



voice factory



Musical Education in its broadest sense has always featured in the Choir's aims.

There have been many events over the years specifically aimed at encouraging young people to develop their musical skills, as well as the obvious educational element for Choir members in our routine activities of rehearsing and performing the large choir repertoire.

In recent years we have bracketed special educational events under the heading



Most events fall into one of the following categories:

1. Groups of young people taking part in our Christmas concerts.
2. Competitions involving writing Carols for performance at Christmas concerts.
3. Competitions for Young Singers – often under the title 'Singing Challenge'.
4. Workshops for young people of various ages aimed at inspiring them to take up singing.
5. Professional Voice coaching schemes for people of various ages, supported by funds raised from Trusts and Sponsors.
6. Major events in which young musicians feature.

Young People taking part in Carols for All

- 1984 Lindens Percussion Ensemble – a school group
1985 Birmingham School Recorder Sinfonia
1988 Primary School Dance Group
1994 Conservatoire Boy Singers
1995 CBSO Youth Chorus
1996 CBSO Youth Chorus
1997 CBSO Youth Chorus
Winner of Singing Challenge as soloist
1998 CBSO Youth Chorus
1999 CBSO Youth Chorus
A choir from 5 primary schools performed winning Carols from competition
2000 Winner of Singing Challenge as soloist
A choir from 3 primary schools performed winning Carols from competition
2001 A choir from 5 primary schools performed winning Carols from competition
2002 A choir from 5 primary schools performed specially written Carols
Winner of Singing Challenge as soloist
2003 Arden Junior Singers
2004 A choir from 4 primary schools performed specially written Carols
2005 A choir from 6 primary schools performed specially written Carols
2007 Voice Factory Children's Choir
2008 Park Hall Junior School
2009 Voice Factory Children's Choir

'Write a Song for Christmas' competitions

Competitions for Young People to write Carols to be performed at our town Hall concerts were held in:

1994 1996 1998

Sometimes the winning carols were performed by the Choir, and sometimes as solos by the composer or by groups of young people.

Carols were specially written for Young people to perform them at our Town Hall concerts, either as competitions for adults or as commissions in:

1999 2000 2001 2002 2004 2005

'Singing Challenge' competitions

These events were aimed at young people who wanted to take singing seriously, and the prizes took the form of bursaries for singing tuition. The competitions proved very popular.

Entries were first made by sending in a recording and these were judged by a panel from the Choir to select a group to take part in the main competition. Between 15 and 20 candidates were then invited to sing a prepared piece before a judging panel comprised of two or three highly respected musicians.

As well as the bursaries offered to the best two or three singers, the winner was also invited to have a solo spot in that year's Carols for All concert.

Competition winners were:

1997	Claire Wilde
2000	Neill Bramble
2002	Anna Huntley



Held in October 2004 the first event under the title 'Voice Factory' was a workshop aimed at 13 – 18 year olds who wanted to develop their singing ability in any style, but were not already having individual tuition.

The day consisted of a series of workshops exploring an adventurous range of styles covering A capella, Arabic song, Solo singing, and Choral singing with everyone attending a session at each workshop. The workshops were led by vocal tutors from Ex Cathedra who selected a number of people at the end of the day who were each offered bursaries for singing lessons.

The day was well received by the participants and a number of them went on to receive a course of vocal training.



II

In October 2006 our second workshop event was aimed at primary school children in years 5 and 6. Five schools were invited to send 15 children each for a day of varied workshops again led by vocal tutors from Ex Cathedra. The day ended with a performance before parents of the children who were all invited to attend.



The day of singing was thoroughly enjoyed by all and parents were greatly impressed and appreciative.

During the day, tutors and a group of Choir members monitored the activities and selected promising singers from each school who were then given a course of vocal tuition at their schools over the next year by a tutor from Ex Cathedra.

The selected pupils were brought together to form a trained choir who performed with the City of Birmingham Choir first at Artsfest and then in the Carols for All concert at the Town Hall.



III

This event in 2008 followed a very similar pattern to Voice Factory II.



All of the pupils moved on to their secondary schools and it was impossible for us to follow their future progress. But we firmly believe and hope that all of those who attended the workshops and especially those who have had vocal coaching will be much more likely to continue with an interest in singing and musical activities in general.



– Bournville Young Singers

Our current project involving Young People is a link with Bournville Young Singers, an independent choir covering an age range of 5 – 18+ comprised of a Training Choir for young children, a Main Choir and a Chamber Choir for their more experienced members.



In the 2011-12 season the City of Birmingham Choir supported a voice-coaching programme for the Bournville Young Singers. We have also created a range of other links that will prove to be of mutual benefit, including recruitment and marketing schemes as well as linking up for performances. The BYS were involved in the celebrations for our 90th birthday concert in November 2011 and are already involved in the Equinox project taking place in March 2012.



– Choir members

In an ongoing project, all Choir members take time out from rehearsals for professional coaching in small groups. This is aimed at raising individual singing standards and improving the Choir's ensemble performance. These sessions are tutored by Julian Wilkins.

We also aim to encourage greater access to the Choir by providing new applicants with the means to improve their Vocal skills as they join. This scheme offers financial support towards the cost of singing lessons for a limited number of new members each year. Also all Choir members in the age range 16 – 25 are offered a series of free singing lessons.



– Choral conducting

As a means of benefiting some of the many Choir members, and others, who have interests in wider choral activities (often in schools, church choirs or other groups) we have run two Choral Conducting workshops led by our own conductor, Adrian Lucas.

Schools Orchestras

In October 2010 we performed Verdi's *Requiem* with the English Schools' Orchestra in Symphony Hall under their conductor, Robert Pepper MBE. Then, in May 2011 we performed *Carmina Burana* in a collaboration with the Birmingham Schools' Symphony Orchestra with Michael Seal conducting. For this concert members of the orchestra also produced programme notes and cover designs for the programmes which were provided free by our sponsor.



BSSO rehearsing in Symphony Hall with Michael Seal

These events provided great opportunities for school students to perform in Symphony Hall with a full-sized chorus, and it was also a rewarding experience for the choir to work with these talented young musicians.

Support for many of these activities has been provided by a variety of Trusts, Businesses and individual donors.

The City of Birmingham Choir is extremely grateful for this support.

If you would like to support any of these activities, please go to our support page where you can find full information.

www.citychoir.org.uk/support