



Renaissance Choral Day

Gems from the golden age of polyphony in three London churches

Tuesday 30 June 2026 (MM 102)

Our London Choral Days are unique and very special events, presenting professional choral ensembles in beautiful buildings. They take the form of a sequence of three concerts interspersed with spoken commentary, walks between the venues, and a good lunch.

They are conceived not as three discrete concerts but as an integrated musical experience. The pleasures are architectural as well as musical, the event taking place in three exceptionally fine churches which are all very different from each other.

For the summer 2026 iteration we have selected three churches which showcase the architectural variety of Central London churches in the Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic traditions.

An extraordinary and little-trumpeted feature of London is the presence of a remarkable collection of church, chapel and cathedral choirs. No other city on Earth can boast so many first-rate ensembles. In this vocal ecosystem, professional choirs of all sorts flourish. We have selected three of the best, who are presenting programmes of some of the finest Renaissance choral music from across Europe.

Concerts

THE LONDON ORATORY

The Choir of the London Oratory

By kind permission of the Fathers of the Oratory

The London home to the Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, it possesses the full panoply of broad vaulted nave, capacious side chapels, high dome, polychromatic marble revetment, gilded highlights and over-life-size figure sculpture in carrara and stucco. The set of Apostles was made for Siena Cathedral in the 1680s.

The Plymouth-bred, Dublin-based, Catholic-convert architect Herbert Gribble was chosen by competition in 1878 and the church was largely complete before the end of the century.

Founded in 1852, the Choir of the London Oratory is the UK's senior professional Catholic church choir and sings for all the major Latin liturgies at the Oratory. Comprising some of London's leading ensemble singers, the choir is internationally renowned. Its working repertoire covers all aspects and periods of



Photograph: The London Oratory, Sanctuary.

music for the Latin Rite from Gregorian chant to the present day. The Director of Music, Patrick Russill, is also Emeritus Head of Choral Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music.

The programme consists of music by Victoria and Palestrina sung to celebrate the summer feasts, including the feast of St Philip Neri himself.

PROGRAMME: **Tomás Luis de Victoria** *Magnificat primi toni (II)* — *Vadam et circuibo* — **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina** *Dum complerentur* — *Missa Tu es Petrus* (Kyrie, Gloria) — *Salve Regina a 8* — **Victoria** *O sacrum convivium a 6* — *Dixit Dominus*

ST PETER'S, EATON SQUARE

The Choir of St Peter's, Eaton Square

A third of a mile long, Eaton Square is one of the largest of London's 'squares' – an extended oblong in this case – and is one of the grandest. It lies at the heart of the 200-acre Five Fields estate which since 1677 has belonged to the Grosvenor family, later Dukes of Westminster. Development began in earnest in the 1820s; the Church of St Peter was begun in 1824.

Externally, this is a Greek Revival church with an austere magnificent Ionic portico by the architect Henry Hakewill. Fifty years later the interior was given a sumptuous High Victorian makeover, but that and the surviving original features were largely destroyed by fire (arson)

in 1987. The refurbishment by the Braithwaite Partnership resulted in a light and airy interior which blends old with new, a Georgian space with slender steel columns, well-crafted woodwork and a gold mosaic apse.

The choir, under the inspirational directorship of Andrew-John Smith, is one of the very finest in London. Their programme *Music from the Morley Seven* consists of music by seven composers named in Thomas Morley's *A plaine and easie introduction to practick musicke* (1597), a guide to the art of counterpoint and composition.

PROGRAMME: **John Taverner** *Mater Christi sanctissima* — **Robert Parsons** *Ave Maria* — **William Mundy** *Memor esto verbi tui* — **William Byrd** *Peccantem me, quotidie* — **John Sheppard** *In pace* — **Robert Fayrfax** *O lux beata Trinitas* — **Robert White** *Exaudiat te, Dominus*

ALL SAINTS, MARGARET STREET

Stile Antico

Historically and artistically, All Saints Margaret Street is arguably the most important Gothic Revival church in London. Building began in 1850 to a design by William Butterfield under the scrutiny of the Tractarian wing of the Church of England, for whom it was intended to be a model modern church.

Renaissance Choral Day
continued



London, All Saint's Margaret Street, etching 1911 by C.H. Ellwood.

The red and black brick exterior harbours an interior of unsurpassed richness. The designs that adorn the walls and pillars owe much to Ruskin. The vast, tiled panels on the North wall, depicting a variety of scenes from the Bible and the Early Church, were designed by Butterfield to replace his original geometric patterns, first erected in 1873 in memory of the first vicar, William Upton Richards.

Stile Antico is firmly established as one of the world's most accomplished and innovative vocal ensembles. The group performs regularly throughout Europe and North America and its recordings have received major awards including the Diapason d'Or de l'Année. Working without a conductor, they rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing to the musical result. Their performances have repeatedly been praised for their vitality, expressiveness and imaginative response to the text.

Their programme *In Honour of the Saints* explores the lives of the saints – those legendary figures who inspired the Church, and are believed to intercede on behalf of Christian worshippers. They sing motets in honour of the Apostles Peter, James and Andrew, venerate the Virgin Mary, St William of York, St Katherine, St Cecilia (the patron saint of music) and – in his anniversary year – the great Francis of Assisi, in a mouthwatering selection of motets from Renaissance England, Flanders, Italy and Spain. The concert concludes with a Mass which carries its own particular legend: that

it is popularly believed to have saved church music from oblivion.

PROGRAMME: Tomás Luis de Victoria *O quam gloriosum* — John Taverner *O Wilhelme pastor bone* — Ambrosio Cotes *O lux et decus Hispaniae* — Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina *Tu es Petrus* — Thomas Crecquillon *Andreas Christi famulus* — Jerónimo de Aliseda *Beatus Franciscus* — Nicolas Gombert *Virgo sancta Katherina* — Palestrina *Cantantibus organis (prima pars)* — Claudio Monteverdi *Stabat virgo Maria* — William Byrd *Optimam partem elegit* — Palestrina *Missa Papae Marcelli (Credo)*

Practicalities

Start: c. 11.00am, The London Oratory (Brompton Oratory), Brompton Road, SW7 (½ mile from South Kensington station, or ½ mile from Knightsbridge station). Doors open 30 minutes before.

Finish: c. 5.45pm, All Saints, Margaret Street, W1W (¼ mile from Oxford Circus Station).

Included: Admission to the three concerts; a two-course lunch and afternoon refreshments; programme booklet; the services of members of staff. Underground fares are not included because many of you are entitled to free transport. Each of the two journeys costs £2.80, and fares for a day are capped at £8.90.

Getting around. Travel between venues is by the London Underground (two journeys, each of two stops, no changes). There are nevertheless walks of about ½ mile at most between churches, restaurants and stations. You are of course welcome to arrange taxis if you wish.

Lunch and refreshments. Lunch is in a selection of good restaurants near the first concert venue. Audience members are arbitrarily pre-assigned to a particular one. Tea and biscuits are served in the afternoon before the final concert.

Audience size: between 100 and 150.

Booking: you do not need to complete a booking form for this event. Book online at www.martinrandall.com or call us to book over the telephone.