

## Future programmes from The Derwent Singers



### Upcoming events in the Derby area

25-29<sup>th</sup> November  
**Marlowe Players**  
"Nightmare" by Norman Robbins  
Darley Abbey Village Hall

29<sup>th</sup> November  
**J26 Sinfonietta**  
with Jacob Taylor-Durrant (Trumpet)  
"Homage to Haydn"  
St Anne's Church, Derby

29<sup>th</sup> November  
**New Opera Company**  
"Christmas Concert"  
St John's Methodist Church, Allestree

# The Derwent Singers

Musical Director Dexter Drown

Present

## ***Perfect Palestrina***

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2025

St John the Evangelist Church

Mill Street, Derby

[www.derwentsingers.org.uk](http://www.derwentsingers.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/derwentsingers](https://www.facebook.com/derwentsingers)

[general@derwentsingers.org.uk](mailto:general@derwentsingers.org.uk)

For details of future concerts and to purchase tickets, please visit  
[www.derwentsingers.org.uk](http://www.derwentsingers.org.uk)

## The Derwent Singers

The Derwent Singers were founded in 1968 by John Nixon with a small group of enthusiastic local singers and instrumentalists, and gave their first concert at Derby Cathedral in April of 1969. Since then things have gone from strength to strength and the choir has performed in many venues from cathedrals, churches, stately homes to village halls. The repertoire has ranged from renaissance to present day, either a cappella or accompanied. Under our Musical Director Dexter Drown, recent concerts have included Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil (Vespers) and Handel's Israel in Egypt with small orchestra and choir soloists. There have been German and French-themed programmes, British choral music programmes including Gustaf and Imogen Holst, Stanford and Britten, a celebration of the works of William Byrd, as well as Brahms German Requiem with choir soloists and four-handed piano accompaniment (borrowing from the 1871 London performance). Last year the choir were Finalists in the 2024 Midlands Choir of the Year competition, as well as taking part in a highly enjoyable short tour performing in Bourton-on-the Water, Gloucester and Lichfield.

**Sopranos:** Hannah Asbury, Naomi Bailey, Debbie Castles, Jenni Curtis, Karen Norman, Katie Smith, Sarah Tambling, Siow Pin Wong.

**Altos:** Brenda Boyden, Katie Boyden, Laura Burns, Rosalind Burrows, Caroline Cheesman, Sylvia Glover, Andrea McGregor.

**Tenors:** Richard Arter, Mark Cheesman, Chris Goodall, Andy Ward.

**Basses:** Michael Castles, Christopher Jack, Len Johnson, David Tudor, Matt Walters

If you are looking to join an exciting choir, particularly if you are a tenor or bass voice, please contact us on [general@derwentsingers.org.uk](mailto:general@derwentsingers.org.uk). Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings during term time in Derby.

## Translations of some of the latin texts

**Exsultate Deo** adjutori nostro;  
jubilate Deo Jacob.

Sumite psalmum, et date tympanum;  
psalterium jucundum cum cithara.  
Buccinate in neomenia tuba,  
in insigni die solemnitatis vestrae.

**O Crux**, splendidior cunctis astris,  
mundo celebris hominibus  
multum amabilis, sanctior universis;

que sola fuisti digna portare talentum  
mundi:  
Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulcia ferens  
pondera salva presentem catervam,  
in tuis hodie laudibus congregatam.

**O bone Jesu**, O piissime Jesu,  
O dulcissime Jesu,  
O Jesu fili virginis Mariae, plenus pietate  
O dulcis Jesu, secundum magnam  
misericordiam tuam, miserere mei.  
O clementissime Jesu, deprecor te,  
per illum sanguinem pretiosum quem  
pro peccatoribus effundere voluisti,  
ut abluas iniquitatem meam ...

**O magnum mysterium**  
et admirabile sacrementum  
ut Animalia viderent Dominum  
natum, jacentum in praesepio!  
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera  
meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum. Alleluia!

**Ave Regina caelorum**  
Ave Domina Angelorum  
Salve radix, salve porta,  
Ex qua mundo lux est orta  
Gaude, Virgo gloriosa  
Super omnes speciose ...

Sing joyfully to God our strength  
sing loud unto the God of Jacob!  
Take the song, bring forth the timbrel  
the pleasant harp, and the viol.  
Blow the trumpet in the new moon,  
at the time appointed for our feast day.

O Cross, more splendid than all the stars  
honoured thr'out the world by all mankind  
most worthy of the love, more holy than  
all the universe;

who alone were worthy to bear the  
ransom of the world:  
Sweet wood, sweet nails that bore  
the sweet burden save your flock,  
assembled here to sing your praises.

Good Jesus, holiest Jesus  
sweetest Jesus, Jesus son of the  
Virgin Mary, filled with holiness  
Sweet Jesus, have pity on me, according to  
your great mercy.  
Jesus most forgiving, I pray to you, by that  
most precious blood that you gladly shed for  
sinners,  
wash away my sin ...

O great mystery  
and wondrous sacrament  
that animals should see the new-  
born Lord, lying in their manger!  
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb  
was worthy to bear the  
Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!

Hail, Queen of Heaven  
Hail, Mistress of the Angels  
Hail, root of holiness, hail gate  
From whom light has risen on the world;  
Rejoice, glorious Virgin  
Beautiful above all others ...



**Dexter Drown** is an imaginative and versatile conductor who has been praised for his utterly magical performances of passion, confidence, and flair.

Alongside his work as conductor of the professional chamber orchestra, The Sinfonia Stellaris, Dexter has worked with musicians from the Orchestra of the Swan on premiere recordings of new works, led concerts with contemporary music ensemble The Hadit Collective, Ensemble Ad libitum de Chambéry,

and conducted the Midland Sinfonia. As well as his work with professional orchestras, Dexter is the Musical Director of the Midland Concert Orchestra and follows in the footsteps of Malcolm Sargent as Musical Director of the Leicester Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to his passion for Orchestral music, Dexter is a distinguished and inspiring choral conductor and choir trainer. He has worked as chorus master for conductors including Sir Karl Jenkins, Toby Purser, and George Jackson in some of the UK's most prestigious venues, such as The Bridgewater Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, Usher Hall, and St David's Hall. Dexter has worked with Ensemble Vocal Interlude (Grenoble), Chaddesley Voices, and is the Musical Director of Solihull Chandos Choir, Stourport Choral, conducts the East Oxford Community Choir and Orchestra, and is on the faculty of the Chester Choral Week, sharing his love of choral music with singers across the country.

In conjunction with his work with large choruses, Dexter is the conductor of the Nottingham Trent University Chamber Choir, helping shape the next generation of choral musicians, and the Musical Director of The Sitwell Singers and the award-winning Derwent Singers. His experience in choral excellence has been recognised with an invitation to adjudicate at the Bangor International Choral Festival.

Proudly State Educated, Dexter is as passionate about learning as he is about music making. He is the Winner of the Michael Beech Conducting Award and the Abingdon Music Festival Conducting Competition. Dexter gained a Master's in Orchestral Conducting with Distinction at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and has been fortunate to participate in the Garsington Opera Conductor Mentorship Programme and Masterclasses with Kazuki Yamada, Nicholas Collon, Paul Murphy, Peter Stark, Kenneth Keisler, and Daniel Bortholossi.

## Programme

Exsultate Deo ~ Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

Exultate Deo ~ Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Vexilla Regis (O Crux) ~ Palestrina

O Crux ~ Knut Nystedt (1915-2014)

O Sacrum Convivium ~ Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

O Magnum Mysterium ~ Palestrina

O Magnum Mysterium ~ Morten Lauridsen (b.1943)

O Eterne Deus ~ Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Tu Es Petrus ~ Palestrina

## ~INTERVAL~

Kyrie ~ Missa Ave Regina Caelorum ~ Palestrina

Ave Regina Caelorum ~ Judith Weir (b.1954)

Sicut Cervus ~ Palestrina

The Deer's Cry ~ Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

O Bone Jesu ~ Palestrina

O Bone Jesu ~ James MacMillan (b.1959)

## About the Music

Tonight's concert celebrates Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina in his 500th birthday year with a 360 degree exploration of composers who influenced Palestrina, his contemporary influences and his impact on modern composers in the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Born in Palestrina, Italy, in 1525, during the flourishing artistic atmosphere of the Renaissance, Palestrina's life narrates a unique story of artistic depth and spiritual growth.

In the realm of music, **Palestrina** is revered as the king of polyphony, expertly weaving intricate vocal lines that add layers of beauty and complexity. This is music that does not just demand your attention; it actively invites engagement. ***Sicut cervus*** is a stunning representation of how musical design can convey profound spiritual themes, encapsulating longing and solace. When immersed in it, listeners are transported into a tranquil space where intertwining melodies create a tapestry as rich and diverse as human emotion itself.

Palestrina influenced modern composers primarily through his clear and elegant style of counterpoint, which became a foundational model for teaching and composing, particularly in sacred music.

Palestrina influenced **Poulenc's *Exultate Deo*** through his use of Renaissance-era polyphonic writing, specifically the technique of paired, imitative voice entries. While Poulenc was more known for his homophonic and harmonically-driven vocal music, he drew on Palestrina's example for this particular motet to achieve a more joyful and complex texture.

Palestrina's influence on **Knut Nystedt's *O Crux*** is not direct, as Nystedt's style is eclectic and modern. However, this composition uses many Palestrina-inspired techniques, framing them with modern harmonies to create tension and a sense of timelessness.

**Olivier Messiaen's** 1937 motet ***O sacrum convivium!*** was influenced by the devotional spirit and textural clarity of Palestrina's music, a style Messiaen would have studied extensively. However, instead of mimicking the Renaissance master, Messiaen reinterpreted these influences through his own distinct 20th-century harmonic language, particularly his modes of limited transposition.

**Morten Lauridsen's *O Magnum Mysterium*** is influenced by Palestrina through its use of High Renaissance polyphonic techniques to create a feeling of timeless serenity. However, Lauridsen applies these techniques within a modern harmonic context, creating a sound that is simultaneously ancient and contemporary. Both composers prioritize the clarity and reverence of the sacred Latin text. Lauridsen, like Palestrina, uses music to illuminate and deepen the theological meaning of the words.

**Hildegard von Bingen** was a 12<sup>th</sup> century medieval composer. The single line of chant of ***O Eterne Deus*** pre-dates Palestrina's writing by over 300 years. In comparison, Palestrina wrote highly refined polyphonic music, featuring multiple, interwoven melodic lines. This was a radical shift in musical style from Hildegard's monophonic works.

While Hildegard and Palestrina were both prominent composers of sacred music for the Catholic Church, their contributions occurred in fundamentally different musical and historical periods. Palestrina's influences came from his Renaissance contemporaries and predecessors, not from the much earlier, and largely isolated, medieval chant tradition of Hildegard.

**Judith Weir's *Ave Regina Caelorum***, commissioned in 2014 for the Merton College Choirbook, sets a traditional Latin text for unaccompanied voices, just as Palestrina would have done. This decision places her directly in the lineage of composers who have used the clarity and devotional power of unaccompanied voices to honour liturgical texts.

Palestrina's influence on **Arvo Pärt's *The Deer's Cry*** is found primarily in the Renaissance composer's clarity of musical texture and textual intelligibility, which Pärt reinterprets through his own minimalist "tintinnabuli" style. Both composers are known for their profound and spiritual settings of sacred texts, which serve as a central connection. While separated by four centuries, Palestrina's "stile antico" (old style) and Pärt's *tintinnabuli* (little bells) style share a commitment to express a spiritual, transcendent experience.