

The Choir of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal is the oldest continuous musical organisation in the world. It has existed since there have been Christian Kings in England, and its duties today are essentially the same as they have been for a thousand years and more: to sing the regular services in the Chapel of the Monarch's home, and to attend the Monarch at services and other events elsewhere as commanded. Almost all of the principal names in English music have been members of the Chapel Royal, including Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Purcell and Handel.

The choir is based in the two Chapels at St. James's Palace. Services are sung in the Tudor Chapel Royal, decorated by Holbein in honour of Henry VIII's marriage to Anne of Cleves. Queen Mary I's heart is buried beneath the choir-stalls, and Charles I spent his last night in what is now the choir's rehearsal room (later Purcell's bedroom) before receiving communion in the Chapel before his execution. Queen Victoria was married here, as was George V. Services are also held in The Queen's Chapel, built by Inigo Jones for the bride of Charles I, and in the Chapels of Kensington and Buckingham Palaces. The choir also takes part in many State and National ceremonies, and at private events within the Royal Household.

There are six Gentlemen in Ordinary and ten choristers and a Sub-Organist. The boys are traditionally known as the Children of the Chapel Royal, and wear the distinctive State uniform introduced at the Restoration. The boys all attend the City of London School, and receive a choral scholarship from The Queen to the value of approximately two-thirds of the fees during the period they are choristers. Boys normally audition for the choir aged 7 or 8, though it is occasionally possible for older boys to be considered. If this is successful, an academic assessment at the school follows which will, if passed, guarantee a place at the school for the year in which they turn 10. Boys join the choir as probationers, becoming full choristers when one of the existing ten choristers leaves. They will almost always be probationers, and often choristers, while still at their previous school.

Services are sung every Sunday morning except during August and September and the Sundays after Easter and after Christmas, and on a number of other occasions as required by the Church year. There are additional events such as carol services, recordings, concerts and broadcasts as arranged. Rehearsals are held four times each week during school term at CLS at the end of the school day, once a week outside school term. Probationers attend only some of these events, full choristers attend all.

Interested families are very warmly encouraged to contact Miss Melissa Morris or The Reverend Prebendary William Scott, Sub-Dean of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, for further information or to arrange an informal meeting. In addition, services are open to the public and all members of the public are most welcome to attend. For details, see www.royal.gov.uk/output/page3253.asp

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