, and Sheffield. During his time in Sheffield, the cathedral choir toured both at home and abroad (including Germany, Holland, France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the USA) and broadcast frequently on BBC Radios 2, 3 & 4. His recordings include *Music for a Millennium*, a Classic FM Magazine Disc of the Year Award Winner, and numerous releases as organist and conductor, all to high critical acclaim.

As solo organist, he has played at many of the major venues in the UK, and has worked with the Hallé, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera, John Rutter, Huddersfield Choral, and the Exon Singers.

He is Music Director of St George's Singers in Manchester, Keele Bach Choir, and organist and keyboard studies teacher at Rossall School. He appears regularly with the BBC as Musical Director and accompanist on *Songs of Praise*, the BBC *Young Chorister of the Year* Competition, the *Daily Service*, and *Sunday Worship*.

In his spare time he enjoys reading and walking. A keen cook, he is also an enthusiast of real ales and good wines.

ACCOMPANIST – PETE DURRANT



Pete Durrant is the accompanist of St George's Singers, the Hallé youth and training choirs, N-choir, and is the deputy accompanist for the Hallé choir. He works at the Royal Northern College of Music and is the head accompanist at the Junior RNCM.

Pete Durrant grew up in London, where he was a chorister at Westminster Abbey. During his time at the Abbey he toured worldwide and sang at many high-profile events, including the funeral of Princess Diana. In 2004 he moved north to study music at The University of Manchester, where he learned piano with Tom Scott. He was awarded the Proctor Gregg prize for performance at the end of his second year. In 2010 he went on to complete a Masters in Piano Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying with Jeremy Young and Colin Stone.

Pete has played with the BBC Philharmonic, the Hallé orchestra, has been the accompanist of Stafford Choral Society, Keele Bach Choir, Manchester University Chorus, has directed and played for Manchester Chamber Choir, and has accompanied the BBCSO Chorus, RNCM chamber choir, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus, Sheffield Chorale, Salford Choral Society and Marple Choral Society. Pete was also the conductor of Leek Choral Society (for whom he wrote his *Requiem* for in 2018), the University of Manchester's chamber choir, Ad Solem, as well as Keele Bach Choir in the second half of 2016.

CONCERT ETIQUETTE

Going on/coming off stage

Our performance begins as we walk onto the stage, so it is important that we adopt a totally professional approach throughout the concert. Please do not talk once you are on the stage, even if there is a long wait before the singing begins, or between items.

During the rehearsal on the day of the concert you will be informed by the Stage Manager of the 'getting on, getting off' procedure. We usually run through this at the rehearsal break to ensure the space and logistics work in the venue.

Please enter and leave the stage with your folder held at waist height, on whichever side of you faces the audience.

Seating

Please sit in accordance with the concert seating plan. Do not bring handbags or water onto the stage. A secure area will be provided for valuables (usually the changing areas). Please remove any keys or change from pockets.

Beginning the concert

Stand when the MD enters the stage, unless instructed otherwise. He will indicate when to open your folders. Any further stands or sits will have been notified during rehearsals – please note them carefully in your score.

Ending the concert

The Musical Director will indicate when to close folders. Please remain standing until he leaves the stage. The Musical Director will indicate any further stands for applause. The Choir can applaud soloists when they take their own bows, but please acknowledge any applause for the Choir from the audience by remaining still (and smiling!). When walking off stage, remain facing forwards until the person next to you moves, then turn and leave stage.

CONCERT DRESS

We do not have a ‘uniform’ as such, but our dress code is designed to give a level of similarity across the Choir (which is less distracting for the audience) whilst allowing a certain amount of flexibility to display our own preferences.

Gentlemen

- Black trousers and open-necked long-sleeved black shirt (no jacket).

Ladies

- Black skirt or trousers (ankle length) and black blouse with full or ¾ length sleeves. Black shoes and black tights/stockings (no bare flesh or flesh-coloured tights). Trousers should be smart and formal. Ladies wear red silk roses: you will be given a rose at your first concert – please look after it.
- Please wear discreet jewellery only, so that the audience is not distracted from the music. The only exception is our Christmas concert, when something more flamboyant may be allowed.

Please refrain from using perfume, deodorant sprays or other strongly scented toiletries in the changing rooms or green room before performances, as some Choir members are allergic to them.

CONCERT ORGANISATION

Whilst most of the organisation work is done by members of the Committee, there are three main ways we expect Choir members to help with concerts:

Publicity: Posters and leaflets are printed for each concert. We rely on our members to display and distribute them, and copies are available at most rehearsals. Please be pro-active and resourceful in advertising the concerts. (See also the section on Publicity and Social Media on p 18.)

Tickets: You are expected to try to sell at least two tickets for each concert, and you will be given an envelope with your allocation. Obviously, the more tickets we sell, the better the atmosphere at concerts and the greater our income. So, please be positive! It is important that you either return the unsold tickets or hand in the monies as soon as possible to the Ticket Secretary (Dave Francis, bass).

Hands-on help: Please volunteer for some of the many tasks that need to be done to ensure the success of a concert, eg helping with staging and chairs. In the event that you are unable to sing in a concert, we would welcome your help with front-of-house duties or with refreshments in the interval.

CHOIR MANAGEMENT

St George’s Singers is a registered charity, no 508686, and a member of Making Music, the UK association representing voluntary music organisations. The Choir is run by a committee, made up of members of the Choir body, elected each year at the Annual General Meeting, which is held during the autumn term. Its main responsibilities are to provide support and a voice for the Choir members, the promotion and development of the Choir, its financial management and the general running of the Choir and concert programme. The Choir has a Constitution, and a 5-Year Plan setting out our objectives for the longer term. [You will find copies of both on the members’ area of the Choir website.](#)

The committee meets at least four times per year. The committee wishes to ensure the Choir is well informed about its work, and publishes agendas and minutes of meetings on the members’ website. For practical reasons the committee does not hold ‘open’ meetings, but welcomes questions, suggestions and issues for discussion at committee meetings, submitted either through the Section Reps or via the Secretary or Chair.

As at end November 2023 the Committee consisted of:

Chair	John Smith	Vice Chair	Jo Bluck
Treasurer	Laura Shaw	Secretary	Jacqui Smith
Concert Secretary	Paul Goss	Stage Manager	Tim Lambert
Librarian	Gwyneth Pailin	Publicity Secretary	Mary Houlton
Ticket Secretary	Dave Francis		
Section Reps	Gillian Banks (soprano)		
	Sue Mason (alto)		
	Mark Warrington (tenor)		
	Paul Burfitt (bass)		
Co-opted member:			
Publications	Susan Hodgson		

In addition to the elected committee, many other people get involved with the running of the Choir: Gillian Banks organises the Singing Day; Barbara Forshaw manages the Friends’ scheme; Alison McLay runs The Cheshire Consort; Peter Farrington handles rehearsal refreshments; Jonathan Wright deals with the staging; [Felicity Tucker organises front-of-house](#); Lorraine Lighton sends out weekly announcements – plus dozens of other people who devote hours of their free time to the Choir.



Jacqui Smith
Choir Secretary



John Smith
Chair



Jo Bluck
Vice Chair



Tim Lambert
Stage Manager



Gwyneth Pailin
Librarian



Laura Shaw
Treasurer



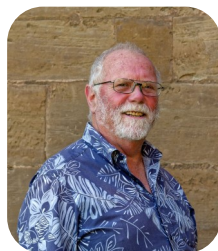
Mary Houlst
Publicity Officer



Susan Hodgson
Publications



Paul Goss
Concerts Secretary



Dave Francis
Ticket Secretary



Paul Burfitt
Bass Rep



Sue Mason
Alto Rep



Gillian Banks
Soprano Rep



Mark Warrington
Tenor Rep

REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

Each concert will have a minimum number of rehearsals which you are required to attend in order to sing in the concert. Rehearsal attendance is monitored via a rehearsal register which you should sign when you arrive. You are responsible for ensuring your attendance is recorded accurately. If you attend part of a rehearsal, please note the register accordingly by putting '½' in the box. You will be advised if it appears likely that you will not reach the minimum attendance required to sing at a given concert. The Musical Director may exercise his discretion in your favour.

The rehearsal on the day of the concert is mandatory and does not count towards the minimum number. If you are late for concert day rehearsal, you will not be allowed to sing in the concert.

Please bear in mind that rehearsal on the day of the concert can be highly pressured for everyone, particularly the Musical Director and the Stage Manager. When professional musicians are engaged we are also obliged to keep to very strict timings. It is important therefore that you listen carefully and respond quickly to any instructions given.

CONCERTS

St George's Singers usually puts on four major concerts a year, including our carol concert. In addition, we are sometimes invited to participate in community events or collaborate with other choirs or orchestras in concerts.

We also hold an annual **Singing Day** for anyone who would just love to sing. The day is free for Choir members, and usually falls on a weekend in January. We learn a piece from scratch throughout the day and finish with a concert performance of the work in the early evening. We often get in excess of 150 people on the day and it is a great experience for all – as well as earning income for the Choir. Choir members provide home-made soup, sandwiches and cakes which we sell on the day. Gillian Banks (soprano) handles Singing Day bookings and organises the day.

The Musical Director creates a wide and varied programme of concerts for each season in consultation with the Committee. Details of the concert programme will be published prior to the beginning of each season in our Season Brochure.

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

The Choir meets every Tuesday from 7.30pm to 10:00pm at St George's Church Hall, Poynton. You will receive a rehearsal schedule in advance of the new season. This includes concert dates, as well as rehearsal dates and minimum number of rehearsals you are required to attend in order to sing at a concert. [There may also be an additional rehearsal on the Thursday evening before a concert.](#) The rehearsal schedule is also posted on the members' area of the Choir website. If you are unable to attend a rehearsal, please inform your Section Rep, if possible.

Each rehearsal starts with a warm-up which you are expected to attend. Out of respect for the conductor, and to avoid distracting other Choir members, please arrive promptly, and be ready to start rehearsal immediately. For security reasons, the front door to the hall is locked soon after we begin warm-up. If you arrive late, wait outside until someone comes to let you in – the door is checked every 10 minutes. Push the button on the door to let someone know that you are there.

Talking during rehearsals is very distracting, is disrespectful to our professionals, and may result in you missing important instruction about the music. Please keep any talking to an absolute minimum. Please also respond to the MD's instructions immediately, without discussion with your neighbour.

There is a 15-minute break in the middle of each rehearsal to enable you to catch up with friends and enjoy a cup of tea and a biscuit, which are provided at a small charge. These are organised by Peter Farrington and proceeds go to Choir funds. The provision of interval refreshments depends on Choir members signing up to the 'tea rota' so please do add your name to the list.

You must bring a soft pencil to rehearsals for your markings. Should you forget there is usually a box available to borrow one for the night.

Nearer to the concert there may be a specific concert seating plan. Please check it on arrival at rehearsal to find out where you are seated. The plans are designed to provide the best blend of voices for the venue, and will try to take account of heights etc. Please adhere to the seating plan. If there are any problems, speak to your Section Rep or the Stage Manager before the day of the concert.

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Section Representatives

At your first rehearsal, you will be introduced to your Section Representative. He or she will welcome you and introduce you to others in the section and help you to become familiar with life in St George's Singers. They will be your first port of call if you are unsure of anything during your first few weeks, and you should discuss any issues with them for taking to the Committee.

Announcements

In order to cut down the time spent on announcements at rehearsals, an email is usually sent round once a week (generally Thursday evening) with notices and information. Announcements may include messages from the conductor about preparation work to be done for next rehearsal, changes to rehearsal venues, music return, or other important information, so please read these announcements carefully. Please ensure the Secretary and the Announcements Coordinator (Lorraine Lighton) are both kept up-to-date with your email address. Any Choir member can send through information for inclusion in the Announcements – send information to Lorraine (alto) at email address lighton@btinternet.com. Announcements are also posted on the members' area of the Choir website.

[Information about other choral events/concerts you think Choir members would be interested in should be sent to Margaret Dennis, \[mpdennis1@hotmail.co.uk\]\(mailto:mpdennis1@hotmail.co.uk\).](#)

Newsletter

The Choir publishes a newsletter called *Hemiola* once a term. [This is a lively, interesting and informative forum for members' comments, ideas, reactions, news, articles of interest etc.](#) The editor, Jo Bluck (soprano), will be delighted to receive any contributions. Email her on joannabluck@gmail.com.

Website

The Choir website is at www.st-georges-singers.org.uk. It has a very informative members-only section (user name 'Saint', password 'Georges') which carries all the latest news and important information. Please log on regularly! [The web editors are Peter Giles \(\[peter.giles@zen.co.uk\]\(mailto:peter.giles@zen.co.uk\)\) and John Smith \(\[stgeorgessingers.johnsmith@gmail.com\]\(mailto:stgeorgessingers.johnsmith@gmail.com\)\)](#) and they would be delighted to receive feedback on its content and design. The public website has lots of information about the Choir, including concert reviews, photos, previous concerts, and our online ticket booking system. The private members' site has all the documents that you need (eg rehearsal schedule, subscriptions policy, auditions policy, registration form) plus the weekly announcements and lots more.

MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATIONS

Membership Subscription

The annual membership fee is currently [£196 \(2023–24 season\)](#). It can be paid in full at the beginning of the year, or by standing order over five months starting in September. Please see the Treasurer to discuss alternative payment options if these are difficult for you. The full Subscription Policy can be viewed on the website. We have a concessionary membership rate of 25% of the full subscription to encourage students and people under the age of 25 to join the choir.

The Choir has charitable status and a statement of the year-end accounts is available from the Treasurer. If you are a taxpayer, signing a gift aid form will enable the Choir to reclaim the tax.

Re-audition Policy

We have a policy of re-auditioning existing members every three years. This allows the MD to assess the progress of individual voices and to adjust the balance and blend of the Choir as a whole. The audition is designed to help members improve their singing, and get valuable feedback from the MD about your technique.

Choir Reputation

As set out in our Core Values statement, the Choir's reputation is very important to us, as is our commitment to mutual respect of all Choir members. We frequently perform with prestigious external choirs and orchestras, often in major concert venues, and we ask all Choir members to remember that at external rehearsals, in concerts, on social media platforms and on tour they are representing St George's Singers to the public.

Dispute Procedures and Issues of Concern

Any disputes or issues of concern to Choir members, whether involving other members or external third parties, should be brought to the attention of the Section Reps as soon as possible, for consultation with the Committee. If deemed necessary, the Committee will investigate, discuss and decide on any action required. This decision will be reported back to the Choir member, who may appeal to the Chair. If the original decision is then upheld, the decision is regarded as binding.

MUSIC

The Choir provides music to Choir members on loan for all items that are not Choir repertoire. We also purchase copies of scores to retain in our music library, or we may ask Choir members if they wish to purchase their own copy at discount rates.

You will need to buy a copy of the following:

European Sacred Music (Oxford Choral Classics, ed John Rutter)
100 Carols for Choirs
Handel's *Messiah* (Watkins Shaw edition)

Please check with our Librarian first, as she may be able to obtain a copy of any of these for you at a reduced price. You will be issued with a copy of Madrigals and Part Songs, English Church Music, and a black concert folder, which remain the property of the Choir, and must be returned if you leave.

You are responsible for the condition of the music which is loaned to you. Please treat it with care so that the good reputation of the Choir is maintained. Make any markings in soft pencil; copies should be returned with all your markings removed.

All music issued should be returned by the date required, and in good condition. Normally, music is due back with our Librarian (Gwyneth Pailin) on the Tuesday after a concert so that it can be checked, accounted for and returned to the lender without incurring further charges. Late return of music may result in the Choir receiving fines from the lending organisation, and members are expected to be proactive in taking responsibility for paying such costs back to the Choir. Late return of music may also damage the Choir's relationship with other choirs from whom we may need to borrow music in the future.

If for some reason (eg holiday, illness) you are unable to return the music in person, please make arrangements to pass it on to another member of the Choir for returning. If you are aware that you will not be performing in a concert, please return music in advance.