

# 2016 Southwell Music Festival PRESS RELEASE



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## Top musicians heading for Bank Holiday in Southwell

This August Bank Holiday (25-29 August) Southwell will again be alive with the sound of classical music when nearly 100 of the very best young professional performers from across Britain and Europe come to town for the third Southwell Music Festival.

The 2016 Southwell Music Festival – to be held throughout the Bank Holiday weekend – will include 29 musical events, of which nearly half are free.

Tickets are still available for most performances and can be obtained online via [www.southwellmusicfestival.com/onlinebooking](http://www.southwellmusicfestival.com/onlinebooking) , by calling 0115 989 5555 or by visiting the Southwell Cathedral Shop.

The Festival is the idea of Marcus Farnsworth who was brought up in Southwell, sang in the Minster Choir and is now a leading professional baritone. As Founder and Artistic Director he invites his musical friends and acquaintances to Nottinghamshire to perform in all the Festival's principal concerts.

Marcus Farnsworth said: "The first two festivals sold out and last year we were also delighted to receive positive comments in the local and national press. Hugh Canning, chief music critic of *The Sunday Times*, described the Festival as 'a community event of an astoundingly high standard' and saw 'a clear indication that Southwell can already equal, even surpass, more established festivals'.

"In 2015 we were also delighted that William Ruff in the *Nottingham Post* should say: 'If it was tough finding spare tickets for this year's Festival, you had better start queuing straightaway for next year. And the eyes of the entire musical world now need to be directed towards Southwell in August'.

“One of our ambitions is to help relieve Southwell of its status as a ‘hidden gem’ and put the town on more tourists’ radar. So we were delighted when the local tourist information centre last year recorded its highest number of visitors for August Bank Holiday Monday.”

"We continue to be immensely grateful for the help and support of many local people whose contribution has been indispensable in establishing, developing and running the Festival. They share the credit for the Festival’s success to date.

“The Festival is funded entirely from box office income and the very generous financial support of local people and organisations; around 100 people signed up as Festival Friends this year; dozens of local people are hosting the visiting musicians; and many people are offering their services as volunteers.

"Building the Festival around an ensemble of brilliant musicians is another very important ingredient in the Festival’s appeal and they continue to return because of the warm welcome they receive. Our players come from leading choirs and orchestras across the country and abroad: the outstanding quality of music making and the enthusiastic commitment of our performers is frequently commented upon by audience members.

“To meet public demand we have again increased the number of tickets available by around 30% by introducing new events and offering more repeated performances. We have kept the Festival to five days and the schedule has been designed so it is still possible to attend a performance of everything on offer.”

Continuing to reflect on this year’s programme Marcus said: “Giving opportunities to local performers is also a key part of the Festival’s approach and local musicians will again feature in five free fringe concerts around the town alongside the main concert schedule.

“The Come and Sing on Bank Holiday Monday (29 August) has proved very popular with local singers and they are in for a real treat this year: taking our cue from Gerontius, we plan to assemble a choir of 250 to perform the great warhorses of the Edwardian choral repertoire – including Parry’s *I was glad* and *Blest Pair of Sirens*, and to finish with a roof-raising centenary performance of *Jerusalem* in which the audience will be invited to join.

“Another ambition for the Festival is to involve young people in classical music both as performers and audience. The family concert is a start on our project to build a young audience, however Saturday morning will also see a further Masterclass when local young musicians work with visiting professionals and this is followed by our Saturday lunchtime recital which provides a showcase for a local performer of great promise. This year we are proud to present a recital by the winner of the Nottingham Young Musician of the Year 2015: Matt Glendening is principal clarinet of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and a star in the making.

“We also want to introduce young people to classical music so one of the novelties in 2016 is the Festival’s first family concert (Saturday 27 August) based around a performance of Prokofiev’s famous piece of musical storytelling – *Peter and the Wolf*: this takes place at the Minster School which is being used for the first time.”

The exciting musical programme is complemented by a wonderful array of art exhibitions: pre-eminent among these is the return of the Open Studios event (Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 August) presented by Southwell’s colony of professional artists. The Southwell Artists will also present a free Musical Draw – a chance for artists of any age or ability, amateur or professional, to attend and draw the performers at the Come and Sing rehearsal on Bank Holiday Monday.

The full programme can be found on the Festival’s website at [www.southwellmusicfestival.com](http://www.southwellmusicfestival.com)

The main work (Saturday 27 August) will be Elgar’s oratorio masterpiece *The Dream of Gerontius* with a stellar line-up of young British soloists – David Butt Philip (tenor), Anna Stéphany (mezzo) and David Soar (bass).

Other musical highlights include a rare performance of Richard Strauss’s final work *Metamorphosen* for 23 solo strings (Thursday 25 and Friday 26 August) directed by Associate Artistic Director Jamie Campbell. The late night sequence of words and choral music in the Minster on Thursday 25 August – now a regular part of the programme – will include Benjamin Britten’s rarely-performed and challenging late work *Sacred and Profane: Eight Medieval Lyrics* alongside choral works by James Macmillan and Thomas Adès. Friday’s late night concert will be a performance of Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* in the original version for string sextet.

Sunday evening’s chamber music concert *Henry Purcell – The Eternal Inspiration* (Sunday 28 August) celebrates the connection between Purcell and Britten in the latter’s arrangements of Purcell songs and a performance of Britten’s Second String Quartet. The programme also illustrates Purcell’s enduring influence on other contemporary composers – Oliver Knussen, Mark-Anthony Turnage and

Thomas Adès. Tickets for this concert went so quickly when booking opened that a second performance was immediately added earlier in the day which is also nearly sold out.

A further highlight will be two performances of Schubert's *Schwanengesang* given by Marcus Farnsworth (Thursday 25 and Friday 26 August) accompanied by one of the Festival's house pianists – the distinguished James Baillieu. Marcus also has several conducting commitments during the Festival – the late night choral programme, *The Dream of Gerontius*, two services on Sunday – Sung Eucharist (Bruckner Mass in E minor) and Evensong (John Casken canticles), and the Come and Sing on Bank Holiday Monday.

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