

the KING'S MEN CAMBRIDGE

Manager | Joseph Zubier
Musical Director | George Gibbon
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Full-Length Biography

The King's Men (formerly known as *Collegium Regale* and *All the King's Men*) is the close-harmony group made-up of the Choral Scholars of the *Choir of King's College, Cambridge*. As Choral Scholars the members sing at daily services in King's College Chapel during term time, as well as undertaking a busy concert and recording schedule, often working with leading orchestras: notably, the *Academy of Ancient Music*, *The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment* and the *Philharmonia*. The Choir is of course most famous for its broadcasts of *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* and *Carols from King's* on BBC Radio and TV, respectively, each Christmas; these broadcasts reach millions of people worldwide. *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018, with radio and television documentaries marking the occasion; the latter of these featured *The King's Men* prominently.

The King's Men, however, functions as a separate entity from the main Choir, and is managed entirely by the members of the group. It sings throughout the year at many dinners, private parties and other events. The singers regularly lead masterclasses at schools around the country, often aided by the King's College Organ Scholars, in which they coach young singers in choral singing, ensemble skills and close-harmony performance. Every year, generally at Easter or in the Summer, the group divides to tour the North and South of England. Recent engagements also have included singing as backing vocalists for the English rap artist Dizzee Rascal in London, and live on MTV at the BBC Electric Proms.

Developing on experience gained from the main Choir, *The King's Men* has excelled in the performance and recording of early-Renaissance polyphony. Under its previous name, *Collegium Regale*, the group released two albums promoting little-known and under-appreciated composers from the European Renaissance on the *Signum* Label, conducted by Stephen Cleobury. The 2006 recording of music by Orlando Lassus in particular was met with great critical acclaim, receiving five-star reviews from *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* — the latter also listing it in its top-ten albums of the year. The 2008 recording of music by Giaches de Wert, receiving its first performance since the late 16th century after having been transcribed by a member of the group, was similarly well received.

More recently *The King's Men* has released albums on *King's College Recordings*. The first of these, *After Hours*, a mixture of pop and jazz-standards, drew high critical acclaim, reaching No. 1 in the iTunes specialist classical charts. This style of music is a particular favourite; ranging from Spirituals to Michael Jackson, these songs are almost always arranged by members of the group. Each summer the group performs to approximately two thousand people on the banks of the River Cam in their popular *Singing on the River* concert.

After leaving the College many members of *The King's Men* seek to continue a career in music, and the group boasts an impressive array of alumni. The baritone Gerald Finley and the tenor Andrew Kennedy are both former members, as is the former Director of *English National Opera* and Principal Conductor of the *Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra*, Edward Gardner. Arguably the most famous close-harmony group in Britain, *The King's Singers*, was set up by an especially enthusiastic year of Choral Scholars in 1968. Former Choral Scholars grace the ranks of almost every professional choir in the UK today including *The Monteverdi Choir* (formed by Sir John Eliot Gardiner in 1964, whilst an undergraduate student at King's), *The Sixteen*, *The Swingles*, and *Polyphony* (also set up at King's in 1986).

Though unlike these groups *The King's Men* faces the constant challenge of a membership in a perpetual state of flux. But this can be a tremendous strength, for each year brings with it a fresh set of voices and new ideas about the group's trajectory and aims. Its success is testament to its ability to change in new and dynamic directions whilst retaining its high standards of musical integrity.