



olic events for Exeter Cathedral.

Emma Solley

The “dawn chorus” will be the first public event, other than worship services, held in the building since Covid-19 restrictions were introduced last year

“Between opening for services and personal prayer, the Cathedral has been sadly empty due to coronavirus restrictions, so I can think of no better way to mark a new dawn as we emerge from lockdown,” explained Exeter Cathedral’s Canon Precentor, The Revd Canon James Mustard.

The event is being held on 24 May to launch a week-long festival of birds and birdsong, organised by the London Review of Books (LRB), and the music will reflect the week’s avian focus.

James McVinne, the organist, will play four pieces by Oliver Messiaen. The French composer known to have had synaesthesia, a condition which allows people to see colours corresponding to sounds.







“A devout Catholic, Olivier Messiaen was an extraordinary voice in 20th century music. He saw God’s work in every aspect of the world which extended especially to his fascination with birds,” said James.

“Much of his organ music includes his own representation of birdsong: he coaxes unusual combinations of sounds from the organ to portray these unique songs, many of which he notated himself from nature.

“I’ve chosen four works which feature birdsong prominently.”

These include the now-increasingly-rare nightingale, the blackbird, the Eurasian blackcap, and the more familiar yellowhammer.

The event is free, although places are limited to just 65 due to safety regulations, and a livestream will be available on [the LRB website](#).

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