

What The Choir Means To Me

The short answer to that question is - "A Lot"! The longer answer is to me the choir means**Awe, Amazement and Thankfulness!** How come? Well music, and by music I mean that made by the human voice, singing, has been a vital part of my life since childhood. A violinist father helped, as did singing around the piano at home, choruses at Sunday School, singing classes at a state primary school, leading to hymns, concerts and opera. So music has always been there and, having no gift myself, I became an avid listener without an attachment to any particular choir or orchestra. A person of broad taste, made broader by the wonders of Radio 3.

So I rather took music for granted, until that is the Choir here at Exeter Cathedral!. As a first time member of a cathedral congregation I gradually became aware of the role of the choir in cathedral life; of its impact on the liturgical, worshipping heart of the Mother church of our diocese. For me music is a ministry of the people to the people. And I learn so much from the extensive repertoire on offer, a rich diet indeed. Here is joy, wonder, solace and comfort. Though we are blessed with brilliant adult choir members, it is the choristers who move my heart. Watching their development, observing their concern for each other, their dedication to their work, their sense of both joy and discipline, and their attention to the Director of Music is quite stunning. I'm sure I am not the only person who tries to sit at Evensong where I can watch Timothy Noon's engagement with the choristers as he directs them. I do hope the choir know how much they mean to the life of the cathedral, how much they aid our worship. How indeed they inspire what they mean to me - **Awe, Amazement and Thankfulness!**

Anne Foreman, September

Fund-raising and Legacies

Many people don't know how important the Foundation is. Without its financial support, there would be no music in Exeter Cathedral.

The annual cost of running the music is upwards of £400,000 for which ECMF funds 50%. We are always in need of help as the aim is to cover the costs in their entirety.

With financial help towards the cost of chorister bursaries, professional salaries sheet music, robes, organ maintenance (the list goes on), your support would aid the foundation to achieve its aim.

We would be so grateful if you could give a donation to this worthy cause. We would all hate it to find that there were no Evensong, nor carol services and concerts.

If you should ever see a way of leaving a *legacy* in your will, that would be a wonderful gesture.

If you would like to know more, please get in touch with Jill Taylor, jill.taylor@exeter-cathedral.org.uk

Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025



Writing Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation's annual Newsletter is something I relish since it gives me an opportunity to reflect on the Choir's activities throughout the year, see the probationers as they develop as well as giving me an opportunity to hear music performed at a superlatively high standard. One expects this on a daily basis with a world class orchestra. But to think that the same standard is achieved by the Choir (particularly with children involved) and on a similar time frame, is quite extraordinary.

The Choir's activities never cease with their constant flow of services, BBC Radio 3 broadcasts and Outreach work. Then there is the fun of an overseas tour to consider not to mention Christmas carols and the annual performance of *Messiah* being the icing on the cake.

The Director of Music, Timothy Noon told me recently that the Choir sings roughly 5.5 Evensongs per week for approximately 33 weeks of the year. Allowing for repetition of the canticles and the addition of seasonal carols this brings a total of 90 different sets of the former and roughly 120 anthems!

As a Trustee of ECMF, I feel very privileged to be involved (albeit in a miniscule way) in the backbone to Cathedral's very existence. Without the Foundation's aid, there would be no choir. What a thought...

Penny Adie, Trustee



Arabella & Rupert Williams

Fund-raising Organ Crawl with Andrew Millington

Much fun was had on a sunny day in October when I accompanied retired Director of Music, and now ECMF trustee Andrew Millington, on an organ crawl. Not knowing what I was letting myself in for, I tagged along as a camp follower hoping to be useful in some way.

Andrew's inspired idea to draw attention to the Foundation was to give a mini recital and talk about the Choir in some of Devon's churches.

Having selected Exmouth and Sidmouth's churches - both boasting excellent organs - off we set on a mystery tour.

The clearly discerning audiences were fascinated to discover what goes on behind the scenes and the Foundation's key role in supporting the considerable cost involved in sustaining the Choir. As a result, those present delved into their pockets putting some handsome donations (including a promise of a legacy) into the pot.

More please, Andrew...



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

Telephone: 01392 413174 Email: jill.taylor@exeter-cathedral.org.uk

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A Conducted Tour

In early May, two Choristers, William and Molly Jackson (chaperoned by their mother, Emma), took me on a 'conducted tour' of the Cathedral.

Armed with a large sheet of paper listing all the important features they wished to show me, these two somewhat shy, but eager children had come well prepared.

Our route began at the West End where I was informed the big doors were opened for Easter processions as well as for other state occasions. Of far greater importance was the nave for which William, in true Guide form, informed me that this was the longest, vaulted nave in the country. I didn't know what the word nave meant at which point Mr Google kindly put us in the picture by saying the shape was that of an upside-down ship. Both children got the giggles saying that from now on, they would be singing the wrong way up!

It must have been the word 'wrong' that prompted my question as to whether things went awry during services. Molly had us smiling when she mentioned Mr Noon's over-enthusiastic conducting that had sent the music stand flying. Another example of a chorister hazard for Emma was the possibility of sending Molly in for a boy's service and vice versa.

Next on their list was to look at the Minstrel's Gallery. William wasn't too keen on going there since he didn't like heights. He and Molly pointed out that you can climb even further on to the roof (even more emphasis from William for giving the area a wide berth!).

We were then on to the subject of where the services were sung. The nave for Eucharist; the quire for Evensong.

Our next discussion involved the appearance of the organ seen from the end of the nave. William was convinced that it looked like a square-jawed robot. Molly was convinced it was the beast from 'Beauty and the Beast'. I have always thought it resembled the face of an owl. There is obviously much debate on this...



Of particular fascination to William was the intricate pattern of the ceiling in the Lady Chapel. The spikes above Bishop Lacy's tomb however were to be avoided!

Both children impressed upon me their preference for singing in the quire stalls simply because there were cushions to sit on.

The huge organ pipes couldn't be missed. There was much discussion as to whether Molly was slim enough to fit inside. I reckoned, as did mum, that both children could. William was proud of the noise but said that the vibration was more impressive than the sound. We were then on to the practical side of playing the instrument. William thought there were three manuals. (There are four, in fact). Molly pointed out the necessity of playing with your feet as well as your fingers.

The finale to the tour focused on the highest note that each of the children could reach. Molly said 'C' on a good day while William was more uncertain.

The children clearly adore their choristership in the cathedral. It's 'really fun', they chorused.

New Music at Exeter Cathedral

Exeter Cathedral Choir has been privileged in recent years to premiere a number of significant new works.

In 2019, there were two commissions: the first 'The Exeter Service' by Nico Muhly in celebration of the founding of the Cathedral's girl choristers in 2019; the second 'We are not Worthy' by Philip Moore to celebrate Professor Peter Toyne's Golden Wedding anniversary.

The tradition of composing new settings of the Evensong Canticles has seen two versions of 'The Exeter Service': the first by Timothy Parsons, formerly Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral and now Director of Music at Wells Cathedral, premiered in 2021; the second, by former Lay Vicar, now Director of Music at St Giles', Edinburgh, Jack Oades.

At Christmas 2024 a new carol was introduced - 'Lullay, My Liking', a beautiful setting by Senior Lay Vicar (and Punctator) Matthew Cann.

Looking ahead, February 2026 sees the world premiere of 'The Panther', a dramatic anthem by Nico Muhly. Commissioned for the Northern European Cathedrals' Conference, it sets a newly-translated passage from the ancient *Exeter Book*, housed in the Cathedral Library.

Through these commissions, Exeter Cathedral continues to play a vibrant role in shaping the sound of contemporary sacred music.

Timothy Noon, Director of Music



Exeter Cathedral Choir Tour - Normandy and Paris 2025

Last summer seventeen choristers joined twelve choir adults together with our organists and pastoral staff on a tour to our link diocese of Bayeux-Lisieux, and Paris. The choir gave concerts in Douvres-la-Deliverande, Bayeux Cathedral as well as Rouen Cathedral, Saint Sulpice and La Madeleine in Paris.

To large audiences, the choir presented mixed programmes in churches with acoustics that amazed our young singers.

However, the social aspect of the tour was as important as the music-making. There were sighting-seeing trips (including the Eiffel Tower) accompanied by some super meals. The choristers were impressively adventurous in trying new foods: Moules-Frites Normandie (in cider) was a firm favourite!

Naturally a tour such as this is costly to put in place and without the help of Rayburn Tours and Blakes Coaches who arranged the trip and transported us, to the choir for such excellent company and singing, and to the Choir Association and all who raised funds for the trip. It was hugely-appreciated, and many happy memories were made!

James Mustard, Canon Precentor