

# Netflix to mainstream in Surrey

27 June 2025



A Surrey film studio used by Netflix, the streaming giant behind hit shows such as Stranger Things, Bridgerton and Adolescence, will be made permanent after full planning permission was granted. The site was originally approved on a short-term basis because of its green belt location, and Runnymede Borough Council’s desire to see the area eventually become an office hub as part of its Longcross Garden Village plan. The cratering demand of office space, plus the growing rise of Netflix, saw the land be taken out of green belt - meaning the temporary restrictions no longer applied and its long-term future could be secured. Officers told the Wednesday June 25 meeting: “This building was erected in 2020 under a temporary permission and has been used continually since. Permission was granted originally for the building on a temporary basis for reasons of visual amenity and so as not to prejudice the ongoing phased redevelopment of the Longcross north site. Since then there has been a change in site circumstances in respect of the commercial redevelopment of the site. The building supports the existing studio use and therefore there are no reasons why the building can not remain on a permanent basis.”

The site was previously occupied by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) with many of its old buildings used by Netflix as film studios including buildings within the Surrey Heath. The Longcross North site together with the former DERA land south of the M3 including Longcross Barracks, form the designated Longcross Garden Village and has been removed from the green belt through the 2030 Local Plan. The building is near to the northern boundary within the wider Longcross North site. The officer added: “The appearance of the building is appropriate in the context of the wider film studios site.” The application was unanimously approved.

Longcross Studios (image Google)

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# Epsom Picturehouse blossoms with Pride

27 June 2025



**Picturehouse Epsom is proud to announce a powerful new partnership with Blossom LGBT to launch OUT – a year-round celebration of LGBTQ+ cinema.**

Together, we’re amplifying queer voices on screen and creating space for connection, reflection, and community – showing that Pride isn’t just a once-a-year event, but an ongoing conversation and opportunity to build lasting community.

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## About Blossom LGBT

Blossom LGBT is a national non-profit supporting LGBTQIA+ young adults aged 16–30. Based in Surrey, their mission is to ensure that no young person faces exclusion – social or economic – because of who they are or whom they love.

They work to break down systemic barriers of discrimination, poverty, and disadvantage, empowering the next generation to thrive.

At Blossom, we are dedicated to creating a world where LGBTQIA+ young adults can overcome discrimination, thrive in safe and supportive communities, and access the tools and opportunities needed to succeed with dignity and purpose. We are designed for the community, by the community.

It’s vital that young people see themselves reflected in film, not just to feel visible, but to know that their stories, identities, and futures matter. Representation can inspire confidence, spark ambition, and help young people imagine a world where they belong.

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### **Our Venue: Epsom Picturehouse**

Epsom Picturehouse is a brand-new six-screen cinema in the heart of Epsom Square. With a rich programme of arthouse and quality mainstream films, plus a stylish café and bar, it offers a perfect setting for inclusive, community-focused events.

We're excited to open our doors to OUT and host a variety of screenings, discussions, and gatherings that celebrate the richness and diversity of LGBTQ+ lives and experiences.

Joe Stroud from Epsom Picturehouse said:

"I'm delighted that, at the heart of all this, we're celebrating community. What better way to do that than by sharing powerful stories on screen and using them as inspiring conversation starters?"

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### **What is OUT?**

OUT is a long-running Picturehouse initiative that celebrates LGBTQ+ stories — from reclaimed classics to bold new voices. Now in its tenth year at Clapham Picturehouse, we're thrilled to extend this initiative to Surrey, helping local audiences build connections and community through film.

Clapham's OUT journey began in 2014 with a screening of *Dallas Buyers Club*, and has since included landmark titles such as Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight*, the historic Best Picture winner at the 2017 Academy Awards. Now, it's Epsom's turn.

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### **Upcoming Events: Brokeback Mountain + Q&A Panel — 6 July**

Join Blossom LGBT for a special 20th anniversary screening of *Brokeback Mountain*, directed by Ang Lee and starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal — a landmark film for the LGBTQ+ community.

Following the screening, we'll host an open and thoughtful Q&A with invited panellists, exploring the film's emotional journey — touching on themes of love, repression, and resilience.

Together, we'll reflect on how life for LGBTQ+ people has changed (and in some ways stayed the same), especially in rural communities. How do those experiences echo in today's legal battles and cultural conversations?

The evening will feature invited guests, including Outline, an organisation supporting people with their sexuality and gender identity through a helpline, website, and support groups. Also attending are the Mary Frances Trust (MFT) LGBT Peer Support Group, as well as Walk and Talk 4 Men — a free support group for men to come together, walk, talk, and support their mental health while enjoying some fresh air.

This event is for anyone seeking connection — whether you're exploring your own journey, supporting someone close to you, or simply curious to learn more. We invite you into a warm, inclusive space to listen, reflect, and be part of a growing community.

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### **Mark your calendars for more upcoming events celebrating LGBTQ+ stories:**

#### **Sun 29 Jun**

- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 17:10

#### **Mon 30 Jun**

- Out Queer Futures (Cert TBC) at 20:30
- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 19:45

#### **Tue 01 Jul**

- Discover — Preview *Hot Milk* (15) at 20:15

#### **Wed 02 Jul**

- *Brokeback Mountain* plus Q&A (15) at 18:30

Stay tuned for more film nights, conversations, and creative community events throughout the year. Whether you're a long-time advocate or new to the conversation, there's a seat here for you.

**Let's make Pride more than a moment — let's make it a movement. See you at the cinema.**

For more information about the organisers, visit [blossom.lgbt](http://blossom.lgbt) or email Steph Elhaddad at [Steph.Elhaddad@blossom.lgbt](mailto:Steph.Elhaddad@blossom.lgbt).

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# Epsom Choral Society ends term on a high note

27 June 2025



21st June, St Andrews, Northey Avenue: Fresh from their triumph at this year's Leith Hill Music Festival, Epsom Choral Society presented an end-of-term programme consisting of three wonderful contemporary items on a theme of jazz and improvisation. Plus a fourth - which earned its place by virtue of being a world premiere! The whole evening worked like a giant crescendo, starting quietly and ending with Will Todd's magnificent and sometimes wild *Mass in Blue*.

Jazz as a genre poses huge demands on a traditional choir. It's no longer enough just to master the notes, the rhythms and the dynamics. The whole concept of flexible swing rhythms can feel positively alien to those steeped in classical music. Full marks, therefore, to ECS conductor Julian Collings, for helping the choir to overcome what is, in essence, a new language to give us an evening of singing that was convincing, exuberant and full of vitality.

Hats off also to the supporting cast: saxophonist Alex Flower, bassist Ben Summers, drummer Tom Lee and pianist Peter Jaekel. Ultimate accolade must go to soprano Lisa Swayne for her stratospheric ululations that took *Mass in Blue* to a different level.

Opening the concert was Ola Gjeilo's (1978- ) *Evening Prayer*. Gjeilo's reflective, not necessarily religious, compositions with sumptuous harmonies have made him a great favourite with choirs on both sides of the Atlantic. Composed in 2010, the powerful words of St Augustine were reverently and warmly sung, with all three protagonists - choir, pianist and saxophonist - creating an atmosphere of contemplation within a framework of gentle and optional improvisation.

And thus, having been transported heavenwards, we were brought down to earth with a bump!

This fun little ditty *True Story* (words by Michael Rosen) was one of a song-set of ten by Russell Hepplewhite, who conceived of inviting ten living poets to document his/her personal response to the current world, and setting these to music. It's not clear whether the full set is ever intended to be performed all together, since they are being individually premiered this year by choirs from around the country.

The song chosen for ECS is set very simply for choir and piano - which makes it accessible for many choirs. Excellent diction was vital to the storytelling; along with a spirited enjoyment of the text - where one man's ecstasy at the birth of his son is mirrored against another man's wonderment at the hatching of a pigeon's egg.

The John Rutter (1945- ) of the *Birthday Madrigals* is a totally different Rutter from the one of popular Christmas carols. These songs are settings of Elizabethan texts infused with the spirit of jazz, whilst perpetuating the great tradition of English part songs. That Rutter is capable of this level of technical mastery of the jazz idiom, together with his lightness of touch and superb invention, makes for a set of five miniatures indispensable to the choral anthology.

And ECS rose to the challenges, giving us an impressive array of singing - from the nimble, joyful and carefree to soulful blending of voices; from fearless high spirits to judicious balancing of the ladies' long, lyrical phrases against harmonious humming from the gentlemen. Optional piano accompaniment in the a cappella numbers provided subtle support for tricky shifting harmonies. What a treat to take us to the interval!

Ever since the 10th century if not before, man has made music to glorify his gods - from the monks' Gregorian chants to the masses of Haydn and Beethoven, each reflecting the conventions of their time. In 1991, Paco Peña created a fiery and rumbustious *Misa Flamenca* to celebrate the Almighty. So it seems appropriate, inevitable even, that in 2003, Will Todd (1970- ) should decide to make use of a contemporary idiom to fashion his own offering.

*Mass in Blue* needs small but vital supporting resources - soprano solo, piano, bass, saxophone, drum kit. But smallness in scale does not mean smallness in achievements. Quite the contrary. What shines through is a superbly confident writing technique that is strong, clear, propulsive and above all, enjoyable for both singers and listeners alike.

No one should under-estimate the amount of hard work that the choir must have put in to meet the merciless technical challenges. There are sliding intricacies of jazzy rhythms, seemingly indecipherable within the confines of traditional notation; there are rapid changes of tempi, metre, dynamics and everything else going; there is the uber-cool, quasi-fugal and multi-layered *Benedictus* - all of these demanding agile and committed singing to maintain the driving momentum. Members of ECS embraced all these hurdles and more, and with the return of the mighty soprano adding fire to the quadraphonic build-up to a bone-shakingly thrilling finale.

Yes, we were gripped. All of us.

**Job done. BRAVISSIMO!**

*Lynda Chang is a local musician and advocate of live music*

Image: *Mass in Blue* - Lisa Swayne and Julian Collings

# Menuhin Hall's Summer Festival Returns for Three Weeks of Music and Community

27 June 2025



The Menuhin Hall, one of Surrey's premier venues for classical music, will once again host its annual Summer Festival from Friday 13 June to Friday 4 July 2025. Set within the tranquil grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School near Cobham, the festival will feature an exciting line-up of performances by the school's talented pupils, returning alumni and acclaimed guest artists.

Across three weeks, audiences can look forward to a programme ranging from family-friendly events and solo recitals to orchestral and choral works of significant scale and emotional depth. Visitors are invited to bring picnics and enjoy the setting before performances, with generous intervals designed to enhance the relaxed and celebratory atmosphere.

## Programme of Events

### Summer Solos

Friday 13 June and Friday 20 June - Grounds open 5.30pm, Concert at 6.30pm

Sunday 15 June and Sunday 22 June - Grounds open 1.30pm, Concert at 2.30pm

This four-part series highlights the individual talents and musical progress of the Yehudi Menuhin School pupils. Audiences will hear a broad repertoire including Brahms's Hungarian Dances, Tchaikovsky's Valse Scherzo, Lutosławski's Subito, and Chen Gang's *Sunshine Over Tashkurgan*. There will be a 60-minute interval for refreshments and picnicking in the beautiful school grounds.

### Seven Sayings: Triumph

Saturday 28 June - Grounds open 4pm, Concert at 5pm

An inspiring evening featuring Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, described by E.T.A. Hoffmann as "one of the most important works of the time", performed alongside Korngold's Suite for Left Hand Piano and Strings Op. 23.

### Family Day: Pictures at an Exhibition

Sunday 29 June - Activities and food from 1pm, Family Concert at 3pm

Family Day offers a chance for children and their families to explore music in a playful and accessible way. The afternoon includes outdoor games, arts and crafts, and refreshments. A special interactive performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, led by broadcaster and pianist Keelan Carew and ten young pianists, will take the audience on a journey through whimsical musical scenes, from enchanted castles to Baba Yaga's forest hut. The concert is particularly suitable for children aged 3 to 9, though all are welcome.

### Spotlight Concert: Piano Gala

Tuesday 1 July - Concert at 7.30pm

The final Spotlight event of the year showcases the school's finest young pianists performing a programme of Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, Berg and Schubert. Highlights include Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque*, Ravel's *Sonatine*, and Chopin's ballades, recently featured in the Oscar-nominated film *A Real Pain*.

### Leavers' Picnic

Wednesday 2 July - Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm

This special occasion marks the final performance by the school's leavers. Works by Ravel, Schumann, Liszt and Kodály will be performed, with a symbolic presentation of musical scores to those moving on. The evening includes a 60-minute interval for refreshments.

### Seven Sayings: Reunion - The Festival Finale

Friday 4 July - Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm

The festival concludes with an emotionally powerful programme featuring James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, performed by the Senior Orchestra, Chamber Choir, conductor Jonathan Bloxham, and the award-winning vocal collective SANSARA. The second half includes Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* and Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, performed by current pupils and alumni.

### Ticket Information

Tickets range from £10 to £28.50, with half-price concessions for under-30s.

To book, visit [www.menuhinhall.co.uk](http://www.menuhinhall.co.uk) or contact the Box Office on 01932 559400 / [boxoffice@menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:boxoffice@menuhinschool.co.uk).

### About The Menuhin Hall

The Menuhin Hall is an award-winning concert venue located on the grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School. It is both a professional resource for the school's pupils and a valued part of the local cultural scene, hosting concerts by visiting

artists and community ensembles. The hall has been recognised by RIBA and the Civic Trust, among others, for its architectural excellence.

#### **About The Yehudi Menuhin School**

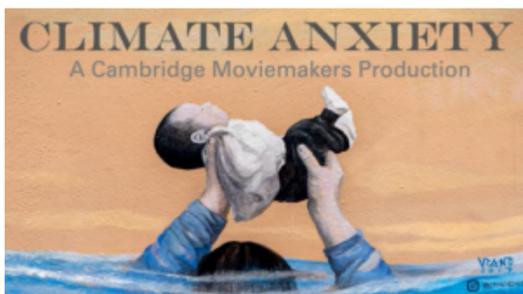
Founded in 1963 by renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the school provides an exceptional music education for gifted children aged 9 to 19, regardless of financial background. Alumni include Nicola Benedetti, Nigel Kennedy, Alina Ibragimova and Tasmin Little. Located near Cobham, the school offers a holistic education, with pupils dividing their time between academic and musical studies, and regular opportunities to perform both in the Menuhin Hall and throughout the local community.

For more information, visit [www.menuhinschool.co.uk](http://www.menuhinschool.co.uk).

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## Green Thinking Takes the Spotlight at Epsom Picturehouse

27 June 2025



*Cinema-goers in Epsom are being invited to watch, reflect, and act, as a national eco-film initiative gains local traction.*

A new strand of community-focused cinema, “Green Screen,” has arrived at Epsom Picturehouse, offering audiences more than just a night at the movies. Instead, it aims to foster conversation and local action around the pressing issue of climate change.

Following its Epsom debut on Earth Day earlier this year — hosted by The Woodland Trust and focusing on the conservation of Langley Vale Wood — the next Green Screen event is set for **Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 8pm**, this time in partnership with **Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell**.

The evening features three short films tackling different aspects of the climate crisis. First up is *#ClimateScam?* (40 mins), a documentary from Cornwall Climate Care which addresses climate change denial and misinformation. It’s followed by *Climate Anxiety* (17 mins), a film from Cambridge Movie Makers exploring the psychological toll of environmental collapse. Finally, *Plan Z: From Lab Coats to Handcuffs* (23 mins), produced by A2Y Productions, tells the story of scientists who risk their careers and freedom by engaging in direct environmental activism.

But it’s not all on-screen. After the screenings, the audience will be invited to stay for a 40-minute panel discussion and Q&A featuring local voices — a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, and a community organiser — all bringing their perspectives to the urgent environmental questions raised by the films.

Joe Stroud of Epsom Picturehouse said:

“We’re proud to see Green Screen take root in Epsom. It’s a strand that thrives when communities take ownership — the films are the catalyst, but it’s the community that brings together their perspectives, expertise, and passion.”

The Green Screen series is a nationwide initiative by Picturehouse Cinemas, transforming theatres into spaces of environmental learning and grassroots conversation. Events across the UK have seen audiences inspired to take local action, supported by partnerships with schools, charities, businesses, and environmental organisations.

True to its ethos, the Epsom screening will extend the invitation to connect beyond the credits. Attendees are encouraged to continue conversations in the Picturehouse’s meeting space over a free tea or filter coffee — if they bring a reusable cup.

Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell, the local host for the July event, is part of the global climate action movement and is active in local campaigning and awareness-raising through non-violent action and community engagement.

Epsom Picturehouse itself is a relatively new addition to the town, having opened in June 2024. Located in Epsom Square, the six-screen venue blends modern programming with vintage touches and a strong focus on community. Its café-bar offers a menu of pizzas, toasties, cakes and drinks, helping turn cinema visits into a more social, immersive experience.

Anyone interested in organising a future Green Screen event in Epsom is encouraged to contact the venue at [epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk](mailto:epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk).

For more information about the 9th July event, readers can contact Warren Bunce of Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell on **07539 069659** or by email at [epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk).

# Queen of Dictionary Corner Brings Word Magic to Epsom

27 June 2025



*Epsom Playhouse set to host a celebration of the English language on 15 October*

Britain's best-loved lexicographer, **Susie Dent**, is heading to Epsom Playhouse this autumn with her brand-new live show, *Word Perfect* – a joyous celebration of the quirks, curiosities, and hidden histories of the English language.

Best known for her long-standing role in **Countdown's** *Dictionary Corner* and its comedy spin-off *8 Out Of 10 Cats Does Countdown*, Susie will take to the Epsom stage on **Wednesday 15 October**, promising an evening packed with surprising etymologies, linguistic delights, and audience interaction.

Ever wondered why a group of crows is called a “murder” or why owls form a “parliament”? Curious whether the colour orange predates the fruit? Or perhaps baffled by Gen-Z slang and fearful that local dialects are fading fast? Susie aims to explore these questions and many more in her witty and engaging style.

**“The English language will never stop surprising and delighting me,”** she said ahead of the tour. “It is as wayward as it is majestic, while the dictionary is as full of magic, drama and adventure as you will find anywhere. I can’t wait to walk down some more of its secret alleyways with the *Word Perfect* audiences, and to hear their own questions about our curious mother tongue!”

Following the success of her 74-date tour *The Secret Life of Words* (2018-2024), *Word Perfect* builds on Susie’s mission to share the joy of words with audiences across the country. The show is a blend of fascinating facts, storytelling, and humour – all rooted in her encyclopaedic knowledge of English.

In 2024, Susie Dent was awarded an **MBE** for services to literature and education, the same year she published her debut novel *Guilty by Definition*. This autumn will also see the release of her latest books: *Words for Life*, and *The Roots We Share: 100 Words That Bring Us Together*.

Tickets for *Susie Dent: Word Perfect* are on sale now via [nothird.co.uk/susie-dent](https://nothird.co.uk/susie-dent) or directly from the Epsom Playhouse box office.

For more on Susie’s work, visit: [susident.com](https://susident.com)

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## Epsom Square’s Music Festival in the round

27 June 2025



Saturday 14th June. In a town better known for its racecourse than rock and roll, Epsom discovered a new spirit last weekend with the first-ever Epsom Square Music Festival – an ambitious, joyful celebration of grassroots talent and community spirit.

“We just wanted to get more music into Epsom,” said Toy, the festival’s organiser, speaking from Metropolis (formerly Epsom Social) which served as the hub of the day-long event. “As a new venue, it felt right to do something for the community.”

The result was ambitious by any measure: three outdoor stages and over 100 performers across 39 acts, playing everything from acoustic soul to funk and rock. The diversity wasn’t only musical, either. “We had performers as young as four, maybe younger,” Toy said, “and then, of course, we had the proper grown-ups too.” The result was a line-up that

reflected the whole community, mirroring Epsom in all its lively charm.

The festival came together in just six weeks, a feat made possible by local support and backing from sponsors such as Epsom Picturehouse, Go Epsom, Epsom & Ewell Families, and music retailers Guitar Guitar and Realistic Music Academy, both of which sponsored their own stages. “We’re so lucky in this town,” said Toy. “There are so many individuals who are brilliant at what they do that, if you decide to throw together a music festival in six weeks – it’s entirely doable,” she laughed. “Though next time, I’d like a bit more lead time.”

Toy, who also runs the Realistic Music Academy, knows the town’s creative undercurrent better than most. Attracting performers was “actually really easy”, she said, as she “just put out a post, and suddenly we had 38 acts signed up... the interest is absolutely there.”

The crowds clearly agreed. Nearly 500 free tickets were ‘sold’ in advance, but many more drifted into the square over the weekend, drawn by the buzz of the music and conversation.

On stage, highlights came thick and fast from a variety of performers, but it was local newcomers Vault, a four-piece with an average age of just 14, who perhaps best captured the festival’s mission. “This is the only way for us to get out there,” they said. “There should be more venues – other than Metropolis, there’s not many places for us to play.”

Toy, who also runs Realistic Music Academy, agrees. “There’s definitely a need for more places to play music in Epsom,” she said. “I’d love to do this again next year. I just want more of it – more stages, more performers, more everything.”

But beyond the lively crowds and standout performances, the weekend carried a deeper message: local music matters, community matters – and when Epsom comes together, it’s capable of creating something genuinely special. A triumph of town spirit – and, with any luck, the start of something much bigger.

For those who love jazz Epsom’s own Epsom Jazz Club stages monthly live jazz nights with quality national and international artists at the Epsom centrally located Comrades Club in The Parade Epsom. The next jazz evening at 7.30pm is Thursday 26th June featuring Atlanticus. See [www.epsomjazzclub.com](http://www.epsomjazzclub.com) for details.

Donovan Livesey

Photo is of the band “Vault”.

## Epsom Choral Society to stage world premiere

27 June 2025



A world premiere blending sharp wit, choral storytelling, and jazz rhythms will take centre stage at Epsom Choral Society’s summer concert this month.

On **Saturday 21st June at 7.30pm**, the Society will unveil *True Story*, a brand new choral piece composed by **Russell Hepplewhite** with text by renowned writer and former Children’s Laureate **Michael Rosen**. The performance takes place at **St Andrew’s Church, Cheam (SM2 2HF)**.

Described as “witty and wonderfully offbeat”, *True Story* is based on Rosen’s chaotic and comic account of the birth of his son Joe. Known for his distinctive humour and accessible lyricism, Rosen’s writing lends itself to vivid musical interpretation. Composer Hepplewhite’s score is full of energy and character, promising a premiere that’s both playful and poignant.

The new work forms part of *Living Voices*, a national project from publishers **Stainer & Bell** pairing contemporary British poets with composers to explore modern life through choral music. Other pieces in the collection reflect on themes including youth, memory, health, and landscape—ranging from the light-hearted to the deeply moving.

For Epsom audiences, *True Story* headlines a lively summer programme entitled ‘**All That Jazz**’, which also features:

- **Mass in Blue** by **Will Todd** – a jazz-infused setting of the Latin Mass blending gospel influences with the classical choral tradition. The Society will be joined by soprano **Lisa Swayne** and a professional jazz trio for this soulful and energetic work.
- **Birthday Madrigals** by **John Rutter** – a playful, jazz-inspired cycle of songs combining Renaissance style with swing-era harmonies.
- **Evening Prayer** by Norwegian composer **Ola Gjeilo**, offering a more serene interlude with choir, piano, and

saxophone.

Speaking ahead of the concert, the Society's musical director **Julian Collings** said the programme celebrates the range and vitality of contemporary choral music:

"This concert combines the best of tradition with innovation—bold new work alongside modern classics. We're especially proud to present a world premiere here in Epsom as part of a major national project."

**Tickets are £20** (under-25s half price) and are available at:

□ [www.ticketsource.co.uk/epsom-choral-society/t-molojed](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/epsom-choral-society/t-molojed)

□ Box Office: 01372 274418

Image of St Andrews - Google Street view.

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## Epsom born band give birth to first single

27 June 2025



From the parks of Alexandra Rec to the playlists of rock fans across the country, a new local band with deep Epsom roots is making waves with their debut single.

**Penny Rebels**, a blues-rock outfit formed by long-time friends and musicians, are preparing to release their first original track, "*Bad Man*", on **July 1st**. The single, described by the band as "gritty, blues-infused rock with big energy and attitude," marks the culmination of years of songwriting, performing, and musical collaboration.

The band's connection to Epsom is woven into its story. Two of its members grew up in the town - attending local schools including **St Martin's**, **Wallace Fields**, and **Glyn** - and spent their formative years playing at **Alexandra Recreation Ground**. The group's bass player, a long-time resident of **Ewell Downs Road**, still calls the borough home.

Formed in **Farnham**, Penny Rebels emerged from a shared passion for music among friends balancing work, family, and creative life. "We were in bands when we were younger, but life took over," the band explained. "Now, with more space in our lives, we've returned to music — and we're loving every minute of it."

Their debut single is accompanied by a newly completed music video, available via a private link ahead of the public release. The band has also released an **electronic press kit (EPK)** featuring promotional images and media resources for broadcasters and press.

With all members contributing vocals and a sound described as "originals with soul and grit," Penny Rebels are setting their sights on **festival stages** and **high-energy live performances** throughout the region and beyond.

The band welcomes opportunities to share more about their journey and would be delighted to speak to local media or take part in community music features.

- Website: [www.pennyrebels.com](http://www.pennyrebels.com)
- Instagram | YouTube | TikTok | Facebook: *Penny Rebels*
- Email: [pennyrebelsband@gmail.com](mailto:pennyrebelsband@gmail.com)

**Listen to "Bad Man" from July 1st on all major platforms.**

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## Epsom Picturehouse hosts Refugee Week

27 June 2025



**This year's Refugee Week theme, "Community as a Superpower," celebrates the influence and connection with other cultures that enrich us all, offering fresh perspectives, traditions, and stories that shape a more vibrant, inclusive society.**

Between 16–22 June, Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) will honour the talents, stories, and successes of the refugees they support through a series of uplifting cultural events and film screenings. Film has a unique way of showing us what unites us—that shared experience of seeing stories on the big screen and sharing the best of our cultures.

**Community is indeed a superpower—especially during Refugee Week—as it reminds us of the strength found in unity. It celebrates the transformative power of welcoming communities to change lives and challenge the narrative around migration.**

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## Local Solidarity and Support

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, the Epsom and Ewell community has shown extraordinary solidarity—welcoming refugees into their homes, raising vital funds, and providing practical support to help newcomers rebuild their lives. All members of the community are warmly invited to attend Refugee Week events in a spirit of unity, compassion, and cultural celebration. Let us come together to show that Epsom stands strong in solidarity with those affected by conflict and displacement.

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## Cultural Events & Film Screenings

Curated in partnership with Ksenia Bugrimova—award-winning Ukrainian film producer and founder of Talented U, a Ukrainian-British screen industry association—Refugee Week events will take place at Epsom Picturehouse, a vibrant new boutique cinema and community hub in the heart of Epsom. Each screening is paired with live music or cultural programming that showcases the creativity and resilience of refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and beyond.

*"Film reflects the joy and humanity in every culture—it reminds us that community isn't just where we live, it's who we are. That's our superpower."*

—Joe Stroud, Marketing Manager at Epsom Picturehouse

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## Tuesday, 17 June

### Live Performance by Yuliia Komyshan

Yuliia Komyshan is a professional bandura player from Poltava, Ukraine. The bandura—a traditional Ukrainian plucked-string folk instrument—holds a special place in the country's musical heritage. Since arriving in the UK at the start of the war in Ukraine, Yuliia has dedicated herself to sharing the richness of Ukrainian culture through music. She is passionate about introducing global audiences to the sound of the bandura and fostering a deeper connection with Ukrainian musical traditions, both ancient and contemporary. Yuliia performs at concerts whenever she can, using each opportunity to celebrate and preserve her cultural roots.

### Film Screening: The Taste of Freedom

A young cook discovers a rare 1929 Ukrainian cookbook and, through traditional cuisine, reconnects with her roots and inner strength.

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## Thursday, 19 June

### Performance by the Ukrainian Renaissance Choir

The Ukrainian Renaissance Choir, founded by concert pianist Nataliia Zadorizhna, will perform the Ukrainian National Anthem and other cultural songs.

*"It is an enormous privilege to stay in the UK and to be surrounded by such noble, caring, and generous people," says Nataliia, who has lived in Ashtead with her 11-year-old daughter since May 2022.*

Attendees will also have the opportunity to meet members of the Ukrainian community and EERN volunteers supporting displaced families.

### Film Screening: Rocky Road to Berlin

A road-trip comedy set in the chaos of the 1990s USSR. Two musicians drive to Berlin in an old Pobeda car to trade it for a Mercedes—and discover much more than they bargained for.

### Plus: Home for Ukraine

A moving documentary featuring former tennis champion Andrew Castle, who shares his story alongside that of a young woman from Mariupol. Previously screened by Film London and other UK festivals. Andrew Castle is hoping to attend and support the event.

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## Saturday, 21 June

### Live Performance by Basel Saleh

Internationally renowned Syrian musician Basel Saleh will perform a fusion of Arabic and Western classical music on the oud. A conductor and composer, Basel has played at major festivals including Glastonbury and Roskilde and collaborated with artists such as Damon Albarn of Gorillaz.

### Film Screening: The Walk

Directed by Tamara Kotevska, this hybrid documentary follows Little Amal, a giant puppet symbolising a young Syrian refugee, as she journeys across Europe in a powerful allegory of hope and resilience.

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## Booking and More Information

To book one of the performances or screenings, visit:

<https://www.picturehouses.com/event-details/0000000167/refugee-week/100>

To learn more about Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network, visit:

<https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org>

For more information about the cinema and upcoming events, visit:

[www.picturehouses.co.uk/epsom](http://www.picturehouses.co.uk/epsom)

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### Community Event - The Great Get Together

**Sunday 22 June 2025 1pm-4pm**

*St Joseph's Church Hall, St Margaret's Drive, Epsom KT18 7QJ*

You will already have received details about our Great Get Together event. This is a FREE community event for all the family, part of a network of events inspired by the Jo Cox Foundation to celebrate all that unites us as a community. We have loads of activities for all ages, so please come and join us and bring friends and family. Although entry is free of charge, please can you book tickets online so that we know the numbers to expect. Also, we would ask you to bring a donation of food to contribute to Good Company's Food Bank.

Book your free online tickets here where you can also see the range of activities available, all of which are free.

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## Epsom Derby's Speed and Spirit Captured in New Station Art Project

27 June 2025



A new art installation at Tattenham Corner Station is shining a light on Epsom's rich racing heritage while adding a burst of creativity to commuters' journeys. This initiative, part of the Art@thestation project launched at Epsom main station in October 2024, transforms everyday travel into a gallery experience, offering young artists a unique platform to share their work.

Led by The Art Society Epsom with support from Southern Railway and its London head office, the project celebrates the energy and excitement of Derby Day and the iconic Tattenham Corner bend. Local artists were invited to explore the theme of 'Speed'—a nod to both the daily rush of life and the fast-paced world of horse racing.

The project's success has been driven by collaboration between Angie Child, Head of Young Arts Volunteers at The Art Society Epsom, and Ben Robinson, Commercial Development Manager at the University for the Creative Arts Students' Union (UCASU). Their efforts have brought together a striking collection of images that celebrate local identity and creativity.

One of the contributors, Richa Elangovan, a Master's student in Graphic Design at UCA Farnham, shared:

“My artwork and style consists of messaging through my concept illustrations: topics I’m passionate about include environmentalism, climate change, feminism, and human and animal rights. I use art as my tool for expression on issues otherwise sidelined.”

The installation is a testament to how art can enrich public spaces, spark meaningful conversations, and bring the community together. Ben Robinson said:

“We’re proud to support young talent and bring this celebration of the Derby into the heart of the community. A massive thank you to The Art Society Epsom for partnering with us on this. We’re always looking to showcase student work and can’t wait to see how these pieces brighten the station this summer.”

For local artists and residents keen to get involved, Angie and her team welcome new participants—contact her at [Volunteers.tase@gmail.com](mailto:Volunteers.tase@gmail.com) to be part of this dynamic project.

Meanwhile, the UCA Students’ Union continues to seek out new venues for student art—anyone with a space that could use a creative spark can reach out to [ben.robinson@uca.ac.uk](mailto:ben.robinson@uca.ac.uk).

Photo L to R: Ben Robinson, Alistair McGeachy, Richa Elangovan and Angie Child

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/romanasustar>

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## Thames Island Festival given go-ahead

27 June 2025



The show will go on for an exclusive summer concert on a private island in the Thames. D’Oyly Carte Island has been given the go-ahead to host three days of music and entertainment as part of the Weybridge Festival over July 4-6, 2025.

The private island, inaccessible to the public for part of the year, opened its grounds last year for Weybridge Festival and celebrated music ranging from Motown and Soul to 70s’ and 80s’ soft rock.

In January 2025, the festival plans were put on hold as Elmbridge Borough Council decided to stop the event going ahead due to “serious health and safety concerns”. After four months of working on risk assessment and escape plans, the weekend concert can now go ahead.

A unique location, only one bridge serves as the connection from the mainland to D’Oyly Carte Island. Officers raised the alarm that the evacuation routes in the event of a fire or an emergency were not enough for the requirements.

Owner of the Island and event organiser Mr Andy Hill said: “It’s an island, it’s surrounded by water, it’s 50 yards from the mainland. My experience of human beings, if confronted with burning to death or taking on 50 yards of the Thames—I know what I would do. People that are confronted with death will do a lot of things to avoid it.”

Mr Hill explained people can evacuate via the bridge in 5 minutes and 3 seconds—just 3 seconds over the legal time. He also added there will be a ferry that is available for the “odd straggler who can’t get on”.

The environmental officer said she is “still concerned about Mr Hill’s attitude and competency to health and safety, and fire safety”. Officers stressed their key concern was the evacuation plan as they were not satisfied proper emergency routes and exits were in place. The environmental officer said the barge is not licensed to carry people.

Councillors recognised Mr Hill had put plans in place like an evacuation plan and alternative routes. But Cllr Paul Hughes, chairman of the licensing committee, said: “I really encourage you to carry on working as there are clear issues that need to be resolved.”

Mr Hill said after the meeting: “We have worked very closely with the Fire, Police and Health & Safety for the last four months to ensure the events in 2025 are as safe and enjoyable as they were in 2024 and we very much thank these services for their valuable input. We are very grateful to the three Councillors at the TENS hearing who listened to the points made by all parties and concluded that the extensive safety measures that have been put in place will result in a safe and fabulous event with some sensational performers.”

Related reports:

Surrey’s D’Oyly Carte Island concerts cancelled.

Bridge to private D’Oyly Carte Island, Weybridge. (Credit: Google Street View)

## St Martin's journey from darkness to light

27 June 2025



**Ashtead Choral Society and Kent Sinfonia - Dvořák Triumph.** St Martin's Church Epsom 24th May.

Let me get straight to the point. This was a special evening and, at least for me, unexpectedly so. Dvořák's *Romance for Violin* and his *Stabat Mater* are very much 'B-list' on the concert repertoire and don't feature on the Classic FM 'Hall of Fame'. You must wonder why when the performance by Ashtead Choral Society, Kent Sinfonia, and Christian Halstead on solo violin was so enthralling from start to finish.

Halstead set the tone for the evening with Dvořák's restless *Romance for Violin*. You might expect a straight love song from the title 'Romance', but Halstead made the most of this restive paean to foreshadow what was to come.

Now, the *Stabat Mater*. It is one of those pieces that is, to my mind, not very interesting when listened to as a recording. But, wow! It comes to life in a performance setting, as Music Director Dr Andrew Storey demonstrated, navigating the orchestra, soloists, and choir through Dvořák's journey from darkness to light.

Each movement is compelling, and on Saturday night in Epsom it felt like reading a great book. As each chapter ended, I wanted to get on to the next one and find out what happens next. There is too much to write about in this review, but to give you a flavour: we were treated to solo quartets that felt appropriately 'cathedral' rather than 'opera house'; soprano and alto choruses that sparkled; tenor and bass choruses plucked from the depths of Bohemia; and, oh, the magical end where Storey closes with 140 performers quietly triumphing over tragedy.

This concert was a very good end to the Ashtead Choral Society season. But there is good news: if you missed this concert and want to experience Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* for yourself, Epsom Choral Society will be performing it next season. Even better news: Ashtead Choral Society's next season will include a mouth-watering line-up: Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, Bach's *St John Passion*, and Handel's (rarely performed oratorio) *Theodora*.

[www.ashtead.choralsociety.org.uk](http://www.ashtead.choralsociety.org.uk)

Jane Pickles, 26 May 2025

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## Epsom Choral Society Bids Farewell to Long-Serving Pianist Marion Lea

27 June 2025



Epsom Choral Society (ECS) has said a heartfelt goodbye to their much-loved accompanist, Marion Lea, who is retiring after an extraordinary 50 years.

At a special farewell party held in her honour, choir members gathered to celebrate Marion's remarkable contribution to ECS since she first joined in 1975. In a warm and emotional tribute, ECS President Jon Pullinger shared the story of Marion's involvement with the choir, remarking, "What amazing good fortune for us" - her musicianship, support and professionalism have been a cornerstone of ECS for half a century.

In recognition of her long-standing dedication, Marion was presented with a series of personal gifts: a facsimile of Mozart's C minor Piano Concerto (K491), a subscription for a monthly bouquet of flowers for the next year, and a set of four handmade, music-themed coasters. She also received a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a magnificent, personalised cake in the shape of a piano.

Members past and present paid tribute to Marion's extraordinary skills, her quiet professionalism, and the musicianship she brought to every rehearsal and performance. As Jon Pullinger said of Marion: "The accompanist will pick out weaknesses in one part or another and come to their rescue with appropriately judged emphases. We have been so

fortunate in having Marion with us as both fine soloist and consummate accompanist.”

ECS looks back with gratitude for all Marion has brought to the choir and with warm wishes for her retirement.

Nina Kaye

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## Epsom celebrates romance and revolution!

27 June 2025



**Another great concert from Epsom Symphony Orchestra**, directed and conducted by Darrell Davison with Christos Fountos the piano soloist. The theme was *Romance & Revolution*.

The concert began with Tchaikovsky's **Romeo & Juliet Overture (Fantasy)** - inspired by Shakespeare. The dramatic and forbidding opening, depicting doom and gloom, moved to a mood of lightness - a faster pace with dancing notes from the flutes - before reverting to solemn chords. The music captured the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. The love theme was special - lyrical notes first heard on the Cor Anglais, then the flautists' melody rang through, and finally the distinctive notes of the harp. Flowing and haunting chords of the ending metamorphosized from hints of happiness to one of pessimism and death, demonstrated so convincingly by the timpani.

**Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini** by Rachmaninov was amazing. Christos Fountos played the piano with aplomb, his fingers racing up and down the keyboard. There were contrasting moments of lightness and solemn intensity. The lyrical melody on the piano was joined by flowing chords from the strings and then the wind, finally ending at a diminished pace on the piano.

**Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5** was a wonderfully deep symphony. A menacing theme from the cellos and double basses contrasted with the haunting notes of the violins. Spiky and unsettling chords added intensity, creating an ominous atmosphere. The serene notes of the flautists changed the mood - reinforced by the calming notes of the lower strings. Other sections were fast, with an atmosphere of expectancy and individual solo parts. The Largo movement was introduced by strings with moments of pathos. As the intensity built up, the mood changed. Was it anger? Or determination to overcome adversity? It resolved serenely. The final movement had a strident atmosphere which moved on to more tranquil waters. Unsettling chords and a melody with almost full orchestration concluded with triumphant notes, the timpani resounding through the hall at the finale.

Sue Haines

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## Baroque to Modern concert by Epsom Chamber Choir

27 June 2025



**Epsom & Ewell is fortunate to have many excellent music and drama groups to join, learn and perform with, and for audiences to enjoy old favourites or explore something unfamiliar and perhaps a bit challenging.**

This lovely concert by Epsom Chamber Choir gave us contrasting styles from the 17th, 18th, 20th and 21st centuries, all with a meditative quality. Good programme notes were helpful.

In the fantastic acoustic of St. Martin's Church one was immersed in the spacious depths of the sounds; the intensity

produced several spine-tingling moments for me.

The choir opened with *I was glad when they said unto me* - not the familiar setting used at King Charles' coronation in 2023 (which is by Parry) but one written by Henry Purcell for the coronation of James II in 1685. It sets off in a joyful dance. The top part floated over the others in a plea for peace and it drew to an exultant finish in a wish for *world without end*.

Purcell's style is perhaps less familiar to us today than Bach's, so it was great to hear three more pieces which showed his skill in dramatic and plangent composition, and the choir's skill in their performance. My notes on *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts* and *Hear my prayer, O Lord say sublime and understated intense anguish* - sounds which produced more delightful shivers up the spine.

Then to compare them with Bach across four pieces - in these there were stately dance rhythms and delicacy as befitted some of the words. *Fürchte dich nicht* (Do not fear, I am near you), probably written for a funeral (it's a pity we don't know who commissioned the work), seemed to demonstrate all the complexities which Bach could write in a short piece. I hadn't heard this before, but it did not sound an easy sing!

In Arvo Pärt's *The Deer's Cry*, written in 2008, the dynamics, sonority and breath were beautifully controlled in some very exposed writing, then the very long lines of John Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* were effortlessly phrased.

Three short modern pieces followed - John Tavener's *A Hymn to the Mother of God*, James Macmillan's *A Child's Prayer* (dedicated to the 16 children and their teacher who were killed at Dunblane in March 1996), and Eric Whitacre's *Lux Aurumque* (*Light and Gold*, which was introduced as representing light falling through stained glass) - they were full of space, profound, resonant and uplifting.

In the baroque pieces the choir of just over 30 singers had a light accompaniment on chamber organ and cello. Poppy Walshaw, the cellist, also played three movements from the Bach cello suites. This was more music to get lost inside, the two dances leading us into a celebration of life in the joyous *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf* (*The spirit comes to help our weakness*) to conclude a most enjoyable evening.

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### Upcoming Events

The choir is holding a **Come & Sing! Haydn's *The Creation* on Saturday 10th May, 1.30-5pm**, at **St. Martin's Junior School, Ashley Road KT18 7AD**

**(£10, students £5, under 18s free** - includes music hire and light refreshments).

Their next concert, **'The Food of Love'**, is a choral tapestry ranging from 16th-century fun, through *West Side Story*, *I Got Rhythm* and *Summertime*, to Billy Joel -

**Saturday 28th June, 7.30pm, St. Martin's Church, Epsom KT17 4PX.**

Anita Littler