



Hollywood Music Festival

*Affiliated to the British and International Federation of Festivals
for Music, Dance and Speech
Patron: Barry Douglas OBE*

History Timeline

2025

Our new home is now the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church Hall in centre of Hollywood. Thanks to Belfast Operatic Company for the use of their premises for the last three years. Festival numbers have been steadily increasing over the last four years with a record number of 650 entries this year.

2024

A young Musicians' Showcase Concert celebrating the wonderful talent of several of our 2023 festival prize-winners takes place in October in the Parish church. This was very well supported by the local community.

President Michael Alexander retires after 20 years and the festival is very grateful to him for his advice and support during those years.

2022

A second festival was held in November 2022 after consultation with our users as the preferred month. A memorable two festivals in one year.

2022

Hollywood Music Festival takes place from Wednesday 19th January - Thursday 30th January, attracting a large number of entrants – despite Covid19 & the Omicron variant.

Covid protocols are followed to ensure a safe environment for all those participating in the festival.

Festival held in three venues: Belfast Operatic Company Premises, Heron Road; Hollywood Parish Church; First Hollywood Presbyterian Church.

The festival is considered to be a great success with competitors enjoying the opportunity to perform live music in public once again.

2021

Festival committee meets by Zoom.

Plans made for Festival 2022.

Syllabus & Programme revamped. New monetary prizes added.

New cover design for Syllabus & Programme created by Dunbar Design.

2020

Hilary Warnock becomes Chairman of Festival Committee

Festival cancelled due to coronavirus pandemic

2018

70th Anniversary year.

New cover design for Syllabus and Programme, marking this important year.

October 5, the cleaned up E Godfrey Brown plaque is unveiled by Lady Sylvia Hermon in its new position at the turn of the stairs leading to the Queen's Hall, where every performer will pass it.

October 25, 70th Anniversary Concert featuring past prize winners, including local school choirs and orchestras.

2016

Extra classes added to the Music Theatre Section.

Two members of the Queen's Leisure Centre staff, Kevin Lewsley and Neil McKenna find a forgotten plaque commemorating E Godfrey Brown, our first Chairman.

2015

Yvonne Friers presents Festival with the Rowel B Friers Memorial Trophy in memory of her late husband, the artist and political cartoonist. He designed Festival's first medals and logo.

2014

Music Theatre gets its own section and own specialist adjudicator, David Beer.

Marianne Underwood becomes Honorary Secretary.

2013

John Young becomes Chairman.

2012

Signed Song section introduces; specialist adjudicator, Paul Whittaker.

2010

Linda Alexander becomes Secretary.

On 14th October we all met in Royal Belfast Golf Club for coffee with the stewards. Michael Alexander and Helen Neale played some duets for us while information was given out about the organizing of the festival and the stewards were able to learn about the tasks involved.

The Festival was launched on 19th November in the Queen's Hall – an event attended by Lady Sylvia Hermon, Deputy Mayor and local businessmen from around Holywood, as well as Festival Stewards and committee members.

The Festival ran until 27th November with 620 entries. This brought about 3000 extra people to the town during that period.

Many classes through the week brought in full houses and the Gala night was attended by Lady Sylvia Hermon and the Lord Mayor along with many other local people and parents.

2009

Holywood Music Festival 2009 got off to a great start on the morning of Friday 20th November with a coffee event featuring the Alexander String Quartet. The event was attended by Lady Sylvia Hermon, Deputy Mayor Councillor Gordon Dunne and local businessmen from around Holywood, as well as Festival Stewards and members of the committee.

2004

April – new Festival 2004 Syllabus released and distributed.

May – second issue of Holywood Music Festival Newsletter sent to Music Teachers and libraries and music shops, again sponsored by Sainsbury's.

2003

March – monetary awards included in syllabus for the first time.

April – Launch of the new Music Syllabus in the Hollywood Library, cover designed by Priory Press.

May – Sainsbury's and First Trust Bank offer to sponsor Hollywood Music Festival. Mr Hastings offers accommodation for adjudicator

September – Barry Douglas becomes Patron of the Festival.

September – First issue of Hollywood Music Festival Newsletter, sponsored by Sainsbury's.

November – Hollywood Music Festival reopens in the Queen's Leisure Complex and runs for 6 days with 550 entries (1,000 children), a record number in years.

Four sections: Piano, Vocal, Instrumental and Choral. New medal design, now in Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Adjudicators are Marilynne Davies and Robin Hewitt.

Chair, Peter Yarr.

Honorary Secretary, Sharon Yarr,

A Traditional Section is added.

2002

January – Music Committee is formed

Richard Pianos offer to provide pianos for festival

Michael Alexander from the Ulster Orchestra and the Hollywood Sinfonietta becomes new President of the Hollywood Festival.

Chair Stella Northover.

Secretary Sharon Yarr

Cross community emphasis.

Priory Press design a new image for festival literature.

Plans to use Queen's Hall instead of Parish Church Hall.

2001

September – Local music teachers make plans to reopen the Music Festival.

1997

Fiftieth year of Hollywood Music Festival.

Music Section closed and cups were stored in a bank in Hollywood.

Speech and Drama and Dance Festivals continue.

1980s

Decline of the festival- Very few entries (270)

Music Festival is short of money and support from schools.

Colour Television in every home now competing for people's time and interest.

Possibilities of closing down or combining with Bangor Festival.

Decision made to continue as Hollywood Music Festival.

1975

24 Feb Major Addy died at 82 (16 Apr 1892, awarded Military Cross in 1918).

Second Phase of the festival

Mr Northover – Chairman

Nana Houston – Vice-Chairman

1966

14 July, Sarah Grainger, Festival's first President dies. Succeeded as President by Sir Francis Evans, G.B.E., K.C.M.G., D.L.

1962

Major Addy began to conduct the Messiah in the Queen's Hall, Hollywood, every Christmas in memory of his wife who died of cancer in 1962, helped by the Hollywood Festival. £2000 raised for Cancer Campaign each year.

1957

Memorial Plaque erected by the Hollywood Musical Festival Association in Queen's Hall in memory of E. Godfrey Brown. Unveiled March 1 by son Michael Brown.

1956

10 day festival with 1500 entries

1955

Feb 2, Godfrey Brown died at 81, (born 15 June 1874, awarded OBE 1936).

Major Addy – new Chairman of the Festival

Nana Ward – Vice –Chairman.

March 11, Memorial Concert for Godfrey Brown, attended by Prime Minister Terence O'Neill..

1st Prize winner medal introduced.

1953

Festival moves to the newly built Queen's Hall.

Adjudicator is Sir Douglas Hopkins, organist at Canterbury Cathedral.

October 14, Official opening of the Queen's Hall.

1948

June 5: Opening of the "Hollywood Musical Festival" by Prime Minister Lord Brookeborough. 4 days with 700 entries Venues: Grainger's Shed and Church Halls, Grainger's shed (where the Queen's Hall and Leisure Complex car park is today) had the capacity for 1500 people.

Adjudicator Dr Frederick W Wadely, organist Carlisle Cathedral.

1947

Plans to set up a music festival in Holywood for Music, Speech and Drama; the following are elected to office:

Godfrey Brown OBE Chairman

Major John Victor Addy MC Vice-Chairman

President Mrs Sarah Grainger

Mr John Anderson Secretary

Mrs Maureen Barber Assistant Secretary

Sponsors:

Holywood Urban and District Council

Grainger Brothers Engineering Company.

1933

Ralph Vaughan Williams conducts the Philharmonic orchestra and chorus in a programme of his works, February 17; the preparation work is done by Godfrey Brown.

1932

Godfrey Brown brings Sir Edward Elgar to Northern Ireland to conduct a Belfast Philharmonic Society performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius'. He is said to have brought him to Holywood Parish Church, where Elgar played the organ.

1925

Sir Henry Wood conducts the Belfast Philharmonic Society's 'The Dream of Gerontius'. Chorus and Orchestra prepared by Godfrey Brown. The concert marked the Society's 50th anniversary and took place on Maundy Thursday, April 9.

1924

Godfrey Brown becomes first Music Director for the BBC in Belfast.

1912

E Godfrey Brown arrives in Northern Ireland. Appointed as the new Conductor and Director of Belfast Philharmonic Society made up of a choir and orchestra. Also appointed organist at Holywood Parish Church. It is said that when he was sailing up Belfast Lough, he saw the spire of Holywood Parish Church and decided that that would be a good place to live. He spent the rest of his life in Holywood.