

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

14 April 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

Epsom celebrates romance and revolution!

14 April 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

Baroque to Modern concert by Epsom Chamber Choir

14 April 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.

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

Surrey Arts Gala went live in Guildford

14 April 2025



Surrey Arts held its latest Gala concert on Saturday, 15 March, at G Live in Guildford, showcasing the incredible talent of over 300 young musicians from 15 different ensembles. The event featured a diverse array of performances, including original compositions and well-known pieces, highlighting the inclusive spirit of Surrey Arts. The event included Surrey Arts inclusive orchestra UP! alongside its newest ensemble, World in Music, a diverse group which aims to introduce young people to unfamiliar cultures through both western and non-western musical traditions.

Sarah Lee, Head of Service for Surrey Arts said: *"The Gala is a fantastic event which showcases the talent of our young people from many of our bands, orchestras and choirs. The concert allows young musicians to collaborate with others they would not normally have the chance to play with and gives an opportunity to play in a professional theatre."*

At the event, Councillor Denise Turner Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said: *"It is lovely to be here tonight at the Surrey Arts Gala 2025. I'm really impressed with how hard the children are working. They are really enjoying themselves this evening and the audience are having a great time. It's actually really moving to see the effort they are putting into their performances, so I would like to say a big thank you to all the staff and everyone who has organised this tonight."*

The groups performed to a delighted audience with one parent commenting *"Thank you to all the members of Surrey Arts staff for putting on such an epic concert! We thoroughly enjoyed it, and it was a pleasure to see the wide range of ensembles run by Surrey Arts, many of which I'd never come across before."*

Performances from the Gala will soon be available to view on the **Surrey Arts YouTube channel**.

Surrey Arts' ensembles perform at locations across Surrey throughout the year. Visit the **Surrey Arts Ensembles webpage** to find out more.

Epsom Choral Society Delivers a Classical Delight at St Martin's Church

14 April 2025



March is concert season at St Martin's Church, Epsom. Between Ashted Choral Society on the 8th and Epsom Chamber Choir on the 29th, Epsom Choral Society took their turn on March 15th, with a programme of two favourite pieces from the classical period, performed just the way everybody likes them.

Haydn's *Mass in Time of Troubles*, nicknamed in honour of Lord Nelson, has its moments of subtlety and reflection, but when the string orchestra and solo quartet get augmented with trumpets and timpani, it needs a full choral society sound to rise above it and deliver the dramatic moments too.

Conductor Julian Collings likes tempi fast, making the most of the English Sinfonietta, whose string players' fingers moved so perfectly together they could have been attached to a giant pantograph. That meant the singers, too, had to know their parts thoroughly beforehand—well enough to keep up with the speed of both cascades of notes and a whole booklet of Latin words.

Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* covers five whole psalms before the more familiar text of *Magnificat*, and the words span many human experiences—from justice, compassion, and almsgiving to footstools and skulls. Their weekly practices for the two preceding months had been well spent.

The piece they knew best was the bijou motet *Ave Verum Corpus*, which they all sang from memory. That meant they could rise and fall musically as one instrument and stay together during the conductor's extensive *rallentando* between the two stanzas. The odd forgotten note length matters not at all when the ensemble improves by a leap.

Hearing pieces as familiar as *Ave Verum Corpus* or *Laudate Dominum*, the fifth of those *Vespers* psalms, I am reminded of other times I've heard or sung them myself. Next time I hear *Laudate Dominum*, I shall enjoy being reminded of this performance. Eleanor Pennell-Briggs' soprano voice has a liquid agility that nourishes every note. Meanwhile, the accompanying choral forces took care to supply the harmony without ever being overpowering.

However easy they were for the listener, these classical-period works pose challenges for the singer. At some distance from the conductor, the basses and tenors did well to keep up with his faster tempi. Everyone had to contend with tricks like tuning odd intervals in the many fugal passages, singing on the beat while the orchestra played off it, or vice versa, and at times, half the choir having to sing a whole movement a few beats behind the other half.

The opening Haydn motet *Insanae et Vanae Curae* was the only appearance of the main church organ, played by Peter Jaekel. He found some rich and sonorous colours during the outer sections. I always enjoy his playing, but the choir couldn't quite match his volume. They wisely had to keep enough in reserve for the longer pieces to follow.

Near the end of the *Nelson Mass* is a minor-key *Benedictus* movement, with martial trumpets and drums. I was glad to hear the sopranos still had the power to confidently scale past the top of the clef, wholly in the spirit of a 'time of troubles.' Likewise, the altos were prepared for some telling moments in the concluding movement of the Creed.

The other three soloists had less chance for display than the soprano. Gavin Horsley sang a prayerful *Qui tollis*, asking gently for Jesus' mercy. Beth Moxon demonstrated that she could keep projecting even at the lower realms of a mezzo's range. In brief solo moments, Paul Hopwood showed signs that he would be comfortable in an even larger venue than St Martin's Church. All showed delightful awareness of the others during ensemble moments.

The concert ended with Helen Phillips, the choir's chairman, thanking the audience for providing the motivation that prompted the musicians to put the effort in, taking great pains to make it sound easy. It was a duty I, and all in the building, were very happy to perform.

Nigel Williams

Photo: Epsom Choral Society at St Martin's Church. Credit Clive Richardson

Epsom Jazz Club Brings Top Talent to Town

14 April 2025



Epsom is swinging to the sound of jazz, thanks to the Epsom Jazz Club – a not-for-profit community project dedicated to bringing Nationally and Internationally renowned jazz musicians to the heart of Epsom. Situated at The Comrades Club, The Parade, Epsom, this intimate venue promises an unbeatable jazz experience, offering a warm welcome to all.

The club, a subsidiary of the registered charity Epsom Music, operates with the sole aim of promoting live music. Other than essential costs like venue hire and promotions, all ticket revenues go directly to the talented musicians. Any surplus funds are reinvested into enhancing the experience for concert-goers.

With no membership required and a strict capacity limit of just 70 seats – all arranged cabaret-style – everyone gets a great view and the same fair ticket price. Epsom Jazz Club is a rarity in its field: no booking fees, no tiered pricing, and not a raffle ticket in sight!

Upcoming Events to Mark on Your Calendar

Thursday 23rd January 7.30pm - Steve Fishwick & Leon Greening Present *SoulTime!*

The first event of 2025 kicks off with a spectacular tribute to Bobby Timmons, the legendary pianist, composer, and sideman to jazz greats like Art Blakey and Cannonball Adderley. Trumpet maestro Steve Fishwick and pianist Leon Greening – hailed as the club's finest pianist to date – lead the evening alongside bass and drums. Expect soulful melodies and toe-tapping grooves in a night that jazz aficionados won't want to miss.

27th February - Coloriage: Accordion Meets Tango and Gypsy Jazz

February brings the enchanting sounds of Mike Guy on accordion and Harry Diplock on guitar, exploring the legacy of Richard Galliano. This quartet will take audiences on a journey through Argentine tango, French musette, and gypsy jazz, with works from Astor Piazzolla and Django Reinhardt. It's a rare treat for fans of accordion-led ensembles.

27th March - Sharp Little Bones with Tony Kofi

A saxophone showcase awaits in March with the award-winning Tony Kofi leading the invigorating modern post-bop quartet. Fresh from a sold-out London Jazz Festival performance, Kofi's appearance is a must-see for lovers of dynamic, contemporary jazz.

Join the Jazz Community

Epsom Jazz Club is open to everyone, whether you're a lifelong jazz lover or new to the genre. The "Ronnie Scott's" like venue, central location near bus stops and the railway station, and welcoming atmosphere make it the perfect spot for a night of live music.

Tickets are available exclusively via TicketSource

The charity also supports a national appeal providing grants to small struggling jazz clubs up and down the country led by Epsom's own jazz legend Nige Price.

Epsom Choral Society carols for cardiac charity

14 April 2025



Epsom Choral Society presented its ever-popular annual Christmas Concert on Saturday 21st December at St Martin's Church in Epsom. Always a highlight of the festive season, this year's concert was a joyful celebration filled with music, readings, and plenty of audience participation. The concert was attended by the Worshipful, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, and the Lady Mayoress, Steve and Carol Bridger.

The choir welcomed back **Connaught Brass**, one of the UK's leading brass ensembles, known for their vibrant performances across the UK and Europe. They brought the true spirit of Christmas through their entertaining instrumental pieces and in their accompaniments to the traditional favourites.

This year's programme featured a variety of carols and Christmas songs performed by the choir, accompanied by Marion Lea on the piano and Ben Lewis-Smith on the organ as well as seasonal brass arrangements and uplifting Christmas readings. As always, the audience had the opportunity to join in singing much-loved traditional carols, and filled the church with the warmth and joy of the season.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit of giving, there was an exit collection in aid of the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) where over £650 was raised. CRY works to reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac deaths through vital awareness, screening, and research, making this a particularly meaningful way to support those in need during the holiday season.

Epsom celebrates a new Ukrainian Christmas Day

14 April 2025



The vibrant Ukrainian community in Epsom and Ewell and surrounding areas will celebrate Christmas Day for the second year on 25th December. This change was formalized when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a law on July 28, 2023, moving the official Christmas holiday from January 7 to December 25.

This decision aligned with earlier moves by major Ukrainian churches. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in February 2023 announced its plan to switch to the Revised Julian calendar followed by The Orthodox Church of Ukraine on May 24, 2023.

The shift to December 25 reflects Ukraine's efforts to distance itself from Russian traditions and strengthen its integration with Western practices. Previously, Ukraine observed Christmas on January 7, following the Julian calendar, a tradition shared with the Russian Orthodox Church. The move to December 25 aligns Ukraine's Christmas celebrations with those of most Western countries, symbolizing a step toward greater cultural independence.

The public are welcome to join Ukrainians, their hosts and supporters at Epsom Methodist Church on Ashley Road on **Saturday 21st December** for a special evening of music from wonderful Ukrainian musicians and singers. Entry is free and no reservations required.

A social event starts at 5pm and the music commences at 6pm concluding about 7.15. Entry is free and a leaving collection is devoted to the musicians whose livelihoods in Ukraine have been cut by Putin's war.

You will enjoy a pianist, a violinist, a soprano, poetry, a brass ensemble, a bandura player (a traditional Ukrainian instrument) and a local Ukraine refugee choir in a packed and varied programme.

The event is organised by the charity behind The Epsom Jazz Club and supported by Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine and the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network.

Lionel Blackman, the organiser said "In one way it is a sad event as it is the tenth Ukrainian Music evening held in Epsom since the Russian invasion in February 2022, which reminds us how long this horrible war has been going on. The music can help take minds away from the tragedies in their homeland."

All are welcome. If you do come you may if you wish bring and share a plate of some finger buffet food. There is no parking at the Church and you should leave plenty of time for travel as roads and rail will be busy.

There will also be time for you to get to Epsom Choral Society's Christmas Concert at St Martin's Church, Church Street, Epsom that starts at 7.30pm.

Full details of the Epsom Choral Society concert [HERE](#)

Watching out for tomorrow's film talent in Epsom and Ewell

14 April 2025



Creative Media students from North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) were joined by their tutors, family and friends for the premiere of their short film, ‘The Watching’ which was screened at Epsom Picturehouse last week.

The Watching’ was filmed on location in the South Downs in November by Nescot’s Level 4 and HND Creative Media students as part of their domestic filming project. Written by and starring former student, Charlie McCarthy, ‘The Watching’, is a psychological drama, exploring themes of identity, state control and the human cost of forgetting, set against the desolate beauty of an isolated coastline.

Louise Gaskin, Head of Curriculum for Creative Industries at Nescot said, “A huge well done to our cast and crew. We are so proud of their efforts and hard work on this project which has resulted in, I think, one of the best films we’ve made as a department. Thank you to Epsom Picturehouse and Satisfied Eye International Film Festival for supporting our students, we were thrilled to be able to showcase our students’ film on the big screen.”

Abigail Partington-Moran, Creative Media tutor at Nescot added, “The students have worked really hard on this filming project and enjoyed themselves too. They’ve taken the early starts, late nights, cold weather and countless unit moves all in their stride. The project has given them the real-world experience of working on set, and alongside the technical film-making skills, they’ve also learnt team work, problem-solving and time management skills.”

After the film screening, key cast and crew members involved in the filming took to the stage for a Q&A session with Creative Media tutor demonstrator, Alex Marshall. They included, former student, Charlie McCarthy, Script Writer and Actor, and Sam Gower, Actor; HND student, Hannah Lealan, Producer; Level 4 student Frankie Hamley and HND student Nathan Elford, Directors and Level 4 student, Amani McKenzie, Script Supervisor.

Former student Charlie was part of Nescot’s Gold Medal winning Creative Media team at WorldSkills UK 2023. He said his inspiration for the script was the filming location, “I liked the idea of writing something satirical with reference to the beach. Everyone involved was brilliant and so dedicated all of the time. We had lots of fun making this film and I do hope audiences enjoy it.”

HND student, Nathan, who had the role of Director along with Level 4 student Frankie said, “We all worked really well together, there were no arguments which was great! Both Frankie and I collaborated to bring together the visual aspects of the film. The whole production was very professional. The experience has given me an idea of the job role I’d like to get into.”

“Even though it was stressful at times, it was good stress and taught us how to problem-solve. We have learnt a lot from this whole production. It has made us ready for the film-making industry,” added Frankie.

HND student, Hannah who had the role of Producer said, “We were essentially two different classes, working together. We turned a challenge from never having worked with someone before into an opportunity to develop, work and learn from each other. We had lots of fun on set between takes which made the experience enjoyable.”

Level 4 student Amani explained that as part of his role as Script Supervisor, he had to ensure there was continuity through the whole production from props to the actor’s lines, to make sure everything ran smoothly. “It’s been an amazing experience and has prepared us for handling industry-related situations. We are ready!” he said.

Nescot Creative Media alumnus and industry professional, Luke James was present for the screening. Addressing the students, he reminisced about working on a similar filming project nine years ago when he was a student at Nescot and offered them key advice. He said, “Filmmaking is a labour of love and there are endless opportunities in this industry. The opportunity to make something like this film is just so valuable, and you may not feel it now, but you should all be extremely proud of yourselves.”

‘The Watching’ has been entered into the Student Short (UK) category for the 2025 Satisfied Eye International Film Festival

Nescot’s Level 4 and HND Creative Media students on location for the filming of ‘The Watching’. Credit NESCOT

Epsom Chamber Choir Christmas concert benefits hospital

14 April 2025



Epsom Chamber Choir was delighted to welcome The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor **Steve Bridger**, and the Mayoress, Mrs. Carol Bridger, to their annual Christmas concert at St Martin’s Church on Saturday, 14th December.

Starting at a family-friendly 6 pm and lasting just an hour, the choir’s programme, devised by conductor **Jack Apperley**, packed in all the elements expected at this time of the year. Inevitably, there was some Rutter – his arrangement of the Sans Day Carol – and audience carols including *O come, all ye faithful* with the Willcocks descant. The choir also sang newer music chosen to feature women composers, including Kerensa Briggs’ increasingly well-known *A tender shoot*.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, a composer closely associated with our local area, was represented by his popular *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, based on folk tunes, with soloists from the choir.

The concert closed with a group of lighter items, including a long-time choir favourite, Peter Gritton’s close-harmony version of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* and a jazzy arrangement of *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.

The Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity supports patients, their families, and staff at our local hospitals. We were pleased to offer them the opportunity to take a retiring collection after the concert which raised £413.94

Roger Miller

Image: Jack Apperley with Molly Simpson from the hospital charity with the Mayor and Mayoress of Epsom and Ewell