

Chorus Director – Job description

Background

Buxton Musical Society was founded in 1944 and drew membership from previous musical groups in the town as well as others temporarily based here during the second world war. The large chorus and amateur orchestra gave two concerts a year of choral works with nationally known soloists.

In 1967 Michael Williams conducted his first work with the Society and shortly thereafter became its Chief Conductor. He set about transforming the orchestra into a group of near professional standard which would meet only on the day of the concert. The Chorus continued to rehearse weekly and now performs four or five concerts per year.

After the founding of the Buxton International Festival in 1979 the Society was invited in 1980 to perform an orchestral Mass in St John's Church with its orchestra and soloists from the Festival Company and this has been a popular feature of the Festival ever since.

For the past fifty-five years Michael Williams has been pivotal to the development and success of the Society, having rehearsed and conducted most major works in the choral repertoire including all three major Elgar oratorios, both Bach Passions, many Handel oratorios and operas and countless other oratorios and liturgical works. The orchestra includes former professional and other professionally trained musicians who welcome the opportunity to exercise their skills by spending an enjoyable day in Buxton four or five times per year.

Michael Williams was appointed MBE for his services to music in the town including his help with restoring the Opera House and establishing the Buxton International Festival. Additional to the time he gives to the Musical Society, he is also Choirmaster and Organist at St John's Church and organises the chamber choir The Buxton Madrigal Singers.

The position of Chorus Director

Michael Williams recently celebrated his eightieth birthday, and the Society is keen to ensure that he is able to continue his work with the Society without imposing too great a workload on him. Following a successful collaboration with the Chorus Director Jack Apperley in a Festival performance of Haydn's *The Creation* last summer, we are keen to explore how we can develop this model further by appointing a regular Chorus Director to prepare and rehearse the chorus for concerts directed by Michael. It is envisaged that the successful appointee will have the

opportunity from time to time to conduct choral pieces in concerts and may be required to deputise for Michael Williams if he is absent for any reason.

The chorus rehearses in Buxton on Thursday evenings normally from 8pm until 10pm. Rehearsals commence in early September until just before Christmas and recommence in early January until just before Easter. There is usually a break after Easter until early June when preparations for the Festival Mass and any choral contribution to the summer concert begin. The summer concert in June is mainly orchestral and usually includes a concerto performance by a student from Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

The Society is run by a committee of members who work closely with the Musical Director to determine suitable repertoire and dates for concerts. The orchestra is managed by the Musical Director in collaboration with several key orchestral players. We are fortunate to have the services of an excellent rehearsal accompanist.

There are no auditions for chorus members but some ability in sight-singing is requested of potential members.

Responsibilities

The Chorus Director will be expected to:

- Prepare the music and conduct the preliminary rehearsals for each concert
- Liaise with the MD over broad interpretation of pieces
- Strive for high vocal qualities from the chorus by explaining helpful vocal technique where appropriate
- Assist the MD on the day of the concert by offering advice and assessing the balance of forces and overall sound quality.
- Contributing advice in the selection of repertoire for future concerts

Qualities

The Society is seeking a candidate that:

- Will promote the enjoyment of singing
- Is knowledgeable about repertoire, musical history and vocal technique.
- Will engender enthusiasm in all age groups
- Is sympathetic to the difficulties of sight singing and can assist and encourage the acquisition of this skill
- Will deal sensitively with the problems of maintaining correct pitch and explain techniques to overcome these difficulties

Period of tenure

We are keen to appoint someone as soon as possible and envisage a selection process in January 2023 with an appointment made in February 2023. There will be a probationary period of one year

during which the appointee will meet with the committee after each concert to discuss and resolve any issues of concern on either side. At the end of the probationary period the post will become permanent by mutual agreement. It is envisaged that the Chorus Director will take an increasing role in the Society particularly by developing ways to increase and diversify membership and explore new ways of presenting music.

Remuneration

Payment will be in accordance with appropriate current scales and will take into account necessary travelling expenses.

Application for the post

Applications for this post should include a current CV and should be sent to:

secretary@buxtonmusicalsociety.org.uk