

GLoucester Three Choirs Festival 2016

PRESS RELEASE

Royal visits announced as Three Choirs Festival gets under way in Gloucester

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is to attend a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at this year's Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, which began on Saturday 23 July. A concert on the penultimate evening of the festival will be attended by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

Gloucester Three Choirs Festival 2016 runs until Saturday 30 July in and around Gloucester Cathedral, and includes concerts that encompass the spectrum of classical choral music, from the single ethereal lines of medieval plainchant to the vast forces of Mahler's 'Symphony of a Thousand' on the final evening, together with chamber music, talks and family events.

HRH The Prince of Wales is President of the Three Choirs Festival Association and has chosen to attend a performance on Monday 25 July of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, a work that has been a favourite of festival audiences ever since its first Three Choirs Festival performance in Gloucester in 1847, a year after its premiere. The title role in this dramatic oratorio will be sung by Sir Willard White, making his Three Choirs Festival debut. The Three Choirs Festival Chorus and Philharmonia Orchestra will be conducted by Dr Peter Nardone, Artistic Director of Worcester Three Choirs Festival, and the other principal soloists will be Eleanor Dennis, soprano, Susan Bickley, contralto and Peter Auty tenor, with the treble Rupert O'Sullivan singing the part of the Youth.

Dr Timothy Brain, OBE, QPM, Chairman of Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and of the Three Choirs Festival Association, said: 'We at the Three Choirs Festival are honoured and delighted to welcome the Prince of Wales. As our President he has long been a supporter of the festival. It was a great privilege for the Festival Chorus to perform before him at Buckingham Palace last year as part of 300th Anniversary celebrations, and now we are equally privileged to be able to welcome him to Gloucester.'

The concert to be attended by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester on Friday 29 July will include the famous 'Enigma' Variations by Sir Edward Elgar – musical portraits of several of the composer's closest friends – and *Carmina burana*, Carl Orff's colourful settings of distinctly secular medieval verse, performed by the Three Choirs Festival Chorus and the Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Adrian Partington, Artistic Director of Gloucester Three Choirs Festival.

Also on the programme for the evening will be the world premiere of *Memento musica*, an orchestral fantasia by Joseph Phibbs, inspired by the work of this year's festival charity Mindsong, which works with people experiencing dementia; and William Walton's 'Spitfire' Prelude and Fugue, performed to

celebrate Gloucester's heritage as the birthplace of the jet engine and the 150th anniversary of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Dr Brain said: 'The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester are Patrons of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival. They have always shown great interest in the event and we are immensely grateful for their support. It will be a great pleasure to welcome them to the penultimate concert of this year's festival, which will include the first performance of one of this year's major festival commissions, *Memento Musica* by Joseph Phibbs, as well as great works by Walton, Orff and Elgar.'

Dr Alexis Paterson, Chief Executive of the Three Choirs Festival Association, said: 'I'm delighted to be welcoming our President, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, to this year's Three Choirs Festival. It's a real honour to present what will be two magnificent concerts to such distinguished guests. The chorus is on top form, and the stage set for a remarkable week of events – I hope all of our audience have an fantastic and memorable week.'

**Picture attached of Adrian Partington conducting the Three Choirs Festival Chorus, Philharmonia Orchestra and soloists in Gloucester Cathedral on the first night of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival
Credit: Ash Mills**

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **The Three Choirs Festival** has its origins at the end of the 17th century in visits by the lay clerks of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester to one another's cathedrals for joint services and informal singing. More formal annual 'music meetings' can be traced back to around 1715 and have continued ever since, interrupted only by the two world wars, making this the oldest continuously running classical music festival in the world. The event rotates between the three

cathedral cities on a three-year cycle. The next festival takes place in Gloucester 23 – 30 July 2016 and is the 289th Three Choirs Festival.

2. The **artistic director** of each festival is the director of music of the city's cathedral, currently Geraint Bowen (Hereford); Adrian Partington (Gloucester) and Peter Nardone (Worcester). They work with the chief executive of the Three Choirs Festival Association, an operations director in each city and local voluntary committees to plan and deliver the festival programmes.
3. **The Three Choirs Festival Chorus** is largely drawn from auditioned members of the choral societies of Worcester, Gloucester and Hereford, with the largest contingent each year coming from the host city. Amateur choral singers have been taking part in the festival since the middle of the 19th century to augment the cathedral choirs of boy trebles and adult altos, tenors and basses.
4. The **Philharmonia Orchestra** has been resident at the Three Choirs Festival for the past six years. More information about the residency: http://www.philharmonia.co.uk/concerts/residencies/three_choirs_festival
5. The full programme for this year's Gloucester Three Choirs Festival can be found on the festival website. Tickets can be booked by phone 01452 768928 or online www.3choirs.org