

FAQs about the choir and being a member....



What sort of music does the choir sing? The works of JS Bach and his baroque contemporaries are a cornerstone of the choir's repertoire, but it also performs a wide range of music from across the centuries, including 20th C British music and works by contemporary composers. The choir regularly commissions works, and in September 2014, performed Paul Spicer's new choral symphony 'Unfinished Remembering', in a major concert in Symphony Hall to commemorate the WW1 centenary, with Orchestra of the Swan, international soloists and a professional semi-chorus. More details of repertoire are available by following this link:

<http://www.birmingham.bachchoir.com/concerts/repertoire.html>

How many concerts a year does the choir perform, and where? There are usually three major concert programmes each year, some of which may be performed twice at different venues. The choir performs in all the major venues in central Birmingham and in many other venues further afield, including Lichfield Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, Malvern Priory and many more. Orchestral concerts are performed with professional orchestras, and professional soloists. The choir also usually performs one or two carol concerts or services each Christmas.

Who sings in the choir? The choir comprises around 80 adult singers from all walks of life, who share a love of choral music and choral singing, and relish the challenge of performing sometimes demanding music to a high standard. Most members, although not all, have sung regularly through school, church, university or other adult choirs before joining.

Where does the choir rehearse, and when? The choir rehearses near to the Blue Coat School in Edgbaston, Birmingham, from 7.15 – 9.30pm on Wednesday evenings.

Do choir members have to attend regularly? Yes: the choir performs to a high standard and members must therefore be fully prepared in order to sing in a concert. Attendance of at least 80% of all Wednesday rehearsals, to include the final pre-concert evening rehearsal, is required, and additionally the performance day rehearsal, unless the conductor agrees otherwise. There is also usually one Saturday rehearsal or workshop each term.

Do choir members have to sing in all concerts? Yes: it is expected that all members will sing in all concerts unless there are extenuating circumstances otherwise.

Do I need to be able to read music? Yes: the choir learns a lot of music and works quickly, so you need to be able to read music. Although you do not need to be an expert sight reader, some ability to sight sing will also be essential.

Can I visit a rehearsal? Yes: the best way is to come and rehearse with us, and other newcomers, at beginning of a new programme (usually, but not always the start of term – see the website Join the Choir page), although visits at other times can also be arranged. Email info@birmingham.bachchoir.com to make arrangements if you are interested – and please mention which voice part you sing.

Do I have to audition to join the choir? Yes: entry for new singers is by audition and a session will be arranged, for everyone who would like to join, before one of the Wednesday evening rehearsals a few weeks into term – see the Join the Choir page for current dates. The audition comprises simple exercises to listen to your range and accuracy, a short piece of singing at sight, and your own choice of song, with accompanist provided. Full audition guidance is available on the choir's website at http://www.birmingham.bachchoir.com/download/Choir_Audition_Guidance.pdf.

The whole choir is also re-auditioned every three years.

Are there membership fees for the choir? Yes: members pay an annual fee of £208 (currently). There is a reduced fee of £48 per annum for students, and from time to time bursary places are available for student singers. Anyone of limited means may talk in confidence to the Treasurer regarding possible alternative arrangements.

Does the choir provide music? No, but members can either purchase or hire the necessary music through the choir, at the appropriate cost. Not all music is available to hire, however, and for major Bach works and other standard items, choir members are expected to purchase their own copies for current and ongoing use.

Does the choir have special concert dress? Both ladies and gentlemen mainly wear their own clothes - black trousers, socks and shoes; additionally, gentlemen wear their own plain black shirt, while ladies require a black choir overblouse (one-off hire charge, partly refundable if leaving within three years of joining) and a set of scarves (one-off deposit required, fully refundable on return in good condition). For some occasions, gentlemen will wear lounge suits, and purchase a choir tie for such events. All members need to purchase a choir folder, which will be used for most concerts.