

23 MAY – 31 MAY 2026



ELGAR FESTIVAL 2026

KENNETH WOODS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER PATRON

THE ELGAR
FESTIVAL IS
FOR EVERYONE!

CONCERTS, TALKS,
EXHIBITIONS AND
WALKS - ELGAR IS
FOR YOU!

*Elgar for
Everyone*

£2

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



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We are proud to be working with the following local partner organisations:



BOX OFFICE: www.elgarfestival.org / Worcester Theatres 01905 611427
/ on the door where available; or in person at Huntingdon Hall Box
Office, Crowngate, Worcester WR1 3LD (Sat nav postcode: WR1 2ES)

WELCOME



Welcome to our annual Elgar Festival, the official celebration of his music and influences in the city and county of his birth, life, and death. It is a great pleasure to be able to showcase a range of new, young, innovative talent alongside performers with national and international experience. Where else will you get such a wonderful tapestry of ticketed, free and accessible concerts?

We are grateful to the many volunteers who support the administration and delivery of our programme as well as the performers and their families. We value especially our funders and partners. Putting a festival like this together in these straitened times for arts funding is a challenge, but it was one we take on readily and we know just how appreciative and supportive you, as our audiences, can be.

Enjoy this year's Festival and I hope to see you again in 2027!

Dr Adrian Gregson *Chairman*



WWW.ELGARFESTIVAL.ORG

ABOUT THE 2026 FESTIVAL



It has become a rather joyful tradition here in Worcester. Every spring, we celebrate music, life and legacy of Britain's greatest composer with a week of concerts, family events, walks, talks and more: the Elgar Festival.

It is, of course, a celebration of music, but it is also a celebration of place. Edward Elgar was born here and spent most of his creative life living, composing, teaching and conducting in Worcestershire and Herefordshire. His music is infused with his love of the Severn, the Malvern Hills and the quiet rural lanes which link the many villages he loved cycling to and from. Today,

his music brings us together in the spirit of preservation and celebration, as we all work together to make sure that both this remarkable music and the landscapes which inspired it are available and accessible to the next generation.

This year's Festival is a true banquet of music. Elgar's *Falstaff* is one of his greatest and most visionary works, a moving and witty portrait of one of Shakespeare's most compelling characters. His dramatic oratorio *The Black Knight* shows the young Elgar brimming with talent, mastery and intensity. And his autumnal *Cello Concerto*, heard this year in the version for viola made by his friend Lionel Tertis, holds a special place in British musical life by virtue of its lyricism and meditative beauty.

This year's Featured Composer is the Scottish/American Thea Musgrave. I still vividly remember my first acquaintance with her music. It was love at first encounter, and I'm so pleased and honoured that she, and her work, are an integral part of this year's Festival. We are incredibly grateful to the Royal Philharmonic Society's Musgrave Fund for supporting our celebration of her music.

As always, it is the remarkable musicians of the English Symphony Orchestra who are the heart and soul of the festival. Working alongside a wealth of choirs, bands, youth orchestras and soloists, they are the living embodiment of Elgar's musical legacy. This year, we're particularly excited to welcome one of the world's leading chamber choirs, I Fagiolini, who come to the Elgar Festival as part of their celebrations of their 40th Anniversary. And we couldn't be more delighted to welcome back some of our dearest collaborators including soprano April Fredrick, violist Rosalind Ventris and oboist Nicholas Daniel, who helped crown our inaugural Festival with his performance in the 2018 Gala Concert.

Thank you for being part of this magical week. Elgar really is for EVERYONE!

Kenneth Woods Artistic Director



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

KENNETH WOODS

Artistic Director

Hailed by Gramophone Magazine as 'a symphonic conductor of stature', American conductor Kenneth Woods was appointed Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the English Symphony Orchestra in 2013, and has quickly built up an impressive and acclaimed body of work and recordings with them. Woods is also the Artistic Director of both the Colorado MahlerFest – the only US organisation other than the New York Philharmonic to receive the International Gustav Mahler Society's Gold Medal – and the Elgar Festival in Worcester.



Kenneth's fascination with the music of Elgar began when, as a young American cellist exploring music for his instrument, he stumbled upon Elgar's Cello Concerto. He has since become a passionate exponent of Elgar's music outside Britain, often bringing Elgar's works to audiences and orchestras whose knowledge of the composer was previously limited to a tiny portion of his output. In 2015, Kenneth led the English

Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of Donald Fraser's orchestration of the Elgar Piano Quintet, a concert Birmingham Post Critic Christopher Morley called '[One] of the most exciting events I have experienced during a reviewing career approaching half a century' declaring that Fraser's orchestration 'deserves to be acknowledged immediately as a worthy addition to the Elgar canon.' That performance was also singled out by Classical Music Magazine as 2015 Premiere of the Year, and the resulting recording on Avie Records was Classic FM Disc of the Month in May 2016. In 2022, Ken and the ESO released Elgar Reimagined in partnership with the Elgar Festival. Through it all, the Cello Concerto has remained a huge part of his musical life. Since discovering the work as a teenager, he's performed it as a soloist many times and conducted many more, perhaps most memorably when he had the honour of conducting the official 100th Anniversary performance of the work with Raphael Wallfisch and the ESO in Worcester Cathedral at the 2019 Elgar Festival. As a guest, Woods has conducted ensembles including the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia and the English Chamber Orchestra, and has made numerous broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, National Public Radio and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He has appeared on the stages of some of the world's leading music festivals, such as Aspen, Scotia and Lucerne.



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

His discography of over thirty-five recordings includes numerous world premieres, and has received accolades including Gramophone Editor's Choice, the Diapason d'Or and has appeared on Best of the Year lists in the Sunday Times, Gramophone, MusicWeb International, The Arts Desk, Forbes Magazine and NPR.

A widely read writer and frequent broadcaster, Woods' blog, A View from the Podium, is one of the 25 most popular classical blogs in the world. He has spoken on Mahler on NPR's All Things Considered and is a regular speaker on BBC radio programmes. Since 2014, he has been Honorary Patron of the Hans Gál Society.



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

ABOUT ESO, OUR ORCHESTRA-IN-RESIDENCE

Hailed as the International Orchestra of Elgar Country the English Symphony Orchestra has a proud legacy of collaboration with leading Elgarians and major figures in British musical life including Yehudi Menuhin, Vernon Handley, Nigel Kennedy and Sir Michael Tippett. In recent years the orchestra has become synonymous with artistic excellence, innovative and visionary programming, distinctive commissioning, ground-breaking recording, a welcoming and immersive concert experience, transformative youth programmes and service to the community.

The orchestra's discography of over seventy recordings includes many works of Elgar. These recordings, and those of other major 20th century British composers, continue to appear on 'Best of the Year' listings in publications including The Times, Gramophone, Forbes and The Arts Desk. The orchestra has a commitment to the music of our time with particular affiliation to the works of Sir Michael Tippett, John Metcalfe, John Joubert, Michael and Lennox Berkeley, John McCabe, Philip Sawyers, David Matthews and Adrian Williams.

In 2017 the ESO under conductor Kenneth Woods launched the 21st Century Symphony Project, a multi-year endeavour to commission, premiere and record nine new symphonies by leading composers of our time. Since 2024 the ESO has held a professional residency at Cheltenham Town Hall.

The partnership with the Elgar Festival began in 2018 when the festival was established by decree of Worcester City Council as an annual event.

ELGAR FESTIVAL LIVE RECORDINGS



In just over a year since it was launched ESO Records has quickly become a major force in British musical life. Their first album, with live Elgar Festival recordings of his *Symphony No. 1* and *In The South*, conducted by Principal Conductor and Artistic Director Kenneth Woods, was released

to wide acclaim on 28 March 2025, in partnership with Ulysses Arts. Subsequent albums include Sibelius *Symphonies No. 6 & 7*, with the tone poem *Tapiola*, on 25 April. Thus far in 2026, ESO Records have released the chamber orchestra version of Mahler, *Symphony No. 9*, and an album of organ concertos with Iain Quinn. 2026 will also see the release of the ESO's second Elgar Festival Live album of Elgar's *Second Symphony*.

Kenneth Woods comments: "From my first contact with the ESO, it was clear this music was in their blood. My predecessor, Vernon Handley, was as fine an Elgarian as there's ever been, and a protégé of Elgar's preferred conductor, Adrian Boult. Yehudi Menuhin, possibly Elgar's closest collaborator at the end of his life, was our Principal Guest Conductor for the last decade of his life. With the memory of their contributions to the orchestra's Elgar legacy still fresh, it felt from day one that Elgar here is no distant historic figure of the past. Unlike Gustav Mahler, whose own performances only survive on a few piano rolls, we can even see and hear Elgar the conductor. These performances are informed deeply by the many revelatory lessons I have gleaned from listening to his definitive and thrilling interpretations of his own music.

There are studio recordings aplenty of Elgar's major works. Our aim with these Elgar Festival Live recordings is not simply to share a performance of a piece, but to share a memory of an occasion and a flavour of this magical place. Each is a record of a single performance that grew out of a week's immersion in all things Elgar, down to the sights he saw, the streets he walked and the air he breathed. I never take for granted that I get to stand on the same spot in Worcester Cathedral that Elgar did so many times, not so long ago. I hope the passion and virtuosity of my incredible colleagues, the intensity of our audience's listening, and the magical acoustics of this great building all help you to feel closer to Elgar.

Elgar Festival Live is to remind us that Edward Elgar is someone whose personality remains fresh in the memory. He is someone whose legacy is very much alive, whom the listener can think of more as a friend of a friend."

2026 FEATURED COMPOSER THEA MUSGRAVE



We're incredibly excited that Scottish-American 97-year-old icon of British music, Thea Musgrave is this year's featured composer. Her music abounds in colour, emotion, drama and impact, and her rich and powerful musical language and a strong sense of drama have led her to become one of the most respected and exciting contemporary composers in the Western world. Her works are performed in major concert halls, festivals, and on radio stations on both sides of the Atlantic.

With grateful thanks for the support of the RPS Thea Musgrave Fund, we have 5 of her works programmed for 2026:

On **Tues 26 May**, Anna Crookes (former Young Musician of the Year, pianist Anna Markland) will perform *Snapshots* in Pershore Abbey as part of the I Fagiolini concert.

On **Thurs 28 May**, world renowned oboist and great friend of Thea's, Nicholas Daniel, joins ESO Strings at Great Malvern Priory for a performance of *Night Windows* and will also be giving a pre-concert talk about Thea's work.

Nicholas is joined by award winning composer and pianist Huw Watkins on **Fri 29 May** for a very special lunchtime recital at Henry Sandon Hall in Worcester including Thea's oboe work *Dawn*.

On **Sat 30 May**, The Elgar Choral will perform Thea's arrangement of *Adam lay ybounden* at their morning concert in St Martin in the Cornmarket, Worcester and the same evening the English Symphony Orchestra perform Thea's rich and evocative orchestral work *The Seasons* to open the Gala concert in Worcester Cathedral – a work offering a profound yet joyful commentary on the cycles of life through the lens of the changing seasons.

Musgrave has been the recipient of many notable awards including two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Ivors Classical Music Award 2018, and The Queen's Medal for Music. She was awarded a CBE on the Queen's New Year's Honour List in 2002.

More information at wisemusicclassical.com

ABOUT THE 2026 ELGAR FESTIVAL CHORUS

The Festival introduced its own chorus in 2022 to enable the programming of choral/orchestral works by Elgar and other British composers.

It is an un-auditioned choir of around 100, drawing on experienced choral singers from choirs and choral societies across Elgar country. Periodic half-day rehearsals are held on Saturdays during the three months leading up to the Festival. The Festival's Chorus Master Stephen Shellard brings a wealth of choral expertise and experience to the role. He is Director of Worcester Cathedral Chamber Choir, Director of The Proteus Ensemble, and was for 25 years a Lay Clerk of Worcester Cathedral until 2023. Rehearsal accompanists in 2026 are Piers Maxim, Zoe Tan and Christopher Allsop.

The EFC made its debut in 2022 with a performance of Elgar's *The Spirit of England*, followed in 2023 by *The Music Makers*. 2024 saw the introduction of a 'Come & Sing Gerontius Day' with an informal end of day performance to encourage new membership and build chorus capacity as the Festival looks to include Elgar's mighty oratorios and other major choral works in future years. *The Black Knight* has provided the chorus with a richly satisfying work to learn and perform together with the ESO at the Gala Concert in 2026.



ABOUT JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER

Festival Patron



Photography: Simon Fowler

Julian Lloyd Webber made his professional debut in September 1972 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, collaborating throughout his career with leading conductors including Yehudi Menuhin, Georg Solti, and Esa-Pekka Salonen, as well as musicians such as Murray Perahia, Stéphane Grappelli, and Elton John. He has premiered over 50 works for cello, inspiring compositions from Malcolm Arnold to Philip Glass. His recordings include the BRIT Award-winning *Elgar Cello Concerto* with Menuhin, Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* with Václav Neumann, and Britten's *Cello Symphony* paired with Walton's *Cello Concerto* under Sir Neville Marriner.

A passionate advocate for music education, Lloyd Webber co-founded the Music Education Consortium in 2003 alongside James Galway and Evelyn Glennie, successfully lobbying the government for greater funding for music in schools. In 2008 he became chairman of the government's *In Harmony* programme - modelled on Venezuela's *El Sistema* - which has since reached over 60,000 children. In 2015 he was appointed Principal of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, overseeing its move to a new £57 million building and the merger with the Birmingham School of Acting, with the Conservatoire receiving Royal status in 2017.

Lloyd Webber has received many honours, including the Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum (1998), a Fellowship of the Royal College of Music, honorary doctorates from several universities, and an OBE in 2021 for services to music. In April 2014 he retired from public performance following a slipped disc in his neck, with his final concert taking place with the English Chamber Orchestra on 2 May 2014. Since then he has concentrated on education, mentoring, and broadcasting. In April 2026 he returned to the concert platform for his 75th Birthday Gala at the Wigmore Hall and has recently published a new memoir *Bows and Arrows*.

TUESDAY 19 MAY



11AM – 12.10PM

Great Malvern Priory, Church Street, Malvern, WR14 2AY

RELAXED CONCERT WITH DOWNSIDEUP STRING DUO

Corinne Frost cello

Stephen Warner double bass

Traditional Irish Jig Medley

Bizet Habanera (from Carmen)

Bach/Gounod Ave Maria

Kreisler Liebeslied

Harry Dacre Daisy Bell

Abreu Tico Tico

Bach Air on a G String

Offenbach The Can Can

Monty Norman The James Bond Theme

Claude-Michel Schönberg Bring Him Home (from Les Misérables)

Celso Machado Marchina de Carnival

Various Vera Lynn Medley

Stanley Myers Cavatina

Henry Wood Hornpipe (from Fantasia on British Sea Songs)

Rossini Duet for Cello & Double Bass (3rd Movt)

Traditional Irish Jig Medley



Scan to find out
more about
Downside Up...

An hour-long concert full of beautiful music performed by ESO players Corinne Frost (cello) and Stephen Warner (double bass). These relaxed performances are particularly suited to those living with dementia and other similar health conditions, adults and children with additional learning needs, their carers, and anybody who wishes to experience classical music in a relaxed and informal environment.

THURSDAY 21 MAY



11AM – 12.10PM

St George's Church, St George's Square, Barbourne, Worcester, WR1 1HX

2.30PM – 3.40PM

Pershore Abbey, 11 Broad Street, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1BB

RELAXED CONCERT WITH ESO WINDS

ESO Wind Quartet

Catherine Handley flute

Odette Cotton oboe

Alison Lambert clarinet

Rosemary Cow bassoon

Elgar Chanson de Matin

Gershwin Promenade (Walking the Dog)

Weissenborn Polka

Grieg Morning from Peer Gynt (trio)

Brahms Hungarian Dance No 5 (trio)

Traditional Oh Waly Waly

Traditional Molly Malone

Traditional Danny Boy (trio)

Howard Fly Me to the Moon (trio)

Goodwin Those Magnificent Men

Traditional Mexican Hat Dance

Haydn Wood Roses of Picardy

Sherman & Sherman Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious (from Mary Poppins)



Join members of the ESO wind section for hour-long concert full of beautiful music. These relaxed performances are particularly suited to those living with dementia and other similar health conditions, adults and children with additional learning needs, their carers, and anybody who wishes to experience classical music in a relaxed and informal environment.

SATURDAY 23 MAY

Pre-concert refreshments available from 10.45am
£12/£8

WALK 9.30AM / RECITAL 11.15AM

Walkers meet: Gardiner's Quarry car park, Jubilee Drive, Malvern WR13 6DN

Recital: St Wulstan's Church, Wells Road, Little Malvern, WR14 4JL

'IN ELGAR'S FOOTSTEPS' – GUIDED WALK AND RECITAL

Carl Flint walking guide

LANO Quartet participants in the Elgar Festival/Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Young Performer Showcase Programme

Elgar String Quartet in E minor, op 83

We are delighted to welcome the LANO Quartet as participants of the Elgar Festival/Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Young Performer Showcase Programme, now in its second year.



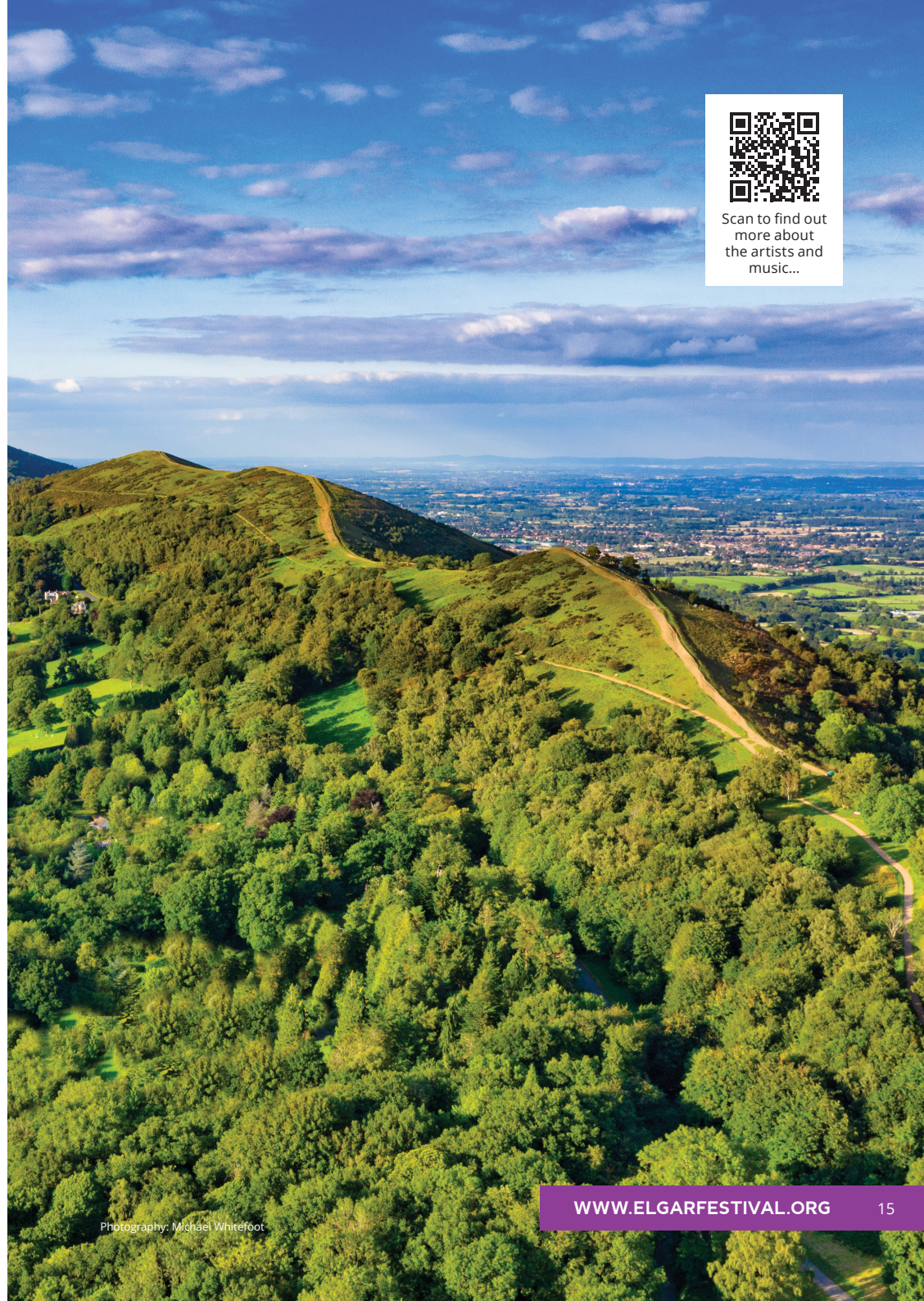
For those wishing to walk, led by local walking guide Carl Flint we meet at Gardiner's Quarry car park at 9.30am to enjoy an hour's guided walk along tracks and footpaths down to St Wulstan's including the opportunity to visit Eye Well and the Holywell Building on route. Refreshments are available before a short recital at 11.15am featuring his deeply personal String Quartet performed by the exceptional LANO quartet led by last year's soloist at this event, Shuwei Zuo. There will be time to explore the Elgar family graves before your guide leads the way back. Approx return time 1pm.

Ticket holders who would rather not walk are welcome to attend the recital and refreshments from 10.45am

Please note, there are car park charges and parking space may be limited. The walking route is hilly and uneven so appropriate footwear is required and we regret no dogs allowed.



Scan to find out more about the artists and music...



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

SATURDAY 23 MAY

2.30PM

Church of St Mary Magdalene, NT Croome,
Croome D'Abitot, Worcestershire, WR8 9DW

LANO QUARTET AT CROOME



LANO Quartet Participants in the
Elgar Festival/Royal Birmingham
Conservatoire Young Performer
Showcase Programme

Shuwei Zuo violin

Yuwen Fan violin

Jinhe Huang viola

Gen Li cello

Rebecca Clarke Poem for string
quartet

Elgar String Quartet in E minor, op 83

The perfect opportunity to combine exploration of Croome Court with the experience of wonderful English music performed in a beautiful setting.

Participants in the Elgar Festival/Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Young Performer Showcase Programme and formed in 2024, the LANO Quartet is a dynamic young ensemble dedicated to expressive and thoughtful music-making who perform across the UK and internationally. Recent engagements including the Leeds International Concert Series and the International Malcolm Arnold Festival. The LANO Quartet has received coaching from renowned ensembles such as the Kuss Quartet and the Castalian Quartet, among others. Each member brings a distinct musical background, enriching the quartet's collective sound and artistic vision.



NT entry
charges to non-
members apply



Scan to find out
more about
the artists and
music...

SATURDAY 23 MAY

7PM

Malvern Cube, Albert Rd North, Great Malvern, WR14 2YF

ENIGMA RE-IMAGINED

Nakisha Swatton director

The Re-Imagined Orchestra

An exciting new collaboration for 2026 led by Malvern-based multi-disciplinary artist Nakisha Swatton. In the run up to the festival Nakisha will work with local amateur and professional musicians to explore & create new musical portraits inspired by Elgar's Enigma Variations, culminating in this performance of a new contemporary multi-instrumental suite.

'Bringing Elgar Reimagined together has already been a journey. What started as a simple idea, to create musical portraits of Malvern today inspired by Edward Elgar, has grown into something far more collaborative than I first imagined. Once I had all the group leads in one room, we began shaping the piece together. Jane brought a mix of Renaissance recorders and we settled on tenor and bass to ground the sound, with alto and soprano cutting through later. Dan's violin filled the room with Elgar's music, Alison shared the energy of taiko, and Jill and Martin brought their instinctive Americana feel. It was the first time these worlds met and you could feel something click.'

It has also been a deeply enriching process. There has been a real exchange of music, culture and ways of working. Seeing these traditions come together reminded me why I wanted to do this. People have brought openness, generosity and curiosity into the room, and that has shaped the piece in ways I could not have planned alone. Now it is about bringing everything together on 23rd May at The Cube, and sharing something that feels truly collective'

Nakisha Swatton, director



SUNDAY 24 MAY

Refreshments available
£12

3PM

All Saints Church, Deansway, Worcester, WR1 2JJ

THE JENNY LIND SINGERS

Lynne Lindner *director*

Tim Sidford *piano*

Anwen Mai Thomas *harp*

Imogen Holst (1907 - 1984)

Hilary Campbell (b. 1983)

Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951)

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b.1971)

Winnie Brückner (b. 1979)

Amy Bebbington (b.1975)

Anon 15th C, arr. Sarah Deere-Jones

Elizabeth Poston (1905 – 1987)

Kate Hill (b. 1952)

Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

Liz Dilnot Johnson (b. 1964)

*Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow,
Shed no Tear*

Our Endless Day

Now is the Time

*Give us Grace
(Words adapted from Jane Austen)*

Branches

Fire

Veni Coronaberis

An English Day-Book: The Bellman's Song

Te Lucis ante terminum

A Night Curse

Lemady: Maying Song

A Charm Against the Bumble Bee

Interlude for Harp

The Noonday Heat

Running Set: Spring, the sweet spring

Evening Song: Farewell! Shepherds all

Sweet Suffolk Owl

The Bellman's Song

Swallows (Words by Scarlett Palys)

Songbird

'Nimrod' Reimagined



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

Back by popular demand, this virtuosic female voice choir celebrates the legacy of soprano and friend of Edward Elgar, Jenny Lind, who lived in Malvern for the latter part of her life and was a well-known benefactor of education and the arts. They are honoured to have as their patron Dr Inga Lewenhaupt, former Chair of the Jenny Lind Society of Stockholm.

The group present several concerts a year in which they explore new music, especially by women and local composers, including for this concert the award-winning composers Liz Dilnot Johnson and Kate Hill.

The Singers were founded in the 1970's at Malvern Girls' College by the Head of Music and Elaine Hugh-Jones. They were re-founded in 2013 by Lynne Lindner, then Director of Music at Malvern St James Girls' School, at the invitation of the Malvern Civic Society, and have performed to great acclaim in many venues in Worcestershire and Herefordshire.



SUNDAY 25 MAY

Refreshments available
£19

7PM

Elmslie House, 8 Avenue Road, Great Malvern, WR14 3AG

AN EVENING WITH JULIAN AND JIAXIN LLOYD WEBBER

In celebration of his 75th birthday, Elgar Festival Patron Julian Lloyd Webber joins forces with his wife and fellow cellist Jiaxin in a fascinating 'double sided' programme. With a first half of live music exploring the extraordinary reasons why Bach's sublime Cello Suites remained unperformed for two hundred years, the second half sees Julian embark on a magical musical tour through his career along with unique video clips and a rare chance to quiz both Lloyd Webbers about playing with musical icons Yehudi Menuhin, Stephane Grappelli, Joaquin Rodrigo, Philip Glass, Elton John, Julian's brother Andrew Lloyd Webber and many more.



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...

MONDAY 25 MAY

£7.50

2PM

Meeting point: The Guildhall, High Street, Worcester, WR1 2EY (main gates)

'THE ELGAR STORY' WALKING TOUR



Join Discover History on an informative Elgar tour of Worcester. Visit the site of his music shop, hear of his interest in cycling and see the many haunts frequented by this Great composer. Sites include his Glee club and St Georges Catholic church in Lowesmoor. A tour for Elgar enthusiasts and people with an interest in old Worcester.

Founded in 2003, Discover History is led by Paul and Helen, dedicated historical performers, providing an award-winning educational service that brings history to life for schools and historical sites along with clubs & societies.

MONDAY 25 MAY

Refreshments available
£5

4PM

Script Haven, 5 Crown Passage, Worcester, WR1 3LL

EXPLORE THE ELGAR ARCHIVES

Held in Worcester's iconic bookshop, Script Haven (please note change of address to 5, Crown Passage WR1 3LL), Faithful History's Joe Tierney offers the chance to explore Elgar's life in unparalleled intimacy. Joe will guide you through the treasure trove that is the Elgar archives including family mementos and photographs offering emotive insights whilst an abundance of personal correspondence and photographs serve to illustrate the story of England's greatest composer.

Joe Tierney is a local Worcester historian whose decade-long career in heritage and study of local history has given him a deep appreciation for the area's fascinating past.

An unmissable hour-long event for all Elgar fans.



TUESDAY 26 MAY

2PM

*Elgar's Birthplace The Firs, Lower Broadheath,
Worcester, WR2 6RH*

RECITAL – THIS FRAGILE BEAUTY

April Fredrick *soprano*

Eric McElroy *piano*

Grace Shepherd *violin*

Joseph Campbell Powell *narrator**

**Participant in the Elgar Festival/Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Young Performer Showcase Programme*

Ivor Gurney *Poem: 'Robecq'*

George Butterworth
Song: Fill a Glass with Golden Wine

Ivor Gurney *Letter: 'The Rhythm of War'*

Ivor Gurney *Song: 'Severn Meadows'*

Ivor Gurney *Letter: 'First time in'*

Folksong *Song: 'David of the White Rock'*

Ivor Gurney *Poem: 'War Books'*

John Ireland *Song: 'Blind'*

John Ireland *Song: 'The Cost'*

Ivor Gurney *Poem: 'To His Love'*

Arthur Bliss *Song: A Child's Prayer*

Arthur Bliss *Song: The Hammers*

Arthur Bliss *Song: This Night*

Ivor Gurney *Song: The Treasure*

Ivor Gurney *Poem: 'Photographs'*

Ivor Gurney *Song: The Hammers*

Arthur Bliss *Song: One Day*

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Songs: Along the Field

Ivor Gurney *Letter: 'Prices'*

Ivor Gurney *Poem: 'Bach and the Sentry'*

Ivor Gurney *'Crystallisation'*

Edward Elgar *Song: A Voice in the Desert*

Café open

£12

NT entry charges
to non-members
to cottage and
garden apply



This Fragile Beauty is a multi-media event created by festival friend and renowned soprano April Fredrick for voice, piano, violin and narrator. Together they explore how war affects creatives through the WWI experiences of composers Ivor Gurney, George Butterworth, Arthur Bliss, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, with settings of war-poets by Ireland and Elgar's evocative *A Voice in the Desert* from the Belgian perspective.

A rich tapestry of longing and loss, it also features poems and letters by Gurney and others and projected paintings by war artist Paul Nash to immerse the audience in the unique letters, poems and music that emerged from their time in the trenches and the collective grief, processing and change that followed it.



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...

TUESDAY 26 MAY

7PM

Pershore Abbey, Church Walk, Pershore, WR10 1BL

I FAGIOLINI 40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

Robert Hollingworth *director*

Anna Crookes and Rebecca Lea *sopranos*

Martha McLorinan and Tania Murphy *altos*

Matthew Long and Jacob Ewens *tenors*

Sam Gilliatt and Frederick Long *basses*

Anna Markland *piano*

Victoria *Alma Redemptoris Mater*

Senfl *Das Gläut zu Speyer*

Vecchi *Daspuo che stabilao*

Wilbye *Cruel behold / Sweet honey-sucking bees*

Weelkes *Noel adieu thou court's delight*

Monteverdi *Sfogava con le stelle / Ah dolente partita / Anima mia perdona*

Interval

Elgar *Go, song of mine*

Adrian Williams *Sweetest Love*

Joanna Marsh *Geocentric*

Thea Musgrave *Snapshots*

Joanna Marsh *Batter my heart*

Daniel-Lesur *La voix du bien-aimé / Le jardin clos*

Leo Ferré *Chanson d'automne*

Refreshments available
£20



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...

I Fagiolini – ‘musical shapeshifters, following Hollingworth’s giddy, eclectic imagination wherever it leads’ (The Spectator).

In 1986 a student group gave its first concert with an eclectic mix of Monteverdi, Grieg and the Fairy Liquid jingle. 40 years on Monteverdi has remained a constant and I Fagiolini has gone on to become internationally renowned, rethinking what a vocal group does from unstageable a cappella to cross-cultural projects, world premiere recordings, the podcast Choral Chihuahua - and plenty of film. In an age of AI, I Fagiolini is a hand-painted original. Join them for this anniversary celebration of their favourite music from 40 years, presented by Robert Hollingworth (BBC Radio 3, University of York).

I Fagiolini’s consort and solo singing are exemplary...

Gramophone

...a superb ensemble, outstanding in their range and versatility.

The Guardian

This is serious musicianship that never takes itself too seriously - the Holy Grail of concert-going.

The Spectator



WED 27 MAY - SAT 30 MAY

Open to the public
FREE

10AM – 4PM

*Court Room, Worcester Guildhall,
High St, Worcester, WR1 2EY*

ELGAR FOR EVERYONE EXHIBITION

Pop into the beautiful and historic Guildhall in central Worcester throughout the 2026 festival to sample this fascinating exhibition of Elgar memorabilia on loan from prestigious international private collections. Curated by Chris Bennett, the exhibition includes original manuscripts, letters, photographs and personal possessions, and tells the story of how Worcester's Ted Elgar became Sir Edward Elgar, First Baronet of Broadheath.

Plus '10 things you didn't know about Elgar' exhibit, and a video exploring Elgar's life and music. Please walk in, discover, explore and enjoy.

*Elgar for
Everyone*

WEDNESDAY 27 MAY

FREE

1.30PM – 4PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA



E4E: THE ELGAR FOR EVERYONE OPEN REHEARSAL

Join us in the Cathedral as we rehearse the 100+ young musicians of the ESO Youth Orchestras for this evening's concert.

7.15PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA

E4E: THE ELGAR FOR EVERYONE FAMILY CONCERT

ESO Youth Orchestras and Ensembles
Musicians of the English Symphony Orchestra

James Topp *conductor*
Zeb Soanes *presenter*



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

Bar available

£15

£20 for ESO
families with code/
under 18s free

PROGRAMME:

ESO Youth Orchestra and English Symphony Orchestra
Britten *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*

Winners of the 2026 Young Composers' Competition
ESO Brass

Samuel Hunt (under 14 winner) *His Dream*

Luca Newman (14-18 winner) *Intermezzo Variations*

INTERVAL

ESO Youth Beginners' Orchestra

Elgar arr. James Topp *Chanson de matin*

Elgar arr. Nicholas Hare *Pomp and Circumstance*

ESO Youth Intermediate Orchestra

Kenneth Leighton *Festive Overture*

Freddie Mercury arr. James Topp *Bohemian Rhapsody*

The annual Elgar For Everyone Youth Concert (E4E) has been one of the most beloved and highly anticipated events of the festival since its inception in 2018. Each year young musicians from across Elgar Country join the three ESO Youth Orchestras and play side by side with professionals from ESO, performing to an audience of families, young people and Elgar fans from all walks of life. They'll perform a vividly varied programme following 2 days of rehearsals and workshops in an uplifting event sure to bring a smile to listeners of all ages and one not to be missed.



*Elgar for
Everyone*



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...



The ESO Youth programme continues throughout the year and works with over five hundred young musicians offering workshops, courses, and residential with bursaries available for many of its initiatives. If you know of a young musician who would like to join any of our courses then please email for further information: esoyouth@eso.co.uk



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

We're delighted to welcome renowned presenter, composer, author and ESO Youth patron Zeb Soanes from Classic FM who will be both hosting and narrating Benjamin Britten's timeless work *'The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra'* with an updated text by Head of Chetham's School of Music, Tom Redmond, commissioned by the Hallé.

The music of Britten holds a special meaning for Zeb – both sons of Lowestoft in Suffolk, Zeb recently led a five year fundraising campaign to commission a bronze statue of Britten as a boy, set just yards from the composer's childhood home and represented at the young age when his talent was recognized, to encourage other local children to follow their dreams. The statue was unveiled last year by Sir John Rutter who himself was conducted by Britten as a young choral scholar.

This concert also includes the winning performances by ESO players of the festival's 2025 Young Composers Competition, this year tasked with composing a theme a variations for brass quartet. We would like to extend our huge thanks to internationally renowned composers Emily Doolittle and Matthew Taylor for judging the competition.



THURSDAY 28 MAY

11AM AND 2PM

Elgar's Birthplace The Firs, Lower Broadheath, Worcester, WR2 6RH

YOUNG STRINGS MASTERCLASS

Nicholas Trygstad *master teachers*

Elizabeth Haughan *piano*

This free public masterclass, held in the inspirational surroundings of Elgar's Birthplace, offers observers a chance to watch talented young string players work with renowned cellist Nicholas Trygstad (Head of Strings, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire), focusing on technique and interpretation.

Masterclass is from 11am – 1pm with a performance by all players after lunch at 2pm.

Tickets should be booked • Café open
FREE



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...

THURSDAY 28 MAY

£22

7PM

Great Malvern Priory, 6 Church Street, Malvern, WR14 2AY

ENGLISH STRING ORCHESTRA – ELGAR'S STRINGS IN MALVERN



English String Orchestra
Kenneth Woods conductor
Nicholas Daniel oboe

6.15pm Pre-concert talk with Nicholas Daniel in conversation with Kenneth Woods

Elgar *Serenade for Strings*

Elgar *In Moonlight*

Elgar *Chanson de Nuit*

Musgrave *Night Windows*

Interval

Sibelius *An American Interlude, (A portrait of Janis)*

Schoenberg *Verklärte Nacht*

Music lovers might be forgiven for mistaking composer Arnold Schoenberg for the 'Big Bad Wolf' of classical music but in his 1899 Romantic tone poem, *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night), his music purrs as sweetly as a kitten. This lush and lyrical masterpiece crowns a programme celebrating music inspired by the night with the English String Orchestra also featuring beautiful and evocative works by Elgar, Sibelius and Thea Musgrave.

Nicholas Daniel has long been acknowledged as one of the world's great oboists and is one of Britain's best-known musicians. He has significantly expanded the repertoire for his instrument through the commissioning of hundreds of new works and is a close friend of festival featured composer Thea Musgrave, whose work *Night Windows* he performs in this programme and to whom it is dedicated.



Scan to find out more about the artists and music...

IN MEMORY OF GERALD GREEN

All of us at the ESO would like to dedicate this concert to the memory of Gerald Green who was a truly faithful friend and loyal supporter of the orchestra for over 30 years. Gerald loved music and he loved talking to musicians and viewed so many of the ESO players as his friends. He played a huge part in our orchestral family, at various times being treasurer, helping in the office, being on the 'Friends' stand and never missing a concert. As well as supporting the main orchestra he also took a great deal of interest in the Care Home Concert scheme and played a major part in funding some chamber concerts here in the Priory during the Covid period to enable players to have some work. Gerald left us in May 2024 and this ESO string orchestra concert as part of the Elgar festival in the Priory he loved gives us the perfect occasion to remember our very dear friend. He will be forever missed.

FRIDAY 29 MAY



1PM

Henry Sandon Hall, Severn St, Worcester, WR1 2NE

LUNCHTIME OBOE AND PIANO RECITAL

Nicholas Daniel *oboe*

Huw Watkins *piano*

Thea Musgrave *Dawn*

Huw Watkins *5 Welsh Folksongs*

Elgar *Soliloquy*

Howells *Sonata*

We're delighted to welcome Nicholas Daniel to the 2026 festival, one of Britain's best-known musicians as well as being one of the world's great oboists. Nicholas joins forces with celebrated composer and pianist Huw Watkins for a very special lunchtime event packed with incredible British chamber music and an event not to be missed!

Photography: Eric Richmond



Scan to find out more about the artist and music...

FRIDAY 29 MAY



7.30PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA

HOLST'S THE PLANETS

English Symphony Orchestra

ESO Chorus

Kenneth Woods *conductor*

Arnold Bax *Tintagel*

Elgar *Falstaff*

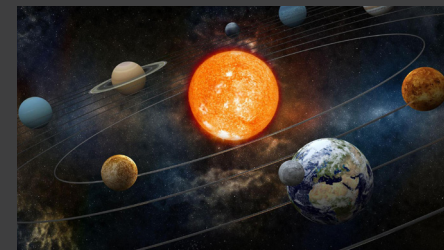
Interval

Holst *The Planets*

This concert celebrates the descriptive and evocative powers of three of British music's greatest tone poets. Bax's masterpiece, *Tintagel*, is a uniquely stirring evocation of the mysterious hinterlands in which the Arthurian legends were born, while Elgar's *Falstaff* is a richly textured portrait of the life and personality of one of Shakespeare's most memorable characters. Holst's ground-breaking suite *The Planets*, a work of unique and extraordinary power, beauty and immediacy crowns this thrilling evening of music with an invocation of the infinite.



Photography: Michael Whitefoot



Scan to find out more about the artist and music...

SATURDAY 30 MAY

£12

11AM

St Martin in the Cornmarket, The Cornmarket Worcester, WR1 2DF

THE ELGAR CHORALE

The Elgar Chorale

Piers Maxim *director*

Christopher Allsop *organ*

Coleridge-Taylor *Te Deum laudamus in F Op.18 No.1*

Elgar *Ave maris stella Op.2 No.3*

Elgar *O salutaris hostia No.3 in F*

Elgar *Organ solo: Solemn March from "The Black Knight"*

Elgar *Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode,
"So many true Princesses"*

Thea Musgrave *Organ solo: Psalm 147 (The Orgelbüchlein Project)*

Arr. Thea Musgrave *Adam lay ybounden*

Elgar *I sing the birth*

Elgar *Angelus Op.56*

Coleridge-Taylor *Jubilate in F Op.18*

This ever-popular local choir named after Sir Edward present a varied programme of works by Coleridge-Taylor, Thea Musgrave and including Elgar's *So many true princesses*.

Under the leadership of the founder and first Musical Director, Dr Donald Hunt, the choir gained a reputation for the quality and variety of its performances. It is particularly noted for its interpretations of music by the greatest English composer after whom it is named - Sir Edward Elgar. From January 2015 the choir has been under the directorship of Piers Maxim, and its reputation continues to grow and flourish.

The Chorale participates in leading roles in some of the region's premier music festivals, including at regular appearances at the Elgar Festival and the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in 2021. Also performing at weddings, civic occasions and charitable events, over the years the choir has raised thousands of pounds for good causes by hosting, and being invited to perform on behalf of, charities. Invitations have also been extended from Germany, France and South Africa, resulting in successful tours in those countries.



SATURDAY 30 MAY

FREE

1.30PM

The Guildhall, High Street, Worcester, WR1 2EY

WORCESTERSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA – MEET ELGAR'S ORCHESTRA



Scan to find out more about the artists and music...

Worcestershire Symphony Orchestra

Keith Slade *conductor*

Bach *Brandenburg Concerto no. 3*

Elgar *Salut d'Amour*

Doreen Carwithen *Lento for Strings*

Mozart *Symphony no 25 in G minor*

The annual free performance of the orchestra co-founded by Sir Edward Elgar himself offers families a great chance to experience the thrill of orchestral music up-close in an informal environment. A wonderful programme featuring Elgar, Bach and Mozart alongside 1950's film composer Doreen Carwithen

Come early to guarantee a seat!



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

SATURDAY 30 MAY

FREE

5.30PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA

FESTIVAL EVENSONG

Worcester Cathedral Chamber Choir

Stephen Shellard *Director*

Festival Responses *David Briggs*

Canticles *Paviour in G*

Anthem *I Saw the Lord, Stainer*

This year's choice of music represents some of the best compositions written for Cathedral music. International concert organist David Briggs' responses were commissioned by the Cathedral Chamber Choir for the 3 Choirs Festival in 2014 and Australian/English composer Paul Paviour's canticles were recorded by the choir for a complete CD of his works on Regent Records. Also included is Sir John Stainer's monumental anthem *I Saw the Lord*.



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...



Photography: Michael Whitefoot

WWW.ELGARFESTIVAL.ORG

SATURDAY 30 MAY

Bar available
£12-£32

7.30PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA

THE ELGAR FESTIVAL GALA CONCERT



English Symphony Orchestra

Elgar Festival Chorus

Kenneth Woods *conductor*

Rosalind Ventris *viola*

Stephen Shellard *Elgar Festival Chorus Director*

Thea Musgrave *The Seasons*

Elgar *Cello Concerto op. 85 (arr Lionel Tertis)*

Interval

Elgar *The Black Knight op.25*

Elgar *Imperial March op. 32*

Our Gala this year is built around the two works that frame Elgar's unique career as a composer of orchestral music. His 'symphony for chorus and orchestra' *The Black Knight* is one of his earliest works, and with it Elgar astounded the musical world with his brilliance, originality and mastery of his vast choral and orchestral forces.

His final major orchestral work, the *Cello Concerto*, holds a unique place at the heart of British musical culture. It is heard here in the version for viola prepared by Lionel Tertis and premiered under Elgar's baton in 1930 in a performance by the outstanding violist Rosalind Ventris, who wowed Elgar Festival audiences in 2025 with her poetic interpretations of works by Venables and Fribbins. We open with our final celebration of Featured Composer Thea Musgrave – her rollicking and joyful suite *The Seasons*.



Scan to find out
more about
the artists and
music...

WWW.ELGARFESTIVAL.ORG

SUNDAY 31 MAY

FREE

11AM

Henry Sandon Hall, Severn St, Worcester, WR1 2NE

THE ELGAR SOCIETY 75TH ANNIVERSARY A.T. SHAW LECTURE – 'RECORDING ELGAR'



Scan to find out more about Andrew...



To mark the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Elgar Society, this year's A.T. Shaw Lecture features world renowned independent recording producer Andrew Keener in conversation with Kenneth Woods about his work in the studio with some of the most renowned Elgar conductors and instrumentalists from the 1980s to the present day.

12PM

Museum of Royal Worcester, Severn Street, Worcester, WR1 2NE

£32

THE ELGAR SOCIETY LUNCH

The Elgar Society hosts its annual festival lunch, open to all, in the beautiful setting of the Museum of Royal Worcester surrounded by treasures of the past.

Pre-booking essential – please contact chairman@elgarsociety.org



SUNDAY 31 MAY

2PM

Henry Sandon Hall, Severn St, Worcester, WR1 2NE

PIANO RECITAL

Roman Kosyakov *piano*

Schumann *Novelette op.21 no. 1 in F*

Brahms *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, op.24*

Elgar *Enigma Variations*

Winner of numerous international competitions, pianist Roman Kosyakov closes the 2026 festival with a wonderfully virtuosic programme that includes Elgar's Enigma Variations in the composer's arrangement for piano.



Refreshments available at Good Roots café
£15



Scan to find out more about the artist and music...

SUNDAY 31 MAY

FREE

4PM

Worcester Cathedral, WR1 2LA

FESTIVAL EVENSONG



Worcester Cathedral
Chamber Choir

Stephen Shellard *Director*

David Briggs *Festival Responses*

Canticles *Dyson in D*

Elgar *Anthem: Great is the Lord*

Elgar *They are at Rest*

This year's choice of music represents some of the best compositions written for Cathedral music. International concert organist David Briggs' responses were commissioned by the Cathedral Chamber Choir for the 3 Choirs Festival in 2014. Sir George Dyson's effusive *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* are included and, of course, music from Worcester's own Edward Elgar. *They are at Rest* was written in memory of Queen Victoria in 1910 and *Great is the Lord* received its first performance in Westminster Abbey in July 1912.

Worcester Cathedral's Evensong service concludes with the annual wreath laying ceremony under the Elgar Memorial Window, bringing the 2026 festival to a close.



Scan to find out
more about the
artists...

WWW.ELGARFESTIVAL.ORG

WORCESTER
FESTIVAL
CHORAL
SOCIETY

CONCERT SEASON 2026 - 2027

WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

140 choral voices

Starting 7.30pm

Saturday 21 NOVEMBER 2026

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *DONA NOBIS PACEM*

BERNSTEIN
Chichester Psalms

COPLAND
Appalachian Spring

Saturday 12 DECEMBER 2026

HANDEL *MESSIAH*

Benefit concert supporting
WORCESTERSHIRE
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Saturday 13 MARCH 2027

ELGAR *THE KINGDOM*



TICKETS £10 - £29

www.WFCS.online / 0333 666 3366

Worcester Festival Choral Society is a Registered Charity No 506826

Michael Whitefoot

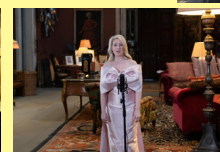


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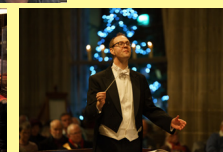
www.michaelwhitefoot.co.uk



BBC National Orchestra of Wales
BBC Hoddinott Hall



Brittany King
Eastnor Castle



Worcester Festival Choral Society
Worcester Cathedral



Cheltenham Bach Choir
Tewkesbury Abbey



Worcestershire Symphony
Orchestra, Pershore Abbey



Worcester Philharmonic
Orchestra, No8 Pershore



Bach Choir
Royal Festival Hall



Gloucester Choral Society
Gloucester Cathedral



Birmingham Choral Society
Lichfield Cathedral



Hereford Choral Society
Hereford Cathedral



English Symphony Orchestra
Cheltenham Town Hall



Elgar Festival 2025

The Elgar Chorale of Worcester

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1186804

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WR7 4DZ
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Tickets: £12.50 will include a glass of Summer Punch
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Worcester TIC: Guildhall, High St, Worcester. Tel: 01905 726311
Tudor House, Inkberrow, WR7 4EA Tel: 07732 661 500
or Eventbrite by scanning the QR Code:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE OFFICIAL ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF SIR EDWARD ELGAR IN HIS HOME CITY OF WORCESTER.

The Festival is a Registered Charity No. 1186804.

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Executive Director	<i>Sue Voysey</i>
Secretary	<i>Stuart Freed</i>
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Elgar Society representative	<i>Peter Tootill</i>

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20 September 2026 7.30pm
The King's Singers

18 October 2026 3.00pm
Jess Gillam with Far Flung Trio

15 November 2026 3.00pm
Leon McCawley

17 January 2027 3.00pm
Maxwell Quartet



21 February 2027 3.00pm
Robert Plane, Rosalind Ventris & Finghin Collins

18 April 2027 7.30pm
Ensemble 360 Octet

16 May 2027 7.30pm
Steven Isserlis & Connie Shih

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Brodsky Quartet

Full main season membership: £126 for all seven concerts, or £111 for any six.
Part season membership, for new or returning members only: any three concerts £78, any four £90, any five £100.
(Main season excludes Brodsky Quartet concerts.)

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Tickets for non-members available from Malvern Theatres
Box office 01684 892277. Online booking malvern-theatres.co.uk

Elgar for Everyone



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