



# THE ABBAY CHOIRS

Since Bath Abbey's foundation as a Benedictine Monastery in the eighth century, choral music has lain at the heart of its worship. The Abbey Choirs are widely regarded as amongst the finest in Britain, performing to the highest standard. Musical and liturgical highlights of the Christian year include the Abbey's atmospheric services held during Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, All Souls and Remembrance Sunday. During these services the choirs sing a variety of repertoire from the fourteenth century onwards, ranging from the greats of English church music such as Byrd, Tallis, Purcell, Stanford, Parry and Britten, to composers from further afield such as Bach, Mendelssohn, Fauré, Bruckner and Whitacre. The choirs have made numerous acclaimed recordings that showcase its wonderful acoustic and fine 4-manual Klais organ, which was completed in 1997.

**The Abbey Choirs** broadcast regularly on national radio and television, including recent broadcasts on BBC1 and BBC Radio 3 & 4 during the Christmas of 2015, 2017 and 2018. Since 2017 the Abbey Girls and men have performed Messiah annually to great acclaim with baroque instrumentalists Canzona and the solos are all performed by members of the choir. In 2018 the choirs featured on a documentary for American television. An annual highlight is the evocative performance in candlelight and accompanied by harp of Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols.

The choirs perform regularly with orchestra and recent performances include Mozart's Spatzenmesse, Duruflé's Requiem and a world premiere of 'And there was light: A Christmas Oratorio' - a modern Jazz cantata by Jools Scott. In September 2017 the 20th Anniversary of the Girls' Choir was celebrated with a Festival Concert which drew its inspiration from the females who have inspired music making. The music performed included texts and music written by women and music inspired by women. Award winning composer Judith Bingham was commissioned to write The Sleeping Soul setting words by the medieval writer St Mechthild of Magdeburg. Each year the Boys and Men combine with the choir of St Mary's Church, Redcliffe in Bristol. The Abbey choirs have also sung alongside King's College choir, London and Norwich Cathedral choir.

The Abbey choirs have undertaken numerous successful tours. In 2016 the Girls and Men toured Paris including performances at Saint Eustache and Notre-Dame and in 2018 they visited Norwich Cathedral. In 2017, the Boys and Men were invited to help celebrate the 70th anniversary of the twinning of Alkmaar and Bath, singing concerts at Dordrecht, Gouda and Alkmaar. The choirs also enjoy good relationships with churches in Bath's other twin cities: Braunschweig (Germany) and Aix-en-Provence in Southern France. Closer to home, the choirs have sung at St Paul's Cathedral, St George's Chapel Windsor, Hampton Court Chapel Royal and Norwich and Gloucester Cathedrals. They have also performed for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the Royal Family.

The choirs welcomed John Rutter to the Abbey in January 2018 as we hosted the celebrated composer and conductor in a Singing Day. Later in 2019 the Abbey Girls and Men will be touring in Holland whilst the Abbey Boys shortly go on tour to Cambridge, singing at Jesus' College and Great St. Mary's Church.