

THE CHOIR



SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# WELCOME



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Image: Clive Barda

*"The performances glow, as does one's spirit after hearing them... they sing with as much sensitivity and soul as many more famous rivals."*

*Gramophone*

**It gives me great pleasure to introduce our exciting and vibrant choral music programme at Sidney Sussex.**

The College has been a nest of musical activity since its foundation in 1596, when it rose from the ruins of the medieval Cambridge Greyfriars. Indeed one of Cambridge's largest chapels stood on this site in pre-Reformation times and was a regular venue for University ceremonies, where a number of early English composers took their degrees including the great Robert Fayrfax (MusB, 1501; DMus, 1504). Later, the Elizabethan composer William Byrd would have been well-known to the foundress, Lady Frances Sidney, and two very fine elegies by Byrd survive for her nephew, the poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney.

A dedicated chapel choir must have existed in some form since the foundation of the College. Following the admission of women to Sidney in 1976, the Choir has blossomed into one of the most esteemed choral groups in Oxbridge. My own research interests in Renaissance music are explored in our unique Latin Choral Vespers services, while we perform more traditional and modern music during our weekly performances of Choral Evensong.

This brochure provides further information about the choral life of the College and its musical treasures, as well as the Choir's projects, recordings and tours. I am always pleased to meet prospective singers, friends and supporters at any time. I hope the following pages will provide an informative account of the Choir at Sidney. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at: [director.music@sid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:director.music@sid.cam.ac.uk) or via the Music Office.

**DR DAVID SKINNER - OSBORN DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

# THE CHOIR

The College prides itself on being an open and friendly environment for music-making at a very high level among those reading a variety of subjects.

The Choir is a major focus of musical life at Sidney, and is made up of six to eight sopranos, six altos (male and female), six tenors, three baritones and three basses.

During term time the Choir has a regular commitment in the Chapel singing Choral Evensong on Fridays and Sundays, as well as Latin Vespers or another musical event on Wednesdays. In addition, the Choir performs concerts several times a year at other UK venues such as St Albans Cathedral and Hever Castle, as well as singing Evensong at Westminster Abbey. The Choir is also involved in additional exciting projects including annual recordings and foreign tours during vacations, most recently to the USA, Dubai, Madrid and Rome. The Choir is a friendly and welcoming community which maintains consistently high musical standards.

The Choir is ideal for those who cannot commit to a daily singing routine, but are still keen to make music and take part in annual tours and commercial recordings. Members of the Choir are able to attend Formal Hall after Evensong on Fridays and Sundays. Extra rehearsals are arranged to ensure familiarity with the term's music and occasionally for recordings, tours and special College events.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 4:45 pm rehearsal for 6:00 pm Choral Evensong*

*Tuesday (one per term): 7:45 pm rehearsal for 9:00 pm Compline*

*Wednesdays: 5:15 pm rehearsal for 6:30 pm Latin Vespers or specially planned musical events*

*Thursdays: 6:00 - 7:00 pm rehearsal for upcoming music*

*Fridays: 5:15 pm rehearsal for 6:30 pm Choral Evensong*



Image: Venkatesh Muthukrishnan

## RECORDINGS

Since the arrival of Dr Skinner, the Choir has made annual recordings, many of which have received wide critical acclaim. Among these, Thomas Tomkins: These Distracted Times was Editor's Choice and CD of the Month in Gramophone magazine, while Thomas Weelkes: Grant the King a Long Life was nominated for a Gramophone early music award. Other recordings include Victorian Christmas Carols and Great Choral Anthems, as well as music by Ludwig Senfl, William Croft, Claudio Dall'Albergo (former composer in residence to Pope Francis) and Joanna Marsh, the College's current Composer in Residence.

## REPERTOIRE

The Choir excels primarily in music of the 16th century and the late 19th/early 20th centuries, but endeavours to maintain a balance of music from all periods. The Choir often performs works written especially for it by members of the Sidney community and beyond, a notable example being The College Grace and 'Alleluia' by former Composer in Residence, Eric Whitacre. Joanna Marsh's setting of 'Martha and Mary' was written to celebrate 40 years of women at Sidney and recorded commercially by the Choir in April 2018. In addition, the Choir encourages commissions by other established composers, as well as music from the student body.

## SINGING AND ORGAN LESSONS

Choral and Organ Scholars are offered six singing lessons a term with one of our three singing teachers: Nicholas Hurndall Smith, Lynette Alcantara and Felicity Cook. In addition, Organ Scholars receive regular tuition on the organ from renowned organist and Sidney's former Musican in Residence, Stephen Farr.

## MIXING WITH PROFESSIONALS

Sidney is one of the few colleges in Cambridge to host a professional musician or ensemble in residence annually. The first incumbent, in 2007, was the viol consort Fretwork, and in 2008 we welcomed the gothic and renaissance harpist Andrew Lawrence-King. The College elected the American composer Eric Whitacre to a Visiting Fellowship in Michaelmas Term 2010. Whitacre was also Composer in Residence from 2010 to 2015. Joanna Marsh has been the Composer in Residence since 2016. The College also regularly spotlights a number of professional musicians who work alongside members of the Choir and provide very useful connections for music-making in the wider world. Our latest recording project included the music of Joanna Marsh, featuring the Choir and Fretwork.

## TOURS

The Choir undertakes two international tours a year along with occasional tours in the UK. Recent tours have taken the Choir as far afield as California, Las Vegas, New York, Dubai and Jordan. Since 2014, the Choir's close relationship with the Italian choral community has been strengthened by annual tours to Rome including performances in the Colosseum and St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. In 2018, the Choir visited the East Coast of the USA and had a fantastic time performing in Washington DC, Staunton, Alexandria, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Cape Cod, Provincetown and Boston.



Image: David Skinner - Tour to USA - July 2018

# CHAPEL INSTRUMENTS

*Sidney Sussex Chapel has one of the most remarkable collections of keyboard instruments among Oxbridge Colleges, which enable the Choir to perform specialist repertoire from the late medieval period to the modern age.*



## STEINWAY & SONS - MODEL D CONCERT GRAND

One of the finest concert grands in Cambridge, this instrument, originally built in Cardiff in 1984, was sourced by Martin Souter and fully restored by Shackell Pianos in Whitney, Oxfordshire, in 2010. The acquisition of this instrument was made possible by the generosity of John Beale.



## BACH HARPSICHORD AFTER MICHAEL MEITKE

The Chapel also houses a 'Bach' harpsichord, built by Huw Saunders after Michael Mietke (Berline, 1710), which is one of the finest continuo instruments in Cambridge. This instrument was kindly donated by alumnus Brian Moody (1962).



## TAYLOR AND BOODY CHAMBER ORGAN

The meantone chamber organ was built by Taylor & Boody in Staunton, Virginia in 2014. It is an elaborate Renaissance/early Baroque design with 7 stops tuned to an historical temperament at A=415. This instrument was acquired with generous support from Peter Espenhahn (1962) and Professor Rosamond McKitterick (Fellow in Medieval History).



## FLENTROP ORGELBOUW

Our main organ is from the Dutch firm Flentrop Orgelbouw, and is one of the most impressive organs in Oxbridge. The instrument was kindly gifted by Patricia Brown.

*The College owns two other grand pianos, situated in the Master's Lodge and William Mong Hall. There are also two historical square pianos, which are used for 19th Century 'Parlour' evenings: a Clementi (1806) in the Knox-Shaw Room and a Broadwood (1826) in the New Parlour.*

## FLENTROP ORGAN SPECIFICATION

### HOOFDWERK (MANUAL I)

Bourdon 16'  
Prestant 8'  
Roerfluit 8'  
Salicciaal 8'  
Octaaf 4'  
Fluit 4'  
Quintfluit 3'  
Superoctaaf 2'  
Cornet IV  
Mixtuur IV-V  
Trompet 8'

### PEDAAL

Subbas 16'  
Bourdon 16'  
Prestant 8'  
Gedekt 8'  
Octaaf 4'  
Fagot 16'  
Compass of keyboards: C - a'''  
Compass of pedalboard: C - g'

### ZWELWERK (MANUAL II, IN SWELLBOX)

Bourdon 8'  
Viola 8'  
Voix Celeste 8'  
Fluit 4'  
Octaaf 4'  
Nasard 2 2/3'  
Fluit 2'  
Terts 1 3/5'  
Mixtuur II-III  
Dulciaan 8'

# FRIENDS OF SIDNEY CHOIR

The Choir of Sidney Sussex College ranks among the very best mixed-voice choirs in Cambridge, and has gained a fine reputation as one of the leading interpreters of early music and 21st century compositions.

The high standard of choral music at Sidney is only possible thanks to the generosity of the College's alumni and friends. This support enables us to purchase music, offer singing lessons, subsidise tours and make commercial recordings.

Sidney now has six endowed choral scholars. The College is seeking support for eighteen more choral scholars, as well as donations towards purchasing choir folders, music, psalm books, psalters and musical instruments. We are very grateful for the generosity of the Friends of Sidney Choir which is so important in enabling us to secure these goals.

**Support at all levels for the Choir is gratefully received by the College. We are delighted to be able to offer to all Friends of Sidney Choir:**

- An annual newsletter with details of the Choir's latest activities and an advance copy of the termly music list.
- Priority booking for key events, including College concerts.
- Reduced ticket prices on selected concerts and discounts on choir recordings.
- Invitations to exclusive events.

If you are interested in making a larger gift to the Choir, we are pleased to offer recognition of significant donations with a brass plaque on one of the beautiful choir stalls in the College Chapel, as well as membership of the 1596 Foundation (the society for major benefactors to the College), reserved seats at concerts and invitations to other events.



**For further information about how you can support the Choir, please contact:**

**Dr Jillaine Seymour**  
Development Director

[developmentdirector@sid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:developmentdirector@sid.cam.ac.uk)

or

**Dr David Skinner**  
Osborn Director of Music

[directorofmusic@sid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:directorofmusic@sid.cam.ac.uk)

**The College is incredibly grateful for the support which allows Sidney's outstanding Chapel Choir to continue to flourish. The Choir provides a vital service to Sidney, ensuring that the Chapel is a welcoming and meditative space for the entire College community to enjoy.**



Image: David Skinner - 2018 Leavers

If you have any questions about joining the Sidney Choir, please do not hesitate to contact.

Osborn Director of Music

Dr David Skinner

director.music@sid.cam.ac.uk



Image: Rome Tour 2018 – North side chapel, St Peter's Basilica



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Cambridge

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Our full data protection statements can be viewed at <https://www.sid.cam.ac.uk/aboutus/publications/dataprot/>.