



PRESS RELEASE

Three Choirs Festival Hereford, 28 July – 4 August 2018: Full Programme Announced

The historic Three Choirs Festival has revealed its full programme for the 2018 festival, which takes place in and around Hereford from 28 July – 4 August 2018. Tickets will be available to members from 4 April and to the general public from 23 April. The festival features more than 70 events over eight days, complementing the evening concerts of choral music at the heart of the festival with a wide range of chamber recitals, talks, exhibitions and family events.

Artistic Director Geraint Bowen has taken notable centenaries as a starting point for his programming, including the start of universal suffrage in the UK, the end of the First World War, and the death of **Sir Hubert Parry**. Parry's music features at both the open and close of the festival, along with a 24-hour Parry focus in the middle of the week (2 August), taking in some of his major works under the baton of Sir Andrew Davis, and talks exploring his life and legacy; fittingly including his support of the suffragettes. The festival also explores imaginative uses of the organ with a series of recitals and an exhibition by the Institute of British Organ Builders.

The festival celebrates the anniversary of the 1918 passing of the Representation of the People Act by programming a wide array of works by female composers, beginning with **Ethel Smyth**, whose magnificent *Mass in D* opens the festival along with **John Ireland's *These things shall be*** (28 July). Smyth, herself a prominent member of the suffragette movement, would have been familiar with the Clarion Bugler on many 'votes for women' posters that lends the festival its cover image this year. The festival's orchestra-in-residence since 2012, the Philharmonia Orchestra, will pair **Holst's famous *The Planets***, 100 years after its first performance, with works by contemporary female composers **Hannah Kendall** (a new co-commission) and **Helen Grime**, as well as a festival first from **Ralph Vaughan Williams** with the recently republished *Norfolk Rhapsody No 2* (29 July). This concert will be conducted by Elim Chan, who made her conducting debut with the Philharmonia last year to great critical acclaim.

Violinist Jack Liebeck returns with his piano trio, Trio Dali (28 July), to kick off the chamber music series with a programme of trios by female composers including **Clara Schumann**, **Rebecca Clarke**, and **Lili Boulanger**, the centenary of whose tragic death at the age of only 24 in 1918 is also marked by the festival programme. Soprano Ruby Hughes will also perform a recent piece by **Helen Grime** along with love songs by **Schumann**, **Mahler**, **Ives** and **Britten** (1 August). Pianist Clare Hammond will look further back in time, beginning her recital with a suite by prodigy of the court of Louis XIV, **Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre** (3 August). An unusual take on the theme comes from Gothic Voices, who look at the Virgin Mary through both the music of **Hildegard von Bingen** and a series of contemporary reflections (4 August).

Meanwhile, the festival's youth choir take on **Cecilia McDowall's** beautifully poignant *Stabat Mater* alongside a choral arrangement of **Elgar's *Sea Pictures*** (4 August). Young performers are also represented at the festival by the National Youth Orchestra and Choir of Wales, who perform **Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*** and **Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*** (2 August). The Royal College of Organists presents a series of recitals by young organists in various venues throughout the county, while the festival's nominated charity SHYPP, which works with young people at risk of homelessness in Herefordshire, presents a programme of song and film in collaboration with local



music students (29 July). The winner of the Bromsgrove International Music Competition, Emily Sun, gives a recital of violin works with a common root in song (29 July). Youth theatre performers Gloucestershire Youth Players perform **Shakespeare's Twelfth Night** (30 July).

Female composers are also represented in the extensive programme of talks at the festival, beginning with the Wulstan Atkins lecture (28 July), in which Rhiannon Mathias, lecturer at Bangor University, will put these women's lives and works into context. Choral evensong performed by the Cathedral Choir on 1 August will also showcase an exclusively female programme, featuring works from **Janet Wheeler, Judith Weir, Ina Boyle** and a newly-commissioned work from **Kerensa Briggs**.

The festival also reflects on the centenary of the end of the First World War with a concert by renowned vocal ensemble Tenebrae (30 July), featuring music by several composers with a strong connection to the Three Choirs Festival such as **Howells, Gurney, Parry, Vaughan Williams**, and more recently **Torsten Rasch**, whose setting of Psalm 91 will be premiered in this concert. A more local connection is established in a talk by Dr Howard Tomlinson, former headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School, in which he reads from the diary of former chorister Sydney Addison and gives an impression of post-war schoolboy life (30 July).

Other notable centenaries are the deaths of **Sir Hubert Parry** and **Lili Boulanger** in 1918. A Gloucester-born composer, Parry was a longstanding supporter of the Three Choirs Festival and performed at the festival many times, and his contribution is marked on 2 August with an evening of his music. The younger of a pair of talented sisters, Boulanger's accomplished life was cut short at the tragically young age of 24, when she was beginning to be recognised as a trailblazer of the French avant-garde. Her **Psalm 130** will be performed on 3 August alongside **Ravel's Le Tombeau de Couperin, Walton's Viola Concerto** and **Stravinsky's** towering **Symphony of Psalms**

In the late-night series, another Hereford cathedral ex-chorister, Liam Dunachie, returns with his organ trio to perform jazz standards as well as his own compositions (28 July). Local talent is also represented by the Lay Clerks of Hereford Cathedral, who present an evening of light entertainment which is always a favourite of the festival programme (29 July), and Alive and Brel, a Hereford ensemble who bring the wit and irony of Jacques Brel to life in a fine cabaret revue (30 July).

Innovative percussionist Joby Burgess performs a pioneering series of contemporary works (2 August), while Kit Downes turns a common Three Choirs instrument on its head with his 'organ ceilidh' (31 July). David Owen Norris brings 'the essence of England and the flamboyance of France' to life with two piano portraits to a video backdrop. **Parry's Shulbrede Tunes** is accompanied by a tour of the home of the title (his daughter's) and the family photo album. Alongside, Poulenc's 'twenty minutes of brilliantissimo' are animated by *Guardian* cartoonist Martin **Rowson**, bringing caricatures to life as the music plays (1 August). Meanwhile, leading exponent of the harpsichord Mahan Esfahani treats us to **Bach's** hypnotically inventive **Goldberg Variations** on his newly-commissioned instrument (3 August).

Celebrated conductor Sir Andrew Davis returns to the festival for two performances: **Elgar's** cantata **King Olaf** (30 July), and a Parry centenary tribute (2 August). The celebrity organ recital this year will be offered by Olivier Latry, organist of Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris (31 July). Eminent tenor James Gilchrist expresses his pilgrim spirit in a programme of romantic music with long-standing accompanist Anna Tilbrook (30 July), while the Gould Piano Trio premiere a new work by **Huw Watkins** alongside **Ireland's** inventive **Phantasie in A minor** and **Messiaen's** iconic **Quartet for the End of Time** (31 July).



Elsewhere in the evening programme, the festival brings its cycle of **Mendelssohn's** major choral works to a conclusion with his **Lobgesang**, paired with **Bruckner's** mighty **Te Deum** (1 August), and the Three Cathedral Choirs of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester join forces with an outstanding cast of young soloists and period instrumentalists for a performance of **Monteverdi's Vespers**, sure to be a highlight of the week (31 July). The festival ends with **Brahms' Ein deutsches Requiem**, in a programme including **Parry's Elegy for Brahms** and Parry's pupil **Vaughan Williams' Toward the Unknown Region** (4 August).

The ticketed programme is complemented by free talks and an exhibition from the Institute of British Organ Builders, and families are well catered for, with plenty of events for children, including an introduction to the wind quintet with the Magnard Ensemble (31 July), a dark retelling of **Hansel and Gretel** for teens and adults, shadow puppet storytelling and string quartet, and drama, drumming and automata workshops.

This year the festival will continue its Festival Firsts programme, which provides free tickets for concerts and events to local people who are first-time festival attenders. The tickets are paid for by donations from supporters of the festival, who are invited to donate the price of a seat when they buy their own festival tickets.

There are many ways to get involved. The festival welcomes applications from potential volunteers, and applications to the youth choir are open until late May.

Ticket Office: 01452 768928 10am-4pm, Monday to Friday. A local ticket office will open in Hereford Cathedral School on Monday 23 July.

www.3choirs.org | www.twitter.com/3choirs | www.facebook.com/3choirsfestival

KEY DATES

Programme Online: Wednesday 21 March 2018
Member Booking: from Wednesday 4 April 2018
General Booking: Monday 23 April 2018
Three Choirs Festival: Saturday 28 July – Saturday 4 August 2018

More information and high-resolution images from:

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Available for interview:

Geraint Bowen, Artistic Director
Clare Wichbold, Hereford Three Choirs Festival Chairman
Dr Alexis Paterson, Chief Executive

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **The Three Choirs Festival** has its origins at the end of the 17th century in visits by the lay clerks of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester to one another's cathedrals for joint services and informal singing. More formal annual 'music meetings' can be traced back to around 1715 and have



continued ever since, interrupted only by the two world wars, making this the oldest continuously running classical music festival in the world. The event rotates between the three cathedral cities on a three-year cycle. The next festival takes place in Hereford 28 July – 4 August 2018 and is the 291st Three Choirs Festival.

2. The **Artistic Director** of each festival is the Director of Music of the city's cathedral, currently Geraint Bowen (Hereford), Adrian Partington (Gloucester), and Peter Nardone (Worcester). They work with a small professional team led by the Chief Executive of the Three Choirs Festival Association, which in turn works closely with a local city committee and freelance staff to deliver the festival each year.
3. **The Three Choirs Festival Chorus** is largely drawn from auditioned members of choral societies in Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester, with the largest contingent each year coming from the host city. Amateur choral singers have been taking part in the festival since the middle of the 19th century to augment the cathedral choirs of boy trebles and male altos, tenors and basses.
4. **The Three Choirs Festival Youth Choir** (14-25) is open for applications until late May. More information and registration forms can be found at www.3choirs.org/take-part
5. The **Philharmonia Orchestra** has been resident at the Three Choirs Festival since 2012. More information about the residency: <http://www.3choirs.org/about-us/philharmonia/>

