

# Gonville & Caius

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## CHORAL AWARDS



# CAIUS CHOIR

The Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, is one of the UK's leading collegiate choirs, with a world-wide reputation based on its extensive touring, its exciting programme of concerts and broadcasts, and highly acclaimed CD recordings.

Caius Choir consists of up to 24 singers (8 Sopranos, 5 Altos, 5 Tenors, 6 Basses) and 2 Organ Scholars. The Choir sings three services each week during term.

This level of commitment seeks to ensure high standards within our regular services whilst leaving time for members also to participate in other forms of music-making around the University such as operas and concerts. In most weeks there will also be a singing lesson.

## Normal Weekly Schedule

Sunday

4.45pm rehearsal  
6.00pm Choral Evensong

Monday

6.00pm - 7.00pm rehearsal

Tuesday

5.30pm rehearsal  
6.30pm Choral Evensong or  
9.30pm Choral Compline

Wednesday

6.00pm - 7.00pm rehearsal

Thursday

5.30pm rehearsal  
6.30pm Choral Eucharist



# ABOUT CAIUS

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**Gonville & Caius** ('Keys') is one of the oldest and largest colleges of the University of Cambridge. Founded in 1348, the College combines the best of Cambridge tradition with 21st century teaching and research.

Caius Chapel has a claim to being the oldest purpose-built College Chapel in Cambridge still in use.

The College's musical tradition began at the end of the nineteenth century with a choir of men and boys, founded by the celebrated composer of Anglican church music Charles Wood, and later became an exclusively undergraduate male choir under Wood's successor, the composer Patrick Hadley. Hadley was succeeded by Peter Tranchell, under whose direction the choir became mixed in 1979.

The director of the choir at Caius is known as 'The Precentor' and our current Precentor is Matthew Martin. Matthew read Music at Magdalen College, Oxford where he was organ scholar. As a postgraduate, he studied at the Royal Academy of Music and with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris. From 2015-2020 he was Director of Music at Keble College, Oxford and Artistic Director of the Keble Early Music Festival. Although more recently better known as a composer, he worked for some time in cathedral music as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, Assistant Organist at Canterbury Cathedral and also as Organist of the Brompton Oratory.



# CHORAL AWARDS

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Choral awards (scholarships) are open to all voices (including both male and female altos) and are compatible with reading any subject. The choral awards scheme is inter-collegiate. Auditions (known as 'Choral Trials') take place in March each year and the deadline for applications is 15th February.

The chief qualities that are looked for in applicants are vocal potential and commitment. Some applicants will have had vocal training and taken grade exams in singing, yet others may have had relatively little vocal training and experience; this factor is taken into account during the auditions and no one should feel excluded from applying on the grounds of their experience at school.

In addition to the standard University Choral Award, weekly singing lessons are provided in Caius free of charge (worth around £800 per annum) with one of our College singing teachers: David Lowe and Kate Symonds-Joy.

Fees are normally paid for concerts and broadcasts to supplement the standard choral award. Choir members stay in College free of charge during vacations when undertaking choir activities, and one or more foreign tours are provided free of charge each year. In addition, a special fund exists to help singers wishing to take part in occasional master-classes or other vocal opportunities at any time of the year.

For more information on the application process, please scan the following QR code:



# MEET THE CHORAL SCHOLARS

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**Louis Pettitt**

**Alto**

**studying Music**

## **Why did you want to be a choral scholar?**

I loved singing in choirs at school and it seemed the obvious choice to carry it on at university! Choral singing allows for the best of both worlds, learning to blend with a larger group and being exposed to such a variety of incredible music, and developing as a soloist.



## **What attracted you to Caius?**

I wanted to sing in a mixed choir and I knew a few people who sang in the choir, who recommended it highly. It's a good level of commitment and the singing is consistently top rate. I also loved the buildings and how central the college is. It's worth going and visiting if you get a chance before you apply, and by all means reach out to current choir members who can give you an idea of what life at Caius is like.

## **How easy has it been to adapt to the demands of being a choir member?**

Having choir five times a week is definitely intense, but so rewarding. It also brings structure to your day, and provides a break from the rigorous academic requirement of your degree.

## **What's it like to be a member of Caius Choir?**

When you sing with the choir five days a week, it becomes your second family: the choir is such a warm and welcoming environment and we have so much fun singing together and socialising. I've also loved singing in Caius Men, our a cappella group, and performing in May Balls.

## **What has been your most memorable experience in the choir?**

Definitely our broadcasts in Buckfast. Singing live on the radio was a first for me and the Abbey was an amazing building to sing in. We got to live together for a week, cooking for each other (the Christmas dinner was a definite highlight) and going on walks in the countryside – and there's no better group to spend time with than Caius Choir!

## **Do you have any advice for future applicants?**

Give it a go! If you like singing, there's really nothing to be worried about: the trials are all about evaluating potential. For your audition, sing a piece that you're comfortable with and give the tests your best shot. Also, come and listen to evensong – there's no better way to experience the choir than watching us singing live.

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## **Toby Barnett**

**Bass**

**studying Mathematics**



### **Did you have a lot of singing experience when you auditioned?**

I had sung a lot before I auditioned to sing at Caius Choir, but never in a choral setting; despite having some classical training I'd always much preferred musical theatre.

### **What's it like to be a member of Caius Choir?**

Being a member of Caius Choir truly is a privilege: you work and sing with unbelievably talented people practically every day. You learn so much about your voice, and yourself as a musician, and get the opportunity to explore incredible music all the time. On top of all this, you become part of a family. Everyone in the choir gets along so well: we are all so supportive of each other, and we do our best to make sure that we all have the absolute best time we can, making the best music possible.

### **How has your time as a Caius choral scholar advanced your music?**

My sight reading has improved ten-fold, and my general musicianship has developed so much: I now have a much better sense of intonation, and I am far better at singing and blending with other people. I also have a newfound appreciation (even love) for choral music, which to be honest I was slightly hesitant about beforehand.

### **What were the choral award trials like?**

The choral trials, although slightly nerve-racking, were made to be as comfortable as possible. Before I had my call-back/trial (which was on Zoom due to the pandemic), I had an online meeting with Matthew Martin, the Precentor, and David Lowe, one of the choir's dedicated singing teachers, in which they helped me to prepare for my trial. They wanted me to succeed just as much as I did, and it was reassuring that when I had my trial, I saw a familiar face.

### **Do you have any advice for future applicants?**

I did not breeze through my trial with flying colours, in fact I made lots of mistakes. Nor did I have any experience singing choral music before I applied to sing in Caius Choir. This isn't a problem though. The choir is not looking for perfectly polished singers who can do everything from the moment they arrive. If that is you, then great! But if it's not, don't worry: you are equally, if not more appealing to the choir, as what the trials really look for are people with potential. If you're considering applying for a choral award, my best advice is: do it.

# TOURS, CONCERTS AND BROADCASTS

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The choir travels abroad at least once each year, singing in concert halls, universities, cathedrals, and churches across Europe and beyond, including South Africa, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, South America and the USA. The choir also performs extensively in the UK and at festivals such as the Spitalfields Festival in London.

In 2023 the choir went on tour to Sweden. They performed a concert and a service at Uppsala Cathedral and another concert later in the tour in Stockholm Cathedral.

Broadcasts of Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 have been notably adventurous in content. In recent years the Choir has broadcast live from locations such as the Church of St John the Baptist in Cirencester and Buckfast Abbey in Devon.



*'Under the marvellously well-judged direction of Matthew Martin...everything seems fresh and vital...evidence of sheer musical fun'*

**Gramophone**

*'The performances by the mixed choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, are highly accomplished ...'*

**American Record Guide**



# RECORDINGS

The choir's recordings have often specialised in the re-discovery of forgotten choral repertoires, including previously unpublished music from within the English choral tradition and beyond, as well as championing new music such as choral works by British composers Judith Weir and Julian Anderson.

'Romaria: Choral Music from Brazil' features sacred and secular music from the 1950s through to the present day in a programme developed in conjunction with experts from the University of São Paulo's music department. 'Set upon the Rood' includes seven newly composed pieces for voices with ancient instruments such as the carnyx, lyre and aulos.

We normally record in a venue outside Caius which might be somewhere else in Cambridge but often involves staying at a special location in London, Oxford or elsewhere, often depending on the type of repertoire being performed.





# LATEST ALBUM

## Philips & Dering: Motets



In May 2023 the choir's first disc under the direction of Matthew Martin was released: Philips & Dering Motets.

This recording offers a fresh insight into the lives and works of two expatriate English Catholic composers exiled to Flanders at the time of the Reformation. Peter Philips and Richard Dering both travelled widely in Europe and their music displays a variety of religious and musical influences picked up along the way.

A particularly striking element of the album is the inclusion of period instruments. Keen to capture the sound worlds of Philips and Dering, Matthew worked closely with the musicians of early-music ensemble In Echo.

The album was recorded in July 2022 in Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton.



*'...the stellar choir of Gonville & Caius College (Cambridge) does a great job ... ensemble In Echo proves skilful and generous, both in sound and ornamentation.'*

**De Standaard**

*'...marvellously well-judged direction... everything seems fresh and vital... evidence of sheer musical fun'*

**Gramophone**

# MUSIC AT CAIUS

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In addition to the Choir, there are plenty of other musical activities with which to get involved. There is an active music society (GCMS), close harmony groups (Caius Men and Gonville Girls), an instrumental awards scheme and jazz nights.

GCMS (Gonville & Caius Music Society) organises a Saturday lunchtime recital series and a College Concert each term. The College Concert in the Michaelmas and Lent terms is usually a large-scale choral and orchestral concert. The summer term concert, known as the May Week Concert, is normally a more light-hearted programme or takes the form of a show, such as *The Threepenny Opera*, or *Guys and Dolls*. There are also informal concerts arranged from time to time, known as the Scales Club Concerts (founded in the late 19th century) where everyone is welcome to take part.

## Director of Studies: Jeremy Summerly

Prof. Jeremy Summerly is the Director of Studies in Music at Gonville & Caius College. Directors of Studies look after the academic welfare of undergraduate students. They arrange supervisions, provide advice on course choices, and monitor students' progress throughout their degrees.

Jeremy Summerly studied at Litchfield Cathedral School, Winchester College, and New College, Oxford where he graduated with a first class degree.

After graduating from Oxford, he started working as a studio manager for BBC Radio, whilst working on postgraduate research in historical musicology at King's College London. Since 1991 he has been a presenter and reviewer for BBC's Radios 3 and 4, in particular for Radio 4's *Front Row*, and Radio 3's *Record Review* (formerly *CD Review*).

Jeremy is a British conductor and has worked with a variety of ensembles including the mixed voice consort at Edington Festival, the Schola Cantorum of Oxford and the choir of The Queen's College, Oxford. During his time at Oxford University he conducted the New College Chamber Orchestra and the Oxford Chamber Choir.



## **How do I know if I'm the right standard for Gonville and Caius College Choir?**

Choral scholars at Caius come from many different backgrounds so it is always worth making an enquiry or application. Our Precentor, Matthew Martin is always happy to answer questions from prospective choral scholars. You can contact him at [precentor@cai.cam.ac.uk](mailto:precentor@cai.cam.ac.uk)

## **Do I have to be a fast sight-reader?**

The choir does a lot of sight-reading but this is something that can be strengthened with time. We are more interested in potential than a particular standard.

## **Should I have a lot of experience singing/playing with a choir before I apply?**

Our members come to the choir with a variety of different levels of experience. While some have been choristers and sung/played for a lot of their lives, others are relatively new to working with choirs. We would encourage you to apply even if you have relatively little experience.

## **Should I have a particular type of voice or sound?**

No, we are interested in all different types of voices!

## **What it is like to be a member of Caius choir?**

For most members of the choir, singing is the most important part of their lives outside academic work. During term this means singing in choir five days out of seven, thus providing the music for three Chapel services per week, and in most weeks there will also be a singing lesson. Out of term more varied work takes place, including high-profile concerts, radio broadcasts, tours etc, and the choir also sings at several College Feasts in the year which are great social and gastronomic occasions. Each year the choir elects one of its 3rd-year members to act as a representative to help with the smooth running of the choir, and the Choir Administrator Claire Wheeler helps with varied aspects of choir membership and organisational matters. Choir members read all subjects, though several read Music, and many also play instruments to a high level.

## **What sort of music does the Choir typically sing?**

The choir performs a wide variety of music throughout the year however, we specialise in undiscovered or unfamiliar repertoire. We currently sing Choral Evensong or Compline on Tuesdays, Choral Eucharist on Thursdays and Choral Evensong on Sundays, and in one week music can span as much as 700 years.

# CONTACT US

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## Get in touch!

If you have any questions about the choir and applications, you can contact us at:

Telephone: 01223 332411

Email: [choirecai.cam.ac.uk](mailto:choirecai.cam.ac.uk)

The Precentor is also happy to meet prospective choral and organ awards candidates informally at any time of year, either on a separate visit or whilst attending a subject or Caius Open Day.

You can write to Matthew directly: [precentor@cai.cam.ac.uk](mailto:precentor@cai.cam.ac.uk)



@CaiusCollegeCho



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