THE CHORAL FOUNDATION
THE CHAPEL ROYAL
HAMPTON COURT PALACE

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2026

The Choral Foundation's plan

Over the past year, the Chapel Royal team and trustees of the Choral Foundation have been working together on a joint strategy and plan to support the music of the Chapel Royal.

At its heart is a shared vision to:

- Preserve and develop the quality of music-making in the Chapel Royal
- Promote the music of the Chapel Royal to more people
- Make that music accessible to all.

Our plan includes, for example, enhancing musical training for our choristers; creating more opportunities for the choir to showcase its music-making through services and events; strengthening pathways for chorister recruitment; and introducing girl choristers as an exciting extension of the Chapel's musical life (see further below).

We will continue to test and shape this plan with those to whom the Chapel's music matters most – including the choir, choir parents, the congregation, the Chapel team, and our supporters and donors. We are deeply grateful for the thoughtful input from many of you already.

Together, we are strengthening the impact of music-making at the heart of the Chapel Royal – preserving a remarkable tradition while enabling it to grow and reach new generations. None of this would be possible without the generosity and commitment of our donors, whose support underpins everything we do.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to sharing further updates in future newsletters.

The Choral Foundations' new Chair, Jane Crowther

Changes at the Choral Foundation

The Choral Foundation trustees are delighted that Jane Crowther has agreed to take up the role of Chair, following a public, competitive recruitment process.

Jane was previously Interim Chair, and has a long-standing personal connection to the Chapel Royal – as a former choir parent and through her current role as Director of Corporate Services at Historic Royal Palaces.

Jane's career spans senior executive and trustee roles at organisations including The Royal Opera and Ballet, The Bach Choir and the National Centre for Circus Arts.

For those of you who haven't already met Jane, there will be plenty of opportunities to engage with her in the near future. For now, we asked her a few questions to help our supporters get to know her:

What motivated you to get involved with the Choral Foundation?

"Music and singing have been a constant thread throughout my life – I love how music brings people together, expresses what words alone cannot, and creates a deep sense of belonging. My involvement with the Choral Foundation brings together this personal passion with clear charitable purpose. We are at a pivotal moment. With our Director of Music, Alexander Hamilton, moving to a full time role with us and rare opportunities emerging – most notably the plan to introduce girl choristers for the first time in over five centuries – it felt like the right moment to step forward and help the Choral Foundation".

How do you see the relationship between the Choral Foundation and its many stake-holders – the Choir, the congregation, the Chapel team and others?

"We cannot achieve our ambitions on our own. Delivering our strategy and plan depends on strong, trusting relationships between the Choral Foundation, Chapel staff and musicians, chorister parents, the congregation, Historic Royal Palaces, the Royal Household, our supporters and donors, and our wider partners. Over the past year, we have been working to strengthen those relationships and improve how we work together. There have already been real improvements, but there is more to do, and listening, openness and collaboration remain essential. For me, success means genuine partnership, where everyone feels connected to, and invested in, the music of the Chapel Royal".

How did you get into choral music?

"I went to a fairly rough state school in Yorkshire, with limited access to music. Music was something I loved instinctively – we happily sang Gilbert and Sullivan at home but classical music often felt distant and 'not for people like me'. I didn't even realise that you could be a musician as a job! When I got to university, many of my peers already had Grade 8s and diplomas. When I auditioned for the chapel choir, I was told – kindly, but firmly – that I needed to go away and train my voice. That was a turning point. As an adult, I became determined to take every opportunity I could to be part of this world, singing in choirs and choruses and paying for my own singing and music lessons. I've now been a member of The Bach Choir for 28 years, have sung in extraordinary venues all over the world, and have also had the privilege of working with world class music and arts organisations. My own experience has given me a strong personal commitment to opening doors for young people, so that access to music is shaped by talent and passion, not by background".

What's your favourite piece of music you have heard sung in the Chapel Royal?

"There are so many! But if I had to pick one it would be Jonathon Dove's *They will rise*. It's such a glorious piece of music and I have a wonderful memory of the choristers practicing in the song room and lifting their arms to 'soar on wings like eagles'. So lovely to see and hear their joy".

The Trustees would also like to thank a number of recently retired trustees, who have contributed greatly to the work of the Choral Foundation – in some cases over many years. **Richard Rothwell** deserves huge thanks for his contribution since the earliest days of the Choral Foundation: his work to manage the Foundation's investments and his many other steps to build the Foundation have been invaluable. **Mike Wood** provided very helpful support on the Foundation's financial management and **Elaine Rowlands** led on the implementation of a comprehensive approach to safeguarding. We expect to be seeking new recruits to the Trustee board shortly, after further consideration of the skills that would most complement those of existing Trustees.

If you might be interested, we would be delighted to hear from you. The Choral Foundation is also currently recruiting a new Development Manager, who will support us with fundraising.

Girl Choristers

One of the most exciting developments on the horizon is the introduction of girl choristers at the Chapel Royal.

Girl choristers have enriched the music and worship of many churches, chapels and cathedrals across the country for several decades now. The Chapel Royal is proud to sustain a distinctive boys' choir, and will continue to do so, but it also recognises that welcoming girl choristers is a vital and joyful part of its future.

The work is being led by Alexander, with the support of the Choral Foundation, and is still at an early stage. The intention is that the girl choristers will be distinct from the boy choristers, likely involving girls aged 11–18, and developed in partnership with local schools, helping to extend access to outstanding music education in the area.

Plans are being shaped carefully and thoughtfully – musically, pastorally and practically – and, in due course, we expect to launch a dedicated fundraising campaign to support this exciting new chapter.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and one we look forward to sharing more about as the work develops.

Songstars 2026

The 2025/26 Songstars programme will reach its climax this year at a concert for participants at the Chapel Royal in June. The programme was founded in 2022 with the goal of bringing the joy of singing to primary school children in the London Borough of Hounslow, with the support of the Choral Foundation. Under the leadership of Sarah Rennix, the programme has continued to develop strongly, and this year the final concert will feature 180 school children and their teachers, led by Isobel Chesman, and the Chapel choir, led by Alexander.

They will be joined by a group of professional instrumentalists to bring together all the hard work from the programme. Thanks to all those whose support and effort continues to make Songstars such a success.

Songstars at the Chapel Royal

Support Us

Thank you to all our donors and supporters; we are extremely grateful for your ongoing generosity. For new donors, there are lots of different ways to support us:

- **Sponsor a chorister** - The Choral Foundation recognises that providing bursaries to broaden our choristers' musical abilities is vital, but the cost of a music education has risen significantly. We are therefore looking for individuals to sponsor a chorister's instrumental and vocal lessons with an annual gift of £1,200.
- **Leave a legacy** - if you are interested in leaving a bequest to support the future of music at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace, please contact our Administrator, Louise Cole.
- **Make a donation** - whether you choose to give regularly or make a one-off contribution, you can donate via JustGiving – **https://bit.ly/47ERe2e**
- **Tell your friends and family** about the wonderful music at the Chapel Royal and how the Choral Foundation is supporting this.

If you feel able to help in this way or are interested in supporting any other aspect of our work, please feel free to speak in confidence to Louise on ***louise.cole@choralfoundation.org.uk***

If you no longer wish to receive e-mails or news updates from The Choral Foundation, please e-mail ***choral.foundation@hrp.org.uk*** to unsubscribe.

Recent And Upcoming Events

The Choral Foundation has been very excited to work with the Director of Music, as he sets out and puts into action his vision for music-making in the Chapel Royal. The Foundation has been delighted, in particular, to support his change to working full time from July.

Holy Week and Easter were typically busy in the Chapel, with many services taking place across the Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The week culminated in the glory of Easter Day, when a fond farewell was said to five choristers (whose voices have recently changed), and to Chapel Clerk, James Harris, and Music Administrator, Sophie Baylis. The Choral Foundation adds its own very best wishes to all of these.

With these roles, a new Chaplain, and a new Assistant Organist to recruit, it is a time of significant change for the Chapel team and the Choral Foundation will offer its full support as it manages these changes.

Over the next few months, we will be working with Alexander, the choir and the Chapel team to establish a wider programme of events supported by the Choral Foundation. For now, there are a number of dates which are ready for diaries:

- **Songstars Concert**
  Wednesday 24 June (please contact Sarah Rennix *sarah.rennix@choralfoundation.org.uk* if you are interested in coming along – places are limited)
- **Raphael Wallfisch** ***plays Bach's Cello Suites***
  Friday 26 June at 7pm.
  Tickets available via Eventbrite – **https://bit.ly/4wOtXa1**
- **Teddingtones Community Choir Concert**
  Wednesday 18 November.
  Tickets on sale later this year.

The Choral Foundation preserves and promotes the unique heritage of English Choral Music at The Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace.

For further information please contact Louise Cole via e-mail
louise.cole@choralfoundation.org.uk

The Chapel Royal is a living vibrant church located at the heart of the historic Palace of Hampton Court.

Everyone is welcome to attend the regular services and to worship in the place where kings and queens have done so for centuries. The Choir sings Choral Matins or Sung Eucharist at 11am and Evensong at 3.30pm every Sunday (except during the Choir recess in the summer). The services are from the Book of Common Prayer. Those attending The Chapel for a service only do not pay the Palace entrance fee. Please enter by Tennis Court Lane.
www.chapelroyalhamptoncourt.org.uk

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