



Handel - Solomon

***All Saints Church
Market Place
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 1JP***

***2 July 2016
7.30 pm***

£2.00



Since its formation in 1949, Kingston Choral Society has earned a reputation for concerts of a high standard and for performing a wide range of music. The Society enjoys singing the familiar favourites of the choral repertoire, but is not afraid of tackling ambitious projects and has, for example, performed a new commission by Peter Maxwell Davies, Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky in Russian and other pieces in Czech, Hebrew, Finnish and Swedish.

Kingston Choral Society has over 130 members drawn from southwest London and north Surrey. New members are welcome. The choir performs four concerts a year, usually in Kingston Parish Church, and two of the concerts are with a professional orchestra. Rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings (8-10 pm) at The Hollyfield School, Surbiton, in term-time. Kingston Choral Society also holds regular social and fundraising events and occasional musical workshops.

If you are interested in joining, please talk to any member of the choir during the interval or at the end of the concert. You can also contact the Membership Secretary on join@kingstonchoralsociety.org.uk or 020 8949 5253 for more information and arrange to come to a rehearsal.

~ ~ NEXT KCS CONCERT ~ ~

26th November 2016 at 7.30 pm

Vaughan Williams: *Towards the Unknown Region*

Dyson: *Sweet Thames, Run Softly*

Chilcott: *Requiem*

Thames Sinfonia

Andrew Griffiths - Conductor

All Saints Church, Market Place, Kingston KT1 1JP

For further details contact the Box Office on 020 8977 4801

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~ ~ PROGRAMME ~ ~

Solomon

Act I

In which Solomon and his people celebrate the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon and his wife rejoice in their love for each other.

Act II

In which Solomon shows his wisdom by judging a case in which two women claim the same baby.

~ ~ INTERVAL ~ ~

Act III

In which the Queen of Sheba pays a state visit and is entertained with a masque. Everyone celebrates Solomon's wisdom and piety.

The Rise of Opera in London

Handel first came to England in November 1710 as part of his Grand Tour. He had no plans to stay, nor did he have any commissions or offers of patronage. At that time, the main forms of extended musical performance in England were the masque and the 'semi-opera' in which singing was interspersed with acting and dancing. Opera 'after the Italian manner', i.e. sung throughout, was considered to be 'nonsense well-tun'd' as one critic put it. There were, however, two theatres in London that, since 1705, had been vying with each other to present operas; the *Theatre Royal*, Drury Lane, and the *Queen's Theatre*, Haymarket. The operas they performed were a motley arrangement, some being sung in English by an all English cast, and others with the arias sung in either Italian or English, depending on the nationality of the singer. It was not until 1708 with the arrival in London of the castrato Nicolini (Nicolo Grimaldi) (1673-1732) that opera started to make its mark.

Whilst in London, Handel was contacted by the manager of the Queen's Theatre, Aaron Hill, with a libretto based on the story of Rinaldo and Armida taken from Torquato Tasso's (1544-1595) *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Handel quickly set it to music recycling a lot of the arias from his previous operas, but providing new music for Nicolini, completing the work in two weeks. *Rinaldo*, the first opera written specifically for the English stage, was premiered at the Queen's Theatre on 24 February 1711. It was a tremendous success and 12 performances were scheduled with a further two hastily arranged after that. Despite this success, at the end of the London season Handel returned to his employer, Georg Ludwig Elector of Hanover.

In autumn 1712, Handel asked the Elector for leave to return to London. His intention for this second visit can only have been to find a patron and capitalise on the success of *Rinaldo*. Handel's first opera when he got back to London, *Il Pastor Fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*) was a badly judged failure. Handel recovered quickly, composing *Teseo* a month later and its success set the seal for Handel's opera career for the next few years. Handel was also using his time to win patronage with the aim of becoming an Englishman and to restore his relationship with the Elector of Hanover who, in 1714 succeeded Queen Anne as King George I of England, so from 1716-1720 Handel wrote no operas. In 1718-1719 Handel and a group of nobles founded the company the *Royal Academy of Music* with a decree from the King. This new venture started with *Radamisto* (1720) but went collapsed in 1728. Handel went on to compose 35 operas, his last being *Rossane* (1743).

The Decline of Opera in London

Handel came to London at a very interesting time. Early 18th century London was a rapidly growing city, undergoing dramatic social and cultural change. New upper and middle classes were emerging who were making their fortunes from the industrial revolution and were converging on the new properties being built in London's West End. They had a desire to be seen with the right people in the right places and to experience all that London's emerging cultural life could offer and opera became one of these experiences. The need to court public taste in order to ensure an audience created great competition between the two opera companies operating in London. They had to provide elaborate sets and costumes, utilise all manner of stage machinery to provide special effects, and employ some of the best, most demanding performers.

This rivalry also extended to the singers, who provided plenty of scandals to fill the newspapers. One in particular, the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni (1696-1778), provided several memorable stories. She came to London in 1722, and whilst rehearsing her first opera, Handel's *Ottone*, she refused to sing one of the arias because it had originally been written for another singer. Handel is reported to have threatened to throw her out of the window, at which point she relented. Paradoxically, according to the music historian Charles Burney (1726–814), it was her singing of this very aria that, "fixed her reputation as an expressive and pathetic singer". Things came to head in 1727 when the sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustino Bordoni (1697–1781) had a fight on stage in a performance of Bononcini's *Astianatte*.

The parlous state of opera was reflected in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), a ballad opera written by John Gay (1685–1732), which mocked the government of the day and lampooned the excesses of opera. The public started to become impatient with questionable morals of the performers and with an entertainment in an unintelligible language and plots far removed from real life. The audience numbers declined until they were no longer capable of supporting one opera company, let alone two.

The Rise of Oratorio in London

Handel's experience with oratorios was limited. When he was working for Prince Francesco Maria Ruspoli (1672-1751) in Rome in 1707-1708 there had been a Papal Decree forbidding the performance of opera so Handel was forced to fulfil his patron's desire for choral works with oratorios. The results were *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (1707), and *La Resurrezione* (*The Resurrection*). These works are very different in style from the later oratorios he produced in England.

In 1718 whilst employed by James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744) Handel composed two masques, *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther* for performance at Cannons, the duke's private residence. In 1732, as audiences at his operas were dwindling, Handel revived these masques, performing them without actions, as oratorios. They proved so successful that rival performances were hastily arranged without Handel's sanction or involvement. He countered this by expanding *Esther* to include twelve extra numbers. The following year two new oratorios: *Deborah*, which was cobbled together from previous music, was considered to be magnificent, and *Athalia*, which was newly written for performance at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford. Oratorio was to become the mainstay of Handel's music for the theatre from this point. By the end of his career he had written nearly 30 oratorios.

SOLOMON

Solomon, was composed between May 5th and June 13th 1748 and was premiered at the Covent Garden Theatre on Friday March 17th 1749. It was not well received and had only two further performances that season. Handel revived it in 1759 for another two performances in a revised version with five additional airs and an extra chorus. The librettist is unknown; it was for some time thought to be the Reverend Thomas Morrell (1703–1784), the author of Handel's three preceding oratorios, but modern thought is that it was Moses Mendes (c. 1690-1758). The story is compiled from the Second Book of Kings, the Second Book of Chronicles, with material from *Antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus (37 – c. 100). *Solomon* is a depiction of a golden age of aesthetic fulfilment and worldly success and, as such, was meant to be a tribute to the Georgian England that he had made his home and his patron King George I.

Handel's previous oratorios, in particular the *Occasional Oratorio* (1746) and *Judas Maccabeus* (1746) were very military in style, full of pomp and pageantry, not surprising given the political situation of the time. The popularity of these works prompted Handel to repeat the style in his next two oratorios, *Joshua* (1747) and *Alexander Balus* (1748), both to librettos by Reverend Thomas Morell.

In 1749 Handel changed librettists for *Susanna* and *Solomon*. The poetry has a sharp eye for nature, a love of exact similes and concrete imagery and a direct approach to the facts of sex. The music for *Susanna* is pastoral in mood and for *Solomon* it is lavish and luxurious. The richness of the scoring of *Solomon*, for strings, flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, trumpets, timpani and continuo (cello, double-bass and keyboard), suggest that Handel was doing well financially at the time. The chorus plays a leading role and is balanced by women's voices in the principle solo parts. There are 13 choruses in all, seven are for double chorus in eight parts, five are in five parts and one in four parts, and they show a great breadth and flexibility of technique.

Act 1 starts with two choruses to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. The double chorus *Your harps and cymbals sound* uses the antiphonal effects of two choirs and contrasts it with *cantus firmus* at the words "to great Jehovah's praise". The next chorus *With pious heart, and holy tongue* starts with a sequence of majestic block chords that leads into a fugue which expresses the words by having repeating entries of "till distant nations catch the song", up to ten in a row. Solomon and Zadok the priest then rejoice in the completion and the consecration of the temple. In Scene 2 Solomon and his Queen rejoice in their married bliss (unlike the biblical Solomon, who is stated to have had hundreds of wives and concubines, Handel's Solomon only has the one) and promises to build her a palace.

They express their love for each other in a lovely duet *Welcome as the dawn of day* before they retire for the night as soft-breathing zephyrs and nightingales lull them to sleep. This chorus, famously called the "Nightingale Chorus" shows Handel's word painting to particularly good effect. The zephyrs are suggested by low murmuring violins and violas, whilst the nightingales are depicted by two flutes in cannon.

Act 2 presents the wisdom of Solomon from the famous biblical story of the two harlots who each claim a single baby as her own. Solomon suggests resolving the case by splitting the infant in half with his sword. The real mother rejects this solution and offers to hand the child over to the other woman, as Solomon knew the true parent would. The first harlot and the chorus praise Solomon's wisdom. Handel here shows his psychological knack of putting himself in the place of his characters. The music for the first harlot (the true mother) shows her trepidation as she presents her case with a faltering and irregular melodic line. The selfish spite of the second harlot is shown by the way she interrupts her rival with a repetitive, persistent line.

Act 3 begins with a sinfonia which has come to be known as "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba" and has gained its own place in the repertoire outside the oratorio. The Queen is entertained with a musical masque of magnificent choruses depicting, in turn, the affecting power of gentle music, the desire for military glory, the pathos of an unhappy lover, and a storm which turns to calm. All celebrate the Israel of the wise ruler Solomon as a Golden Age of prosperity, peace and happiness.

Programme notes courtesy of Paul Chambers

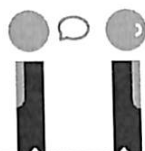
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HAMPTONS
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(Second Harlot)

Then be just, and fear the laws.

30. Recitative (Solomon)

What says the other to th'imputed charge?
Speak in thy turn, and tell thy wrongs at large.

(Second Harlot)

I cannot varnish o'er my tongue.
And colour fair the face of wrong.
This babe is mine, the womb of earth
Intomb'd, conceals her little birth.
Give me my child, my smiling boy,
To cheer my breast with new-born joy.

(Solomon)

Hear me, women, and the king regard,
Who from his throne thus reads the just award:
Each claims alike, let both their portions share;
Divide the babe, thus each her part shall bear.
Quick, bring the falchion, and the infant smite,
Nor further clamour for disputed right.

31. Air (Second Harlot)

Thy sentence, great king,
Is prudent and wise,
And my hopes on the wing
Quick bound for the prize.
Contented I hear,
And approve the decree;
For at least I shall tear
The lov'd infant from thee.

32. Recitative (First Harlot)

Withhold, withhold the
executing hand!
Reverse, O king, thy stern command.

33. Air (First Harlot)

Can I see my infant gor'd
With the fierce relentless sword?
Can I see him yield his breath,
Smiling at the hand of death?

And behold the purple tides
Gushing down his tender sides?
Rather be my hopes beguil'd,
Take him all, but spare my child.

34. Accompagnato (Solomon)

Israel, attend to what your king shall say:
Think not I meant the innocent to slay.
The stern decision was to trace with art,
The secret dictates of the human heart.
She who could bear the fierce decree to hear,
Nor send one sigh, nor shed one pious tear,
Must be a stranger to a mother's name —
Hence from my sight, nor urge a further claim!
But you, whose fears a parent's love attest,
Receive, and bind him to your beating breast:
To you, in justice, I the babe restore,
And may you lose him from your arms no more.

36. Chorus (Chorus of Israelites)

From the east unto the west,
Who so wise as Solomon?
Who like Israel's king is bless'd,
Who so worthy of a throne.

41. Chorus (Chorus of Priests)

Swell, swell the full chorus to Solomon's praise,
Record him, ye bards, as the pride of our days.
Flow sweetly the numbers that dwell on his
name,
And rouse the whole nation in songs to his fame.
Swell, swell. . . *da capo*

ACT THREE

Solomon, Queen of Sheba, Zadok, and Chorus of Israelites

42. Symphony: Arrival of Queen of Sheba

43. Recitative (Queen of Sheba)

From Arabia's spicy shores,
Bounded by the hoary main,
Sheba's queen these seats explores,
To be taught thy heav'nly strain.

(Solomon)

Thrice welcome queen, with open arms
Our court receives thee, and thy charms.
The temple of the Lord first meets your eyes,
Rich with the well-accepted sacrifice.
Here all our treasures free behold,
Where cedars lie, o'erwrought with gold;
Next, view a mansion fit for kings to own,
The forest call'd of tow'ring Lebanon,
Where art her utmost skill displays,
And ev'ry object claims your praise.

44. Air (Queen of Sheba)

Ev'ry sight these eyes behold
Does a different charm unfold;
Flashing gems and sculptur'd gold,
Still attract my ravish'd sight.
But to hear fair truth distilling,
In expressions choice and thrilling,
From that tongue so soft and killing,
That my soul does most delight.

45. Recitative (Solomon)

Sweep, sweep the string, to soothe the royal fair,
And rouse each passion with th'alternate air.

46. Solo and Chorus (Solomon & Israelites)

Music, spread thy voice around,
Sweetly flow the lulling sound.

47. Solo and Chorus (Solomon & Israelites)

Now a different measure try,
Shake the dome, and pierce the sky.
Rouse us next to martial deeds;
Clanking arms, and neighing steeds,
Seem in fury to oppose —
Now the hard-fought battle glows.

48. Recitative (Solomon)

Then at once from rage remove;
Draw the tear from hopeless love;

Lengthen out the solemn air,
Full of death and wild despair.

49. Chorus (Chorus of Israelites)

Draw the tear from hopeless love,
Lengthen out the solemn air,
Full of death and wild despair.

50. Recitative (Solomon)

Next the tortur'd soul release,
And the mind restore to peace.

51. Solo and Chorus (Solomon & Israelites)

Thus rolling surges rise,
And plough the troubled main;
But soon the tempest dies,
And all is calm again.

52. Recitative (Queen of Sheba)

Thy harmony's divine, great king,
All, all obey the artist's string.
And now, illustrious prince, receive
Such tribute as my realm can give.
Here, purest gold, from earth's dark entrails torn;
And gems resplendent, that outshine the morn;
There balsam breathes a grateful smell,
With thee the fragrant strangers wish to dwell.
Yet of ev'ry object I behold,
Amid the glare of gems and gold,
The temple most attracts my eye,
Where, with unwearied zeal, you serve the Lord
on high.

54. Recitative (Zadok)

Thrice happy king, to have achiev'd,
What scarce will henceforth be believ'd;
When seven times around the sphere
The sun had led the new-born year,
The temple rose, to mark the days
With endless themes for future praise.
Our pious David wish'd in vain,
By this great act to bless his reign;
But Heav'n the monarch's hopes withstood,
For ah! his hands were stain'd with blood.

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55. Air (Zadok)

Golden columns, fair and bright,
Catch the mortals' ravish'd sight;
Round their sides ambitious twine
Tendrils of the clasping vine;
Cherubims stand there display'd,
O'er the ark their wings are laid:
Ev'ry object swells with state,
All is pious, all is great.

56. Double Chorus

(Chorus 1)

Praise the Lord with harp and tongue!
Praise Him all ye old and young,
He's in mercy ever strong.

(Chorus 2)

Praise the Lord through ev'ry state,
Praise Him early, praise Him late,
God alone is good and great.

(Full Chorus)

Let the loud Hosannas Devinehs rise,
Widely spreading through the skies,
God alone is just and wise.

59. Recitative (Queen of Sheba)

May peace in Salem ever dwell!
Illustrious Solomon, farewell!
Thy wise instructions be my future care,
Soft as the show'rs that cheer the vernal air,
Whose warmth bids ev'ry plant her sweets
disclose;
The lily wakes, and paints the op'ning rose.

60. Air (Queen of Sheba)

Will the sun forget to streak
Eastern skies with amber ray,
When the dusky shades to break
He unbars the gates of day?
Then demand if Sheba's queen
E'er can banish from her thought
All the splendour she has seen,
All the knowledge thou hast taught.

61. Recitative (Solomon)

Adieu, fair queen, and in thy breast
May peace and virtue ever rest!

62. Duet (Queen of Sheba & Solomon)

(Queen of Sheba)

Ev'ry joy that wisdom knows,
May'st thou, pious monarch, share!

(Solomon)

Ev'ry blessing Heav'n bestows,
Be thy portion, virtuous fair!

(Queen of Sheba)

Gently flow thy rolling days.

(Solomon)

Sorrow be a stranger here.

(Both)

May thy people sound thy praise,
Praise unbought by price or fear.

63. Chorus (Chorus of Israelites)

The name of the wicked shall quickly be past;
But the fame of the just shall eternally last.

ANDREW GRIFFITHS – Musical Director

Andrew Griffiths enjoys an enviable reputation as a dynamic and versatile young conductor with a particular flair for opera and choral music.

A graduate of The Royal Opera's prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme, Andrew has conducted productions for The Royal Opera, Opera North, Opera Theatre Company, Early Opera Company, Mid Wales Opera, Bampton Classical Opera and Iford Festival Opera. He has appeared in concert with the orchestras of The Royal Opera and Opera North, Southbank Sinfonia and Orpheus Sinfonia, and is regularly engaged to broadcast and record with the BBC Singers.

Andrew has worked at Glyndebourne, ENO, Scottish Opera, WNO, Chicago Opera Theatre and with the BBC Symphony and Scottish Symphony Orchestras, as well as on numerous Royal Opera productions (including the *Ring* and the world première of *The Minotaur*), under such conductors as Pappano, Bychkov, Elder, Gardiner and Mackerras. He is often engaged for projects outside the standard operatic canon, and is particularly experienced in Baroque repertoire and the music of the last fifty years. Much sought-after as a vocal coach, he works frequently with the singers at the National Opera Studio and The Royal Opera.

In constant demand as a choral conductor, Andrew appears regularly with the BBC Singers, for whom his engagements have included an acclaimed performance of *Gawain* (BBC SO/Brabbins), recordings of twentieth-century American repertoire, and broadcasts of the Howells Requiem, Parry's *Songs of Farewell* and MacMillan's *Tenebrae Responses*. He is Musical Director of Kingston Choral Society and chamber choir Londinium, and has appeared as a guest conductor with New London Chamber Choir, Hong Kong's Tallis Vocalis, and the choirs of Dartington International Summer School.

A pianist, viola player and singer by training, Andrew began his musical education as a Quirister and Scholar at Winchester College, and read music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he held a Choral Exhibition. He studied conducting under Martyn Brabbins in Glasgow, and trained as a répétiteur at the National Opera Studio and at Scottish Opera. He is a former principal viola of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, and a founder member of vocal consort Stile Antico. In 2008 he was chosen to receive the Wagner Society's Bayreuth Bursary.

Highlights of Andrew's 2015-6 season include his début with Welsh National Opera (*Orlando*) and the European première performances of Tarik O'Regan's *The Wanton Sublime* (Arcola Theatre).

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ANNA DEVIN – Soprano

"With a voice as liquid and sparkling as the best champagne", (Geoff Brown, *The Times*) Anna Devin is widely acknowledged as one of today's brightest young sopranos for her vocal versatility and strong stage presence.

Ms Devin has established an international career since graduating from the Royal Opera House's Jette Parker Young Artist programme with outstanding performances as Nannetta (*Falstaff*) at the Royal Opera House and Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at WNO. The 2015/16 season saw Ms Devin perform at Glyndebourne Touring Opera (*Michal, Saul*); Lausanne Bach Festival (*Messiah*); Seattle Symphony (*Messiah*); Mozartwoche in Salzburg (*Galatea, Acis and Galatea*); Haydn's *Lobgesang* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and her debut at La Scala, Milan (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*)

Highlights of the upcoming 2016/17 season include; Scottish Opera (Susanna, *Le Nozze di Figaro*); The English Concert and Wigmore Hall (*Don Quixote*); The title role in *Semele* at Karlsruhe Handel Festival, Helena in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Aldeburgh Festival.

A frequent concert performer, Ms Devin's repertoire encompasses a vast range of both sacred and secular works, and she has appeared as part of the BBC Proms with the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Mark Elder, the London Handel Festival, Brighton Early Music Festival, Belfast Festival as well as with the RTÉ NSO and Ulster Orchestra.

Appearances in the United States included Oberto (*Alcina*) at Carnegie Hall; the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra for *Messiah* and the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra for Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Other recent highlights have included Marie (*La fille de Regiment*) at the Royal Opera House; Clotilde (*Faramondo*) under Lawrence Cummings at the Handel Festival Göttingen and Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) at Garsington Opera under Martin André.

Ms Devin has performed with some of the greatest conductors of our time including; Marc Minkowski, Sir Antonio Pappano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, William Christie, Sir Colin Davis and Sir Andrew Davis.

An alumna of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Britten-Pears YAP and the National Opera Studio, Anna Devin has garnered awards including the Maggie Teyte and Miriam Licette Scholarships, Stuart Burrows International Voice Award, Singers' Prize at the Gerald Moore Awards and the Audience Prize in the London Handel Singing Competition. She is an Associate Artist with Classical Opera with whom she records and performs with regularly.

MÁIRE FLAVIN - Soprano

Dublin-born soprano Máire Flavin represented Ireland at the 2011 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, where she was a finalist in the Song Prize.

In 2016 Máire has made notable role debuts as Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) with Opera North under the baton of Jac van Steen (also her company debut) and as Mimì (*La bohème*) for Opera Theatre Company under the baton of Andrew Greenwood, garnering widespread critical acclaim for both.

Other recent engagements include the title role in *Agrippina* with Northern Ireland Opera & the Irish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Jonathan Cohen; Mahler's *2nd Symphony* with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra at the National Concert Hall, Dublin; and several engagements with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra including their Summer Lunch Time Series; Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*; and Mozart's *Requiem* (broadcast live as part of the national commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising). Future engagements include her debut with the Ulster Orchestra; a world première with the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra; a return to the RTÉ Concert Orchestra; Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* in Germany and two New Year's Gala Concerts at the National Concert Hall (also with the RTESO).

Previous seasons' highlights have included roles with Théâtre des Champs Élysées, Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Glyndebourne on Tour, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Northern Ireland Opera, and the Cork Summer International Festival; with conductors such as Mark Wigglesworth, Lothar Koenigs, Jean-Claude Malgoire, Alan Buribayev, John Wilson, Christoph Poppen and Pierre-André Valade. On the concert platform Máire has performed with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in Berlioz *Les Nuits d'été* at the NCH, Dublin; Mahler's *8th Symphony* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall; Mozart's *Requiem* with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera in the St. David's Hall International Concert Series; Handel's *Messiah* at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin and Bach's *St. John Passion* at the National Concert Hall, Dublin.

An avid performer of song, she has appeared in recital with Simon Lepper, Gary Matthewman, and Nico de Villiers internationally; at venues including St. Bride's Fleet Street, the Estoril Festival, the London Song Festival, the British High Commission in Singapore, Waterford Music Festival and Wexford Festival Opera.

An alumna of both the Opera Theatre Company and Britten-Pears Young Artist programmes, Máire holds a BA joint honours in Music and Psychology from Queens University, Belfast, an MMus from the Royal Irish Academy of Music and is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera Course and the National Opera Studio, London.

JAMES LAING - Counter-tenor

James studied at Uppingham School and was a choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. He furthered his studies at the Royal College of Music and was selected by Opera Now as amongst 'Who's Hot' in Opera Now for his performance as Nerone *Agrippina* at the London Handel Festival. James Laing has appeared for companies including the Classical Opera Company, the Early Opera Company, Garsington Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Grange Park Opera, Opera North, Opera Holland Park, OTC, Dublin, Sächsische Staatsoper Dresden, Opera de Nice, and also at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. His repertoire includes Oberon *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Tolomeo *Giulio Cesare*, Nerillus *L'Ormino*, fourth innocent *the Minotaur*, Giuliano *Eliogabalo*, Coachman *I Fox The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Refugee *Flight*, Raphael *Tobias and the Angel*, Medoro *Orlando*, Armindo *Partenope*, Bertarido *Rodelinda* Andronico *Tamerlano*, Pastor *L'Orfeo*, Zephyrus *Apollo and Hyacinthus*, Ascanio *Ascanio in Alba*, Spirit *Dido and Aeneas* and Zelim *La verità in cimento*.

He also appeared in Jonathan Miller's production of the *St Matthew Passion* at London's National Theatre. He appeared in *Other Shakespearean Dreamers* at The Liceu, Barcelona, and his concert highlights have further included performances with the Academy of Ancient Music, Les Agréments, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the Hallé, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the Israel Camerata, the Netherlands Bach Society, the National Orchestra of Spain, Tafelmusik, Toronto, and the Polski Chór Kameralny.

Current engagements include Cheshire Cat *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* at Holland Park, Armindo *Partenope* ENO, Ottone and Nerone *Coronation of Poppea* for Cincinatti Opéra and Pinchgut Opera in Sydney. His performance with Opera North in *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is now available on Opus Arte Blu Ray / DVD and his recording of *Tobias and the Angel* is available on Chandos CD (and was selected as a Gramophone CD of the Month for September 2010).

NICK PRITCHARD – Tenor

Born in West Sussex, Nick Pritchard sang in the choir of New College, Oxford, where he read music and studied with Russell Smythe at The Royal College of Music International Opera School (RCMIOS), where, on graduation, he was awarded the *Eric Joseph Shilling Prize*. He was awarded The London Bach Society Bach Singer's Prize in 2013 and is a Samling Artist.

Concert appearances include *King Arthur* (c. Christian Curnyn, The Early Opera Company, Wigmore Hall), Bach's *Mass in B minor* (c. Sir John-Eliot Gardiner, the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists), *Messiah* (c. Brian Kay, English Festival Orchestra, Royal Albert Hall) and with the Nieuwe Philharmonie in Utrecht, Bach Cantatas for Ensemble Pygmalion and Raphaël Pichon, the Bach *Magnificat* (c. Laurence Cummings, The English Concert), Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* (c. Daniel Hyde), the *St. John Passion* (c. Robert Quinney, The Choir of New College, Oxford), the *St. Matthew Passion* (Leith Hill Music Festival), Vaughan-Williams' *On Wenlock Edge* for BBC Radio 3, *Die Schöne Müllerin* (Elgar Room, The Royal Albert Hall with Gary Matthewman) Britten's *Spring Symphony* (c. David Hill), *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (c. John Rutter), *Winter Words* (Brighton Festival with Simon Lepper) and the world première of Gabriel Jackson's *Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ* with the choir of Merton College, Oxford.

Recent opera roles include Aquilio in JC Bach's *Adriano in Siria* (c. Ian Page with the Classical Opera Company), Prologue *The Turn of the Screw* for Opera Holland Park, Telemaco *The Return of Ulysses* for Iford Arts (c. Christian Curnyn), Paulino *The Secret Marriage* (British Youth Opera – for which he won the Dame Hilda Bracket award from Sadler's Wells), title role *Albert Herring*, Tamino, Lucano *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Torquemada *L'heure espagnole* for the RCMIOS, title role *Acis and Galatea* for Handel House and La Nuova Musica (c. Laurence Cummings).

Current Season/future plans: roles for English Touring Opera (company début), the première of *Matthew Pleasure* (Mark Simpson) for Opera North (house début)/Aldeburgh/Linbury, Ruggiero in Caccini's *La Liberazione di Ruggiero* for The Brighton Early Music Festival, *Winter Words* for the Oxford Lieder Festival, *Messiah* for The Instruments of Time and Truth (c. Edward Higginbottom) and in the Netherlands, the *St. Matthew Passion* for St. Paul's Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota (c. Paul McCreesh) and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* (c. Stephen Cleobury).

THE PURCELL ORCHESTRA

The Purcell Orchestra was founded in 1982 to give one of the very first performances of Purcell's *King Arthur* on period instruments, in a project devised by Robin Page and Richard Wistreich. The concert took place at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, with a group of handpicked singers including Evelyn Tubb and Emily van Evera.

Since then, the orchestra has accompanied numerous choral events, performing many major works of the baroque repertoire, including JS Bach *B Minor Mass*, *St Matthew* and *St John Passions*, *Magnificat* and *Christmas Oratorio*; CPE Bach *Magnificat*; Telemann *Tageszeiten*; Handel *Coronation Anthems*, *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*.

Since 2005, the Purcell Orchestra has given annual performances of Handel's *Messiah* at Christmas and Bach's *St John Passion* on Palm Sunday at the Church of St Mary Abbots, Kensington. In recent seasons they have performed *Messiah* in Colchester, and given a highly successful debut concert at St Martin in the Fields.

The principals of the Purcell Orchestra also perform as the Purcell Players, often creating specially devised programmes exploring a particular theme or capturing the spirit of a venue.

Leader Diane Moore

Flutes Siu Peasgood Leslie Halliday

Oboes Mark Radcliffe Jane Downer

Bassoons Damian Brasington Mike Brain

Horns Martin Lawrence Joseph Walters

Trumpets Robert Vanryne Jack Ross

Timpani Tom Lee

First Violins Diane Moore Cathy Weiss Diane Terry Ben Sansom

Second Violins Joanna Lawrence Hazel Brookes Eleanor Gilchrist

First Violas David Brooker Wendi Kelly

Second Violas Bill Thorp Niek Idema

Cello Elizabeth Andrews Helen Verney

Bass Jan Spencer

Organ continuo Julian Perkins

Orchestra Manager Natasha Hale

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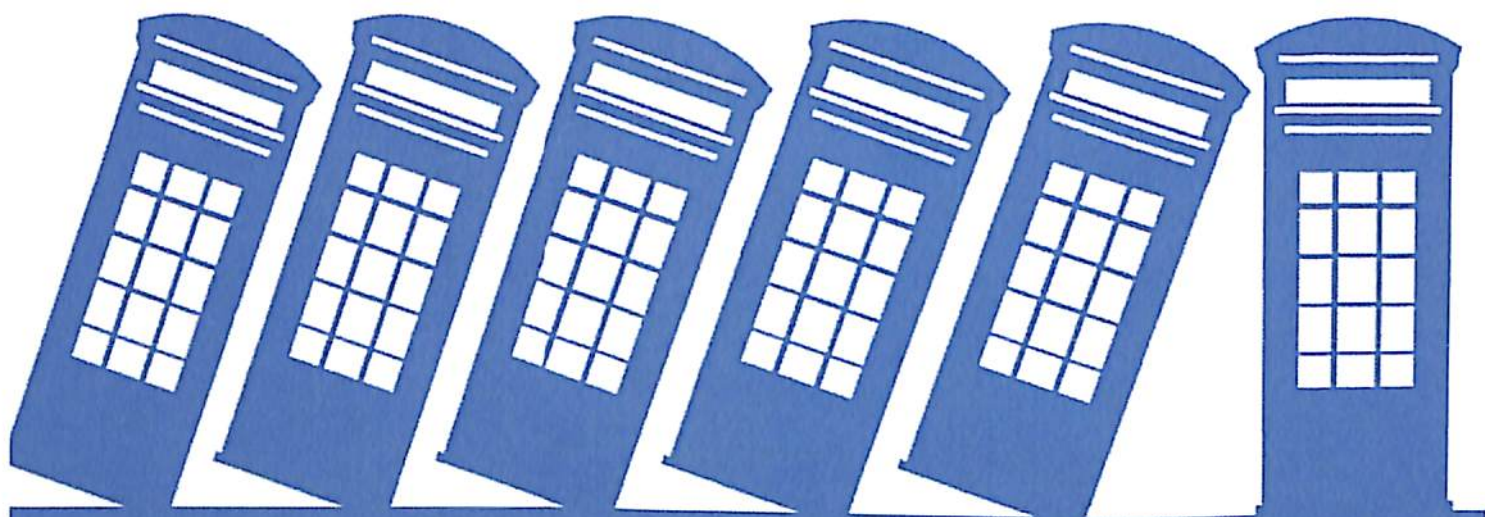
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Any donations or legacies would be used to purchase and hire music, to rent performance facilities or to pay the day-to-day operational expenses of the organisation.

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