

THE SUNDAY BOYS

Welcome!

We're so excited that you've decided to join **The Sunday Boys**. We're a genuinely friendly bunch, from all ages and walks of life.

This guide will give you enough informal information to make you feel right at home when you meet us in person and sing with us for the first time and by the end, you will know what to expect and may already recognise a few friendly faces!



We describe ourselves as an inclusive gay male choir — while many of our members would identify as gay, we want male voices of any sexual orientation or gender identity to come and join us.

Joining any group can be really daunting, so we put this short guide together. We remember what it felt like to join **The Sunday Boys** at first, and want to make this first step as easy and enjoyable for you as possible!

We are **unauditioned** and you will fit right in without any previous choir or singing experience.

If you haven't seen our introduction video just yet, **you should start by watching The Sunday Boys in 3 minutes video on YouTube.**

SINGING WITH THE SUNDAY BOYS

The choir was started in January 2016 by composer and conductor, Michael Betteridge. Michael wanted to create a new male voice choir to brighten up Sunday evenings by bringing gay men and their allies together to sing exceptionally.

Over the three years **The Sunday Boys** has grown from small beginnings to perform at prestigious gigs in the city and beyond.



We sing the songs together that we love as individuals. We come together to sing, and in doing so, meet new people and build great friendships.

The Sunday Boys now spills over into the week, with spontaneous social gatherings and trips to share Manchester life together.

Being really good at what we do, singing, is important to everyone in **The Sunday Boys**. That doesn't mean that you have to have had lots of musical experience or even done any singing before. So long as you want to give it a go, and are prepared to learn, then it sounds like you have what it takes to join us.

We are laid back and work to ensure our rehearsals are both relaxed and that we all see an improvement in what we do each week.

Our rehearsals are challenging, but that doesn't mean you have to read music. If you are prepared to get to work and learn, you will find over a few months you will gain the benefits from being involved and committed.

It is also entirely your decision whether you join us during the various concerts and gigs we give throughout the year — we do not ever put pressure on anyone to take part.

We delivered our first large gig in July 2017 where we celebrated the the 50th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which initiated the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality. We had a concert in Iceland in 2018, and more recently performed at the prestigious Stoller Hall in Manchester, at Manchester International Festival and at the Manchester Pride Candlelit Vigil.

Most people stay around for a drink after rehearsals and you will quickly find yourself invited to a whole load of different social events too.

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ALL MALE CHOIR SINGING BASICS

Choir Singing refers to a group of people singing together in a chorus of voices, often with harmony parts (3-part, 4-part or even more) designed to make the choral songs sound full and colourful.

The Sunday Boys perform **with or without music accompaniment**, either going *a capella* (without music) or accompanied with piano.

In choir singing, singers are usually **classified by their vocal range**, and so it is more convenient to group singers based on their ranges, ie Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass, rather on the various characteristics of their voice, as it would be in the classical world.



A conventional choir, one which includes both male and female members include **4 basic voice types or ranges – Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass** – this is commonly known as SATB.

The Sunday Boys is a male voice choir with a lower range, and commonly split into **2 Tenor parts and 2 Bass parts (TTBB)**. We refer to these parts as (from the highest to lowest range) Tenor 1, Tenor 2 (or higher Baritone), Bass 1 (or lower Baritone) and Bass 2. When we sing pieces in 3 parts, we tend to simply group singers as Tenors, Baritones and Bases.

All singers should find their own vocal range for singing, so as to know which singing parts they can manage, and also which parts are out of reach. This is part of what **Michael**, the musical Director, can help with during your first vocal coaching session. (See the [Once You've Joined](#) section).

The advantage of singing in a choir as opposed to singing in a smaller group of singers is that you're not on your own. If you lack confidence with certain parts you can make your voice quieter, or drop out during the difficult parts, and join back in when you're more comfortable. You can also listen to your fellow singers in your part to make sure you're singing at the right pitch and it's fine to get it wrong sometimes, especially during rehearsals as this the best way to learn!

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING REHEARSALS

We currently rehearse from **Halle St Michael's** — George Leigh Street, Ancoats, M4 5DG — in the Northern Quarter of Manchester. Our regular rehearsal times are 5:30pm - 7:45pm every Sunday. The closest tram stop is Piccadilly Gardens, which is 0.5 miles away.

There is usually about 30 to 40 of us coming to rehearsal regularly.

When you come in, you will usually find us in the large rehearsal space by the café. If you're early, you will most likely find a few of us in the café and waiting as **Michael** may be giving a voice coaching session in the space, which is done in private.

Introduce yourself to anyone, we will look after you. We always welcome new faces. During your first time, one of us will probably introduce you either to **Ed** (our chair), **Michael** (our musical director), or another member of the organising team, who will ask you a couple of questions about your experience of being in a choir (or lack thereof), and assign you to a location in the choir, depending on your range.

When you come in, **Ken** makes printed song sheets available in the café area. Grab one copy of each, these are the songs we will be rehearsing on the day. Please look after them as they are for you to keep, and you can annotate them *with a pencil*. In due course we will give you your very own Sunday Boys folder and you'll be allowed to keep hold of them.

Once rehearsal begins, we start with a gentle warm up. This involves gentle stretches followed by simple singing warming up exercises. Some of them may seem a bit silly and can occasionally cause fits and giggles but they are a very good way to begin a rehearsal. Just follow the instructions of the musical director. If you are not familiar with a particularly routine, that's ok. Just observe the others, and you will know what to do next time!

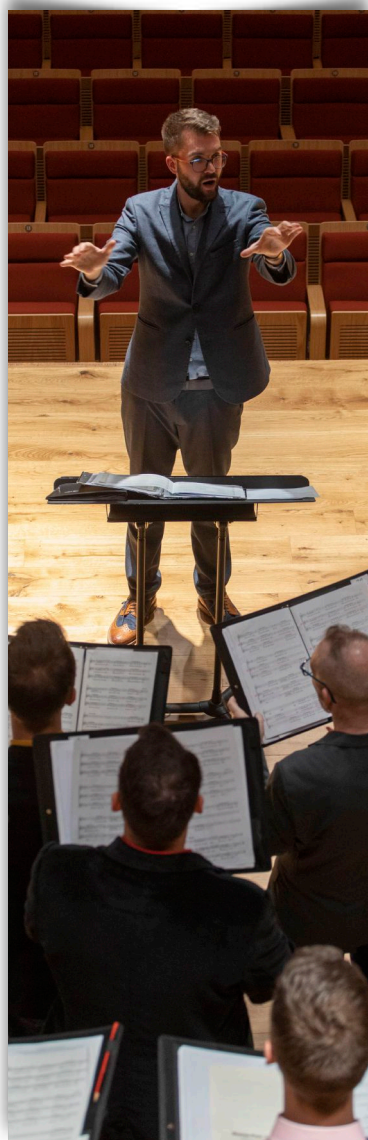


The musical director will then announce which song he wishes to rehearse, and lead the rehearsal.

You will find that we tend to only run through sections of each song during each rehearsal and, as we gradually become more confident, we eventually attempt whole pieces. At this point the musical director will focus on parts people may find difficult or that do not sound quite right.

The important thing to remember is that it's just a rehearsal. It doesn't need to be perfect and mistakes are allowed. If you do not know a part well, attempt it anyway. You will never be judged and the musical director will never pick on you specifically.

Rehearsals last about two and a half hours with a short 15 minute break in the middle. After the first break there's an opportunity for **Ed**, our chair, to share any news relevant to the choir and there's an opportunity for you to ask any questions.



We then run through the other half of the rehearsal.

After each rehearsal, some of us get together either at HOME or the Molly House pub, where you have an opportunity to chat with other members.

We consider our time with **The Sunday Boys** a nice way to end the week, working building something we all enjoy very much. It is also a nice way to gather between friends before the week ahead.

If you keep on coming regularly, after 6 weeks, we will eventually hand you your very own **Sundays Boys** folder — which you will use to keep copies of your own song sheets (that you can annotate with a pencil) and that you will need to take with you at any concerts you take part of.

Should you decide that the part or range we assigned you in the choir isn't comfortable for you, you can decide to move into a different location during the next rehearsal.

We strongly recommend that you meet **Michael** for a private voice coaching session. It only takes about 10 minutes, and it enables **Michael** to make sure you're singing with the part(s) that are right for your range, and he can give you tips on how to improve for the next sessions. He's here to help, and doesn't judge. The single purpose for this session, is to ensure you are comfortable and not stretching yourself, as well as answering any questions you may have.

We all were nervous about the voice coaching sessions at first, but Michael is a great teacher, and it always is an enjoyable experience.

OUTSIDE OF REHEARSALS

Open sessions

Every few months - roughly every 3 months - we host open sessions that everyone can join. They usually start a couple of hours on a Sunday before rehearsals.

They are an opportunity to review our experiences and discuss matters pertaining to the direction of the choir, such as reviewing the quality of the material we sing, how we experienced any concerts or gigs, and weigh in on matters the organising team and choir put forward.



Trips away

We try to organise trips away a couple of times a year. It goes from gigs in interesting locations such as what we have done in Iceland in 2018, or spending a week-end together in a city in the UK where we run choir-related workshops.

The advantage of group bookings keeps the costs of travel and accommodation as low as possible. Should this be any concern, please communicate this, either openly during open sessions or more privately directly with the organising team. We always try to help if we can.

Socialising

We tend to gather at HOME or the Molly House pub after rehearsals, which are not very far from the rehearsal space.

This is by no means compulsory, and we find it a good opportunity to socialise with other members or the choir and social team.

We also regularly organise — as a choir or as individual groups — other events, such as walks, going to the cinema or to the theatre. Some of **The Sunday Boys** are accomplished artists so there's often an occasion to go and support them performing!

GIGS & CONCERTS

There are different types of concert throughout the year: project gigs, sing-and-go.

When a concert has been confirmed, we will announce it during rehearsal and also in the Serenade (our newsletter) as far in advance as possible with an electronic invitation as well as listing any potential requirements for that event.

Requirements usually include a location, a minimum number of participants, a minimum commitment in terms of number of rehearsals attended during a fixed time period, and a dress code.



At this point you can choose to join in by adding your name to the list - and which parts you would like to sing. This helps ensure that we have the number of Tenors, Baritones and Basses.

The Sunday Boys' dress code ensure that as a group, we look coordinated, but very much leaves room for individuality. **Always wear a plain coloured shirt** (bright colour of your choice), dark trousers and we often include a jacket (although not always, especially if performing in a warm environment in the summer). Sometimes we will also allow an optional waistcoat when jackets are not compulsory.

The rules are loose when it comes to colours to allow you to show your own personality but patterned shirts or not wearing a jacket for formal events will not be allowed. You must not deviate from those general rules without first checking with the organising team.



ONCE YOU'VE JOINED...

Book a free vocal coaching session

Michael, our musical director allows a time slot before rehearsal for people to come in and run through a few basics with him. This is a very relaxed session where Michael can help ensure you are singing in the right part for your range and give you any tips that he thinks could help you going forward.

We do not want to put you on the spot if you are lacking confidence and this is why these sessions are done in private.

Please contact **David Plaister** during rehearsal or email info@thesundayboys.com to arrange for a vocal coaching session.

What does it cost?

Running a choir has costs and we ask members to contribute a small amount each week. This helps to pay for the rehearsal space and singing material. We try to keep them as low as possible.

Each member contributes either £5 a week on the day when you come to rehearsal (**Matt** will come and find you with a card reader) or you can make Matt's life easier and make a saving by subscribing to a cheaper £16 a month direct debit by using the links below:

[Pay on the 1st of each month](#)

[Pay on the 15th of each month](#)

Singing Lessons

Jenny trained at the Royal Northern College of Music where she met **Michael**, and she has been teaching for 10 years. She loves helping people find their voices and exploring how they work. She is classically trained and has a real love of musical theatre.

You can book a 30 minute session with her for £15 - either by yourself or in a group of up to three people (members need to arrange this between themselves).



David Plaister organises singing lessons so feel free to contact him or email info@thesundayboys.com should you have any questions.

You will also find more tips in our other guide: [The Sunday Boys: A singing guide.](#)

Choir Genius

All of the information from this guide and more is available [from the Choir Genius website](#). We will give you a unique login when you join, and you will be able to access all of the tools, calendars and contact details from there at any time.

The Serenade Newsletter

We send an email newsletter called "The Serenade" to all of our members every Saturday before rehearsal.

It contains any relevant news, calls for joining gigs and a preview of what we intend to rehearse the next day. This gives you an opportunity to familiarise yourself with any covers of existing songs if you are not familiar as well as knowing what to focus on, should you be using our Chorus Class tool (see [Choir Tools](#)).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook

We have two groups on Facebook - one which is public for the world to see, and another private group where members and the organising committee can share news about the choir, themselves, any social events, social media news about the choir and sometimes for bit of friendly online banter. You will be invited to the members' group as you join by the organising team but if you can't wait, feel free to send a request from the link below.

[Public Facebook Group](#) — [Private Member's Group](#)

WhatsApp

We also have a WhatsApp group, which essentially serves the purpose of both a lifeline with all the other members, as well as a way to communicate with everyone outside of rehearsals. Joining is not compulsory but if you have WhatsApp, [you can join the group here](#).

SUNDAY BOYS MEDIA

Photos

From gigs to professional photos, you will find our photo here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9Fchl1o-mvgYVF3enppYmxVTlk>

YouTube

We have a YouTube channel here, and we try to keep updated with our latest concerts as much as possible: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ-a2fh1Mbzm7_bHdngv8CA

TOOLS USED BY THE SUNDAY BOYS

Choir Genius

Chorus class is our main tool — it's a website and an application that will help you access information about future gigs, as well as help you rehearse **The Sunday Boys** material at home in between rehearsals. The music team regularly uploads new content, and you are able to play, and repeat parts of the song as needed as well as isolate each part so you can focus on either rehearsing your part alone, or try to sing your part with all of the other parts enabled.

You will find Choir Genius here: <https://sundayboys.groupanizer.com>












Sheet music

Some of our own arrangements are available on the drive here — <https://drive.google.com/open?id=OB9Fchl1o-mvgemVUdkladkY3Y0E>. Be part of being the best by downloading copies and learning during the week. Some people even bring their music on their tablets too - fancy that!

The Sunday Boys Calendar

The Sunday Boys shared calendar is always available here as a shared calendar. You can add it to your smartphone and always be aware of when rehearsals, gigs or special events happen. You can access the calendar from your Choir Genius account, and add it to your smartphone from the bottom of the home page. Please ask a member of the organising team if you're not sure on how to do this.

THE TEAM

					
Ed Moss Chair	Michael Betteridge Musical Director	Adam Summers Assistant Music Director	Matt Saint Treasurer	Ben Baughan Marketing	Alex Seewald PR & Comms
					
Sébastien Desprez Memberships	Alex Winkcup Permissions	Ken Rhode-Bell Librarian	David Plaister For Singing Lessons Bookings	Jenny Singing Teacher	



A Singing Guide

by Jenny

REHEARSING AT HOME TIPS

Sometimes knowing where to start for practising music for a concert can be very daunting. Especially when we're all so busy and can maybe spare only a few minutes every so often to do so. Here are some handy hints for practise so you can utilise the most out of those precious moments:

1. Setting aside a dedicated ten minutes is much more helpful than twenty minutes of unfocused rehearsal. Whilst learning through osmosis by listening to the songs in the background is really useful, it doesn't beat actually focused work. Find a quiet space where you can really sing out and won't be interrupted or feel self conscious.
2. Sing out! If we sing under our breath, or tentatively to ourselves, the learning doesn't embed in our muscle memory. It may embed in our brains, but our body doesn't connect with it. This means when you sing it properly and fully in rehearsal it won't be connected and often flat.
3. Know what to focus on. Singing through a whole song is only useful if you already know it really well. Identify what went wrong for you in a rehearsal and focus on that. Use chorus class to find your starting note and then go over that bit a few times. If the notes are really hard slow it down. If the notes are fiendishly hard then slow it down further and practise the interval (i.e. going from one note to each other) that is the culprit to an open vowel like an 'ah'.
4. If you're finding something boring, difficult or isn't quite sticking, scrap the words and sing to an 'ah' or a fricative sound (like 'vv' or 'ggghhh' or 'zzz' from our warm ups) or a diaphragmatic sound (like the 'brrr' lip trill sound). This means you can focus on notes rather than words.
5. Practising rhythm can be very useful as it a) helps with diction and b) makes you confident in the detail. Pieces like 'Glacier' or 'You Will Be Found' have very tricky rhythms that need to be precise - often the notes will come easily after practising the rhythm first.
6. Try practising some of your music from memory. This helps your learning in a variety of ways, but it also gets you in the habit of not relying on music/words. By looking up we improve sound quality and always engage with our audience. If you forget the words whilst doing this just 'do' along until they come back.
7. Practise in a mirror! See what you really look like when you sing...
8. Make notes in Sunday Boys rehearsals of what you find hard. Circle it in the rehearsal so when you flick through your music you can find it easily.
9. Perhaps contradictory to point one - any practice is better than no practice! However if you can dedicate some focused time it'll always produce better results in the long run.

BREATHING TIPS

It seems that the main aspect of vocal technique that most singers run into problems with at some point is breathing, so we thought we would quickly debunk a few myths and give a few simple pointers for easy, effective breathing!

Myth 1: 'Use the diaphragm'

First of all, what does that even mean?! The diaphragm is a dome shaped muscle below your lungs, which flattens down to allow air to fill the lungs and returns to its original position when air leaves the lungs - you cannot physically USE it or make it do anything other than this natural action!

Myth 2: 'Breathing is to do with the lungs'

Nope! The respiratory system is so much more than just the lungs! The lungs won't work without the actions of the diaphragm, abs and all the muscles of the torso. If you focus only on filling the lungs, it's likely that you'll be taking quite high and shallow breaths which makes it much more difficult to control how the air leaves your body.

A simple (I hope!) description of what is happening when you breathe:

The diaphragm lowers into its flattened position, increasing the volume inside the lungs. Air rushes in to fill the vacuum - you do not physically need to suck in any extra air!

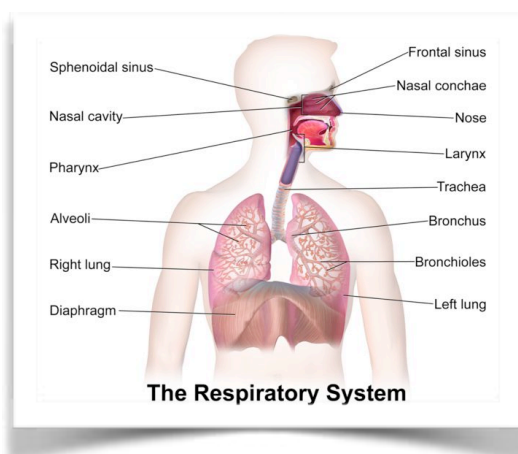
The stomach has to get out of the way for the diaphragm, which is why your belly looks like it's sticking out.

The ribcage has to expand for the fuller lungs, so you'll feel a sense of widening around your sides and back.

To actively support your breath for singing, the lower abs slowly and gently move back in towards their original position which sort of controls the speed at which the diaphragm returns to its dome position. The ribs and muscles around your sides and back maintain their sense of wideness. Instead of the air rushing out passively, all of this combines to create steady air pressure which you can use to create sound! Once the lungs are empty, the elastic recoil of the diaphragm kicks in and the whole process can begin again!

In short, breathing in is passive; breathing out is active!

Hurrah! Obviously, there's a lot more to it than that, and apologies to the doctors amongst you who know far more about it than we do, but I hope that this provides a quick overview of how to breathe specifically for singing! If you want to know more, or have any other technical questions for me, please **book a lesson with Jenny** (see below).



SINGING LESSONS WITH JENNY



Jenny trained at the Royal Northern College of Music where she met **Michael**, and she has been teaching for 10 years.

She love helping people find their voices and exploring how they work. She is classically trained and has a real love of musical theatre.

Lessons are not going to be scary - whether you're in a group or on your own, the main aim is to add to your enjoyment of singing in **The Sunday Boys** by giving you the tools to sing comfortably and healthily.

She can work on breathing, support, high notes, low notes, long phrases — basically anything that fills you with dread when you see it coming up in the music! Most vocal issues can be fixed with a few simple adjustments and you'll be amazed at how quickly you progress in lessons and within your choir rehearsals!

It's up to you how much you want to commit to having lessons. You're welcome to see Jenny weekly, fortnightly, monthly - as often as you feel you need or can afford.

You can book a 30 minute session with her for £15 - either by yourself or in a group of up to three people (members need to arrange this between themselves).

The sessions are relaxed and informal. Smiley Jenny is wonderful at making you feel at ease and will quickly pick up on the best way forward for you.

The sessions happen in private during rehearsal time. Jenny will come and find you during rehearsal at your allocated time.

David Plaister organises singing lessons so feel free to contact him should you have any questions, or want to book and pay for your lessons.