



CITY of DERRY  
INTERNATIONAL  
CHOIR FESTIVAL

*Fourteenth Edition*

22 - 25 October 2026

[derrychoirfest.com](http://derrychoirfest.com)





# SYLLABUS 2026

## FUNDERS



Derry City & Strabane  
District Council  
Community  
Challenge Office &  
Choirs for an Upraised Voice  
Derry City & Strabane  
District Council



## SPONSORS



Marketing and  
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# Introduction

*Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the City of Derry International Choir Festival.*

We are very excited to offer you the opportunity to participate in a four-day celebration of song. The dates for the 2026 edition of the festival are Thursday 22 – Sunday 25 October, with the programme of activities spread over those days, as outlined on page 6 of the syllabus.

Regular participants in the festival will recognise all the usual competition categories for national choirs and the extensive opportunities for non-competitive participation for both national and international groups. Please note carefully the requirements for the Oak Tree of Derry International Competition. The details for competing international choirs can be found on page 12. All choirs should read the information contained on page 22 carefully before completing the relevant forms on the following pages.

This festival has now grown to be recognised as one of the most prestigious celebrations of singing anywhere in Ireland or the U.K. Participants are guaranteed a warm welcome, an enjoyable experience and memorable performances in beautiful locations throughout the city and surrounding area.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of funders, sponsors, and friends of the festival, combined with the enthusiasm of the people of Derry and the participation of wonderful singers and choirs.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to experience the magic of the festival for yourselves.

Please complete and submit your applications as soon as possible and keep an eye on the festival website at [derrychoirfest.com](http://derrychoirfest.com) for regular updates.



*Dónal Doherty*

Artistic Director of the Festival



## Timetable (Provisional)

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### THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

Primary School Big Sing

Opening Gala Concert

### FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

Post-Primary School Competitions and Big Sing

Choral Trails

Community Concerts

Evening Concert

Late-night Concert

### SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER

National Competitions

Big Sing

Choral Trails

Community Concerts

Oak Tree of Derry International Competition

### SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER

Sacred Trail

National Competitions including the National Choir of the Festival

Competition Choral Trails

Community Concerts

Closing Gala Concert and Awards Ceremony

“

*What an amazing,  
unique and  
inspiring festival...  
I love it!*

*- Festival Participant*

”





*Welcome to a  
'Legenderry'  
Festival!*



## Visiting Derry

Located in the stunning north-west of Ireland, the charming city of Derry~Londonderry is renowned as one of the finest walled cities in Europe, full of fascinating history and culture. Our vibrant city offers a unique combination of rich heritage and a buzzing social scene.

Take a trip back in time and discover over 400 years of history strolling along the historic 17th century walls, enjoy magnificent historic buildings and cathedrals, visit one of the many museums

to uncover our fascinating story and journey to peace, or extend your stay and enjoy the stunning Halloween celebrations in Derry, voted 'Best Halloween Destination in the World' by USA Today ([derryhalloween.com](http://derryhalloween.com)).

Listed as one of the Lonely Planet's 'Top 10 Cities in the World to Visit', Derry has also been named the 'Friendliest Destination in Northern Ireland' so you will be guaranteed the warmest of welcomes!

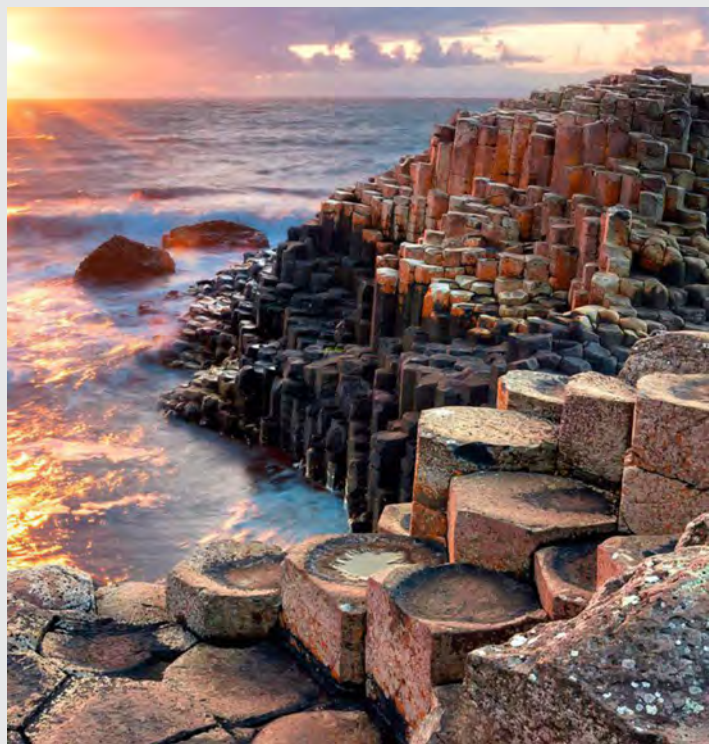


## SIGHTS TO SEE - in and around Derry

Derry is the perfect base to explore some of Ireland and Northern Ireland's most beautiful scenic locations. It is less than an hour from the Giant's Causeway (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Bushmills Whiskey Distillery, the oldest licensed distillery in the world, and just 90 mins from Belfast and its award-winning Titanic Belfast Museum, Crumlin Road Gaol and countless other attractions. To the south of the city lie the Sperrin Mountains in a stunning area of outstanding natural beauty, and to the west you can marvel at the magnificent natural beauty of County Donegal, home to fabulous attractions such as Glenveagh National Park, not to mention some of the best links golf courses in Europe and the gateway to the spectacular 'Wild Atlantic Way'.

Popular tourist activities in the city and nearby:

- Derry's historic walls
- Peace Bridge, Derry
- Tower Museum, Derry
- Museum of Free Derry
- Derry Girls filming locations
- Grianán of Aileáich, Co. Donegal
- Game of Thrones filming locations, Co. Antrim
- Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, Co. Antrim
- Giant's Causeway, Co. Antrim
- Ulster American Folk Park, Co. Tyrone
- Bushmills Distillery, Co. Antrim
- Star Wars: The Last Jedi filming location, Co. Donegal



# Travelling to Derry

The City of Derry is situated in the north-west of Northern Ireland and is its second largest city. There are four airports with regular transport links to the city:

|                                      |                                                                    |   |                            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| City of Derry Airport                | <a href="http://cityofderryairport.com">cityofderryairport.com</a> | - | approx. 8 miles (13 km)    |
| Belfast International Airport        | <a href="http://belfastairport.com">belfastairport.com</a>         | - | approx. 60 miles (95 km)   |
| George Best Belfast City Airport     | <a href="http://belfastcityairport.com">belfastcityairport.com</a> | - | approx. 70 miles (110 km)  |
| Dublin Airport (Republic of Ireland) | <a href="http://dublinairport.com">dublinairport.com</a>           | - | approx. 140 miles (220 km) |



There are several bus services to the city from both the north and south of Ireland:

Translink ([www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)),  
Aircoach ([www.aircoach.ie](http://www.aircoach.ie)) and  
Bus Eireann ([www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie))

There is also a regular train service to Derry from Belfast ([www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk))

For more details on transport, accommodation and tourist attractions in Derry, go to the 'Visiting Derry' page on our website ([www.derrychoirfest.com/visiting](http://www.derrychoirfest.com/visiting)) or the Visit Derry website ([www.visitderry.com](http://www.visitderry.com))

Feel free to contact us directly via email at [info@derrychoirfest.com](mailto:info@derrychoirfest.com) if you require any additional assistance with your travel and accommodation arrangements



# International Competition

Open to any youth or adult choir of international standing with a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 60 members. All singers must be aged 15 or over.

## Repertoire

The programme must be entirely a cappella, represent an historically balanced range of styles and include at least:

- a polyphonic work composed before 1750
- a work by a composer from the choir's native country
- a work by a composer from Ireland. The piece chosen must be an original composition written after 1950. Choir directors may wish to refer to the choral catalogues of the Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland, for a list of suitable repertoire.

The contrasting programme should comprise between 3 and 5 pieces, and the performance time (excluding applause) should be between 13 and 15 minutes in total. Time penalties will apply to choirs whose performance does not adhere to these limits.

## Prizes

1st Prize: 'Oak Tree of Derry' trophy and £2,000  
2nd Prize: £1,500  
3rd Prize: £1,000

## Selection Process

Upon receipt of all entry materials, choirs will be selected on the basis of their application. In particular, attention will be paid to the proposed repertoire and to the quality of the performance on the recording submitted.

## Support for Choirs

Selected choirs will receive financial support towards the cost of travel and accommodation. Please see point 4 of the Travel, Accommodation and Meals section on page 27.

[APPLICATION FORM](#)  
[RULES & REGULATIONS](#)



# Schools - UK and Ireland

## **Primary School Big Sing**

Primary school children from throughout Ireland and the UK are invited to participate in a Kodaly-based inter-active workshop, where they'll be introduced to songs, games and rhymes - a must for every primary school teacher.

## **Post-Primary School Competition (Unison/Two-Part)**

Repertoire: Two contrasting pieces, in unison or two parts, both of which may be accompanied

Time Limit: Not exceeding 8 minutes in total

1st Prize: Trophy and £150

## **Post-Primary School Competition (Three/Four-Part)**

Repertoire: Two contrasting part songs, in three or four parts, both of which may be accompanied

Time Limit: Not exceeding 8 minutes in total

1st Prize: Trophy and £150

In addition to 1st Prize in each of the school categories, Certificates of Participation will be awarded to each participating school in the following categories:

90% or above: Gold Award Certificate

85% - 89%: Silver Award Certificate

80% - 84%: Bronze Award Certificate

## **Post-Primary School Big Sing**

All post-primary school choirs are invited to take part in a Big Sing workshop that will take place during the competition session. Details will be provided in advance of the festival.

[APPLICATION FORM](#)  
[RULES & REGULATIONS](#)





# National Competitions (UK & Ireland)

## Equal Voice - Upper

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, only one of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** The majority of singers must be aged 15 or over

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Equal Voice - Lower

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, only one of which may be accompanied.

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total.

**Age Limit:** The majority of singers must be aged 15 or over

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Mixed Voice

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, only one of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** The majority of singers

must be aged 15 or over

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Youth Choir

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, both of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** All singers must be aged 20 or under

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Vocal Ensemble

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, only one of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** The majority of singers must be aged 15 or over

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 3 and maximum of 12 singers per ensemble

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Sacred and Gospel

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces in a relevant style, both of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** Open to adult and youth choirs

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## Light, Pop and Jazz

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces in a relevant style, both of which may be accompanied

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**Age Limit:** The majority of singers must be aged 15 or over

**No. of Members:** Minimum of 8 singers per choir

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £200  
**2nd Prize:** £100

## APPLICATION FORM RULES & REGULATIONS

“

*We have attended a  
number of other  
international festivals  
and Derry is up there  
with the best!*

*- Festival Participant*

”



“

*The participation of so many wonderful choirs is testimony to the standing of the festival.*

*- Festival Participant*

”

# National Choir of the Festival Competition

In this exciting competition, all choirs who have been awarded first place in any of the national competitions above, will be eligible to compete for the title 'National Choir of the Festival'.

**Please note that this competition is scheduled to take place on the afternoon of Sunday 25 October.**

In the event of a choir winning more than one national category, additional choirs may become eligible to compete in the National Choir of the Festival competition, based on the recommendation of the adjudicators.

**Repertoire:** Two contrasting pieces, both of which may be accompanied. Previously presented repertoire may be repeated in this competition.

**Time Limit:** 5 - 8 minutes in total

**1st Prize:** Trophy and £500



## Special Awards

The festival is delighted to present a number of special awards in the school, national and international categories of the festival as follows:

- Bernadette Kelly Memorial award for most promising school choir
- Bishops Daly and Mehaffey award, presented by the Inner City Trust, for an outstanding performance in the school competitions
- Sing Ireland conducting scholarship for the most promising conductor in the national competitions or a participant in the conducting masterclass
- Bishop's Gate Hotel award for an outstanding performance of a work composed before 1750 in the International Competition
- City Hotel award for the conductor of the most interesting and varied programme in the International Competition
- Contemporary Music Centre award for the best performance of a piece by a composer from Ireland. Only choral works found in the CMC's online library will be eligible for consideration.
- Visit Derry award for an outstanding competitive or non-competitive performance by a first-time participant
- Derry City and Strabane District Council award for outstanding contribution to the festival





# Non-Competitive Participation

The festival welcomes non-competitive participation in a range of activities throughout festival week, including:

- **Choral Trail** - informal public performances at various locations throughout the city
- **Sacred Trail** - a church service in one of the city's churches
- **Community Concerts** - a performance in one of the city's community venues alongside other participating choirs
- **Big Sing Workshop** - participation in a Big Sing choral workshop led by one of our visiting guest artists/adjudicators

[APPLICATION FORM](#)  
[RULES & REGULATIONS](#)



# Application Procedure

## Deadlines

Completed application forms and all supporting materials must be received by the dates specified below. Acceptance of late applications will be at the discretion of the City of Derry International Choir Festival.

### International Competition:

Friday 30 January 2026

### School, national and non-competitive applications:

Friday 29 May 2026

## Application Requirements

- Completed entry form with proposed competition programme
- Entry fee
- 5 sets of original sheet music of competition pieces
- Choir biography (150-250 words)
- Recent high resolution colour photograph of the choir in JPEG format (International Competition only)
- Recent recording of the choir (International Competition only)

## Competition Fees

School Competitions: £50/€60

National Competitions: £80/€95

International Competition:  
£150/€180

Competing school and national choirs may avail of the official festival accompanist and should request this on their entry form. Accompanist fee: £50/€60 per competition

Choirs who are not selected for participation in the International Competition will receive a full refund of their entry fee.

Pay by electronic transfer to:



Sterling payments and cheques should be made to:

Account Name: City of Derry International Choir Festival  
Account Address: Holywell Trust DCCP  
10-14 Bishop Street, Derry, BT48 6PW  
Bank Name: Danske Bank  
Account Number: 9015 6841  
National Sort Code: 95-06-79  
IBAN: GB59 DABA 9506 7990 1568 41  
BIC: DABAGB2B



Euro payments and cheques should be made to:

Account Name: Walled City Music Trust  
Account Address: Holywell Trust DCCP  
10-14 Bishop Street, Derry, BT48 6PW  
Bank Name: Bank of Ireland  
Account Number: 2925 9366  
National Sort Code: 90-49-15  
IBAN: IE70 BOFI 9049 1529 2593 66  
BIC: BOFIE2D

**N.B.** Please ensure that the choir name and contact details are noted on all bank transfers.

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# Competition APPLICATION Form

There are two ways to apply:

[Fill in our online application form here](#)

**OR**

Complete the application form below and email it to [info@derrychoirfest.com](mailto:info@derrychoirfest.com)

The closing dates for receipt of applications are:

**International Competition:**

Friday 30 January 2026

**Schools, national choirs and non-competitive participation:**

Friday 29 May 2026

A SEPARATE APPLICATION FORM AND FEE ARE REQUIRED FOR EACH COMPETITION.

Name of Choir:

Conductor:

Telephone:

Contact Person:

Telephone:

Address:

Email:

Website:

Number of singers in choir:

We wish to enter the:

competition

Official Accompanist required at a fee of £50 per competition ☐ Yes ☐ No

We'd love to tell our audience that you are participating in this year's Choir Festival so please share your social media handles here

Facebook:

Instagram:

Twitter:



# Repertoire for competition

The order of performance cannot be changed once submitted.

(I)

Title:

Composer/Arranger:

Composer's Dates:

Duration:

(II)

Title:

Composer/Arranger:

Composer's Dates:

Duration:

(III)

Title:

Composer/Arranger:

Composer's Dates:

Duration:

(IV)

Title:

Composer/Arranger:

Composer's Dates:

Duration:

(V)

Title:

Composer/Arranger:

Composer's Dates:

Duration:

# Non-Competitive Activities

The festival welcomes non-competitive participation for all choirs during festival week. These performances can be slotted in between rehearsal and competition schedules for each participating choir.

Please tell us below which activities you would like to sign up for.

| Non-Competitive Event                                                                                                  | Date                     | Participation                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Big Sing Workshop                                                                                                      | Sat 24 Oct (open to all) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choral Trail<br>(20 minutes light repertoire in public spaces throughout the city)                                     | Fri 23 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                        | Sat 24 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                        | Sun 25 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Concert<br>(20 minutes light repertoire as part of a concert in a community venue featuring multiple choirs) | Fri 23 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                        | Sat 24 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                        | Sun 25 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sacred Trail<br>(4/5 sacred pieces to be performed during a church service)                                            | Sun 25 Oct               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

# Repertoire - for non-competitive performances

PLEASE SUBMIT SOME EXAMPLES OF THE TYPE OF REPERTOIRE THAT YOUR CHOIR USUALLY PERFORMS.

## SACRED MUSIC

|        |                      |                    |                      |
|--------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |

## NON-SACRED MUSIC

|        |                      |                    |                      |
|--------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |
| Title: | <input type="text"/> | Composer/Arranger: | <input type="text"/> |

**CHECKLIST:**    Entry form    Entry fee    Choir biography (maximum 150 words)

|                |                      |       |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|
| Signature:     | <input type="text"/> |       |                      |
| Position Held: | <input type="text"/> | Date: | <input type="text"/> |

**N.B.** This form should be signed by a mandated, authorised member of the choir, e.g. choir conductor, choir secretary or chair of the governing body/committee.

We use the personal information you provide to contact you regarding your participation in this festival and future festivals. We do not disclose these personal details to any other organisation or business. You will be contacted by direct email from our festival staff and can ask to be removed from the contact list at any stage.



# Rules & Regulations

## Eligibility

1. Participation in the school days is open to schools from both the U.K. and Ireland.
2. Post-Primary school choirs may enter more than one competition (each entry must be made on a separate form and requires a separate fee).
3. National competitions are open to choirs from the UK and Ireland.
4. National choirs may enter more than one national competition (each entry must be made on a separate form and requires a separate fee).
5. The majority of singers in all national choirs must be over 15 years of age, apart from the Youth and Sacred categories.
6. The International Competition is open to any youth or adult choir of international standing.
7. Choirs accepted for participation in the International Competition are excluded from entering any of the national categories.

## Repertoire

1. No choir may sing the same repertoire in two different competitions (apart from the National Choir of the Festival competition, which allows repetition of previously presented pieces).
2. Piano or one other principal accompanying instrument is permitted in all school and national competitions. Choirs may also use up to a maximum of two additional instruments if indicated on the score.
3. Changes to the submitted programme are not permitted.
4. Choirs will be penalised for a programme that does not adhere to the stated time limits for each competition.
5. Adjudicators will award marks for the technical ability and artistic quality of each choir, and for the variety and communication of their programme.

## Broadcasting, Recording and Photographic Rights

1. Performances throughout the festival may be photographed and/or recorded for subsequent reproduction and/or broadcast on radio or television.
2. All broadcasting and photographic rights to the performances will belong to the festival and may be used for promotional use as it sees fit.
3. Choirs will not receive payment for recordings or photographs used and the festival will be entitled to reproduce any such recordings or photographs for sale or promotional use.
4. All choirs with members under the age of 18 years must ensure that the necessary consent is obtained from the young people and their parents/guardians prior to taking part in the festival.
5. If any choir does not wish to be broadcast, recorded or photographed, it must inform the Festival Board of this in advance of the festival.

## Travel, Accommodation, Meals

1. All travel costs to and from the festival are the responsibility of each participating choir.
2. All accommodation and meal costs at the festival are the responsibility of each participating choir.
3. Participating choirs are responsible for organising, booking and paying for all travel, accommodation and meals.
4. Choirs selected for the International Competition from outside the island of Ireland will receive an award of £2,000 as a contribution towards the cost of travel, accommodation and/or meals. Choirs selected from within the island of Ireland to compete in the International Competition will receive an award of £500 towards the costs of their participation in the festival.

To qualify for the award, choirs must:

- be in Derry for at least 3 nights
- participate in the Sacred Trail and other non-competitive performances
- perform in the International Competition on the Saturday night

- perform in the Closing Gala Concert on the Sunday night

5. For visiting choirs from outside the island of Ireland, the festival will provide all local transport, from the City of Derry Airport or the local train/bus station to their accommodation and back, and throughout the weekend as required by the festival.

## General

1. The decisions of the adjudication panel will be final in all competitions and no correspondence will be entered into regarding any aspect of its work.
2. The Artistic Panel reserves the right to limit the number of entries for any competition.
3. The Artistic Panel reserves the right to combine competition categories in the event of a small number of entries or to cancel a competition if sufficient entries are not received.
4. The Artistic Panel reserves the right to refuse entry into any competition.
5. Entry fees (less any bank charges) will be refunded if a choir is not selected.
6. If a selected choir withdraws from the competition, it will not be entitled to a fee refund.
7. The timetable for competitions is to be used as a guideline only and may change at the Festival Board's discretion.
8. Illegal reproduction of music will not be condoned by the festival. In the event of any illegal reproduction, the Festival Board accepts no responsibility for any action taken by publishers.
9. The Festival Board accepts no legal responsibility whatsoever in respect of any matter pertaining to a choir's participation in the festival and any associated activities.
10. The decisions of the Festival Board are final.
11. All details are subject to change. Any updates will be made on the festival website and will supersede the information in this syllabus.
12. Participation in the festival implies acceptance of all rules and regulations.

[derrychoirfest.com](http://derrychoirfest.com)



Future  
Festival  
Dates

**2027**  
October  
21-24

**2028**  
October  
19-22

**2029**  
October  
25-28