



## 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 over 70 events in eight days, complementing the evening concerts of choral music which form the heart of the festival with a wide range of chamber recitals, talks, exhibitions and family events.

The festival is a huge tourism event for the city and expects to welcome around 4-5000 visitors over the course of the festival, as well as providing a platform for local musicians and youth ensembles. The festival chorus, drawn from local choral societies, performs alongside the world-famous Philharmonia Orchestra, who are the festival's orchestra-in-residence. Meanwhile the festival's youth choir gives local young people aged 14-25 the chance to perform **Cecilia McDowall's** beautifully poignant *Stabat Mater* in the beautiful setting of Hereford Cathedral (4 August).

This year, the festival's nominated charity is SHYPP, which works with young people at risk of homelessness in Herefordshire. Working with the festival and Herefordshire's local music hub Encore, the SHYPP singers join three other local choirs to perform **Gavin Bryars' *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet***, bookended by two films SHYPP have developed that explore the idea of home and homelessness (29 July).

After last year's success, the festival will continue its **Festival Firsts** scheme, 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 also numerous free events throughout the week including talks and exhibitions. The various services at the heart of the festival are also free, including the opening service (28 July), festival eucharist (29 July), Compline in the cathedral crypt by the Ethelbert Consort, and the daily evensongs. For young people 26 and under, access to selected chamber music recitals and cathedral rehearsal passes is also free of charge.

The heart of the festival will once again be the Festival Hub, located in Hereford Cathedral School, where concert-goers and passers-by can find hot and cold meals as well as a bar and café, a free art exhibition and a friendly place to meet friends or spend a quiet moment.

Families are also welcome, with plenty of events for children, including an introduction to the wind quintet with the Magnard Ensemble, a dark retelling of Hansel and Gretel performed by the Goldfield Ensemble for teens and adults, shadow puppet storytelling with string quartet, and drama, drumming and puppetry workshops.

Artistic Director Geraint Bowen has taken notable centenaries as a starting point for his programming, including the 1918 passing of the Representation of the People Act, which signalled the start of universal suffrage in the UK. The festival celebrates this anniversary by programming works by female composers, such as **Ethel Smyth**, herself a prominent member of the suffragette movement, whose magnificent *Mass in D* opens the festival along with **John Ireland's *These things shall be*** (28 July). In the annual concert of orchestral music, the festival's orchestra-in-residence since 2012, the Philharmonia Orchestra, will pair **Holst's** famous work *The Planets* 100 years after its



first performance with two new works by contemporary female composers (**Hannah Kendall** and **Helen Grime**, 29 July), 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. An unusual take on the theme comes from Gothic Voices, who look at the Virgin Mary through the music of twelfth-century composer **Hildegard von Bingen** (4 August), and the Binchois Consort also perform polyphonic chant in honour of the Virgin Mary (3 August).

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 **Herbert Howells**, **Ivor Gurney**, **Sir Hubert Parry**, **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, and more recently **Torsten Rasch**. 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 act who bring the wit and irony of Jacques Brel to life in a fine cabaret revue (30 July).

Elsewhere in the evening programme, 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 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 **Brecon Baroque** 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).

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](http://www.3choirs.org) | [www.twitter.com/3choirs](https://www.twitter.com/3choirs) | [www.facebook.com/3choirsfestival](https://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](http://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/>

