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EX CATHEDRA

INSPIRING SINGING



 **phenomenal**
The New Yorker

www.excathedra.co.uk

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Artistic Director & Conductor Jeffrey Skidmore OBE



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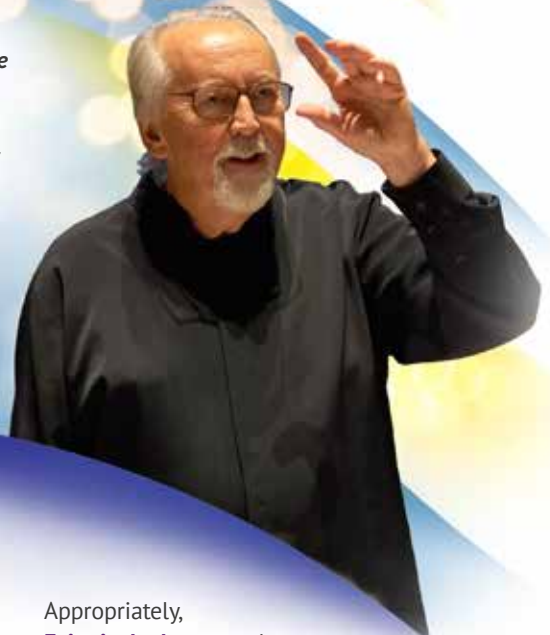
Birmingham
City Council

... to the heart



*Ex Cathedra stood out for the way they combine **technical excellence with warmth and humanity** ... They're seriously professional but also love the music into being, and **I don't think any choir in Britain does that better**”*

Michael White



As Ex Cathedra continues its exciting search for my successor, our new season looks at some of the highlights of our first 55 years. One of the key factors that makes Ex Cathedra special is the unique blend of carefully chosen singers - amateurs, students and professionals - which is deconstructed in some concerts this year to highlight the exceptional quality of the basic ingredients. I like to think of myself as an alchemist, a musical MasterChef or is that MaestroChef? From the beginning it has always been a team effort bringing together a group of like-minded musicians who love making music in a spirit of friendship and who love what they perform. Great music, new and old from around the world, has always been the driving force behind what we achieve.

Appropriately, **Faire is the heaven** takes place in the idealistic utopian Birmingham village of Bournville. From a council estate in Northfield I went to school there and was a chorister at St Francis Church. This programme includes music from Ex Cathedra's first 20 years or so, when I was a full-time teacher in four comprehensive schools in the region and all the singers, and the players, performed just for fun! Well-loved, popular and typically innovative repertoire was mixed with commissions from John Joubert and Martin Bates, and much of the music brings to mind the group's 'legendary' trips to Cork, Lyon, Leipzig and Milan. These special occasions built the ethos of the choir.

Ritual 1631 revisits the vivid colours, the fire and passion of **Latin American Baroque** music with a newly devised dramatic production around the

extraordinary cultural fusion of colonial music in this magical continent. The haunting mantra of the Inca hymn *Hanac pachap cussicuinin* (published 1631) provides the heartbeat that binds the narrative together.

Nurturing talent is a key feature in all of Ex Cathedra's work. **Chansons d'amour** platforms our current crop of future stars (Scholars) who perform a seductive programme of love-songs from Monteverdi to Bach and Mozart, from Marlene Dietrich to the Carpenters, Bacharach and the Beatles. As Valentine's Day approaches enjoy a little light music in the specially created romantic ambiance of the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space at Symphony Hall!

Education and participation are central to our work and the traditional Good Friday Bach Passion in Symphony Hall - this year the 'great' **St Matthew Passion** - has evolved into a powerful and poignant opportunity for 'historical' participation which brings all the elements of our work together through a liturgical reconstruction similar to that which might have been heard in the St Thomas Church in Leipzig in the 18th century. The audience and musicians' response last Good Friday was overwhelmingly positive.

Bach's music is sublime and has always been a major part of our work. His idealised setting of the **Mass in B Minor** is the absolute pinnacle of the great man's achievement and is one of Ex Cathedra's most loved works. No-one writes happy music, no-one writes sad music, no-one writes love-songs like Johann Sebastian Bach.

The two solstice concerts - Summer Music and Christmas Music - have for a long time attracted large audiences with

their mix of a diverse range of music and poetry presented and choreographed to explore the architecture and acoustic of the beautiful buildings in which we are privileged to perform. This year, the **Summer Music by Candlelight** programme includes an ornithological theme - the windhover, swallow, cuckoo and bluebird - with music by Clément Janequin, Benjamin Britten, Caroline Shaw, Charles Villiers Stanford and Liz Dilnot Johnson. There are poems by Carol Ann Duffy, Shakespeare, Maya Angelou and Benjamin Zephaniah alongside the usual selection of songs about sea, sun and sand.

For many people **Christmas Music by Candlelight** represents the start of Christmas. This year's unique programme is still a secret but will contain the usual eclectic mixture of seasonal goodies. Book early!

We celebrate the anniversaries of Gabriel Fauré (d.1924) and Gustav Holst (b.1874) and the 200th anniversary of Anton Bruckner's birth. Continuing a long history of artistic collaboration with many Birmingham companies (Kokomo, MAC, Black Voices, BRB), we perform his magnificent **Mass in E Minor** with CBSO wind players. This sacred symphony is one of Bruckner's greatest works.

There is something for everyone here. The golden triangle of music, performers and audience is elemental. So join us to discover some great classical choral music and find out how Birmingham's "jewel in the crown" is put together.



Jeffrey Skidmore,
April 2024

Summer Music by Candlelight

Hereford Cathedral
Wed 12 Jun 2024, 8pm ¹

**St Peter's Church,
Wolverhampton**
Thu 13 Jun 2024, 8pm ¹

St Paul's Church, Birmingham
Tue 18 Jun 2024, 8pm

**St Martin-in-the-Fields,
London**
Tue 25 Jun 2024, 8pm ¹

¹Performed by our Consort of 10 singers.

Tickets: £15 - £46
Age up to 17 & students: **£5**
Aged 18-30: **£15**

Discounts may vary at some venues,
full details online.



Sumer is icumen in - and we can't wait to celebrate the return of warm, light evenings, birdsong and holidays. As daylight fades and candles glow in the twilight, we invite you to unwind and enjoy an evening of enchanting music and readings. Expect choral classics, a sprinkle of surprises, and some fun as we journey from the promise of a new dawn to the serenity of sunset.

Bring your own strawberries and fizz for the interval at St Paul's and a cushion for your comfort. Refreshments will be available at all other venues.

Running time is approx. 2 hours including interval.

EX CATHEDRA
Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

 *a beautiful evening -
just magical*”
Audience member



Bruckner, Palestrina & Allegri

Bruckner's majestic motets and monumental Mass in E Minor form the centrepiece of this concert to mark his 200th birthday. Bruckner's sacred symphony draws inspiration from Renaissance Rome, and the timeless elegance of Palestrina. Allegri's ever popular *Miserere* – once shrouded in secrecy and renowned for its soaring soprano lines – completes the programme.

Running time is approx. 2 hours, including interval.

Bruckner Locus iste, Ave Maria,
Ecce sacerdos, Inveni David

Palestrina Missa sine nomine (Kyrie, Gloria)

Allegri Miserere

Bruckner Mass in E Minor

EX CATHEDRA

CBSO Wind & Brass

Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Town Hall, Birmingham

Sun 13 Oct 2024, 4pm

Tickets: £15 - £46

Age up to 17 & students: **£5**

Age 18-30: **£15**



Book online:
www.excathedra.co.uk

Faire is the heaven - beginnings in Bournville

St Francis Church, Bournville
Sat 9 Nov 2024, 7pm

Tickets: £26

Age up to 17 & students: **£5**

Aged 18-30: **£15**



You are invited to bring your own soft drinks and snacks for the interval.

Velvety richness, silky smooth notes, moments of pure indulgence ... several of life's pleasures began in Bournville! We return to the scene of our earliest concerts to celebrate the music Ex Cathedra performed during its first two decades - when the group was fully amateur and included several emerging stars. A moment of pure bliss!

Running time is approx. 2 hours including interval.

Programme includes:

Bainton And I saw a new heaven

Bates Blessed are the peace makers

Cavalieri Medici wedding music (extract)

Fauré Cantique de Jean Racine

Gibbons This is the record of John

Harris Faire is the heaven

Joubert O Lorde, the maker of al thing

Parry I was glad

Sheppard Reges Tharsis

Vaughan Williams Three Shakespeare Songs

EX CATHEDRA

Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Martyn Rawles organ





Bach Mass in B Minor

“A small product of the skill I have attained in Musique” wrote Bach as he sent two of the movements to the court of Dresden. That’s quite the job application, and rather an understatement! The movements were composed across 25 years and the Mass only assembled into its final form shortly before Bach’s death, so he never heard a complete performance. But what an epic work it is, showcasing supreme mastery and a profound beauty that resonates deeply within us.

Running time is approx. 2 hours, 10 minutes including interval.

EX CATHEDRA Choir & Baroque Orchestra

Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Margaret Lingas, Imogen Russell,

Katie Trethewey, Clover Willis soprano

Martha McLorinan, Elena Stamp alto

Daniel Marles tenor

Thomas Lowen, Lawrence White bass

Town Hall, Birmingham
Sun 1 Dec 2024, 4pm

Tickets: £15 - £46
Age up to 17 & students: **£5**
Aged 18-30: **£15**

SEE P14

**MULTIBUY
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Book online:
www.excathedra.co.uk

Christmas Music by Candlelight

Hereford Cathedral

Thu 5 Dec 2024, 7.30pm ¹

St James the Greater, Leicester

Sat 7 Dec 2024, 7pm ¹

Lichfield Cathedral

Tue 10 Dec 2024, 7pm ²

St Mary's Church, Moseley

Wed 11 Dec 2024, 7pm

St Martin-in-the-Fields, London

Fri 13 & Mon 16 Dec 2024, 7pm

St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton

Sat 14 Dec 2024, 7pm ¹

Coventry Cathedral

Tue 17 Dec 2024, 7pm

St Paul's Church, Birmingham

Thu 19 & Fri 20 Dec 2024, 7pm

Sat 21 Dec 2024, 4pm

¹ Performed by our Consort of 10 singers.

² Co-presented with Lichfield Festival

Tickets: £15 - £46

Age up to 17 & students: **£5**

Aged 18-30: **£15**

Discounts may vary at some venues,
full details online.

**MULTIBUY
SAVINGS &
DISCOUNTS**

SEE P14

Immerse yourself in the serene embrace of these popular, atmospheric concerts - where hushed anticipation and spellbinding seasonal music fills the air, and the choir is enveloped in the soft glow of candlelight. We perform a seamless sequence of Christmas favourites, little-known gems and gorgeous new music, interspersed with a selection of readings, to explore the magic, mystery - and humour - of the season.

Early booking is advised to avoid disappointment. Running time approx. 2 hours 10 minutes, including interval.

It is traditional to bring your own refreshments for the interval at St Paul's. Refreshments will be available to buy at all other venues.

EX CATHEDRA

Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Rupert Jeffcoat, Nicholas Wearne organ



Chansons d'amour - by arrangement

Join us for an enchanted evening, in a relaxed cabaret style, as our talented scholars perform love songs from Monteverdi's sensual madrigals to some of your favourite hits from recent decades, expertly arranged by Jeffrey Skidmore. Treat yourself – and perhaps a loved one – and indulge in this sensuous music as we approach Valentine's Day.

Running time approx. 2 hours, including interval.

EX CATHEDRA Scholars Ensemble
Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Jennifer Blackwell
Performance Space,
Symphony Hall
Wed 12 Feb 2025, 7pm

Tickets: £26
Age up to 17 & students: **£5**
Aged 18-30: **£15**



Book online:
www.excathedra.co.uk

Latin American Baroque Ritual 1631

Town Hall, Birmingham
Sun 9 Mar 2025, 4pm

Hereford Cathedral
Wed 12 Mar 2025, 7pm

St Martin-in-the-Fields, London
Thu 20 Mar 2025, 7.30pm

Tickets: £15 - £46

Age up to 17 & students: **£5**

Aged 18-30: **£15**

Discounts may vary at some venues,
full details online.



a heady mix of **gloriously rich polyphony and manic, earthy villancicos**. Skidmore has mined a rich vein of hitherto undiscovered music ... **exhilaratingly uninhibited**”

Birmingham Post

Singers, harp, guitar, bajón, strings, winds and percussion revel in this colourful music sung in Latin, Spanish, Nahuatl and Quechuan – the languages of the Aztecs and Incas – as we explore this glorious fusion of musical styles from Africa, the Americas and Europe.

The iconic Inca hymn *Hanac pachap cussicuinin*, the oldest printed polyphony in the Americas, punctuates a grand tour from Mexico to the Amazonian jungle, Brazil and Bolivia - where Juan de Araujo, probably the greatest composer of the age, worked for the last 30 years of his life.

Running time is approx. 2 hours including interval.

EX CATHEDRA & Baroque Ensemble
Jeffrey Skidmore conductor



Good Friday Bach St Matthew Passion

Betrayal, anguish, sacrifice and, above all, love. Bach's ability to capture in music such profound human drama and personal conflict makes this one of the most powerful of all choral works. We are drawn to empathise with the characters, share the anger of the mob, and are transfixed by the agonising beauty of exquisite, heart-rending arias. On Good Friday, this is a poignant and universal experience regardless of belief.

We explore the Good Friday traditions of Bach's time by including chorale preludes, motets, readings and a communal hymn.

Sung in German with English surtitles.

Running time: 3 hours, 30 minutes including interval.

EX CATHEDRA CHOIR, Baroque Orchestra & Academy of Vocal Music

Jeffrey Skidmore conductor

Sebastian Hill Evangelist

Themba Mvula Jesus

Lawrence White Pilate & bass I

Margaret Lingas, Imogen Russell soprano I

Martha McLorinan, Gabriella Liandu alto I

Katie Trethewey soprano II

Mercè Bruguera Abelló alto II

Daniel Marles tenor II

Thomas Lowen bass II

Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Fri 18 Apr 2025, 2pm

Tickets: £15 - £48.50



Book online:
www.excathedra.co.uk

Inspiring singing alongside the concerts

Let's get everyone singing! Singing together is powerful, it boosts wellbeing and turns individuals into communities. That's why, alongside our concerts and our youth choirs, we deliver an award-winning programme of activities for schools and healthcare settings.



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Visit www.singingschools.co.uk to explore our affordable, innovative projects which inspire, enable and support teachers and pupils of all ages.



A unique, high-quality resource, featuring diverse, world-class musicianship and modelling."

Music Teacher magazine, 2024

music&drama
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Ex Cathedra
Singing Medicine

We support health and wellbeing through singing, from bedside sessions at Birmingham Children's Hospital to dementia groups, stroke recovery to our Ladywood-based community choir.

Visit www.singingmedicine.co.uk to find out more.



Our Academy of Vocal Music choirs welcome young singers from toddlers to teenagers and offer a wide range of creative, learning and performing activities with a nurturing ethos.



Fabulous, fabulous work. It's about the difference it makes to those kids' lives, which is huge."

Parent

If you'd like to join one of our groups, or are interested in exploring how singing can transform your school or healthcare setting, please contact us. We'd be delighted to discuss how we can work together!
Email education@excathedra.co.uk



Can you help? Be an Angel!

As a charity, Ex Cathedra relies on many sources of income to support our work. By donating via our Host of Angels scheme you can support our work whilst enjoying priority booking and other benefits. Find out more about this and other ways you can help at: www.excathedra.co.uk/support-us.

Booking information

How can I book?

Online – www.excathedra.co.uk

Telephone – for tickets sold via B:Music, call **0121 780 3333** (lines open Mon-Sat 10am-2pm). Other box office numbers vary, see back cover.

You can choose to receive your tickets:
- as an e-ticket (no charge)
- by post (£2 surcharge per order)¹

When can I book?

Priority booking for our Host of Angels:

- Tue 14 May **Archangels, Thrones & Seraphim**
- Thu 16 May **Guardian Angels**
- Tue 21 May **Angels**

General sale **Thu 23 May**

Access

Everyone is welcome at our concerts, and we will do all we can to ensure you have a great experience with us.

All of our venues are accessible. Designated wheelchair and free companion spaces are available; please telephone the box office to book these. Any specific details regarding venue accessibility are noted on our webpage for the relevant event.

Our concerts are unamplified and audiences may reserve applause for the end of each half in some concerts.

If you have any questions, please do contact us and we'll be happy to help. If you have additional access requirements, please also raise these with the box office at the time of booking. If you are attending events sold by the B:Music box office, you may like to join the B:Music Access Scheme.

¹ Applies to eligible concerts sold through the B:Music box office. Other box offices may vary, please check when booking.

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Any tickets sold via B:Music that are priced £16+ are eligible. Tickets must be booked at the same time and discounts cannot be applied retrospectively.

Discounts are applied automatically.

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Students & under 30s ¹

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20% discount for groups of 10+.

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Per ticket commission reduced to £1

Email groupbookings@bmusic.co.uk or call free on

0121 289 6331 (10am to 2pm Mon- Fri).

Please note all tickets must be paid in one transaction.

Standby discounts ¹

Tickets priced £5 available from 1pm on the day of evening performances or 10am on matinees:

- Passport to Leisure holders
- Benefit Recipients (qualifying benefits are Universal Credit, Income Support, Pension Credit and Disability Tax Credit). Proof of eligibility may be required. ¹

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CBSO City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra



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CBSO Centre, Berkley Street,
Birmingham B1 2LF
T: 0121 616 3410
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The information in this brochure was correct at the time of going to press. Ex Cathedra reserves the right to change programmes and artists if necessary. Ticket prices may vary; customers will have to pay the prevailing price at the time of booking.

Dates at a glance 2024-25

Summer Music by Candlelight (2024)

Wed 12 Jun	Hereford Cathedral	01432 340 555
Thu 13 Jun	St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton	0121 780 3333
Fri 14 Jun	St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury	0333 666 3366
Tue 18 Jun	St Paul's Church, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
Tue 25 Jun	St Martin-in-the-Fields	020 7766 1100

Bruckner, Palestrina & Allegri

Sun 13 Oct	Town Hall, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
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Faire is the heaven

Sat 9 Nov	St Francis Church, Bournville	0121 780 3333
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Bach, Mass in B Minor

Sun 1 Dec	Town Hall, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
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Christmas Music by Candlelight

Wed 4 Dec	St John's Church, Hagley	See website
Thu 5 Dec	Hereford Cathedral	01432 340 555
Fri 6 Dec	St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury	0333 666 3366
Sat 7 Dec	St James the Greater, Leicester	0116 242 3595
Tue 10 Dec	Lichfield Cathedral	01543 306 271
Wed 11 Dec	St Mary's Church, Moseley	0121 780 3333
Fri 13 Dec	St Martin-in-the-Fields, London	020 7766 1100
Sat 14 Dec	St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton	0121 780 3333
Mon 16 Dec	St Martin-in-the-Fields, London	020 7766 1100
Tue 17 Dec	Coventry Cathedral	024 7655 3055
Thu 19 Dec	St Paul's Church, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
Fri 20 Dec	St Paul's Church, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
Sat 21 Dec	St Paul's Church, Birmingham (matinee)	0121 780 3333

Chansons d'amour

Wed 12 Feb	Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall	0121 780 3333
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Latin American Baroque – Ritual 1631

Sun 9 Mar	Town Hall, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
Wed 12 Mar	Hereford Cathedral	01432 340 555
Thu 20 Mar	St Martin-in-the-Fields, London	020 7766 1100

CBSO Northern Lights

Sat 5 Apr	Symphony Hall, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
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Bach St Matthew Passion

Fri 18 Apr	Symphony Hall, Birmingham	0121 780 3333
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Full details, additional dates & book online
www.excathedra.co.uk