

Hereford Cathedral School takes national Songs of Praise choir title

Hereford Cathedral School's Cantabile Girls' Choir have won the BBC Songs of Praise Senior School Choir of the Year Competition 2015, beating some of the finest school choirs from across the UK in the Final televised last night (Sunday, 16 May)

The 17 female singers from Hereford Cathedral School accompanied by fellow pupil Laurence John and Cantabile Director Jo Williamson, took the audience and judges at Nottingham's Albert Hall by storm in the final of the competition.

Competing against choirs from Twyford Church of England High School and Strathearn School Chamber Choir, the choir sang 'The Skylark' to clinch the title. Although the School's Cantabile choir have reached the finals before and have won the international Eisteddfod on two separate occasions this is the first time they have won the BBC Songs of Praise competition.

Singing lyrics written during the Great War by a former pupil of the school brought an extra dimension, as Emily explained:

"We all had an emotional connection to the piece; to know it was written by a former pupil of the school, who had not only fought in WW1, but who had also walked through the same school buildings and corridors as we do every day is naturally thought provoking. I don't think we have sung a song that has connected with all of us in such a way."

Charlotte, another member of Cantabile Girls' Choir added:

"Singing such a sensitive piece, which was commissioned especially for this Choir in commemoration of the centenary of WW1, was such a privilege. As was being part of the School's Chamber Choir representing the UK and singing in the historic '1000 Voices for Peace' concert in Brussels. I will never forget the marvellous opportunities and experiences that singing for our school choirs has provided me."

Accepting the trophy, in the programme which was broadcast on Sunday (17 May), Cantabile Girls' Choir Director and Hereford Cathedral School Vocal Coach Jo Williamson said:

"Words cannot express how happy I am for the girls – I'm so proud of them and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart. They have worked so hard for this moment and gave everything they had – heart and soul!"

Mr Paul Smith, Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School said:

"I am naturally delighted for the pupils, their families and for all the staff associated with this choir. They have worked very hard and their effort, commitment and determination has been rewarded with success at the International Eisteddfod, winning their section twice and reaching the finals of the World Choir competition, and now being named the 2015 BBC Songs of Praise Youth Choir of the Year. Whilst our Cathedral choristers are used to performing for the BBC, and even Royalty, there are no girl choristers at Hereford, and so it is marvellous that the school is also able to produce choirs of Cantabile's expertise and quality"

"With our Junior School's Chamber Choir also winning a national choral competition a couple of months ago (Barnardo's Choir of the Year) the future for choral music at Hereford Cathedral School, and indeed the county of Herefordshire, looks very promising."