

# NEWS & VIEWS



238 Spring 2026



Croydon Male  
Voice Choir  
at 50



THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION FOR ALL CHORISTERS

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Last date for copy - 30 April 2026

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## Rob's Ramblings

Publications Officer — Rob Edwards



I Hope you all had a very relaxing and enjoyable festive season. All those carol books can go to the back of the cupboard for another year now.

Did anyone come across new music for the Christmas season — enjoyed by both singers and audience? If so, let's us know so we can all enjoy them next year.

### Deadlines

With regard to the deadline for articles — don't feel you have to wait until the last minute. Send in your contributions as soon as you have compiled them. Then I can have a leisurely couple of months putting the next issue together instead of having a mad panic and pulling what remains of my hair out in the last week.

### Feedback

Do you have any topics you would like covered in an article in News & Views? If so, let us know — the officers may not have all the answers, but we may know someone who can talk knowledgeably about the subject.

### Swindon MVC

Well done Swindon MVC for taking up Eastwood MVC's photo montage challenge — looking good there. Who will be next to pick up the baton?

### New NAC President

We have a article introducing the NAC's new president — David Lawrence — we wish him well in his new role.

### ECMVC New Uniform Launch

Eastwood Collieries' MVC was joined by Nicki Hunt as soloist in their concert to launch their new uniform - looking good there gents - singing in style.

### NAC Conference 2026

You can find all the details about this years conference in Chester, including booking forms.

### Copyright — Dos and Don'ts

Douglas Coombes gives us the lowdown on the rules of copyright — from protecting your own rights as a composer or lyricist, arranging the works of others and the thorny issue of photocopying.

### New Choirs

Vocal Expression Ladies Choir has taken the opportunity to introduce themselves to us in this issue. I regularly get updates from Brenda of new choirs joining the NAC. If you are a choir new to the NAC why not write an article introducing yourselves.

### Music Review

Liz gives us her review of a collection of twelve new pieces for male voice choir from Douglas Coombes and Edward-Rhys Harry. You can purchase the collection as a complete set or each piece individually — what a great idea.

### Sing For Life

As Poynton Male Voice Choir tells us Singing Changes Men's Lives. The article describes their most ambitious charity project, culminating in a concert late last year (2025), to raise a

significant sum for Prostate Cancer UK while helping more men to find their voice and sing alongside the choir at the gala event. Well done chaps.

### MDs Workshop

The second workshop for musical directors was held in October and we get a double helping of feedback. Firstly from Kirstie 'The Imposter' Smith (her words not mine) one of the guinea pigs, I mean willing volunteers, and secondly from Simon who gives us the singer's viewpoint. A great day out if you are a singer, an observer or musical director — we can all learn a lot from each other.

### Supporting Good Causes

Its always good to hear your stories about raising money to help out worthy causes. The Appledore Singers supporting the North Devon Hospice, Cor Meibion Colwyn supporting Hope Restored, a charity for the homeless, amongst many others. I'm sure every charity is very appreciative of all the work that goes into these ventures.

### Anniversaries

Croydon Male Voice Choir has been celebrating its fiftieth anniversary.

The St Helens Singers are bowling us over with their century not out - you could teach the English cricket team a thing or two.

Enough of my rambling - enjoy the view - and watch out for the next issue - it may surprise you!

Rob Edwards

# Chairman's Chat

## NAC Chairman — Brenda Wilkinson



I hope you all had a lovely well-earned, relaxing time over Christmas and the New Year. From what I've been reading you really deserve it.

You should be congratulated and celebrated, not only for the work you put in learning all the music, but also for the time you spend in the rehearsal room, then singing for your public and the donations to charity which you make from those performances.

Over the past four years I have enjoyed being your Chair, but I am now at the end of my tenure and have to hand over the baton. I am not leaving the Association because I will be continuing with membership so will probably see you when I'm out and about, but definitely at Conference which will be held in Chester in March.

*Brenda Wilkinson*



*from Lindsay Music . . .*

### SONGKIT

10 folksongs arranged for flexible combination of voices by Douglas Coombes

S.A.B [or S.S.A.A.(T).B.]

Price £9.95 + p&p

We have all seen mix and match instrumental music for young players, but here is mix and match music for teenage and adult voices. The 10 up-tempo folksongs in this collection have been arranged in 5 parts, so that they work well if only two voices (S.A.) are available, but they can also incorporate male voices as well - all the guys singing the bass line which is printed in the bass clef, or using tenors, if you have them, singing one of the alto lines, or even the 2nd soprano part down the octave.

This mix and match concept means that you also have complete freedom over which parts sing together in different sections of the song, so it may also be thought of as 'create your own arrangement', where no two performances ever need be the same again. To help you keep track of the building blocks of each song, printed on the page are structure boxes, so that you can make a note of your preferred version of the song.

There are also chord symbols so that an accompaniment may be improvised on keyboards/guitars and the whole book is fully photocopiable. This represents GREAT VALUE and enables you to provide printed music for all the singers to see.

*Titles include: The Blue Tail Fly, Go Tell it On the Mountain, Pay Me My Money Down, Water Come a Me Eye, Rock-a-my Soul, Swing Low Sweet Chariot, Sambalele, We Wish You a Merry Christmas, Sandyland & Old Joe Clarke. Suitable for young teenage up to and including adult voices.*

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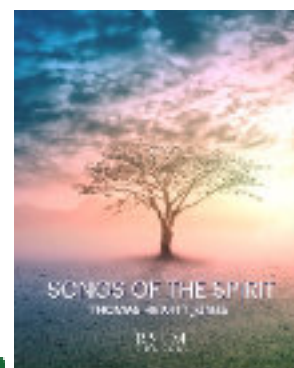
# Music Review Spring 2026

## Music Review Officer — Liz Moulder



The Royal School of Music launched a major chorale work as part of its centenary celebrations. *Songs of the Spirit* by Thomas Hewitt Jones is a suite of songs by the award-winning composer, created for singers of all ages.

A forty -minute piece perfect for all types of choirs it is scored for SATB but is very flexible. For further information please contact the [www.rscm.org.uk](http://www.rscm.org.uk)



Early October 2025 saw a brand, new publication of twelve TTBB compositions in one sampler published by Lindsay Music. This is an unique publication in two very distinct ways. Firstly, it is a collaboration of pieces by Dr Douglas Coombes and Dr Edward-Rhys Harry. Douglas is a prolific composer, choral clinician and conductor with a wealth of experience as an educator and supporter of teachers, adjudicators and singers. Edward is an award-winning conductor and composer who has established himself as a choral clinician both nationally and internationally with a passion for vocal music of all genres.

They met at the NAC Conference in 2023, and it was here, I believe, that the first seeds of this collection were discussed resulting in this new concept of compositions and arrangements of lower voice compositions.

Both composers have contributed six pieces which vary in style, level of difficulty, and requirements of vocal technique and you will find a wide variety of compositions that will engage you and your choir and more importantly, your audience.

### *Beethoven Vocalise*

The six pieces from Douglas start with a composition, *Beethoven Vocalise*, based on the *Moonlight Sonata*.

Good breath control and beautiful sounding vowels will be a must if you are to do justice to this composition.

His next two compositions are both unaccompanied but quite different!

*Quodlibet*, the Latin for 'What you please' is exactly what it says, a collection of four tunes, with different words, sung together.

I can imagine that getting the balance between the parts is going to be an essential skill to allow the four songs to be heard and recognised.

### *Deep Peace*

In complete contrast is the setting of a Celtic Prayer, *Deep Peace*. A gentle, tranquil piece, the inner voices have a two-part melodic line whilst the outer voices hold longer sustained notes.

This piece would be such a useful addition to any choir's repertoire and is so effective through its simplicity.

### *Quodlibet*

His next two compositions are both unaccompanied but quite different!

*Quodlibet*, the Latin for 'What you please' is exactly what it says, a collection of four tunes, with different words, sung together.

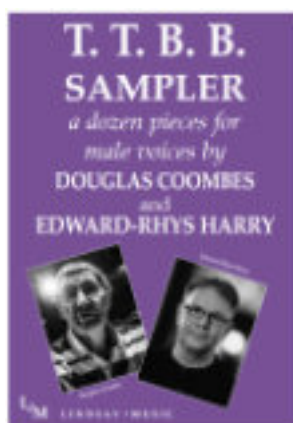
I can imagine that getting the balance between the parts is going to be an essential skill to allow the four songs to be heard and recognised.

### *Wai Bamba*

*Wai Bamba* is a Shona wedding song, from Zimbabwe full of excitement, energy and syncopated rhythms.

Precise attention to the rhythm to ensure that the use of syncopation is not lost in its almost Presto speed, as well as maintaining the energy to the end of the piece is a must.

This composition will definitely get a positive response from both the choir and your audiences.





### *Shenandoah*

*Shenandoah*, dedicated to Edward to celebrate their collaboration, opens beautifully with staggered entries at the beginning of each verse before moving onto a close harmony arrangement of the melody.

Douglas' arrangement of this American folksong brings a freshness and newness to this old favourite.

### *We Are The Music Makers*

The melody of his final piece, *We Are The Music Makers*, was composed by delegates at the National Association of Choirs Conference in 2017.

The words by Arthur O'Shaughnessy have been sympathetically set to music under his guidance and harmonised in such a way as to allow your choir to demonstrate their many skills throughout the performance.

### *Blow The Wind Southerly*

Edward starts his collection with an arrangement of *Blow The Wind Southerly*. The baritones take the melody throughout the piece whilst a gentle piano accompaniment supports the harmonised parts at all times.

I particularly enjoyed the effect of all parts singing the melody on "Is it not sweet to hear the breeze singing etc" which gently contrasts with the rest of this four-part arrangement.

### *Crossing the Bar*

His second composition, *Crossing the Bar*, a setting of Alfred Lord Tennyson's words, is an atmospheric piece which subtly changes mood throughout whether it be through modulations, the use of varying pianistic styles or precise dynamics.

### *Dreamland*

*Dreamland*, an unaccompanied setting of Christina Rossetti's poem, allows her words to linger in our mind as she describes the journey of a soul newly departed from its dead body.

The opening first verse with second tenors singing above the top tenors allows us to explore their vocal colour and hopefully, enhance his directions 'legato teneramente sempre' (to be sung smoothly and tenderly). In the third verse, top tenors and baritones sing the voiced consonant 'nn' instead of the text. Getting this nasal, vibrating sound to resonate with the correct amount of air will be an excellent exercise in itself.

### *When You Are Old*

*When You Are Old*, dedicated to the oldest member of our male voice choirs, is another unaccompanied composition.

Constantly changing time signatures and textures allow us to appreciate W B Yeats text whilst paying strict attention to the dynamic markings, accents etc, will ensure a performance that pleases both choristers and audience alike.

### *Three Celtic Folk Songs*

His arrangement of Three Celtic Folk Songs, (*All Through the Night*, *The Water is Wide* and *Molly Malone*), moves seamlessly from one folksong to the next, mainly in close harmony. Top tenors, look out for a few top Bs in Molly Malone!

### *Eli Jenkins' Prayer*

Edward's ability to create a mood is seen again in his setting of *Eli Jenkins' Prayer*.

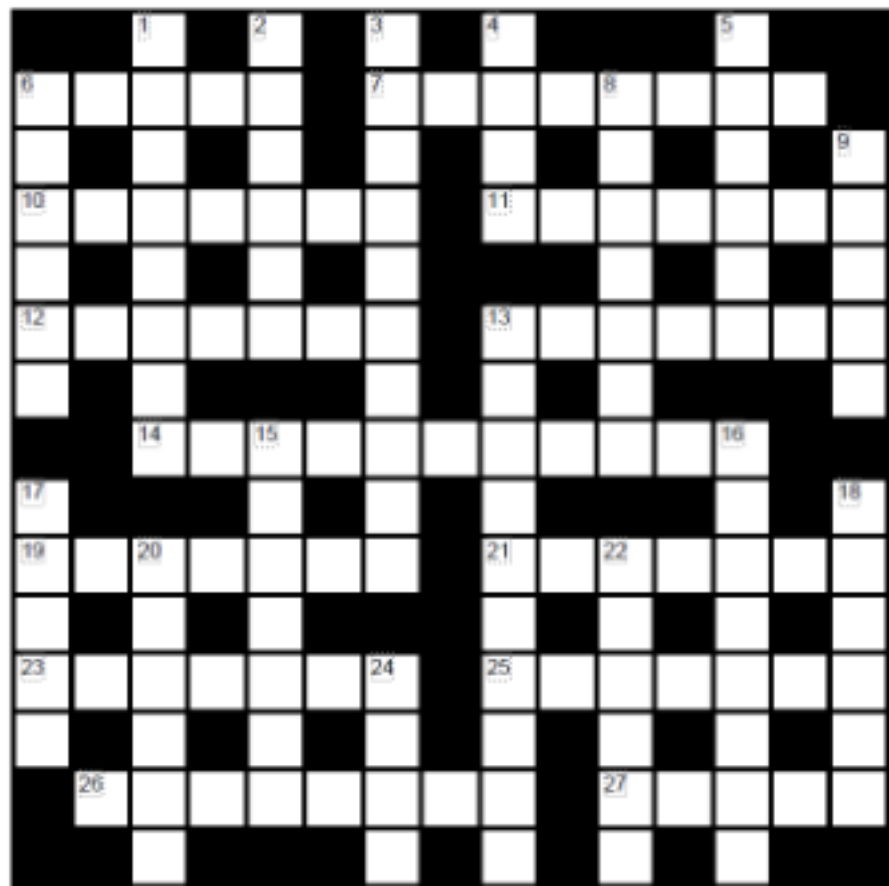
Like Douglas, he also has the ability to allow a text to come to the fore with skillful harmony and memorable melodic lines.

I hope I have given everyone enough information about these new compositions to whet your appetite and encourage you to explore this collection further. If you find a piece you think may suite your choir and programme, the other unique selling point of this collection is, each song is available as a separate publication. The costs of each piece varies accordingly and a pricing catalogue is included with your sampler. To obtain your copy please contact [sales@lindsaymusic.co.uk](mailto:sales@lindsaymusic.co.uk) with your name, name of the choir, full postal address and phone number for delivery or call 01766-260815



# PUZZLE PAGE

Thanks to Bob Swallow for contributing our puzzles this issue.



	6		8	5				9
					9		5	
			3	1	4	2		
4		2	6					5
								7
	7	9					4	2
		8						
7	2	4						3
6	3	1	4					

## Across

- 6 Non-flat area (5)
- 7 Useful for soreness (8)
- 10 Interpreter of 14 across (7)
- 11 Yearning for a Japanese coin (7)
- 12 Do it for free (3,4)
- 13 Keep away from others (7)
- 14 Parents, children and a holy book (6,5)
- 19 Swiss city or perhaps alfalfa (7)
- 21 Change (7)
- 23 Not knocked down (5-2)
- 25 Urinals in a mess alone on an island (7)
- 26 Perpendicular distance (8)
- 27 A strong tightly twisted cotton thread (5)

## Down

- 1 Single canis lupus (4,4)
- 2 Attached to a document (6)
- 3 Attractively old fashioned (4,6)
- 4 Jealousy (4)
- 5 Inuits in a tizzy in the original position (2,4)
- 6 Treeless plain (6)
- 8 A rather small taxi (7)
- 9 Achieve harmony (5)
- 13 Someone who approves (10)
- 15 Hair mat shuffled for an Indic language (7)
- 16 I correct your vision (8)
- 17 Proof I didn't (5)
- 18 Go hungry (6)
- 20 Is it warm in a South American city? (6)
- 22 Cuddle and snuggle (6)
- 24 Mope (4)



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[SOLUTIONS PAGE 34](#)



# Christmas Charity Concerts

Cor Meibion Colwyn — Wales N/Cheshire W — Charles Cooksley



After our hotel booking at the end of November 2025, Cor Meibion then raised funds for local and national charities. Our regular outdoor community carol singing at the Tree of Lights with Beulah Brass Band on Rhos On Sea raised funds for St Davids hospice.

A joint concert in St Asaph Cathedral with the Tenovus Choir and the Fairholme Junior School followed. Then we made a welcome return to inside the RNLI lifeboat station on 7 December where a packed audience braved the torrential rain and gale on Llandudno promenade.

On 10 December we were at the United Reformed church to raise funds for Rhos on Sea Rotarians and then on 14 December we returned to St Joseph's Colwyn Bay.

Our final concert, shown in the picture, was in St Johns Old Colwyn where all the funds went appropriately to Hope Restored, a charity for the homeless. We were joined by the Holywell Brass Band to entertain a packed standing room only congregation. S4C TV recorded some items which will be featured as part of a documentary in December 2026.

Some of our performances are on the NAC Facebook site. Smaller groups also sang at Colwyn Bay hospital at the Leonard Cheshire Disability centre and

Tan y Bryn home Llandudno where our stalwart second bass Gordon Evans is recovering.

## Earlier in 2025

In March we sang at St David's day concerts and toured South West Ireland. In April and May we recorded our new CD in the Sain studios near Caernarfon.

Between May to October 2025 we introduced a monthly series of Tuneful Tuesday concerts in Llandudno to raise much needed choir funds in addition to other concerts.

Our concerts often feature soloists from within the choir: top tenors John Roberts, Hywel Roberts and Llyr Griffiths; second tenors Alf Gladman Tom Jones and Stuart Davies; baritone Gwyn Jones and bass Tim Hays and we give our thanks to all for their performances through the year.

In June we travelled to Wirksworth, Derbyshire to raise funds for the Air Ambulance and Derby hospital, as well as hosting a US choir. In 2025 Dylan Cernyw, a distinguished solo harpist, kindly accepted our invitation to be our new president.

## Looking Ahead and Conference

Looking ahead to 2026 we will continue to be led as MD by Owain

Gethin Davies and accompanist Ann Leavitt in our series of concerts and a possible trip to Ypres. We thank them both for their support and musicianship. We are especially grateful that Gethin has arranged a series of compositions for us and accompanies soloists in addition to being Head of Llanrwst Secondary School. Gethin is also a music graduate and is arranging a Young Musicians competition for our area in March 2026

In March 2026 we have two St David's concerts. The National Association of Choirs Annual Conference is in our area with the conference in Chester and concert in Mold. We have been invited by the Association to be one of the choirs to sing at the concert and we feel privileged to confirm our acceptance with other choirs. We look forward to meeting some of you and the other choirs then and hope the Conference is a great success. We will be pleased to consider enquiries, concert engagements and to welcome further choirs from home and abroad. Wishing you all a successful 2026.



[www.cormeibioncolwyn.co.uk](http://www.cormeibioncolwyn.co.uk)

# ECMVC Launch 'New Look'

Eastwood Collieries' MVC — Midlands East — Ian Webster



Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir launched their new look at a free afternoon concert on 30 August.

The venue was the choir's home ground of St Mary's Church in Eastwood and the 'full-to-busting' audience were treated to a programme which demonstrated the wide range of music styles ECMVC now bring to their performances.

Special guest, Nicola Hunt, provided two sensational sets of high-quality singing which brilliantly complemented the items from the choir and the audience were spellbound by her considerable talent.

The new outfits were sponsored by local firm Cauntan Engineering and supplied by Fort Formalwear in Ripley.

The big reveal was the culmination of a project which started in February 2025, with two sessions at the Ripley shop attended by every member to make sure the new suits were a perfect fit for everyone.

ECMVC is hugely grateful to the support provided by both companies.



STOP! — you are under arrest!

# Introducing New NAC President

## David Lawrence

Following the loss of Ronald Corp it is with great pleasure we welcome David Lawrence as the new president of the National Association of Choirs.

David Lawrence is one of the UK's most versatile conductors, working with orchestras, symphony choruses and national youth choirs. He has been nominated for a Gramophone Award for his conducting, awarded a prestigious ARAM by the Royal Academy of Music, and holds the Guinness World Record for conducting the UK's largest choir.

David's work has taken him to Singapore, Colombia, Canada, the United States, India, the United Arab Emirates, throughout Europe, and most often of all to Australia. His positive and engaging manner makes him a popular guest conductor, and he is an experienced and respected trainer of choral conductors, with particular experience in the field of contemporary music.

David has prepared and conducted première performances by Per Nørgård, Pierre Boulez, Iannis Xenakis, Mauricio Kagel, Graham Fitkin, James Wood, Bob Chilcott and others. As a guest chorusmaster of the Netherlands Radio Choir he has worked with many conductors such as Kenneth Montgomery, Frans Brüggen, and John

Adams, and in 2002 working closely with Stockhausen he also conducted this exceptional choir in the German première of Scene II from his opera *Sontag aus Licht*.

David has conducted the London Philharmonic Choir, the Hallé Choir, the London Symphony Chorus, the CBSO

*Symphony* with the Barrier Reef Orchestra in Queensland, and has conducted the CBSO in a massed performance of *Carmina Burana*, the Orchestra of Opera North with their Inspiration Choir, Vaughan Williams *Sea Symphony* for Hull's City of Culture Festival and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Huddersfield Choral Society for the BBC's Songs of Praise.

David is Choral Advisor to Sinfonia Viva with whom he has worked closely since 1998, Musical Director of the Harrogate Choral Society, Associate Conductor of the Huddersfield Choral Society, and is Principal Conductor of the Basel Proms in Switzerland. He directs the London Symphony Orchestra's Community Voices, and as Principal Conductor of Young Voices, a position he has held for 27 years, directs massed choirs in an annual series of concerts with some choirs incorporating more than 9,000 singers.

David says: 'I am thrilled to have been asked to become President of the NAC. It's a great honour, not least because I knew Ron Corp for thirty years; he was a dear friend, and I know he'd want me to make a difference if I can. And that's what I intend to do: NAC holds a treasured place in my heart, and I fully intend to be an active and present President!'



Chorus, the national youth choirs of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. He has directed large scale education projects with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera, the English Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and of course the CBSO.

In 2011 David conducted an award winning performance of Beethoven's *9th*

Visit David's website at

[www.davidlawrencemusic.com](http://www.davidlawrencemusic.com)





# Don't get CopyRIGHT WRONG

Douglas Coombes



## What's the Law?

The most recent law that governs copyright is the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act which received its royal assent on 15 November 1988 and came into being on 1 August 1989.

It was enacted to restate the law of copyright in the United Kingdom and consolidated previous copyright laws and introduced new provisions regarding copyright, design rights and patents.

This act established that copyright in most works lasts for 70 years after the end of the year in which the author has died. For computer generated works, the duration is 50 years from creation or publication.

## What is covered?

The act covers various types of works including:

- Literary
- Dramatic
- Musical
- Artistic
- Film
- Sound recordings
- Broadcasts
- Graphics

## Musical Works

Regarding a musical works, it can only be copyright where it is written down or recorded in some tangible form. It cannot exist as a mere idea alone.

Unlike some other countries, in the UK a work doesn't need to be registered to attain copyright protection. As soon as a work is written or recorded it is automatically covered.

## Collaborations

If a musical work is co-written, for example a song, then the writers share the copyright and importantly should agree straight away how any income made from the song is shared — whether it is say 30% for the lyricist and 70% for the composer or whatever percentage is agree.

All this should be written down as a contract and signed by the creators and witnessed. If the song is published, then a new contract will be drawn up and signed by all parties.

Remember, the UK law states that copyright does not exist until the work is written down or recorded. It does not have to be registered in any way, unlike a number of other countries.

## How to Protect Yourself

Having said that, you can do a number of things to protect yourself from any disputes that may arise in the future such as:

- Register the work immediately with the Performing Rights Society
- Post the manuscript and/or recording to yourself, and when delivered, do not open the package
- Keep and save computer files of the work
- When the work is finished, photocopy your creation with the front page of a daily newspaper clearly showing the date

## Property Rights

Do not forget that copyright is a 'property' right which means that the owner of that right, or anyone, such as a publisher who has been assigned the right, has the exclusive right to give permission to or prevent anyone else from using and adapting that work.

## Musical or Literary work?

A work that consists entirely of music is a musical work. The lyrics of a song or words which serve as a narrative, such as *Peter and the Wolf*, is a literary work.

The copyright for both musical and literary works lasts for 70 years after the end of the calendar year in which the composer/author has died.

## Public Domain

The work then becomes public property, what is called 'public domain'.

However, a title itself is not generally eligible for copyright - hence a number of different works by different composers with the same title.

Also, do not forget that your work becomes copyright when it is written down or recorded, It is not copyright if it is just an idea.

## Arranging Music

Be careful also if you are arranging, say a folk song, that you think is in public domain. Sometimes such a song has words that have been changed and totally altered and are actually still in copyright.

## Photocopying Music

The one area that causes many problems is the photocopying of what is clearly copyright music.

This is normally stated at the bottom of the first page - the copyright symbol © followed by the publisher's name and year, for example:

© Bloggs, 2025.

### The Golden Rule

No matter the reason for copying, you are breaking the law, regardless of what excuses you present.

There is one golden rule that should always be observed and saves a lot of problems.

If in the slightest doubt DON'T; instead write to the publisher or the writers and ask permission, giving as much information as possible, such as number of copies and performances.

The same applies if you wish to rearrange a choral piece written for SSA which you want to arrange for SATB choir. The same applies if you want to adapt an orchestral piece to suit your orchestra, write to other publisher or composer and present your case.

### Overseas Publishers

Bear in mind that if it is an overseas publisher the copyright laws of that country may be slightly different.

### Printed Music Licensing Ltd

It is also worth investigating how your choir could benefit from taking out a licence with the choir version of Printed Music Licensing Ltd.

This has been devised to assist choirs in producing copies from published collections or longer works. The cost of such a licence is based on choir size and all the information, benefits and restrictions can be found on the website.

In such as short article, it is impossible to cover every point so if you have any queries, do not hesitate to get in touch with me through the NAC.

### Further Information



# Singing for North Devon Hospice

Appledore Singers — Devon — Moya Espley



Appledore Singers have presented North Devon Hospice with more than £500 raised from a recent concert.

Representatives recently visited the hospice and presented them with a cheque for £548.93. This is the total raised from the group's joint concert with Churchdown Male Voice Choir of Gloucester in October 2025 at Saint Mary's Church, Bideford.

A spokesman for Appledore Singers said 'Churchdown MVC were incredibly generous in saying everything that was raised on the evening would go to North Devon Hospice which is so very dear to most of us in Devon.'

# Singing Changes Men's Lives

Poynton Male Voice Choir — North West — David Allaby



For anyone told by their nearest and dearest that they can't sing – unfairly dismissed as more bullfrog than Andrea Bocelli – Poynton Male Voice Choir, in East Cheshire, came up with perhaps the perfect response when they sent out an open invitation to encourage 30 men to join their Sing For Life venture.

To build on the choir's successful 90 year anniversary in 2024 the Poynton men embarked on Sing For Life, their most ambitious charity project, culminating in a concert late last year (2025), to raise a significant sum for Prostate Cancer UK while helping more men to find their voice and sing alongside the choir at the gala event.

Forty were quick to sign up. 'We were thrilled with the response,' said choir chairman Donald Sykes. 'We felt that was the limit of our resources, to support them effectively over six rehearsals and within our concert venue on the night.'

We made it clear that we weren't necessarily seeking experienced singers, and whatever their background and ability they would be made most welcome by our members. The singing had to be enjoyable for all

concerned and our new friends would help maximise our effort to support Prostate Cancer UK.'

Some men came with a solid music foundation, such as the Halle Choir, while others may have been enthusiastic bath-time singers.

The result was astounding. Thirty-six of the newcomers fully embraced the opportunity and were able to perform in the concert alongside 30 members of the host choir. Their combined efforts raised more than £26,000 for the charity plus Gift Aid contributions.

The venue, Poynton Methodist Church, was extended with 100 extra seats and the audience rose as one at the end of the sell-out concert to give the singers a standing ovation.

The musical bonus for male voice singing is that 22 of the newcomers have continued with the choir to sing at the full-house Christmas concert and in preparation for the 2026 programme.

After their annual dinner celebration at Bramall Park Golf Club, engagements include a spring concert in Poynton with the Laurence Singers on Saturday April 25.

'We're amazed by all that's happened. The new men have worked tremendously hard', said the chairman. 'Our musical director Eileen Rigg and accompanist Kath Buckley deserve great credit for their leadership and encouragement.'

Seren Evans, Prostate Cancer UK's head of community fundraising, has paid tribute to Poynton's enterprise: 'Everyone who took part and supported Poynton Male Voice Choir's Sing For Life event is helping Prostate Cancer UK fund life-saving research to stop the disease damaging the lives of men and their loved ones. We are so grateful to the dedication of the choir, their friends and families, with particular thanks to Mrs Helen Watkins, whose husband Ken sang with the choir until his death in 2024.'

After 52 years in Poynton's first tenors, choir president Maurice Hargreaves said: 'I couldn't have imagined the impact Sing For Life has made on all who took part. I can't wait to see what's next for this remarkable group of singers.'



Visit [www.pmvc.info/home](http://www.pmvc.info/home) for more information about Poynton Male Voice Choir

Or

Email: [secretary.pmvc@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.pmvc@gmail.com)

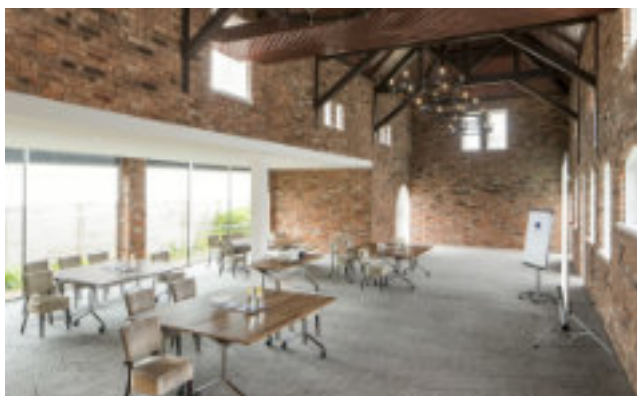


# NAC Conference 2026: Chester

**NAC Conference Co-ordinator — Clive Lawton**



**Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa  
The Abbey Suite**



## Speakers

When deciding on our speakers for conference my fellow officer Liz Moulder has a wealth of knowledge and contacts in the musical field. Her input is invaluable in securing a presenter who is amply qualified in his or her field.

We have agreed on our main speaker this year to be Amy Bebbington. Liz will give you all the information, qualifications, and posts she holds and a synopsis of her fields of work in her presentation. Amy will give three 75-minute seminars on Saturday. Liz will offer her come and sing presentation on Friday afternoon and a sight reading and singing tutorial on Sunday morning.

The Annual General Meeting follows at which there will be reports from all the officers and there are officer changes to deal with.

The Members Open Forum is probably the item I personally look forward to the most as it provides the opportunity to have a discussion with our members about what was liked or not in the line up this year and changes we could make or introduce new items of interest in 2027.

Christmas and the New Year festivities are over and normality returns. Lovely to catch up with family and friends and to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas which seems for many to be lost. I hope all our members enjoyed the break but now is the time for rehearsals and concerts to begin again.

This year I am being assisted in preparing conference at Chester by my good friend and co-opted officer Frank Pearson.

## Venue

The venue this year is the Double Tree by Hilton Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa. [The full address is on the booking form]. A very comfortable 4-star hotel. Some members will recall we used this hotel some years ago for conference. Now it is encircled on three sides by the fitness and spa with only the front facade of the old hall preserved.

I visited the hotel early last year with Peter Carlyon. We immediately thought the facilities on offer suited our expectations for a more than adequate accommodation. adequate accommodation – the preliminaries of choosing a base for our conference 2026 and all the organisation behind booking rooms, planning layouts and finding speakers who share our interest in choral music and the art of singing.

## Conference Concert

The Conference Concert this year will consist of five choirs, with the lead choir being Harwarden Singers. My gratitude to Harold Taylor for his invaluable assistance in organisation of the concert. I have arranged coach transport.

The cost of the coach and admission to the concert is included in the delegate package at £299 per person. It would be helpful for the hotel to know numbers of guests by no later than the end of February please, so if you intend to attend conference this year please send me your booking form and deposit either by cheque or BACS transfer. If the latter form of payment is used, please put the word conference in the reference square. I look forward to seeing as many delegates as possible this year in Hoole Hall.

## Trade Stands

Frank has the task of contacting all our trade personnel and hopefully new ones too. Filling the stands is always enjoyable as it gives our delegates the opportunity of discussing items of interest to their respective choirs or groups in convivial surroundings where face to face discussion with specialists often forms new ideas which members can take back to their choirs.

# NAC Conference 2026: Chester

Guest Presenter — Amy Bebbington



Highly regarded for her insightful, dynamic teaching and depth of choral and pedagogical expertise, Amy Bebbington is an internationally respected choral clinician, educator, and mentor.

A committed advocate for choral singing and the professional development of conductors, she brings a rare combination of artistic excellence, academic rigour, and practical leadership to her work.

Amy holds degrees in Piano Performance (UK) and a Doctorate in Choral Conducting (USA). Until recently, she was the Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors and is Co-Founder of the London International Choral Conducting Competition (LICCC), reflecting her longstanding commitment to nurturing the next generation of choral leaders.

She is regularly invited to lead choral conducting masterclasses and to teach at international summer schools and professional development programmes.

During the pandemic, Amy founded the highly successful Choral Leadership and Pedagogy (CLP) online course, which has since engaged conductors worldwide and is recognised for its emphasis on reflective practice, inclusive leadership, and high artistic standards.

A trained dancer, Amy integrates Kodály, Dalcroze, and Laban principles into her work with choirs and conductors, with particular expertise in kinaesthetic gesture, embodiment, and expressive conducting technique. She has been a guest clinician at leading international events including Leading Voices (Utrecht), chor.com (Hannover), and Symposium Junge Stimmen (Berlin), where she has presented on gesture, pedagogy, and the work of female composers.

Amy is widely recognised for her advocacy for women conductors and composers and for championing marginalised voices through innovative choral programming, professional Discovery Days, and sustained one-to-one mentoring.

Her choral compositions and arrangements are published by Banks Music Publications, Multitude of Voices, and Choral Music Publishing.

She is Musical Director of Corra Sound, Harlequin Chamber Choir, Nota Bene, and Sempre Fidelis Singers, and is in demand internationally as a choral clinician, adjudicator, mentor, and educator.

For more information see:






[www.amybebbington.co.uk](http://www.amybebbington.co.uk)

## National Association of Choirs Conference 2026 Chester

Doubletree by Hilton Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa  
Warrington Road, Hoole, Chester CH2 3PD

## Conference Programme

### Friday March 20

	1400	Delegates arrive and register
	1500	Officers meeting
	1615 — 1715	Come and sing with Liz Moulder
	1900	Pre-dinner drinks
	1930	Gala Dinner

### Saturday March 21

	0930 — 1045	Seminar 1 with Amy Bebbington
	1045 — 1115	Coffee and trade stand viewing
	1115 — 1230	Seminar 2 with Amy Bebbington
	1230 — 1400	Lunch
	1400 — 1515	Seminar 3 with Amy Bebbington
	1515 — 1545	Coffee and Trade stand viewing
	1645	Early dinner
	1800	Coach departs hotel for concert
	1900	National Association's Annual Concert

### Sunday March 22

	0930 — 1030	Sight singing with Liz Moulder
	1030 — 11.00	Coffee and trade stand viewing
	1100 — 1130	AGM
	1130 — 1300	MOF
	1300	Conference closes
	1300 — 1400	Officers meeting





Reg'd. Charity No. 1014630

# National Association of Choirs

*Joining the Nation in Choral Singing*

## National Conference Booking Form 1 20-22 March 2026

**Doubletree by Hilton Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa**  
**Warrington Road, Hoole, Chester CH2 3PD**

### CONFERENCE COSTS

#### Full Conference Stay

The price quoted is

**per person for the whole conference**

There are no single room supplements

Price per person for whole conference includes admission to all lectures  
two nights bed breakfast, evening meal, refreshments and free admission to Saturday evening concert.  
per person £299

Cancellations two weeks before conference will incur a charge of 50% of the total fee payable.  
Substitute guests will be welcome.

#### Day Delegates

Payment in full when booking (non-refundable)

Please circle requirements

**Day delegate fee including refreshments and lunch £80**

Evening meal Saturday add £28.00

Concert ticket Saturday add £12.00

Friday Gala Dinner add £35.00

Deposit of £70 with booking form. Balance by early February 2026

Please circle Room Type -

**single   double   twin**

Amount submitted £ \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed forms and deposits to the address below

**Payment method - tick the appropriate box**

#### Paying by cheque

Cheques should be made payable to

**The National Association of Choirs**

Please return your completed forms and cheque  
to the address below

#### Paying by BACS

You may pay by BACS

(please indicate BACS on booking form)

Pay to **National Association of Choirs**

Sort code 30 94 19 - Account no 30254060

Reference: Conference 2026.

THE PERSONAL DETAILS OF EACH DELEGATE MUST BE ENTERED ON FORM 2

Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS  
07939012458 [cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com](mailto:cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com)



Reg'd. Charity No. 1014630

# National Association of Choirs

*Joining the Nation in Choral Singing*

## National Conference Booking Form 1 20-22 March 2026

**Doubletree by Hilton Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa  
Warrington Road, Hoole, Chester CH2 3PD**

The event is open to all who wish to attend on payment of the appropriate charges

### Guest 1

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone Home.....Mobile.....

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

Disability [wheelchair user/handrails required etc.].....

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

### Guest 2

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone Home.....Mobile.....

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

Disability [wheelchair user/handrails required etc.].....

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM FOR MORE GUESTS IF REQUIRED

# MDs Course: Conductor's Report

## Swindon Male Voice Choir — South West — Kirstie Smith

I've felt a sense of 'Imposter Syndrome' for many years in many roles, and in the words of Sam Smith, 'I know I'm not the only one'. This feeling of 'not being good enough' most certainly stems from negative experiences during my childhood and is particularly rife among musicians, artists and creative professionals. So why on earth would I subject myself to scrutiny at an NAC MD Training Day?

Here's why;

I've been Musical Director of Swindon Male Voice Choir (SMVC) for over three years now, and I'm incredibly proud and privileged to direct my hometown's longest established choir. They are a very kind and supportive bunch. I absolutely adore them and love making music, memories and a difference to people's lives with them.

However, stepping into the enormous shoes of their retiring director of music who had been with them for 32 years was daunting, and becoming the choir's first female director since its establishment in 1919 was going to be an enormous challenge.

I knew my conducting skills needed developing and not everyone had voted in favour of my appointment despite my impressive CV. 'The glove doesn't quite fit,' I'd been told. At that moment, I fully understood that change can be good but not always easy.

So back in May 2022, although I was delighted to start leading SMVC rehearsals, the dreaded 'Imposter Syndrome' kicked in with a vengeance; 'I'm not trained! I

shouldn't be here - they don't like me! I don't know what I'm doing! I don't deserve this job!' bla, bla, etc, etc, etc.

However, over the last three years I've gratefully received continued encouragement from the SMVC committee, members, friends and supporters, plus positive feedback from our audiences and musical partners. I've flourished as SMVC's Musical Director and have developed a conducting style that communicates my love of music, suits my expressive

On arrival at The Priory Centre, Stretton, I was warmly welcomed by Brenda, Liz, Clive and NAC observers. With name badge firmly pinned into place, gripping my coffee cup for dear life and feeling a little awkward, I began chatting with other attendees and started to relax. I cannot tell you how delighted I was when four Swindon Male Voice members walked in and gave me huge hugs, having made the long journey from Swindon to support me — (see Simon Grove's write-up).

After informal introductions from Liz, Edward led everyone in some warm-ups, which was a valuable lesson in itself. Music had been provided for the 4 workshop sessions in advance, and so when Edward asked for the first volunteer, I took the plunge and made my way to front-and-centre. 'Get it out the way so I can enjoy the rest of the day' I thought to myself. Just like eating my veggies first and leaving the delicious crispy roast potatoes 'til last.

I chose to conduct *O Love* by Elaine Hagensburg. This beautiful piece was already familiar to me as well as the supportive singers, and so I did what I normally do, although

my conducting was somewhat affected by nerves of course. It's amazing what weird things happen when you're aware of being watched!

Rather than going into a huge amount of detail regarding what happened, where, when, why, how and to whom, I thought I'd share just a little of what I took away from the day.

### My key takeaways:

1. I'm better than I think I am.
2. Lose the 'Imposter Syndrome' mindset.
3. Don't lose my expressive conducting qualities, but...
4. Keep my hands in the 'focus box'.
5. Be 'Captain of the Ship', take command of 'my crew' right from the start.
6. Maintain a pulse throughout.
7. Anticipate direction of breath intakes by singing in my head.
8. Don't lean into the music-stand, stay upright, allow the choir to 'come to me'.
9. Conduct anacrusis entries correctly (arrgh, the nemesis of all MDs in attendance!)
10. Be aware of every hand or facial gesture and its intended meaning / impact / effect.
11. Effective conducting cannot take place when heads are in the music.
12. Enjoy conducting, and the choir will enjoy singing.

personality and is understood by the gentlemen of SMVC. I have also succeeded in building trust between myself, the members and music team.

And so, having gained the confidence and inner strength to take constructive criticism, (Every Day's a School Day), I signed up for the Midlands East MD Training Day led by Dr. Edward-Rhys Harry on October 5th, 2025. And I'm so glad I did!





Dr. Edward-Rhys Harry was a wholly supportive mentor who shared his conducting skills and wealth of experience in a humorous and entertaining manner without distracting from the educational aspect of the workshop. He praised the positives, highlighted areas for development with kindness, and allowed each and every MD (novice or experienced) to practise new techniques or correct their faults - sometimes with success, other times not.

Edward was absolutely brilliant with one of the novice conductors, encouraging him in every aspect and providing simple yet highly effective ways to improve. He pushed the more experienced MDs in terms of technical command as the day went on, but this more detailed and analytical approach was embraced

by all concerned. A more experienced MD made a tangible difference to the overall sound production quality of the choir with a simple change of hand gesture (as suggested and demonstrated by

learnt an incredible amount through direct instruction but also watching others being taught.

Firm friendships were made on the day, and a joint Midlands East/Southwest concert is already being planned for 2026! Despite my initial anxieties, I enjoyed the day immensely and I would attend another NAC workshop with Dr Edward Rhys-Harry without hesitation. You're never too old to learn, and now that those two immobilising words 'Imposter Syndrome' have been removed from my vocabulary, there's nothing holding me back!



Edward), which was absolutely fascinating to watch and hear. I

# Croydon Male Voice Choir at 50

**Croydon MVC —Thames South — Peter Gillman**

Croydon Male Voice Choir has been celebrating its fiftieth anniversary.

Across the past five decades, from modest beginnings CMVC has become an accomplished choral group at the heart of the Croydon community. It sings for local and national charities and has a busy social life. Along the way it has met its fair share of celebrities as well as brushing greatness in the form of Darth Vader.



**A section of Croydon Male Voice Choir, wearing its formal uniform, sings at its Coronation Concert in 2023**

It began life in 1975 with just 12 members, a number of them prison officers, among them the choir's first music director, Phil Ratcliffe. It was sponsored by the Croydon branch of the South Suburban Co-op and rehearsed at the Co-op canteen. It sang ballads and pop songs and performed in dinner jackets, raising money for causes such as local hospices and homeless charities.



**The choir rehearses at its Sandilands headquarters, conducted by previous MD Matthew Quinn**

The choir lost its sponsors when the Croydon SSCS closed down. It found new premises in a local pub, the Cherry Orchard. It adopted vee-necked pullovers (think Val Doonican) and recruited members by advertising in local newspapers and newsagents.

As its numbers grew, the choir adopted its current uniform, stylish silver-blue jackets and a maroon tie. It found new rehearsal rooms at Sandilands Sports Club, fortuitously equipped with a bar.

Under its new music director Ozzie Arnold, who took over in 1994, it began staging mass choir concerts in Croydon's Fairfield Halls – the last of them, in 2012, celebrated the Royal Jubilee. In 2000 Ozzie handed over to the choir accompanist, Richard Hoyle, who remained in post for 18 years, conducting 186 concerts in that time.



**CMVC accompanist Sam Prouse (left), who joined the choir in 2022, with current MD Andrew Moore**

Richard oversaw the choir's growth to its current size of around sixty and its decision to undertake annual tours to locations such as Yorkshire, Cornwall, North Wales, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Choir members also took part in the annual Remembrance Day concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, and had the thrill of singing *The White Cliffs of Dover* in the presence of Dame Vera Lynn.

In 2007, it sang at the Service of Thanksgiving held at Croydon Parish Church for the late Lord Weatherill, Speaker of the House of Commons and a former Croydon MP. And in 2015 it sang at the wedding of his granddaughter, Julia Weatherill, at St Margaret's, Westminster – known as the parish church of the House of Commons.



In 2018 Richard was succeeded by Roger Pinsent who helped steer the choir through the Covid crisis. He was followed by Matthew Quinn, who stayed for two exciting years before joining the English National Opera as its choir director.

The current MD, Andrew Moore, like Matthew from Northern Ireland, has been in post for two years. All three of those MDs were trained singers, helping to lift the choir to new levels, winning praise for its tonal quality, diction, accuracy and expression.



**The choir, in informal burgundy shirts, sings at Llandaff Cathedral during its Wales tour (photo Judith Thomas)**

Among the celebrities associated with the choir is Gareth Malone, who – before he was famous - took the solo tenor spot at a concert in Old Coulsdon in 2007. Della Jones, the distinguished mezzo soprano, was our president for several years around 2010.

We met former England cricket captain David Gower when we sang at a mass concert at Winchester Cathedral in 2015. David was raising funds and awareness for Prostate Cancer UK and related some cricketing anecdotes, including the occasion when he buzzed a cricket ground in a light aircraft during an MCC tour in Australia, earning a reprimand from the team management.

The assembled choirs burst into an impromptu rendition of Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines and CMVC presented him with its latest CD which bore the very same name.

As for Darth Vader, the actor Dave Prowse, who took the role in the original Star Wars trilogy, sang as a baritone with the choir for a time in 2012. He was delightfully modest, thanking the luck which had given him such a lucrative role. Another movie actor who sang with us as a bass in 2015 was Martin Oelbermann, who appeared in the J K Rowling adaptation, Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find them. Martin, who is German, and took the part of Heinrich Eberstadt, said how much he enjoyed the choir's sense of fun and camaraderie.

The choir has had a busy year celebrating this milestone anniversary. It conducted a commemorative tour to South Wales – home of male choral singing – in May. It sang in Brecon Cathedral and staged a concert with the local choir, followed by a second concert with the Ystragylais Male Voice Choir and a second cathedral appearance in Cardiff.

In July the choir had a full-on anniversary concert in Croydon, with four of its five previous music directors in attendance. It also staged a joint concert at Croydon Minster with the Croydon Philharmonic Choir, with whom it has a friendly rivalry – and also shares five members who sing in both choirs. Among other joint concerts in the past, it performed in a Coronation Concert with the Black British Classical Foundation in May 2023.

The choir is now into its 2025-26 season. Its continually developing repertoire now covers the musical waterfront, from folk song and pop and rock classics to anthems, hymns and popular opera choruses. It has acquired two offshoot choirs: the Sandilands Shanty Men, named after our rehearsal venues, which has been winning outstanding reviews in a competitive field; and Octet-ish, so called because it began life as an octet but may sing with more (or less) than eight members

Meanwhile it keeps busy in other ways. It has weekly “beer and ditty” on Friday evenings by invitation in local pubs, where it is generally welcomed by the clientele.



**The choir's walking group, including women participants , poses for a photo during a recent Surrey outing**

It has a walking group which conducts outings in the Surrey and Kent countryside every three weeks or so – summer and winter.

The choir recently had a successful recruiting campaign which managed to edge down the average age by a couple of notches. But even with a high proportion of free bus-pass members still in our number, we feel confident that our future is assured.

**Bring on the next fifty years!**



# Starting a Folk Choir

Sheffield Folk Chorale — Yorkshire South — Graham Pratt



Back in October 2000, while doing some supermarket shopping, I became aware of the strains of *Away In A Manger* blaring out of the in-store public address system. I suddenly felt robbed of autumn — my favourite season! I knew Christmas always started too early, but my annoyance was compounded by the predictability of the material.

My wife and I had been busy on the traditional folk circuit for many years, so I knew that there were hundreds of beautiful melodies out there that rarely saw the light of day. Eileen and I had always sung in a cappella harmony groups as well as pursuing our duo career. What I'd enjoyed almost as much as the singing was researching and arranging the material; and I'd already written several songs which had been picked up by other artists or featured on the radio.

So I made the decision to organise a Christmas concert for the following year which would feature new SATB arrangements of less well known carols and winter songs. Of course, that meant I'd have to start a choir.

I began to trawl through various books and recordings for items which might be of interest. Our first concert programme in December 2001 would eventually include many traditional tunes from home and abroad, (Slovakia, France, Poland and the USA), with new lyrics as appropriate.

To be honest, throughout this first year my goal was to put on only one concert; the choir would, in theory, be disbanded after that event. I didn't have a specific blueprint for how it would all work; I just chose material I enjoyed doing and harmonised it in a way I thought was appropriate. So, on an unseasonably warm evening in April 2001, the motley crew of 55 new members — drawn from workplace colleagues and local folk enthusiasts — met up and started to learn 16 brand new 'winter' songs.

We have some great countryside near us here in Sheffield and it was while out rambling one day that I passed a farm called Spitewinter. It seemed to me the ideal name for a Christmas event: we would sing our hearts out and withstand all — in spite of winter's onslaught. That first concert was a wonderful experience, the culmination of lots of hard work.

The positive feedback we got sealed the choir's fate: we were hooked — and wanted more! Now, 25 years later, whatever other performances we do during the year, we always finish the season with a SpiteWinter — two in fact, as the concerts are so well attended.

Since that first year we've added consistently to our repertoire, staying with that same remit — to showcase the less familiar. The core of our repertoire still falls into that category called 'folk' but we also feature material by modern day writers who are influenced by traditional music, together with my own compositions and arrangements. And we cover all relevant subjects and moods...from the comical *Carollers From Hell* to the lyrical *Lord Of The Leopard*, (which was featured on Radio 2's recent Christmas Folk Show).

Although we have several 'standards' in our repertoire, over 70% of the material would still be unknown to most audiences. However, with the publication of five books of my arrangements, some of the songs are now being picked up by other groups.

Our overall aims have remained the same: to introduce traditional material to non-folk audiences; to concentrate on strong melodies in four-part arrangements; to foster natural singing linked specifically to narrative song; and to include singers who don't sight-read alongside those who do. The Sheffield Folk Chorale now has a membership of about 90 — and we regularly take 40 — 50 singers to performances.

I don't pretend my approach to running a choir is the right one; this is just an account of my own experience and I've still got a lot to learn. However, working with this group of people has been one of the most worthwhile and rewarding things I've ever done. My thanks go out to all the members for their enthusiasm, support and friendship.

[www.sheffieldfolkchorale.bandcamp.com/music](http://www.sheffieldfolkchorale.bandcamp.com/music)

# A Century of Song

Castleford MVC — Yorkshire West — Paul Carr



As Castleford Male Voice Choir prepares to mark its centenary, the focus is firmly on what has sustained the choir for a hundred years: friendship, shared purpose, and the power of singing together.

Founded in 1926, Castleford Male Voice Choir has long been a cornerstone of community life in Yorkshire. Generations of men have found camaraderie, well-being and belonging through weekly rehearsals and performances that reach far beyond the concert platform.

The centenary year builds on that legacy, not as a retrospective exercise, but as a living celebration of unity and connection. Developed through 'Project CAS100' which is a two-year, community-led singing initiative developed and delivered by CMVC. The project carries the message 'COME AND SING, celebrating the power of music to enhance mental, physical and social health.

Throughout the year, CMVC will collaborate with brass bands and fellow musical organisations, reflecting a long tradition of partnership across different genres. These shared performances highlight a common ethos: music as a means of bringing people together, regardless of age or background. Variety, accessibility, and audience connection sit at the heart of the programming, ensuring that choral

music remains relevant, inclusive, and warmly received.

A centrepiece of the centenary celebrations is a large-scale community day. Designed to be inter-generational and fully accessible, the planned event brings together choirs, musicians, dancers, craftspeople, and local organisations in a joyful expression of community life.

Alongside performances, the day champions social connection, supports charities addressing loneliness, and celebrates shared heritage through activities that appeal equally to young families and older residents. It is a vivid statement of what a male voice choir can offer its community in the twenty first century.

The centenary programme also embraces Castleford's wider identity, joining forces with local sporting and cultural institutions to celebrate a shared sense of place. These collaborations underline the choir's belief that singing is not separate from everyday life but woven into the story of the town and the people who call it home.

Beyond Yorkshire, the choir will take its centenary spirit on tour, strengthening international friendships with fellow male voice choirs. Joint concerts and shared travel experiences reaffirm the long-standing tradition of male voice

choirs as ambassadors of goodwill, where music creates instant bonds and lasting memories across borders.

Alongside headline events, the choir will continue its regular presence in churches, civic spaces, and community venues. These performances remain central to its mission: supporting well-being, offering moments of reflection and joy, and reminding audiences that choral singing is, above all, a collective experience.

As the centenary year unfolds, Castleford Male Voice Choir is clear that this milestone is not simply about longevity. It is about people standing shoulder to shoulder, voices blending into something greater than the sum of its parts, and communities strengthened through song.

The choir enters its second century with confidence, purpose, and an open invitation. New voices are always welcome. No prior experience is needed, just a willingness to sing, to listen, and to be part of a brotherhood built on harmony, laughter, and mutual support.



[www.castlefordmalevoicechoir.co.uk](http://www.castlefordmalevoicechoir.co.uk)



# 100 not out — We don't mean cricket

The St Helens Singers — North West — Helen Tierney



Back in the days of drop waist dresses, tweed suits, and cloche hats, a group of men and women with an interest in singing and performing gathered at Lowe House to form 'The St Helens Catholic Amateur Operatic Society'. That first meeting in August 1926 led to the staging of *Lily of Killarney* in 1927 in the parish hall, and the start of a musical journey which has lasted three or four generations.

The chance to enjoy an evening of musical entertainment away from the routine of daily life was evidently appreciated by the audience. Numbers in the Society grew steadily and in 1933 the members performed their first Gilbert & Sullivan operetta.

The Gilbert & Sullivan productions were very popular; apart from a brief hiatus during World War II, they were the mainstay of the group for almost 80 years. The captivating singing, imaginative stage sets, striking costumes and accomplished performances were received enthusiastically by the dedicated audiences – by 1949 the Pilkington Theatre in Prescott Road was the venue for the performances.

In 1963 the Society added 'Gilbert and Sullivan' to its name and productions moved to the Theatre Royal in St Helens. Some of our current members joined around this time — what a fabulous achievement to still be singing with us over 60 years later!

In 2011 the Society staged what was to be its final Gilbert & Sullivan theatre production, *The Gondoliers*. It was recognised that although members thoroughly enjoyed Gilbert & Sullivan, a change of direction was needed. We re-branded ourselves as 'The St Helens Singers', concentrating on concert performances, all the while building up our repertoire and growing our reputation.

All was going well — then in 2020 Covid hit. Would we be able to sing together again? Social media and a weekly online quiz kept us in touch. In 2021 we resumed rehearsals under social distancing restrictions. Our first post-Covid concert in December 2021 had just 16 members...was the choir sustainable?

Unsure what lay ahead, but with a firm resolve and determination to succeed, we encouraged friends to join, we raised our profile on social media, and our membership increased. Four years on we have some 40 members of all ages and sing regularly at public and private events each year. Our forward-thinking MD is continually devising new ways to interpret the music and bring it to life to suit the venue and audience. Versatility and adaptability are our middle names!

What does the future hold? We have dates booked for 2026 and are working on a series of special events throughout the year to commemorate our musical milestone. Want to know more? Watch this space!

Rehearsals – Monday evenings, 7.30pm — 9.30pm, St Julie's Church Hall, Eccleston WA10 5HJ.



[www.thesthelensingers.com](http://www.thesthelensingers.com)



# MDs Course: Chorister's Report

## Swindon Male Voice Choir — South West — Simon Grove

7:15 — It's a Sunday morning and my alarm has just gone off. Why? I'm seriously wondering that at such an ungodly hour on a day of rest. It was doubly difficult as we'd had a big concert the previous night with two other choirs and the after-glo was a blast. Ablutions over, I drove to Gordie's house to pick up my three passengers and then head north — destination Burton-on-Trent. Why?

Our MD, Kirstie Smith, was booked in to for training day led by Dr Edward-Rhys Harry and they needed to choristers to conduct. The roads were kind and, after a comfort/coffee stop on the M5, we safely landed at the Priory Centre.

The welcome was very warm and the kettle was on, a good sign that we were in for an enjoyable day. Before long, we were put in our sections, and a chorale of around 20 chaps from a handful of different choirs took shape. Having given the necessary announcements, Liz introduced Edward and we made a start.

The first job, as ever, was a warm-up that proved to be very interesting and effective. We were in for quite a bit of singing so it was really important to have warmed up properly.

There were five MDs booked in participate — Kirstie, Chris, James, Richard & John — with three others observing.

We were assured that we only needed to bring ourselves (and lunch) as music would be provided. The new sampler advertised in the latest News & Views was handed out and a quick flick through showed the pieces all to be very new — to me at least. Thankfully, we also would be singing *American Trilogy* and *O Love*, both in our current repertoire — phew!

Edward asked for a volunteer to get things going and Kirstie jumped up, grasped the nettle, took the bull by the horns and made her way to the

front. She's been with us for around three years and, whilst she freely admitted no conducting experience, it has been a joy to see her develop into that role.

After each MD had taken their turn to conduct us, Edward offered his thoughts. Each had different styles, with some being more expressive than others. Regardless, Edward would always start with the positives, reinforcing what each MD was doing well before moving on to giving honest feedback and suggestions of where they may be able to improve. It was clear that he didn't miss a



thing, be it keeping their hands in the focus box, not leaning forward, keeping your fingers and thumbs under control or getting the dreaded downbeats right, Edward was able to find something on which each could work. Oh, and mouthing the words is apparently a no-no.

Yes, we got to sing *American Trilogy* and *O Love* a few more times than we perhaps would have liked to do but we had soon realised that we were simply there to be used. Not used in a bad way but for the MDs to practice on and practice they did. It was great to see each MD improve as the day progressed. They were clearly doing their best to take on board Edwards' comments, advice and suggestions.

We also sang some of the new songs from the sampler booklet which was

challenging at times but a really important part of leading any choir is the learning of new songs — it's always good to make a new sound. It proved to be hard work for us choristers with plenty of singing, often pieces never seen before but it was clearly worth it.

The day was full of humour from all sides although Edward's idea of the MDs all taking turns to conduct four bars of *American Trilogy* was, well, interesting. It was the strangest relay race I've ever seen.

It was a delight to make the two-hour journey, both to support Kirstie but also to meet new friends. We got to meet Brenda, Clive and the irrepressible Liz from the NAC and enjoy the fabulous playing of Lorna, the hard-working accompanist for the day. We got to eat some scrummy cake and, most importantly, got to sing as making music is at the core of what we do.

The following evening was choir practice and it was a joy to see Kirstie put all that she'd learned into action.

The jury is still out on whether the other choristers feel the same as some things were quite different but, as with everything in life, it is a journey — one that we will take with Kirstie as she continues to improve her conducting style, finding what works best to get the required results. All in all, it proved to be a most enjoyable (and tiring) trip to Burton. We made new friends, did a bit of singing, learned a lot and the MDs clearly learned a lot too. MDs and choir officials out there — we are always looking to improve in all that we do.

Keep your eyes peeled for the next training session and, if it's not too far away, go along, participate and I'm sure that you can improve too. You'll certainly have a fab day, regardless of what time your alarm goes off!

# Ammanford Here We Come!

Swindon Male Voice Choir — South West — Simon Grove



It's mid-October in not-so-sunny Swindon and we're off to South Wales for the weekend and the return gig with Côr Persain, a fab ladies choir from Ammanford.



We enjoyed our first outing with the ladies when they came to Swindon. It was a delight to hear them on their own patch. We even managed a couple of joint items – well, it would have been rude if we hadn't!



It's a thirsty business being on tour and, yes, it's a bit of a recurring theme! The M4 behaved and we landed at the Sessile Oak, our hotel in Llanelli, in time for lunch.



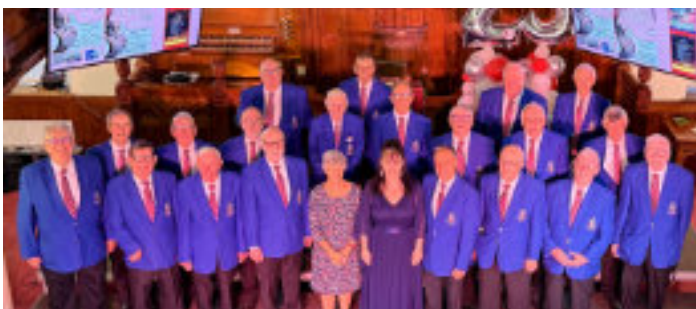
It was a special night for the ladies — their 25th Anniversary Concert – and our Chairman, John Mills, naturally wanted to say a big thank you for their splendid hospitality.



Once replete, bags were unpacked and the chaps changed into something less comfortable before boarding the bus to the Ammanford venue – a beautiful old Welsh chapel.



We brought a debutante – baritone Gareth – a Welshman living in Wiltshire. As per choir tradition, he was presented with a set of cufflinks, by our President, Shirley Ludford.



As always, a group shot is a necessity, and we couldn't leave out our amazing musical team – Kirstie Smith, MD, and Kate Lock, Deputy MD & Accompanist.



The concert over, we walked the short distance to the Ammanford Mining Welfare Club and a scrummy spread – plates would empty but the goodies just kept on coming.





As we all know, singing is very thirsty work and is always important to keep hydrated (but never to excess). And yes, we did have a sing too.



We broke the journey with a quick concert at the Dan y Bryn care home in Pontardawe near Swansea. One of our smallest audiences but nevertheless appreciative and it was an emotional time for all.



It was an easy coach ride back to our hotel and the all-important debrief in the bar with MD, Concert Secretary, Stage Manager and Secretary — it was a day well spent.



Our amazing musical team with Kate tinkling the ivories and Kirstie trying to keep us in check. She's enjoying using skills learned at the recent NAC MD's training day.



Sunday dawned and we returned to Swindon after we'd marked our President's birthday with a card, gift and a rendition of *Happy Birthday* in 20-part harmony.



Gordie, our hardworking concert secretary and tour organiser, thanking his niece, June, for hosting us so well and plying us with tea and sarnies and cakes.



Not the latest boy band but four of our chaps taking the air at Mumbles. Their walk back was a little more rushed as the heavens opened — that's Wales for you.

We got back to Swindon for (a late) tea and medals having thoroughly enjoyed our sojourn in South Wales.

A big thank you to the ladies of Côr Persain and, of course, to Gordie 'Mr SMVC' Smith for organising another fab weekend away. Here's to the next one.



# Introducing Vocal Expressions

Vocal Expressions Ladies Choir — Yorkshire West — Jane Doherty



Vocal Expressions Ladies Choir has recently joined the NAC and we would like to introduce ourselves.

Formed in 1997 by singer Catherine Williams and a group of 20 ladies, 9 of whom are still in the choir, Vocal Expressions from Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, now has a full membership of 60 members. We pride ourselves on being a friendly, happy and supportive choir.

The choir has an extensive and varied repertoire, singing in three- and four-part harmonies. As well as putting on three concerts of our own each year, the choir:

- sings as guests at the concerts of others
- takes part in local festivals and other events
- is available to sing at weddings

Over the last 28 years there have been many changes and highlights. One particularly memorable event was Vocal Expressions visit, in 2005, to Lviv, Ukraine,

sharing concerts and our joy of singing with the distinguished Myriya choir, leading to lasting friendships, including a long-term relationship with the Ukrainian community in Huddersfield which endures to this day. Another special moment for the choir was when it won first place in the ladies choir section in the Huddersfield Mrs Sunderland Music Festival in 2016

Appointed in 2023, our current MD is Nicola Mills, an opera singer who has brought new musical challenges and direction to the choir. She brings joy, and laughter to every rehearsal and event. Her positive approach helps us to be the best we can be: the emphasis is on singing for the love of singing, and audience enjoyment.

A really important part of any choir is its accompanist and since 2012 we have been extremely fortunate to have a talented accompanist in Lloyd Buck. There is no doubt that our performances owe a great deal to his ability as an accompanist and arranger of music.

Throughout its 28 years Vocal Expressions has always been about friendship and community as well as making good music. The choir is proud to have raised many thousands of pounds in support of a wide range of local charities, such as Yorkshire Air Ambulance, Yorkshire Lupus, Huddersfield Mission, Kirkwood Hospice, Kirklees Young Carers, Forget Me Not Hospice, and currently local charity the Square Peg Group.

In 2027 Vocal Expressions will be 30 years old. We are planning a year of events to celebrate this milestone. One suggestion is that there might be another choir out there, also celebrating its 30-year anniversary, who might like to join with us in some way.

If there is you can get in touch:

[www.vocalexpressions.co.uk](http://www.vocalexpressions.co.uk)

or email us: [ve.enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:ve.enquiries@gmail.com)

The logo features a stylized treble clef with a large 'V' integrated into it. Below the clef, the word 'Expressions' is written in a smaller font, and 'Ladies Choir' is written in a larger, elegant script font.

# Loss of Chairman - John Pritchard

## Pye Hill and District MVC — Midlands East — Malcolm Hill

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our Chairman, John Pritchard, on Monday 1 December.

Our hearts and condolences go out to his wife, Barbara and to his family and many friends.

We also wish to express our deepest sympathy to our friends, Bestwood Male Voice Choir, where John was a long-standing member and President and equally regarded.

John had a great love of singing and was well known both within the local choir community and nationally. He was also an annual visitor to the Llangollen International Music Festival which he hoped we would take some small part in 2028, marking our choir's 125 year anniversary.



John joined the Pye Hill and District Male Voice Choir a few years ago and soon became Chairman with a driving ambition to continue the choir's success and build for the future and worked tirelessly to this end with great enthusiasm.

He particularly liked taking part with Barbara in our annual tours to various parts of the country.

John was well liked, and all members of our choir had the greatest of respect for him. He made time for everyone and made us all feel valued. Typically, Despite clearly being very unwell John took part in our first Christmas concert only the previous Saturday

John will be greatly missed by all choir members and the wider Pye Hill family which he treasured and valued. As a choir we will ensure that his work continues to be built on. As John would say, 'onward and upwards'. May God bless him.

### MUSICAL QUIZ

1. What was Madonna's first UK top ten single?
2. The live album Beauty and the Beat featured pianist George Shearing and which singer?
3. Whose band was the Tijuana Brass?
4. Who were Cliff Richard's backing group through the 60s?
5. Stewart Copeland was the drummer with which band?
6. Which Welsh singer was born Gaynor Hopkins in June 1951?
7. Who were the famous backing singers on most of Elvis Presley's early hits?
8. Who made the highly rated 1959 jazz album Kind of Blue?
9. Larry Adler played what instrument?
10. What is the first name of composer Vivaldi?

**Answers on page 34**

# NAC Report December 2025

## Glasgow Phoenix Choir — Scotland West — Anne Kay

I hope everyone had a very merry Christmas. I'm sure many choirs, conductors and accompanists will have been as busy in December as we were and are appreciating a lie-down in a darkened room – not all together, obviously!

Following the retiral of our business manager (John Blue) in June, we had been unsure what kind of season we might have. We need not have feared – a combination of John's efforts and our own, meant that we had a busier season than in the same period last year.

Ahead of our first singing engagement, however, we held a very well attended Open Rehearsal, which we combined with a social event and which led to a good number of new recruits. Our first concert of the season saw us revisit Dunoon, after a number of years and our second also involved a return visit, this time to Bishopton Parish Church; then, in November, we revisited St David's Memorial Church, Kirkintilloch.

All concerts were very well received and put us in a good frame of mind to begin our Christmas preparations. Each year our conductor chooses some popular songs to repeat and mixes in a great choice of new and challenging music. A personal favourite this year, was *Emily's Carol* by Ben Ponniah – a very moving tribute to Emily Hoh, commissioned by Timothy Garrard for the Choir of Westminster School where Emily worked as Accompanist-in-Residence and piano teacher. We sang this amongst a lovely range of other Christmas songs in all our December concerts in Paisley St George's Church, the Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and Moncreiff Church East Kilbride.

Another big event for us was the attainment of 90 years of age by our

longest serving member, William (Bill) Forrest in early December. When Bill celebrated 60 years of choir membership, he mentioned, in a jokey fashion, that he had some similarities with Cliff Richard – I investigated further and wrote this piece to celebrate the occasion in his local newspaper. As seven years have now passed, I've done a bit of updating, which I hope Bill, at least, will enjoy reading.



What do Bill Forrest and Cliff Richard have in common? Good looks? Yes. Money? Mmm! Singing? Definitely. This year both celebrate 67 years as singing sensations. Granted, Cliff may be better known, but it's not clear that he has a bigger fan-base than Bill. Before joining the Glasgow Phoenix Choir (GPC), Bill had been a member of various youth choirs and joined us, at the ripe young age of 23, in 1958, the same year that Cliff had his first No. 1 with *Move It*. GPC's and Bill's first recording, *The Road to the Isles*, was released in 1959. Sadly, it didn't reach No. 1.

Over the years Bill has sung on more than 30 album and CD recordings, so Cliff beats him there as he's recorded in the region of 100 albums. However, when singing solo, Cliff only had the *Shadows*, ranging in number from three to five, whereas Bill's backing group has always numbered between 60 and 100. Both men have enjoyed a great deal of travel in their singing careers, but Cliff has probably not had quite the number of 'interesting' lodgings or concert venues as Bill.

During his long career Cliff has been...well, Cliff, whereas Bill has taken on many roles. He has been both tenor chorister and soloist under four different conductors; he was choir President and is now an Honorary Vice-President; and, currently, Bill fulfils the role of choir archivist. Anyone wanting to know about the choir just needs to ask Bill and they will be on the receiving end of a massive amount of information and don't say you haven't been warned.

One of the big differences between the two stars is that, while Cliff has remained a Bachelor Boy, Bill was married to and supported by his lovely wife Clarice for over 60 years. Sadly, Bill is now on his own, but all of us who knew her remember Clarice with great affection. Since joining the choir in 1959, Bill has helped celebrate all of the choir's big anniversaries – Silver, Golden, Diamond, and, next year, we hope he'll still be singing with us when we celebrate our seventy-fifth birthday, knowing Bill he may still be with us when we get to our ninetieth, too.

The 2025 –26 season is our seventy-fifth and next year we plan to celebrate our seventy-fifth birthday with a modicum of style. In the meantime, we wish everyone very best wishes for 2026.



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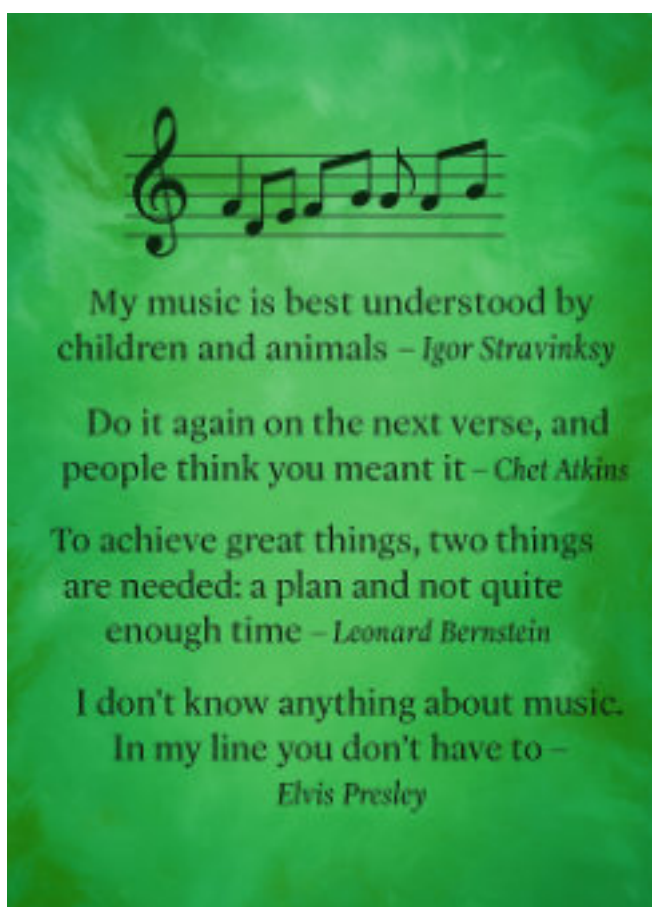
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5	9	8	1	2	3	7	6	4
7	2	4	9	8	6	5	1	3
6	3	1	4	7	5	9	2	8



## Musical Quiz

- What was Madonna's first UK top ten single?  
Holiday
- The live album Beauty and the Beat featured pianist George Shearing and which singer?  
Peggy Lee
- Whose band was the Tijuana Brass?  
Herb Alpert
- Who were Cliff Richard's backing group through the 60s?  
The Shadows
- Stewart Copeland was the drummer with which band?  
The Police
- Which Welsh singer was born Gaynor Hopkins in June 1951?  
Bonnie Tyler
- Who were the famous backing singers on most of Elvis Presley's early hits?  
The Jordanaires
- Who made the highly rated 1959 jazz album Kind of Blue?  
Miles Davis
- Larry Adler played what instrument?  
Harmonica
- What is the first name of composer Vivaldi?  
Antonio

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