

Press Release



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For Immediate Release

Ruthie Henshall and Richard Suart to appear at the Annual Festival of Saint Cecilia – the Patron Saint of Music.

- Ruthie Henshall and Richard Suart to give readings at the Musicians Benevolent Fund's Annual Festival of Saint Cecilia at St. Paul's Cathedral
- World premiere of specially commissioned Anthem *Deus, portus pacis* by Cecilia McDowall
- Combined choirs of St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral to perform together for the only time in the year

The Musicians Benevolent Fund will be celebrating their Annual Festival of Saint Cecilia on 18 November at St Paul's Cathedral and Guildhall. Held annually since 1946 as a tribute to The Patron Saint of Music, this event continues a tradition in bringing together over 1000 people to celebrate music and musicians, making it the Musicians Benevolent Fund's flagship event of the year.

This year's Festival theme is *The role of music in difficult times* and identifies the power which music has in helping people through times of crisis. The theme has a vivid connection with the Fund's vital work in supporting music professionals throughout their working lives when a problem such as an accident or illness can have a devastating impact and in later life, with the challenges that face older people.

The Service will begin at 11am and readings will be given by West End Star and TV personality Ruthie Henshall and highly acclaimed opera baritone Richard Suart. The Reverend Dr Carolyn (Cally) Hammond will be the preacher for the Service. The Reverend Hammond is Dean of Chapel at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and has a long-standing commitment to the English choral tradition.

Composers such as Purcell, Dryden, Pope and Handel all took part in early celebrations marking Saint Cecilia's Day and the Fund continues this tradition by commissioning an anthem each year. This year, the Festival Service features a premiere of *Deus, portus pacis* from distinguished composer Cecilia McDowall. McDowall joins Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, John Tavener, John Rutter, Roxanna Panufnik, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Tarik O'Reagan, who have all composed anthems for previous Festivals.

The music will be performed by the combined choirs of St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral. This is the only time of the year when these choirs come together to sing, making the Festival of Saint Cecilia a unique event.

A reception and Lunch will follow the Service at the historic Guildhall where Sir David Willcocks will be the guest speaker. Sir David has recently retired as Chairman of the Fund's Advisory Council and will be succeeded by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. Friends, supporters, Patrons, Ambassadors of the Fund, musicians and music lovers are sure to enjoy this day of musical celebration.

Tickets for both the Festival Service and Lunch are available from the Musicians Benevolent Fund. Please call 020 7239 9114 or order online at www.mbf.org.uk/shop

Notes to Editors:

The Musicians Benevolent Fund is a unique charity which provides essential help to musicians of all ages. The Fund supports music professionals throughout their working lives when a crisis such as an accident or illness can have a devastating impact and in later life, with the challenges that face older people. The Fund also recognises that the life of a professional musician has to begin early and support talented young people to enable them to fully develop their creativity and musical potential.

The Musicians Benevolent Fund Festival of Saint Cecilia continues a tradition dating back to the 17th Century. The Festival is held on or near Saint Cecilia's Day (22 November) and is celebrated in Cathedrals, churches and musical organisations throughout the country.

Please note that the Musicians Benevolent Fund is no longer using the acronym 'MBF' and should be referred to as 'the Musicians Benevolent Fund' or 'the Fund' thereafter.

For further press information and high resolution images please contact:

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