

RCS SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Hello!

The news you have all been waiting for - finally, after many parts have stopped moving we can announce the programme for the 2026-27 season. See page 7. In this newsletter we also see the committee's reports and look back on performances and events of the season just concluded.

New term starts on September 7th.

The rehearsal at starts at 7.30pm. Be there early to sign in and collect music. Information about the music for September is on page 3.



People



Amazing year for Amelia

Isn't it wonderful to have youthful voices in the choir! Amelia has had a really busy year - the National Youth Choir, the Samling Academy for aspiring young singers in the Northeast and one of just 22 finalists out of 2000 entrants in the West End Calling 2026 Competition. The competition is for aspiring musical theatre performers. She's an all-rounder!

Most recently Amelia played the part of Barbarina, a schoolgirl, in Marriage of Figaro at Darlington Majestic Theatre (Musical Director, Ben) singing the melancholy aria "*L'ho perduto, me meschina*" (I have lost it, poor wretch me). 'It' being a pin which she is charged to deliver that sealed a love letter. Soloists in our Summer Concert, Zara Chung (Susanna) and Ed Kirker (Figaro), were stand-out stars in this very entertaining opera.

For my next production...



Diaphragmatic obstructions didn't seem to hamper Fae Evelyn's powerful performance in our Brahms German Requiem. Here's a picture of Jonah (who arrived just 4 weeks after the concert) with his big sister, Annie.



Chair's Report

What a great season 2025-26 was! We gave three super concerts, all very different in character. Many of us joined Richmond Chamber Orchestra for the very enjoyable Carols & Concertos concert at Tennants and the Swale Singers for Faure's Requiem in the Swaledale Festival after a fabulous masterclass with Roderick Williams. We are going from strength to strength under Ben's baton and guidance and I am absolutely delighted to say that he has accepted our offer to continue as MD for another 3 years when his current contract ends in June 2027.

The organisation behind the scenes to run the Society successfully is significant; my thanks to the committee and all these members who assist with staging, coffee mornings and all other activities.

The 2026-27 season is really very exciting, we will be singing more major works and collaborating with two orchestras – Richmond Chamber Orchestra for Mozart Requiem in November and the Richmondshire Symphony Orchestra for Mahler Second Symphony in Ripon Cathedral in May 2027 in a fund-raising concert for Cancer Research charities. Given the orchestral forces required this work is rarely performed by amateur choirs so this is a fantastic opportunity for us both musically and to hopefully raise significant monies for a charity whose work touches so many lives.

November's concert 'Mozart Final Masterpieces' features three of his final works- Ave Verum Corpus, the clarinet concerto and Requiem. What's not to like! We're delighted to be working with this fabulous orchestra for what I am sure will be a very special evening – tell your family & friends to get the date in their diaries now! We will be using the New Novello edition which will be available to hire, if you want to purchase your own copy contact Mark Harrison (cmharrison6@gmail.com).

We will then have 4 rehearsals for Christmas music to sing carols at The Station on 19th December in an informal performance around the piano.

Ben has come up with a super programme for our Spring concert – 'England at 1100: A Celebration of English Choral Music' - a journey through English choral music since King Æthelstan unified England.

Rehearsal and concert dates are below. Note the 7pm concert starts.
I look forward to seeing you all in September.

Kay Marriott.



Music Director's Report

In our 2025/26 season, we performed three great works of the Western canon: Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, a short yet dramatic piece paired with Christmas favourites; Brahms's *German Requiem*, sung in English, of course; and Goodall's *Eternal Light* alongside operatic 'bangers'.

As a choir, we consistently punch above our weight in challenging repertoire and sound quality. Every rehearsal is a process towards the performance experience, and each performance we have given has been met with considerable praise and enthusiasm by our audience.

All our performances have been special to me, and I've been delighted with the outcomes. You sang the Brahms with total, earnest conviction (all of those primal sounds: sobbing, whinging, paying dividends). We know that it meant something because of the silence that followed. The Christmas double-bill weekend, with '12 Days of Christmas' (on steroids and with percussion) and then carols with orchestra the next day at Tennants!

I'm very lucky to stand where I do; it's the best seat in the house.

Looking ahead at next season's highlights, we will be performing with two different ensembles. In November, Mozart's *Requiem* with Richmond Chamber Orchestra and Mahler's whopping 2nd Symphony 'Resurrection' at Ripon Cathedral with Richmondshire Orchestra.

Doors open to new and exciting possibilities that go beyond the upcoming season. More on that to follow. Can you feel the momentum?

I look forward to seeing you all for Mozart rehearsals in September. Those of you familiar with Richmond Chamber Orchestra (Christmas 2025 carols at Tennants) will know that this is a very fine ensemble indeed. The orchestra will be playing his clarinet concerto in the first half, so we will have a healthy run of rehearsal time to focus on crafting the *Requiem*. We also have smashing soloists lined up.

All the ingredients indicate that this could be our best performance yet. This celebration of the most famous works of late Mozart is the perfect invitation to the kind of music we are making.

So, bring/make that friend who has been thinking about giving singing a go to rehearsals in September, where we will greet them warmly. And, start spreading the word that an unmissable concert is coming on Saturday, 21st November at 7pm.

Thank you so much for your continued practise, patience, and dedication.

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Warmest wishes,

Ben



Membership matters

We've been very pleased to welcome several new members to our Choral Society during this year, including two who radically reduce the average age of our choir! It's wonderful to have young people with us. We are always happy to have people try out a rehearsal or two to see if they would like to join us.

Members singing with us during season 2025-2026, though because of illness, holidays or other commitments, not all were available to sing in each concert.

Term	Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass	Total
Sept-Dec	18	19	10	10	57
Concert	15	16	9	9	49
Jan-March	18	21	10	14	63
Concert	16	19	9	10	53
April-May	19	21	9	12	61
Concert	13	15	8	9	45

Marian Jinner
Membership Secretary

Money matters

From a financial viewpoint, the year commencing June 1st 2025 to May 31st 2026 was highly satisfactory. Revenues from subscriptions and additional coffee mornings were highlights, and costs were only marginally up on the previous year thanks to the careful management of the Chair, the committee (and of course the Treasurer - Ed)

The accounts (which will be presented in full at the AGM) will show a healthy surplus. The Committee has therefore decided to hold subscriptions at their current level for the forthcoming year.

However, there are a number of cost increases next year. For example, the Committee have increased Ben and Andrew's weekly fees broadly in line with inflation, the Methodist Church have increased our hire charge, we have an increase in the number of rehearsals, and our insurance premium will increase.

Therefore, we plan to introduce a voluntary donation option to your subscription payments next year. Members can either pay the base amount (i.e. £130) or if they so choose, include an additional donation.

As usual, subscriptions may be paid in full (i.e. £130 with an optional donation) in September, or as two payments each of £65 in September and January. Payment by bank transfer is encouraged - to Richmondshire Choral Society, sort code 40-52-40, account no. 00016006. Cheques are also acceptable.

David Hughes
Treasurer

Social Secretary's Report

Our coffee mornings have been very successful this year earning us £1308.85. So a big thank you to everyone who has helped out on the mornings and all those who have contributed with prizes and cakes. Hopefully we will be as successful in the coming year

I hope those members who came to the end of season dinner enjoyed the evening. The Station provided a lovely buffet and the piano playing by Trevor was a lovely touch.

A choir is not just about the singing but also about friendship and I thank our tea and coffee makers who provide us with the opportunity to catch up in the break. Our Facebook page is still collecting new followers and certainly helps with our advertising. Please take a look at the Richmondshire Choral Society page if you have access to Facebook.

Hope to see you all in September.

Judy Weeks.

Coffee Morning at the Town Hall



Rehearsals are thirsty work



Dates for your Diary *RCS* 2026-27

Mon 7 September 2026	Rehearsals start, each Monday up to including 14 December.
Sat 21 November 7pm	Concert Mozart's Final Masterpieces, St Mary's church.
Sat 19 December 6.30pm	Carols at The Station.
Mon 11 January 2027	Rehearsals resume.
Sat 24 April 2027 7pm	Concert England at 1100, St Mary's church.
Sat 22 May 2027	Mahler 2nd Symphony, Ripon Cathedral

Tips for reading sheet music

When learning a new piece of music, you can break it down using a method like this.

1: Scan the Roadmap

Before you sing a note, look through the pages and get the lay of the land. Where are any repeats? Are there key changes? Are there breath marks?

2: Speak the Rhythm

Ignore the pitch for a moment. Look at the rhythm and tap a steady beat while speaking the rhythm on a neutral syllable like "Ta" or "Da."

3: Speak the Lyrics in Rhythm

Now, replace the "Ta"s with the actual words of the song. Be careful to observe the hyphens and held notes which align the words with the music's timing.

4: Add the Intervals

Now, try to sing the melody. If you have a keyboard or use an app, play the melody slowly. Listen to the distance between the notes, is it the next note a neighbour or a skip up or down?

5: Combine and Polish

Add the dynamics; p (piano/soft), mf (mezzo-forte/medium loud), and f (forte/loud). These directions bring the work to life to life. Understand the 'story' so you can bring it to life.

A look back at 2025-26

Winter

The festive programme started with a bang and the rhythmically challenging Chilcott, supported by the entertaining, one-man percussion section, Joe Gerard. Soloists Graeme Danby and Cameron Robertson charmed the audience with their well chosen repertoire.



Spring

Soloists Fae Evelyn and Tom Asher together with wonderful accompaniment from Alison Gill and Andrew Christer gave everyone present and participating a spine tingling evening. See photos on the next page.

Summer

Eternal Light, a new work to almost everyone was by the performance on most people's 'want to do that again' list. New to the audience too and very well received.



RCS



Brahms Requiem Spring 2026



With thanks to
Harold (Eddie)
Bishop of Richmond
Camera Club for the
images.
[www.richmondcam
eraclub.co.uk/](http://www.richmondcameraclub.co.uk/)



Couldn't Do Without You

Special thanks to St Mary's and the Churchwardens, also to Dowse of Richmond for storing and transporting our staging.



Social and Savoury it was lovely to see so many at the end of social season and have a chance to get to know each other better. A big thank you to Judy and Steph for organising the event and to The Station for a great meal.



Swaledale Festival 18 of our members joined the with Swaledale Singers in the Faure Requiem and can put on their CV that they once sang with Roderick Williams.



At Tennants with the Richmondshire Chamber Orchestra, Dec 2025



The launch of *The Choral*, Dec 2025

