



“one of Britain’s very best choirs” (New York Times)

Choir | Consort | Orchestra | Education
Jeffrey Skidmore OBE Artistic Director & Conductor

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Role Description

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Remuneration: | The role of Chair is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although expenses for travel may be claimed |
| Time commitment: | Currently 2-3 days per month, including quarterly Board meetings. See ‘Terms’ below for more details |
| Location: | Ex Cathedra is based in Birmingham and the Chair must be willing and able to be in Birmingham on a regular basis |
| Reporting to: | Board of Trustees |

Having paused the process to take account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Ex Cathedra is now resuming the search for a senior leader with a passion for the arts and a track record of delivering organisational growth and resilience.

The successful person will take over as Chair at what was always a pivotal point in our development, and is now also a crucial period of recovery and renewal following the pandemic.

Building on the extraordinary artistic successes of its first 50 years, Ex Cathedra is poised to enter a new chapter with the transition to a successor for artistic director and founder Jeffrey Skidmore, and opportunities presented by ambitious plans for celebrating our 50th anniversary. Leading through the transition, ensuring an inspiring vision and brand for the new era, and securing financial growth are all priorities at this exciting time.

The financial recovery of the organisation, maintaining a vibrant digital offer and an accelerated programme to diversify the Board, staff, performers and audiences are now also extremely important for long-term sustainability and success.

The Chair will hold the Board and Management Team to account for Ex Cathedra’s mission, values and vision, providing inclusive leadership to the Board of Trustees, setting strategic direction and ensuring that each trustee is aware of and fulfils their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity. The Chair will also support, and, where appropriate, challenge the Artistic Director (existing and new), General Manager, Director of Education, and other members of the management team and ensure that the Board functions as a cohesive unit and works closely with the entire management team of the charity to achieve agreed objectives. He or she will act as an ambassador and the public face of the charity in partnership with the Artistic Director and Management Team.

Principal responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Provide inspiring leadership to the Charity and its Board, ensuring Ex Cathedra has maximum impact for its beneficiaries
- Ensure that impact and excellence for audiences, learners and other beneficiaries are at the heart of our decision-making, driven by a value-led and innovative culture
- Set the agenda for change, ensuring clear long-term strategic direction; marrying artistic, educational and participation aspirations, with organisational and financial objectives, whilst operating within charitable objectives
- Have responsibility for the Board fulfilling its duties to maintain the Charity's financial health, and seek innovative ways in which to do so
- Ensure that the Board is able to review major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfy itself that it can capitalise on opportunities, and manage and mitigate the risks

Governance

- Ensure excellent governance, including maintaining Safeguarding controls, working in the most effective way for the Charity.
- Leading and enabling a broad and balanced Board of Trustees reflecting the wider population with the right balance and range of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead the Charity effectively,
- Encourage the development of the knowledge and capability of the Board of Trustees, including embracing appropriate and up to date technologies and methods to engage with the wide range of people who participate in and experience Ex Cathedra activities, both now and in the future.
- Encouraging and leading positive change and, where appropriate, address and lead on resolving challenges and any conflicts within the organisation

External Relations and Fundraising

- Act as a passionate and committed advocate for Ex Cathedra, visible in the region and nationally, creating a network of influential contacts and attending concerts, education, learning and participation activities on a regular basis
- Maintain close relationships with stakeholders, partners and potential supporters including key members of the Arts, Education and Arts in Health Communities in the UK, and with key influencers, across both public funders and an increasingly diverse range of other stakeholders
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation when appropriate
- Facilitate change and address any potential conflict with external stakeholders

Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process
- Garner the expertise and talents of individual trustees to deliver the shared vision
- Lead the identification and selection of trustees, ensuring diversity of people and skills
- Work closely with the General Manager to give direction to Board policy-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of trustees
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

Relationship with the Artistic Director and senior management team

- Establish and build a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Artistic Director, General Manager, and Director of Education and the wider management team to support ongoing artistic and operational delivery of the highest quality
- Support the General Manager, Director of Education and management team, to convert long-term strategic objectives of Ex Cathedra into shorter-term tactics and change actions
- Maintain regular contact with the whole senior team and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges
- Liaise with the General Manager and Director of Education to maintain an overview of the Charity's affairs, providing support as necessary

The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive. The Chair will be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.

Terms

The Charity's Chair (and board members) serve a three-year term, renewal to a maximum of nine years.

The time commitment is currently c.2-3 days per month, including:

- quarterly board meetings in Birmingham
- involvement in sub-groups and working-groups meeting in Birmingham
- concerts and other events in Birmingham, across the region and in London
- ongoing contact with Artistic Director and General Manager between Board meetings
- attending high level events on behalf of Ex Cathedra
- calls, lunches and meetings with key stakeholders

We ask all trustees to undertake a DBS check.

Person Description

In addition to the qualities required of a Trustee of the Charity, the Chair should also meet the following requirements:

Personal Qualities

- Have a strong interest in/passion for music and especially singing, and the role, importance and potential power of music in education and health/wellbeing sectors
- Demonstrate a strong and visible commitment to Ex Cathedra, its strategic objectives and cause
- Purpose and value driven
- Stimulated by challenge and the opportunity to make a difference
- Ability to nurture the Management Team in forming and communicating long-term strategic vision
- Personal gravitas to lead a significant national organisation
- Exhibit strong inter-personal and relationship building abilities and be comfortable in an ambassadorial role
- Demonstrate tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively
- Strong networking capabilities that can be utilised for the benefit of the Charity and its beneficiaries
- Ability to inspire, promote and enable a collaborative team environment
- Ability to commit time to conduct the role well, including travel and attending events out of office hours

Experience

- Experience of successfully operating at a senior strategic leadership level within an organisation
- Experience of charity governance, chairing meetings and events, working with or as part of a Board of Trustees and managing change
- Experience of external representation, and managing stakeholders
- Track record of innovation and organisational change

Knowledge and skills

- Broad knowledge and understanding of the UK Arts, Education and arts in health sectors and current opportunities and challenges and a willingness to enhance that understanding over time
- Understanding and confidence to facilitate wider diversity of trustees and staff
- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate staff and volunteers and bring people together
- Financial acumen and a broad understanding of charity finance issues
- Good understanding of charity governance issues

Appointment process

1. Letter of application and CV

We are asking interested candidates to develop your expression of interest into a formal letter which responds to this role description, and send it with your CV to:

- Jill Robinson, Search Committee, Ex Cathedra, CBSO Centre, Berkley Street, Birmingham B1 2LF
- or email info@excathedra.co.uk, marked FAO Jill Robinson

The deadline is Tuesday 8 September.

Ex Cathedra is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in its employment practices, and values diversity. To help us monitor and improve our ability to reach a range of applicants, we encourage applicants for performer, staff and trustee vacancies to complete our [Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form](#), which is anonymous and not part of the selection process.

2. Meeting with Chair search subcommittee

The Chair Search subcommittee of the Board will then invite candidates for a virtual meeting lasting around an hour with members of the subcommittee and the General Manager during weeks commencing 7 & 14 September.

3. Subsequent meetings

You may be invited to a second virtual meeting with the full subcommittee and a meeting with the artistic director in late September which would be arranged with you at the time.

About Ex Cathedra



Ex Cathedra is a leading UK choir and Early Music ensemble with a repertoire that reaches from the 12th to the 21st centuries. Founded in 1969 by Jeffrey Skidmore, the group has grown into a unique musical resource, comprising specialist chamber choir, vocal Consort, period-instrument orchestra and a thriving education programme, aiming to explore, research and commission the finest choral music and to set the highest standards in performance and training.

We present a series of concerts in Birmingham - where we are an Associate Artist at Town Hall & Symphony Hall - across the Midlands, and in London. We enjoy invitations to appear at festivals and concert series across the UK and abroad.

As well as bringing new insights to choral masterpieces, we are committed to expanding the choral repertoire. We have recorded three best-selling CDs of newly re-discovered music from the Latin American Baroque and are regarded as leading interpreters of music from the French Baroque.

We are also proud of our reputation for championing new choral music. Highlights in recent years have included Stockhausen's 'World Parliament' from *Mittwoch aus Licht*, James MacMillan's oratorio *Seven Angels*, *A Shakespeare Masque* by the Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and composer Sally Beamish, and several major works from Alec Roth.

"a phenomenal feat of musicianship" (New Yorker)

Ex Cathedra has made a significant number of highly regarded recordings for ASV, Hyperion, NMC, Orchid Classics, SOMM, Signum, and on its own label. *A French Baroque Diva* with Carolyn Sampson won a Gramophone Award in 2015 whilst *Britten to America* was Grammy nominated. The most recent release, *Celestial Bird*, surveys the choral music of Roxanna Panufnik, and includes two Ex Cathedra commissions.

An extensive programme of award-winning schools and community projects is delivered by a team of expert Vocal Tutors, all members of Ex Cathedra. *Singing Playgrounds* has reached over 900 primary schools across the UK and also schools in Belgium, China, New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand. *Singing Medicine* works bedside on every ward, every week at Birmingham Children's Hospital. *Singing Pathways* provides weekly group sessions for stroke patients at Solihull Hospital.

Nurturing talent is at the heart of our work. Our Academy of Vocal Music provides a choral training pathway for children and young people aged 2-18. Our Scholarships programme provides a year-long scheme for recent graduates as they establish their singing career, and our Student Scholarships provide opportunities for singers at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Our newest initiative, our Associate Conductor scheme enables emerging conductors to spend 5 months working intensively with Ex Cathedra and Jeffrey Skidmore.

“one of Britain's very best choirs... superb” ([New York Times](#))

“proof, if proof were needed, of why Ex Cathedra are regarded as one of the UK's elite choirs” ([www.seenandheard-international.com](#))

“Under the leadership of Jeffrey Skidmore this ensemble has acquired a justly-deserved reputation as one of the UK's finest chamber choirs. This disc [Celestial Bird] will surely enhance its reputation still further. It also serves to remind us that though they made their name for their historically informed performances of Baroque music, much of it rare, they have consistently been highly effective advocates for the choral music of our own time.” ([www.musicweb-international.com](#))

“possibly the best choral experience I have ever experienced as a member of the audience...I was completely absorbed from start to finish. I closed my eyes at times and was transported into the firmament. It was magical. I was enthralled.” ([Arts Council England assessor](#))

“Being a professional choral singer is such a unique vocation, with no real guide book on how to go about your work. Training with Ex Cathedra is that guide book which every young singer wants - lessons in how to be a professional in a safe, supportive environment. I am hugely grateful for this opportunity.” ([Ellie Sperling, 2018-19 Scholar](#))

“I really can't think of a comparative scheme in which a conductor is able to experience the breadth and depth of an organisation, from rehearsals to board meetings.” ([Sarah Latto, Associate Conductor, Spring 2019](#))



“We just want to say a huge thank you for what you do. When Marianne (I think that was her name, the lady with the horses 😊) first visited [redacted] on ward 18 at BCH some time early this year, our little girl was so overwhelmed by all the pokes and treatments and strangers and drugs that make her feel sick that she was quite traumatised and withdrawn. Marianne got out a horse hand puppet and gently sang with us - even though [redacted] didn't want to engage. She left the soft horse puppet behind which was then cuddled for the next few days - and when 'the singing lady' came

back to fetch her horse [redacted] was already more willing to play along. And so she came more and more out of her shell and back to her usual cheeky self - the one who chose the super sticky slug in the bravery box to play pranks on everybody which eventually turned into the slimy slug song 😊. I strongly believe that experience of song and the soft hand puppet to cuddle was the beginning of her remarkable recovery!” ([Parent of Singing Medicine recipient](#))

“[Redacted] has been part of the Junior Academy and Girl's Academy for a number of years and has gained so much from the experience. She has loved taking part in *The Nutcracker* at the Hippodrome, *St John Passion* at Symphony Hall and many other projects - amazing opportunities, which would not otherwise be available to her. These academies have expanded her horizons, given her confidence, which she did not have before - to sing to large audiences and in professional performances. This is a fantastic experience, we feel very lucky to be part of it.” ([Parent of Academy of Vocal Music singer](#))



“I have to confess, and this will not help my quest for alpha male of the year, that I had a little moment when the children were singing in the mall. I had to stop singing myself, save the world from witnessing a very embarrassing snot and sniffle incident and compose myself. I thought it was wonderful and I know from the sheer abandonment and exuberance that my children displayed that they did too.” ([Deputy Headteacher](#))