

Newsletter - Summer 2026

Notes from the Musical Director



I hope you have all had a restful summer and are looking forward to another year of wonderful music-making together. Our new season promises an exciting and varied journey, with repertoire that moves from the powerful and poignant to the joyful and celebratory.

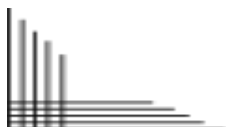
We begin in November with Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, paired with Poulenc's *Gloria* — two very different works that together promise a dramatic and uplifting opening to the season. I am performing the work with St. Edmund's College Choir the following Wednesday and would welcome extra singers to boost the college choirs. Our December concert will bring the warmth and traditions of Christmas, with Carols for Choir & Audience including Bob Chilcott's beautiful *On Christmas Night*.

In the spring, we turn to one of the great choral masterpieces: Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. This is a work of extraordinary drama, colour and humanity, and I am very much looking forward to exploring it with you.

We bring the season to a joyful conclusion in June with a programme celebrating Joy & Celebration, including music by Andrew Carter and his *Benedicte*. It promises to be a fitting way to end another year of singing together.

I am delighted to begin this new season with you and look forward to the energy, commitment and enjoyment that you bring to every rehearsal. Here's to another memorable year of music-making together!

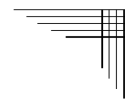
Andrew



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



Notes from the Chair (email chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)



As the long hot and dry summer continues I can't help being reminded of the opening of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* - "*As God the Lord of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years.....*". Powerful stuff - as is the whole work and indeed the entire season we have before us. I hope you are all looking forward to it as much as I am. Our first rehearsal is on Tuesday 8th September at 7.45pm. Do make a note of all the key dates for the season as listed at the end of this newsletter.

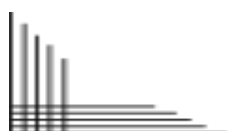
Our continuing high standards and steady improvement are encouraging. Let us make sure we keep that up in the coming year, but to do so requires us all to prioritise, as far as possible, Tuesday rehearsals. There are always members who, just before a concert, say that a particular piece or movement hasn't been rehearsed. That is never the case, but Andrew's preferred rehearsal style - of rehearsing sections in depth a small number of times - can mean it feels that way if you have missed rehearsals. It is beholden on us all to check with our part reps what was covered in any rehearsal we miss and do the appropriate homework.

I've managed to listen to more of the Proms this summer than I typically manage. When we talk of powerful things the *Messe des Morts* of Berlioz is hard to beat. It is such a massive work with 4 brass bands alongside the huge symphony orchestra including something like 14 timpani. I couldn't help wondering what the budget would be for us to programme it (and what a headache the logistics would be for our concert managers). But I can dream! If you thought Verdi was loud and dramatic but have never heard the Berlioz do take a listen!

In last year's newsletter we put out an appeal for a publicity officer - without success. So I have included a piece about that again this year. We have enjoyed some really good (and sometimes sold out) audiences over the last couple of seasons and need that to continue. As a choir we can't afford to grow too much bigger because of space constraints in our performance venue, but for our long term future it would be good to attract some younger singers. We believe the right publicity is key to both of these. On that front too, you will see that this year we have had small (A6) cards listing all our concerts for the season. They will be available from the first rehearsal (and we have lots!). Please help to distribute these to churches, libraries, etc and at other events you may be involved with in the hope people take them and have them as bookmarks or whatever, providing regular reminders of our concert schedule.

This newsletter once again contains snippets from the works we will be singing this year. I will be interested to hear how you get on with identifying them! If you can't at the start of the season, try again at the end when you have sung them all!

Huw

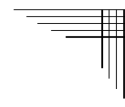


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Notes from the Treasurer (email treasurer@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk)



Subscriptions for the new season

We have continued with our custom of increasing subscriptions by a modest amount each year, to avoid the situation we have faced in the past, where we have had to ask for a large increase after a period of no movement at all. Subs for 2026/27 will increase to £180 (if paid annually) or £80 each for the first two terms of the season that you attend and £35 for the third, giving a discount only if you've been singing with us all year. It seems like a large amount, but it equates to less than £6 for each rehearsal. Payment can be made online to the usual bank account, or you can bring a cheque or cash to rehearsal in September. It can be rather busy at the first rehearsal, so if you're bringing cash it's helpful if it's in an envelope of some kind, with your name on it.

If you are experiencing difficulty with paying the subscription, please speak to me in confidence and we'll work something out.

Gift Aid

By HMRC concession, we are allowed to claim 100% of our subs for gift aid. If you're a taxpayer and haven't signed up for gift aid, please ask me for a form.

If you've stopped paying tax, or you've moved house since you signed up for gift aid with RCS, please let me know. There are still one or two for whom I haven't received declaration forms at all. Even if you aren't a tax payer, please let me know, and I'll make a note in the file and stop nagging you!

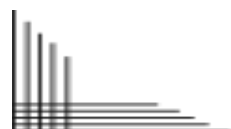
Music

The music for the autumn term is Karl Jenkins' The Armed Man and Poulenc's Gloria. There will, as usual, be enough library copies for everyone, but some members prefer to buy their own.

For some years, we've ordered music for you on the basis that you have paid the usual price, and we have retained the bulk discount we receive to help with choir funds. Sadly, our supplier has been taken over, and those discounts are no longer available. I was able to take advantage of a temporary discount when I put in the order earlier in the summer, but from now we will have to pay the full amount.

I'm still willing to order copies, but if the number isn't sufficient to qualify for free postage, there will be an additional charge. If you would like me to get copies for you, please let me know **by 1st September at the latest** so that I can get them in time for the start of rehearsals. The cost is £17 for each piece.

Caroline

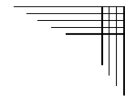


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RCS 100 Club (email juliec2157@outlook.com)



Have you joined the RCS 100 Club yet?

Anyone can join. Your friends and family too.

This is a good way of raising money and supporting our choir.

The details:-

- Annual subscription £20 per year.
- Monthly draw with prizes of £25 and £10 (Sept - June).
- Maximum number of members 100 (we currently have just 36, so would welcome many more, to boost the choir's funds.)
- There is an application form on the download section of the RCS website (<https://www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/100%20Club%20application%20form.pdf>) or just email me or collect a form from me at rehearsal.

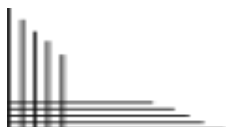
Existing club members - the majority of your subs are due in September, so please come and pay me or add £20 to your choir subscription, but please let Caroline know this is for the 100 Club.

If you're not sure if your subs are due, then contact me, or come and see me at rehearsals.

RCS would really benefit from, and welcome, your support in this way, and there's a very big chance you could be a winner!!

Julie Clements

You'll find me in the sopranos!

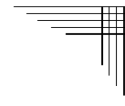


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Sing all about it!



People support successful organisations and, by any standard, our last few seasons have been very successful for Royston Choral Society. We are now looking for someone to help us share that success with the wider Royston community and the surrounding villages.

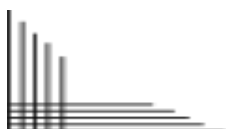
Do you know that person?

We have ambitions to:

- Increase our connection with more people, including younger audiences, to nurture their musical appreciation, through targeted marketing
- Make our website more interactive and ideally move it into Making Music's platform to make administration easier.
- Tap into appropriate social media – to start and sustain online conversations that make people feel they're a part of RCS
- Ultimately, to build a core of advocates – to promote the choir for us - and to possibly lay the foundations for a 'Friends of RCS' programme.

To do this, we need help! Do you know anyone – friend, family, work colleague – with relevant marketing experience (beyond pure publicity) who might work with us to develop our supporter base as a Publicity Officer?

If so, please invite them to express their interest and share relevant experience in an e-mail to chair@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk ideally before the end of September. A role description is available.

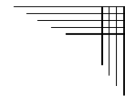


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Notes from the Part Reps



RCS Soprano Part Rep – Brigid Hickey (email partrep.soprano@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

Joy of Music:

What another wonderful year of choral music we have enjoyed at Royston Choral Society!

Much of our success is thanks to our brilliant conductor, Andrew, and his assistant, Jonathan, whose enthusiasm, encouragement and excellent teaching continually inspire us. Andrew certainly sets us some challenging pieces at times, but with his guidance and support, we always seem to rise to the occasion when concert evening arrives.

I, for one, am very much looking forward to the coming term and another exciting year of singing. Our programme includes The Armed Man, Poulenc's Gloria, Elijah, and more — so we certainly have plenty to look forward to and plenty to keep us busy!

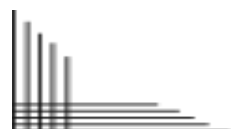
One of the things I particularly value about our group is the wonderful, friendly atmosphere within the choir. It is such a pleasure to be part of a group where everyone shares a love of singing and enjoys making music together.

This past year we have also been delighted to welcome two new members, Jen Cole and Helen Allen, who by all accounts have settled in very well. We hope they are enjoying being part of RCS and look forward to singing alongside them in the year ahead.

I hope everyone has enjoyed a lovely, warm summer and is now looking forward to getting back together, catching up with friends and, of course, making beautiful music together once again.

Here's to another fantastic year with RCS!

Brigid

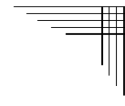


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RCS Alto Part Rep - Sue Pegram (email partrep.alto@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

What wonderful music this season (and some more challenging pieces too!) on the theme of "Journeys by Sea and in Spirit". At the November concert, Finzi's evocative Eclogue for Piano and Strings was new to me, and I absolutely loved it. However, the highlight just HAS to be performing Brahms "Ein deutsches Requiem" with brilliant soloists and orchestra and to a capacity audience. Huge thanks to Andrew, and Jonathan, for guiding us to new heights.

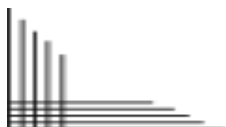
In the alto section, we welcomed Annabel Busher who sang with us for the Spring concert and hopes to return. Also, we welcome Jen Cole who transferred from the soprano section during the summer term.

During the summer, a few of us sang in a jolly event performed outside Great Chishill church during the village's Open Gardens weekend. It was a short but fun set of songs specially arranged by Jamie Hall, including English Country Garden, Edelweiss, Now is the Month of Maying, and Tiptoe Through the Tulips. Great fun, and the audience loved the playfulness of the singing as much as we did!

Looking forward to next season's programme "Out of Darkness, Light".

Sue

Chishill Voices outside St Swithun's Church, Great Chishill:

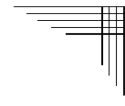


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A view from the tenors - as compiled by CS Tenor Part Rep, Chris Lee (email partrep.tenor@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk):

Being a lazy so-and-so and without an original idea in my head, when asked to write something for the RCS newsletter, I turn to my fellow tenors. This is how Neil, Martin, Alan and I summed up the past year singing with the Royston Choral Society...

How would you sum up the choir's year in up to 5 words?

An astonishing musical journey [NM]

Challenging yet enjoyable, performances 'nailed' [MA]

Fine music, made locally [CL]

What was your favourite piece and why?

Brahms 'Ein deutsches Requiem' was an enormous challenge because of its sheer scale... But the end product was 70 minutes of stunning artistry... and it went in a flash! [NM]

'Brahms Requiem' - love singing in German. Second favourite piece was Herbert Howells 'Like As The Hart' - spiritually moving [MA]

Of this last season it was undoubtedly the 'Brahms Requiem' - a long-standing favourite choral work of mine. This is a masterpiece of the highest order, the musical equivalent of Gothic Architecture (another huge love of mine). [AB]

Elgar 'Sea Pictures' - I didn't know it, I liked the variety of pieces (they grew on me) and it made a nice change to sing in English! [CL]

What was your favourite concert and why?

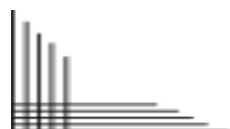
Without a doubt, the March 2026 concert. Such a wonderful programme... I'm sure most of us felt that it was an exhausting day, but the comments by members of the audience were so wonderfully uplifting... An unforgettable evening! [NM]

Probably the Summer one - as it consisted of several shorter works, and showed off the quality of our English composers [MA]

It was the last one [Summer] because I had never had the opportunity of singing the Elgar compositions. It was a very pleasant addition to the many works I have had the privilege of performing over a 65 year singing experience! [AB]

The Brahms Requiem because, although I don't like singing in German, all the hard work was rewarded with a sell-out audience and a performance to be proud of. [CL]

Suggestions how we could make the experience (for singers and/or audience) better?

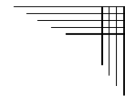


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None needed – we appear to have found a sweet spot, with the choir constantly challenged by Andrew and a consistently large and supportive audience... [NM]

Maybe more mixing of parts, in rehearsals and maybe also in the concerts. Socialising more, within the choir (I'm first to admit I'm not good at this!) [MA]

What are you looking forward to in the year ahead?

The 'Elijah' oratorio has an exquisitely dramatic score... that will be fun to learn. But I just love the sheer warmth and joy we see in the faces of our audience during our Christmas concerts...priceless! [NM]

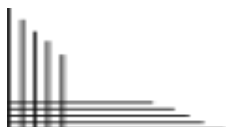
The more contemporary, and less highbrow works, ie the Jenkins, Chilcott, Gershwin and Rutter [AM]

As far as I am concerned – all looks very enticing! [AB]

I enjoyed singing 'The Armed Man' last time with RCS – I expect it to be as rewarding this time around. I also think it will attract a slightly different audience. [CL]

My thanks to all our tenors who have consistently shown up and helped create a great team spirit to make the most of our relatively limited numbers.

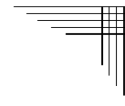
Chris



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RCS Bass Part Rep - Anthony Pigg (email partrep.bass@roystonchoralsoc.org.uk) writes:

Once again it has been a most successful year for the bass section, interesting, sociable and educational too. There have been 23 participants in total with a typical attendance of 16 at each rehearsal and participating in each of the concerts, always good humoured and always working well together.

The academic year began with Benjamin Britten's St. Nicolas Cantata, which we all enjoyed, it really came to life when we were accompanied by the instrumentalists, especially the percussion. This was closely followed by the Christmas concert which was a delightful, sentimental occasion, there were only a few rehearsals for this concert and for some it felt a little rushed but it went well and was a lovely way to end the term.

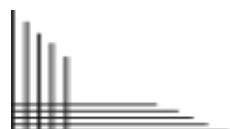
In the new year we started work on Brahms's Ein deutsches Requiem, it wasn't always easy for everybody to get the German pronunciation quite right but there is so much help on the internet and with Carole's phonetic translation and Andrew's guidance we were, on the whole, quite satisfied with our efforts by the time of the concert, it is certainly a wonderful piece to study. We were pleased to have such excellent soloists join us for the concert and feel confident that the audience would have enjoyed the evening.

The summer concert, Elgar's Sea Pictures and other English pieces, was most agreeable. The solo version of the Sea Pictures is well known but this Choral arrangement was new to many of us and was of particular interest. It wasn't always easy to manage a number of single pieces in the folder rather than only having one book and some felt conscious of shuffling music but we managed.

On top of all this we also had two fine social events.

Our thanks go to the Director, Assistant Director, committee and all who make the choral society so enjoyable. We are looking forward to studying Karl Jenkins and Poulenc next term and all that lies ahead.

Anthony

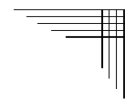


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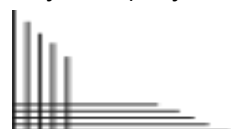


Key Dates for 2026-27 season



Tuesday 8th September 7.45pm	First rehearsal of the season.
Tuesday 29th September 8.45pm	AGM (during rehearsal break)
Tuesday 27th October	No rehearsal - half term
Saturday 14th November	Concert - Jenkins - <i>The Armed Man</i> ; Poulenc - <i>Gloria</i> Afternoon rehearsal
Saturday 12th December	Christmas Concert (incl. Chilcott - <i>On Christmas Night</i>) Afternoon rehearsal.
Tuesday 5th January 2027	Winter Social (TBC)
Tuesday 12th January 7.45pm	Rehearsals resume
Tuesday 16th February	Half term but a rehearsal will probably be useful!
Tuesday 23rd March	No rehearsal
Tuesday 30th March	No rehearsal
Tuesday 6th April	No rehearsal
Saturday 24th April	Concert - Mendelssohn - <i>Elijah</i> Afternoon rehearsal.
Tuesday 1st June	Half term but we will definitely be rehearsing
Saturday 19th June	Summer Concert - (incl. Carter - <i>Benedicite</i>) Afternoon rehearsal.
Tuesday 22nd June	Summer Social (TBC)
Tuesday 7th September 7.45pm	Rehearsals start for 2027-28 season
Saturday 13th November	Concert Afternoon rehearsal
Saturday 11th December	Christmas Concert Afternoon rehearsal

All rehearsals and concerts are currently expected to take place in St John the Baptist Church Royston (Royston Parish Church).



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