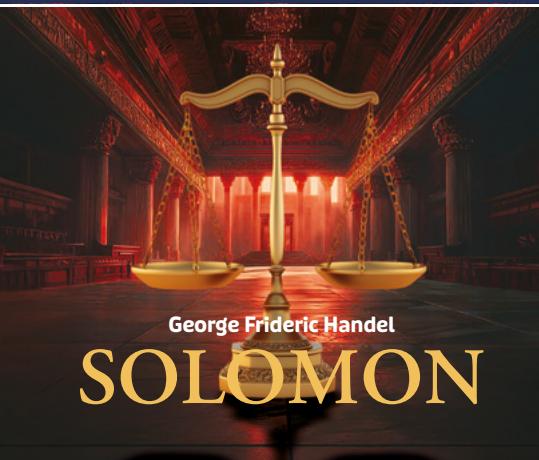
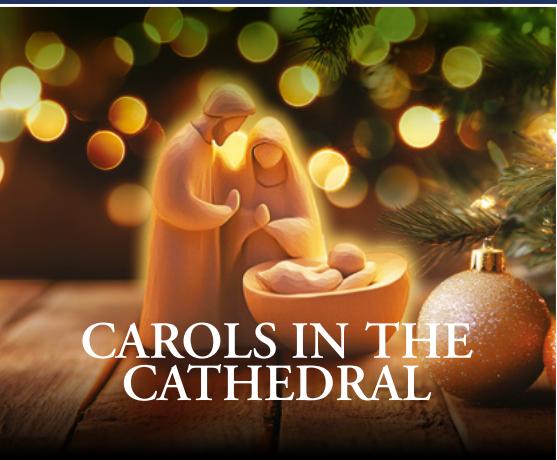




# Exeter Philharmonic Choir



**2025/2026 season**

## Welcome to our 2025/2026 new season!

### Howard Ionascu

Howard joined Exeter Philharmonic Choir as Director of Music in 2017. A professional conductor, specialising in choral music, he has led the choir in performing many major works with leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists in Exeter Cathedral and elsewhere.

After a degree in music at Manchester University, Howard joined Wells Cathedral Choir as a professional singer. His move into choral conducting began in 1997 when he founded The Laudate Choir in London. He is also Music Director and Conductor of Twickenham Choral.

Howard has a long association with music education, having led departments at some of the UK's finest educational establishments. He directed the choirs at Winchester College, King's Canterbury and the Junior Royal Academy of Music.

[www.howardionascu.com](http://www.howardionascu.com)



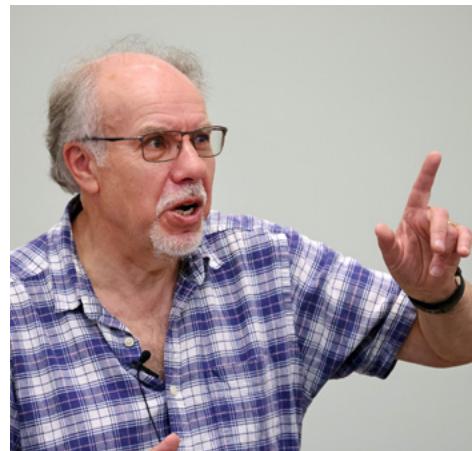
### Stephen Tanner

A freelance choral director, organist, composer and arranger, Stephen joined Exeter Philharmonic Choir as Associate Director of Music in 2017. He is also the choir's accompanist and directs its Pilgrims' Chorus, which makes annual expeditions giving choral concerts while walking ancient pilgrimage routes.

Stephen graduated in Music from the University of Huddersfield. For many years he was Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral School, and Assistant Organist and Director of Girl Choristers at Exeter Cathedral.

His musical interests are wide and he has a particular affinity for jazz. Stephen directed our 'Sacred Jazz' concert in 2022, including his new composition, *Jazz Te Deum and Jubilate Deo*. He will direct our second concert of Jazz for a Summer Evening next June.

[www.stephentannermusic.co.uk](http://www.stephentannermusic.co.uk)



*'Darest thou now, O soul,*

*Walk out with me toward the unknown region,*

*Where neither ground is for the feet*

*nor any path to follow?'*

These words of Walt Whitman, opening his poem *Toward the Unknown Region*, aptly conjure up the exciting challenges of our new season, featuring 'firsts' and fresh new music as well as more familiar repertoire.

Our season opens in November with a world première performance of a newly commissioned work by Cecilia McDowall: *The Weather Book*. The concert also includes Poulenc's magnificent *Gloria* and Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, as well as Vaughan Williams' atmospheric setting of Whitman's *Toward the Unknown Region*.

In contrast, our Carols in the Cathedral on 16 and 17 December will as usual feature glorious Christmas music, performed by two trumpets, soprano, choir and organ, with audience participation for some familiar carols.

Handel's oratorio, *Solomon*, in the spring will be another 'first' performance for the choir. Although the 'Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' in the final act will be recognisable to many, this work is rarely performed in its entirety. Handel's masterpiece brings to life a compelling story about the deeds and wisdom of King Solomon.

The choir's final event of the season in June offers Jazz for a Summer Evening, featuring a trio of piano, bass and drums. Almost a 'first' (our previous jazz concert took place in 2022), it will again be directed by Associate Director Stephen Tanner.

We look forward to welcoming you all very soon!

Howard Ionascu  
Director of Music

Get Tickets 

**Howard Ionascu** Conductor  
**Bristol Ensemble**

**Agnes Auer** Soprano  
**Seohyun Go** Soprano  
**Cecily Shaw** Mezzo-Soprano



EPC commission and world première

# The Weather Book

Cecilia McDowall

## Gloria

Poulenc

Toward the Unknown Region

Vaughan Williams

**Saturday 8 November 2025**

7.30 pm, Exeter Cathedral

6.30 pm, Pre-concert talk with Cecilia McDowall  
at the Devon and Exeter Institution

Tickets £30 £24 £16

Brahms *Tragic Overture*

Vaughan Williams *Toward the Unknown Region*

Brahms *Alto Rhapsody*

McDowall *The Weather Book*

Poulenc *Gloria*

Exeter Philharmonic Choir is proud to launch its 2025/26 season with the world première of a new choral work, *The Weather Book*, by one of the UK's leading composers, Cecilia McDowall. This explores aspects of the history of weather and meteorology – appropriately for the city that is home to the world-renowned Met Office!

Coincidentally, as we approached Cecilia McDowall to compose a work for us, the Gustav Vasa Chamber Choir in Stockholm had also asked her to write a short piece for them. The result was a joint commission – a brand-new work, entitled *The Weather Book*, in three movements.

Cecilia's inspiration for the commission was to link the UK and Sweden through references to climate. She worked with poet and librettist Kate Wakeling to discover different aspects of weather-related topics.

The first movement, 'Celsius Rising', was written for the Swedish choir, who performed it in Stockholm in March. Cecilia then wrote the second and third movements, 'History of Air' and 'The Weather Book', for Exeter Philharmonic Choir, and we will have the honour of performing the world première of the entire work on 8 November.

Cecilia will lead a pre-concert talk about her composition at 6.30 pm, at the Devon and Exeter Institution, 7 Cathedral Close, Exeter. Admission is free, but tickets are very limited and must be booked with concert tickets.

**Programme** In addition to Cecilia McDowall's new commission, the concert also includes four other wonderful pieces of music.

### Johannes Brahms

#### *Tragic Overture*

Bristol Ensemble will open the concert with Brahms' *Tragic Overture*. This is one of a pair of overtures (the other being the *Academic Festival Overture*) written by Brahms in 1880, to thank Breslau University for his award of an honorary doctorate.



#### **Cecilia McDowall**

##### Composer

Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951) is a leading British composer of sacred and secular choral music. Her compositions have been commissioned and performed by many organisations, including the BBC Singers, The Sixteen and London Mozart Players.

In 2020 Cecilia was presented with the Ivor Novello Award for a 'consistently excellent body of work'. She was awarded a commission by King's College, Cambridge, to write the carol for the 'Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols', broadcast worldwide on Christmas Eve 2021.

She holds honorary doctorates from the Universities of Portsmouth and West London and an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal School of Church Music.

### Ralph Vaughan Williams

#### *Toward the Unknown Region*

Vaughan Williams' setting of Walt Whitman's poem, 'Toward the Unknown Region', was composed in 1906 and first performed at the Leeds Festival the following year. It reflects the spirit of adventure felt by an explorer on a journey of discovery.



#### **Agnes Auer**

##### Soprano

We are delighted to welcome Swedish soprano Agnes Auer, who in March was the soloist for 'Celsius Rising' in Stockholm, to sing the entire new work with the choir.

### Johannes Brahms

#### *Alto Rhapsody*

Brahms composed his *Alto Rhapsody* in 1869, based on text from Goethe's poem, 'Harzreise im Winter'. In it, the alto soloist depicts the agonies of a despairing recluse, wandering through the Harz Forest, until a four-part chorus finally brings comfort with a shared prayer to the 'Father of Love'.



#### **Seohyun Go**

##### Soprano

A South Korean artist studying in London, Seohyun will be the soloist in Poulenc's *Gloria*.



#### **Cecily Shaw**

##### Mezzo-Soprano

New Zealander Cecily, who is taking a Guildhall Artist master's degree course in Voice, will sing the title role in Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*.

### Francis Poulenc

#### *Gloria*

Poulenc's ever-popular *Gloria*, a setting of text from the Latin Mass, was written in 1959. In its six short movements, soloist, choir and orchestra display many musical contrasts, ranging from solemnity, through lyricism, to pure joy.



#### **Bristol Ensemble**

Founded in 1994 by violinist and music director Roger Huckle, Bristol Ensemble is a versatile collective of professional musicians in Bristol and the South West. Its repertoire spans from 17th-century works played on original instruments to contemporary and experimental music.

**Saturday 8 November 2025**

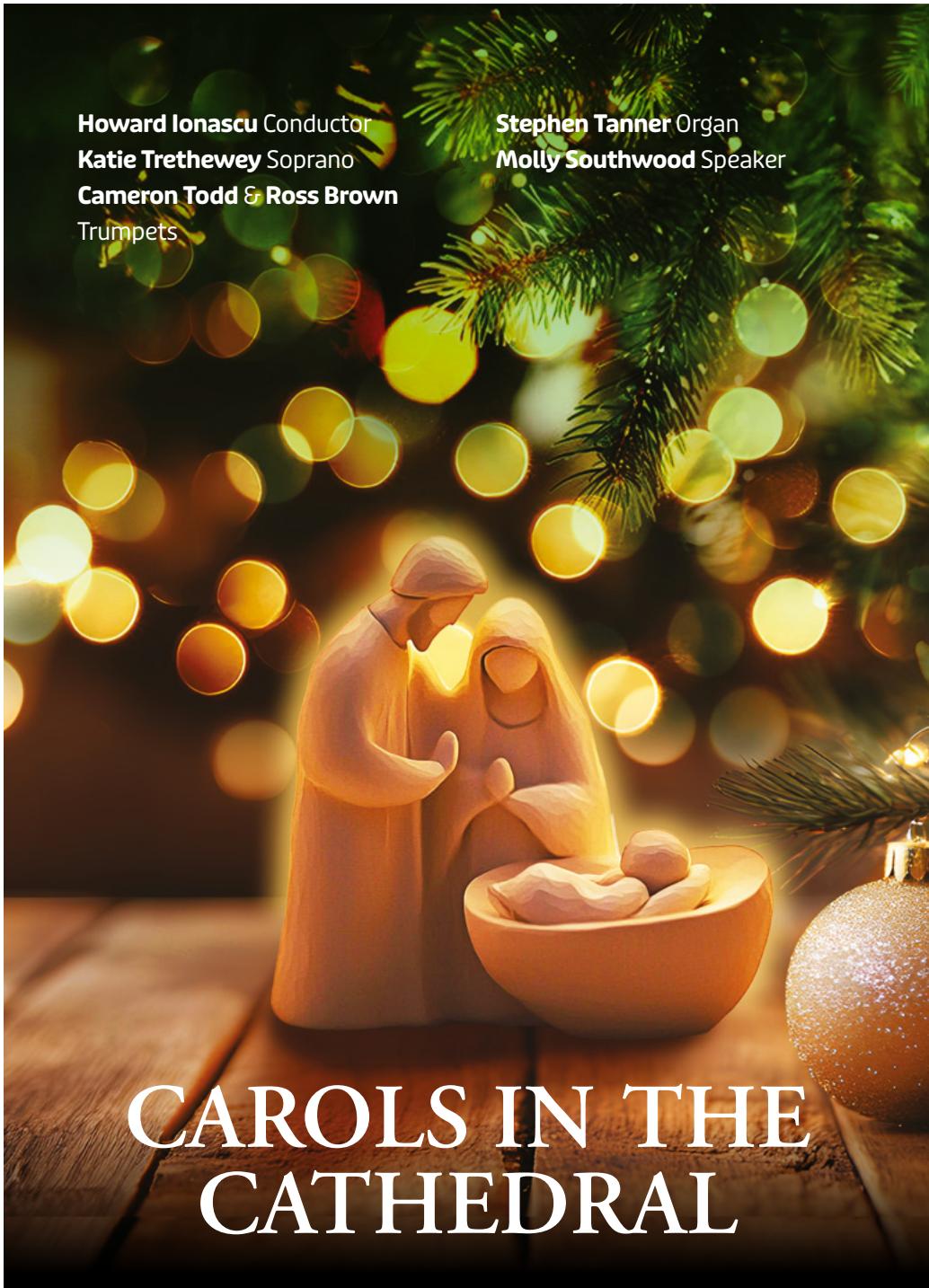
7.30 pm, Exeter Cathedral,  
Tickets £30 £24 £16

[Get Tickets](#) 

**Howard Ionascu** Conductor  
**Katie Trethewey** Soprano  
**Cameron Todd & Ross Brown**  
Trumpets

**Stephen Tanner** Organ  
**Molly Southwood** Speaker

# CAROLS IN THE CATHEDRAL



**Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 December 2025**

7.30 pm, Exeter Cathedral  
Tickets £23 £17 £13

Winter nights are the perfect time to share the joys of Christmas music, and our two nights of Carols in Exeter Cathedral on this theme are certainly no exception.

This year popular trumpeters Cameron Todd and Ross Brown return to add shimmer and sparkle, while soprano Katie Trethewey enchants with her spellbinding voice. With Stephen Tanner on the mighty organ and Exeter Philharmonic Choir adding festive harmonies, a merry start to Christmas is guaranteed.

But never forget the other important performers – the audience – with their special part to play, singing familiar carols with great gusto!

Our carol concerts also give a valuable opportunity to support the vital work done by local charities. This year we are delighted to welcome Molly Southwood, chief executive of Exeter Leukaemia Fund, based at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, as our special guest speaker. There will be retiring collections for ELF on both evenings.



**Katie Trethewey**  
Soprano



**Cameron Todd**  
Trumpet



**Ross Brown**  
Trumpet  
Head of Brass Studies at Wells Cathedral School, Ross also plays with leading orchestras and ensembles, often as principal trumpet.



**Molly Southwood**  
Speaker  
As chief executive, Molly oversees all ELF's activities, including spending one day every week meeting patients and staff at the hospital.

Retiring collection in support of



Get Tickets



#### Amy Carson

Soprano

Amy enjoys teaching and performing. Her own vocal ensemble, called 'The Echoing Air', specialises in Baroque repertoire.



#### Martha McLorinan

Mezzo-Soprano

Martha returns to Exeter to sing the title role of Solomon after performing around the world, from Moscow to Salt Lake City.



#### Hugo Hymas

Tenor

Specialising in the Baroque repertoire, Hugo performs with many of the foremost ensembles in the UK and Europe.



#### Timothy Dickinson

Bass

A member of the BBC Singers, Timothy is also a regular concert soloist. He co-founded 'The Echoing Air' with Amy Carson.



## The Lord Mayor's Concert

**Saturday 14 March 2026**

7.30 pm, Exeter Cathedral

Tickets £30 £24 £16

Retiring collection for the Lord Mayor's charity



High drama and majestic wealth set the scene for Handel's oratorio, *Solomon*.

Although the story is compelling and the music sublime – just think of the 'Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' – the work is rarely performed in its entirety. Indeed, no record has been found of any full performance in Exeter Cathedral since Handel composed the work in 1748.

Exeter Philharmonic Choir will therefore be delighted to welcome to the Cathedral Martha McLorinan as the wise King Solomon; Amy Carson, doubling as his Queen and the Queen of Sheba; Hugo Hymas as Zadok the Priest; and Timothy Dickinson as the Levite. Complementing the action will be Endelienta Baroque and the full choir, singing in eight voice parts.

#### Endelienta Baroque

The talented young members of Endelienta Baroque love to share their joy of playing baroque repertoire on historical instruments.

**Howard Ionascu** Conductor

**Endelienta Baroque**

**Amy Carson** Soprano

**Martha McLorinan** Mezzo-Soprano

**Hugo Hymas** Tenor

**Timothy Dickinson** Bass

**Stephen Tanner** Chamber Organ

George Frideric Handel

# SOLOMON

[Get Tickets](#) 

**Stephen Tanner** Director  
**Andrew Downton** Piano

**Phil Williams** Bass  
**Ryan Carter** Drums



# *Jazz for a Summer Evening* **‘Then Sing We All’**

**Saturday 13 June 2026**

7.30 pm, Holy Trinity Church, Exmouth  
Tickets £20 unreserved

**Bob Chilcott *A Little Jazz Mass***  
**Iain Farrington *Then Sing We All***

Holy Trinity Church in sunny Exmouth must be the ideal place to enjoy jazz on a summer evening.

Associate Director of Music Stephen Tanner has devised an inspiring programme for the choir and a jazz trio of piano, bass and drums.

Bob Chilcott composed *A Little Jazz Mass* in 2004 for a choral festival in the home of jazz, New Orleans. It blends five movements of the traditional Latin Mass with the jazz idiom.

In 2022, composer Iain Farrington had a very different inspiration for writing *Then Sing We All*. He explains: 'After the pandemic in 2020-21 and the forced closure of group choral singing, I wanted to express the joy that we experience when singing together.' He chose medieval verses that reflect the simple pleasures of singing, interpreted through the sound world of jazz.



**Andrew Downton**

Piano

Versatile musician Andrew plays organ, piano and keyboards in both contemporary and classical styles. He also teaches at Exeter Cathedral.



**Phil Williams**

Bass

Phil will showcase a new electronic upright bass at our concert. He has worked for over 30 years as a freelance bassist in the South West.



**Ryan Carter**

Drums

Ryan teaches drum kit full time in schools and performs in musicals, gigs and functions. He is also kit player for the Dartmouth Royal Naval College bands.

# Come and sing with Exeter Philharmonic Choir!



## About the choir

With around 100 members drawn from all walks of life, Exeter Philharmonic Choir has a long tradition of singing choral music, old and new. We always perform with professional orchestras and soloists to maintain our quality of music-making.

Founded in 1846, the choir sang its first concert, Handel's *Messiah*, in 1847. Since then we have given concerts in Exeter every year, without interruption, despite world wars and the recent pandemic. Quite a record!



## How to join us

We aim to achieve high standards and also to help our members enjoy and develop their singing. The choir rehearses on Mondays in central Exeter from 7 pm to 9 pm.

We warmly welcome new members over the age of 18 and have some vacancies in all voice parts. Our next auditions will take place on Monday 15 September. You are welcome to come and try out the choir informally on the previous two Monday evenings, 1 and 8 September.

To find out more about us and how to join the choir, contact our Membership Co-ordinator at [membership@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk](mailto:membership@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk)

## Meet some recent new members

**Jeanie Honey, soprano**, joined the choir last term. She says:

"I joined Exeter Philharmonic Choir because I wanted to sing in a really good quality choir where I would be a small part of a huge and beautiful sound. I also wanted to keep up my singing voice."

"I've found everyone to be very friendly and I really enjoy the variety of repertoire. It's a wonderful experience to participate in big concerts in Exeter Cathedral."



**James Wrigley, bass**, also joined last term. He explains:

"I hadn't sung in a large choir for over 30 years, because I had too many international business responsibilities to commit to rehearsals. Now I'm travelling less, an EPC member encouraged me to sign up, and I haven't looked back since."

"My sight-reading is average, but I love singing and have put in the hours practising. It's exhilarating to be singing in a big, friendly choir once again."



With our long tradition of music-making, Exeter Philharmonic Choir has a strong ethos of bringing people together to experience the joy of choral singing. We have an exciting concert season ahead and equally ambitious programmes for the following years to provide high-quality live music for the city of Exeter and the surrounding area.

Staging major concerts is increasingly costly and can no longer be achieved solely through ticket sales and members' subscriptions. We also need the support and generosity of individuals and of our local business community.

There are various ways you can support us – as a Friend, a Sponsor, an Advertiser and/or a Donor – and by remembering the choir in your will.



## Become a Friend of Exeter Philharmonic Choir

As a Friend you will have priority booking for our coming season and a 15% discount for one or more concerts (according to level of Friend subscription). You will also receive a complimentary programme with your discounted ticket and a complimentary ticket to a special Friends event during the year. You will be welcome to join us at post-concert receptions and be invited to come to a rehearsal, attend our AGM and join in other choir events.

In addition, Friends receive a regular Newsletter, and your support will be acknowledged in all concert programmes and on the choir website.

For more information about the Friends Scheme or to join, please contact [friends@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk](mailto:friends@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk)

## Business sponsorship and advertising

We are keen to involve the wider local business community in our concert activities and offer both sponsorship and advertising opportunities.

Business sponsorship can be tailored to suit the specific interests and marketing needs of your business, including regular programme advertising, sponsoring a professional soloist or concert venue, or supporting printing or other concert costs.

In return, we offer circulation of your corporate message to more than 150 performers (including instrumentalists), audiences of around 700 for our Cathedral concerts and several thousand music-lovers on our mailing lists.

For further details, please contact  
[sponsorship@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk](mailto:sponsorship@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk)

### We are grateful for the support of our sponsors



## Donations and legacies

We very much appreciate individual donations of any size to support our work, as well as donations made through legacies in a will.

Donations and legacies can benefit the choir in so many ways: hiring venues such as Exeter Cathedral; engaging and encouraging talented young soloists; and working with top orchestras and ensembles to enhance the Exeter musical scene.

The choir is a registered charity and legacies to charities can also be beneficial in inheritance tax arrangements.

To discuss possibilities of individual donations or legacies, please contact [finance@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk](mailto:finance@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk)

## Tickets

### Booking opens on 1 September 2025

online at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/exeterphilchoir](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/exeterphilchoir)  
by telephone on 0333 666 3366

#### Discounts

- 10% discount when 10 or more tickets are purchased at the same time. This discount cannot be used with any other concessions.
- For children (18 years and under), students presenting valid university student ID and those receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or Universal Credit, a discount of 50% is offered on all tickets.

#### Wheelchairs

If you are a wheelchair user and wish to remain in your chair during the concert, please call us on 0300 102 1379 before you book. A complimentary carer's ticket is available for wheelchair users.

#### Terms and conditions of ticket sales

Exeter Philharmonic Choir is unable to offer refunds unless a concert is sold out. If a concert is sold out, we will endeavour to resell your tickets. However, we can offer no guarantee of sale. For further information contact [tickets@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk](mailto:tickets@exeterphilharmonic.org.uk)

#### General enquiries

Please call us on 0300 102 1379.



Exeter  
Philharmonic  
Choir

2025/2026 season