



Composition competition

Oxford Harmonic Choir is holding a competition to select a composer to write a work for choir and orchestra, for first performance by the choir in 2019 and to be based on one of five texts chosen by the choir.

About the choir

Oxford Harmonic Choir is a good amateur mixed voice choir with a current membership of approximately 140 singers. Singers wishing to join are auditioned and every three years have a voice check. There is no sight singing test. It performs three concerts a year with a fully professional orchestra and professional vocal soloists.

The choir sings a classical repertoire ranging from baroque to modern, and aims to perform lesser known or new works alongside the established masterpieces. For more information about the choir go to www.oxfordharmonicchoir.org.

Prize

- A commission to compose a work for the choir in accordance with the specification below, to be performed as the first work in a concert given by the choir in Oxford Town Hall on 29 June 2019.
- The sum of £3,000, of which £1000 will be paid on completion of a satisfactory first draft and £2000 on completion of the score, vocal score and orchestral parts

Judges

- Suzi Digby, internationally renowned Choral Conductor and Music Educator
- Paul Max Edlin, composer, performer and lecturer
- Robert Secret, Music Director of the Oxford Harmonic Choir
- *For more about the judges, see <http://oxfordharmonicchoir.org/competition/>.*

Requirements for entry

You should submit:

- a minimum of two pieces of your work, including choral writing (preferably for SATB) and instrumental writing for chamber orchestra or full orchestra (but music for a large chamber ensemble would be acceptable).
- an brief outline describing in general terms your ideas for the musical treatment of one of the texts offered, how you see the spirit of the piece, and how you might use the forces at your disposal.
- a short CV and details of other compositions and performances.

You are also encouraged to supply CDs or mp3 files of the scores you submit. These need not be recordings of performances but could be, for example, be recordings made using music writing software.

Entry deadline

- 30 November 2017: closing date for entries

Eligibility for entering

- The competition is open to all UK and foreign nationals resident in the UK, except that members of the choir may not enter. There is no age limit.

How to enter

Entries should be submitted by email to competition@oxfordharmonicchoir.org or by post to OHC competition, 47 Templar Road, Oxford OX2 8LS.

Electronic files should be submitted in pdf form. If submitting on paper, please send three copies, which will be returned at the end of the process. Your name **should not** appear on the scores or outline you submit, whether electronic or paper.

Composition schedule for winning composer

- February 2018: winner announced
- Early October 2018: first draft of the new work submitted by winner
- February 2019: final scores and parts submitted
- June 2019: concert

Specification

1. The work will be performed in the first half of the concert, the second half of which will be the Mozart Requiem. It must:
 - be between 15 and 20 minutes in duration.
 - be entirely the composer's original work and written specifically for this commission.
 - be predominantly a choral work and appropriate to the standard of the choir and its style of repertoire. It would be desirable that the composer comes to hear the choir either at a rehearsal or concert early in the composition process.
 - take into account the fact that the orchestra, while fully professional, will only rehearse the piece once for 45 minutes in the afternoon of concert day (although parts will be sent out in advance).
 - set a text or texts chosen from the five options listed in the appendix on pages 4 - 8 of this document. Where two texts on the same theme are grouped together as one option, one or both may be used, or a combination of the two.
 - draw on the orchestral forces to be used for the Requiem in the second half, although it need not use all of them. It may also use any, all or none of the 4 vocal soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). The orchestration available is:
 - 2 basset horns, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, organ, strings (6 1st violins, 6 2nd violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos and 2 double basses, ie players, not desks).
 - clarinets may be substituted for basset horns
 - Up to 4 extra orchestral instruments can be added, but **NOT** a piano.
2. The winning composer will:
 - submit a first draft of the full score to the Music Director for approval and comment in early October 2018. (However, the composer will be encouraged to contact the Music Director at any stage in the composition process should any questions arise.)

- supply a full score, vocal score and a set of orchestral parts by February 2019. The parts should be produced on a high-quality music writing programme such as Sibelius, Finale or Dorico but very legible manuscript will also be accepted. The vocal scores should be written in open score, not short score, format. The duplication of the vocal score and string parts will be undertaken by the OHC.
- be expected to come to a choir rehearsal of the work in summer term 2019 and either watch and comment, or take all or part of the rehearsal. Reasonable travel expenses will be paid by the choir.
- be expected to attend the première on 29 June 2019

Intellectual property rights

All intellectual property rights remain with the composer except that:

- Oxford Harmonic Choir has the right to give the first performance of the work
- the composer will not permit any other choir to perform or record the work before 6 months has elapsed after its first performance

Regulations

- *The judges will not enter into any correspondence or discussion with candidates about the competition at any point, and their decision will be final.*
- *Should the winning composer find him or herself unable to undertake the commission as specified above it is imperative that he or she informs the choir at the earliest opportunity.*
- *If the first draft of the composition does not fulfil the requirements of the specification above the commission will be cancelled and a cancellation fee of £500 paid to the composer.*
- *If the first draft does not fulfil the spirit of the outline submitted in the winning entry, or of subsequent discussions with the Musical Director during writing, the commission may be cancelled and a cancellation fee of £500 paid to the composer.*
- *If the presentation of the first draft is deemed to be insufficiently legible by the Music Director and Committee of the choir the composer will be required to revise it for the final draft. In this case, £500 will be paid on first draft and the balance of the fee on final draft.*
- *If any entrant submits pieces which are not their own original work they will be disqualified. If this is discovered to apply to the winner after the judging has taken place the commission will be cancelled.*
- *If the commissioned work is found not to be the winning composer's original work before performance the commission will be cancelled and no fee paid. If after performance the composer will be required to return the fee and will be fully liable for any infringement of copyright involved.*

Queries

Please contact us on competition@oxfordharmonicchoir.org if you have any queries.

Appendix: texts for setting

Please choose one option from the five listed below, noting the following points:

- Where there are two related texts in one option (as in 1 and 4) you may set one or both, or combine selected text from the two.
- Where the texts are out of copyright (as in 1, 3, 4 and 5), parts of them may be used instead of the whole text.

1. **Two Holy Sonnets by John Donne**

(out of copyright)

At the round earth's imagin'd corners

At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go;
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace
When we are there; here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood.

Death, be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

2. **Rumi: *Where Everything Is Music***

(translated from 13th century Persian by Coleman Barks. Coleman Barks has generously given permission for this to be used without charge for all future performance and recording but please credit him as translator.)

Don't worry about saving these songs!
And if one of our instruments breaks,
it doesn't matter.
We have fallen into the place
where everything is music.
The strumming and the flute notes
rise into the atmosphere,
and even if the whole world's harp
should burn up, there will still be
hidden instruments playing.
So the candle flickers and goes out.
We have a piece of flint, and a spark.
This singing art is sea foam.
The graceful movements come from a pearl
somewhere on the ocean floor.
Poems reach up like spindrift and the edge
of driftwood along the beach, wanting!
They derive
from a slow and powerful root
that we can't see.
Stop the words now.
Open the window in the centre of your chest,
and let the spirits fly in and out.

3. **William Shakespeare: Fidele**

(out of copyright)

Fear no more the heat o'the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o'the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

(continued on next page)

Fear no more the lightening-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renowned be thy grave!

4. Two Summer Poems

(both out of copyright)

Robert Louis Stevenson: *Summer Sun*

Great is the sun, and wide he goes
Through empty heaven with repose;
And in the blue and glowing days
More thick than rain he showers his rays.

Though closer still the blinds we pull
To keep the shady parlour cool,
Yet he will find a chink or two
To slip his golden fingers through.

The dusty attic spider-clad
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;
And through the broken edge of tiles
Into the laddered hay-loft smiles.

Meantime his golden face around
He bares to all the garden ground,
And sheds a warm and glittering look
Among the ivy's inmost nook.

Above the hills, along the blue,
Round the bright air with footing true,
To please the child, to paint the rose,
The gardener of the World, he goes.

James Whitcomb Riley: *A Summer Afternoon*

A languid atmosphere, a lazy breeze,
With labored respiration, moves the wheat
From distant reaches, till the golden seas
Break in crisp whispers at my feet.

(continued on next page)

My book, neglected of an idle mind,
Hides for a moment from the eyes of men;
Or lightly opened by a critic wind,
Affrightedly reviews itself again.

Off through the haze that dances in the shine
The warm sun showers in the open glade,
The forest lies, a silhouette design
Dimmed through and through with shade.

A dreamy day; and tranquilly I lie
At anchor from all storms of mental strain;
With absent vision, gazing at the sky,
“Like one that hears it rain.”

The Katydid, so boisterous last night,
Clinging, inverted, in uneasy poise,
Beneath a wheat-blade, has forgotten quite
If “Katy DID or DIDN’T” make a noise.

The twitter, sometimes, of a wayward bird
That checks the song abruptly at the sound,
And mildly, chiding echoes that have stirred,
Sink into silence, all the more profound.

And drowsily I hear the plaintive strain
Of some poor dove . . . Why, I can scarcely keep
My heavy eyelids--there it is again--
“Coo-coo!”--I mustn’t--“Coo-coo!”--fall asleep!

5. William Wordsworth: lines 89–112 from *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*
(out of copyright)

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
(continued on next page)

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, both what they half-create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.