

PRESS RELEASE: 27 January 2015



Eight of the UK's best young singers selected for National Youth Chamber Choir's inaugural Fellowship programme

The National Youth Chamber Choir, the senior ensemble of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain today announces the first eight singers who have been selected for its inaugural Fellowship programme.

The Fellowship will run from September 2015 – August 2016 and is a brand new professional development programme which aims to create the most highly-skilled and multi-talented young choral singers in the UK. It offers a unique package of training and benefits to prepare the singers for professional musicianship. The year-long Fellowship will provide extensive training in performance, ensemble work, musical leadership and pedagogy to enable the singers to become outstanding performers and educators, equipped for a successful career in choral music.

Over 50 singers from around the UK applied for the programme, and, following a rigorous three-round audition process which included solo performance, sight-reading of contemporary vocal scores, on-the-spot improvisation and ensemble work, eight of the UK's best young singers have been appointed to this exclusive programme.

The mixed-voice octet will form the elite core of the 24-voice National Youth Chamber Choir and will perform throughout the UK and abroad, both with the choir and as a solo ensemble. The singers will each receive an award of £4,000 for the 50 days of engagements and training including concerts, international events, educational projects, and recording weekends with the option to earn more through additional performances.

The eight Fellowship holders range in age from 22 - 25 and come from towns across the UK:

Bethany Partridge, soprano, 22, Exeter

Bethany is the soprano section leader of National Youth Choir and a former choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. Bethany hopes the scheme will help her fulfil her ambition of becoming a professional singer.

Aimee Presswood, soprano, 22, Birmingham

Soprano Aimee is a graduate of the Genesis Sixteen programme and has wide experience as a soloist including performances of contemporary opera. She is also an experienced conductor and is looking to the scheme to help her improve her skills and further her career.

Joseph Judge, countertenor, 23, Leicester

Countertenor Joseph is a freelance singer and conductor. He is also Director of Music at Bury Parish Church where he has developed the music theory and tuition programme. He sees this scheme as an opportunity to develop all aspects of his career.

Rebekah Jones, alto, 22, Lymm, Cheshire

Since graduating from Kings College London, alto Rebekah has worked as a professional freelance singer. She is a former member of Halle Youth Choir and Orchestra and is looking to develop high-level musicianship skills through the scheme.

Jack Holton, bass, 23, Rainham, Kent

Bass Jack is currently studying voice at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with ambition to go into opera. Through this scheme he hopes to develop his choral leadership skills, first acquired through his work as an Early Years Practitioner at nursery level.

Timothy Coleman, tenor, 24, Aberdeen

Timothy is a tenor and a current Lay Clerk at New College, Oxford, which has involved solo work on broadcasts and recordings. For Timothy, this scheme presents the opportunity to learn how to conduct and direct.

Gareth Thomas, bass, 22, London

Bass Gareth spent three years as a choral scholar at Jesus College, Cambridge followed by a year at Hereford Cathedral. A former boy chorister at St George's Windsor Castle and director of his own ensembles, Gareth is pursuing a career in singing and interested in developing mentoring skills through the scheme.

John Clapham, tenor, 22, London

Tenor John is a Gentleman of the Choir of St John's College in Cambridge as well as Director/Musical Arranger of their close-harmony group, The Gents. He looks to refine his singing skills through this scheme.

National Youth Chamber Choir

The National Youth Chamber Choir is the senior ensemble of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain. From 2015, the core of the ensemble will be formed by eight Fellowship holders selected at open audition while further members are selected from audition within the National Youth Choir. The National Youth Chamber Choir performs 5-10 engagements annually, both independently and as part of National Youth Choir concerts, encompassing performance, education and recording projects. The Fellowship octet also undertakes standalone engagements. Appearances in 2014 included the Aldeburgh Festival and the City of London Festival, while 2015 brings performances at the American Choral Directors Association Convention in Salt Lake City, USA, and the City of London Festival and a programme of workshops at the UK's leading music colleges.

National Youth Choirs of Great Britain

The National Youth Choirs of Great Britain exists to discover and foster exceptional musical talent, to provide inspirational teaching and guidance, to extend musical opportunities to young people from all communities and backgrounds and to thrill audiences with passionate and innovative music-making. The organisation comprises eight choirs with a total of approximately 800 singers: Junior Boys (9-15), Cambiata Voices (Boys ages 9-15), Junior Girls (10-13), Senior Girls (13-15), Training Choir North, Training Choir South (13-18) the National Youth Choir (16-24) and the National Youth Chamber Choir (18-25). Entry to all eight ensembles is determined by annual open and internal auditions, while members of the National Youth Choir are subject to annual re-auditions. In 2014, NYCGB performed concerts in Birmingham Town Hall, Coventry Cathedral, Leeds Town Hall (broadcast on BBC Radio 3), Sage Gateshead and Royal Festival Hall including collaborations with Shlomo, Southbank Sinfonia, the Crioich Quartet and the Royal Academy of Music. 2015 brings concerts in Queen Elizabeth Hall, Truro Cathedral, Lincoln Cathedral and the Sheldonian Theatre and an exciting new collaboration with The Real Group. The NYCGB's widening regional engagement programme has led to successful new recruitment and workshop initiatives in Cornwall and West Cumbria, with new partnerships in Suffolk, Manchester, Leeds, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire envisaged for 2015.

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Dedicated resource page live at nycgb.org.uk/activities/Fellowship

For further press information please contact:

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

Tel: 020 7247 1894

Email: rebecca@rdmr.co.uk | nasarene@rdmr.co.uk | emily@rdmr.co.uk