

Stainer's *Crucifixion* or Maunder's *Olivet to Calvary* alongside guest choristers from other churches. And they'll sing seven anthems at the traditional Carols by Candlelight service, often with challenging harmonic and descant arrangements.

The choir also performs in other churches and in residential homes. Several choir members also play musical instruments, and the worship band plays at all-age and special services too. Its junior choir follows the Royal School of Church Music 'Voice for Life' scheme, and choristers are examined externally for their Dean's and Bishop's Awards.

Jo said: "I originally joined the choir as a treble chorister at St John's when I was seven years old, so I'm very aware of how important church music is, in terms of retaining young people in the congregation, and giving them a role in leading worship."

'Singing is an important part of our identity as Christians'

"Singing is such an important part of our identity as Christians, so helping to lead a congregation in praising God is a real privilege."

There is a similar feeling at **Portsmouth Cathedral**, where the Cathedral Choir and Cantate rehearse and sing daily for a variety of worship services.

Organist and Master of Choristers Dr David Price said: "Our work with choristers and adult singers is at the heart of our daily round of worship at the cathedral."

"Church of England cathedrals are unique in that they all strive to

Music festival is a real showcase for village church choir

WHEN All Saints Church in Botley is full of people waving flags and singing at the top of their voices, it's easy to see how important music is to village life.

This 'Last Night of the Proms' style event is the finale of the biennial Botley Music Festival, which is a week-long celebration of music.

Although it's not a church event, it's centred around All Saints and the choir are the life-blood of the organising team.

Concerts are held each weekday lunchtime and on four evenings, and this year's ranged from a harp recital to a music quiz, from a wind band concert to Choral Evensong.

The enthusiasm for the inaugural festival in 2009 prompted a monthly series of

musical events, run by church choir members, which includes a Christmas concert every other year.

The music festival and monthly concerts are part of the fabric of Botley's community, not least because choir members themselves are also involved with other aspects of village life. It means the choir sings at the parish council's outdoor Christmas event each year, as well as in pubs and in residential homes.

For musical director David Burgess, it's all part of his philosophy of 'getting people through the doors' to see what happens next.

"Our audiences for all of these events seem to appreciate the opportunity to let the music speak, in whatever way it will," he said. "We have had new members

of the choir, and indeed the All Saints congregation, as a result."

The choir sings for Parish Communion on three Sundays a month, usually singing an anthem between the epistle and gospel to help worshippers reflect. On the first Sunday of each month, they sing Choral Evensong, and they'll be leading this service in our cathedral on All Saints Day this year.

The choir will sing Fauré's *Requiem* on the evening of Remembrance Sunday, lead the singing at a Nine Lessons and Carols service, and offer a musical piece for Good Friday.

Their special offerings for Good Friday have led to the creation of 'All Saints Chamber Choir', an augmented version of the church choir, which also gives other performances during the year, and helps to hone the musical skills of its members.



Last Night of the Proms at All Saints Church, Botley



hold our Benedictine tradition of music and singing in particular to embellish this offering to God.

"This ministry also forms the main focus of our formative work with children. We have 26 boy choristers, 24 girl choristers and 14 young people singing in our choirs every week. This singing

experience gives them a lifelong attachment to the church and some wonderful faith stories."

Christian Sim, aged 14, who has just stepped down after two years as head chorister, said: "I loved being in the choir. It taught me so much about faith and the Church, and also about me. Being



a chorister has really boosted my confidence as well as giving me so many amazing experiences.

"The music is amazing and very complex, and so concentration is essential. The best piece to sing was definitely Handel's *Messiah*. There are so many different parts to learn, but it was worth it."

And the choir at **Church of the Holy Spirit in Southsea** is one of a number of thriving choirs within the city of Portsmouth.

It sings Mass in the Catholic tradition each week, and includes adult and junior members. Its repertoire includes music from the ninth century to the present day.

Far left: choirmaster Philip Drew explains a point to choir members at Church of the Holy Spirit in Southsea; left: the choir at St John's Church, Newport

Choir member Sean Kanavan, who has sung with the choir there for 40 years, said: "I've always enjoyed singing because of the energy it gives you to glorify God. And as a physical place to sing, Church of the Holy Spirit is fantastic."

For special occasions, choir members from Church of the Holy Spirit join with those from St Mary's Church, Fratton, and St Mark's Church, North End, to ensure enough voices in each of the soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts.

Such an occasion is happening on October 12, when they'll also be joined by the Wyndcliffe Voices to sing an original composition by choirmaster Philip Drew on the theme of grandparents. It starts at 7.30pm and entry is free.