

The King's Singers & Voices NZ Chamber Choir Singers biographies

The King's Singers

Patrick Dunachie Countertenor

Timothy Wayne-Wright Countertenor

Julian Gregory Tenor

Christopher Bruerton Baritone

Christopher Gabbittas Baritone

Jonathan Howard Bass

Acclaimed worldwide for their virtuosity, life-affirming energy and irresistible charisma, The King's Singers are in global demand. Their work – synonymous with the very best in vocal ensemble performance – appeals to a vast international audience. Every year they sing over 120 concerts, touring regularly to Europe, the United States, Asia and Australasia. Instantly recognisable for their immaculate intonation, impeccable vocal blend, flawless diction and incisive timing, The King's Singers are also consummate entertainers – a class act with a delightfully British wit. The King's Singers are among Britain's greatest musical exports. Highlights of the group's 2014/15 season include: two performances in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, a Christmas performance in Washington National Cathedral; a visit to the Grand Philharmonic Hall of St. Petersburg; an invitation to perform at the American Choral Directors Association annual conference in Salt Lake City, where they will give the world premiere of a new work by Jake Heggie, and their second residential Summer School in the UK.

Their repertoire has evolved to become one of the most diverse and compelling imaginable. The King's Singers have commissioned over 200 works, including landmark pieces from leading contemporary composers including Berio, Ligeti, MacMillan, Penderecki, Takemitsu, Tavener and Whitacre. They have also commissioned thrilling arrangements of everything from jazz standards to pop chart hits, explored medieval motets and Renaissance madrigals, and encouraged young composers to write new scores. The 2014/2015 season saw the world premiere performance of a commission from Joanna Marsh as part of the London A Cappella Festival. Their openness to fresh artistic experiences, led to the release by Deutsche Grammophon in 2013 of *Let it Snow*, a collaborative project with oboist Albrecht Mayer on the theme of winter.

Recording plays a significant part in the life of The King's Singers. Their discography, which comprises over 150 albums and includes more than 2,000 pieces of music, reflects the group's breath-taking repertoire range. Reviews of recent releases confirm that The King's Singers are at the top of their game. Their contribution to classical recording was recognised in June 2013 when they were selected as one of only two vocal ensembles to join the Gramophone Hall of Fame. The King's Singers are double Grammy® award-winning artists, honoured in 2009 for their *Signum* Classics release, *Simple Gifts*, and again in 2012 for their contribution to Eric Whitacre's *Light and Gold* album on Decca.

Since signing to Signum Classics in 2003, The King's Singers have developed distinctively themed recording and concert programmes. Their studio album and live performance programme, *Great American Songbook*, includes seventeen new arrangements, and following the launch of the project in October 2013 at the Royal Albert Hall in London it has been performed live in concert to more than 20,000 people in fifteen different countries.

The King's Singers own a strikingly rich history of television appearances. Their fruitful relationship as favourites of The Mormon Tabernacle Choir notably led to a broadcast performance at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City; they were also featured guests in the choir's recent Christmas concert, aired on PBS across the US to a combined live audience of 80,000 and subsequently released on DVD. Their performance at the BBC Proms, televised and issued on DVD, received a MIDEM International Classical Award at Cannes in 2010.

In addition to performing to capacity audiences and creating highly regarded recordings, The King's Singers share their artistry through numerous workshops and masterclasses. Their work has also reached countless singers in the form of prodigious quantities of sheet music: at present, two million items have been distributed through the group's publisher, Hal Leonard. Their arrangements are sung the world over.

Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, with Music Director Dr Karen Grylls, made its début at the 1998 New Zealand International Arts Festival and later that year won awards at the Tolosa International Choral Competition in Spain.

Recent projects include appearances with Jack Body's *PASSIO*, Tippett's *A Child of our Time* and Britten's *Requiem for the Fallen* (all Auckland Arts Festival), Ross Harris' *Requiem for the Fallen* (also NZ Festival and Dunedin Arts Festival) and a gala concert with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa for the last New Zealand Festival.

Critically acclaimed recordings include *Spirit of the Land*, and *Voice of the Soul*.

VOICES New Zealand was formed in 1998 with Dr Karen Grylls as its Music Director. As a nationally selected choir of the highest calibre, VOICES is a chamber choir that is flexible in size, and capable of performing a wide repertoire. Many of the singers are alumni of the New Zealand Youth Choir.

With its distinct New Zealand sound, performing music from Aotearoa/New Zealand and infusing the qualities of its pacific origins into the classic choral repertoire, VOICES has established itself as the country's premier national and professional choir. VOICES regularly performs at Arts Festivals around the country, collaborates with orchestras, Chamber Music New Zealand, Taonga Puoro and other artists across creative genres.

VOICES also tours internationally and is the choir-of-choice for arts festivals and special projects.

History and Highlights

The choir made its début at the 1998 New Zealand International Arts Festival in a recital with the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra and Keith Lewis. Later that year it won gold and silver awards at the Tolosa International Choral Competition in the Basque region of Spain. In 2000 it appeared at the New Zealand International Arts Festival which led to a collaboration with the prestigious Aradia Ensemble from Canada, resulting in the completion of a world premiere recording of the Vanhal Masses for Naxos.

In 2004 the choir participated in the Otago Festival of the Arts, and concluded the year recording a CD which features New Zealand repertoire and composers - including two pieces commissioned especially for the choir with the assistance of Creative New Zealand. This CD, *Spirit of the Land*, won Best Classical Album at the 2006 NZ Music Awards.

In May 2005 the choir represented New Zealand at the 9th International Chamber Choir Competition in Marktoberdorf, Germany. In 2008 Voices NZ performed at the New Zealand International Arts Festival in 'The Poet', a work composed for VOICES and the New Zealand String Quartet by Jenny McLeod, setting poems by Janet Frame.

In 2010 Voices NZ joined the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) in a performance of Mahler's Symphony No 8, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. This concert was the opening Gala performance of the NZ International Arts Festival in Wellington and was broadcast live on a large screen in Wellington's Civic Square and on the internet, reaching an audience of thousands.

In August 2011 VOICES was one of the 24 international choirs appearing at the 9th World Symposium on Choral Music in Puerto Madryn in Argentina. In the same year the ensemble performed two nationwide tours, including a tour with the NZSO performing Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' and a national tour of 'Voices of Aotearoa' for Chamber Music New Zealand.