

Ashford Choral Society

Founded: 1857

Conductor: Matthew Raisbeck

Chairman Dominic Urand - Secretary : Virginia Brown

Newsletter: August 2023



Review of the Past Season

The society had a busy and successful 2022–23 season, with concerts at Wye Church and the Colyer-Fergusson Hall, University of Kent, Canterbury, as well as our annual carol concert in aid of local charities.

November 2022 saw a performance of Handel's Samson at Wye Church. Among our soloists it was good to hear Hazel Neighbour (soprano), who sang with ACS while at school, give a spirited performance as Delilah.

In December we continued our 60-year-old tradition of raising money for charity through a combination of our annual carol concert and singing by invitation at selected venues. This year we raised over £1,400 for Ashford Family Food Bank and Crossroads Care Kent. We also provided a small choir, at the request of hospital management, to perform carols in the week before Christmas, in an outside courtyard at the William Harvey Hospital, joined by nurses, doctors and patients (on beds) of the ITU.

January 2023 began with rehearsals for Fauré's Requiem and Vierne's Messe Solennelle, performed to a packed audience at Wye Church in March. Our soprano soloist for the Fauré was Matilda Dawes (soprano), granddaughter of much-missed ACS bass Charles Dawes. The rarely performed Vierne was particularly interesting to sing and the powerful organ accompaniment was tackled with relish by our wonderful accompanist, Tim Woodhead.

We rounded off the season with a performance of Haydn's Creation at the Colyer-Fergusson Hall in May, an occasion when everything seemed to come together at exactly the right time. We certainly finished the 2022–23 season on a high.



Ashford Choral Society's 2023/24 Season Programme

Tuesday 5 September 2023:

- First rehearsal of the 2023/24 season, Willesborough St Mary's Church.

Saturday 18 November 2023:

- Rossini - *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Wye Church.

Saturday 16 December 2023:

- Carol concert at Willesborough Church

Saturday 27 April 2024:

- Schubert - *Mass in G*
- Mozart - *Spatzenmesse*
- Rheinberger - *Stabat Mater*
- Durante - *Litanie della Beata Maria Vergine*
- Mozart - *Misericordia Domini*

Colyer-Fergusson Hall, University of Kent, Canterbury

Other dates for your diary

Tuesday 10 October 2023:

AGM after a short rehearsal

Tuesday 9 January 2024:

First rehearsal of 2024

The move to Willesborough Church as our rehearsal venue has been a great success. We look forward to holding our carol concert here in December, also to concerts at Wye Church in November and the Colyer-Fergusson Hall in May. We can look forward to a delightful programme of music through the year, beginning with Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* in the autumn. From January we'll be getting to know some beautiful music by Schubert, Mozart, Durante and Rheinberger for our May concert.

Music Scores available for hire at the first rehearsal at £2 a copy. Please bring the exact amount in cash if you can.



Choral Workshop

More than 40 singers gathered at Willesborough Church on 3 June for a day singing madrigals and part-songs. It was a real treat to sing together during our closed season – and we attracted a good number of people new to the choir.



Several commented on the friendly atmosphere, delicious cakes (thanks to Kate Brazier!) and above all on Matthew's excellent choice of music and expert leadership. The workshop proved an excellent way to showcase what we have to offer in ACS.



Songs of Praise

On a hot evening in June, 25 ACS members took our seats in a packed Canterbury Cathedral to record Songs of Praise. Some of the hymns we sang will be part of a special Songs of Praise programme from Canterbury on 3 September. The rest will be broadcast in subsequent weeks and months.

Subscriptions 2023/24

Since the pandemic all choral societies have been struggling financially – a combination of declining membership, increasing costs for rehearsal and performance venues, higher fees for orchestral players and soloists, and lack of grants. To secure the future of the society, it has been decided to raise the annual subscription to £144, equivalent to around £4.50 per rehearsal. Excellent value for all the joy that learning and singing together brings – not to mention the opportunity for each member to participate in concerts at a very high level, with orchestra and professional soloists.

- Annual subscription £144 – under 25s free.
- Payment by instalments acceptable, provided that some payment is received by 30 September.
- Pro formas available from the Treasurer at rehearsal.
- Payment by BACs online banking preferred.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back in September for a lively new season of choral music.

Contact :

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Telephone: 01233 660559

www.ashfordchoral.org.uk

JOIN THE CHOIR!

SEASON 2023-24

ASHFORD CHORAL SOCIETY

FREE FOR UNDER 25s
ALL MUSICAL ABILITIES WELCOME

Rehearsals Tuesdays 7.30-9.15pm from Sept. 5th 2023
Saint Mary the Virgin Church, Willesborough, Ashford TN24 0YH

www.ashfordchoral.org.uk
secretary@ashfordchoral.org.uk

New Members

The society welcomes new members of all ages and abilities – so if you have friends, family or colleagues who have been thinking about joining a choir, bring them along. There is no charge for the first two rehearsals and scores will be made available free of charge.

Become a Friend of the Society

Friends of Ashford Choral Society play an invaluable role and their annual contribution is most appreciated. If you would like to become a Friend of the society, please let us know. Yearly contributions start at only £30.

