The image shows the interior of a grand cathedral, likely the Queen's College Chapel. The architecture is highly detailed, featuring a high vaulted ceiling with intricate carvings and a central circular fresco. Stained glass windows are visible on the walls, and wooden pews line the floor. A large brass chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and religious significance.

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

Written by choir
members in 2020

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

A is
for...

Applying for a Choral Scholarship at Oxford. And also an Adage: you've got to be in it to win it. Whilst the stars (academic tutors) may have to align (offer you a university place), there'll be no choral scholarship waiting for you if you haven't attended auditions in September. So apply! Worst comes to the worst, it's a couple of days spent in the gorgeous city of Oxford, enjoying free meals and accommodation, singing beautiful music, making new friends... for nothing?

- Rory Booth, Bass

B is
for...

Broadcasts and the Bright, red recording light of BBC Radio 3, whose glare must be met with defiance as you sing live to listeners across the country, and even further afield. Once you've got over your newfound fame, TikToks can't hope to match the broad appeal of Choral Evensong - you may have the surreal pleasure of listening back to yourself on BBC Sounds. We tend to find this exercise in self-appraisal is best conducted together over tea, or something stronger if need be.

- Rory Booth, bass

C is
for...

Concerts, several throughout the year, high-profile and sold out. Sometimes we're on our own, but often we're collaborating with such esteemed groups as the Academy of Ancient Music, Instruments of Time and Truth and the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. From the sublime to the ridiculous, C is also for Crewdates, social occasions with other choirs in Oxford - a great opportunity to make new acquaintances and test vocal rivalries, to the delight of local restaurateurs. We believe the highest musical standards are certainly compatible with a healthy dose of fun.

- Rory Booth, bass

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

D is
for...

Dinners! After every Evensong the choir moves to the hall in Queen's for their well-deserved dinner, free of charge! This is when you properly get the chance to catch up with friends about what's happened over the past few days, and taste the delights the college kitchens have to offer. The churros and sticky toffee pudding are particular highlights! Most dinners are promptly followed by a trip to the pub, the King's Arms (or 'the KA' as it is fondly known) being the choir's local hangout.

- Lauren Burke, Alto

E is
for...

Evensong: the main responsibility of any choral or organ scholar. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, the peal of Chapel bells heralds the beginning of evensong at Queen's. As the congregation settles in the pews, the choir dons regal purple cassocks. For each service, we prepare responses, canticles, an anthem, and a juicy chunk of psalmody. Although services are religious, choral scholars aren't expected to be ☐ don't let the religious aspect dissuade you from applying! Irrespective of religious belief, the Chapel at Queen's provides a serene space away from hectic work schedules. For both choir and congregation, evensong allows for a moment of calm, stillness and contemplation.

- Charlotte Jefferies, Soprano

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

F is
for...

Frobenius, the Danish firm that built the chapel's famous organ in 1965. Each of its 22 stops are of exceptional quality and it is a fantastic instrument to experience either as a player or listener, especially in the works of J.S. Bach and the North German school. Being regarded as one of the finest instruments in the country, it is a privilege and honour to have only a 15-second walk across the quad to it from my room, and the ability to practise in my pyjamas if required. This year, F is also for Funky Masks, the company which provided our purple singing masks throughout the pandemic.

- Tom Dilleu, Organ Scholar

G is
for...

Gaudies are fancy college dinners, often for old members, for which the choir sings grace from the balcony, as well as an evensong service beforehand. They are often in the holidays which is a lovely way for the choir to be reunited outside of term-time. The best gaudy of the year is the Boar's Head Gaudy, where in a strange Christmas tradition the choir sing the Boar's Head Carol, whilst processing behind chefs carrying a boar's head! Last year's gaudy was particularly exciting because Rowan Atkinson, a Queen's alumnus, was at the gaudy, and presented members of the choir gold sprigs of holly as part of the tradition - mine had pride of place on our family Christmas tree! Last year the choir was asked to perform the Boar's Head Carol as part of Lucy Worsley's BBC documentary A Merry Tudor Christmas, which is just one of many weird and wonderful opportunities that come your way by being a member of Queen's Choir!

- Becky Howitt, Soprano

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

H is
for...

Howells - there's nothing quite like the soaring melodies of the choral music of Herbert Howells. Much of his music, and in my opinion, some of his greatest bangers, are only found in the repertoire associated with Evensong. It's always a treat to see the St Paul's or the Gloucester service on the music list for the term, and many choristers list Howells' pieces amongst their favourites to sing. The choir has even recorded a Howells-themed disk, featuring the colossal anthem 'The House of the Mind', along with other works such as 'Behold O God our Defender', 'Hymn for St Cecilia', and the famous anthem 'Like as the Hart'.

- Miranda Gronow, Alto

I is
for...

In the bleak midwinter.

Whether you're a die-hard supporter of Holst or Darke, one thing is for certain: Michaelmas Term is a busy one! With term starting in October there is not much time to prepare for the Christmas (or Oxmas!) concerts and events that you'll surely be a part of. Whether you're singing at our 'Carols from Queen's' concert, performing at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons for a VERY well catered carol recital, singing Handel's gorgeous Messiah accompanied by the magnificent Academy of Ancient Music, or processing into hall behind a boar's head, you'll realise that midwinter with Queen's Choir is anything but bleak.

- Sam Teague, Tenor

The Queen's College Choir A-Z

J is
for...

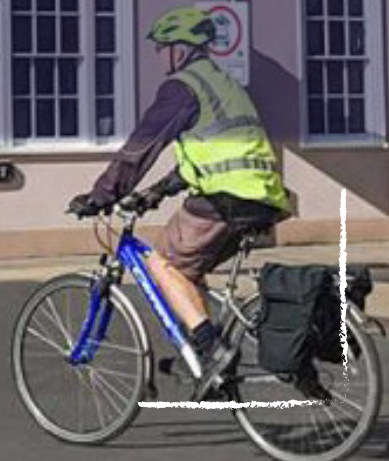
Jam tarts! Each Sunday before our rehearsal for Evensong, members of the choir who live in College take turns hosting 'Choir Tea'. It's a lovely informal opportunity for everyone to get together for a chat over a cup of tea, and something to eat (although jam tarts are not always on offer). At the beginning and end of term, the Chaplain is often the host: on these occasions, we are treated to delicious scones from the bakery in the Covered Market.

- Laurence John, Organ Scholar

K is
for...

King's Arms It's often hard to resist the welcome calls of 'pub?' or 'KA?' that pass down the choir tables towards the end of dinner, and not to find yourself joining others for a quick (or not so quick) trip to one of choir's favourite pubs. From my very first evensong, everyone was so welcoming and friendly, encouraging everyone (particularly freshers) to come along and get to know people better. Some of my best nights in Oxford have been spent in the King's Arms (or 'Chequer's' or 'Turf') surrounded by many of my closest friends, and they are one of the things I am most looking forward to coming back to.

- Lizi Vineall, Soprano



The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

L is
for...

Live streaming Over the past few months, Queen's has invested in state-of-the-art live streaming & recording equipment. Backstage (in the choir room), there are lots of blinking red lights, computer screens and complicated-looking wires. We hope to make great use of our new equipment in the future by making selected evensongs, concerts and recordings available to the public. Watch this space!

- Charlotte Jefferies, Soprano

M is
for...

Music for a Summer's Evening This is typically our last concert of the Summer term, and a perfect way to round off the year. After singing the first half of the concert in the chapel, we move outside to the idyllic Queen's garden for the second half; there, we sing madrigals and contemporary a cappella arrangements in consort groups. Afterwards, we have the perfect opportunity to celebrate coming to the end of an always busy year! This year, 'M' has also meant something totally different for choir: masks. We are very grateful to FunkyMasks for equipping us with stylish, purple PPE so that we can sing safely.

- Hugo Till, Bass

The Queen's College Choir A-Z

N is
for...

A New Heaven, the CD which we recorded in 2016. Featuring a number of well-loved anthems by composers such as Edgar Bainton, William Harris, and former Queen's Organ Scholar David Bedhall, it also includes three commissions, written by Phillip Cooke, Toby Young, and Marco Galvani - a Queen's music student and Choral Scholar, who was in his final year when the disc was recorded. The CD reached number 1 in the classical music charts, and its tracks have been firm favourites in evensongs and concerts both in Oxford and across the globe! A New Heaven will forever evoke wonderful memories of my time in the choir.

- Izzie Grive, Soprano

O is
for...

Organ scholarships. Queen's has two organ scholars at any one time, and together they share in the accompanying of the choir and playing voluntaries for the three services a week. In addition, organ scholars take part in the concerts, recordings, tours and radio broadcasts that form the choir's busy schedule. Recent highlights have included playing continuo alongside the Academy of Ancient Music, accompanying the choir in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, as well as playing live on BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong! As well as free meals after services and funding for organ lessons, both organ scholars are guaranteed a lovely set of rooms in college, complete with piano!

- Laurence John, Organ Scholar

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

P is
for...

Psalms - an essential part of any evensong! How to sing a psalm was one of the first things I learnt coming to Queen's as a choral scholar, but once you've picked up the basics it quickly becomes second nature. P is also for Professionals; the chapel choir regularly gets the opportunity to collaborate with professional ensembles and soloists, some of whom are even alumni of Queen's. Recently, we were lucky enough to sing Monteverdi's Vespers with the singers of Contrapunctus, along with the sublime forces of Instruments of Time and Truth. Finally, P is for Purple: the monarchical colour of the choir's cassocks. Whilst all of the cassocks are the same colour, they come in a variety of lengths, which has been known to lead to a great deal of cassock confusion.

- Tamsin Sandford Smith, Soprano

Q is
for...

Queen's - Undoubtedly the best college in Oxford, Queen's is home to a fiercely intelligent, fun and welcoming community of students and staff. A small-to-medium sized college, Queen's accepts 90-100 new undergraduates each year, and there are usually about 150 graduate students in residence, making for a diverse yet familial environment - the perfect balance. Her stunning neo-classical walls encase two beautiful (and rather regal) quads. Together these frame the heart of Queen's: her chapel (choir!) and hall (dinner!!). What's more, as one strolls along the open cloisters, stealing a smug glance at the beautiful (and award-winning) library, the path veers left through a series of immaculate walled-gardens, before arriving at the Shulman Auditorium - another Queen's treasure. Queen's is also home to The Eglesfield Musical Society, the oldest, and one of the most prestigious, music societies in Oxford. Whilst we might not always make the University Challenge cut, Queen's' overflowing social, sporty, and musical calendar, her stunning architecture, guaranteed undergraduate accommodation, historical prestige and homely ambience is simply second to none. Oh, and I hear the choir is pretty good too.

- Rachel Howe, Soprano

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

R is
for...

Recordings. What's that you say? You love that anthem so much you could sing it over and over and never tire of it? Great - let's put that to the test! Patience is a virtue when recording a choral disc, as the pieces are tuned more finely than an F1 engine, and you never know when a nefarious lawn mower or low-flying aircraft might interrupt to slow the process down. Oh, and that note in bar 46, just wait for the producer to inform you that you've been getting it wrong FOR YEARS. Tempers may fray, but keep calm and think of the Spotify release. It'll all be worth it.

- Rory Booth, Bass

S is
for...

Self-improvement via the means of Singing lessons. Scholars receive free, bi-weekly lessons with professional vocal teachers. Regular tuition encourages us to be extra-committed to developing our technique, and as a result, we mature hugely as vocalists. Another S is for Sight-Singing, which improves exponentially through lots and lots of practice. We work to a tight schedule, and much of the music we sing for evensong is only rehearsed once or twice if we're lucky! Therefore, we finish our tenure at Queen's as infinitely better musicians than when we first started; our sight-reading, vocal technique, and general musicianship all improve tenfold. The final S is for Scholar's gowns, which most of us get to wear. They're fancy, go Swish in the wind, and fall off your shoulders if you're little.

Charlotte Jefferies, Soprano

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

T is
for...

Tours. The choir's adventures outside Oxford are the highlight of a choral scholar's time at Queen's. Our journeys far and wide have enabled concerts in remarkable locations to wonderful audiences, from the mayor of LA's house to a Buddhist monastery near Taipei. Undertaken during the university vacations, tours are a fabulous way to make long-lasting memories and build close friendships across the choir - there's plenty of time for trips to the beach, to explore the places we visit, and for nights out. Rated as one of the UK's top mixed student choirs, we attract large audiences that boost the choir's performance to higher levels. Subsidised accommodation and travel allow all singers to take part and mean the fun can be shared by everyone!

- Jake Sternberg, Bass

U is
for...

Undergraduate choral scholarships. A choral scholarship at Queen's is great alongside an undergraduate degree. I'm a Law finalist and I've really enjoyed the structure of having Evensong three times a week, especially since my degree has had relatively few contact hours in some terms. In addition, the regular singing lessons as part of the scholarship and the concerts, recordings and tours outside of term have been just the right level of commitment alongside my degree - and great fun too!

- Jacob Alston, Tenor



The Queen's College Choir A-Z

V is
for...

Virtual Evensong During the COVID-19 pandemic, the choir was determined for some normality to continue. As well as online socials, such as 'zoom pub nights' and our (online) annual black-tie dinner, the chaplain worked hard to make e-evensong happen. These virtual services were made up of webcast recordings of previous services, CD recordings, as well as members of the choir and the Queen's community recording the readings at home! For my family, it became a new tradition to listen to the virtual service whilst making the roast dinner - although I did have to ask everyone to stop chopping the vegetables so we could listen to Howells's Gloucester Service in all its glory! It's also really nice that I am able to share my love of evensong with my extended family who would not usually be able to come to a service in person, but can easily tune in on a Sunday evening from home.

- Becky Howitt, Soprano

W is
for...

Week in the life of a Choral Scholar One of the best things about being a Choral Scholar at Queen's is the structure that Choir adds to your weekly life in Oxford. We sing four times a week in term: evensong on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays (with the added bonus of a free dinner afterwards!) and a lunchtime rehearsal on Tuesdays. As a postgraduate research student working in the humanities, I find that Choir usefully breaks up my working weeks which mostly involve independent study. No matter what subject you do, a bit of singing followed by eating with friends is always a great way to end your working day.

- Anna Thomas, Alto

The Queen's College Choir

A-Z

X is
for...

Xmas at Queen's. My favourite part of the year is Christmas with Queen's choir. We round off Michaelmas term in the perfect way - a carol service with sublime music followed by a black-tie Christmas dinner with yet more carols and lots of merriment! We have our Carols from Queen's concert in December which provides a perfect opportunity to sing together and socialise outside of term time. In this time back in Oxford, we also sing for the traditional Boar's Head Gaudy which was featured on the BBC documentary A Merry Tudor Christmas - filming this provided the perfect opportunity for some of the lower voices to show us just what we are missing out on by not living in Tudor times!

- Melissa Talbot, Soprano

Y is
for...

Well, after the previous 24 letters, you should already be convinced that there really is a whole host of reasons to apply for a choral scholarship at Queen's! For me, what sells Queen's in particular is the balance it strikes between the professional and the fun. What makes me most grateful to have been part of the choir for the last 3 years is that not only is the musical standard so high, and the opportunities that the choir receives are amazing as a result, but the social side is valued just as highly. Singing together so often (for 3 services a week, plus concerts, ceremonies, tours and CD recordings), has meant that the choir is very close as a whole, and if all of that wasn't enough we still meet up for choir tea before rehearsals, and regular pub trips after dinner. Rehearsals have always had a degree of playful banter from all sections (including Owen), but never to the detriment of the musical product. Without a doubt, the choir is as good as it is because we enjoy singing together and share a strong desire to perform the repertoire to the best of our ability.

- Alex Moss, Soprano

The Queen's College Choir A-Z

Z is
for...

Zadok the Priest. As I sat down this time last week to watch Bayern Munich demolish Barcelona in the quarter-finals of the UEFA Champions League, the familiar-sounding opening title theme (being highly reminiscent of a certain anthem by Handel) transported me back to the evening of 9 November 2019. The combined forces of the current Queen's Choir, Instruments of Time & Truth, and Queen's Choir Alumni came together in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the chapel's consecration in a performance of music by Bach and Handel, featuring the coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest*. With 1719 being the year where Bach and Handel planned to meet, the concert was a particular highlight of my second year, being able to perform alongside the choir and IT&T in fantastic works including Bach's *Magnificat* and Handel's *My Heart is Inditing* to a packed chapel.

Z is also for Zzz (sleep it off in the vac). The 8-week terms are a condensed period of intense music making for the choir, with the long vacation providing the perfect opportunity to rest ahead of another busy year. However, with this year's long summer vacation being an even further extended time away from the choir due to the virtual Trinity term, the chance to sing together again in the upcoming Michaelmas term is something that will be extra special after such a long time apart.

— Tom Dillely, Organ Scholar



