

Southend Bach Choir

Rossini
Stabat Mater
&
Schubert
Mass in G

Saturday 2nd May 2026 at 7.00pm

Holy Trinity Church, Southchurch



Programme



**SUPPORTING &
CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC**



The Southend Bach Choir

Musical Director – Roger Humphrey

The Southend Bach Choir began life in 1943 as an evening class of the Municipal College in Southend under the direction of its founder Dr. Harold May, FRCO. Known as the *Municipal College Choir*, it gave its first performance in December of that year. The programme consisted of selections from Handel's "Messiah".

In its early years, the Municipal College Choral and Orchestral Society sponsored the birth of the *College Opera Group*, which became independent in 1950. In this year the choir's name reverted to *The Municipal College Choral Society* and many challenging concerts followed. In 1968, the choir became the *Southend Bach Choir*, and in 1993, under the baton of Gerald Bates (Musical Director 1987-2001), the choir celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a memorable performance of Bach's "Mass in B minor". Upon Gerry's retirement in 2001, the choir welcomed its past Music Director Colin Edwards until 2023.

In 2023, Roger, who had served as our accompanist for 40 years, stepped into the role of Music Director. Under his direction, the *Southend Bach Choir* continues to thrive, building on its rich history and looking forward to many more memorable performances.

Why not join us?

- Our rehearsals:
 - *When?* Every Tuesday during school terms at 7:30-9:30pm
 - *Where?* St Andrew's Church, Southview Drive, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 9PW
- No auditions and reading music is an advantage but not a requirement.
- ***If you are interested in singing with the choir, please speak to any one of us during the interval or after the concert!***

Our Guest Soloists

Talia Lieberman (*Soprano*) - Talia Lieberman is an emerging soprano who began her musical journey in the *Southend Girls Choir*, where she developed a passion for classical singing from an early age. A recent graduate from the *Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama*, she has already gained significant experience on the operatic stage. Whilst studying, she performed alongside the *David Seligman Opera School* in productions such as Humperdink's "Hänsel und Gretel" and the Welsh National Opera's "Opera Gala". Most notably, last spring she made her principal role debut as *Il Gatto* in Respighi's "La Bella dormiente nel bosco". Over the 2024-2025 season, Talia took part in three esteemed young artist programmes. She has been selected for the renowned *Genesis Sixteen* programme, part of The Sixteen ensemble, which is dedicated to developing young choral singers, and is a new choral scholar for the *Oxford Bach Soloists* who study and specialise in the music of J.S. Bach. She is also a member of *Vox Next Gen*, the young artist programme of the professional choir *Vox Urbane*. All these programmes are shaping her development as an accomplished ensemble singer, providing opportunities to work with leading musicians in the industry. Alongside these achievements, Talia is serving as a choral scholar at *St James's Piccadilly*, where she continues to develop her artistry and passion for choral music.

Rachael Best-Babayeju (*Mezzo-soprano*) - Rachael Simone, a *Pegasus Opera Mentee* of the 25/26 cohort, joined the *Royal Academy of Music* in September 2022 as a scholar on the Undergraduate Vocal Studies course, generously supported by The Dame Patricia Routledge Award and the Sussex Opera and Ballet Society. She is currently studying with Alex Ashworth, Michael Chance and Chad Vindin. At the academy she has toured annually to Neresheim with the *Academy Chamber Choir*, performed in the Academy's Resounding Shores projects and has sung in the opera chorus of the RAO's earlier production of Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte", as well as performing in the chorus of Humperdinck's "Hansel und Gretel" previously. She is also a founding member of the *Royal Academy of Music African Caribbean Society*. Outside of the Academy, Rachael is an avid choral singer. She has recently toured with the *Constellation Choir* to Zurich and has performed at events and venues such as the "BBC news awards", "The Shard Christmas Lights Turn On", "Good Morning Britain", the "Royal Albert Hall" and "Royal Festival Hall", working with Ben Parry, Gareth Malone, Laurence Cummings and Greg Beardsell among others. She was a member of the 24-25 cohort of *Genesis Sixteen* working with Harry Christophers and Eamonn Dougan and has also been a choral scholar with the *Thames Philharmonic Choir*, *St Paul's Knightsbridge*, and *All Saint's Fulham* currently. Rachael has previously sung frequently with the *London Youth and National Youth Choir* and *Chamber Choir/Voices* and has

sung as part of the chorus in Longhope Opera's "Don Pasquale", and in a semi-staged performance of "La Traviata" at the St Endellion festival. Rachael's solo work includes a performance of Mahler's "Ich atmet einen lindenduft" with John Eliot Gardner as part of the *Gustav Mahler Voice Academy*, alto solos in Handel's "Messiah" with the *Thames Philharmonic Choir* and the role of Dido in a semi-staged performance of Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas".

Andrew Walters (Tenor) - Andrew was born in Southend-on-Sea. He was a member of the *Southend Boys' Choir* throughout his school life and had many thrilling musical experiences, touring Britain and singing at major events in London. A huge turning point was being picked to be in the kids' choir for a production of "Joseph" at the *Palace Theatre, Westcliff*. Singing and dancing every night for 4 weeks in the show and hearing the audiences having a great time every night was very exciting! The show returned for TWO more runs "by public demand" and, by this time, Andrew knew he wanted to work in musical theatre and be on stage. From this commitment he has never looked back! After winning the *Freda Parry Scholarship* in Southend in 1986, Andrew gained a Diploma in Singing Performance at *Trinity College of Music, London*. Ever Since leaving college, he has enjoyed a varied career, singing on many famous opera stages throughout Britain and Europe. He made his USA debut at Jazz at *Lincoln Centre* with Dawn Upshaw and the *London Voices* in 2008. This year Andrew is celebrating 30 years in the Music Industry. Andrew has sung on many film soundtracks with the *London Voices*, including the entire "Lord Of The Rings" series, from the very first session in 2001, to completion of the final "Hobbit" film in 2013. Andrew's passion is for Musical Theatre. Favourite composers are Stephen Sondheim, Jason Robert Brown and Andrew Lloyd Webber. Favourite musicals include "Company", "Sweeney Todd", "The Last Five Years", "Parade", "Ragtime" and "Sunset Boulevard". Teaching Musical Theatre has now become a huge passion. Andrew now has developed a busy teaching practice at home in Westcliff, for Singers and Pianists, beginners to advanced. He is very much looking forward to meeting the students at Expressions, to pass on his knowledge and enthusiasm to the next generation of upcoming stars and performers!

David Townend (Bass) - David Townend started singing as a chorister at *Holy Trinity Church, Southchurch* and in the *Southend Boys' Choir*. In 1985, he took a place to read Law at the *University of Sheffield* and became a Songman of *Sheffield Cathedral*. He sang with the Cathedral for 20 years. One of the early recordings he made with the choir was of Schubert's "Mass in G". He has studied singing with Richard Hill and Martin Hindmarsh. As a recitalist, he particularly enjoys works of twentieth century French and English composers. His most recent recital was a programme of settings of

Shakespeare songs, including the “Premiere of Settings” by Ronald Law. His oratorio repertoire includes many of the great works, including sacred works of Puccini, Verdi, and Rossini.

Our Accompanist

Stephen King (*Organist*) - Stephen King has been organist of Brentwood Cathedral for over 30 years. He studied at Trinity College of Music and subsequently with John Birch. Distinguished composers with whom he has worked include John Rutter, Bob Chilcott and Colin Mawby. He has performed the organ concertos of both John Gardner and Andrew Carter (giving the second UK performance of the latter’s work), and, to mark his first 25 years at Brentwood Cathedral, he commissioned “Carillon” from Philip Moore. He has also worked closely with Diana Burrell, whose “Missa Brevis” was composed in 2016/17 for *Brentwood Cathedral Choir*. He has appeared as organist with the *Southend Boys’ Choir* and *Southend Girls’ Choir* on numerous overseas tours, at Australian, American, Canadian and various European venues, including St Peter’s Basilica, Rome, and, last year, Amsterdam. He also works regularly with other Essex choirs, including *Hutton and Shenfield Choral Society* and the Brentwood based choir *Bravissima*. Over the last year, he had a particularly busy recital schedule in South and South East England, along with performing Poulenc’s “Organ Concerto” and Bach’s “Brandenburg Concerto no 5”. He is a trustee of the *Royal College of Organists*.

Our Musical Director

Roger Humphrey - Roger studied organ, piano and conducting at the Royal College of Music, London and University of London. Post graduate work included studies at the City of London University and Guildhall School of Music. He has held positions of Director of Music at *Southend High School for Boys* and lecturer in Performing Arts at *South Essex College*. Currently Roger teaches part time at the Westcliff High Schools. In addition to conducting the *Southend Bach Choir*, Roger is musical director of *Southend Choral Society* and Director of Music at Holy Trinity Church, Southchurch, with whom he has taken the choir to many cathedrals across the UK. Roger is the

founder and Musical Director of *Southend Girls' Choir* and Director of *Southend Boys' Choir*, positions he has held for over 30 years. Roger has taken these choirs on many overseas concert tours to Poland, Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, Spain, Canada, US, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia and Seychelles. These tours have included performances in The Sydney Opera House, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Cathedrals in Paris, New York, Chicago, Washington, Milan, The Seychelles, Florence, St Peter's Basilica, Rome, St Mark's, Venice and many other major venues and concert halls across Europe, Canada, US, Singapore, and Australia. Roger has conducted the choirs in major London concert halls, including Royal Festival Hall and Barbican, and prepared the choirs for many performances at the BBC Proms. Roger directed performances of Britten's "Noye's Fludde" during the centenary year of Britten's birth, involving over 450 musicians of all ages performing in Southend, Tilbury Cruise Terminal and Southwark Cathedral. For several years Roger was Musical Director of the *Seychelles Festival of Music*. In April 2025, Roger was awarded "Freedom of the City" of Southend-on-Sea as recognition of his work in music across the city. In addition, Roger was presented with The High Sheriff of Essex Award in recognition of great and valuable services to the community.

♪ Tonight's Composers and Music ♪

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Gioachino Rossini stands as one of the most brilliant and influential composers of the late Classical and early Romantic eras. Best known for his extraordinary contribution to opera - writing 39 works including enduring favourites such as "The Barber of Seville" - he combined melodic brilliance, dramatic flair, and a distinctive sense of wit that captivated audiences across Europe.

Born in Pesaro to a musical family, Rossini showed prodigious talent from an early age, composing by twelve and quickly establishing himself on the Italian operatic stage. His career developed at remarkable speed: by his early thirties, he had achieved international fame and set new standards in both comic and serious opera. Yet at the height of his success, he made the surprising decision to retire from opera

composition, turning instead to a quieter life that included salon music and smaller-scale works.

In his later years in Paris, Rossini became a central figure in artistic circles, hosting celebrated gatherings attended by leading musicians such as Franz Liszt and Giuseppe Verdi. It was during this period that he composed some of his most intriguing sacred works, including the “Petite messe solennelle” and the “Stabat Mater”. Though he once joked that he was “born for opera buffa,” these later compositions reveal a deeply expressive and often spiritual dimension to his artistry, blending theatrical instinct with profound musical sensitivity.

Preludio Religioso (1863)

from *Petite Messe Solennelle*

The “Preludio Religioso” offers a moment of calm reflection within Rossini’s “Petite messe solennelle”, composed in his later years as part of his so-called *péchés de vieillesse* (“sins of old age”). It has an intimate and contemplative character, revealing a more restrained side of Rossini’s musical personality. Gentle, dignified, and deeply expressive, it provides a quiet centre of devotion within the wider Mass.

Stabat Mater (completed 1841)

Rossini’s “Stabat Mater” is a deeply expressive setting of the medieval Latin hymn that contemplates the grief of the Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross. Though begun in 1831 during a visit to Spain, the work was not completed until 1841 after a complex history involving illness, collaboration, and later revision. The finished score stands as one of Rossini’s most important achievements beyond the opera house.

Scored for four soloists, chorus, and orchestra, the work brings together sacred devotion and the dramatic instinct that made Rossini famous. Across its ten movements, he explores a wide emotional range: sorrow, tenderness, awe, anguish, and ultimately hope. Intimate passages for solo voices are balanced with powerful choral writing, while the orchestra adds colour, momentum, and atmosphere throughout.

At its premiere in Paris in 1842, the work was greeted with enormous enthusiasm, though some critics questioned whether its operatic energy was suited to a religious

text. Yet this very fusion of theatrical vitality and spiritual intensity is what gives the piece its unique power. Rossini does not present grief as distant or austere, but as vivid, human, and immediate.

Today, the “Stabat Mater” remains a cornerstone of the choral repertoire - music of passion, beauty, and dramatic conviction, showing that even after retiring from opera, Rossini could still write with extraordinary freshness and emotional force.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Franz Schubert was one of the most remarkable voices of the early Romantic era, a composer whose gift for melody and emotional depth continues to resonate profoundly. Despite his tragically short life, he produced an astonishing body of work - over 1,000 compositions - including symphonies, chamber music, piano works, sacred music, and more than 600 songs, establishing himself as a master of the German Lied.

Born in Vienna, Schubert showed exceptional musical talent from a young age, receiving early instruction from his family before studying under Antonio Salieri. Immersed in the musical world of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn, and Ludwig van Beethoven, he developed a style that blended Classical clarity with a deeply personal, expressive lyricism. During his lifetime, however, his music was appreciated mainly within a close circle of friends and supporters.

Widespread recognition came only after his death, when champions such as Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann helped bring his works to a wider audience, revealing the true scale of his achievement. Today, Schubert is celebrated for the warmth, intimacy, and poignancy of his music. Whether in song, chamber music, or sacred works, his ability to capture both fleeting beauty and deep emotion has secured his place among the greatest composers in Western music.

Mass in G (D. 167, 1815)

Schubert’s “Mass in G major” was composed in 1815 when he was just eighteen years old. Written in less than a week, it is one of his shorter Mass settings (*missae breves*), favouring clarity, lyricism, and devotional warmth over grand ceremonial scale.

Originally scored for choir, three soloists, strings, and organ, it reflects a sincere and intimate approach to sacred music.

The work is marked by the qualities that define so much of Schubert's writing: flowing melody, gentle expressiveness, and emotional depth achieved through simplicity. Rather than dramatic grandeur, the *Mass in G major* offers quiet reverence and heartfelt spirituality, which have made it one of his most enduring and frequently performed sacred works.



Programme

Preludio Religioso

from Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle"

Organ/harmonium interlude

Mass in G - Schubert

Choir and soloists

- | | | | |
|------|---------------|-----|-------------------|
| I. | Kyrie | IV. | Sanctus |
| II. | Gloria | V. | Benedictus |
| III. | Credo | VI. | Agnus Dei |

INTERVAL

Please join the choir for light refreshments.

Stabat Mater - Rossini

Choir and soloists

I. Introduction

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius.

*(The grieving Mother stood
weeping by the Cross
where hung her Son.)*

II. Cujus Animam

Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

*(Her spirit groaning,
saddened and grieving
a sword has pierced.)*

III. Quis Est Homo

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Christi Matrem si videret
In tanto supplicio?

*(Who is the man that would not weep
if he saw the Mother of Christ
in such torment?)*

IV. Pro Peccatis

Pro peccatis suæ gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis
Et flagellis subditum.

*(For the sins of His people
she saw Jesus in torment
and submitted to the scourge.)*

V. Eia Mater

Eia, Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac ut tecum lugeam.

*(Ah, Mother, fountain of love,
to feel the force of grief
grant that I may mourn with you.)*

VI. Sancta Mater, Istud Agas

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.

*(Holy Mother, grant me
that I fix the wounds of the crucified
firmly to my heart.)*

VII. Fac Ut Portem

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortium,
Et plagas recolere.

*(Let me bear Christ's death,
let me share his passion
And revere his blows.)*

VIII. Inflammatus et Accensus

Fac me cruce custodiri
Morte Christi praemunire
Confoveri gratia.

*(Let me be guarded by the cross,
strengthened by the death of Christ
cherished by grace.)*

IX. Quando Corpus

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac ut animæ donetur
Paradisi gloria.

*(When the body shall die,
grant that my soul be given
the glory of Paradise.)*

X. In Sempiterna Secula, Amen

In Sempiterna secula, Amen.

(For ever and ever, Amen.)

Thank all of you for joining us at our concert tonight 🎵

We look forward to seeing you at our concerts throughout the year.

Have you thought about becoming a Patron?

As a choir we take great pleasure sharing our love of music with others and we are fortunate that our friends who enjoy it with us have decided to become our patrons.

Are you a regular attendee at our concerts?

Ever felt you'd like to support the choir but don't want to take up a singing position?

If so, the Southend Bach Choir Patron scheme may be for you. Anyone can apply to join. There is no fixed fee to join this scheme, though Patrons may make a donation if they wish. Patrons receive regular updates about choir events and activities, and an annual invitation to continue their patronage. They will also receive a complimentary ticket to every concert and be invited to other choir events including the AGM.

If you are interested in becoming a patron or would simply like further information, then please ask at the welcome desk, speak to any choir member or contact the patron secretary via email:

membership@southendbachchoir.org.uk

For further information about the Southend Bach Choir please contact:

secretary@southendbachchoir.org.uk

visit our website:

www.southendbachchoir.org.uk

or social media pages:



Southend Bach Choir



southendbachchoir

OUR PATRONS

Mrs J. Restorick Mr K. Treverton
Mr S. Burford Mr T. Harding
Miss C. Kirkham Mrs J. Bliss Mr M. Bliss
Mr R. Hair Mr P. Hepworth Mr M. Luxford

*Southend Bach Choir is very grateful to the Patrons
for their continued encouragement and support*

For details of the Patron Scheme:
Email: membership@southendbachchoir.org.uk

OUR NEXT CONCERT

A Night at the Musicals

Saturday 4th July 2026, 7pm

St Alban the Martyr Church, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7JZ

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Our next concerts will take place on:

21st November 2026

19th December 2026 (Christmas Concert)



Southend Bach Choir

Registered Charity
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