

Calling choirs of all shapes and sizes from across the United Kingdom - we want to talk to you!

Hanbury & Groves, commissioned by Sky Arts, are looking for choirs to co-create a British Songbook that celebrates what it means to be British through the power of song.

We are conducting a nationwide listening project to collect stories about British life in 2018. We want to hear from a huge array of people and communities to take a snapshot of different lives across the UK - exploring our commonalities and celebrating our differences.

Theatre maker Rebecca Hanbury will collect the stories via workshops and interviews. She will then craft them into lyrics and composer Alex Groves will set them to music. The resulting songbook will be available for free to all choirs across the UK to sing and enjoy. We hope to be able to invite participating choirs to join mass performances around the UK including at the Barbican, London and Sage Gateshead.

We want to hear from choirs of every kind - community choirs, school choirs, gospel choirs, rock choirs, LGBTQ+ choirs, acapella choirs, church choirs, NHS choirs, choirs we can't even begin to imagine - we want to represent the incredible idiosyncrasies and diversity that makes us all proud to be British. So - get in touch!

For more information and to register your interest, email britishsongbook@gmail.com

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should my choir be involved in this project?

- You will be part of a new piece of choral music that will directly share your voice and capture the opinions of people around the UK at an important moment in British history
- You will get to work with a composer and theatre director
- Your choir will be profiled on the British Songbook website, a community hub for choirs taking part, a place to download music and upload your thoughts about the project and meet other choirs involved
- You will be part of a high-profile celebration of new art across the UK as part of Sky Arts Art 50
- There might be an opportunity for your choir to perform the finished songbook at one of the mass choir performances around the country and we would be able to support costs for you to do so

What will you need us to do? Does the whole choir need to be involved?

1. Talk to us:

Initially we are asking for your choir members to chat to Rebecca between February and June 2018. The interviews will be tailored to each individual choir. We can run anything from a 3-hour song-writing and singing workshop with the whole choir, to a discussion with a small group, to interviewing individuals before/after your rehearsals. Rebecca will then craft the conversations into lyrics and Alex will compose the songs.

2. Give us feedback:

In July 2018, for choirs that are interested, we will be asking some of the choirs to work with us to test the music, try it out and give us your feedback.

3. Sing!

Over this time, we will establish the performing opportunities at Sage Gateshead, the Barbican and other venues around the UK. The premieres will take place in February 2019 and we will talk to choirs who took part in the co-creation to see if they would like to perform. We will also be encouraging choirs to sing the songs in their usual concerts and we would love to help share information about these performances.

The final songbook will be free to download for any choir from April 2019.

How will what I say be used?

Rebecca and Alex have experience in creating work that uses interviews in a 'verbatim' way. Rather than interpret what people mean, it is important to them to use your words directly. We will talk to everyone who is involved in the interview process about their preference as to how they are credited, be it by name, or by choir, or anonymously. Songs might contain interviews from several other people or choirs, so it will not be clear exactly who has said what.

Are there any costs to the choir?

No. We will come to talk to you wherever you are in the UK.

About Us

Hanbury & Groves

Director Rebecca Hanbury and composer Alex Groves have been working together since 2010. United by a love of theatre and live music, their work explores ways to combine them.

Their work to date has experimented with real-life stories, electronic sound and vocal music, searching for ways to incorporate music with stories that needed to be told. This is the bedrock of their collaboration and underpins everything they create.

Their work encompasses everything from installations to theatre shows, from immersive performances to songbooks, working with partner organisations including Sky Arts, Ovalhouse, Spitalfields Music and Bristol Old Vic.

www.hanburyandgroves.com

Sky Arts Art 50

Sky Arts launched Art 50 to invite artists of all kinds, from all walks of life, from all artistic genres, to create a piece of work which says something important about what it will mean to be British after we leave the European Union. A selection of these commissions will be presented as part of a festival at the Barbican, Sage Gateshead and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in February 2019, marking two years since the signing of Article 50.

In the next two years, there will be staggered commissioning rounds for more opportunities to apply for funding or co-funding to make a piece of theatre, dance, music, film, art, collage (the list goes on) that responds to the question - what will it mean to be British?

www.skyartsart50.tv