

# **ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY**

*Registered Charity No 500729*

*President: Roger Shelmerdine*

*Honorary Life Members: Steven Roberts, Roger Shelmerdine, Lydia Bryan*

Altrincham Choral Society prides itself in offering a diverse, innovative and challenging programme of concerts, including many choral favourites.

We are a forward thinking and progressive choir with a strong commitment to choral training and high standards, so providing members with the knowledge, skills and confidence to thoroughly enjoy their music-making.

Rehearsals are on Monday evenings at Altrincham Methodist Church, Barrington Road, Altrincham.

Car Park entrance off Barrington Road.

Satnavs please use WA14 1HF.

We are only a 5 minute walk from the train/metro/bus station.

Rehearsals are from 7.45 to 10.00 pm

For more information contact us

E-mail: [info@altrincham-choral.co.uk](mailto:info@altrincham-choral.co.uk)

Tweet us @acs1945 Like us on Facebook

## ***EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD***

The Award for Exceptional Service may be conferred on any member who is deemed to have given exceptional service to the Society. The award may be made to a member who has served for 25 or more years on the Committee or a Sub-Committee.

In recognition of their services to the society  
The Exceptional Service Award has been awarded to

***John Greenan***

***Andrew Wragg***

***Joyce Venables***

# **ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY**

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Would you like to support our choir by becoming a patron or a sponsor?

We operate a well established scheme for patrons and sponsors and hope to develop it further with the help of our supporters.

As a patron you will receive advance publicity, complimentary tickets, reserved seats at concerts, acknowledgement in all our programmes and on the web-site.

Elisabeth Lawrence is our Patrons Secretary. She is looking forward to hearing from you and can answer your enquiries about the scheme. Contact her on 01925 861862 or [ellaw@talktalk.net](mailto:ellaw@talktalk.net)

ACS is grateful to the following for their continued support this season:

## **Platinum Patrons**

Anonymous

Bernard Lawrence

Lee Bakirgian Family Trust

Joyce Venables

## **Gold Patrons**

Barrie and Maureen Netting

John Greenan

## **Silver Patrons**

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# **ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY**

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Formed in 1945, *The Altrincham and District Choral Society* gave its first performance in the then Stamford Hall, in aid of the Altrincham General Hospital building fund.

Since then, the choir has continued to grow and offer its members and audience alike a rich tapestry of concerts and events. With over 130 singers, *Altrincham Choral Society* prides itself in producing a diverse, innovative and challenging programmes of concerts and events, with a repertoire of not only choral favourites but also new commissions and collaborations with orchestras, choirs and youth groups.

Performing regularly at The Royal Northern College of Music as well as other venues across the country, including The Bridgewater Hall, Gorton Monastery, The Lowry Theatre, Huddersfield Town Hall and St Paul's Cathedral, ACS has also sung throughout Europe, including France, Prague, Lake Garda, Venice and Florence.

Recent events have seen the choir performing on tour with Russell Watson (*A Candlelight Christmas – 2014, An Intimate Evening With Russell Watson - 2015*), lunchtime recitals at St Paul's Cathedral (*London – 2015, 2016*) and in 2016 working with Barnsley Youth Choir (*2015 European Triple Gold Medalists and Grand Prix Winners*). Alongside their own concert schedule, the ACS 2017/18 season also includes a series of recitals at Carlisle Cathedral, Hexham Abbey and central London.

ACS also holds vocal training sessions for its membership, with singing days and termly open rehearsals for newcomers to come and meet the choir and explore their own voice potential and enjoy the thrill of singing.

The choir also supports local and national charities throughout the year through retiring collections and sales of their CD, *Religion and Reel*. Previous charities have included St Ann's Hospice, The Rainbow Family Trust, Macmillan, Barnardo's, The Lord's Taverners. This year the choir is supporting The David Lewis Centre.

# ***ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY***

Brenda Adams	Colette Foan ^	Gillian Jones
Sarah Allen ^	Elizabeth Foy	Hazel Jones
Joy Anderson	Joyce Fuller *	Melanie-Anne Jose *
Sara Apps *	Rima Gasperas	George Kistruck *
Pat Arnold #	Melanie Geldard	Win Knowles ^
Ann Ashby	Trevor Gilmore	Elisabeth Lawrence
Kate Barlow	Robert Gledhill	Deborah Leigh ^
Matthew Barr	Estelle Goodwin	Keith Lewis *
Janet Bedell *	Bryan Goude #	Annie Lloyd-Walker
Frances Broad #	Helen Greig	Emma Loat
Rachel Brougham	Pauline Griffiths	Trish Lovett ^
Patricia Brown	Caroline Harris	Timothy Lowe ^
Anne Bullock *	Dudley Harrop *	Rosie Lucas *
Stephen Campbell	Liz Harwood	Sarah Lucas
Anthony Campion	Gill Hayes *	Anne McDougall ^
Helen Cash	John Hayes	Norma McRae
Barbara Clift *	Bill Hetherington	Andy McWilliam
Michael Cummings	Katja Hilbrig ^	Ann McWilliam
Adrienne Davies	Jane Hollinshead	Cathy Merrell
Jacqueline Davies	Juergen Hornung ^	Eve Miles ^
Louisa Dewar ^	Catherine Horrocks *	Heather Morrey
Marie Dixon *	Valerie Hotter *	Jen Morris ^
Jean Drape *	Gail Hunt *	Catherine Mottram
Kathy Duffy	Rosie Hurley	Pamela Moulton *
Liz Dunn	Tony Jackman	Annie Muir ^
Michael Dunn	Sarah Jackson ^	John Mulholland *
Richard Dyson	Karen Jarman	Jessica Murrills ++
Frank Estcourt	Roy Jervis	Julian Mustoe
Wendy Estcourt	Alan Johnston	Norma Nock
Rik Evans	Elizabeth Jones #	Terence Oddy
Heather Falconer	Clare Jones	Debbie O'Driscoll

Melanie Owen ^  
Alex Patel ^  
Alison Patel ^  
Christine Pidcock  
Kate Potter  
Frances Provost  
Ian Provost  
Eleanor Reeves  
Linley Roach \*  
Doris Robinson #  
Kate Robinson  
Tony Robinson  
Rachel Sadler

Anja Schiebeck  
Tobias Schiebeck  
Catherine Simons ^  
Fiona Simpson  
Susan Sinagola  
Colin Skelton #  
Emma Slack ^  
Audrey Smallridge ++  
Catherine Taylor ^  
Thomas Taylor  
Malcolm Thomson  
Pamela Thomson  
Jean Tragen

Gill Turner  
Elaine Van Der Zeil  
Catherine Verdin  
Jo Wallwork  
Christine Weekes  
Geryl Whitaker  
Helen Whitehouse \*  
Kath Whyte \*  
Yvette Willey #  
Ondria Williams ^  
Julia Williamson \*  
Andrew Wragg #  
Cecilia Wright

\* Denotes 20 years

# Denotes 30 years

++ Denotes 40 years

^ Denotes joined 2016-17  
Season

## Soloists

Jane Hollinshead  
(soprano)

Bill Hetherington  
(tenor)

Tony Jackman  
(bass)

## In Memoriam

**Margaret Greaves** - Member of Altrincham  
**Soprano** Choral Society from  
January 1984 until her  
Death in April 2017

## Steven Roberts

Steven is the Conductor and Musical Director of Altrincham Choral Society, Chesterfield Philharmonic Choir and Honley Male Voice Choir. He is also an adjudicator member of The British and International Federation of Festivals and regularly adjudicates throughout the United Kingdom, and is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Federation. Prior to 2006, Steven combined his musical activities with a full-time post at Barnsley College. During 17 years at the college Steven held a number of posts including Head of Performing Arts and Music, Head of Quality and Director of External Relations.

He has also been conductor of Dodworth and Skelmanthorpe Male Voice Choirs, the Allendale Chamber Orchestra, the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union, Sing Live UK, Unlimited Voices and The Huddersfield Choral Society, most notably for concerts with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and José Carreras. He has also been chorus master for 'The Magic of Queen' and the Electric Light Orchestra (ELO), rock classics concerts with the Hallé Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Alongside his choral work he has conducted the Manchester Philharmonic, Derbyshire Sinfonia, Lancashire Chamber Orchestra, the National Festival Orchestra, the Yorkshire Wind Orchestra, and a variety of other bands and ensembles. He is in demand as a choral and voice specialist, but studied piano, brass and voice and has equal extensive experience in each field. He has led choral days and workshops every year since 1993 and continues to inspire singers throughout the country. He has led workshops and coached young singers in both Peru and Bahrain.

He has conducted numerous times at the Royal Albert Hall, London and has been privileged to conduct in many of the country's most prestigious concert halls. He has also conducted in many sacred settings including St Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, St Mark's Basilica, Venice as well as in Florence, Sorrento, Amalfi, Milan, Austria, Paris, Bavaria, Montecassino, Barcelona and Poland.

He is also Musical Director for COAL, an award-winning contemporary dance piece choreographed by Gary Clarke; the piece is set at the height of the 1980s Miners' Strike and is currently touring the UK featuring live brass music.

He is delighted to be working with many well-known brass bands, including Carlton Main Frickley, Brighouse & Rastrick, Tredegar and The Fairey Band to name a few.

He is proud to be a member of The Lords Taverners, the cricketing charity that raises money to give 'young people, particularly with special needs a sporting chance' and holds Honorary Life Membership with both The Royal Philharmonic Society (awarded in November 2013) and Altrincham Choral Society.

Steven is proud to be a Patron of EnRich, the charity was formed for the people of Barnsley in memory of a well-loved teacher, manager and an inspirational man. Richard Tolson "Rich T" was Head of Music & Performing Arts at Barnsley College for a number of years and had an impact on many lives. The charity set up in his name aims to promote all specialism's in the performing and creative arts.

## **Jonathan Scott**

Jonathan Scott enjoys a hugely varied performing career on a diverse spectrum of keyboard instruments. In addition to his career as pianist and organist Jonathan is also a specialist in the music for the art harmonium and has a busy concert schedule with his pianist brother, Tom Scott, performing as Scott Brothers Duo.

Born in Manchester, Jonathan studied piano and organ at Chetham's School of Music before gaining a scholarship on both instruments to attend the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM). With the aid of a Countess of Munster Scholarship he was able to continue his studies in USA and Holland. Jonathan won the coveted Worshipful Company of Musicians WT Best Scholarship and gold medal, and is a Freeman of The City of London. He has been a member of the keyboard staff at RNCM since 2001 and is also Associate Artist of the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester where he gives a series of popular lunchtime organ recitals which attract audiences approaching 1000.

Jonathan's recent performances have included numerous solo recitals as pianist and organist as well as concertos with Orchestra of Opera North, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, solo appearances at the BBC Proms, mid-Atlantic performances on Queen Mary 2, a European tour with trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger and a series of performances as organ and piano soloist at The Royal Albert Hall, London. His recent performance of Copland's Organ Symphony with BBC Philharmonic and John Wilson has just been released on the Chandos label and has been made Editor's Choice in Gramophone Magazine, 'Disc of the week' on BBC Radio 3 and one of The Telegraph's 'Top Ten CD's of 2016'. This season Jonathan will be performing across UK, France, Spain, Germany, South Africa and Taiwan as well as concerto appearances with BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the premiere of a new organ concerto by Karl Jenkins for the 2017 Hull City of Culture.

In collaboration with his brother, Tom Scott, Jonathan has released several recordings to great critical acclaim on the Scott Brothers Duo label. The discs have received wide international airplay, including their own special editions of BBC Radio 2's 'The Organist Entertains' and the duo's online performance videos have received over 2.5 million views.



# Choral Classics

## **I Was Glad**

(Words from Psalm 122)

**C. Hubert H. Parry**

## **Hallelujah (Opus 85)**

(Christ on the Mount of Olives)

**Ludwig Van Beethoven**

text by Franz Xaver Huber

## **He Watching Over Israel**

(Elijah)

**Felix Mendelssohn**

English text - William Bartholomew

## **Allegro Molto**

(Symphony No 40 in G minor K550)

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

arr. J. Scott

## **Lacrimosa**

(Requiem, K.626)

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

edited by Duncan Druce

## **Hostias**

(Requiem, K626)

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

edited by Duncan Druce

## **How Lovely are Thy Dwellings**

(The German Requiem)

**Johannes Brahms**

edited by John E. West

## **Zadok the Priest**

**George Frideric Handel**

**INTERVAL**

# Choral Classics

## **Blest Pair of Sirens**

(an Ode by John Milton)

**C. Hubert H. Parry**

arr. by C.S. Lang

## **The Heavens are Telling**

(The Creation)

**Franz Joseph Haydn**

## **Gloria in Excelsis Deo**

(Gloria)

**Antonio Vivaldi**

## **Et in Terra Pax Hominibus**

(Gloria)

**Antonio Vivaldi**

## **Allegro “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” George Frideric Handel**

(Concerto No.13 in F Major H295)

arr J.Scott

## **In Paradisum**

(Requiem)

**Gabriel Fauré**

## **I Vow to Thee My Country**

(text by Cecil Spring-Rice)

**Gustav Holst**

arr. Paul Anthony Howard

## **Jerusalem**

**C. Hubert H. Parry**

## **Hallelujah Chorus**

(Messiah)

**George Frideric Handel**

## **C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918)**

### **I Was Glad**

Parry was a composer, scholar and teacher. He was a brilliant lecturer and an authoritative writer on musical subjects. He was also a great open-air man, constantly endangering his life (and many times injuring himself) on land or sea. Combining these talents with a genial yet forceful personality and social position, he exercised a revitalising influence on English musical life. At a time when standards of composition, performance, criticism and education were low, Parry shared a determination with his fellow musician Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) to improve the status of English music and musicians.

*I was glad when they said unto me* was composed in 1902 for the coronation of Edward VII. The words are from Psalm 122. Together with Handel's 'Coronation Anthems' it has been sung at every subsequent British coronation.

## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)**

### **Hallelujah (from Christ on the Mount of Olives)**

The first of two *Hallelujah* choruses this evening comes from Beethoven's only oratorio, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. It is a dramatic piece, which portrays the emotional turmoil of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion. It is scored for soprano, tenor and bass soloists, and the main role of the chorus is to play the parts of the soldiers and the disciples. The oratorio was begun in the autumn of 1802, and Beethoven spoke of having written it in 'a few weeks'. It was first performed in April 1803 in Vienna. He revised it some years later for publication, but was never very happy with this work, particularly with the text, written by the poet Franz Xaver Huber. The critical response to the work's initial performance was mixed and it has now drifted into obscurity and is rarely performed. However the finale has enjoyed some popularity on its own. *Welten Singen* (usually rendered as *Hallelujah*), is frequently performed by choirs and choral societies. This final movement is a great hymn of praise and looks towards the triumph of the resurrection.

## **Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)**

### **He Watching over Israel (from *Elijah*)**

For many people, even today, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is rivalled only by Handel's *Messiah*. This has been so since the first spectacular performance of *Elijah* on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1846 in Birmingham Town Hall. Mendelssohn himself conducted the large choir and orchestra and the Times wrote: 'Never was there a more complete triumph'. The Victorians loved it, and immediately took *Elijah* to their hearts. The work appealed particularly to Evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists as the text is based closely on the Lutheran Bible. It could be said that the popularity of *Elijah* played a major part in the growth in number and size of choral societies during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the newly industrialised areas of Britain.

*He watching over Israel* from the second part of *Elijah* finds Mendelssohn at his most gently reflective. The prophet is in the wilderness, after asking for his life to be taken away following his failure to convert the people forever to the one true God. The chorus quietly encourages faith in the Lord, who lifts us up in times of despair.

## **Organ**

## **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

### **Allegro Molto (Symphony No. 40 in G minor K550)**

All but two of Mozart's 41 symphonies are composed in what we would call 'happy' or major keys. The exceptions are known as *The Little G Minor Symphony (No. 25)* and *The Great G Minor Symphony (No. 40)*. No. 40 was written in the summer of 1788. This was a dark year for Mozart. Viennese audiences were proving less eager to hear his concerts and recitals, bills were piling up and his infant daughter Theresia had just died. Letters to friends reveal that he was finding it difficult to look beyond the shadows and some have suggested that this fact influenced this unusually anxious symphony. Yet, in the same summer he wrote two other symphonies in major keys that are bright and sunny in nature. At no point in his career would Mozart allow music to stay long in sombre moods.

No. 40 is arguably the most popular of all Mozart's forty-one symphonies. The first movement, *Allegro Molto* makes much of plaintive sighs, but gentle graceful melodies also appear and even occasional bursts of jubilation. It is one of the catchiest opening movements of any symphony. It was probably quite popular in Mozart's lifetime. Although scholars can't be absolutely certain, it would appear Mozart performed it more than once, going on to re-score it for slightly different musical forces. In more recent times it became one of the most popular and annoying ringtones of the mobile phones of the 90's.

Tonight's arrangement for organ is by Jonathan Scott.

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 -1791)** **Lacrimosa and Hostias (from Requiem in D minor K626)**

Mozart's wife Constanze was later to claim that her husband had a premonition that the Requiem was an omen of his own coming death. The work had been commissioned anonymously in July 1791 by Count Franz Walsegg zu Stuppach, who sought to commemorate the recent death of his wife by the performance of a work that he might, at least by implication, claim as his own. While no intention of this kind was revealed to Mozart, an initial fee of sixty ducats was paid with promise of a further sum when the Requiem was completed. In the event Mozart did not live to finish the work. In November he was taken ill and within a fortnight he was dead. He died on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> December, to be buried a day or so later in an unmarked grave.

Constanze entrusted the completion of the Requiem to her husband's pupil Franz Xavier Süssmayr. Mozart had completed the composition and scoring of the *Introit* and *Kyrie*, and drafted fairly fully up to the *Lacrimosa*. The *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* are by Süssmayr although it is thought that there were sketches of the *Agnus Dei* which Mozart had already begun. These drafts may have been given to Süssmayr by Constanze. It should be added that Count Walsegg was not deterred from his original intention and on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1793 had the *Requiem* performed as his own composition, an act that seemed to bring him great satisfaction. The mysterious story of the incomplete composition of Mozart's *Requiem* has done much to increase the fascination audiences have for this work. The quality of much of its music accounts for its enormous popularity in the concert hall.

The two movements selected here are the *Lacrimosa* which ends the *Dies Irae* sequence and the prayerful *Hostias*, which forms part of the *Offertorium* – almost certainly the last two sections to be completed by Mozart himself. They both require singing of controlled beauty and quiet reflection, as well as the ability to explore both ends of the dynamic range.

## **Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)**

### **How Lovely are Thy Dwellings (from Ein deutsches Requiem)**

This work, completed in 1868, was the breakthrough piece in which Johannes Brahms, the brilliant young pianist, created a large-scale orchestral and choral work and moved into his artistic maturity. The work is probably inspired by the death of his mother in February 1865, although lingering feelings over Robert Schumann's death in July 1856 may also have been a motivation.

The word 'requiem' usually refers to the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead, which begins with the Latin phrase 'Requiem aeternam dona eis domine' (Grant them eternal rest, O Lord). *Ein deutsches Requiem* comforts the living, beginning with the text 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted'. Brahms created his own text from Luther's translation of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and the Apocrypha. He wanted to create a universal text, one that would not follow any particular liturgy. In a letter written before the première, to the director of music at Bremen Cathedral Brahms explained that 'German' referred only to the language in which it was sung; He would gladly have called it 'A Human Requiem'. His aim was to capture a universal human experience rather than a narrow doctrinal one, addressing the living, the bereaved, rather than the dead.

*The German Requiem* is Brahms' largest work. Here, he not only established himself as a mature composer in the eyes of his contemporaries but also wrote one of those special choral works that singers return to with as much delight as audiences, a unique masterpiece, expressing a deeply felt, non-denominational statement of faith.

## **George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)**

### **Zadok the Priest**

Handel composed four coronation anthems between September and October 1727, producing some of the most spine-tingling choral music of the Baroque period. The most famous of these anthems, *Zadok the Priest*, was composed for the coronation of King George II. It has been performed at every British coronation since then. The texts for all four anthems were picked by Handel himself from the most accessible account of an earlier coronation, that of James II in 1685. It is derived from the biblical account of the anointing of Solomon. Ceremonial in style, yet containing moments of intricate delicacy, *Zadok the Priest* has become recognised as a British patriotic anthem, and was the first piece ever played on Classic FM.

## **C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918)**

### **Blest Pair of Sirens**

*Blest Pair of Sirens* was written for and dedicated to C.V. Stanford and the Bach Choir, who gave the first performance of it under the direction of Stanford himself. It is a setting of John Milton's poem, *At a Solemn Musick*. This ode was written in 1633 and is one of a trilogy contrasting the harmony of heaven with the discords on earth. It is one of Parry's best known choral works and shows the skilful way in which he composes with the utmost breadth and simplicity of effect, yet using the voices of the choir to obtain climax after climax.

## **Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)**

### **The Heavens are Telling (from The Creation)**

*The Heavens are Telling* is the final chorus in part 1 of *The Creation* composed by Joseph Haydn between 1797 and 1798. The oratorio depicts and celebrates the creation of the world as described in the Book of Genesis. Haydn was inspired to write a large oratorio during his visits to England in 1791-92 and 1794-95, when he heard Handel's *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt* performed by large forces. The first public performance of *Creation* was held in Vienna in March 1799 and was immediately recognised as a supreme masterpiece, receiving many performances all over Europe. It had its London première in 1800, using its English text at Covent Garden. The text of *The Heavens are Telling* is based on Psalm 19 verses 1-3 and celebrates the victory of light over darkness.

**Antonio Vivaldi (1678 -1741)**  
**Gloria in Excelsis Deo (from Gloria)**  
**and Et in Terra Pax (from Gloria)**

Antonio Vivaldi was the most original and influential Italian composer of his generation. He was born in Venice where his father was a violinist in the orchestra of St Mark's. Vivaldi himself became a brilliant violinist and, as a young man, took holy orders. He was known as 'il prete rosso' on account of his red hair. Ill-health seems to have been the cause of his soon ceasing to say Mass, and for most of his life he was in charge of music at an orphanage-conservatory for girls in Venice.

Although his numerous concertos were and remain the foundation of his fame, he was also an opera composer of some distinction and wrote much splendid church music. His music fell out of favour with succeeding generations, but the twentieth century saw a revival of interest in authentic methods of performing baroque music and many of his two hundred or so instrumental concertos have been recorded and the favourites are performed regularly.

Vivaldi's *Gloria* is the best known of all his sacred music. It displays the infinite variety and invention of his work. The *Gloria* is in twelve contrasted movements. Its swift changes of mood and varied vocal colouring are among its striking features. These two opening movements contrast the rhythmic excitement of 'Glory to God in the Highest' with the long sustained lines and harmonic clashes of the following section, 'And on earth peace, goodwill toward men'.

## **Organ**

**George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)**  
**Allegro 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale'**  
**(Concerto No. 13 in F major)**

Handel's greatest fame in England rested with his Italian-style Operas. At the première of each new Opera and Oratorio he got into the habit of improvising at the organ. The *Concerto in F (No. 13)* was played by Handel in 1739 at the first performance of his Oratorio *Israel in Egypt* at the King's Theatre in London. His publisher, John Walsh struggled to assemble the Organ Concertos.



Sometimes Handel left much of the organ score blank, or with just the key notes provided labelled *ad libitum*. The organist was left to show off his skills of improvisation.

The *Concerto in F* was published in 1740. It is made up of four movements. In the second movement, the *Allegro*, the organ spectacularly imitates the call of the cuckoo and the lyrical song of the nightingale in solo and then in duet. Perhaps because of its nickname, and surely because of the engaging, charming and vigorous music it has become the most popular of Handel's Organ Concertos.

Tonight's arrangement is by Jonathan Scott.

### **Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924)** **In Paradisum (from Requiem)**

Fauré began work on his *Requiem* in 1887 purely, in his own words, 'for the pleasure of it', though the death of his father in 1885 and of his mother two years later may well have given impetus to the composition. It is a touchingly beautiful piece, cherished more today than when it was first performed.

Fauré was, at the time, choirmaster of La Madeleine, and though much of his time was taken up with private teaching, which he found uncongenial, he completed his 'first version' of the *Requiem* early in 1888. It consisted of five movements. Fauré made a personal selection of texts, omitting the *Day of Judgement (Dies Irae)*, and laying emphasis on the idea of rest and peace. Fauré summed up his thoughts on his own setting: 'Somebody called it a lullaby of death', he wrote, 'but that's how I feel about death – a happy deliverance, a yearning for the joys of the afterlife, rather than a painful passing away'. Nowhere is this 'lullaby of death' more keenly felt than in the closing *In Paradisum*, which has been likened to a vast stained-glass window in sound.

Fauré went on to prepare an expanded version, for use on grander occasions which was first given in January 1893 and included two extra movements, the *Offertory* and *Libera me*, both calling for baritone solo. The third version of the *Requiem*, the familiar one with full orchestra received its premiere in July 1900 at the Trocadéro Palace during the Paris World Exhibition.

## **Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934)**

### **I Vow to Thee My Country**

*I vow to Thee my Country* is a British hymn created in 1921. The origin of the hymn's text is a poem by diplomat Sir Cecil Spring Rice. He wrote the first draft in 1908 or 1912, but revised it before his death in 1918. The poem circulated privately for a few years, until in 1921 Gustav Holst adapted the music from a section of *Jupiter* from his suite *The Planets* to create a setting for the poem. The music was extended slightly to fit the final two lines of the first verse. At the request of the publisher Curwen, Holst made a version as a unison song with orchestra.

This was probably first published in 1921 and was commonly performed at Armistice ceremonies. In 1926, Holst harmonised the tune to make it usable as a hymn, which was included in the hymnal 'Songs of Praise'. In that version, the lyrics were unchanged but the tune was called 'Thaxted' after the village where Holst lived for many years.

The editor of the new (1926) edition of 'Songs of Praise' was Holst's close friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, which may have provided the stimulus for Holst's co-operation in producing the hymn. Holst's daughter Imogen recorded that, at the time when he was asked to set the words to music, Holst was so overworked and over-weary that he felt relieved to discover that they 'fitted' the tune from *Jupiter*.

## **C. Hubert H. Parry (1848 – 1918)**

### **Jerusalem**

*'And did those feet in ancient time'* is a short poem by William Blake from the preface to his epic poem *Milton*, printed circa 1808. The poem was inspired by the apocryphal story that a young Jesus, accompanied by Joseph of Arimathea, travelled to what is now England and visited Glastonbury during his unknown years. It poses questions and contrasts heaven with the 'dark Satanic Mills' of the early Industrial Revolution.

Today, the poem is best known as the anthem '*Jerusalem*', with music by Sir Hubert Parry, composed, as his diary tells us, on a 'wet and very cold' Friday in March 1916. He had been sent the words by Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, who had included it in an anthology of verse published in 1916 to 'brace the spirit of the nation' at a time when morale had begun to decline because of the high number of casualties in World War I.

Bridges asked Parry to supply 'suitable, simple music to Blake's stanzas – music that an audience could take up and join in'. He and Parry were, along with Thomas Hardy and Edward Elgar, vice-presidents of Fight for Right, a movement that had been formed the previous year to reinforce the idea of British cultural values during the war.

On March 11, Parry showed his work to his colleague Walford Davies, who a little over two weeks later, conducted the first performance by a choir of 300 people from London choral societies. It was, as Parry's biographer Jeremy Dibble notes, 'an instant success'. Yet within a few weeks of writing the tune, Parry, a man of liberal views and moderate outlook began to feel uncomfortable with the jingoistic tone that others in Fight for Right were taking. He became so disillusioned with this extreme body that he withdrew the tune from them. It might have disappeared altogether, had the National Union of Women's Suffrage Associations not asked whether they might use it in support of their campaign for votes for women. Parry, who strongly believed in that cause, was delighted to grant their wish.

When all women over the age of 21 finally had the vote in 1928, Parry's executors assigned the copyright to the Women's Institute, and it has remained their song ever since. Sir Edward Elgar re-scored the work for very large orchestra in 1922 for use at the Leeds Festival. Elgar's orchestration has overshadowed Parry's own, primarily because it is the version usually used for the Last Night of the Proms (though Sir Malcolm Sargent, always used Parry's simple and noble version).

Although composed initially as a unison song, it can be heard in many English cathedrals, churches and chapels, and it was chosen as the opening hymn for the London Olympics in 2012. It has become an unofficial second national anthem and is often used by England at sporting fixtures such as the 2010 Commonwealth Games, where each of the home nations is represented separately. *Jerusalem* has been sung at every Last Night of the Proms since 1945.

## **George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)**

### **Hallelujah (from Messiah)**

This mighty *Hallelujah Chorus* is so often heard out of context that it is easy to overlook its immense importance as the climax to part two of Handel's *Messiah*. That second part of the oratorio follows the story of Christ's passion, scourging, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven and this triumphant chorus celebrates the ultimate victory over sin. On a later occasion, when the composer Joseph Haydn heard the *Hallelujah Chorus* in Westminster Abbey, he exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, 'He is the master of us all'.

The first London performance of *Messiah* took place at the Covent Garden Theatre on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1743, in the presence of King George II. When he heard the words, 'The Kingdom of this world...' the King rose to his feet and remained standing until the end of the number. The exact reason the King stood at this point is lost to history, but as a matter of protocol, no-one could remain seated while the King was standing, so the whole audience and orchestra stood throughout. This tradition remains favoured by some to this day. On completing this chorus, Handel is reputed to have said, 'I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God himself'.

#### **Programme notes Elizabeth Jones.**

Sources: The Internet, Wikipedia, previous ACS programmes, The Telegraph (July 2010), The Oxford Companion to Music – Scholes.