

# THE KING'S SINGERS GOLD50

Long Biography June 2017

**Patrick Dunachie** Countertenor

**Timothy Wayne-Wright** Countertenor

**Julian Gregory** Tenor

**Christopher Bruerton** Baritone

**Christopher Gabbitas** Baritone

**Jonathan Howard** Bass

The King's Singers were officially born on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1968, when six recently-graduated choral scholars from King's College, Cambridge, gave a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the Southbank in London. This group had formed in Cambridge and had been singing together for some years in a range of line-ups under a different name, but this big London debut was the launchpad for the five-decade-long career of The King's Singers we know now. Their vocal make-up was (by chance) two countertenors, a tenor, two baritones and a bass, and the group has never wavered from this formation since.

As former members of King's College Choir (Cambridge), traditional choral repertoire pulsed through the veins of these founding King's Singers, and it has never left the group's performances. But what really distinguished The King's Singers in the early years was their musical versatility. They were a weekly fixture on prime-time television, celebrating popular music never usually touched by choral ensembles, and their unique British charm, combined with their musical craft, captured audiences' hearts the world over. The group has consistently been welcomed on the world's great stages throughout its history – from London's Royal Albert Hall to the Opera House in Sydney, New York's Carnegie Hall, Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw – as well as being ambassadors for musical excellence across the globe. To this day, they still prize the precision of their craft and musical diversity is among their most cherished trademarks.

The King's Singers' have accumulated many glowing reviews from the world's great musical publications, two Grammy® Awards, an Emmy® Award, and place in the Gramophone magazine's inaugural Hall of Fame: not to mention some of the other fantastic – and wacky – awards bestowed upon them over the course of their 50-year history. One of the keys to the group's success has been the slow turnover of its members. Including the current six singers, there have only been 26 King's Singers since 1968, which has allowed the techniques that guide every aspect of the group's music-making to be inherited and refined without getting lost through a rapid change of line-up.

The group's ongoing commitment to enriching the world of music has led to numerous wonderful collaborations with all of kinds of extraordinary musicians. In their their early years, the group's sound was informed by the work of arrangers like Gordon Langford, Daryl Runswick and Goff Richards, many of whom had worked extensively with brass bands. Writing for voices with this specific experience helped to develop the blended 'close-harmony' sound that has become a hallmark for so many King's Singers performances and recordings since. In more recent times, individual King's Singers such as Philip Lawson and Bob Chilcott have written music prolifically from within the group. This music sits alongside a panoply of commissioned works by many of the supreme composers of our times – including Sir John Tavener, György Ligeti, Toru Takemitsu, John Rutter, Luciano Berio, Nico Muhly and Eric Whitacre. The group's mission has always been to expand its repertoire not just for itself, but for ensembles and

choirs of all kinds around the world, with much of their commissioned repertoire and arrangements in print through the publisher Hal Leonard. In fact, over two million items from their

King's Singers collection have been shared with their customers worldwide.

This ongoing commitment to spreading great music incorporates a lot of teaching, both on tour and at home. The group has always led workshops across the world as they travel, and week-long residential courses now also take an important place in the annual calendar, when the six King's Singers work with groups and individuals on the techniques of ensemble singing that have governed how they make music to this day.

The world may have changed a lot in the fifty years since the original King's Singers came together, but today's group is still charged by the same lifeblood – one that wants to radiate the joy that singing brings us every day, and that is as determined as ever to give joy to audiences with virtuosity and vision for an exciting musical future.

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