

Representing the City

As Alderman Roger Gifford dons his ceremonial robes as Lord Mayor today, he will take centre stage in a procession like no other

At over three miles long, with 6,500 participants and more than 150 floats, this year's Show will be the culmination of months of preparation. Perhaps this will not daunt the 685th Lord Mayor who has enjoyed taking the stage as part of a team since he was a child.

"I strongly believe in performing music as well as listening to it. I relish the physical activity of singing and being in tune with a choir or accompanist. It's a great experience," says Roger Gifford, who has sung bass with a number of choirs, including the City of London Choir, the Chorus of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Holst Singers and the Tallis Chamber Choir, where he met his wife, Lady Mayoress Clare Gifford. They currently sing with the Choir of the 21st Century, or CC21, which has recently recorded a DVD of Handel's 'Acis and Galatea' with the English Chamber Orchestra.

Roger knows that the creative industries are vital to the UK, and the City invests greatly in the arts, complementing the financial and professional sectors based there. He has a 35-year career in banking behind him and is UK Country Head of Swedish financial group, SEB.

EARLY DAYS

Listening to and performing music have always been profoundly important to Roger and Clare and explains why they have set up the City Music Foundation, which helps aspiring young musicians find new opportunities, as a beneficiary of this year's Lord Mayor's Appeal (see page 6 for details).

Roger says his one of his earliest

memories of music is playing the recorder at primary school in Boarhills, near St Andrews, Fife. He recalls: "I remember singing Scottish folk songs like 'Over the sea to Skye' and 'The Road to the Cuillins' and trying to accompany them on the recorder. It's wonderful to be introduced to an instrument at a really early age."

Roger still plays the recorder and the piano. His late father Douglas was Professor of Spanish at St Andrews University and also a keen musician who founded the University's Renaissance Group, a choir focussing on Renaissance church music, as the name suggests.

After attending Sedbergh School in the Yorkshire Dales, Roger went up to Trinity College, Oxford to study chemistry. He continued to sing in choirs and as a soloist, as well as being president of the college boat club.

On graduation in 1977, he decided to pursue a career in the City, and joined merchant bank SG Warburg as a graduate trainee.

"Everybody who joined Warburgs in those days had to have their handwriting analysed," says Roger. "I'm glad to say mine was found to be of good character. I worked there for five years before joining SEB in 1982, where I have remained ever since."

Roger has calculated that it will be 30 years and a week since joining SEB when he takes up his Mayoral office. SEB has most Nordic companies, such as Scania, Skanska, Ericsson, Volvo, Hydro and Nokia as customers and Roger is proud that his bank has helped finance major infrastructure projects such as the building of the Icelandic hydroelectric dam, Kárahnjúkar.

"We're a rather typical foreign bank in London," he states. "We deal very much with our home country industries. As well as doing some private banking, we help raise finance for our corporate clients in the London capital market. That is our function."

FAMILY AND JAPAN

Roger's banking career has meant very frequent travel to Sweden, the rest of Scandinavia, Europe and the US and he also spent six years running SEB's Tokyo office.

The time in Japan left an indelible mark. Of Roger's children by his first marriage, his two oldest sons, Fergus and Fred (now aged 25 and 24) both studied Japanese at university and have recently returned from stints in the country; Fergus has now started in shipbroking. His daughter Olivia, 27, is a film producer and his youngest,

BRITAIN AND SWEDEN: A BICENTENARY OF PEACE

The Peace treaty of 1813 between King Karl XIII of Sweden and King George III is the last between Great Britain and Sweden. In his year of office, Lord Mayor Gifford, who has close connections with the country, will mark its bicentenary.

The Swedes and the Norwegians had come to help rebuild London after the great fire of 1666, providing timber, carpenters, stone and craftsmanship.

There were also many Swedish sailors in British service. The Swedish Church in London was given two major donations for the services given by Swedes at the Battle of the Nile and the Battle of Trafalgar.