What you need to know about being a member of Birmingham Bach Choir...

... an amateur choir which aspires to professional standards

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 also regularly commissions new works. More details are available by following this link: http://www.birmingham.bachchoir.com/choir-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 performs a carol service each Christmas.

Who sings in the choir? The choir currently comprises around 60 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. Members have usually sung regularly in choirs elsewhere before joining.

Where does the choir rehearse, and when? The choir rehearses near central Cotteridge, Birmingham from 7.15 – 9.30pm on Wednesday evenings. Our venue is conveniently placed for buses and Kings Norton Station, and has on-site parking.

Do choir members have to attend regularly? Yes: the choir performs to a high standard and needs to be fully prepared for every concert – every voice is important. Singers should aim to attend all rehearsals unless otherwise unavoidable; the absolute minimum attendance at 80% of Wednesday rehearsals, including the two final pre-concert evening rehearsals, is required, as well as the performance day rehearsal, unless the conductor agrees otherwise. There are occasionally Saturday workshops. NB rehearsals continue during half term week.

Singers should be mindful of the ease with which viruses (flu, covid, colds, coughs, sore throats etc) spread in choral situations, and refrain from attending rehearsals if afflicted.

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

Is singing in the choir demanding? Yes, although it is also very rewarding and even exhilarating! Rehearsals require focus, alertness and responsive attention, while concerts also require stamina for concentration and sometimes the challenges of staging, raked seating and uneven floors, as well as standing for extended periods. Appropriate personal presentation and behaviour, particularly during concerts, is also required.

I have a disability – can I join the choir? The choir welcomes all prospective members, and will always endeavour to make reasonable adjustments to enable singers with disabilities to join the choir and sing in its concerts. However, these must be feasible within the scope available to the choir in terms of venues, and the need to maintain the standards required of all singers in both rehearsals and concerts. Prospective members with disabilities or special needs which might be relevant to choir membership should raise this with the Choir Secretary when enquiring about membership.

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). Email info@birmingham.bachchoir.com to make arrangements if you are interested – and please mention which voice part you sing (including first or second), together with an indication of your choral experience.

If you are not sure, you can still come and join us for a rehearsal or two at the beginning of a new programme to see if it is something you might like to do – just email as above.

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. You will also be expected to do some work between rehearsals in order to be fully prepared each week.

Do I have to audition to join the choir? Yes: entry for new singers is by audition, which will be arranged 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/assets/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 £276 (2026/7 season onwards). There are reduced fees of £69 per annum for full time students, and £138 per annum for young singers aged 25 or under. 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 wear mainly their own clothes - black trousers, socks and shoes; additionally, gentlemen wear their own plain black shirt, while ladies require a black choir overblouse and a set of scarves (one-off deposit required, fully refundable on return in pristine 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.