

A Chorister's Life is a busy one! Notes from Arabella Stokes...

On a typical Sunday I'll wake up at 8:00am and get into my school uniform ready for choir at 8:45 am. We rehearse for 1 hour and 15 minutes, with Eucharist starting at 10 am. Parents can collect their children shortly after 11:15 am or you can go and have lunch at school and hang out there, that's what I like to do most weekends. We have things like roast, brunch or sausage and mash. After lunch we go back to rehearsal at 2:45 pm and we sing Evensong at 4 pm. We are usually finished at around 5 pm.

Sunday Eucharist isn't the only thing we do though. Before school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday we have a rehearsal from 8:10 am to 9:15 am. The girls and boys take turns to sing weekends and weekly Evensong. The girls sing Evensong on Tuesday and Friday, the boys do Monday and Thursday. Christmas and Easter are busy too but just as, if not more fun.

Some people I meet say they think they wouldn't be able to manage being a Chorister or think that they wouldn't enjoy it, but you can't compare it to anything else. I absolutely love being a Chorister and will be so sad to leave next year.



Arabella Stokes

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NOTES FROM THE CONGREGATION

The contribution of our wonderful choir is a highlight of every service. We are very fortunate with the quality of our musicians when so many cathedrals are really struggling. **Charles Beer**

DIARY DATE

8th December

Performance of
Handel's 'Messiah'



Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation at Work...

Arabella Stokes's lovely words couldn't paint a more accurate description of a busy Chorister's life: one of fulfilment, commitment to the art of choral singing, food and fun!

However... Did you know that without annual financial support from the Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation, there would be very little music taking place in Exeter's fine Cathedral?

Each year, the Foundation contributes half the annual £380,000 cost of sustaining the music and all that it embraces. Removing these funds would reduce the number of choral services and there would be fewer Choristers and Choral Scholars. The high standard of music would plummet through lack of rehearsals; the organ would be out of tune and robes would become scruffy. The much-valued outreach work would cease and worst of all, there would be nothing to attract potential Choristers.

As it stands, Exeter's fine Choir has an enviable reputation. In a short space of time, its standard, under the direction of Timothy Noon, has risen immeasurably. Last year's achievements are testament to the Choir's standing as one of the country's leading cathedral choirs. 'Messiah' was a triumph (people still talk about it) as was the performance of Bach's 'B Minor Mass'. The much-hailed tour to Wales and Dublin gave the Choristers a chance to sing in a different environment as well as giving them an opportunity to let off steam. Last but by no

means least, is the ongoing outreach work – led by Andrew Downton – that gives children in various Devon schools, the chance to discover the wonders of singing.

It's easy to forget the *raison d'être* of the Choir which is to lead the many regular choral services. Some people prefer the intimacy of Evensong whereas others appreciate the lusty hymn singing at Eucharist.

The great hymns are known by everyone. 'For those in Peril on the Sea', 'Onward Christian Soldiers', 'We plough the Fields' and 'All Things bright and Beautiful' are just a sprinkling of those familiar to everyone. Top of the list however has to be 'Cwm Rhondda' as this is guaranteed to have everyone (particularly the men) blasting the final two lines! Where would we be without these glorious tunes?

We need the leadership of a good choir. Why? Because the singers encourage us all to sing. Everyone has a voice although shy about using it unless there are others to take the lead. Mind you – speed comes into it as well. A hymn at tortoise pace is hard work; a good romp is far preferable.

So where are these words leading? The Cathedral couldn't manage without its Choir. The problem lies in its cost... We are always in search of funding and if you are looking for a worthy charity, please think towards the Foundation. Maybe you might like to go a stage further and consider leaving a legacy.

Need I say more....

Penny Adie MBE

Trustee, Exeter Cathedral
Music Foundation





A postcard the Choir dated 1880



Day off!

Outreach Work By Andrew Downton

One of the great joys of my work as the Cathedral's Singing Development Leader is running the Chorister Outreach Programme. In collaboration with the Cathedral School and Devon and Torbay Music Education Hubs, we are able to invite children to work with the Choir in order to prepare a joyous afternoon concert in the Cathedral. At the time of writing, we have just enjoyed our most recent performance involving a wonderful group of schools from Exeter itself.

The termly activity usually begins around eight weeks before the concert when I am very fortunate to start visiting each school for the first of three workshops. The primary aim is to help the children learn three songs to be performed by everyone. Depending on the children's experience level, the support given varies widely from helping them to find their voices and discover their ability to sing notes in a higher range to exploring ways to perform more musically.

Providing an extra boost before the concert, the final workshop also involves a group of Choristers and our Director of Music, Mr Noon. Not only can the school children benefit from singing together but also, they can hear a performance from the Choristers.

The concert is always on a Saturday when we hope that as many of the children's family and friends as possible will be able to come. In recent performances this has certainly been the case when we have reached the Cathedral's capacity for performers and audience alike. We now have the problem of deciding whether to start ticketing future outreach programme concerts; something never previously required!

After many years of leading the programme, I can honestly say I still greatly enjoy the process and the final concert, and I think it is fair to say that the children always do too. There is something uniquely special about performing together to an encouraging audience in the majestic surroundings of our Cathedral. We love hearing the positive feedback from schools afterwards, none better than when we hear that the programme has inspired a school to form a new singing group and to continue the joy of singing.

NOTES FROM THE CONGREGATION

The glorious music sung by the Choir sends our prayers straight to Heaven. **Sally Sedgman**

A Chorister's Afterlife...

I was a chorister at Exeter Cathedral for over 5 years and I got to sing a huge repertoire in that time which has really helped me for Blundell's as it has improved my sight reading. I have sung in all sorts of services, recordings and concerts and it was an unforgettable experience. It was great socially and it taught me a lot about teamwork which has helped me join all the Blundell's music groups and get to know new people. I had lots of solo experience in the cathedral which helped prepare me for the Two Moors competition of which I went on to be one of the winners. Chorister life is extremely busy, although fun and rewarding, and Blundell's is just the same as there are so many opportunities for the music scholars from specialist ensembles to choirs and amazing trips! I loved every minute of being a chorister and it has put me in great stead for my future as a singer and my scholarship at Blundell's.

Ginevra Dobson, Year 10, Blundell's School



© Ginevra Dobson

NOTES FROM THE CONGREGATION

“However trying your week has been, to enter the Cathedral and hear the choir singing is to keep in touch with Heaven!”

Kit Newsome



Chorister's sand impression of the Cathedral's logo. Summer tour 2023

Legacies

Have you ever considered leaving a legacy to Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation?

Your support would help to safeguard the future of the Choir. In an age where church attendance is dwindling, the continuation of centuries old ecclesiastical musical traditions has never been so necessary.

For more information, please contact jill.taylor@exeter-cathedral.org.uk



**EXETER CATHEDRAL
MUSIC FOUNDATION**

To donate online or find out more information, visit exeter-cathedral.org.uk/music/music-foundation

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