

# wcs

Wokingham  
Choral Society

Friends & Patrons Newsletter  
2024-25 season



## Dear Friends & Patrons

Thank you for your enthusiasm and valuable support for the choir over this past season of exciting choral singing, collaborations and challenges!

It has been the first full year for our Chair, Katy, who has guided the choir through this very exciting season, which our members agree she has managed to do in grand style.

It has also been George's first full season with us as MD, and what a season it turned out to be! His musicianship, knowledge, positivity, calmness, ability to get the best out of us, and mastery of multiple forces on concert days were all remarked upon in the choir survey and much appreciated by members.

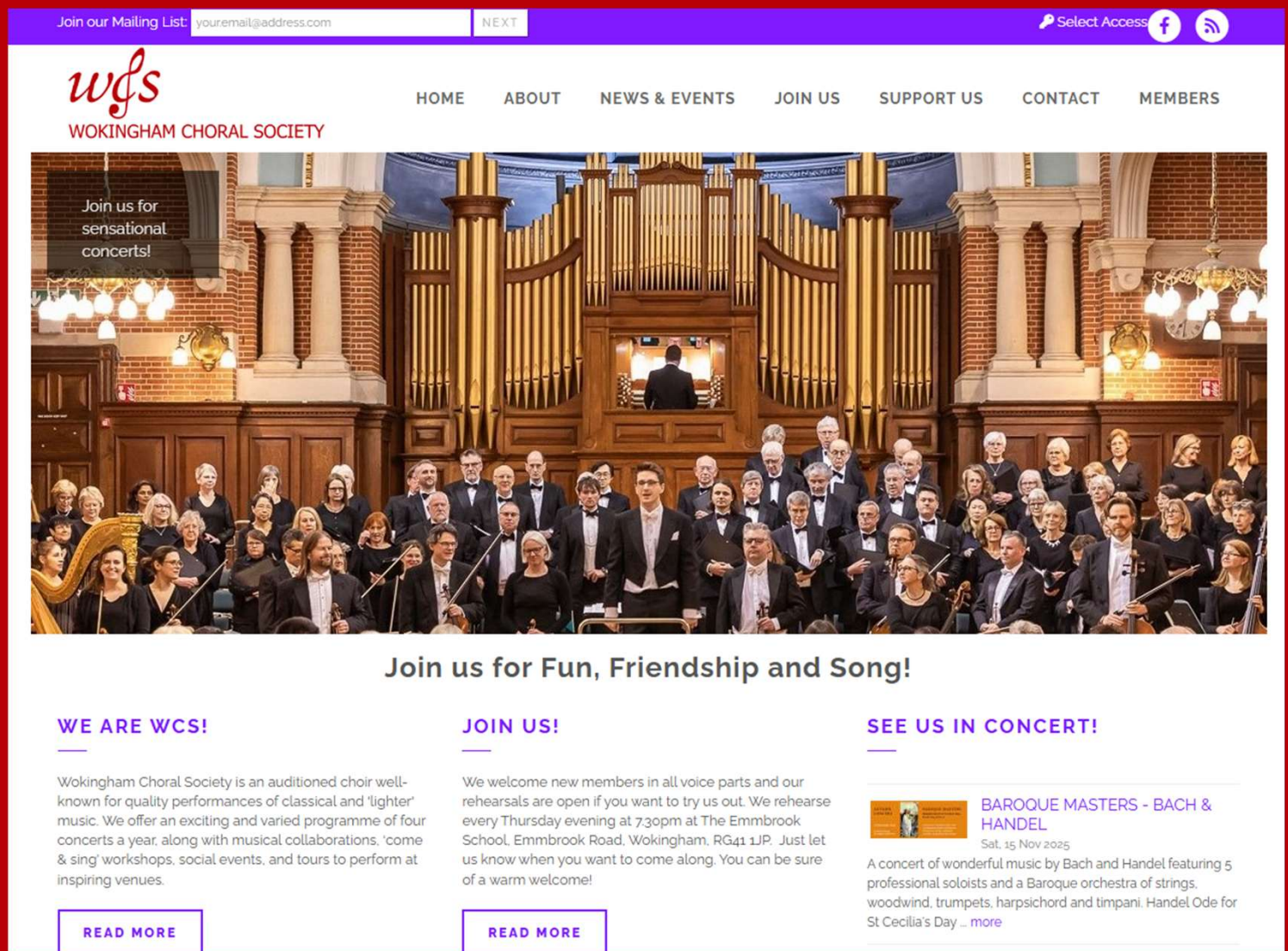
The choir also recognise Ben Gidden's musicality and talent, both as a pianist and organist. Members appreciate his sensitive accompaniment, supportiveness of the choir, good humour, the strength of his partnership with George, and his ability to work well with stand-in MDs.

George and Ben are regarded as real assets to WCS and both are a delight to work with!





# New Website



Last year, the Committee decided to create a new public-facing website and choir-facing management portal using the Making Music platform, which would give us several benefits.

Starting in June 2024, Katy put in a lot of work and amazingly the public website went live in mid-July, and the members area at the end of August, with the first online choir newsletter published on 31st August 2024. Another excellent achievement!

See the new website at <https://www.wokingham-choral-society.org.uk/>



# Norfolk Singing Tour



August 2024 saw our very enjoyable and successful Norfolk tour. It was a wonderful weekend of fun, friendship, song and great audiences. We sang 2 lunchtime recitals at lovely churches (St Mary's Saffron Walden and St Peter Mancroft Norwich), led the Sunday Sung Eucharist at the impressive Wymondham Abbey, enjoyed an excellent Norfolk Broads boat trip, and had fun times with choir friends.

Huge thanks to George for his great musical leadership and James Speakman for multi-tasking as singer, accompanist, and monumental organist!



# 2024-25 Concerts

## Autumn 2024



In September 2024, our new season started officially with a wonderfully inventive collaboration with the Choir of St George's School, Windsor, on a celebration of English music featuring Britten's St Nicholas. This sell-out concert saw an imaginative use of the new All Saints space, with 2 conductors, 3 accompanists on organ and piano duet, terrific tenor and bass soloists, the skilled Chameleon Arts Orchestra, the 2 choirs occupying separate ends of the church, choreographed swaps of position between them, and even 3 'pickled boys' walking up the aisle through the audience!

## Christmas 2024



On 7th December, Wokingham Town Council's Christmas charity event featured WCS (led by Rober Grindley), Woodley Concert Band, RMVC, the Ukrainian Choir, and piano duets by James Speakman and George. On 11<sup>th</sup> December, a group from WCS sang carols at Acorn Community Centre in Woosehill, organised by Richard Turner. Our last rehearsal on 12th December included a 'fizz & mincepies' social, and on the 14th we rounded off our Christmas term with a lovely family concert of both traditional and jazz-inspired carols, raising a tremendous £687 for the choir's and Mayor's charities.

# Spring 2025

The constant backdrop to all other choir activities last season was the prolonged and meticulous planning required for our performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with Bracknell Choral Society on 22nd March at Guildford Cathedral.

16 months in the making, the sheer size of the project became clear as we started pulling together the forces required; an estimated 200 singers across 3 choirs (double choir plus semichorus), 60-piece orchestra with organ, professional soloists, and the prestigious Guildford Cathedral venue.

The popularity of the *Dream of Gerontius* in its 125th year attracted an audience of nearly 500. It was wonderful to see such a large venue so full, making the performance more rewarding and the financials less negative! The sound and volume of the orchestra was spine-tingling, as was singing with so many other voices.

All WCS concerts take a lot of people and planning to make them happen, but organising an event of such complexity and epic proportions took stamina and detailed coordination by the joint working committee from the two choirs. It was an absolute pleasure working with George, Greg Hallam (BCS MD), Ben Giddens and Nick Austin (Accompanists), the external semi-chorus singers, and all the choir members on this unique project.





# Summer 2025

Our concert on 21<sup>st</sup> June was titled 'And all the people rejoiced', a majestic programme comprising rousing choral pieces by Mozart, Haydn, Brahms, Handel and Parry, plus beautiful individual pieces and a quartet by our soloists, and an entertaining piano/organ Mozart duet by George and Ben. Feedback on the concert was incredibly positive, describing it as a triumph, joyful, outstanding, amazing, passionate, and more. Special mention must go to our 4 young soloists who were wonderful, adding hugely to the success of the concert and deservedly receiving fulsome praise from choir and audience.

All our concerts last season, apart from the Dream of Gerontius, were at [All Saints Church Wokingham](#) which is proving to be a lovely and flexible 'home' venue for WCS. We thank the Church team for all their support and look forward to working with them again on our 2025/26 concerts.



## Charity Fundraising

This season, our choir charity has been the Alexander Devine Children's Hospice Service. Between the retiring collections at our Christmas and Summer concerts, and the Gerontius concert with BCS, we are proud to have raised £2,169.50 for the charity.

# Looking ahead

## Programme for 2025-26

### **Autumn Concert**

Baroque Masters – Handel & Bach  
15 November 2025

### **Christmas Carol Concert**

13 December 2025

### **Spring Concert**

Sturm und Drang! – German  
Romantic Myths & Legends  
21 March 2026

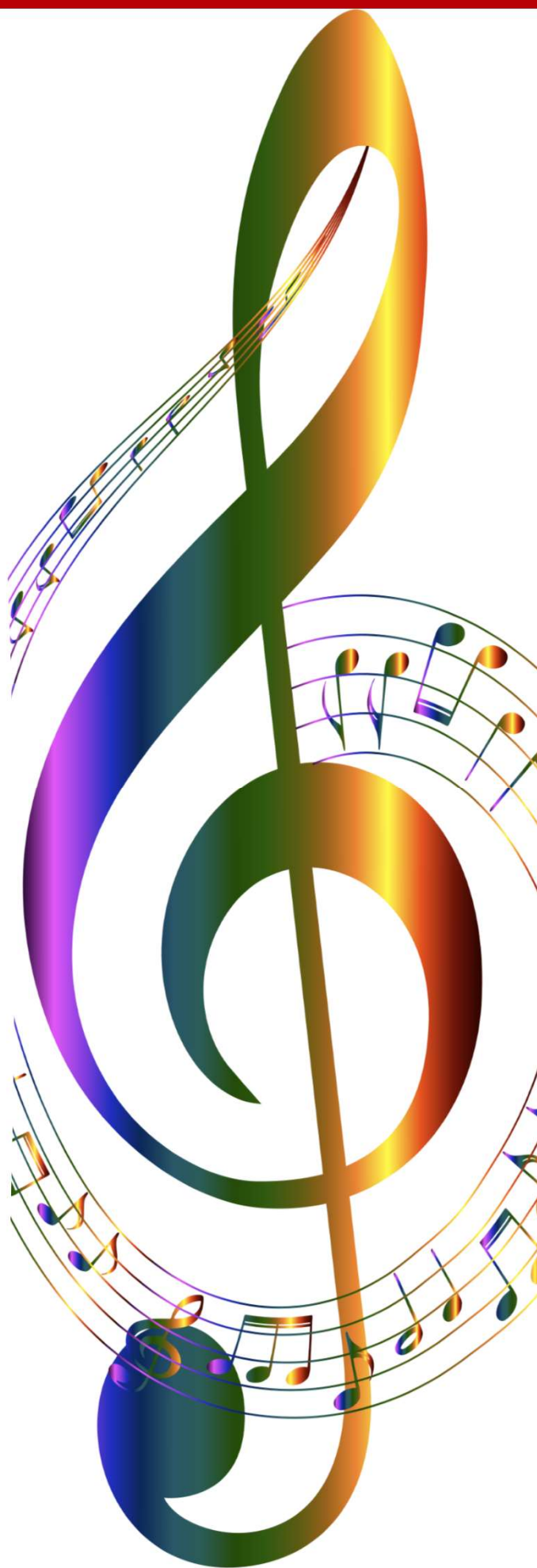
### **Summer Concert**

'Saturday Night at the Movies'  
20 June 2025

## Fundraising for Shelter

We will be organising 2 exciting fundraisers with Shelter including **Carol Singing** at Reading Station on 10 December 2025 and a **'Come & Sing' and Concert of Karl Jenkin's The Armed Man** on 7 February 2026.

*Details at*  
<https://www.wokingham-choral-society.org.uk/ConcertsandEvents>





*We hope you enjoyed your newsletter*

Watch out for exciting news for  
2026-27 when we will be  
celebrating  
Wokingham Choral Society's  
75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON!

