



Chipping Norton Choral Society

Musical Director

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Job Advertisement

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Our friendly choral society (established in 1926) is looking for a conductor and musical director to replace Peter Hunt who is leaving us after 24 years.

The choir, with 100 members and a regular turnout between 60 and 80, has enjoyed some remarkable challenges under Peter's direction – recent examples including Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Fanshawe's *African Sanctus*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*.

There are no auditions as we believe that everyone can sing, and that with strong musical leadership and sufficient encouragement delivered with humour through engaging rehearsals, ordinary people can truly achieve extraordinary things. The choir's exacting standards and our ambitious and wide-ranging repertoire are testament to that belief.

Members come from Chipping Norton and surrounding villages and we perform three concerts a year in the town and local churches, play a key role in the Music Festival and support local charities. We work with professional players and soloists, local musicians, excellent accompanists and young people from the county music service. A key partner is the Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra.

Governance is strong: the conductor and choir are fully supported by an active committee and together we create a sociable and hard-working ensemble whose members like to share a drink in The Chequers after rehearsals.

We are looking for a conductor who shares our passion for getting the best out of keen amateur singers and who would like to help with the choir's development as we emerge from the pandemic. This is a tremendous opportunity for someone who wishes to grow with the choir and to help determine its future.

Salary will be commensurate with experience and will reflect prevailing market rates.

The choir is committed to a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory appointments procedure.

About Us

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OUR BACKGROUND

The Choral Society was formed from the Stour Choral Union (1904), whose mission was the *'encouragement of part-singing in the country districts'*.

Today we carry on that proud tradition, encouraging music making through a supportive and inspiring environment in which our members can flourish. Although based in Chipping Norton, members are drawn from right across the district.

The choir is a Registered Charity affiliated to Making Music.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of the choir is that anyone can sing, given the right support and encouragement.

We hold no auditions but aim for the highest quality in performance: many of our members have a history of singing but may have lapsed for many years before joining and might not have been confident in starting again with another choir.

We pride ourselves on our welcome and our ambition is always to be open, inclusive and sociable.

OUR REPERTOIRE

The choir's repertoire is varied with a leaning towards serious and sometime challenging choral music. There is no religious affiliation, and the repertoire contains both sacred and secular pieces.

Recent pieces performed over the past 5 years cover baroque, classical, and twentieth century; from folk songs and spirituals to major works. Featured composers include Bach, Berlioz, Bernstein, Britten, Chilcott, Elgar, Fanshawe, Franck, Handel, MacDowall, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Rossini, Stanford, Vaughan Williams, Vivaldi, Verdi and Walton.

OUR EVENTS

We meet to rehearse once a week in Chipping Norton during school term times. Each year the choir plans three musical events, with major concerts taking place at Easter and Christmas and a lighter concert or sing-day taking place during the summer.

We also support the Chipping Norton Music Festival in March and members may be invited to perform carols at local venues over Christmas.

Our Ideal Candidate

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Our ideal candidate will be enthusiastic and personable with a deep knowledge and love of choral music of all genres, and a proven track record in bringing the very best out of amateur singers.

As a guide, the successful candidate will need to demonstrate:

PERSONAL SKILLS

- Strong interpersonal skills with patience and a sense of humour.
- Excellent teaching, organisational and planning proficiencies to maximise learning and create quality performances.
- An ability to create an atmosphere of fun and engagement in rehearsals through motivation and encouragement.
- Commitment to musical leadership, building the choir's confidence to reach ever higher standards.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Singing experience, excellent knowledge of the voice and understanding of how to coach the choir to develop vocal confidence and sing healthily.
- Experience of conducting amateur choirs through a broad and varied repertoire, particularly large-scale choral works; evidence of working with professional players and soloists.
- Appreciation of amateur music-making and a good understanding of how to enable the choir to perform at its best.
- Expertise in planning balanced programmes which satisfy and challenge the choir, keep to budgets and attract audiences.
- Ability to use contacts in the musical world to benefit the choir – soloists, orchestras, other choirs, potential funding sources; and awareness of support offered by music organisations.
- Technical literacy, open to online rehearsing should this be required in future and to communicate rehearsal plans and supporting material via a blog or other media.

Job Specification

The following sets out the formal specification of the role of Musical Director for the choir and the duties they are expected to perform.

REHEARSALS

- Warm up and prepare voices healthily, helping singers to establish good basic technique and sound vocal practice.
- Enable singers to learn the repertoire effectively in engaging and enjoyable ways, both to prepare for concerts and to support singers' abilities to perform with confidence.
- Enable singers to participate fully by publishing online a weekly rehearsal schedule with follow-up notes/reminders to consolidate learning and establish expectations.
- Plan concert dress rehearsals to take account of the requirements of professional performers (orchestra/soloists).
- Develop a close musical relationship with the accompanist, coordinating as required.
- Arrange for a deputy in cases of absence.

CONCERTS AND PLANNING

- Take a lead in planning concert programmes, ideally over a 3–5-year period. These should balance a range of musical styles and vocal/choral challenges for the singers, raising their expectations and achievements whilst being enjoyable and manageable.
- Work with the Treasurer to agree budgets and with the Librarian to source music scores in good time.
- Advise on choice of instrumentalists and soloists, using own personal/professional contacts if required.
- Contribute to concert programmes by sourcing biographies and programme notes as required in good time.

COMMUNICATION AND MEETINGS

- Attend and advise committee meetings as invited, staying in close contact with the Chair and committee members as appropriate.
- Foster a friendly and open relationship with the choir, as a key member of its community. Diary and time permitting, engagement with social activities, extra-musical events (e.g. carol singing, singing days) will be welcomed and encouraged.

Application Process

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Our application process is designed to be transparent and to allow candidates the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Here is what you can expect:

- The Committee will consider all applications received by the submission date and make up a short list. Any unsuccessful candidates will be informed at this time.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview and to lead part of a rehearsal session.
- Candidates will each take a section of the rehearsal, to include warm-ups and passages relevant to the current concert or event.
- This may include a mixture of short passages with which the choir is unfamiliar and passages that the choir has already learned.
- Candidates will be assisted by the accompanist.
- Having demonstrated their practical skills, the candidates will be interviewed by the recruitment sub-committee.
- The Committee will make the final decision, guided by feedback from the choir.

Should you wish to apply please indicate your interest by contacting:

Eric Clubley,

Chair, Chipping Norton Choral Society

chair@cncs.org.uk

Please apply to the email address above, attaching your CV along with a letter stating your reasons for applying and why you feel that you are best placed to lead our choir.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Closing date for applications is 01 October 2021.

Shortlisted candidates will be notified early in October, with auditions and interviews taking place in the last two weeks of that month.

