



News & Views

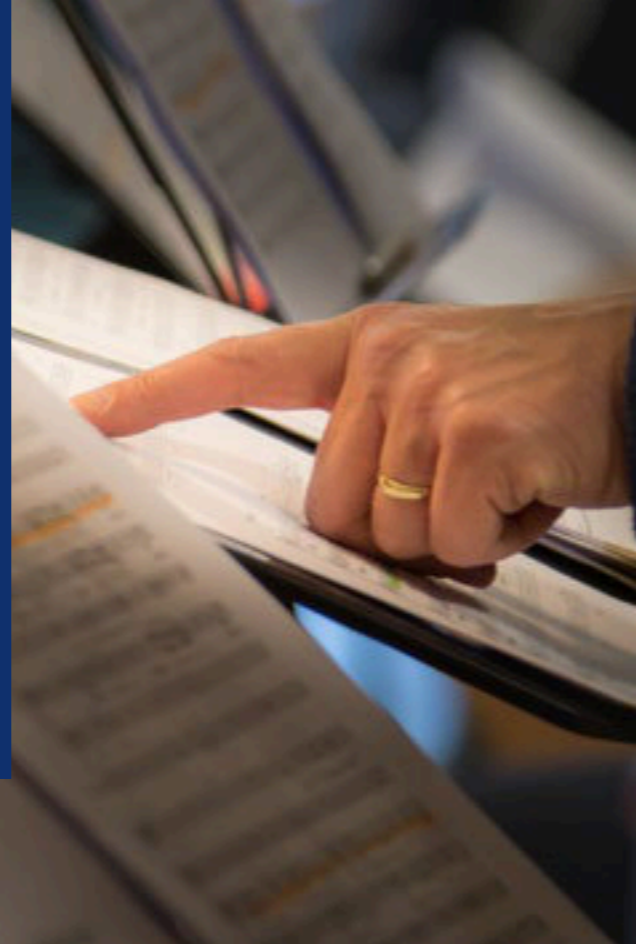
239 Summer 2026



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Themes and Variations

Issue 239

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Rob's Ramblings

Publications Officer — Rob Edwards

Welcome...

... to your new-look bumper edition of News & Views including some new features.

I hope you like what you see as it ties in with the redevelopment of the NAC website. Do let me know if you would like these new features to continue.

Front Page Layout

The new layout of the front page allows me to choose from a much larger selection of your photos. Previously we used portrait oriented pictures, but 98% of the photos received were landscape format - for good reason when you are taking a picture of a choir.

The 'Blobs'

The green (now blue) 'blobs' seem to have had a general thumbs up. Hopefully they help to break up dense columns of text with some visual interest and also label the information therein.

Corrections

In the last issue we unfortunately give the wrong phone number for Lindsay Music in the text of the article. The number in the advert was correct and should be:

01767-260815

Apologies Carole and Douglas and thank you for pointing out the error — we aim to make any corrections as they are identified.

Change of Meeting Date

Please note there has been a change to the Officer meeting date in June.

Feedback

We received some positive feedback on the last issue. 'I particularly enjoyed, and found useful, the items about copyright and new music'.

It's always good to know what topics you would like us to be talking about — don't be shy — suggestions please.

Puzzle Page

For those cruciverbalists amongst you — (look it up — Google is your friend) it shall return, I just thought it might be nice to mix things up a bit for those of us more lexicographically challenged.



From the Other Side

No, not communicating with the dear departed. We often get articles from choirs describing their charitable endeavours and I thought it might be nice to hear from those charities that benefit from our efforts and what it means to them. Thanks to Diane Rowley for providing her perspective.

If you have contacts within the charities you support, see if they would contribute an article to News & Views. It's always good to hear about the impact your efforts have on your communities.

Amateur Choir Licence

Interesting information you might find useful but do read the caveat.

Never Leave a Meeting ...

...until a decision has been made (even to go to the loo) or you find yourself volunteered to do a write up of the conference — see my Exit Survey.

It Could Be You

The NAC is looking for a new Public Relations Officer — let's overwhelm the Chair with those applications for this exciting and creative opportunity.

Choral Weekend 2027

Check out the details of the NAC Choral Weekend to be held in Durham April 2027. Cut out the poster on the back page and pin in to your choir notice board.

Exploring Choral Favourites

Checking out some treasures of the choral repertoire. This time Orff's Carmina Burana. Let me know if you have a favourite to explore.

Recycling Your News & Views

Before consigning the previous issue of News & Views, cut out any interesting items and pin them to your choir noticeboard.

Choir Round ups

We have our updates from choirs around the country— some regular contributors (thank you for your repeat custom) — some new (welcome to the community).

If your choir is not featured — put your thinking caps on and consider what you might be able to tell us about all your wonderful adventures in choraland.

Enough rambling from me — on with the show!

Rob Edwards

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman — Liz Moulder

Hello There...

When I first started attending my local NAC group meetings as MD of an upper voice choir, I little thought that I would find myself as Chair of the whole organisation some thirty or so years later. It is a role that I am looking forward to with enthusiasm but also some slight trepidation.

Like many organisations, over the past few years we have realised that we have to move with the times. We also have to remember that we represent all choirs and their members covering many genres.

Your Voice Matters

In order to fulfil the many requirements of my role, and those of the other officers, we would welcome your feedback whether it be suggestions, requests for information or criticisms. This organisation is its choirs, which makes it unique.

Choir News

The summer issue is again packed with many articles from our choirs.

There is such a variety of news whether it be reports about your concerts, new MDs or celebrations, each one reflects the ongoing success of the choir.

This means that many people are working very hard as choristers or behind the scenes, to ensure that choral music plays an important part in the musical life of the UK.

What Can You Contribute?

As well, this issue carries a number of articles on wider aspects of choral music. If you have knowledge of an aspect of choral music through singing or personal research, perhaps you would like to share it.

If you would like further articles on matters relating to ideas for communicating with your choir outside rehearsal, commissioning works, vocal health etc, please let us know.

Following on from this, one of our major ongoing problems is keeping in contact with our choirs.

Keeping Us Up to date

We have had a major overhaul of our members list, and have found that a few of our choir contacts are no longer in their roles and we have not been informed of the changes.

So, notices, like the reminder to pay your subs for this year, may not have reached your choir. Please do check your records ensuring that we have the correct contact details.

Also, please check that you have paid and if there is a problem, please contact the membership officer, Brenda.

There are two important events advertised in this issue.

NAC Weekend Durham 2027

On the back page you will find an advert for our 2027 weekend in Durham. It will be an amazing time packed with workshops presented by highly respected choral tutors, and hopefully an incredible concert, as well as making new friends and welcoming back old friends!

MD Training Day

The second is the MD training day on the 4 October. Dr Edward-Rhys Harry is possibly one of our most supportive tutors and his workshops are always informative, supportive and full of practical advice delivered in his own inimitable style.

We have been moving this annual event around the country, so we hope many of you will join us, in Swindon, whether it be as an MD, observer or chorister.

And finally...

Finally, my thanks must go to all the officers who are working on your behalf. Thank you to Paul Gailiunas and John Croft who stepped down this year, for their services to the NAC covering many years.

We are all volunteers, who want to support you all to keep choral music alive and thriving.

It only remains for me to wish you an enjoyable summer of singing with friends and entertaining audiences, new and old.



Your NAC Officers



General Secretary

Pete Carlyon

Chief note taker and webmaster



Treasurer

Clive Lawton

All things financial



Chair

Liz Moulder

The big cheese and music reviewer



Event Officer

Frank Pearson

Chaos Coordinator— who makes magic happen while whispering, 'It's all fine.'



Publications Officer

Rob Edwards

The one who nags you for your articles and photos



Membership Officer

Brenda Wilkinson

The keeper of the lists who somehow knows everyone before they know themselves



Public Relations Officer

It Could Be You!

A creative communicator who shapes and promotes the NAC's public voice. Responsible for sharing our story, managing media and social channels, supporting event promotion, and ensuring our visual and written messaging is clear, engaging, and true to the NAC's identity.

Contact the chair for more information.

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Alan Simmons

Bob Swallow
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27 June 2026 — Durham, Radisson Blu Hotel
12 September 2026 — TBD
10 November 2026 — Priory Centre, Stretton

Members Open Forum

27 June 2026 — Durham, Radisson Blu Hotel
12 September 2026 — TBD
27 January 2027 — ZOOM

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue — 31 December Summer Issue — 30 April Autumn Issue — 31 August

Music Review Summer 2026

Music Review Officer — Liz Moulder



Many of you were unable to attend Chester in the spring, so you missed the incredible workshops led by Amy Bebbington. The focus of all three sessions were compositions by female composers. Her knowledge of their works from Imogen Holst onwards, was outstanding.

The differing genres, depth, and style of the pieces we sung, were at times inspiring, so I asked Amy if I could review them to share with all our members. Not only did she agree but she also sent me a copy of her notes from another presentation. To cover them all in any depth would be impossible in one review, but I do hope to give you an overview of a few pieces and provide information to help you research many more female composers.

Alison Willis — *In Peace Eternal, A Blessing for Leo*

The first composition was one that all attendees immediately engaged with. *In Peace Eternal, A Blessing for Leo* is a setting of words by the Rev. Sharon Graham-Thompson, written as a blessing on hearing of the death of her seventeen-year-old son. Set to music by Alison Willis in 2022, this SATB close harmony piece shares the hope of a parent to be reunited with her son.

Gentle phrases rise and fall throughout, with subtle dynamics and suspensions. I particularly liked the inclusion of single bars of triple time at the end of some phrases, that gives the listener time to ponder on the words and harmony, whilst finishing on the dominant chord, leaves us all with a sense of that there is hope of more to come.

Amy Bebbington — *An Echo of the Spheres*

Browsing through the collections that Amy brought, my eyes were immediately attracted to the piano accompaniment of *An Echo of the Spheres* composed by Amy. It's flowing accompaniment moves so effortlessly whilst conveying the words of the first verse, written by Lord Byron. Composed for SAB, the altos singing the main melodic line joined in unison with the sopranos, then the basses an octave lower.

A simple but atmospheric opening allowing us to appreciate the shaping of each phrase.

The second verse is set to words by Amy herself, with the altos continue the melodic line and the outer parts providing a thicker harmony.

Returning to Lord Byron's words for the third verse, the altos and basses share the melody whilst the sopranos, often in two parts, provide a descant. Attention needs to be paid to the rhythms throughout, making sure you do not lose the gentle syncopation, but without being too rigid!



'Gentle phrases rise and fall throughout... leaving us with a sense that there is hope of more to come.'

In Peace Eternal, A Blessing for Leo

Alison Willis (2022)

'Her knowledge of their works... was outstanding. The differing genres, depth, and style of the pieces we sang were at times inspiring.'

Workshop Leader:

Amy Bebbington

Focus:

Women composers from Imogen Holst onwards

Tone:

Warm, informed, quietly authoritative — very NAC.

Carols of our Time — compiled /edited by Sarah MacDonald & Tim Rogers

My last review is *Carols of our Time* compiled and edited by Sarah MacDonald and Tim Rogers, published by Encore.

All the carols are composed by women with a range of diverse styles, arranged for accompanied and unaccompanied voices, set for SATB and SSA. There is a set of well-known carols arranged with descants and harmonies by Sarah MacDonald as well as original pieces, some of which are published for the first time, and also new arrangements of classic carols.

Among the highlights are:

- Lucy Walker's accessible four-part setting of *In the Bleak Midwinter*
- Stephanie Martin's *An Earthly Tree*, a more demanding piece suited to younger, agile sopranos
- Sasha Johnson Manning's *What Sweeter Music*, full of her characteristic warmth and lyricism

A must for choirs preparing for Nine Lessons and Carols, Advent, Epiphany, Candlemas and beyond, the collection was last priced at £18.95.



Further Exploration: Publishers and Composers

For those keen to delve deeper into the world of women's choral composition, the review offers a helpful list of publishers and notable names:

Alfred Music — Sally Albrecht, Glenda Franklin, Patsy Simms

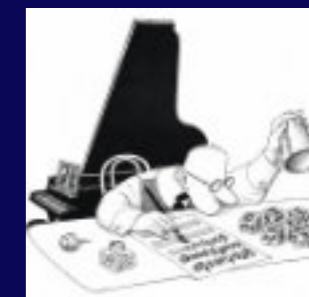
Boosey & Hawkes — Becky McGlade

Banks Music Publications — Hilary Campbell, Lydia Kakabadse, Olivia Sparkhall

Lindsay Music — Olivia Sparkhall, Elizabeth Keetley-Smith, Ann Bryant, Jan Holdstock

One heartfelt request:

Might some of these talented composers consider writing more for lower voices?



A sentiment many choirs will no doubt echo.

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NAC Music Weekend 2027

Frank Pearson — Events Officer

The Date for Your Diary

Following on from our successful weekend in Chester, we are now working towards our next music weekend at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Durham. It will involve workshops, musical performances and trade stands. Something for everyone.



The date for your diary: Friday 9 to Sunday 11 April 2027. The application forms will be available in the autumn edition of News & Views once the committee have finalised the booking later this year in June.

The Radisson Blu 4*Hotel overlooks the River Wear and is within walking distance of the centre.

Evening Concert

We are extremely hopeful that an evening concert can be arranged within Durham Cathedral and I am actively working with local choirs to that end.

Full details will be available in the autumn edition of News & Views.

Travelling to Durham

When travelling by car, take Junction 62 off the A1(M), and follow the signs to Durham city centre along the A690.



After crossing the River Wear, stay in the left-hand lane and turn left at the traffic lights.

Take the first immediate left to Framwellgate Waterside. The hotel is on the left.



From the train station, it's only a 900-meter walk to the hotel.

WENGER CHORAL PERFORMANCE RISERS



The Brue Boys choir for men has a set of Wenger Tourmaster performance risers for sale. The set comprises 8 sections of 4 steps with back and end side rails. The units fold down for transport to and from venues. The risers will accommodate about 38 choristers. Further details can be obtained from the Wenger website. We are selling for £800 for collection from near Shepton Mallet, Somerset. The current new price for this set is in the thousands. We normally transport this kit in a horsebox on which we are also open to offers. Contact us on email: brueboys@outlook.com or through our website www.brueboys.com



Conference or Joy of Singing?

The Leaside Singers — Midlands East — Heather Parr

Views of a Newbie

I think it's fair to say that the NAC is a bit of a mystery to most choir members: it is a 'News & Views' magazine sat on a noticeboard at a rehearsal base; it is some feedback or information shared with members, if and when a representative attends one of the meetings.

I felt this myself when I was first a member of my local choir, The Leaside Singers, based in South Derbyshire. I then took over the role of their secretary a few years ago and it started to mean a bit more to me. I still believe that I might not have the full picture, but I'm significantly better informed than I once was. I basically see it as a source of support and information for choirs, a national body of sorts. We get out of it what we put in, so it is only as good as its members.

We are of course quite lucky in Derbyshire since we are part of the Midlands East group, and our officers in this group are immensely active and they are providing additional perks such as annual workshops that members can pay a small fee to attend. Here, we get an opportunity to hear and learn from key people in the choral world. If there are workshops happening in your area, I highly recommend giving them a try.

When is a Conference not a Conference?

One thing that happens every Spring is the NAC Conference. Of course, the term conference raises connotations of meetings and formal procedure, and not particularly something that is of interest to the average singer in a local choir.

I had started to get an itch a couple of years ago to go along and see what it might offer me. However, despite highlighting the details each year, none of my fellow choristers showed any interest in wanting to attend, and there is some hesitation in attending as a lone delegate.

Put on Your Big Girl (Boy) Pants

So, this year, I put on my big girl pants and took the plunge. This was made slightly easier by the fact that our amazing accompanist at Leaside, Lorna Flear, has been the accompanist for the conference for the past two years.

Well, I needn't have had any worries because it doesn't really matter if you are travelling alone, you are in the company of people who have a similar interest, so you meet lots of lovely new people and spend the time mingling and speaking with them. It is a great forum for sharing ideas and looking at different ways of doing things.

Value for Money?

The weekend cost me £299 – excellent value for money. For this I:

- was in a very smart Hilton Hotel accommodation and fed like a king
- attended a gala dinner on the Friday evening (with wine)
- ate three meals plus supper on the Saturday and my breakfast Sunday
- participated in five varied workshops
- was provided admission and transport to a five-choir concert
- not to mention the cakes, biscuits and other snacks during our workshops

Workshops

We had a workshop Friday afternoon where we were taught a Grace written especially for the event by Douglas Coombes, to be sang before our Friday dinner.

We had three workshops on the Saturday and one on the Sunday morning, the Saturday sessions led by Amy Bebbington, an internationally known choral clinician, educator and mentor. The Sunday one ended up being led by Douglas Coombes, renown composer, choral clinician and conductor – how lucky we were.

Saturday Evening Entertainment

The weekend also included coach transport and attendance at a five-choir concert on the Saturday evening, again arranged especially for the occasion.

We travelled a short distance to watch five very different choirs perform a whole host of delightful and mixed musical repertoire. This culminated in a rousing rendition of 'You'll Never Walk Alone', performed by all five choirs, which was breathtaking.

The evening ended with both the English and Welsh National Anthems, the latter which virtually blew the roof off!

And Now for the Bad News ...

The only problem with the conference weekend was the number of attendees, which was approximately 40 people.

What a disappointing attendance for an association that represents 660 choirs! This instigated conversation during the members open forum, which is tagged onto the end of the weekend.

What is it that is putting people off or making them not even consider coming to conference in the first place?

For me, the weekend wasn't a conference, it was about a joy of singing. It was a lovely weekend away with the underpinning theme of music, an opportunity to sing different styles of music to what you normally sing within your own choir, and a chance to network. For many there, it was essentially spending a lovely weekend with friends in the music world.

Final Thoughts ...

I wanted to write this article because I wanted to shed a little light on the NAC and give a taster of what the 'conference' feels like to the newcomer.

I hope that if I have reached even a few members who haven't given it much thought previously, then it will be worth it. So next time copies of News & Views are hanging on your choir's notice board, have a flick through, see what's going on out there.

Looking ahead, I hope to meet some of you at Durham in 2027.



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NAC Choral Weekend 2026 Survey

About you

Optional Information

Name:
Rob Edwards
Email contact:
publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk
Choir:
Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir
Group:
Midlands East

Are you a repeat offender or a newcomer this year?

Repeat offender

If repeat offender – what brought you back?

- Publications Officer of the NAC
- interest in meeting singers from other choirs
- learning from the sessions
- viewing the trade stands

If newcomer – what attracted you this year?

Not applicable

★ Overall Experience

How would you rate your overall experience at the conference?



What were your expectations for the conference?

Networking with other choirs and singers, learning new singing techniques

To what extent did the conference meet your expectations?

Pretty well

What was the highlight of the event for you?

The workshops led by Amy Bebbington.

📄 Content & Sessions

How relevant were the sessions to your interests or professional needs?

Session 1 - Come and Sing – Liz Moulder

From the Godly to the chucklesome – proof that you can sight-sing, create harmony and include choreography all in 60 minutes.

Douglas Coombes kindly wrote a setting of the Grace for this occasion which the participants learned as a four- part round and was sung before the gala dinner.

Then Liz introduced us to *Bella Mama* – no music – learn by listening – two-part harmony with added choreography that the rhythm demanded.

Gala Dinner

A good repast, a glass (or two) of quaffable wine, an opportunity for some networking and thanks Lorna for the background music and leading the singalong. – showing us the way to go home.

Session 2 – It's never too early for carols – Amy Bebbington

Amy Bebbington introduced us to some *Carols for our Time* compiled and edited by Sarah Macdonald and Timothy Rogers. Some familiar melodies with new harmonies and descants. It is always good to give our audiences a mix of traditional and new. We also sang through Amy's composition for SAB – *An Echo of the Spheres* – a jazzy reflection on nature.

Session 3 - Amy Bebbington

Amy continued with more works my female composers.

Session 4 – Conducting Workshop covering essential leadership skills technical aspects and gesture.

Amy introduced us to the gestures used in conducting 2 beat, 3 beat, 4 beat times, compound times and the difference between a bounce beat and a flowing beat (legato singing). At least we all know where our ictus should be now.

One plucky volunteer (well done Christine!) was persuaded to put into practice those tips and techniques Amy had been describing. The breathing, the eye contact and the beat were all there as she led us through a rendition of – *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* – who knew how much emotion and technicalities could be wrought out of this little gem.

Evening Concert

The NAC Conference Concert was hosted by the Hawarden Singers at the Bryn Coch School, Mold. The auditorium was packed to the rafters with an audience looking forward to an evening of a variety of choirs displaying their talents and we were not disappointed. We had an upper voices choir, a male voice choir, a community choir and two mixed voice choirs.

Rather than list all the items on the program, perhaps I will pick out one item that caught my attention for each choir.

Chester Ladies Choir let by Jan Hutchins and accompanied on the night by Rachel Phillips. *Ten Thousand Miles* – an 18th-century English folk ballad, listed as number 422 in the Roud Folk Song Index. In the song, a lover bids farewell before setting off on a journey, proved an engaging number in the first set enhanced by the synchronised clapping.

Côr Meibion Colwyn Male Voice Choir let by Owain Gethin Davies and accompanied by Ann Leavitt. Looking through their selection, I was interested to see some numbers I was not familiar with but in the end, I had to pick *Gwahoddiad* – sung many times, by many choirs, but when sung by a Welsh male voice choir with that attention to detail – you can't beat it. Also noticeable was that Owain conducted without music. Losing that podium between the conductor and the choir made the connection between them much more direct and effective. Choirs - time to get you revenge on your conductors who demand you sing without music – challenge them to do the same.

Hawarden Singers – a mixed choir led by Jenny Huntington and accompanied by Margaret Williams. *Mi Vida, Mi Cancion (My Life, My Song)* - infectious Latin rhythms paired with close choral chords and a passionate music text certainly proved a crowd pleaser.

Kelsborrow Choir – a mixed voice choir led by John Evans, accompanied by Lynne Cowley provided a sung-through selection of six songs. The standout number for me was *Only Remembered* (from *Warhorse*) - *Only Remembered* is an 1891 hymn with words by Dr. Horatius Bonar and music by Ira D. Sankey. The lyrics were adapted for *War Horse* by John Tams. A brave choice to start with an a capella number and bravo to the solo singer for leading the song.

Runcorn Community Choir led by Jason Ellis and accompanied by Andrew Wileman sang *The sound of silence* - the song's origin and basis are unclear, with some thinking that the song commented on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, as the song was recorded three months after the assassination, although Simon & Garfunkel had performed the song live as Kane & Garr two months before the assassination. Simon wrote 'The Sound of Silence' when he was 21 years old, later explaining that the song was written in his bathroom, where he turned off the lights to better concentrate. This arrangement by Jason Ellis gives an atmospheric feel to this well-known number.

Which session(s) did you find most valuable, and why?

Sight singing, vowel sounds, conducting techniques

Were there any topics you wish had been included?

With more time it would have been interesting to see conducting techniques for the anacrusis, or the upbeat, at a start of a piece. A difficult one for those amateur conductors, and then also for the singers if the signals are not clear.

How would you rate the quality of the speakers?



Amy was engaging, entertaining and informative. Most of us have perhaps come across presenters who are entertaining but don't deliver anything of value, or the presenter is very knowledgeable about the subject but fails to engage the audience. Amy managed to combine all three aspects being able to read the room, adapt to the audience in front of her while keeping them engaged and informed – providing a few laughs along the way.

🤝 Networking & Community

How satisfied were you with the networking opportunities?

There were plenty of opportunities for networking with other delegates and trade stands during coffee breaks, lunch, gala dinner, and possibly you might spot one or two reprobates hanging around the bar. The concert gave some opportunity to meet singers from the performing choirs.

Did you make useful connections during the event?

Yes – perhaps as an officer of the NAC, walking around with a badge advertising my role made it easier for people to approach me and raise issues and questions. One reader provided some very robust feedback on News & Views, a singer at the concert approached me to introduce himself as a contributor to tell me his article would be coming in soon. It is always nice to be able to put a face to a name.

What could improve the networking experience?

Perhaps it might be nice to have all the officers and their roles introduced at the first session so delegates know who they should speak to if they have issues questions, or even compliments.

🏠 Venue, Logistics & Accessibility

How would you rate the venue (comfort, accessibility, facilities)?

Generally, very good

How satisfied were you with event communication before and during the conference?

No problems

How easy was it to navigate the schedule and sessions?

Some alterations of rooms between sessions – beyond the control of the NAC

How would you rate the registration/check-in process?



🍽️ Catering & Hospitality

How satisfied were you with the food and refreshments?

A good buffet breakfast – plenty of choice -something for everyone

Were dietary needs and preferences handled appropriately?

Not applicable

🏢 Organisation & Delivery

How would you rate the event's organisation overall?



Did the event run on time and as advertised?

Yes

How helpful were the event staff and volunteers?



💡 Impact & Takeaways

What is one thing you learned that you plan to apply after the conference?

Some of the conducting techniques and hopefully better vowel sounds

How likely are you to attend the conference in Durham next year? If not – why not?

Very likely

How likely are you to recommend this event to a colleague or friend? What factors might put off other members of your choir coming? Price, destination, travel etc

Very likely

Pricing will affect some members, as will the distance to travel – but conference moves around the country each year to try to reach as many members as possible.

Durham next year should prove a popular destination.

📄 Open Feedback

What should we keep doing next year?

Engaging. Informative and entertaining speakers

Lorna providing the musical entertainment after dinner – well done Lorna for all your hard work over the weekend

What should we change or improve?

Encourage more delegates to participate

What other types of trade stands might interest you?

Music publishers

Do you think the weekend gave value for money?

Yes – 4-star hotel, full board, gala dinner, concert ticket and travel included

Any additional comments or suggestions?

Keep up the good work

PUZZLE PAGE



Wordsearch

Find the hidden words in the grid, which can run horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, forwards or backwards, and often overlap; the goal is to locate all words from the list by circling or highlighting them.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| Bach | Schubert |
| Beethoven | Schumann |
| Chopin | Debussy |
| Mozart | Berloiz |
| Puccini | Smetena |
| Mahler | Brahms |
| Wagner | Gershwin |
| Handel | Ives |
| Haydn | Copeland |
| Listz | Webern |



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[SOLUTIONS PAGE 46](#)

£850 for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust

Appledore Singers — Devon — Moya Espley



About Appledore Singers

This was our fortieth year as a choir so this was an extra special Christmas concert for us. We are a choir who are based in Appledore, who enjoy singing and raising money for various charities. Our Musical Director Pam Beechey is an Appledore lady, and we are accompanied by Chris Beechey, we meet every Monday evening in Appledore Baptist Church.

Our Christmas Concert

The Appledore Singers held their annual Christmas Charity concert at Northam Hall and this year our chosen charity was The Cystic Fibrosis Trust which is a charity very dear to one of our members.

The Trust focuses on improving care, funding research and providing help for people and families affected by Cystic Fibrosis. Our compere for the afternoon was Tony Nicholls who knows the choir well and he has always made the most amazing job of compering our concerts.

The Music

The music chosen was a mix of traditional congregational Christmas carols where the audience were invited to join in (as usual we provided carol sheets) and a collection of about 15 pieces of music, all of which were Christmassy but more modern than the traditional carols.

Our Resident Poet

Our resident 'Poet' Ann Irwin read three of her amusing ditties and limericks which as usual went down well both with us and the audience as they were very humorous.

The Tasty Bit

Halfway through the concert there was a refreshment break served by the choir and a raffle where the prizes were all donated by the choir members.

Cystic Fibrosis Trust

The concert was a resounding success as it was standing room only and was supported by choir family members, friends and the lovely people of Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho! and we raised the amazing sum of £850 for Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

Come and Join

We are now back in new year mode and are busy rehearsing and planning towards our summer concert and are always happy to welcome anyone who would like to join a ladies choir we would be delighted to see you any Monday evening at between 7.00 and 7.30 for a 'taster session' at Appledore Baptist Church. Feel free to join us just check out our website site for any information:

www.theappledoresingers.co.uk

or come join us on Facebook or give us a call on 07772 210604 we would love to see you.



Mansfield & Morriston — Magnificent!

Mansfield and District MVC — Midlands East — Geoff Mansfield & Mario Curtis

Momentous, Memorable, Magnificent

It was with great anticipation, enthusiasm and detailed preparation that we looked forward to sharing a stage with Morriston Orpheus and it proved to be a momentous, memorable, magnificent evening of entertainment and male choral singing.

Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir

Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir led by Musical Director Ian Grice with Concert Manager Lynden Lowe and accompanist Maureen Lockwood were, on 28 March, delighted to present our Mansfield choir in a Gala Spring Concert with their special guests the illustrious, premier Welsh male voice choir Morriston Orpheus.



Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir was inaugurated in 1944 and won over 50 first places in national competitions. The choir was granted permission to wear the Mansfield Coat of Arms on their uniforms in recognition of their work as ambassadors for Mansfield. In 2019 they were kindly granted the Freedom of Mansfield by former Mayor Kate Allsop to mark their 75th Anniversary. Sell out concerts are the norm including their 80th anniversary concert in Southwell Minster.

Morriston Orpheus

Morriston Orpheus, based in Swansea, Wales, is a flagship choir who enjoy an international reputation as a leading exponent of male choral singing. Since its formation on 23 April 1935 the choir has steadfastly embodied the ethos of 'making music joyously'.



With a storied history and the unwavering dedication of its members and staff, (two of whom have over 60 years of service), it proudly upholds its position as the Ambassadors of Song.

During its early days the choir concentrated primarily on competitions and local concerts. In 1937, the choir achieved its first success at the Royal National Eisteddfod in Machynlleth, going on to win at the 'National' on six further occasions.

Variety is now the hallmark of the choir's performances which include arrangements by Alwyn Humphreys M.B.E., musical director from 1979 to January 2005 and now the choir's Conductor Emeritus.

The choir features regularly on Radio and TV and has produced over fifty recordings and feature in more than 100 compilation albums. The current Musical Director is Nathan Jones, and the accompanist is Dora Seaton.

Joined in Harmony

It was the first occasion that the two choirs have appeared together as Morriston Orpheus rarely appear outside of Wales although with an esteemed international reputation, the choir regularly undertakes concert tours overseas.

The Mansfield choir was honoured to share a concert in the East Midlands as part of their 90th Anniversary celebrations.

The concert on 28 March 2026 was carefully prepared and presented soaring male voice choir music to include some stunning male voice choir classics as well as modern songs.

We, and many of our local audience members anticipated and witnessed a great event and the informal table layout at Mansfield Rugby Club, Eakring Road, Mansfield made for a relaxed evening of uplifting song and fun.

Mansfield's Set

Mansfield's set included:

- *Anthem* from the stage play Chess
- *Soldiers' Chorus*
- *Ar Hyd y Nos (All Through the Night)*
- *The Fields of Athenry*, a great crowd pleaser
- *Shine* from Take That
- *Rachie* (in Welsh)
- *Guardian Angel*
- *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang medley* (great fun)
- *We Rise Again*
- *World in Union*

Morriston Orpheus' Set

Morriston Orpheus set portrayed:

- *Let All Men Sing*
- *Perfect* — Ed Sheeran's song sung in Welsh
- *Fix You*
- *Deus Salutis* another Welsh Hymn to close the first half
- *Let the River Run*
- *Another Day*
- a Welsh pop medley including *It's Not Unusual/Have A Nice Day/Those Were the Days* and *Diamonds are Forever*
- *I Dreamed a Dream*
- *Calon Lân*

A Rousing Finale

The rousing finale featured both choirs performing

- *Christus Salvator*
- *Y Tangnefeddwyr (The Peacemakers)*
- *Gwahoddiad (Invitation)*
- the Welsh National Anthem *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*

You will notice that several songs were delivered in Welsh in honour of our guests and we were very pleased to hear that they understood our Welsh and indeed congratulated us on our diction.

Presentation and Donation

During the evening a presentation and £2000 donation was made to the Crossroads Trust who are a registered Christian charity seeking to transform lives through the provision of temporary accommodation and services for those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.



Left to right: Treasurer - John Wakeland, President - David Marriott, Chairman - Paul Bennett.

The Crossroads Trust

The Chair of Trustees Reverend Mark Herd described how the charity offers support for women and men in separate housing, each with an individually tailored package to help each person move towards overcoming barriers towards independent living. The group offers a wide range of support through and details of their schemes and services can be found at:

www.crossroadstrust.co.uk.

Craig, a beneficiary, gave a warm testimony about his personal improvement journey and his work in helping others in their paths to fulfilment.

An Undoubted Success

The concert was an undoubted success with an audience of over 300 enthusiastic in their applause and standing ovations. The 'afterglow' of drinks, buffet and informal singing topped off a fantastic evening.

Some Thanks

Thanks go to so many people in the choir and the rugby club for their work in getting it all together, particularly to Alun Roberts (Baritone) and rugby club member who had a baptism of fire as the choir's new choir marshal (great job Al); we are grateful and will return to this venue in the future.

We have to mention Paul Bennett, our incomparable compère, the buffet quality and the hard-working bar staff. They were all brilliant.

Summing it up

Steve Cree (Baritone) summed it up perfectly:

'Such an honour singing with Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir at Mansfield Rugby Club, to be joined by the famous Morriston Orpheus Welsh Male Voice Choir from Swansea as they performed their final concert of their 90th Birthday celebrations.

Such a wonderful melodious, mellifluous sound from both choirs individually which culminated with both choirs joining together for a harmonious dulcet finish.'

Magnificent!

Greetings from Scotland

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir — Scotland West — Anne Kay

More Anniversary Celebrations

Greetings to everyone in News and Views World from a surprisingly warm Scotland. The choir has been fairly busy preparing for concerts and gearing up for the things yet to come before the end of the current season — our 75th.

In February, we returned to Cambuslang, near Glasgow, for a most enjoyable concert in very familiar surroundings. It amazes me how learning and relearning all that Yuletide music displaces the memory of familiar pieces so I, for one, am always a bit more nervous ahead of the first post-Christmas concert of the season. This one went very well and I surprised myself by recalling most, if not all, of the words of the majority of the programme.

A Little Jazz Works Wonders

Our **BIG** concert of this section of the season was billed as a Spring Celebration. It's always so good to realise that another winter is fading and that we may have an actual summer coming along. Usually we have a guest choir but, for this concert, we had ourselves, our soloists and our secret weapon — the Matthew McIlree Jazz Trio.

For some time we have been learning, our Honorary President, Bob Chilcott's *A Little Jazz Mass* — parts of it were our focus during lockdown rehearsals, which, sadly had the effect of putting some of us off. I think we were all very surprised when we eventually got back together to realise how much better it sounded with all the other voices in place and we've all been converted to it.



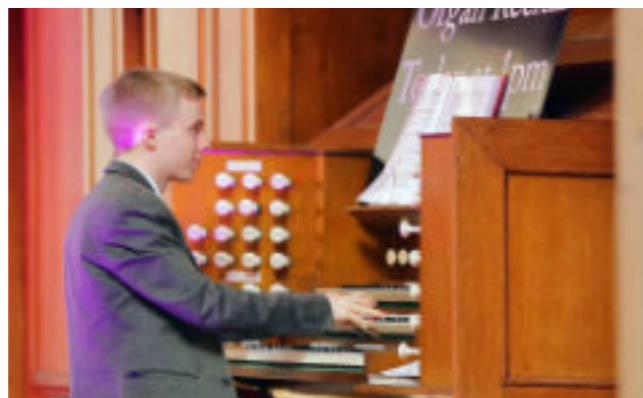
This concert was our first full performance of the work and Cameron invited our regular accompanist, Matthew, to bring his trio along to play with us. It was a wonderful experience and particularly amazing to have the trio whose age total is still younger than our average! Matthew, Duncan and Nemo also played some excellent jazz pieces as part of the concert.

The comments afterwards were most gratifying for both the choir and the trio but, especially, for the jazz mass itself. As a result of its reception and our enjoyment of singing it, we will be performing the mass in our remaining concerts of this season.

The most recent of these took place on Sunday 26 April in Beith, North Ayrshire. There should have been 52 singers but, due to the ravages of respiratory and digestive complaints, we

had 38 singers on the day. While it was a bit alarming at first, not least of all to our conductor, we geared ourselves up and put in a quite amazing performance.

The warm reception and kindness of the organisers and audience certainly helped us to maintain our usual high standards of singing. On this occasion, Matthew performed *Sweet William*, a brilliant piece, as part of the programme; part of the vote of thanks was provided by the Provost of North Ayrshire, who suggested that the title might be changed to Sweet Matthew. You can see from his photo what she meant.



With only two months of the season remaining, we are looking forward to a return to the Isle of Bute, where we always enjoy ourselves, to sing in the Isle of Bute Parish Church. We'll be joined by our great friends of the Ballianlay Choir with conductor Fiona Shaw and accompanist Annabelle Sung. We'll also have our terrific trio with us — so it should be an amazing concert.

In June, we have two special events. We'll be joining the Glasgow Symphony Orchestra in their summer concert. We're busy learning some additional items for that and are very honoured to have been invited to participate. Then, on Sunday 7 June, we'll be helping to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of one of Scotland's most influential architects and artists, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. We'll be performing the concert in the former Queen's Cross Church, the only built Mackintosh church design, which is now the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society headquarters, for whom we are undertaking the concert. We have sung in the building, now known as Mackintosh Queen's Cross, before and are looking forward to this return visit to this most stunning space.

In my December report, I celebrated the 90th birthday of our longest serving member Bill Forrest. Sadly, Bill recently suffered a stroke but is on the mend and hopes to return to the choir at the start of next season. We certainly hope he'll be fit to join us at our 75th birthday dinner, which we'll be celebrating in October this year and I wish him, and all of you the very best of health for the future.

Our History

North Ferriby Ladies Choir — Yorkshire North and East — Lesley Brown

Celebrating Seventy Years of Music and Community

Founding Years

The year was 1956.

In a modest bungalow in North Ferriby, the joyful sound of singing could be heard rising up towards the sky. It was here that six ladies, united by their love of music and friendship, came together to form the North Ferriby Ladies Choir.

As their numbers grew to twelve, the choir relocated to the North Ferriby Church of England Primary School. This venue became their home for the next sixty years, marking a significant chapter in the choir's history.

Milestones and Musical Direction

Now, in the choir's 70th year, rehearsals take place at the Village Hall, situated in the heart of the community. Over these remarkable years, only three Musical Directors have led the choir: Jennifer Heelas, Peter Bullock, and the current Musical Director, Heidi Riçhâl, whose dedication over the past thirty years has been nothing short of extraordinary.



Membership and Adaptation

The choir has grown from its original six members. Despite a decline in numbers during and after the COVID pandemic, membership is now approaching forty once again.

Heidi, our present Musical Director, pictured with the choir in the late 1990s.

Musical Style and Performances

Our motto, 'Singing with Style — everything from nursery rhymes to grand opera,' has truly defined our repertoire. Over the years, the choir has performed at weddings, funerals, charity concerts, festivals, open gardens, and carol evenings with Santa, embracing every opportunity to share music with the community.

Major Events and Collaborations

During the last seventy years, the choir has performed five times at the Royal Albert Hall, participated in the John Rutter festival in Scarborough, Choir of the Year, the National Association of Choirs in Scarborough, and performed works such as *Alpha and Omega* by Martin Emslie and version of the *Requiem Mass* was written especially for the choir by our previous accompanist Art Dickinson among others.

Recently, we have performed at and hosted concerts with the Stoke on Trent Male Voice Choir and Blackpool Male Voice Choir.

Community Involvement and Charity

Our choir members possess a variety of talents. Local concerts frequently feature solos, instrumental performances, readings and poems written especially for the choir. All of this is of course not possible without our fabulous accompanist Laura Stamp.

Each year, the choir votes for a different charity to support. Hundreds of pounds are raised through local concerts and coffee mornings. The choir is an integral part of the community, regularly singing in care homes and other local venues.

Friendship and Social Life

The choir also enjoys social events and outings, demonstrating that, beyond singing, the members share deep friendships.

Thank you for reading this — we hope it brings back some memories of singing with us or listening to our concerts over the years — here is to many more years of music, friendship and laughter.

Anniversary Celebration

From humble beginnings seventy years ago, we now celebrate our 70th Anniversary with a special concert at the Village Hall. The programme features Songs from the Shows, with at least one song from each decade of the choir's existence. The choir from the primary school, where we once rehearsed, will join us as special guests.



from PAGE to STAGE

a workshop focusing on the process of learning new songs and performing them

on
 Sunday 7 June 2026
 2pm - 5pm (registration from 1.30pm)

at
 The Priory Centre
 Church Road
 Burton upon Trent DE13 0HF

tickets:
 NAC choir members: £5
 non-NAC members: £7.50

online: trybooking.com/uk/GGTX
phone: 01530 411178
email: brenda18@mypostoffice.co.uk

workshop includes:

- basic sight-reading
- interpreting the emotions of a song
- body language and facial expressions
- sharing experiences and fears and ideas



use your mobile phone camera to scan the code and go straight to purchase tickets

MDs and singers of all abilities welcome

Passing the Baton

Ravenswood Singers — North East — Lilian Martin



The Best News

Following the very sad death of our beloved leader, Joan Trainor last year, we were worried about the choir's future. However, the best news we could have wished for at Ravenswood Singers is that our lovely Susan Robertson has agreed to stay on as our musical director.

That's Susan in the picture with her husband Paul. We are immensely grateful for Susan's commitment and support of the choir, as we know the distance Susan travels to be with us and how ridiculously busy her life already is!

We also know that Joan will be so, so happy that her baton has been handed on to Susan and her legacy is in safe hands.

She Knows Her Stuff

She knows what Joan wanted and expected from her singers and that Joan will be more than happy for Susan to take us forwards and upwards and to put her own stamp on our choir.



We now have someone who knows (more than most) her stuff about music, vocal prowess, choirs — and in particular she knows The Ravenswood Singers inside out and backwards.

Onwards and Upwards

We won't live in the past. We will take Joan's choir into the future- which is exactly what she wanted to happen. Thank you Susan. Enormous love and gratitude from us all xxx

Quotable Quotes

“Beethoven tells you what it's like to be Beethoven and Mozart tells you what it's like to be human. Bach tells you what it's like to be the universe.”

— Douglas Adams

The Evolution of the Part-Song:

A Choral Genre Through Time

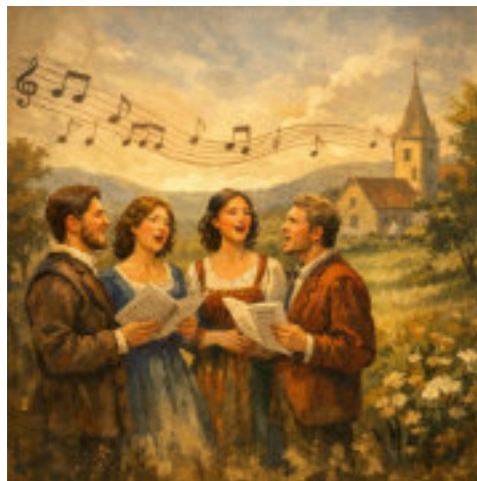
The part-song sits in a fascinating corner of choral history — intimate, flexible, and deeply expressive. It has moved through centuries of musical change while keeping its core identity: short, finely crafted pieces for small vocal ensemble, usually unaccompanied, designed for pleasure as much as performance. What follows is an exploration of how this genre evolved from Renaissance roots to its modern revivals.

The Early Foundations

The part-song's ancestry lies in the **English madrigal school** of the late 16th century. Composers like **Thomas Morley**, **John Wilbye**, and **Thomas Weelkes** wrote secular pieces for small groups of singers, often with pastoral or amorous texts. These madrigals were:

- **Polyphonic**, with independent voice lines
- **Expressive**, using word-painting and vivid imagery
- **Social**, intended for domestic music-making

By the early 17th century, the madrigal tradition waned, but its DNA persisted. The idea of a short, secular, multi-voice piece never disappeared — it simply adapted.



The 18th Century: A Quiet Interlude

The Baroque and Classical eras shifted musical attention toward opera, oratorio, and instrumental forms. Yet the seeds of the part-song survived in:

- **Glee clubs**, especially the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club (founded 1761)
- **Catches and glees**, witty or sentimental pieces for men's voices
- **Domestic harmony singing**, a staple of middle-class culture

These works were lighter and more homophonic than madrigals, but they kept alive the tradition of small-scale vocal ensemble music.

The 19th Century: The Golden Age of the Part-Song

The Victorian era transformed the part-song into a major choral genre. Several forces converged:

- **The rise of amateur choirs**
- **Music education expanding nationwide**
- **A taste for lyrical, sentimental poetry**
- **Publishers hungry for accessible repertoire**



Composers such as **Arthur Sullivan**, **Charles Villiers Stanford**, **Hubert Parry**, and **Edward Elgar** elevated the form. Their part-songs typically featured:

- **Homophonic textures** with occasional imitative writing
- **Lush Romantic harmonies**
- **Nature-inspired or reflective texts**
- **SATB scoring**, though TTBB and SSA variants flourished

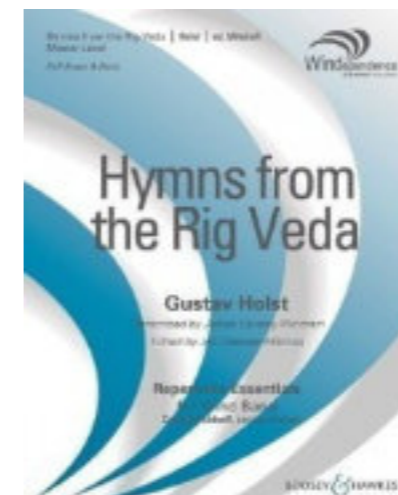
This was the era when the part-song became a cultural staple — sung in parlours, competitions, festivals, and civic gatherings.

Early 20th Century: Innovation and Colour

The early 1900s brought a new wave of experimentation. Composers like **Gustav Holst**, **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, **Granville Bantock**, and **Rebecca Clarke** expanded the expressive palette:

- **Modal harmony** and folk-song influence
- **More adventurous chromaticism**
- **Expanded vocal ranges and divisi**
- **Atmospheric tone-painting**

Holst's *Hymns from the Rig Veda* and Vaughan Williams's *Three Shakespeare Songs* show how the part-song could become harmonically daring while retaining its compact form.



Mid-Century Decline and Choral Shifts

After the Second World War, the part-song's popularity dipped. Several factors contributed:

- **The rise of large choral societies** favouring oratorios
- **A shift toward modernist idioms** less suited to short secular forms
- **Changing tastes in domestic music-making**



Yet the genre never vanished — it simply became more specialised. Composers like **Benjamin Britten** kept the tradition alive with works such as *Five Flower Songs*, which blend clarity, wit, and technical finesse.

Late 20th to 21st Century: Revival and Reinvention

In recent decades, the part-song has enjoyed a quiet renaissance, driven by:

- **Chamber choirs seeking refined, text-driven repertoire**
- **A renewed interest in a cappella textures**
- **Contemporary composers exploring compact forms**

Modern part-songs often feature:

- **Extended harmonies** (clusters, added-note chords)
- **Rhythmic flexibility**
- **Eclectic texts**, from poetry to world literature
- **Cross-genre influences**, including jazz and minimalism

Composers such as **Cecilia McDowall**, **James MacMillan**, **Judith Weir**, **Eric Whitacre**, and **Ūriks Einfelds** have created works that echo the intimacy of the Victorian part-song while embracing contemporary colour.

Why the Part-Song Endures

Across its long history, the part-song has remained beloved because it is:

- **Compact** — perfect for concerts, competitions, and community choirs
- **Expressive** — capable of deep emotion in just a few pages
- **Flexible** — suitable for amateur and professional ensembles alike
- **Text-centred** — allowing poetry and music to intertwine

It is a genre that thrives on clarity, craftsmanship, and the sheer pleasure of voices in harmony.

A Closing Thought

The part-song's evolution mirrors the evolution of choral culture itself — from Renaissance households to Victorian festivals to today's chamber choirs.

It has adapted to every era while preserving its essential charm: a small group of singers, a beautifully crafted text, and the shared joy of making music together.



Listening Guide: The Evolution of the Part-Song

A curated journey through five eras of the genre, each track chosen to show how the part-song transformed in colour, harmony, and purpose.

1. Renaissance Roots — The Madrigal Spark

Thomas Morley — *Now Is the Month of Maying*

Bright, playful, and quintessentially English, this madrigal shows the part-song's earliest DNA: light textures, vivid text-painting, and the social joy of voices weaving together.

Listen for: crisp imitation, dance-like rhythms, and that unmistakable Elizabethan sparkle.

2. Georgian Glees — Harmony for the Drawing Room

Samuel Webbe — *Glorious Apollo*

A classic glee: smooth, homophonic, and written for convivial male voices. This is the bridge between madrigal intricacy and Victorian warmth.

Listen for: elegant phrasing, close harmony, and the polished charm of 18th century amateur music-making.

3. Victorian Golden Age — Lush Romantic Colour

Charles Villiers Stanford — *The Blue Bird*

The part-song at its most atmospheric. Stanford suspends time with floating soprano lines and shimmering harmonic shifts.

Listen for: that magical soprano entry on 'blue,' the stillness of the texture, and Stanford's velvet-soft Romantic harmony.

4. Early 20th Century — Folk, Modal, Modern

Ralph Vaughan Williams — *Three Shakespeare Songs: Full Fathom Five*

A masterpiece of choral colour. Vaughan Williams blends modality, text-driven rhythm, and subtle dissonance to create something ancient and modern at once.

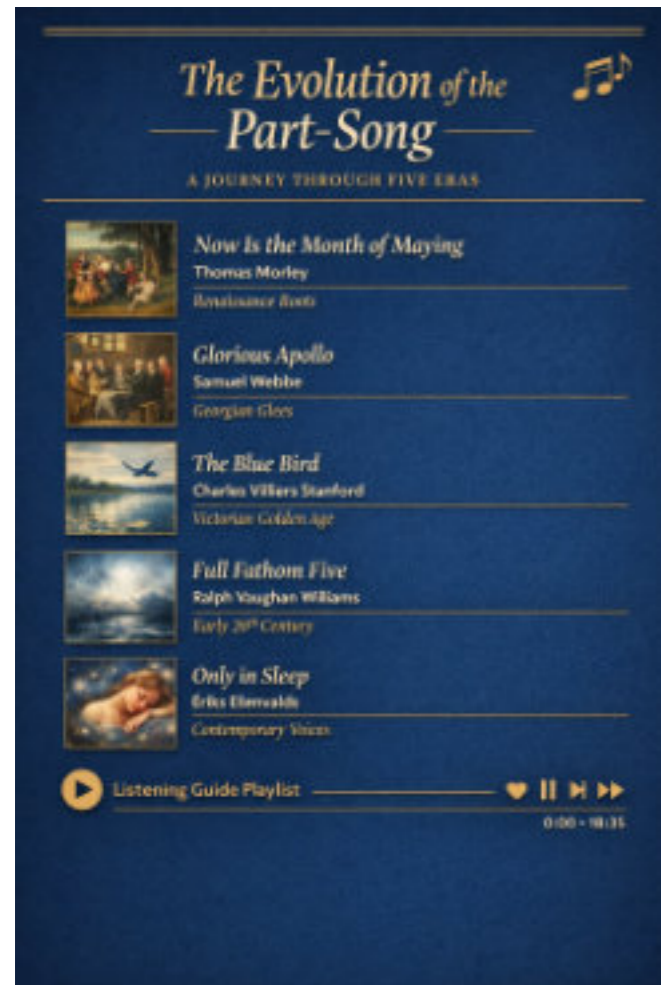
Listen for: bell-like cluster chords, shifting tonal centres, and the sea-spray atmosphere.

5. Contemporary Voices — New Harmonies, New Light

Ēriks Eņvalds — *Only in Sleep*

A modern part-song that feels cinematic. Eņvalds uses rich cluster chords, soaring melodic lines, and dreamlike pacing to show how the genre continues to evolve.

Listen for: shimmering added-note harmonies, warm divisi textures, and the nostalgic emotional arc.



Aberfan Memorial Concert

Bestwood Male Voice Choir — Midlands East — Peter Fletcher

21 October 2026 will be the 60th anniversary of a terrible disaster in the village of Aberfan, South Wales. A spoil tip from coal mining activity collapsed onto the village engulfing Pantglas Junior School, suffocating 116 children and 28 adults.

To commemorate the event, four local organisations with mining associations will be getting together to give a memorial concert at St Paul's Church, Mansfield Road, Daybrook, Nottingham, NG5 6BH on 24 October 2026.

Hosted by Bestwood Male Voice Choir, the concert will include Pye Hill and District Male Voice Choir, Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir, and Hucknall and Linby Mining Community Brass Band, raising funds for the Aberfan Memorial Charity.

Many readers may not have been born at the time of the tragedy and for those wanting to know more, there are many resources on the internet.

If you would like to know more about the concert, please contact Bestwood Male Voice Choir at:

www.bestwoodmvc.org.uk



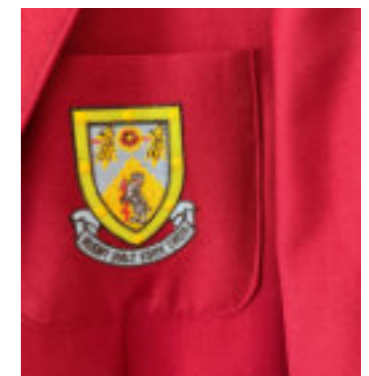
Recycling Choir Blazers

Rugby Male Voice Choir — Midlands West — Peter Banks

Rugby Male Voice Choir is adopting a new uniform and therefore we have approximately 40 blazers ranging in adult sizes from 32 inch to 56 inch which we are prepared to pass on to another choir in return for a small, voluntary donation.

Unfortunately the Rugby Male Voice Choir badge is embroidered on and so cannot be removed so our only stipulation would be that they sew on their own choir's badge over the top of the RMVC one in order to avoid any confusion.

We're happy for people to view them before they make a decision, if they prefer. Contact Peter on (07947 548505) or email info@rugbymvc.org.uk.



90 YEARS YOUNG

Sonara Singers — Midlands East — Christine Middleton/Helen Beresford

How It All Started

'I have a dream' (Martin Luther King jr, 1963); 'it started with a kiss' (Hot Chocolate, 1982); but long before both of those iconic statements a group of ladies in South Normanton, Derbyshire 'had an idea' – in 1936!

Their idea was hatched over tea and cakes, presumably because men folk were having an immensely enjoyable time singing in male voice choirs. 'So why not we ladies?' (poetic licence). The plan became reality, and *Alfreton Ladies Choir* was born in March 1936 – believed to be the first, therefore the oldest, ladies choir in the country.

In the late 1990's the name of the choir was changed to *Sonara Singers*, the choir going from strength to strength.



Birthday Celebrations

This birthday celebratory year is being commemorated with an extensive programme of concerts with guest choirs from near and far – even international (well, Wales).

We kicked off the year in March when we welcomed, first, Chameleon Choir from Ashbourne to St. Peter's Church in Belper, then, two weeks later, the amazing Morrision Orpheus Male Voice Choir from Swansea were our guests at the prestigious Cavendish Hall at Chatsworth – both truly fabulous events.

There are more to come – all being different and unique, but promising to be amazing and uplifting, not least our huge celebratory concert in Derby Cathedral on Saturday, 17 October together with 2 guest choirs and a brass band, and welcoming a special guest MC!

Supporting Local Charities

The choir also decided to support three local charities throughout this year with funds raised from concerts being donated to the local branch of the Air Ambulance, to Women's Work based in Derby, and to Speech, Sign and Song Club.

Joy and friendship through singing for 90 years – what a great idea those ladies had in 1936.



Celebrating 70

Pilkington Choir — North West — Jenny Southward

We made it!

Our last article for News & Views was summer 2023 in which we talked about our recovery after COVID and now in 2026 here we are celebrating 70 years of Pilkington Choir in St Helens.

The choir was formed in 1956 and was restricted initially to Pilkington Glass male employees but later family members and retired employees (including women) were allowed to join. The aim for choir members was to 'sing for their own pleasure and to give concerts for the benefit of charities and similar organisations'; We now like to add 'and to sing for our health and mental well-being.'

Our Heritage

Although Pilkington Glass sadly no longer exist in our town as an independent business, we are proud to be able to continue to use the Pilkington name and the choir is now a registered charity.

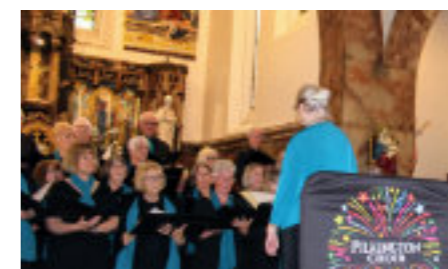
We regularly receive funding from the Harry and Mavis Pilkington Foundation Fund for Arts and Leisure and, by a lovely coincidence, our current rehearsal space owned and run by our local hospice, is on the site of the original Pilkington works canteen.

We are honoured to have the founder of the hospice; Lady Kirsty Pilkington and two other family members David and Jeremy Pilkington attend our celebration concert.

Who we are

We are a mixed voice choir of around 30 people and sing in a variety of local venues, particularly enjoying the opportunity to sing in joint concerts with other local choirs including Liverpool Male Voice Choir.

We also had the opportunity to showcase the choir at the 2025 St Helens Heritage Day where we had the pleasure of meeting the Mayor of St Helens. He very kindly not only attended our next performance but also invited choir members to join him at the town hall for a tour and afternoon tea.



Our Repertoire

Our repertoire covers a wide variety of music including songs from the musicals and older and more modern pieces. We are very excited to be holding a special 70-year anniversary celebration concert on 30 June where

we will perform *Flowers* made popular by Miley Cyrus and *Colors Of The Wind* from Walt Disney's *Pocahontas*.

In addition, we are most fortunate to have Ted Adams (tenor) performing as our special guest on the night which will be held at St Austin's RC Church in St Helens.

Future Events

We currently have six concerts booked for our anniversary year and are looking forward to singing in new venues for the first time.

We are particularly honoured to have been invited to perform a little further afield in Garston, Liverpool to celebrate the 800-year anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi in the church of his name on October 4 2026.

A Friendly Bunch

We are a friendly choir (with a very active WhatsApp group) and, as part of our 70-year anniversary celebrations, members have organised an afternoon tea which we hope will be a wonderful opportunity to chat to each other as our tea break time at rehearsals is never enough.

New Members Welcome

Like many choirs we are always looking for new members. No audition is required and we rehearse at Willowbrook Living Well, St Helens WA10 3RN on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 to 9.30.

How to Contact Us

More information can be found on our website: www.pilkingtonchoir.org.uk or you can find us on Facebook.

To contact us directly for further information on events or to enquire about joining the choir please email Secretary@pilkingtonchoir.org.uk

Finding Your Voice

Wyre Forest Community Choir — Midlands South West — Carol Woolley

Who We Are

On a Monday evening in Kidderminster, as the working day winds down and the lights come on at the Severn Valley Railway, something rather different starts to happen. Mugs are put to one side, sheet music comes out, and after a bit of laughter and catching up, voices begin to rise together in song.

This is Wyre Forest Community Choir. In just a few months, it has become a place where people come not just to sing, but to connect.



The choir was founded in October 2025 with a simple aim: to bring people together through a shared enjoyment of singing. It is open to any adult who enjoys singing, with no auditions and no requirement to read music. Experience is not expected, enthusiasm is enough.

‘There is no pressure here at all,’ says Musical Director David Barclay. ‘You do not have to read music, you are never asked to sing on your own, and nobody is judging. We sing because it feels good to do it together.’

That approach has struck a chord locally. Members come from across the Wyre Forest and surrounding areas. Some have sung in choirs for years, others have not sung in a group since school, and some had never sung with others before joining. What they share is a desire to be part of something positive and welcoming.

Where We Are

Rehearsals take place every Monday from 7.30 to 9.30 in the Valley Suite at Severn Valley Railway. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, with music taught at a comfortable pace and plenty of encouragement. Halfway through the evening there is a short break for a drink and a chat, a small but important part of the night that many members say they really look forward to.

The choir works on a varied repertoire throughout the year, from contemporary songs and folk music to more traditional choral pieces and seasonal favourites. Music is provided, and learning happens together, helping people grow in confidence as well as musical ability.

What We Are

Wyre Forest Community Choir is run as a not-for-profit organisation, with all income used to support its aims. New members are invited to attend their first two rehearsals free of charge, giving them the chance to experience the choir before committing. A modest monthly subscription then helps cover music and running costs, with flexibility available where needed.

Our First Steps

Although still new, the choir has already taken its first steps into the wider community. Just before Christmas, members gave their first public performance at Severn Valley Railway Station in Kidderminster. For many, it was their first time singing in public.



‘The sense of pride was incredible,’ says David. ‘Seeing people who were nervous at the start stand there smiling and singing together was a really special moment.’

Looking ahead, the choir hopes to continue growing and to perform at more community events and concerts. As part of this, they are currently looking for a committed accompanist to support rehearsals and future performances.

‘Singing with live accompaniment makes such a difference,’ says Chairman and founding member Daniel Woolley. ‘We are keen to hear from someone local who would enjoy being part of a new choir as it finds its feet.’

At its heart, Wyre Forest Community Choir is about more than music. It is about confidence, friendship and feeling that you belong somewhere. As one member puts it, ‘You come for the singing, but you stay for the people.’

Come and Join

New members are always welcome. Wyre Forest Community Choir offers an open invitation: come along, give it a try, and see where your voice might take you.

Music Quiz

1. Which film composer won Best Original Score Oscars for *Jaws*, *Star Wars* and *Schindler's List*?
2. In Holst's suite *The Planets*, which planet was the ‘Bringer of War’?
3. The *Great Gate of Kiev* is the last part of which piano work by Mussorgsky?
4. What popular name is shared by Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 in B Minor?
5. Whose ode *An die Freude* was used by Beethoven in the finale of his Ninth Symphony?
6. *Anitra's Dance* and *Solveig's Song* are part of Grieg's incidental music to which play by Ibsen?
7. The jazz classic *Mood Indigo* is particularly associated with whose orchestra?
8. In 1972, Isaac Hayes won the Oscar for Best Original Song for the theme tune of which detective film?
9. What title did J. S. Bach give to his set of 24 Preludes and Fugues for keyboard in each of the major and minor keys, and also to a second set composed later in Leipzig sometimes called the ‘48’?
10. Who titled his Fifth Symphony ‘A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism’?

Answers on page 46



Exploring Orff's Carmina Burana

The Choral Thunderbolt That Changed Everything

Music That Doesn't Tiptoe into the Room

Few choral works land with the sheer, visceral impact of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Premiered in 1937 and built on a collection of medieval poems discovered in a Bavarian monastery, it has become one of the most recognisable — and most electrifying — pieces in the entire classical repertoire. This is music that doesn't tiptoe into the room. It arrives like a storm front.

A Wheel of Fortune That Never Stops Turning

At the heart of *Carmina Burana* lies a simple but potent idea: Fortune rules us all. Orff structures the cantata as a great turning wheel — from the famous opening chorus *O Fortuna* through springtime, tavern revelry, love, and back again to the same thunderous invocation of fate.

The circular design is more than clever architecture. It gives the work its sense of inevitability, its ritualistic power. The audience doesn't just listen; they're swept into a cycle that feels ancient, primal, and strangely modern.

Medieval Texts, Modern Punch

The poems Orff chose — written in Latin, Middle High German, and Old French — are anything but dusty. They celebrate:

- Spring and renewal
- Drinking and gambling
- Desire, flirtation, and sensuality
- The cruelty of fate

Orff's genius was to treat these texts not as museum pieces but as living, breathing theatre. His music is rhythm-driven, percussive, and unapologetically direct. He once said he wanted to create 'elemental' music — and *Carmina Burana* is exactly that: bold blocks of sound, pounding rhythms, and melodies that lodge in the memory after a single hearing.

The Soundworld: Primitive, Colourful, Unforgettable

Orff's orchestration is famously muscular. The percussion section alone feels like a small army, and the chorus is used as a collective force rather than a delicate tapestry. Yet within the bombast, there are moments of exquisite intimacy:

- The pure, floating lines of the children's choir
- The tender lyricism of 'In trutina'
- The comic brilliance of the roasting swan aria
- The sensual glow of the soprano's 'Dulcissime'

It's a work of extremes — and that contrast is what makes it so theatrically potent.

A Chorus's Rite of Passage

For choirs, *Carmina Burana* is a milestone. It demands:

- Precision in rhythm
- Stamina across its relentless climaxes
- Clarity in multiple languages
- Fearlessness in dynamic range

It's no wonder that performing it often becomes a defining moment in a choir's life. The sheer physicality of the music creates a sense of shared exhilaration — a feeling that lingers long after the final chord.



From Concert Hall to Pop Culture Icon

Few classical works have infiltrated popular culture as deeply as *Carmina Burana*. 'O Fortuna' has become the universal shorthand for drama, danger, and epic scale — appearing in films, adverts, sports events, and even comedy sketches. This ubiquity can overshadow the rest of the score, but it also speaks to the music's elemental power. Orff tapped into something instinctive, something that resonates across centuries.

Why It Endures

Nearly ninety years after its premiere, *Carmina Burana* remains a phenomenon because it offers an experience rather than a narrative. It's ritual, spectacle, theatre, and communal catharsis rolled into one. It speaks to the body as much as the mind. And in a world that often feels ruled by forces beyond our control, its great wheel of fortune still turns with unsettling relevance.

Listening Guide: Carmina Burana

A Journey Through Fate, Spring, Revelry, Desire, and the Turning Wheel of Life

1. O Fortuna

Mood: Monumental, ominous, cinematic
What's happening: The chorus summons Fortune herself — unpredictable, merciless, unstoppable.

Listen for: Hammer-blow chords, chanting unisons, the sense of a ritual beginning.

Why it matters: This is the gravitational centre of the whole work. Everything else spins around it.

Part I — Primo Vere (Spring)

The world thaws; life stirs; energy returns.

2. Fortune Plango Vulnera

Mood: Fierce, declamatory
Listen for: The choir railing against Fortune's cruelty — already the wheel is turning.

3. Veris Leta Facies

Mood: Bright, dancing, pastoral
Listen for: Light, skipping rhythms that feel like sunlight breaking through.

4. Omnia Sol Temperat

Mood: Warm, lyrical
Listen for: Tenor solo floating over gentle orchestral warmth — the first real moment of tenderness.

5. Ecce Gratum

Mood: Joyous, rhythmic
Listen for: The choir celebrating spring's return with irresistible momentum.

Part II — Uf dem Anger (On the Green)

Nature, youth, flirtation, and earthy humour.

6. Tanz

Mood: Rustic, energetic
Listen for: A medieval-flavoured instrumental dance — earthy and irresistible.

7. Floret Silva Noblis

Mood: Noble, expansive
Listen for: Broad choral lines evoking a forest in full bloom.

8. Chramer, Gip Die Varwe Mir

Mood: Playful, teasing
Listen for: A cheeky dialogue about beauty, cosmetics, and attraction.

9. Reie / Swaz Hie Gat Umbe

Mood: Whirling, communal
Listen for: A round-dance that feels like a village festival in full swing.

10. Were Diu Werlt Alle Min

Mood: Bold, boastful
Listen for: A burst of youthful swagger — if the world were mine, the singer declares, he'd give it all for a kiss.

Part III — In Taberna (In the Tavern)

Rowdy, raucous, and darkly comic.

11. Estuans Interiu

Mood: Fiery, manic
Listen for: The baritone spitting out rapid-fire lines — a portrait of a man consumed by desire and drink.

12. Olim Lacus Coluera

Mood: Surreal, tragicomic
Listen for: The roasting swan lamenting its fate in a high, tortured tenor line — grotesque and unforgettable.

13. Ego Sum Abbas

Mood: Boisterous, swaggering
Listen for: The "Abbot of Cockaigne" boasting about drunken authority.

14. In Taberna Quando Sumus

Mood: Full-throttle, chaotic
Listen for: The men's chorus listing the drinkers, the stakes, the losses — a medieval pub-crawl in musical form.

Part IV — Cour D'amours

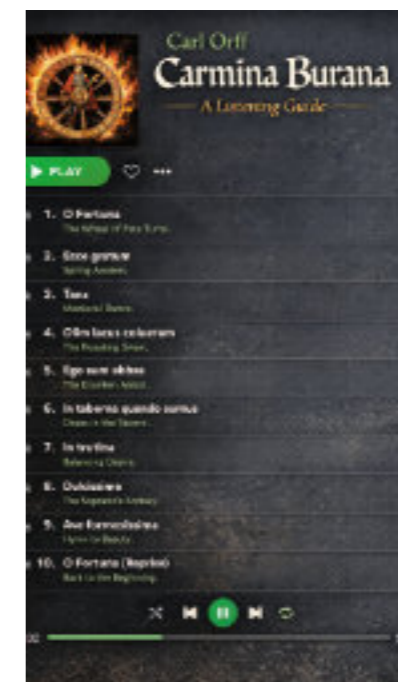
Desire, seduction, vulnerability, and ecstatic release.

15. Amor Volat Undique

Mood: Light, innocent
Listen for: Children's voices symbolising Cupid's fluttering presence.

16. Dies, Nox Et Omnia

Mood: Dark, yearning
Listen for: The baritone's confession of unrequited love — raw and exposed.



17. Stetit puella

Mood: Bright, flirtatious
Listen for: A girl's beauty described with sparkling orchestral colour.

18. Circa Mea Pectora

Mood: Playful, rhythmic
Listen for: Rapid exchanges between voices — a musical flirtation.

19. Si Puer Cum Puellula

Mood: Warm, lilting
Listen for: A gentle, rocking rhythm suggesting intimacy.

20. Veni, Veni, Venias

Mood: Urgent, breathless
Listen for: Repeated pleas of "Come!" — desire at boiling point.

21. In Trutina

Mood: Pure, suspended
Listen for: The soprano's serene balancing of chastity and desire — one of the work's most luminous moments.



22. Tempus Est Iocundum

Mood: Joyful, celebratory
Listen for: Voices layering in a tapestry of youthful delight.

23. Dulcissime

Mood: Ecstatic, soaring
Listen for: The soprano's stratospheric climax — the emotional peak of the love sequence.

Finale — Blanziflor et Helena / O Fortuna (Reprise)

The wheel completes its turn.

24. Ave Formosissima

Mood: Triumphant, ceremonial
Listen for: A coronation-like celebration of beauty and love.

25. O Fortuna (Reprise)

Mood: Inevitable, overwhelming
Listen for: The return of the opening thunder — the wheel of fate turns again, unchanged and unstoppable.

If You Like Carmina Burana, You Might Also Like...

Carl Orff — Catulli Carmina: Another dramatic cantata by Orff, featuring Latin texts and rhythmic intensity.

Igor Stravinsky — Les Noces: A ballet-cantata blending Russian folk themes with modernist rhythms and percussion.

Benjamin Britten — Saint Nicolas: A cantata with a narrative structure, combining choral and orchestral forces.

Maurice Ravel — Daphnis et Chloé (Choral Suite): A lush orchestral and choral work with impressionistic harmonies.

Gustav Holst — The Planets (Neptune Movement): Featuring a wordless female chorus, this movement creates an ethereal atmosphere.

Igor Stravinsky — Symphony of Psalms: Its austere choral writing and rhythmic drive resonate with Orff's style.

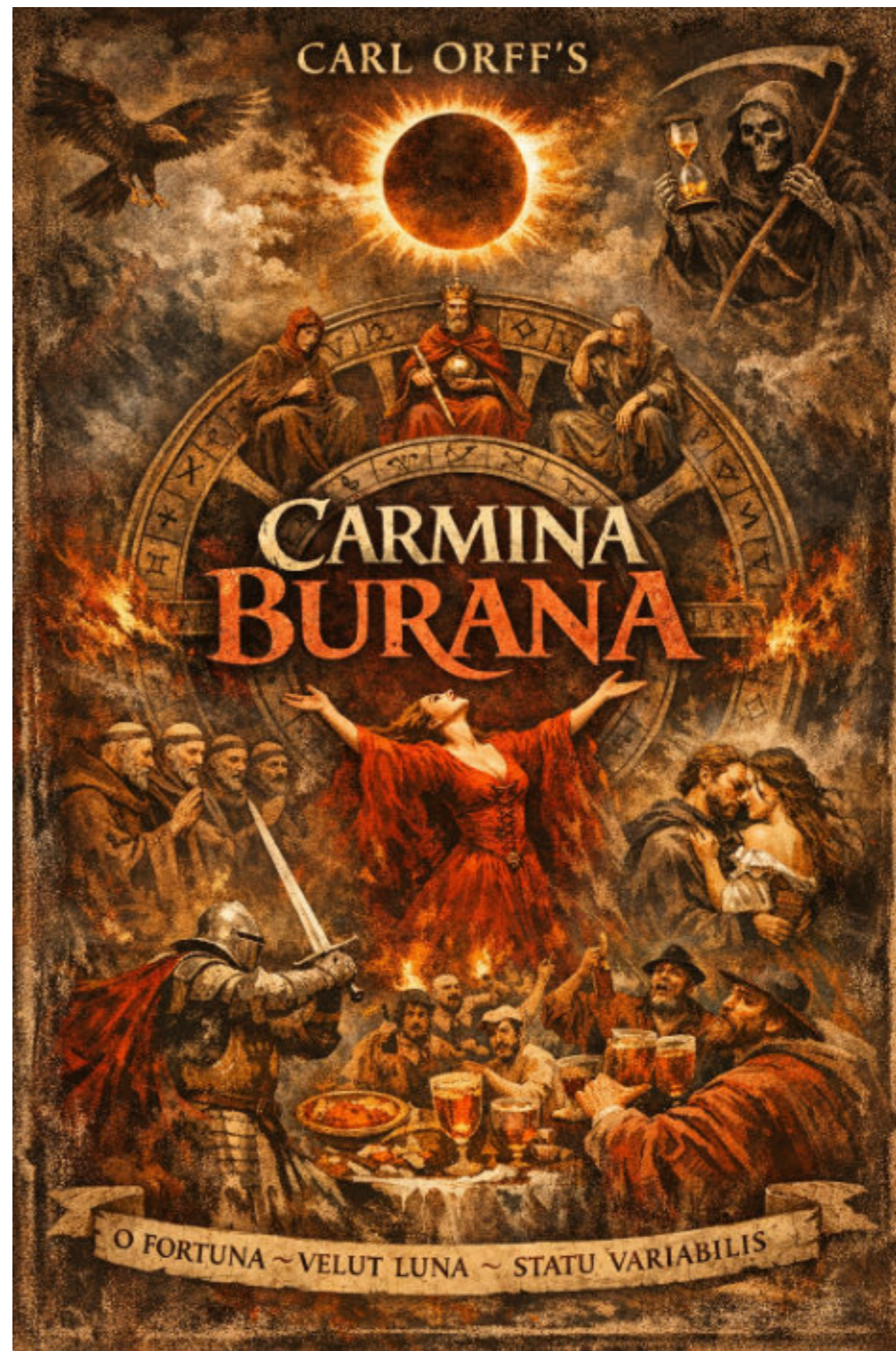
Paul Hindemith — Mathis der Maler (Symphony): A symphonic work with choral elements, reflecting dramatic and spiritual themes.

Leonard Bernstein — Mass: Shares theatrical and dramatic elements with Carmina Burana.

Michael Tippett — A Child of Our Time: A modern oratorio addressing social issues with powerful choral writing.

Hector Berlioz — Te Deum: A grand choral work with dramatic orchestration and intensity.

These works share thematic or stylistic connections with Carmina Burana, whether through their dramatic rhythms, choral intensity, or theatrical flair. Exploring them can deepen your appreciation of the rich tradition of 20th-century choral and orchestral music.



Celebrating 100 Years in Style!

The St Helens Singers — North West — Helen Tierney

'A Bit of a Do'

We already had dates planned throughout the year at the start of 2026, and we have continued to add to that list with enquiries from charities and other musical groups.

We started 2026 with 'A bit of a do' in February at the Mercure Hotel in St Helens. Current and past members were invited to the launch of our celebrations, with a buffet meal, disco, and a chance to catch up and reminisce about years gone by. Coincidentally, the date was also the 80th Birthday of our Secretary, Mrs Marie Holden. We congratulate her on reaching this milestone. It's said that singing keeps you young — well, Marie is still very much an active singing member in our soprano section, as well as carrying out the role of Secretary with efficiency and attention to detail. Thank you, Marie, for all you do.

Taking to the Airwaves

In March our MD, Angela, and one of our sopranos, Carol, took to the airwaves when they were interviewed by our local BBC radio station. What a fabulous day out they had! After chatting about our choir, our centenary, and what makes us such a wonderful group of people, they had lunch at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. (If you have never been there, it's highly recommended!)



On the 'Big Screen'

As some of you may be aware, we began life on stage, performing (in the main) operettas from Gilbert and Sullivan. In recognition of this major part of our history, we arranged a Gilbert and Sullivan film evening at a lovely local independent cinema.

We showed the 1992 performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* and invited those who were part of that production to come and watch (and sing, if they wished). It must be said that it was a treat to see our friends on the 'big screen' — although the recording is over 30 years old, the quality is astounding. We look forward to arranging another evening later in the year.

Plenty of Flag-Waving and Cheering

On 23 April we teamed up with Old Hall Brass for a concert at one of our regular venues, St Mary's Club in Birchley. We marked St George's Day with our own 'Last Night of the Proms', with plenty of flag-waving and cheering! The brass band was excellent and got the evening off to a rousing start. We followed with a selection from our ever-expanding repertoire, from The Beatles to ABBA mixed in with Sting, The Animals and Leonard Bernstein. The finale was superb, as Old Hall Brass led us in a stirring rendition of *Jerusalem, Land of Hope and Glory, Rule Britannia*, and of course the National Anthem to finish.

What's next in 2026?

At the end of May we are participating in St Helens Heritage Day at the Town Hall; this is an opportunity for us to showcase our choir and meet other organisations with a longstanding connection to St Helens. Our next concert is at Holy Trinity Church in Downall Green on 6 June, and our Centenary Concert will be on 20 June at our rehearsal venue, St Julie's Hall in St Helens — this will feature music from almost every genre of the past 100 years. More information is available on our website.

We have seven dates (so far) on the calendar from September to December; most are regular events and we are excited to reveal that we have a couple of new ventures. We are looking forward to sharing our love of music with a wider audience.

And...2027?

We are very much a forward-thinking group and are always looking to increase our reach — whether it be through our repertoire, the venues we sing in, or the groups we perform with. Some 2027 performance dates are already being suggested. We've achieved so much in our first 100 years — long may it continue!



We welcome enquiries from anyone interested in joining us. For more information contact our Secretary, Mrs. Marie Holden, on 01744 612485, find us on social media, or visit www.thesthelensingers.com.

Can you Help?

UK Female Ensemble Corra Sound to Perform Rare Ruth Gipps Masterpiece and Release World-First Recording



Shropshire-born musician, Dr. Amy Bebbington, is undertaking an ambitious and deeply significant new project to perform and professionally record Ruth Gipps' dramatic cantata *Goblin Market*, inspired by Christina Rossetti's iconic poem.

The live performance featuring vocal ensemble, Corra Sound, alongside the Great Little Orchestra, conducted by Amy, will take place on Friday, 3rd July, 7.30pm, at Holy Trinity Church, Guildford with the programme set to feature additional Rossetti settings by notable 20th Century composers.

A pre-concert conversation with Gipps' daughter-in-law Dr Victoria Rowe will offer rare insight into the composer's life. The landmark recording, partnering with Convivium Records, will take place on Saturday 11th July with a release date scheduled for the beginning of 2027.



This venture marks the historic and long-awaited world premiere recording of this powerful masterpiece, rich in themes of temptation, sisterhood, and female solidarity, and will be only the second UK performance of the work in 70 years.



The project stands as a threefold celebration of female creativity bringing together the iconic poetry of Christina Rossetti, the masterful and long-overlooked choral writing of Ruth Gipps, and the voices of Corra Sound — an ensemble dedicated to bringing the works of female composers out of the shadows.

'Ruth Gipps was a formidable force — a composer, conductor, and advocate who carved out space for women in a profession that frequently excluded them,' says Dr. Amy Bebbington, Corra Sound Founder and Director. 'By performing and recording this work, we are not only sharing exceptional music, we are highlighting a lineage of female creativity that has been side-lined for too long. *Goblin Market* is brimming with colour and emotional intensity. It is a vital piece of our musical heritage that demands to be heard.'

'Corra Sound is an outstanding ensemble, brilliantly led,' says Neil Ferris, Director of the BBC Symphony Chorus. 'This project forms an important part of their pioneering mission to uncover new repertoire and celebrate the works of often little-known female composers. The work they do is both ground-breaking and utterly essential to our choral music landscape.'



Dr Leah Broad, award-winning British musicologist says: 'Gipps was prodigiously gifted and fearlessly determined and yet the significant impact she had on British music is still yet to be fully realised. This vital project by Corra Sound is a major step towards redressing some of the historical imbalance of our musical heritage and securing Gipps her rightful place in the classical canon.'

Corra Sound is an established, high-performing ensemble of artistic excellence but we operate without core funding and have found it increasingly difficult to secure support through traditional funding channels. We have therefore launched a crowdfunding campaign to support the production costs of the performance and recording, inviting the public to contribute to the project, helping to bring this important work to a global audience.

Your financial support will cover essential costs including professional musicians, rehearsal and performance logistics, recording and production, and fair artist remuneration.

Any amount you share will be gratefully received and will help us to realise our vision. Please go to www.crowdfunder.co.uk and search for *Goblin Market*. Note: if choosing to donate, choose any amount you like (it doesn't have to be one of the suggested figures).

When prompted to tip, click the blue words underneath that say 'enter custom tip' and change the suggested tip to £0. This way your full donation will go directly to Corra Sound!

To book tickets to the concert visit www.eventbrite.co.uk and search for *Goblin Market*.

Thanks Alan — 60 Years Of Music!

City of Newcastle Male Voice Choir — North East — Karl Holford

Alan Clark Announces Retirement as MD

The City of Newcastle Male Voice Choir (CNMVC) would like to share the news that our Musical Director, Alan Clark, has decided to retire from his role, bringing to a close an extraordinary conducting career spanning 60 years. Along the way, Alan has led choirs everywhere from the Royal Albert Hall to great European cathedrals. Alan brought a wealth of musical knowledge, experience and clear leadership to the choir.

Steady, Experienced Leadership

Karl Holford, CNMVC Chair, said: 'Alan provided exactly the kind of steady, experienced leadership the choir needed during a challenging period. We thank him sincerely for his commitment, musicianship and support.'

Alan Clark commented: 'Working with the CNMVC has been both rewarding and enjoyable. I'm pleased to have played a part in guiding the choir through a period of change, and I look forward to seeing it continue to thrive in the years ahead.'

60-Year Musical Career

Alan's retirement and his remarkable 60-year musical career was formally recognised at the choir's concert at St Charles RC Church on Friday 20 March.

For now, we simply want to thank Alan once again and wish him every happiness and good health in his retirement.



PMLL Amateur Choir Licence

What is it?

Printed Music Licensing Ltd. (PMLL) represents the rights of music publishers.

On their behalf, PMLL issues licences to allow the photocopying and arranging of sheet music as part of education and beyond.

The Amateur Choir Licence allows choir members to legally make photocopies of works and also permits minor arrangements (such as change of key) to suit the voices of the choir.

The licence is intended to make access to music easier for choirs, enabling them to make copies without having to seek permission directly from the publisher, while ensuring that songwriters and composers are fairly paid for the use of their works.

With this licence you can easily and legally make printed copies without contacting publishers individually, **but you must check the publisher list to find out which publishers are included in this licence.**

What Does it Cost?

Pricing is tailored to the size of your choir, the number of copies you want to make, and how many songs you want to sing. If you have a choir of 50, but own 25 original copies, you would need a licence for 25 members, allowing you to make 25 copies only!

It is essential that you report what you have copied to the PMLL so that they can ensure they pay the correct publishers, who then pay monies to the writers and composers of the works.

Please contact pmlacl@mpagroup.com for further questions and queries, as well as pricing for specific orders.



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From Another Perspective

Chairperson of Eastwood Memory Cafe — Diane Rowley

Eastwood, Nottinghamshire

Eastwood Memory Cafe, a small local charity supporting people living with early to mid-stage dementia, along with their carers and family members, was delighted to welcome Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir to perform at its recent monthly meeting.



The choir, widely respected and admired within the local community, delivered a wonderful chosen programme of music that perfectly suited the group. The performance gave attendees the opportunity not only to listen and enjoy, but also to join in with a few familiar favourites.

The Power of Song

Music is incredibly powerful, it stirs memories and emotions in ways that few other things can. The room was filled with smiles and warmth and even a few tears, as special memories were rekindled.

'The visit was a wonderful example of community spirit in action. Seeing the choir engaging so warmly with our group was truly uplifting, and it was clear that the enjoyment was shared by performers and audience alike. I sincerely hope other local groups and venues will have the opportunity to enjoy their performances in the months ahead and benefit from the positive impact that music and local partnerships can have in supporting well-being and connection.'

Celebrating 50 Years in 2026

Bangor Ladies Choir — Northern Ireland — Anne Poots

Who We Are

Bangor Ladies Choir was formed in 1976 by Isobel Reid, who had a love for music and was very keen to form a ladies choir in her home town of Bangor, Northern Ireland.

The choir started with nine members, two of which are still singing with the choir in this fiftieth anniversary year and the membership now stands at 82.

Our Mission

The choir's mission is to inspire, uplift and entertain audiences and to provide an opportunity for musical growth and lifelong choral singing for women of all ages.



Our Travels

The choir has travelled extensively over their 50 years including:

- USA
- Canada
- Europe
- UK
- Republic of Ireland

Find Us



www.bangorladieschoir.com



BLC



Bangor Ladies Choir

First Ambassadors to the City of Bangor

In 2022 the choir was appointed First Ambassadors to the City of Bangor, having the privilege to sing for HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne — a day which will not be forgotten in the choir's history.

Loyalty, Enthusiasm and Commitment

Christine Crutchley, Musical Director, continues to expertly guide the choir to new levels resulting in a high standard of performances which is expected by audiences all of which include a range of secular, sacred and cultural pieces loved by the choir.

For a choir to last 50 years and still increasing in size, it takes loyalty, enthusiasm and commitment from the members.

Enduring Spirit and Camaraderie

COVID was the most difficult period in the choir's history and indeed for many choirs across the country. Zoom learning isn't really recommended for choirs but the main aim of Bangor Ladies Choir was still to be together by the end of the pandemic, still singing — and that's exactly what we did!

The enduring spirit and camaraderie of the choir are a true testament to its rich legacy and the community it continues to foster.

Celebration Concert

Bangor Ladies Choir will celebrate this momentous anniversary with a celebration concert on Saturday 16 May in the city of Bangor, Northern Ireland.



What's New in Choral Music?

Notable recordings released in the past three months



Elgar – *The Dream of Gerontius*

Huddersfield Choral Society • Orchestra of Opera North
Martyn Brabbins

A landmark new recording of Elgar's choral masterpiece.



Kerensa Briggs – *Lead, Kindly Light*

The Sixteen • CORO Records

Premiere recording of a luminous new choral work.



Nico Muhly – *With Eys Lift Up*

Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford • CORO Records

Seventeen new premieres from a leading contemporary composer.



De Profundis – *Morales Project, Vol. 3*

De Profundis • CORO Records

L'homme armé Masses from the Renaissance.



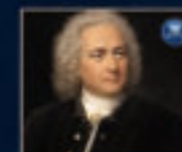
I Fagiolini – *Monteverdi: Vespers of 1610*

A bold new interpretation of Monteverdi's masterpiece.



I Fagiolini – *Benevoli: Angelus Domini & Dum complerentur*

Grand multi-choir works from the Colossal Baroque series.



Johann Ludwig Bach – *Cantatas*

Editor's Choice spotlight on a lesser-known Bach.

Why These Matter for Choirs



Fresh repertoire ideas



Premiere recordings



British choral highlights



Renaissance & Baroque gems

Singing with 'Our Dementia Choir'

Friends in Harmony — Yorkshire South — Alan Taylor

Shared Voices and Community Spirit

The choir joined with Vicky McClure's 'Our Dementia Choir' for a wonderfully inspiring evening of shared voices and community spirit in a concert arranged by The Rotary Club of Rotherham.

A fantastic concert, the choir was on top form, 'Our Dementia Choir' were amazing and their love of music and singing was infectious.



Our Next Concerts

The choir is now rehearsing for a concert on May 23 at 7.00pm in St Cuthbert's Church, Sitwell Park Rd, Rotherham S60 4BW. Tickets are £7 and available from 07392383600, any church member or choir member.

On June 27 the choir will be performing a concert in St Martin's Church, New Rd, Firbeck, S81 8JY.

Celebrating Isobel Clare

Orthopaedic Ladies' Choir — Midlands North — Mair Smith

A Lovely Lady...

This lovely lady is Isobel Clare, Musical Director of the Orthopaedic Ladies' Choir in Oswestry, Shropshire. Isobel is 91 years old and still conducting!

Isobel Hampson as she was then, studied music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, becoming a graduate with three diplomas in:

- Piano Teaching
- Accompanying
- Performing

She became a music teacher with classes at secondary school and taught adult education piano classes.



Isobel with accompanist Cath Wilson




At concerts held in Rochdale she played piano duets and two piano concerts with Ken Millington Director of Music in Rochdale as her partner.

Isobel has been an accompanist for many choirs with several in Lancashire and Yorkshire:

- Saddleworth Male Voice Choir
- Chadderton Music and Arts Choir
- Middleton Choral Society
- Oldham Musical Society
- Opera Society Walthamstow London

Isobel has composed pieces for piano and choir. To top it all, in 2012 she received a letter of thanks from her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when she wrote a piece of music to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee.

As you can see Isobel is a very talented lady.



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Puzzle Pages — Answers

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

S	C	H	U	M	A	N	N	E	A	H	C
L	I	U	W	A	G	N	E	R	A	Y	N
L	I	S	T	Z	A	N	E	Y	S	S	E
B	R	A	H	M	S	C	D	T	E	S	V
D	Z	P	R	D	M	N	R	U	V	U	O
W	O	B	A	C	H	O	E	L	I	B	H
T	I	Y	N	N	E	G	Z	R	H	E	T
R	L	C	I	S	P	E	S	A	N	D	E
E	R	O	H	C	U	R	M	R	R	P	E
B	E	P	A	H	C	S	E	E	E	T	B
U	B	L	N	O	C	H	T	L	B	U	E
H	Z	A	D	P	I	W	E	H	E	T	C
C	M	N	E	I	N	I	N	A	W	I	N
S	S	D	L	N	I	N	A	M	T	D	D

Music Quiz

- John Williams** — John Williams also won the Best Original Score Oscar for E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and went on to write the music for the first three Harry Potter films.
- Mars**
- Mussorgsky's **Pictures at an Exhibition** is the Russian composer's most famous piano composition and has become a showpiece for virtuoso pianists.
- Pathétique** — Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 (Pathétique) was written in 1798, Tchaikovsky's Pathétique Symphony almost 100 years later.
- Schiller** — An die Freude, or Ode to Joy, was written by Schiller in 1785 and revised in 1808. Beethoven used it for the final, choral movement of his Ninth Symphony, which he completed in 1824.
- Peer Gynt** — Both of those songs feature in Act IV of Grieg's incidental music to Ibsen's 1867 play.
- Duke Ellington** — Ellington's biographer, Terry Teachout, described Mood Indigo as 'an imperishable classic, one of a handful of songs that come to mind whenever Ellington's name is mentioned anywhere in the world'.
- Shaft** — Stax Records legend Isaac Hayes recorded the song at the peak of his powers, and would go on to act in films and provide the voice for Chef in South Park.
- The two books of **The Well-Tempered Clavier** are essentially exercise pieces, but they're also one of the high-water marks of Western classical composition.
- Shostakovich** — Shostakovich is thought to have written the comment in the Moscow newspaper Vechernyaya Moskva a few days before the symphony's premiere.

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