

## **A History of the Boston Saengerfest Men’s Chorus**

The Boston Saengerfest Men’s Chorus was officially formed in 1992 after about 45 members of the earlier Saengerfest Chorus were invited by the London Welsh Male Voice Choir to sing in the Festival of Welsh Male Choirs at London’s Royal Albert Hall. That debut performance established the chorus as a distinct male ensemble dedicated to the traditions of tenor-bass choral singing.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the chorus expanded its repertoire and reputation across New England and abroad. It became known for performing folk songs, sacred music, classical works, show tunes, and traditional English and Welsh male-chorus music. The group regularly participated in the biennial Welsh Male Choir Festivals at Royal Albert Hall and toured internationally to Ireland, Wales, Portugal, Spain, and Canada. Performances also took place at notable venues such as Carnegie Hall, Faneuil Hall, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and several British cathedrals.

In 2003, members created the smaller ensemble “Sound Investment,” an a cappella offshoot specializing in barbershop, doo-wop, and vocal jazz, adding another dimension to Saengerfest concerts.

The chorus also developed a strong civic and educational mission. Over the years it has sung at naturalization ceremonies in Boston, collaborated with school and collegiate choruses, hosted vocal workshops, and commissioned new works and arrangements from contemporary composers including John Rutter and Lewis Spratlan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the chorus adapted by presenting livestreamed holiday programming instead of its traditional in-person concerts.

Today, the Boston Saengerfest Men’s Chorus remains an active non-auditioned tenor-bass chorus based in the Boston area. It continues to perform several concerts each season, collaborate with other ensembles, and preserve the camaraderie and musical traditions that began with its 1992 Royal Albert Hall appearance. In 2026, the organization announced the appointment of Kevin Lackie as its new Artistic Director, marking another chapter in its continuing history.

Here is a sample list of concerts by the chorus since 2000

<b>Year</b>	<b>Concert / Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
2000	Performance at Winchester Cathedral	England
2004	Festival of Welsh Male Choirs	Royal Albert Hall
2004	Concert at St Albans Cathedral	England
2007	Concert at Carnegie Hall	New York
2007	Singing appearance at Fenway Park	Boston
2008	Festival of Welsh Male Choirs	Royal Albert Hall
2009	Saengerfest concerts/tour	Toronto, Canada

<b>Year</b>	<b>Concert / Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
2010	Bowdoin Alumni concert	Maine
2010	Sound Investment performances at Old Orchard Beach	Maine
April 2011	“Saengerfest” concert	Westwood, Massachusetts
May 2011	“Boyz to Men” concert	Massachusetts
2012	Sound Investment at MusicFest	Massachusetts
2015	Joint performance with Harvard Glee Club	Massachusetts
2015	Naturalization ceremony performances at Faneuil Hall	Boston
2016	“Brothers, Sing On!” concert with Yale Whiffenpoofs and other choruses	Massachusetts
Oct. 2016	25th London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs	Royal Albert Hall
Oct. 2016	Concert at Southwark Cathedral	London
2017	25th Anniversary Concert	Cary Hall, Lexington, Massachusetts
June 3, 2018	“America in Harmony” concert featuring Lewis Spratlan’s <i>New England Concordance</i>	Cary Hall, Lexington
2019	Concert tour performances	Madrid and Barcelona, Spain
Dec. 2019	Christmas Concert (“Gloucestershire Wassail”)	Massachusetts
Dec. 12, 2020	Christmas Wassail livestream concert with Southern Rail and Sound Investment	Online
2025–2026 season	“Let Freedom Sing” with Highland Glee Club and Apollo Club of Boston	Newton, Massachusetts

The chorus has also regularly performed:

- Annual Christmas concerts,
- Charity fundraising concerts,
- Naturalization ceremonies at Faneuil Hall and the Hynes Convention Center,
- Collaborative concerts with school and collegiate choruses, including Wellesley High School, Natick High School, Cornell University Glee Club, and the Harvard University Glee Club
- Appearances at venues including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and on WGBH radio and television.

Recollections of Dr. Phil Conti, a retired Tenor in the chorus from the early days -

“In 1990 Sam Rogers and his wife were on a trip to the British Isles. They were in Wales and saw a poster about a concert of 1000 Voices in Royal Albert Hall in London. They inquired about this concert and finally were given a contact person, a secretary of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir. Sam made the contact and was invited to the Thursday evening rehearsal at

their center in London. Sam and his wife attended the concert and the afterglow. Sam was asked by the secretary if the Saengerfest Chorus would be interested in singing in the 1992 Concert as the USA representative. Sam said he would find out.

At the 1990 Christmas Saengerfest meeting at the Spee Club (a club which had been in existence since the early 1900's), Sam raised the question and about 25 of us said yes. After some further discussion in 1991, it was decided to accept the invitation. We hired a conductor and an accompanist from the Fenn School in Concord, and in January 1992, we began rehearsals every Monday evening at the Fenn School, learning the music that included eight Welsh pieces. Sam acted as our Welsh instructor and for the first time we had to memorize all 18 pieces.

In the summer of 1992, Hayden James came to check out our chorus and rehearse all of the music with us. In the first tenor section, we had some good voices and we were going to try and impress this Welshman. During some of the Welsh pieces we sang a bit too loud, and Hayden said, "NO PAVAROATI!", so we toned it down. When we came to sing Verdi's "Anvil Chorus" from *Il Trovatore*, Hayden then said, "NOW PAVAROATI!".

We went to London in October 1992 to sing in the concert. We attended the Thursday rehearsal for all visiting choruses, and I guess we did okay. Our initial seating was between London Welsh and other Welsh Choruses, however on Saturday, the concert day, they moved us back and put another chorus between us and the London Welsh.

After the concert, we were asked to come back to the next one in 1994, and from then on, we virtually had an open invitation to every concert. I believe we sang in seven of them.

Up until this time, Saengerfest had never been a performing group. When we came back to Boston after the first London Concert, we met and decided to continue as a performing chorus in addition to meeting quarterly at the Spee Club. We needed to hire a new conductor and accompanist as the two we had did not want to continue. I was fortunate to get Joe Messina to be our conductor, and Jim Roth to be our accompanist."

-Dr. Phil Conti, Tenor, Saengerfest