

SOUTH WEST ESSEX CHOIR

Post: SWEC MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Job Description

Key objectives: to provide musical direction, and to sustain and develop the performance and reputation of the Choir, in collaboration with SWEC Committee

Specifically:

- i) To conduct rehearsals of the Choir, which are held on Tuesday evenings during term time from 7.45 – 9.45pm at Loughton Methodist Church, High Road, Loughton, Essex, plus occasional additional rehearsals, as negotiated. To conduct concerts: Normally SWEC presents three concerts per year, with an average of twelve rehearsals per term, plus rehearsal on concert day.
- ii) In supporting choral development, to respond to the needs of amateur singers who encompass a wide range of sight/music-reading and vocal ability and to challenge the choir in developing its musicality.
- iii) To plan programmes taking into account the balance and appeal of repertoire within the annual programme, feedback from the Committee, suggestions from the Choir and available budget.
- iv) To book professional musicians as required. To hire orchestral parts. To rehearse and conduct professional soloists and orchestral players for the Choir's concerts.
- v)
 - a) To liaise closely with members of the Committee, to include:
 - rehearsal scheduling and management, including development of a rehearsal plan for members as appropriate,
 - ensuring timely and effective concert organisation,
 - anticipating likely costs for the hiring of musicians and obtaining vocal scores, and agreeing budgets with the Treasurer,
 - providing copy for SWEC publicity materials, in line with responsibilities such as fliers and programme notes.
 - b) To work collaboratively with the rehearsal pianist.
- vi) To provide feedback on rehearsals and performances to the Committee, and also to the Choir following concerts and to provide a report at the Annual General Meeting.

- vii) To attend Committee Meetings (normally three times per year at the start of each term) and the AGM.
- viii) To arrange for a deputy in the event of planned absence from a rehearsal.

Required competences

- Interpersonal skills and ability to work as part of a team
- Ability to communicate a musical vision to the choir, which comprises a diverse range of abilities and ages, and to enthuse and engage the members at rehearsal
- Ability to interact with and inspire the choir toward continuous improvement in musicality, as well as ensemble singing and performance technique
- Sensitivity to the needs of a choir with a wide range of technical competence,
- Ability to demonstrate an inclusivity of approach in his/her interaction with members
- Ability to inspire confidence as a conductor

Qualifications, skills and experience

Essential

- Demonstrable experience of working with and conducting choirs
- Ability to create welcoming and inclusive rehearsal environment
- Ability to rehearse with clarity, energy and care, giving confidence to choir members and teaching with the appropriate concern for accuracy and interpretation
- Ability to communicate the key dynamic elements of a piece of music and its underlying context and vision
- Ability to provide and receive constructive criticism and feedback
- Experience of conducting orchestras
- Experience of planning music programmes
- Experience of engaging soloists and musicians
- Experience of working to agreed budgets
- Recognised music qualification

Desirable

- Experience of working with professional musicians
- Experience of working with non-auditioning choirs
- Experience of working collaboratively with a committee
- Experience of developing vocal technique
- Recognised conducting qualification
- Keyboard skills at least to Grade VIII or equivalent

Application process

If you think this is an opportunity that would benefit both you and our SWEC community, please apply by submitting:

- Your CV with details of your qualifications and experience
- A covering letter explaining your motivations for applying and what strengths you would bring to the role (500 words max)
- A short clip (no longer than 5 minutes) filmed on your phone, giving us your suggestions for the programme for SWEC's Spring and Summer 2026 concerts, taking into consideration the capability of the choir, the need to attract audiences and balance the budget. Please explain the rationale for your suggestions.
- Names and contact details of two referees who we can contact about your previous experience.

Your application should be sent to: southwestessexchoir@hotmail.com no later than **31 July 2025, 5pm.**

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a panel interview in the week beginning 1 September and, if successful, to conduct a 30-minute rehearsal on either Tuesday 7 or 14 October.

This is a remunerated post. Rehearsal fee is £175/concert fee = £580. Reviewed annually.

This post is subject to an informal three-month review and a formal probationary review after six months.

SWEC is committed to equality of opportunity in all its activities.

South West Essex Choir

South West Essex Choir (SWEC) celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2024. It was founded in 1964 from the choral wing of the former Leyton Municipal Orchestra and Choir, which later became the Forest Philharmonic. In 2018, we joined them and the London Forest Choir to perform Britten's *War Requiem* at Walthamstow Assembly Hall for the Armistice centenary.

Our main repertoire includes major choral works by composers such as Vaughan Williams, Rossini, Bach, Verdi, Brahms, Fauré, and Mozart. We have commissioned new pieces, including Jonathan Rathbone's *Requiem for the Condemned Man* (2000), Robert Fokkens' *Gloria* (2009), former Musical Director James Sherlock's *A Few Ways to Say Thank You* (2017), and Edward Nesbit's *The Genuine History of the Life of Richard Turpin* (2024) with Kings College Choir. In recent seasons, we have collaborated regularly with the National Symphony Orchestra, performing Haydn's *Creation*, Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, Beethoven's *Mass in C*, Handel's *Messiah* (2024), and Mozart's *Requiem* (2025). We have also worked with many accomplished soloists.

The choir has toured internationally, performing in the South of France in 2014, 2016, and 2019, with concerts in Sospel Cathedral and Breil.

Beyond classical music, we have performed jazz-inspired works by Will Todd, Alexander L'Estrange, and Duke Ellington's *Sacred Concert* with the Blue Planet Orchestra. In our 60th anniversary year, we sang the world premiere of Ed Nesbitt's *The Genuine History of the Life of Richard Turpin* at Kings College Chapel, London, Richard Blackford's arrangement of Verdi's *Requiem* for two pianos and timpani and the *Messiah* with an ensemble from the National Symphony Orchestra. Our 2025 summer concert will feature further jazz-inspired works and include a jazz ensemble.