

RICHMOND UPON THAMES
PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL 2026

www.richmondfestival.org.uk

Choral Syllabus 2026

SECTION SECRETARY – HEIDI PEGLER

Richmondfestival.vocal@gmail.com

VOCAL ENSEMBLES

ADJUDICATOR – **Ben Costello** MA,BMus,PgDip,FISM,FRSA



Ben is a freelance musical director, adjudicator, singing coach and accompanist, working internationally, and is also Artistic Director of Thames Concerts. He is a generalist music adjudicator for the British and International Federation of Festivals, having joined in 2009, and was elected Music Chairman of the Adjudicators' Council in 2024. He is also a music examiner for LCME and a consultant on their musical theatre syllabi.

A specialist in musical theatre and vocal performance, Ben has been musical director for numerous productions across the UK, and a reflective

product of this has been his continuing work as a musical director and singing teacher at the cutting edge of performing arts training in London, with his portfolio over the years including Arts Ed, Mountview Academy, Trinity Laban, Laine Theatre Arts, Italia Conti, Guildford School of Acting, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, the Royal Academy of Music, Drama Studio London, and the London School of Musical Theatre. At these colleges his work has included teaching singing technique, portfolio, acting through song, audition technique, and auditioning thousands of prospective students. Countless of his former singing students enjoy successful careers in the West End and beyond. He also teaches singing at Kingston Grammar School and Tiffin Girls' School.

Born and based in London, Ben trained initially as a flautist before majoring in piano, singing and conducting. He read Music at Kingston University and the London College of Music, subsequently joining the teaching staff as the College's first resident MD.

Ben remains much sought-after as an accompanist, and collaborates in a variety of genres with countless singers and instrumentalists in many performing environments, working with several distinguished singers including Michael Chance CBE, James Bowman CBE, Robin Blaze, Hugh Cutting, Alison Pearce, Joanne Lunn, Peter Savidge, Richard Suart, Lotte Betts-Dean and Mark Dobell. He is one of the regular pianists for Cantabile (The London Quartet), and has given concerts with them in Germany, Belgium and the UK. Ben is a Liveryman and on the Court of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. He chaired the Company's prestigious annual musical direction scholarship for eight years, and is presently Chairman of the Company's Jazz Committee.

For the Federation, he is also an adjudicator mentor, and is a member of the interviewing panel for potential new music adjudicators.

Outside music, Ben is a keen motorcyclist and wine bore.

The junior and intermediate choral classes will take place on **Monday 16 March** at Duke Street Church, Quadrant Road, Richmond TW9 1DH.

The Junior Choirs will run approximately between 5.00-7.00pm.

The Intermediate Choirs will run approximately between 7.30-9.00pm.

CLOSING DATE: Friday 13 February

Class 800	Junior Vocal Ensemble – 11 years and under Approximate timing – 5.00-7.00pm (TBC) Own choice of two contrasting pieces. Time limit: 8 mins	£25
Class 801	Intermediate Vocal Ensemble – 18 years and under Approximate timing – 7.30-9.00pm (TBC) Own choice of two contrasting pieces. Time limit: 10 mins	£25

- A vocal ensemble can be a quartet, acapella group, barbershop group, choir etc.
- There is no upper limit on the number of singers but there must be at least four.
- The accompaniment should be piano only – there is a Bechstein grand piano at the venue. Choirs must provide their own pianist.
- Other solo instruments (e.g. flute, violin) may be included if the piece requires this.
- Unaccompanied singing is also permitted.
- Music stands are provided at the venue.
- Choirs should come to the venue ready to perform and arrive as a group – there are no changing facilities apart from toilets
- Audience members/supporters are very welcome – there is a small charge of £5 for anyone watching the session; children are free

The adult choral classes will take place on **Tuesday 17 March** at Duke Street Church, Quadrant Road, Richmond TW9 1DH and will run approximately between 8.00-10.00pm.
CLOSING DATE: Friday 13 February

Class 802	Ladies Vocal Ensemble – 19 years and over Approximate timing – 8.00-10.00pm (TBC) Own choice of two contrasting pieces. Time limit: 12 mins	£25
Class 803	Male Vocal Ensemble – 19 years and over Approximate timing – 8.00-10.00pm (TBC) Own choice of two contrasting pieces. Time limit: 12 mins	£25
Class 804	Mixed Vocal Ensemble - 19 years and over Approximate timing – 8.00-10.00pm (TBC) Own choice of two contrasting pieces. Time limit: 12 mins	£25

- A vocal ensemble can be a quartet, acapella group, barbershop group, choir etc.
- There is no upper limit on the number of singers but there must be at least four.
- The accompaniment should be piano only – there is a Bechstein grand piano at the venue. Choirs must provide their own pianist.
- Other solo instruments (e.g. flute, violin) may be included if the piece requires this.
- Unaccompanied singing is also permitted.
- Music stands are provided at the venue.
- Choirs should come to the venue ready to perform and arrive as a group – there are no changing facilities apart from toilets
- Audience members/supporters are very welcome – there is a small charge of £5 for anyone watching the session; children are free
- Adjudication for classes 802, 803 and 804 will take place once everyone has performed so that everyone can listen to each other