

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL 2026

GLOUCESTER 25 JUL–1 AUG



01452 768 928

3choirs.org

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DRAMATIC
THRILLING
MAGNIFICENT

WELCOME TO GLOUCESTER!

It is a privilege for me once again to introduce a Three Choirs Festival programme. I have, quite deliberately, created a programme centered on magnificent choral works. I feel sure this will be popular with artists and audiences alike and bring great joy to the Gloucester 2026 festival.

The week will begin with a performance of the boisterous cantata *Belshazzar's Feast*, and end with a performance of Elgar's masterpiece *The Dream of Gerontius*. I am delighted that we can book-end the week with these thrilling works!

We are paying homage to Edward Elgar throughout the week; his work remains for many the soul of the festival, and the Elgar Society will be celebrating their 75th anniversary with us. Works of Elgar during the week include his thrilling First Symphony, *Sea Pictures* (sung by that wonderful friend of the festival, Roderick Williams), *Cockaigne*, and the Piano Quintet.

In 2026 the cathedral is being blessed with a new organ 54 years after the previous one was installed. The brilliant American virtuoso Katelyn Emerson plays Poulenc's Organ Concerto, followed by Janáček's breathtaking *Glagolitic Mass*. The incomparable young French virtuoso Thomas Ospital will give the Celebrity Organ Recital. Such things are not to be missed!

Supporting the work of contemporary British composers is one of the most important functions of the festival, and we are pleased to be able to programme significant pieces by Judith Bingham, Cecilia McDowall, Edmund Rubbra, Ian Venables, and Gavin Higgins.

We will also be performing the following choral-orchestral masterpieces, which need little introduction: Mozart's dramatic Requiem, Beethoven's magnificent Mass in C, and settings of Vespers texts by both Monteverdi and Rachmaninov.

I hope very much that you will share in our musical celebration!

Adrian Partington
Artistic Director



HIGHLIGHTS OF

Saturday 25 July

Elgar Symphony No 1
Walton *Belshazzar's Feast*

David Stout
Festival Chorus
Philharmonia Orchestra
Adrian Partington

Daytime Highlight

Voces 8

Holst | Vaughan Williams |
Howells | Jonathan Dove |
Eric Whitacre |
Morten Lauridsen

Wednesday 29 July

Cecilia McDowall A Song
to St Cecilia**

Rubbra Sinfonia da Camera

Cecilia McDowall Rain,
Steam and Speed

Beethoven Mass in C

Mark Padmore
John Savournin
Festival Chorus
Philharmonia Orchestra
Adrian Partington

Daytime Highlight

Broadcast Evensong

Featuring a Magnificat
and Nunc dimittis*
by Gavin Higgins

THE 2026 FESTIVAL INCLUDE:

Sunday 26 July

Rachmaninov Vespers

Ex Cathedra

Jeffrey Skidmore

Daytime Highlight

Roderick Williams

Recital to include the

Cycle of Six Songs to Poems

by *The Dymock Poets*

by Douglas Weiland

Monday 27 July

Elgar Cockaigne Overture

Poulenc Organ Concerto

Janáček Glagolitic Mass

Katelyn Emerson

Festival Chorus

Philharmonia Orchestra

Adrian Partington

Daytime Highlight

Charles Owen piano

Schumann | Janáček |

Cheryl Frances-Hoad*

Tuesday 28 July

Mendelssohn Hebrides

Overture

Elgar Sea Pictures

Judith Bingham Salt in
the Blood

Stanford Songs of the Fleet

Roderick Williams

Festival Youth Choir

Philharmonia Orchestra

Geraint Bowen

Daytime Highlight

Fretwork and **Ian Bostridge**

A programme

commemorating the 400th

anniversary of the death of

John Dowland (1563–1626)

Thursday 30 July

Monteverdi Vespers

Three Cathedral Choirs

La Serenissima

Samuel Hudson

Daytime Highlights

Celebrity Organ Recital

Thomas Ospital

Bernstein Chichester Psalms

Neil Cox Requiem Canticles

Saint Cecilia Singers |

Jonathan Hope

Friday 31 July

Mozart Sinfonia Concertante

for Violin, Viola and

Orchestra

Mozart Requiem

Festival Chorus

Philharmonia Orchestra

Geraint Bowen

Daytime Highlight

London Chamber Ensemble

Quartet

Wood | Howells

Saturday 1 August

Elgar The Dream of

Gerontius

Festival Chorus

Philharmonia Orchestra

Adrian Partington

Daytime Highlights

Severn Meadows

Music and readings on the

life of Ivor Gurney and his

friendship with Will Harvey

and Herbert Howells

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

Great Choral Anthems

Parry | Gardiner | Ireland |

Bainton | Harris | Britten

*premiere, festival commission **version premiere

All details, programmes and artists published in this preview are correct at the time of going to press but may be subject to alteration

Cover and inside image © Joseph Wong; Adrian Partington © Michael Whitefoot

JOIN US FOR THE 2026 FESTIVAL AND...

...secure the best seats

Booking Dates

Stewards	16 March
Diamond Patrons	23 March
Ruby Patrons	24 March
Emerald Patrons	25 March
Opal Patrons	26 March
Gold and Life Members	30 March
Silver Members	1 April
Bronze Members	7 April
General Public	13 April

Sign up at 3choirs.org/mailling-list to hear about our full programme launch in March 2026!

...be part of the music making

If you love singing, why not consider taking to the stage in one of our festival choirs? You can audition for the Three Choirs Festival Chorus or join the Festival Youth Choir (for ages 14–25). Full details and sign-up forms for both groups can be found at 3choirs.org/join-in

Our Participation project for 2026 is Sing my Story, a creative singing, songwriting and storytelling project which will run from January to March 2026 in Gloucestershire schools. If your school or a school you know would like to take part in this series of creative and vocal workshops ending with a celebratory concert finale in Tewkesbury Abbey, get in touch with our Participation Co-ordinator Hannah: hannah.ropen@3choirs.org

Three Choirs Festival Limited

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Free singing workshops are also on offer to schools in Herefordshire in the Autumn term 2025 – get in touch to enrol.

...be hands-on behind the scenes

We're always looking for people to join our wonderful volunteer team who help us deliver the festival. To find out more, contact our Production Manager: production@3choirs.org

...show your support for the work and future of the festival

Donations make our music possible, and there are so many ways that you can support the music you love. Get in touch with our Head of Development Robert at supportus@3choirs.org or on 01452 768930 and he will be delighted to chat through options with you. Thank you to those who've already pledged their support for 2026:

LG Harris Charitable Trust
Peter Smith



Three Choirs Festival Leadership Team:

David Francis *chief executive*
Lucy Potter *artistic planning manager*
Robert Convey *head of sales and development*
Bethany Alexander / Jessica Robson-Hill
production manager