

Full Length Biography

The King's Men (previously 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 we sing the daily routine of chapel services throughout term 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 the broadcasts of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on BBC TV and Radio each Christmas, which reaches millions of people worldwide.

The King's Men, however, functions as a separate entity from the main choir and is run entirely by the members of the group itself. We sing throughout the year for many dinner entertainments, private parties, and other events. In addition, this year we will be performing in the Far East, as part of a full choir tour in the summer. We also run master classes regularly at schools around the country, aided by our talented Organ Scholars, in which we coach young singers in choral singing, ensemble skills and close harmony performance. The climax of our year, however, comes when we divide into two groups touring the North and South of England, generally at Easter or in the Summer.

Building on its experience from the main choir, the group has excelled in performance and recording of early renaissance polyphony. Under its previous name (Collegium Regale) the group released two discs promoting little known and under-appreciated composers from the European Renaissance on the Signum Label. The 2006 recording of music by Orlando Lassus in particular 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 discs of the year. The 2008 recording of music by Giaches de Wert was similarly well received. This CD is also notable, as most of the music, having been transcribed for the first time by a member of the group, received its first performance since the late 16th century.

Most recently, the group released an album on the King's College Label entitled *After Hours*. A mixture of pop and jazz, it too drew high critical acclaim and reached No.1 on the iTunes Classical Charts.

This style of music is a particular favourite amongst the group. From spiritual songs to Michael Jackson, these are almost always arranged by members of the group and give us a chance to sing outside the 'classical music' box. Each summer the group performs this repertoire to around two thousand people on the banks of the Cam ('Singing on the River') and it forms a

mainstay of our performance material throughout the year. The group's recognition as non-classical singers is growing and recent engagements have included singing as backing vocalists for the English rap artist Dizzee Rascal at the BBC Electric Proms in London and live on MTV.

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 Director of English National Opera, Edward Gardner. Perhaps the most famous close harmony group in Britain, The King's Singers, was set up by an especially keen 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, The Sixteen and Polyphony, itself set up in King's in 1986, and the Swingle Singers.

Unlike these groups however, The King's Men faces a constant challenge that its membership is in a perpetual state of flux. In some ways this can be a challenge for the group, but in other respects it is a tremendous strength, for each year heralds a fresh set of voices and ideas about where the group should go. Indeed, as The Times once wrote 'the mystery is how the Choir achieves its gorgeous blend with such transitory, albeit overlapping, personnel'. That it has flourished for so long is testament to its ability to change in new and interesting directions whilst retaining its high standards of musical integrity.

RTS - 26/10/15