

Bi-annual notices and newsletter for Chorus members

Editor: Michelle Whitefoot (S)

Autumn 2021

# WELCOME BACK to our 160<sup>th</sup> SEASON! FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Finally the new season – our 160<sup>th</sup> – is upon us, and it's time for *The Choral Chronicle*.

I have to say it feels a very long time ago that we sang through *The Sea Symphony* to an empty cathedral, not knowing what was around the corner. The year threw enormous challenges to us all. For some of us the year has been particularly tough. I know that there are members who have been affected far more with Covid, than I have. Some of our members not only contracted Covid, but some have lost loved ones to the virus. Some of our members were working on the front line in health care at our hospitals, whilst others were essential workers. Some were furloughed, and others had major financial difficulty in maintaining businesses.



## **IN THIS ISSUE**

	PAGE
WELCOME BACK	
Chairman's welcome	1
Conductor's welcome	2
IMPORTANT NOTICES	
Membership notices	3
Treasurer update	3
Ticket news	4
Patrons update	5
Marketing matters	6
NEWS	
100 Club news	7
Three Choirs Festival review	, 8
WFCS book raises funds	9
Worcester Voices choir	10
Tribute: Margaret Renney	11
CONTACT US	
Officers & committee list	10
KEY DIARY DATES	12



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## **CONDUCTOR'S** WELCOME



WFCS is back!

After the extraordinary choral blackout of the last 18 months, it is a particular pleasure to welcome you to the start of a new and especially exciting season.

I hope that everyone will enjoy and benefit from a return to choral singing – we know about the physical benefits of singing, and of the positive impact music can have to our mental wellbeing, too.

With a bit of help from Mozart, Fauré, Handel, and Bach, I look forward to joining you for the experience of our 2021 -2022 season.

Here's to what I'm sure will be an excellent series of concerts!

Samuel Hudson Director of Music

Others have fought loneliness and fought other personal battles. But time has ticked on, 18 months later we are all learning about a 'New Normal'

Well, it is now time for us at WFCS to look forward. I was thrilled when I heard that the majority of our members wished to return. For those who have not really sung at all over the last 18 months, embrace the feeling of singing again. For those of us who sang in the Three Choirs Festival this year it was truly emotional, first singing and rehearsing again and then performing. We all knew that we had missed our singing, but I don't think any of us could have imagined how much.

This next concert has been chosen specifically to help bring us all back up to speed with our singing. Many of us know Fauré's Requiem and Cantique de Jean Racine, but Mozart's Solemn Vespers will be known by fewer of us so we all have a challenge in front of us, but not one that is insurmountable.

I am looking forward to seeing you all once again. I would like to urge you all to be mindful of others when we return. Even though we are not rehearsing socially distanced, please do be mindful of those that wish to have more space. If possible please take lateral flow tests before rehearsals, and if you have any doubt or worry, please do not come!

During The Three Choirs rehearsals all members of the chorus tested regularly, everyone was careful, and we had no cases; indeed there were no cases reported during or after the Festival. So, with care, we can bring WFCS back for a fabulous season this autumn.



Ben Cooper (B) Chairman





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## **MEMBERSHIP NOTICES**

Thank you for responding so promptly to my email asking if you will be singing with us this autumn. Knowing who will be returning makes it so much easier for me to prepare the registers and to see if we have room for new members.

A few have decided not to join us this year and sadly amongst them are some of our longest standing members. We wish them all well and look forward to seeing them at our concerts. This term we are saying goodbye to Alison Boswell, Susan and David Snaith, Jacquie Miller, Peter Kendal, Beth Rabjohn, Elizabeth Winscom and Frauke Jung.

On 13th September we shall be welcoming some potential new members, many of whom have been on our waiting list for a considerable time. Sam has invited them to sing with us for a few weeks before auditioning. I'm sure you will make them feel welcome and help them to settle in.

I know that many of you will be wondering about your own auditions, as currently almost half of us are due to take one. Sam and I are aware of this and we will get around to organising things eventually. However, at the moment the most important thing is getting the society up and running again and allowing members time to enjoy their singing and to get their voices back into shape after our enforced break. Finally, remember that the entrance to rehearsals is now through the North Porch which will be locked after 7:30pm.

It will be wonderful to be able to sing together again and I'm really looking forward to seeing you all.



Sally Rees (S) Membership secretary

## TREASURER UPDATE

Dear members,

As we emerge from the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare excitedly for the return of WFCS live performances, it's worth looking backwards as well as forwards as we take stock.

Last season, despite the absence of any musical activity, the Society was able to make support payments totalling some £18,500 to Sam, Nick and all the other talented musicians in the Meridien Sinfonia, which provided them with over half of what they would have earned in a normal year. I'm very pleased that we were able to do what felt like the right thing to help those whose livelihoods had been flattened by the sudden entry into lockdown in this constructive way. None of this would have been possible without all of your help. Donations in lieu of subscriptions plus the associated Gift Aid raised £10,000 which meant that the raid on the Society's reserves to supplement this activity was contained. So a huge thank you to everyone who helped achieve this.

Looking forward, I have to say that, financially, this season is likely to be challenging. We may face higher concert costs, lower audiences, lower advertising revenues and, possibly, lower subscriptions revenue too. However, the absolutely overriding priority is to prove that WFCS is back in town, presenting a very attractive programme to as large an audience as possible to get live classical music going again. I have to tell you that substantial rises in subscriptions and ticket prices may lie in wait in the future, but not for this season. Let's do our utmost to put the last eighteen months behind us and I hope you're all as excited to be coming back as I am!



David Norledge (T)
Treasurer







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# **TICKET NEWS**

# Tickets for our first concert on 27 November available NOW!

It's wonderful to be selling tickets for this season again. We continue to develop our booking system to keep up to date with current trends and make the booking experience simple and problem free. Please go to our website www.wfcs.online early to secure your chosen seats.

NEW – We are no longer using Worcester Live as a Booking Agent. You can book your tickets by telephone direct to TicketSource, 0333 666 3366 (Mon-Fri, 9-5) who will have up to date availability.

Ticket prices range from £15 - £25 with the usual booking fee and you can also pre-book an accompanying concert programme to avoid a cash payment on the night.

Being constantly vigilant about possible new Covid restrictions, we are using a slightly different cathedral seating plan with pews and chairs in the Nave and reserve the right to change seating selections if necessary. Due to possible changes, we are releasing seat booking arrangements for each concert separately.

Any problems? Ask me!



Judy Jenkins (A) Tickets secretary

# TICKET DISCOUNTS FOR WFCS MEMBERS

- A discount of 20% is available if you book seats for all three concerts at the same time.
- 'Buy 5 tickets and get 6th free' for any one concert

Both deals are available by contacting me at a rehearsal or on jgjenkins@btinternet.com





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Editor: Michelle Whitefoot (S) Autumn 2021

# **BUILDING OUR PATRONS**



WORCESTER 2021-22 SEASON	PATRON APPLICATION 2021-22
AUTUMN 27 November 2021 MOZART: OVERTURE - MAGIC FLUTE MOZART: SOLEMN VESPERS FAURE: CANTIQUE DE JEAN RACINE FAURÉ: REQUIEM	PATRON PACKAGE Price How many Front Nave season ticket £125  SEAT PREFERENCE
WINTER 11 December 2021 HANDEL: MESSIAH	Preferred row Seat No/s
SPRING 19 March 2022 J. S. BACH: ST. JOHN PASSION WHY BE A PATRON?	YOUR CONTACT DETAILS Name/s
WFCS Patrons enjoy a range of benefits across the season's three concerts in recognition of their valued support in maintaining great choral music in Worcester Cathedral.  The annual package comprises:	Address
<ul> <li>Priority booking to 20 August 2021 on a Front Nave seat of your choice at each of our three concerts (individual seat value Ω25)</li> </ul>	Phone
Complimentary concert programmes	Email
Complimentary interval refreshments in the Chapter House with WFCS members	PROGRAMME DETAILS
Your name and patronage acknowledged in our concert programmes	Your name/s as you wish it/them to appear in programme
E-newsletters on the Society's activities and invitations to social events	Or mark <b>X</b> here if you don't want your name in programme
HOW TO APPLY It's easy to become a WFCS Patron. Smply complete the table opposite and send it, together with your cheque payable to Worcester Festival Choral Society to:	SEATING PLAN  *Please mark with a cross your preferred choice of seats on the plan below. We will endeavour to place you as near to that location as possible with the seating plan plan is the cathedria it the time.
Anne Renshaw, Patrons Secretary, 8 Creen Hill, Bath Road, Woncester WRS 2AT	CHORUS & ORCHESTRA
or email annormation and the Control of the Control	FRONT MANE  FRONT

Dear Chorus members,

Now couldn't be a better time to encourage, or gift, potential new Patrons to take out a year's membership.

As a Society, we have done well to not only stay afloat financially this past year, but also to support the professional musicians we are privileged to work with.

Patrons provide reliable income to us by subscribing to a season's worth of concerts in advance (@ £125.00 per head) in the front nave seats of their choice.

Benefits include acknowledgement in our publicity materials, complimentary programmes, and interval refreshments with the Chorus.

Knowing that they are helping the Society, both financially and musically, is rewarding enough for many of our kind Patrons.

Please give one of our application forms (available in PDF format from www.wfcs.online/become-a-patron or hard copy from me) to anyone you can think of who might appreciate the opportunity to join us.

Thank you.



Anne Renshaw (S)
Patrons secretary







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## **MARKETING MATTERS**

















to bring our WFCS 2021-22 concerts to the attention of music lovers across the region are already underway, and will continue all season focusing on what is effective and affordable.

The marketing and PR efforts

**BUT...** these efforts very much need to be magnified and expanded by the promotional efforts of every one of our 150 Chorus members!

Concert seats do not fill themselves, and our promotional budgets are tiny, so we all need do our bit if we want to see a full nave on concert night.

#### How you can help

There are many practical ways you can proactively help to raise awareness of our concerts, bringing great choral music to even more people:

- Display some of our concert posters in your local shops, noticeboards and churches, at your workplace, in your car etc (November's flyers should be available around early October in A5, A4 and PDF format)
- Share our Facebook and Twitter posts (both @WorcsChoral), and invite your friends to follow us
- Give out our new season WFCS bookmarks as a year-round concert reminder (available soon)
- Keep an eye on our website for the latest concert and event news, photos and other updates you can share with friends
- Buy tickets for friends and family (perhaps as a gift!)

There are also many other ways you can support the WFCS coffers, through a host of other 'little extra' activities, for example:

- Our weekly raffles at each rehearsal
- The 100 Club (see article on P6)
- Select WFCS as your chosen charity when you buy tickets for the Worcester Community Lottery
- Support WFCS at no extra cost to you, when you shop online at Amazon or through The Giving Machine (see speciallinks at www.wfcs.online/support\_us)
- Purchase a copy of the WFCS history book A Choral Chronicle

More opportunities will be highlighted as we go along, but thank you meanwhile for all your help.



Michelle Whitefoot (S) Marketing & publicity officer





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Autumn 2021

## **NEWS FROM THE 100 CLUB**

Choral activity may have been on hold for the last 18 months, but the 100 Club has continued to raise money for the Society, thanks to our loyal members who have kept up their subscriptions throughout.

#### How does it work?

For those who aren't familiar with the 100 Club, this is a means of raising funds for the Society while giving members the chance of a small windfall. Members buy a number of shares, typically between 1 and 5 and pay for them on a quarterly basis by standing order. Each share costs £3 so if you buy 2 shares, you'll pay £6 each quarter. At least 30% of funds is paid out in prizes each year; all shares are entered into a draw 3 times a year and 4 winners receive a cheque dependent on the total amount subscribed but normally between £35 and £40.

#### Latest draws

We have continued to hold draws as usual during the last 18 months, including two since I last notified you. Video records of the draws are available on request! Winners were:

March 2021	May 2021
Mark Elliston	Judy Baer
Edgar Green	Benedict Coleman
Eric & Deirdre Myers	Toby Hooper
Margaret Saunders	Ruth Reeves

This year the 100 Club contributed £1,500 to the Society's funds.

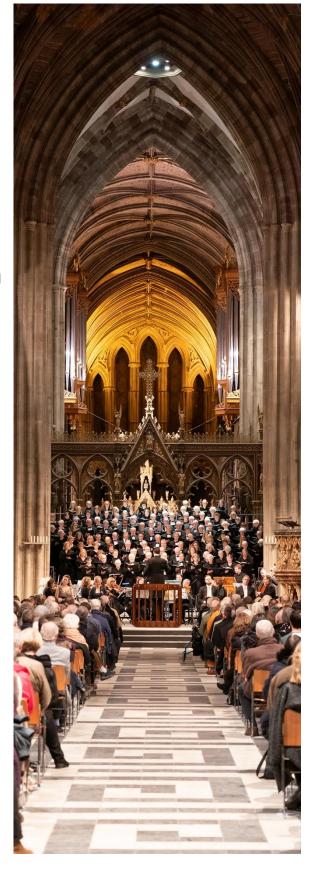
## How to join

Currently we have 55 members holding 124 shares. We always lose a few members each year and of course have not recruited any new members in the last 18 months so if you're new to the Society please consider joining. If you'd like to join or feel able to increase your number of shares please get in touch with me at

Deirdre.myers@btinternet.com or come and find me at a rehearsal among the Second Altos.

Looking forward to seeing you all again soon!

**Deirdre Myers (A)** 100 Club coordinator







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Autumn 2021

## WFCS MEMBERS SING IN THE

## THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL 2021

After being postponed last year due to the pandemic, the Three Choirs Festival made a warmly-received return to Worcester this summer... with more than 40, specially auditioned Worcester Festival Choral Society members forming the major part of its renowned Festival Chorus and Samuel Hudson as the event's Artistic Director. Across Festival week (24 July – 1 August), thousands of UK and international visitors saw almost 1,000 performers present more than 100 choral and orchestral concerts, plays, talks and services in Worcester and surrounds. In all, 252 works by 159 composers were performed, including 16 world premieres. A marqueed 'Festival Village' on College Green behind the Cathedral was also home to refreshments, outdoor entertainment and craft stalls.

Due to the immense challenges of holding choral rehearsals for the Festival – at 2m social distance, often outdoors – this year the Festival Chorus sang in only three of the major evening concerts at Worcester Cathedral, rather than the usual five or six. Nevertheless, Chorus members greatly enjoyed the chance to sing once again in concerts that were both of international quality and exceptionally moving. Accompanied by the acclaimed Philharmonia Orchestra and outstanding soloists, their well-received performances included Elgar's *The Music Makers*, Armstrong Gibbs's Symphony No 2 'Odysseus', and the adventurous, world premiere Festival Commission, *The World Imagined* by British composer Gabriel Jackson.

### In 2022 the Festival moves to Hereford – visit 3choirs.org

Led by Samuel Hudson with Nicholas Freestone, the 'Worcester contingent' of the 2021 Three Choirs Festival Chorus included (not all pictured): Soprano: Amanda Bath, Sarah Bullock, Joanna Clutterbuck, Karen Gorman, Melanie Gunn, Claire Horacek, Catherine Kelly, Frances Kelsey, Satyam Makoieva, Alison Marlow, Shara Parry, Anne Renshaw, Kath Skinner, Sue White, Michelle Whitefoot, Mela Whitling. Alto: Susie Arnold, Lesley Bellerby, Marjory Bisset, Victoria Bradley, Helen Butler, Sarah Ellis, Julie Greenwood, Mary Kenchington, Carole Liddle, Isobel Reid, Carol Sandys, Penny Searley, Elizabeth Shepherd. Tenor: Colin Archer, Joseph Banerjee, Benedict Coleman, Edgar Green, Wynne Harries, Leon Joynes, Richard Phillips. Bass: Euan Chalmers, Philip Clenell, Ben Cooper, Mark Fenton, Stephen Greenwood, David Meachem, Luke Mitchell, Andrew Newman

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

- "...the Festival Chorus made a fine contribution." seenandheardinternational.com on Elgar's *The* Music Makers
- "...the chorus... was superb, right through to the work's quiet and slightly ominous ending" classicalmusicdaily.com on Elgar's The Music Makers
- "The Festival Chorus... was on an even higher level. They sang what is clearly demanding music with assurance and total commitment. I also admired their clarity of diction." seenandheardinternational.com on Jackson's The World Imagined
- "...the amazingly accomplished Three Choirs Festival Chorus...performing it with a high degree of commitment and remarkable discipline." theartsdesk.com on Jackson's The World Imagined
- "The chorus, having learned the score in what can only have been testing circumstances, dealt ably with its demands." The Guardian on Jackson's The World Imagined
- "...terrific singing..." seenandheard-international.com on Gibbs's Odysseus









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## **GET YOUR COPY**

Copies of 'A Choral Chronicle - The History of Worcester Festival Choral Society" will be available to purchase from Michelle immediately before each Monday night rehearsal.

Copies are just £25... with 100% of profits going to WFCS funds.

Pay by either cash, cheque (payable to Worcester Festival Choral Society), or Bacs (into the usual WFCS account). Or, order by credit card via the WFCS website (fees apply).

## WFCS HISTORY BOOK OUT NOW!

Back in early 2020, Chorus members voted for the idea of a landmark new fund-raising book charting the illustrious, 160-year history of Worcester Festival Choral Society. That book became a lockdown project for Soprano member Michelle Whitefoot, and was published as an impressive, full colour, 242-page volume in December.

Charting the WFCS story from its Victorian origins to the present day via two World Wars, 11 conductors, hundreds of major concerts and many famous-name connections, 'A Choral Chronicle - The History of Worcester Festival Choral Society' makes a fascinating read for any WFCS member and concert-goer. As well as drawing on a wide range of historical archives, the book includes commentary and anecdotes from long-standing Chorus members and several Directors of Music.

"It was a really interesting project," said Michelle. "We now have fresh insights into how the Society began, its achievements, activities and key characters. For example, WFCS worked closely with Sir Edward Elgar in the 1890s, Sir David Willcocks was WFCS Conductor in the 1950s and Sir Stephen Cleobury was a singing member in the 1960s. Since its beginning, WFCS has also provided many singers for the renowned Three Choirs Festival Chorus each year. The Society really has a lot to be proud of!"



In the book you can find out:

- How WFCS was born in 1861
- · How Sir Edward Elgar led the WFCS 'Band', conducted several of its concerts and chose WFCS to premiere two of his choral works
- Which Treasurer was 5 x Mayor of Worcester
- The truth behind Conductor Hugh Blair's unusual dismissal
- When WFCS was guest-conducted by Sir Adrian **Boult and Sir Hubert Parry**
- How WFCS helped the Second World War effort
- · Why the WFCS 'Centenary Concert' was a mistake
- How the Society sang at the Royal Albert Hall
- Which past members went on to become leading lights of English choral music
- How the music is programmed for WFCS and Three Choirs Festival concerts

The book has gone down so well it is now stocked by Waterstones Worcester, Worcester Tourist Information Centre, Worcester Cathedral Shop (and it's in The Hive) ... BUT... WFCS gains the most profit from direct sales. So if you haven't already got your copy, please do consider buying one this term (see left) and help boost WFCS funds, in exchange for a riveting read.



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Editor: Michelle Whitefoot (S) Autumn 2021



# NICHOLAS FREESTONE'S LOCKDOWN

# **WORCESTER VOICES CHOIR**

When singing together in person became impossible in 2020, WFCS Accompanist and Worcester Cathedral Assistant Director of Music Nicholas Freestone set up an invaluable singing lifeline for singer of all kinds: the Worcester Voices online community choir.

Across the long months of lockdown, Nicholas enabled local singers to take part in a string of virtual choir performances by setting, arranging and producing 14 popular songs for at-home recording.

Creating SATB vocal arrangements, score sheets, instructional videos, social media feeds, a YouTube channel and the combined performance videos themselves – as well as involving more than 60 musicians from across the UK – Nicholas devoted hundreds of hours to delivering the project.



Scores of local singers – including many Worcester Festival Choral Society members – took part each time, singing pieces as varied as *Good Vibrations*, *I Say a Little Prayer* and *How Can I Keep From Singing?* 

Thank you Nicholas for creating the means for so many people to sing 'together' in this past year, despite it all!

# OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

#### **PRESIDENT**

The Lord Bishop of Worcester

### SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

The Dean of Worcester

#### VICE PRESIDENTS

Dr Christopher Robinson CVO CBE Adrian Lucas MA Dr Peter Nardone

#### **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

Samuel Hudson

#### **ACCOMPANIST**

Nicholas Freestone

#### **CHAIRMAN**

Ben Cooper b.cooper@lineone.net 01684 541421

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Bi-annual notices and newsletter for Chorus members

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## TRIBUTE TO MARGARET RENNEY



Michelle Whitefoot

Worcester Festival Choral Society pays tribute to one of our longeststanding and best-known members, Margaret Renney, who sadly passed away at Cheltenham General Hospital on 25 November 2020, aged 81.

Sunderland-born Margaret – an accomplished pianist, organist and teacher – became a soprano member of WFCS in 1976 when she and husband John moved to Malvern. As well as singing in the Society for more than four decades she served on the committee as patrons secretary for many years. She had previously been a member of Hereford Choral Society. She also sang in the Three Choirs Festival Chorus for 40 years, was an active member of the Three Choirs fundraising committee and the Friends of Worcester Cathedral, and sang in the Great Malvern Priory Singers. Professionally Margaret was Head of Music at Wells House Prep School, taught at several other Malvern schools and ran their choirs. In retirement she became Chairman of the West Midlands and Severn Vale branches of the European Union of Women, and Membership Secretary of the Worcestershire branch of the English-Speaking Union. She also loved organising musical events, readings and 'Priory teas' at home.

One of her sons, David, told us that she was brought up in a musical but "disciplined, Methodist household: tee-total, with no card games on

Sundays. For the rest of her life, Margaret was resistant to be being told what to do." She met her husband, county council solicitor John Renney, when she joined a local choral society and he was the organ accompanist. They married when she was 19 and lived in Durham, Leicester and Hereford before settling in Malvern; becoming parents to David, Paul and Joyce and treasured grandparents along the way. In the last few months of her life, despite pain from cancer, Margaret nursed John through his own final illness (he passed away only two months before her) and played the piano at family lockdown Zoom concerts until a month before she died. "She must have loved singing in a choral society above all else, because even when she was at her busiest, she was always a diligent member of one," recalled David. "She also took her responsibility as WFCS Patrons Secretary very seriously and was proud of the number she recruited. Chorally, 'I know that my redeemer liveth' was probably the piece she loved most of all, which is why we had it sung at her funeral. She was also very fond of *The Dream of Gerontius*. My father's loyalty in going to hear her sing it so many times during their

60 year marriage led him eventually to say, 'Not again?' the last time he was offered a place in the audience, despite his love of Elgar!"

WFCS Chairman Ben Cooper remembered: "One word to describe Margaret would be 'formidable'. She was never shy in putting her opinions forward, but most of all insisting that everything was done properly. No one was more deeply involved with varied organisations and as busy than she. For example, when organising a Come and Sing day to raise money for the Three Choirs Festival in 2019, single-handedly she booked Brian Kay to lead us; she arranged the marketing, the venue and refreshments, and she sold a huge number of tickets – determination that raised around £3,000. Rarely did she let her guard down, but when she did a wonderful warmth and fondness exuded about all the things she was involved with, her pride in John's career and her three children. I shall greatly miss hearing the phrase 'Ben, could I have a word please?!' and also knowing that I always had Margaret to keep me on my toes, whilst at the same time giving me unstinting support."

Worcester Festival Choral Society sends its very best wishes to Margaret's loved ones. We will be dedicating our November concert in her name.



courtesy David Renney



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# WFCS DIARY DATES 2021-22

\* Rehearsals and concerts held at Worcester Cathedral unless indicated below. Cathedral access ONLY via North Door (NOT via College Green/cloisters), strictly by 7.30pm. Lateral flow tests encouraged; face masks and social distancing at your personal choice. Latest updates at: www.wfcs.online/members \*

## 2021

September	13 20 27	7.30pm 7.30pm 7.30pm	First rehearsal of autumn term. <u>Arrive early to collect music</u> Rehearsal at St Andrew's Church, Pump Street Rehearsal and AGM
October	4 11 18 25	7.30pm 7.30pm 7.30pm n/a	Rehearsal Rehearsal Rehearsal HALF TERM (no rehearsal)
November	1 8 15 22 <b>27</b>	7.30pm 7.30pm 7.30pm 7.30pm 2.00pm <b>7.30pm</b>	Rehearsal at St Andrew's Church, Pump Street Rehearsal Rehearsal Rehearsal Afternoon rehearsal (compulsory if wish to sing in concert) AUTUMN CONCERT (Singers arrive Chapter House 7.00pm / line up 7.05pm) Mozart: Overture – Magic Flute Mozart: Solemn Vespers Fauré: Cantique de Jean Racine Fauré: Requiem
	29	7.30pm	Rehearsal
December	6	7.30pm	Rehearsal at St Andrew's Church, Pump Street
	11	2.00pm <b>7:30pm</b>	Afternoon rehearsal (compulsory if wish to sing in concert) WINTER CONCERT (Singers arrive Chapter House 7.00pm / line up 7.05pm) Handel: Messiah
	TBC	TBC	Event and possible WFCS participation not yet confirmed: Worcester Cathedral Christmas Concert

## **2022** (additional term dates/details to be announced nearer the time)

January	10	7.30pm	First rehearsal of spring term. Arrive early to collect music.
March	19	2.00pm <b>7:30pm</b>	Afternoon rehearsal (compulsory if wish to sing in concert)  SPRING CONCERT  (Singers arrive Chapter House 7.00pm / line up 7.05pm)  J.S.Bach: St John Passion
Mar/Apr Mar/Apr	TBC TBC	TBC TBC	Quiz Night: Powick Village Hall – event tbc Come & Sing One Day Workshop – event tbc

PP1-8: All photographs copyright to our photographer Michael Whitefoot, with grateful thanks. www.michaelwhitefoot.co.uk

