

The Exon Singers

Conductor and Artistic Director required from Spring 2018

We are looking for an experienced and dynamic choral conductor, with a proven track record in developing mixed-voice adult chamber choirs.

Our Conductor and Artistic Director will be responsible for rehearsing and preparing the choir for performance, and to lead and conduct our events and concerts. We are looking for someone keen to plan and propose future programmes to drive our aspirations and stimulate the choir's further development, whilst maintaining the high standards we seek.

The Exon Singers has an established tradition of commissioning and premiering new choral works, and its commissions have contributed a significant body of work to the cathedral repertoire over the last 20 years. In addition, we have been regular contributors to the Choral Evensong "slot" on BBC Radio 3 for the last 40 years. We would wish our Conductor and Artistic Director to have a keen interest in continuing this practice.

Whilst our concerts are often *a cappella* or with keyboard accompaniment, we would ideally like our Conductor and Artistic Director to have connections in the professional musical world to attract high-quality professional soloists and instrumentalists should this be required.

We are very interested in ways that a new Conductor and Artistic Director's specific experience and knowledge can add to and broaden the choir's musical range and repertoire.

About the post

The post of Conductor and Artistic Director of the Exon Singers is honorary, with travel expenses paid in some circumstances. It requires a commitment to programming and directing our annual summer Festival in Tavistock, Devon, in late July/early August each year, and one or two other projects during the year, depending on availability of singers.

The choir is made up of singers from all over the UK, invited by recommendation, and we are proud to nurture exceptional young talent alongside many professional musicians and music teachers, all of whom give their time and goodwill freely. In recent years all monies made have been ploughed back into commissioning new music or recording CDs. The choir celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016. The Festival forms the centre of our work, and for each project we gather, rehearse intensively and then perform or record. It is an ideal opportunity for professional development for an energetic and ambitious choral director.

For a broader idea of festival repertoire since 2006, Festival flyers from each year 2006-2017 can also be downloaded from the webpage www.exonsingers.org.uk/conductor-search.

The Exon Singers

How to apply for the post

The closing date for applications is Friday 15th December 2017.

Applications for the position should include:

- a **covering letter** which explains how your experience to date would prepare you for the role;
- a **CV** and contact details for **two referees** who can testify to your musical and choir training ability;
- a link to a video of your conducting, if possible;
- **suggested programmes** for three Festival events for the 52nd Annual Summer Festival in Tavistock, which will run from Saturday 28th July (Come and Sing Day) to Sunday 5th August:
 - Come and Sing Day in celebration of the 700th anniversary of St Eustachius Parish Church in Tavistock (currently advertised as based around Handel and Parry anthems);
 - Choral Evening Prayer, a programme suitable for broadcast on BBC Radio 3, format below:
 - Introit; Responses; Office hymn; Psalms; *First reading*; Anthem; *Second reading*; *Homily*; Magnificat; *Intercessions*; The Lord's Prayer; *Collect*; Motet; Hymn; *Blessing*; Organ Voluntary
 - Festival Finale concert.

If you are interested in this exciting opportunity to work with a dedicated group of experienced singers, please email your application to Graham Wood, Choir Secretary, by Friday 15th December 2017: secretary@exonsingers.org.uk

We will notify candidates shortlisted for interview and audition by Friday 22nd December. **Interviews and auditions will take place in London**, on one of the following dates:

Wednesday 3rd or Thursday 4th January 2018

The audition will be 30 minutes of a rehearsal session with the choir, working on material for our new CD. *Candidates will be informed of the programme for the rehearsal well in advance.* Feedback on the rehearsal will be sought from the choir.

The Exon Singers

Brief information about the Exon Singers

THE EXON SINGERS, founded in 1966, is recognised as one of the UK's leading chamber choirs. It has become renowned for its dynamic and expressive performances of music from the Renaissance to the present day, with reviews describing the choir's performances as "brilliantly sung" (Classic FM), with "beautifully tailored singing" (Gramophone), and a "brilliant soprano sound" (The Daily Telegraph), where "The Exon Singers excel" (BBC Music Magazine).

The choir broadcasts regularly on BBC Radios 3 and 4 and has made a number of highly acclaimed recordings for Albany, ASV, Delphian, Regent and Rubicon Classics record labels. The choir's Artistic Director and Conductor is Richard Wilberforce. Richard succeeded Matthew Owens, under whose direction the choir received considerable recognition for its commitment to commissioning new works from some of today's most exciting composers – Brian Chapple, Gary Davison, Joseph Pibbs, Richard Allain, David Briggs, Grayston Ives, Francis Jackson, Gabriel Jackson, Howard Skempton, Philip Moore, Philip Wilby, Matthew Martin and Robin Holloway. The choir welcomed James Burton as Composer in Residence for the 2015 Festival and Toby Young in 2017, and its final project under the direction of Richard Wilberforce will be a recording of the choral music of Toby Young.

To celebrate the choir's 50 years of music making and its 50th Festival, they recorded a new CD of music commissioned by them for Choral Evening Prayer, *Before the Ending of the Day*, released on Rubicon Classics. Click here for more details. The disc was given 4 stars in its review in the July 2017 edition of BBC Music Magazine.

<https://exonsingers.org.uk/discography-and-shop/>

Since 1973, the annual Exon Singers Festival has been based in the historic market town of Tavistock on the edge of Dartmoor, and includes the beautiful venues of Tavistock Parish Church and Buckfast Abbey. The annual Festival involves both concerts and the leading of Christian worship. It is based within a parish church community, and we work closely with a volunteer committee from the parish to enable the rehearsing, performing, accommodation and hospitality in Tavistock. The choir's festival performances include the Oxford Festival of Contemporary Music and the Edinburgh Festival, as well as concerts in St John's College, Cambridge, Gloucester Cathedral, Wells Cathedral and at venues in Winchester, Salisbury and Belfast.

The 52nd Exon Singers Festival will run from Tuesday 31st July to Sunday 5th August 2018 and will include a Come and Sing Workshop Day on Saturday 28th July, preparing music to celebrate the 700th Anniversary of St Eustachius Parish Church in Tavistock at the Opening Concert of the Festival, using the combined forces of the Exon Festival Chorus with the Exon Singers.

Details of the 2017 Festival can be downloaded here: <https://exonsingers.org.uk/festival-details/>, including the annual Come and Sing Workshop Day for the Exon Festival Chorus which took place on Saturday 29th July 2017.

For further information about the Exon Singers including full details of our 2017 Festival please visit our website www.exonsingers.org.uk

The Exon Singers

Job Description

The Conductor and Artistic Director will be responsible for:

- The musical training and continual development of the choir (including developing performance skills);
- Ensuring the highest possible musical standards at rehearsals and concerts;
- Conducting the choir and other performers at concerts and workshops;
- Proposing annual programmes for concerts that challenge and engage choir members;
- Auditioning prospective singers;
- Attendance at Committee meetings and timely communication with committee members to facilitate effective decision-making;
- Assisting with audience development and the commercial success of concerts through appropriate choice of programmes;
- Making recommendations to the Committee for the engagement of soloists and other performers as required;
- Fixing soloists and performers where required.

Person Specification

Essential

1. A skilful and inspiring choir trainer, with outstanding musicianship, demonstrated by proven experience and academic qualifications.
2. Vision and ambition for the future development of the choir.
3. Experience of training adult mixed-voice choirs.
4. Experience of successfully conducting choirs in a variety of performance settings.
5. Ability to provide sensitive leadership for the choir to maintain current high standards and facilitate its future development.
6. High levels of energy, enthusiasm and passion for choral music and the ability to transmit this to choir members and audiences.
7. A good sense of humour, excellent communication and organizational skills and good time management skills within rehearsal.
8. Ability to foster, build and develop successful, productive working relationships both within the choir and with volunteer committee members and financial supporters elsewhere.
9. Broad musical outlook, with a wide knowledge of choral music from different eras and countries.
10. Ability to plan and structure programmes and festivals to interest and challenge the choir.
11. Ability to plan and structure programmes and festivals that are attractive to the concert-going public, including our loyal, long-time supporters.
12. Experience of working with composers in order to continue the choir's commitment to commissioning new music.
13. Experience and a good understanding of the Christian tradition.

Desirable

1. A wide knowledge of the professional performing circuit in order to identify and liaise with potential performing partners.
2. A good understanding of how to coach singers to develop vocal technique within a choir setting.
3. A sound understanding of, and willingness to engage in, promotion and PR to foster the financial success of the choir.
4. Proven ability to work within a committee structure in planning, managing and promoting the choir and its concerts within financial constraints, in an open-minded manner, listening to and accepting feedback as appropriate.