

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir was founded in 1947 by the Borough of Guildford to perform important works from the choral repertoire with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra. Since then, the Choir has grown in stature and reputation and can now justifiably claim a place as one of the foremost Choruses in the country. Although the Choir is now independent of Guildford Borough Council, it regularly joins forces with Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra to perform a major choral work. Tonight's concert is one such occasion. The Choir also promotes at least two other major concerts of its own each season, and regularly performs by invitation for other promoters, orchestras and venues.

The Choir grew to prominence under the batons of such eminent musicians as Sir Charles Groves and Vernon Handley, and of Sir David Willcocks, who is also the Choir's current President.

The Choir's reputation has been enhanced recently by a series of outstanding and successful concerts. Recent performances have included Mozart's "Great" C-minor Mass, Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast", Bach's St Matthew Passion, Vaughan Williams' "Dona nobis pacem", Haydn's "Creation, Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony (No.2), Orff's "Carmina Burana" and Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius". The Choir's March 1999 performance of the "Resurrection" Symphony (in a concert which included Bruckner's Mass in E Minor) earned a standing ovation – believed to be a first for a Guildford Cathedral audience. The performance of Mozart's "Great" Mass last October was reported in the press as "Magnificent Mozart".

Guildford is "twinned" with Freiburg-im-Breisgau, "capital" of the Black Forest region in Germany, and for the last ten years, the Guildford Philharmonic Choir has collaborated with the Freiburger Bachchor to present some outstanding joint performances. Last March's moving rendition of Bach's St Matthew Passion in the Cathedral was the most recent visit by the Bachchor to Guildford. Plans for this year include a return visit in November by Guildford Philharmonic Choir to sing Bruckner's D-minor Mass with the Bachchor in Freiburg's magnificent new Konzerthaus.

Guildford Philharmonic Choir's concert programme for the rest of this season includes a performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams' "A Sea Symphony" on May 12th in a concert which includes the rare treat of hearing Jeremy Filsell perform Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto. Next season starts with Handel's Messiah on November 3rd in the Cathedral.

The Choir is always searching for new members to maintain its high standard, and auditions are held throughout the year. Prospective members are always welcome to attend rehearsals, which are held on Monday evenings in central Guildford. Please telephone the Membership Secretary, Noreen Ayton, on 01932 221918 for more information.

The Choir also enjoys the support of a group of Friends and if you are interested in becoming a Friend (or Patron) of the Choir please contact Marion Arbuckle on 01483 572621.

Jeremy B?