



PRESS RELEASE

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL REVEALS FULL PROGRAMME FOR GLOUCESTER 2016

The full programme has been revealed for the 2016 Three Choirs Festival, taking place in Gloucester 23 – 30 July. From the single ethereal lines of medieval plainchant to the vast forces that will assemble for Mahler’s ‘Symphony of a Thousand’, it encompasses the spectrum of classical choral and instrumental music.

The Three Choirs Festival Chorus, Three Cathedral Choirs of Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford and resident orchestra the Philharmonia are at the heart of the event, performing in various permutations each evening in Gloucester Cathedral.

Edward Gardner OBE, a former chorister of Gloucester Cathedral who attributes his love of orchestral music to the experience of taking part in the Three Choirs Festival as a boy, **will conduct the *Grande messe des morts* by Berlioz (27 July). The Philharmonia’s solo programme of Orchestral Classics** by Sibelius, Tchaikovsky and Dvorak features violinist Jack Liebeck and the much talked-about young Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali (24 July).

Simon Halsey CBE, choral director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and London Symphony Orchestra, **will conduct the Three Cathedral Choirs and the Philharmonia** in Mozart’s *Te Deum* and *Requiem* ((28 July). Adrian Partington, Artistic Director of Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, conducts Elgar’s *The Kingdom*, often considered to be the finest of Elgar’s great trilogy of oratorios, on the opening night; Orff’s *Carmina Burana* with works by Elgar and Walton and the **premiere of orchestral fantasy *Memento Musica* by Joseph Phibbs** on 29 July; and Mahler’s *Symphony No 8* on the closing night. Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, a favourite of festival audiences since its first appearance at Gloucester in 1847 just a year after its premiere, will be conducted by Peter Nardone, Artistic Director of Worcester Three Choirs Festival, with Sir Willard White making his festival debut in the title role.

The Three Choirs Festival’s 300-year-old heritage is celebrated in performances of works by English composers closely associated with the festival and in particular with Gloucestershire, including Parry – whose original version of ‘Jerusalem’ with the first verse set for solo soprano opens the first evening cathedral concert. Vaughan Williams, born in Down Ampney near Cirencester, is the focus of the evening concert on 26 July, conducted by Geraint Bowen, Artistic Director of Hereford Three Choirs Festival. It includes perhaps the most famous Three Choirs Festival commission, his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, premiered in Gloucester Cathedral in 1910, and *The Lark*

Ascending with Philharmonia leader Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay as soloist. This concert also includes *Dona Nobis Pacem*, written by Vaughan Williams in 1936 as a reminder of the horrors of war at a time when the storm-clouds were gathering once more over Europe, and *A Shropshire Lad* by George Butterworth, who died on the Somme in 1916.

A new War Passion by Philip Lancaster is premiered by the St Cecilia Singers in Cirencester Parish Church on Sunday 24 July, paired with the Requiem by Herbert Howells, born in the Gloucestershire village of Lydney. Other works by Howells punctuate the week, including his Fantasy String Quartet played by the Carducci Quartet on 26 July and his rare Rhapsody Op. 14 played by pianist Mark Bebbington on 29 July – both these recitals take place in St Barnabas Church, Tuffley. Composer, conductor and writer Paul Spicer gives a talk on Howells, Ivor Gurney and Ivor Novello, who were choristers together in Gloucester Cathedral, on 26 July.

Choral Evensong is sung in the cathedral most days and on 25 July it is entirely devoted to the music of Howells. Cathedral services during the week also include **a new Gloucestershire Mass by Neil Cox** to be performed on 24 July and **a new setting of the Evening Canticles by Ian King**, which will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 on 27 July.

Quentin Letts will narrate ‘Gloster Gossip’, a light-hearted journey through 300 years of Gloucester Three Choirs Festivals (27 July), with musical contributions by Ensemble Sine Nomine, directed by Sebastian Field, a lay clerk of the cathedral who is also currently serving as Mayor of Gloucester, although he will have completed his term of office before the festival begins.

A medieval thread is inspired by the **800th anniversary of the Coronation of the nine-year-old King Henry III** in what was then Gloucester Abbey. Music dating from the era of Henry III will be included in the recital programmes of Conductus – tenors John Potter, Rogers Covey-Crump and Christopher O’Gorman – and vocal consort Stile Antico, making their Three Choirs Festival debut. The festival’s chairman, Dr Timothy Brain OBE QPM, a historian by training, sets the event in context in a lecture entitled ‘Coronation 1216: Saving the English Monarchy’.

Song recitals will be given by **tenor James Gilchrist** with pianist Anna Tilbrook in a programme exploring links between music and mental health, reflecting the therapeutic work with sufferers from dementia of festival charity Mindsong, of which Gilchrist is President (23 July); **baritone Marcus Farnsworth** and pianist James Baillieu, whose ‘Gloucester Lads’ programme includes the premiere of Matthew Martin’s *Sonnets of Petrarch* and works by Gurney and Finzi (27 July); and siblings **Olga and Natalya Pasichnyk (soprano and piano)** who will be performing ‘Songs and Songs without Words’ with an Eastern European theme, including folksongs from their native Ukraine as well as settings by Chopin, Mendelssohn, and the singer Pauline Viardot.

Thomas Trotter gives this year's celebrity organ recital (30 July) which includes works by Parry, Howells and former Gloucester Cathedral organist John Sanders as well as Jonathan Dove's recent *The Dancing Pipes*, works by J S Bach, Reger and Anthony Powers and an arrangement of Prokofiev's Toccata for Piano. **Clarinetist Emma Johnson plays Mozart's concerto** with the Philharmonia in Gloucester Cathedral (28 July) and then presents her jazz-influenced 'Clarinet Goes to Town' programme with Paul Clarvis, percussion and John Lenehan, piano, in the Guildhall later the same evening. Violinist **Adrián Varela**, hugely popular at the 2013 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, returns with his '**Further Beyond Tango**' programme in another late-night performance in the Guildhall (29 July).

There are **young artists' lunchtime recitals each weekday** by recipients of the Philharmonia's Martin Musical Scholarship Award in St Mary de Lode Church or by performers chosen by the Royal College of Organists in St Peter's Church.

The **Three Choirs Festival Youth Choir** was launched at the Gloucester festival in 2010 and has been expanding its repertoire ever since. This year it tackles Rossini's sparkling *Petite Messe solennelle* (29 July). The **Rodolfus Choir** directed by Ralph Allwood presents a programme featuring choral arrangements of famous instrumental works (28 July), and **Gloucestershire County Youth Choir and Orchestra** conducted by Glyn Oxley will be joined by singers from local primary schools to perform Thomas F Johnson's *Street of Bugles*, a cantata that tells how young musicians from the county were affected by the First World War (26 July). The **National Youth String Orchestra** will be joined by the professional RTE Con Tempo Quartet for the Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra by Howells, and will also play Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and works by Elgar and Suk, (30 July, Cirencester Parish Church).

Thanks to support from the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust free tickets for under-26-year-olds are available for selected chamber music recitals at this year's festival. They include a 'Cello Classics' recital by Jamal Aliyev, winner of the 2015 Bromsgrove International Young Musicians Competition.

The festival programme features **family-friendly and participatory events** such as a 'Family Come and Sing' led by Nia Llewelyn Jones of Gloucester Cathedral's music staff (24 July) and an entertaining introduction to classical chamber music for children aged five-12, presented by the Carducci Quartet (30 July), both in St Mary de Lode Church.

In Shakespeare's 400th anniversary year the all-male Festival Players present two performances of Hamlet in the Old Bishop's Palace Garden (26 & 27 July; NB this is a change to the previously published dates). Other events include a screening of the 1923 version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with an improvised accompaniment by organist Jonathan Hope (27 July); an introduction to the cathedral's restored chimes (26 July); an art installation relating to the work of Mindsong and a guided walk and talk about the Hereford and Gloucester Canal (25 July).

Gloucester Cathedral Close will be given a new look for this year's festival with **the introduction of a Festival Village bringing together catering and retailing** and featuring hot suppers by award-winning local caterers **StarBistro**, picnic boxes provided by the Friends of Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and a champagne bar in the cloister garth.

Full programme details for Gloucester Three Choirs Festival can be found on the festival website. www.3CHOIRS.ORG

General booking opens on 11 April online and via the Ticket Office: 01452 768928

www.twitter.com/3choirs

www.facebook.com/3choirsfestival

Artistic Director Adrian Partington, Festival Chairman Timothy Brain and the Three Choirs Festival's Chief Executive Alexis Paterson are available for interview.

More information and a selection of high-resolution images from:

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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 male 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