



# Joining a choir

Sometimes, singing in the car or shower is not enough to satisfy your need for a musical outlet. If you don't plan to audition for *The Voice*, *The X Factor* or *Britain's Got Talent*, then joining a choir may offer the perfect solution. There are many benefits to gain from singing in a choir: making new friends who share a love of music; exercising your lungs and stomach muscles; clearing your head from the stresses of the day, and performing beautiful pieces which appeal to all kinds of musical tastes. The great news is that in London and beyond, there are lots of choirs you can join or watch, some of which do not require an audition. Choirs come in many forms from church to neighbourhood, and even some focused on specific musical genres.

## Church Choirs

Almost every church has a choir, and choir directors often seek new members, so that on any given Sunday, there is good representation in all sections (sopranos, altos, tenors and basses). Many church choirs do not require an audition, making them a great way to dip your toe into the choir world. One such choir is at the American International Church in London. Led by Scott Stroman, who is also a Jazz Composer and Jazz Professor & Fellow at The Guildhall School of Music & Drama, **Eclectic Voices** sings in different languages and across many genres, including traditional, jazz, and gospel. It rehearses on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, from September to June, but also performs in concerts, and at the annual US Thanksgiving Day Service at St. Paul's Cathedral.

## Neighbourhood Choirs

Joining a choir near where you live or

work is not only convenient, but also a great way to make new friends - a definite advantage for expats in the UK.

A few, notable ones include:

- The aforementioned **Eclectic Voices**, which rehearses on Thursday evenings in Highbury, and "picks each year with up to eight, thrilling performances - many with world-class classical or jazz musicians". Auditions are required.
- The **City of London Choir** performs a range of music with leading orchestras. Conducted by Hilary Davan Wetton, the choir rehearses on Monday evenings near Fleet Street and Blackfriars. Auditions required.
- **City Academy Choirs** has six choirs: two mixed-repertoire choirs (Singers and Collective), a pop and indie choir (Amplified), a musical theatre choir (Encore), a classical chamber choir (Chamber), and a ladies-only mixed-repertoire choir (Songbirds). All choirs require an audition, and a membership subscription fee, with weekly rehearsals around London, and performances throughout the year.
- **The Croydon Bach Choir** is one of the leading choral societies in the South East, with very diverse membership. Led by Tim Horton and performing in Croydon, the choir sings Bach, but also a diverse range of choral repertoire. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings. Auditions and subscription fees are required.
- Surrey residents might want to check out **The Ripieno Choir**, based in the Esher area. Auditions are required for this relatively small chamber choir, and rehearsals are on Sunday evenings, led by David Hansell.
- If you live south of the Thames, **The Festival Chorus** might be perfect for you. It is a 100-member choral society, which rehearses on Monday evenings, and performs in the Clapham/Wandsworth areas. No auditions are required. There are three big performances each year, led by conductor Andrea Brown. One of the chorus members says that she was invited to join by a friend, and that her "favourite part about being a member is



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hearing the harmonies between the different voice sections, and rehearsing with the professional soloists and orchestras on concert days”.

### Special interest choirs

Perhaps you like to sing but also like spending your time with people who share your demography? Pink Singers and She Choir London are two groups that might meet your criteria:

- **Pink Singers** is Europe’s longest-running LGBT choir. It was formed more than 30 years ago for London Pride, and has been singing together ever since. Musical director Murray Hipkin leads rehearsals on Sunday afternoons in the Euston/King’s Cross area, and auditions are required.
- **She Choir London** is a dynamic, all-female pop choir based in London. It has 60 members and rehearses in the King’s Cross area. It is unique because the choir is collaborative and encourages active participation from all

members. Included in this is leading the physical and vocal warm ups, to conducting and arranging songs or organising gigs. No auditions are required, and there are also She Choirs in Manchester, Newcastle and abroad.

### Genres

Have you dreamt of being a Gospel singer, love to belt out show tunes or know all the words to the top pop hits? Try London Community Gospel Choir, SOUND or West End Musical Choir.

- **London Community Gospel Choir** is Europe’s leading Gospel choir, founded and led by Bazil Meade, and one of the most in-demand choirs on the continent. Auditions are required, and the choir regularly performs on TV, in films, and graces many of the UK’s greatest stages such as Wembley Stadium (FA Cup Final), the Royal Albert Hall and is a regular at the Glastonbury Festival.

- If you want to sing all of the latest pop, funk and soul hits, then **SOUND** is for you. Artistic director Liz Swain leads this choir for performances at great venues, such as The Roundhouse. Auditions are required.
- **West End Musical Choir** is a performance and social events choir, which rehearses and performs all of the hits from the West End and Broadway. There are six choirs in various London neighbourhoods, with no auditions, but membership fees are required.

These are just a few of the choirs to be found in London and beyond, which you can join or simply watch. If you are feeling even braver and more confident in your abilities, you may want to audition for bigger, more famous ones such as: **The Bach Choir**, the **London Oriana Choir**, or the **London Philharmonic Choir**. Now, go sing your heart out!

**Zena Martin** is an American/British dual-citizen, who has lived in London for 19 years, and Paris for a year. Connect with her on: [uk.linkedin.com/in/zenamartin](http://uk.linkedin.com/in/zenamartin)