

## The Marian Consort **Biography** **Vocal Ensemble**

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Taking its name from the Blessed Virgin Mary, a focus of religious devotion in the sacred music of all ages, The Marian Consort is a Gramophone Award-nominated and internationally-renowned early music vocal ensemble, recognised for its dynamic freshness of approach and innovative presentation of a broad range of repertoire. Under its founder and director, Rory McCleery, this **'astounding'** (The Herald) ensemble has given concerts throughout the UK and Europe, features regularly on BBC Radio 3, and is a former 'Young Artist' of The Brighton Early Music Festival.

Known for its engaging performances and imaginative programming, the group draws its members from amongst the very best young singers on the early music scene today. They normally sing one to a part (dependent on the repertoire), with smaller vocal forces allowing clarity of texture and subtlety and flexibility of interpretation that illuminate the music for performer and audience alike.

The Marian Consort is also committed to inspiring a love of singing in others, and has led participatory educational workshops for a wide range of ages and abilities.

Their repertoire encompasses the music of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries with a particular focus on the exploration of lesser-known works, often bringing these to the attention of the wider public for the first time. The Marian Consort is also a proud exponent of contemporary music, juxtaposing latter-day pieces and Renaissance works in concert in order to shed new light on both. As part of this commitment to new music, the group has commissioned works from several leading British choral composers, including Cecilia McDowall, Matthew Martin and Cheryl Frances-Hoad.

The Marian Consort often collaborates in performance and recording with a variety of vocal and instrumental ensembles: recent project partners have included the Carducci Quartet; the Choir of Merton College, Oxford; the Berkeley Ensemble; the Rose Consort of Viols; the Monteverdi String Band; and Ludus Baroque in repertoire ranging from Byrd, Parsons, Bach and Monteverdi to Arvo Pärt and Michael Berkeley.

Together, the members of The Marian Consort perform across the UK and Europe: recent highlights have included recitals for Aldeburgh Music, the Tage Alter Musik Regensburg and the Festival de Música Antiga Valencia; concerts for the Leipzig A Cappella Festival and the St Magnus International Festival; and performances at the Festival Alte Musik Knechtsteden and the British Academy.

The Marian Consort has to date released eight CDs with Delphian Records, all of which have met with considerable critical acclaim in the broadsheets and specialist press. Their discs have been praised for **'performances that glow with golden purity and soul'**, **'precision and pellucid textures'**, **'impeccable polish and blend'** and for **'drawing the listener in by quiet persuasion and musical intelligence of the highest order'**.

Plans for 2017 include a revival of the ground-breaking ACE-supported theatrical collaboration 'Breaking the Rules', performances for the Bath, Cheltenham, and Beverley Early Music Festivals, and concerts across the UK.

The Marian Consort is directed by Rory McCleery, a freelance singer, choral conductor and academic.

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