



RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No 2 Vespers (extracts) The Bells

Piano: Francis Pott
The Brandenburg Sinfonia
Conductor: Jeremy Backhouse

Vivace
Chorus

Saturday
19th May 2012

7.30 pm Guildford Cathedral

Royal Grammar School Guildford

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President Sir David Willcocks CBE MC

An Evening of Music by
RACHMANINOV

All-Night Vigil (Vespers), Op. 37 - extracts

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

Vocalise No. 14, Op. 34

The Bells, Op. 35

Francis Pott

Piano

Sara Lian Owen

Soprano

Edward Hughes

Tenor

Gareth Brynmor John

Baritone

The Brandenburg Sinfonia
Conductor: Jeremy Backhouse

Tonight's concert is being held in Guildford Cathedral
by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter.

PRE-CONCERT TALKS

Before Vivace Chorus concerts in Guildford Cathedral, we offer ticket holders a free talk given by an acknowledged music expert who has a special interest in the works to be performed. We are delighted that before this concert of music by Rachmaninov, including not only two choral pieces, but also his ever-popular *Piano Concerto No. 2.*, the talk is being given by tonight's solo pianist, Francis Pott, himself – there can surely be no greater 'special interest' than to be about to perform such a well-known work to a cathedral full of eager concert-goers!

The pre-concert talk for Britten's *War Requiem* on November 17th will be given by Christopher Mark, senior lecturer in musicology at the University of Surrey, whose research is focused on 20th century English music. He has published book chapters, articles and reviews on Elgar, Britten, Vaughan Williams and Tippett, and has also written two books on Britten: *Early Benjamin Britten* was published in 1995 and the second, *Britten: An Extraordinary Life*, is due for publication in late 2012.

Members of the audience who wish to attend the talk and do not already have reserved seating can reserve their concert seats beforehand in the appropriate unreserved areas of the Cathedral. The talk should finish at 7.10pm, allowing time to order refreshments for the interval.

A Night at the Opera, March 2012



"Congratulations! Bravo! What a super concert. I can't tell you how much we enjoyed it and look forward to the next one."

"Fantastic concert last night. We enjoyed it immensely. Great choir, orchestra and soloists. Well done."

"Un véritable regal ce samedi. Bravo les artistes."

"It really was a splendid evening with Jeremy, Vivace and the Brandenburg Sinfonia on top form."

Flash photography, audio and video recording are not permitted without the prior written consent of the Vivace Chorus. Please also kindly switch off all mobile phones and alarms on digital watches.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 – 1943)



"Six foot two of Russian gloom" was Igor Stravinsky's celebrated dismissal of Sergei Rachmaninov. Probably this has played its part in leading posterity to focus mainly on the vein of Slavic melancholy running through much of Rachmaninov's music, while Rachmaninov the pianist's famously poker-faced stage demeanour could hardly have invited anyone to question Stravinsky's assessment. Yet the picture is misleading. The pianist's scowl might be attributable to a lifelong battle with stage fright (sometimes he had to be physically pushed towards the piano), and also conjecturally to the condition known

as acromegaly, which would account for the heavily impassive features and also the massive hand stretches demanded by his keyboard writing. Moreover, the Rachmaninov known to friends and family was a warm-hearted, generous soul who took a childlike delight in the practical jokery of his four offspring, and who reportedly once wept with gentle mirth when these managed to tie together the shoelaces of a visiting fellow composer under the dining table. On another occasion, the great violinist Fritz Kreisler suddenly lost his place during a duo recital. "Where are we?", he hissed towards the keyboard. "In the Carnegie Hall", reassuringly replied Rachmaninov without dropping a stitch. But the dry humour had been hard won.

The story behind Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto is well known: the *première* of his First Symphony had been conducted by the composer Glazunov in a state of what was later alleged to be advanced inebriation. A notorious review by César Cui declared its intentions early: "If there were a conservatoire in hell...", it began, before suggesting that its most talented graduate could not have come up with a more infernal racket, even had he been asked to compose a symphony entitled *The Seven Plagues of Egypt*. A combination of Glazunov, the public and Cui precipitated depression in Rachmaninov to the point of nervous collapse. Composition ceased entirely, until the sinisterly-named neurologist Dr Nikolai Dahl (one of musical history's more crucial walk-on

parts) succeeded in lifting him out of the Slough of Despond through some pioneering form of hypnotherapy.

The Second Concerto is not the sole token of Rachmaninov's recovery, which saw the simultaneous creation of his Second Suite for two pianos and the lyrical 'Cello Sonata. However, the composer still faced many difficulties over the Concerto's first movement, which he actually composed only *after* giving a performance of the completed slow movement and finale. One wonders at what point he even realised that the Concerto's sovereign key must be C minor, since the slow movement is in remote E major and the finale sets off towards A minor, making its decisive key-change only just before the soloist enters.

The Concerto bore a grateful inscription to Dahl. Rachmaninov's cousin and former teacher, the pianist Alexander Siloti, had taken Europe and the USA by storm in 1898 with the composer's equally celebrated solo piece, *the* C sharp minor Prelude. This had led to Rachmaninov's own London debut with the Royal Philharmonic Society, as both pianist and conductor, in spring 1899. The enormous success of the Second Concerto occurred in the years immediately following, its fame becoming international in 1902 and leading to a London performance by Siloti in May that year. The shrewd assurance with which Rachmaninov handles form, continuity and the integration of highly memorable thematic ideas across all three movements easily blinds us to the fact that this is the work of a man then still in his mid-twenties.

Rachmaninov had graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire as a pianist in 1891. Learning of Siloti's imminent retirement, he risked all by requesting that his examination be held a year early, since he had no wish to study with anyone else. His graduation as a composer therefore followed in 1892, bringing him the Conservatoire's coveted Great Gold Medal, awarded only twice previously. His great success on this occasion lay with his one-act opera, *Aleko*. Thus, he emerged into the wider world pre-eminent in areas likely to lead almost anywhere but towards sacred composition, of which his total output at that stage amounted only to a six-part Latin motet, *Deus Meus* (1890).

Eighteen years elapsed before Rachmaninov produced his mature setting of the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* in 1910, and a further five before he completed the *All-Night Vigil*, popularly known as his *Vespers*. In the former the raw materials were entirely his own, but in the latter he turned to traditional plainchant, thought to have come with Christianity itself from Byzantium, but by now saturated with a wholly Russian flavour and identity. Specialists could say much about Rachmaninov's specific choice of chants, but more important for a concert audience is the sheer

sublimity conjured by their assimilation into a completely unified compositional idiom. Raw material of this kind tends to work on a law of diminishing returns: the more elaborate in the first place, the less suitable for musical development, and *vice versa*. It comes then as no surprise that Rachmaninov had perceived a wider potential in liturgical chant, with its unvarnished sparseness and its general adherence to narrow melodic intervals. In a symphonic context, this had a unique capacity to evoke the culture, terrain and traditions of a vast country with a vividly dramatic past.

In addition, Rachmaninov had conceived an almost obsessive attachment to the chant *Dies Irae*, which had first made an appearance in his Symphony No. 1. This persists, in fragmented guise, as a presence among many of the piano solo pieces, the Concerto heard this evening (and its successor), the 'cello Sonata, the symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead*, the Second Symphony, the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, and the composer's final work, the *Symphonic Dances*. Through these runs a more general current of indigenous Russian liturgy, but the imported *Dies Irae* from western Europe stands apart. Like others whose creativity fed upon introspection, throughout his life Rachmaninov was haunted by the shadow of human and individual transience; and this chant (especially the stepwise descent of its first four notes) came to be for him a kind of icon – not so much of judgement and damnation as of mortality itself: at times poignant, at others terrifying, as the third movement of *The Bells* hair-raisingly demonstrates.

In 1912 Rachmaninov was looking for a text to set as a sequel to his cantata *Vesna* (Spring), when, from an anonymous admirer, he received a copy of Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Bells* in the translation by the Russian poet Konstantin Balmont. The admirer was later revealed as Mariya Danilova, a 'cello student at the Moscow Conservatoire. The eventual result (in 1913) remains arguably Rachmaninov's most ambitious work, deploying chorus, soloists and the largest orchestra he had yet required. Across respective movements the bells themselves evoke festivity, marriage, danger and, finally, departure from this world, with even the marriage sounds undermined (especially in the choral interjections) by that omnipresent shape of the *Dies Irae*, as if in grim reminder that love itself is but an idyllic interlude on mankind's inexorable journey into the unknown.

Rachmaninov tends to be underestimated by those acquainted only with the surface character of his melodies (as if that were not an achievement in itself). True, the symphonic process might not always sit easily with such lyricism, and the composer frequently agonised over revisions or

even drastic cuts. But his language, even at its richest, emerges from a controlled use of small melodic motifs, woven into overlapping strands until they become virtually omnipresent; and his gloriously generous melodic inspiration never deserted him. The works heard this evening all preceded revolution in Russia. A practical man with young mouths to feed, Rachmaninov proved a survivor, moving his family first to Switzerland and then, as storm clouds gathered over Europe in the 1930s, emigrating to America. The farewell to Russia separated him from comfortable upbringing on a much-loved family estate near Novgorod (where the cathedral bells exerted a lasting influence which possibly we can hear tonight). Yet, even if his music changed in exile, becoming leaner and more tersely astringent, he would have understood Tennyson's line, '*I am a part of all that I have known*'. In 1973, performing Rachmaninov's Second Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra in Moscow, the conductor André Previn was moved by sounds of open weeping behind him in the audience, and, backstage afterwards, by an elderly lady who tearfully and wordlessly handed him a large apple, a prized rarity in the Soviet Union then. Stravinsky, one would like to think, may have been in a minority. Six foot two, yes. Russian gloom? Judge for yourself...

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All-Night Vigil (Vespers) Op. 37

The *All-Night Vigil* (Всенощное бдение; Vsenoshchnoye bdeniye) is an *cappella* choral composition, written (in less than 2 weeks!) and premièred in 1915, in the middle of the first world war. During this period Rachmaninov was travelling throughout Russia with Serge Koussevitsky, giving concerts in aid of the war against Germany. His inspiration was as much politically motivated as anything else – the composition was a powerful affirmation of nationalism during the war. It consists of settings of texts taken from the All-night vigil ceremony which precedes the great holy days of the Russian Orthodox Church. The title of the work is often translated simply as *Vespers*, although only the first six of its fifteen movements set texts from the Russian Orthodox canonical hour of Vespers.

Tonight we present a selection of movements: numbers 1, 6, 7, 14 and 15, sung in the original Russian.

The first movement is a fourfold call to prayer, in six and then eight parts, preceded by the word *Amin* (Amen), which would have been chanted by the priest.

Movement 6 is the last movement of Vespers proper and is a hymn to the Mother of God. This three-part setting is solemn but retains a sense of rejoicing and gladness.

The start of Matins (Movement 7) is a chorus in praise of God; Rachmaninov's setting is rich, with bell-like sounds as the word '*Slava*' (praise) is reiterated.

Movement 14 is the second of the two Resurrection hymns in the work; these are not sung in one service but alternate to the prevailing chant for that week. Both are based on *znamenny* chant, the primordial age-old form of Russian liturgical, unison singing.

The Vigil ends with another hymn to the Virgin, known as the Akathist Hymn as the people stand throughout (*akathistos* means without sitting). Rachmaninov's brilliant setting ends the All-Night Vigil in a lively fashion.

1. Come, Let Us Worship (Priidite, Poklonimsya)

Amen.

Come, let us worship God, our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Him.

6. Hail Mary, Full of Grace (Bogoroditsye Devo)

Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God, Mary full of grace; the Lord is with Thee.

Blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb,

for Thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.

7. Glory to God in the Highest (Slava V Vyshnikh Bogu)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will amongst men.

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim Thy praise.

14. Resurrection Hymn (Voskres Iz Groba)

Thou didst rise from the tomb and burst the bonds of hell,

Thou didst destroy the condemnation of death, O Lord,
releasing all mankind from the snares of the enemy.

Thou didst show Thyself to Thine apostles,
and didst send them forth to proclaim Thee;

Vivace Chorus

and through them Thou hast granted Thy peace to the world,
O Thou who art plenteous in mercy.

15. Thanksgiving to the Mother of God (Vzbrannyoy Voyevode)

To Thee, the victorious leader of triumphant hosts, we Thy servants,
delivered from evil, offer hymns of thanksgiving, O Mother of God.
Since Thou dost possess invincible might, set us free from all calamities,
so that we may cry to Thee:
"Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!"

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

- I *Moderato*
- II *Adagio sostenuto*
- III *Allegro scherzando*

~ Interval ~

(Refreshments may be ordered before the concert)

Vocalise No. 14, Op. 34

The term *vocalise* denotes a vocal exercise, consisting of a wordless melody sung to one or more vowels. It was originally designed to help with pitch and to improve *legato* singing, but several composers turned the vocalise into an art form, setting the human voice against the piano or other instruments. Rachmaninov's *Vocalise*, published in 1912, is one of the best known of the genre; it was the last of a set of 14 songs, originally for soprano and piano. Its sinuous melody is one of Rachmaninov's most haunting and beautiful themes, and like other vocalises, sounds equally effective whether sung, played by a solo violin or orchestrated, as in tonight's programme.

The Bells, Op. 35 (Колокола; Kolokola)

Sung tonight in Russian and translated here from the Russian text by Michael Golden.

I. *Allegro, ma non tanto* – Tenor solo and chorus

The Silver Sleigh Bells

Listen!

The sleighs are racing in a line, racing in a line.
Their little bells are jingling.
Their silvery light ringing sweetly torments our ears
And, with their singing and their jingling, of oblivion they speak.
Oh, such ringing, ringing, ringing,
Like the tinkling laughter of a child, in the tranquil air of the night
They tell that our daytime delusions will be followed by renewal
Of that magical delight of tender sleep.

The sleighs are racing, racing in a line,
Their little bells are jingling.
The stars are listening as the sleighs, racing away, are speaking,
And, heeding them, the stars themselves are glowing
And, dreaming and shining in the heavens, their spirits soar,
And with evanescent radiance, and with silent fascination,
Together with the ringing, together with the singing, of oblivion they speak.

II. *Lento* – Soprano solo and chorus

The Mellow Wedding Bells

Listen!

The holy summons of golden bells calls you to the wedding!
How much tender bliss there is in this youthful song!
Through the peaceful air of the night,
It is as if someone's eyes are watching, glowing
And, through a wave of melodious sounds, gaze towards the moon.
From the pealing of the wondrous chapel bells,
Full of fabulous rejoicing,
Now swelling, now fading, radiant beams are flying out.
Once more fading, once more sparkling, they are flying out,
And shed a radiant gaze into the future,
Where tender dreams serenely slumber,
Proclaimed in the harmony of the golden bells.

Vivace Chorus

III. *Presto* – Chorus

The Loud Alarum Bells

Listen!

Hearken to the beating alarum bell,

Like the madness of a brazen hell.

These sounds, in wild torment, a tale of horrors they repeat.

As if clamouring for help,

They cast their cries into the night,

Straight to the ears of the dark night.

Every sound,

Now longer, now shorter,

Proclaims its terror.

And their fright is so intense;

How terrible is every cry

That the rending pealing, unable to be heard,

Can only beat and cry out, cry out, cry out,

And only weep for mercy

And turn to the wailing grief of the blazing inferno.

But, meanwhile, the insane fire

Is both deaf and deafening,

Devouring all.

Then, from the windows, then on the roofs,

It soars yet higher, higher, higher.

And, as if to say: I yearn to soar even higher,

And flare up to meet the moonbeams,

And either I die now or fly up to the moon.

Oh, alarum bells, alarum bells, alarum bells,

If only you could turn back

This horror, these flames, these sparks, the glance,

The first glance of fire,

Which you now proclaim, with your wailing, weeping and ringing.

But now there is no salvation for us;

We are surrounded by flames, by seething,

And by terror and by rage.

Your summons, with such discordance of wild sounds,

Proclaims peril to us.

Then the deaf calamity grows, then falls, like the tide.

Our ears keenly hear the waves in the changing sounds.

Again it falls, again it sobs, the brazen, grinding surf!

IV. *Lento lugubre* – Baritone and Chorus

The Mournful Iron Bells

The funeral bell is tolling,
The long, slow bell!
The sounds of bitter sorrow are heard
And the dream of bitter life is ended.
The iron bell proclaims the sorrow of burial
And, involuntarily, we tremble,
And from our daily amusements we hasten,
And we sob, and we remember that one day our eyes will also close.
Unchangingly monotonous, the distant proclamation,
The funereal heavy ringing,
As if moaning, sorrowful, angry and weeping,
Grows into a long, slow resonance,
Proclaiming that the sufferer has fallen into eternal sleep.

The rusty belfries sternly repeat one message
Both for the righteous and the unrighteous:
That on your heart there will lie a stone,
And that your eyes will close in sleep.
The funereal torch is burning,
But from the bell-tower someone cries, someone loudly speaks.
A dark figure is standing there.
It roars with laughter and it thunders
And it howls, howls, howls.
It clings to the bell-tower
And swings the echoing bell.
The echoing bell sobs and sobs,
Moaning and groaning in the silent air,
Slowly, solemnly, proclaiming the eternal peace of the tomb.

Some of the printed music for this evening's concert has been hired from
Boosey & Hawkes Music Hire Library,
Surrey County Council Performing Arts Library and
Yorkshire Libraries and Information Music and Drama Service.

Francis Pott – Piano



Francis began his musical life as a chorister at New College, Oxford. He held an open music scholarship at Winchester College and then at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he studied composition with Robin Holloway and Hugh Wood while also pursuing piano studies privately in London with the distinguished British artist, Hamish Milne.

Throughout the 1990s Francis was John Bennett Lecturer in Music at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and also a lay clerk in the Choir of Winchester Cathedral. In 2001 he became Head of London College of Music, University of West London, later leading Research across the institution's wider Faculty of Arts and acceding in 2007 to the University's first ever Chair in Composition; he also holds the M.A. and postgraduate Mus.B. degrees of the University of Cambridge, a Fellowship of London College of Music (FLCM) and a Ph.D.

Francis prefers to see himself as one of a long line of composer-pianists for whom advanced pianism is a means to another end, and less as a 'career' performer; he regards playing as merely one among many manifestations of "being a musician". Nonetheless, he has been heard several times playing his own piano music on BBC Radio 3, has participated in a number of commercial CD recordings and has appeared at prestigious venues such as London's Wigmore Hall. He treasures the review of an Oxford critic who in the 1980s dubbed him "*a pianist possessed by a thousand devils*" after a performance of Liszt's *Dante Sonata*, seemingly with approval. He has done his best to live up – or down – to this ever since. An especial interest for Francis is the pianistic tradition of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; in particular, Russian repertoire and the music of Nikolai Medtner, a close friend of Rachmaninov.

In demand as a soloist and accompanist, he has also maintained piano duo partnerships with Roger Owens and Jeremy Filsell, the latter his predecessor as accompanist to Vivace and a brilliant exponent of his organ compositions over the past 30 years.

Sara Lian Owen – Soprano



Welsh soprano Sara Lian Owen completed her BMus at The Royal Academy of Music and graduated in 2010 with a First Class degree and a Regency Award.

In 2007 Sara was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Bursary Competition and she won the coveted Osborne Roberts Blue Riband Prize at the National Eisteddfod in 2010. Her concert work includes Mozart's *C minor Mass* and *Requiem*, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Will Todd's *Mass in Blue*. She has appeared on BBC Radio Wales, S4C, BBC2 and also at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Royal Albert

Hall and St Martin-in-the-Fields. During summer 2011 she appeared in Glyndebourne Festival Opera's first ever staging of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, under Vladimir Jurowski. Sara joined Royal Academy Opera in September 2011, to continue her studies with Elizabeth Ritchie and Ingrid Surgenor. In her first term she performed the role of Nora in Vaughan Williams' *Riders to the Sea*, conducted by Peter Robinson. Future engagements include Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* with the Waverley Singers and a second season at Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Sara is extremely grateful for the generous support of the Headley Trust in memory of Howard Milner, Ryan Davies Memorial Fund, The Josephine Baker Trust and The Arts Council of Wales.

The Vivace Chorus gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship of
Sara Lian Owen and Gareth Brynmor John
by the Josephine Baker Trust.

Edward Hughes – Tenor



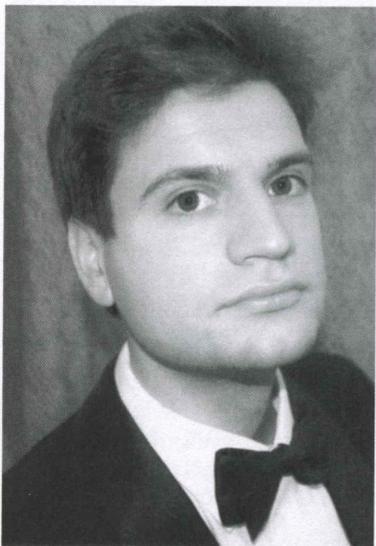
Edward Hughes studied at the Royal College of Music International Opera School (RCMIOS) with Tim Evans-Jones. Whilst there he was supported by an MBF Sybil Tutton Award, the Gisela Gledhill Award, the Wall Trust and the Christopher and Susan Gordon-Wells Award. He is also a Concordia Foundation Young Artist and Ambassador. In 2009, Edward graduated from Imperial College London with a MEng in Aeronautical Engineering.

Concert highlights include Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* at the Mini-Mahler and Edinburgh fringe festivals with members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and in London with the London Mahler

Orchestra, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* at Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Square, Verdi's *Requiem* with Vietnamese National Opera at Hanoi Opera House, Mozart's *Requiem* with the Royal Choral Society and London Philharmonic Orchestra, and Rachmaninov's *The Bells* with Canterbury Choral Society.

Edward performed the roles of Rinuccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* for Pervalidus Opera, Ferrando (cover) in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at Longborough Festival Opera, The Duke in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, Orpheus in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Haroun in Bizet's *Djamileh* for RCMIOS and Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* for London Youth Opera. Most recently, Edward covered for the tenor in Kenneth MacMillan's ballet *Song of the Earth* (Mahler) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Edward will be singing the role of the 1st Armed Man in *The Magic Flute* at Longborough Festival Opera in the summer.

Gareth Brynmor John – Baritone



Gareth Brynmor John has performed widely around the UK, with performances including the St John and St Matthew Passions, the Mozart, Haydn, Stanford and Fauré Requiems, Schubert Masses, *The Messiah* in St Martin-in-the-Fields, and Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* in St John's, Smith Square, and Philharmonic Hall, Ljubljana. Gareth has a keen interest in song repertoire and is part of the RAM Song Circle. Recent performances include Brahms op. 71 in the Duke's Hall and Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch* in the David Josefowitz Recital Hall at the Royal Academy of Music. A forthcoming recital at King's Place will feature works of Brahms.

In addition to concert work, Gareth's opera roles have included the Gendarme in the Cambridge University Opera Society (CUOS) production of Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*; Eliab in Samuel Hogarth's modern chamber opera, *David and Goliath*; the title role in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* as part of the Cambridge Summer Music Festival; the title role in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* with CUOS in West Road Concert Hall; Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with Shadwell Opera; Sid in Britten's *Albert Herring* with Shadwell Opera; The Ferryman in Britten's *Curlew River* with Royal Academy Opera (RAO) and Claudio in Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict* with Sir Colin Davis and John Copley (RAO). Forthcoming roles include Speaker in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (RAO) and The Count in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* as part of the Amersham Festival.

Gareth graduated in 2007 from St John's College, Cambridge, where he was a Choral Scholar and subsequently a Lay Clerk under David Hill and Andrew Nethsingha. He is now continuing his studies on the Royal Academy of Music Opera Course with Mark Wildman. Gareth is kindly supported by the Josephine Baker Trust and is the Reizenstein Scholar.

Jeremy Backhouse



Jeremy Backhouse began his musical career in Canterbury Cathedral, where he was Head Chorister, and later studied music at Liverpool University. He spent 5 years as Music Editor at the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), where he was responsible for the transcription of print music into Braille. In 1986 he joined EMI Records as a Literary Editor and from April 1990 combined his work as a

Consultant Editor for EMI Classics and later Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers with his career as a freelance conductor.

In January 1995, Jeremy was appointed Chorus Master and subsequently Music Director of the Vivace Chorus (then the Guildford Philharmonic Choir). Jeremy has presented and conducted some ambitious programmes, including Howell's *Hymnus Paradisi* and Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater*, Mahler's '*Resurrection*' *Symphony (No. 2)*, Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, Mendelssohn's '*Lobgesang*' (*Symphony No. 2*), Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*, and, most recently, Mahler's '*Symphony of a Thousand*' (*No. 8*) in the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Major classical popular works have included Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Verdi's *Requiem* and Haydn's *The Creation*.

Since 1980, Jeremy has been the conductor of the Vasari Singers, acknowledged as one of the finest chamber choirs in the country, performing music from the Renaissance to contemporary commissions. Jeremy is totally committed to contemporary music and to the commissioning of new works. He and Vasari have commissioned over 20 works in their recent history, and this enthusiasm has spread to the Vivace Chorus who, in May 2009, performed the premiere of their first commission – local composer Will Todd's *Te Deum*.

Jeremy has also worked with a number of the country's leading choirs, including the Philharmonia Chorus, the London Choral Society and the Brighton Festival Chorus. For 6 years, to the end of 2004, Jeremy was the Music Director of the Wooburn Singers, following Richard Hickox and Stephen Jackson. In January 2009, Jeremy was appointed Music Director of the Salisbury Community Choir.

The Brandenburg Sinfonia is one of the most dynamically versatile musical organisations in the country. It is renowned for its special quality of sound and poised vivacity in performance. The orchestra performs regularly in the majority of the major venues across the country, and in London at the Barbican, Royal Albert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Fairfield Halls and St John's, Smith Square. The Brandenburg Sinfonia is also in great demand abroad and has visited France, USA, Bermuda, the Channel Islands, Barbados, Russia, Germany, Japan and Hong Kong. In 1999 the orchestra established major concert series at both St Martin-in-the-Fields and Crystal Palace Bowl.

The orchestra's repertoire ranges from Bach to Lloyd Webber and its members give around 100 performances during the year, as well as forming the touring companies for First Act Opera, London City Opera, Opera Holland Park, London Opera Players and Central Festival Opera.

Violin 1

Charlotte Scott
Liz van Ments
Kirra Thomas
Rebecca Totterdell
Barbara Dziewiecka
Cecilia Romero
Melissa Reiner
Barbara Zdziarska
Hitoshi Suzuki
Chris Rutland

Violin 2

Oriana Kristzen
Gabriella Nikula
Joanna McWheeney
Christiane Eidsten
Dahl
Emma Martin
Judith Choi Castro
Iwona Boesche

Viola

Julia Knight
Mariam Ruetschi
Triona Milne
Miriam Eisele
Ester Harling
Estafania Manzo

Cello

Adrian Bradbury
Harriet Wiltshire
Gabriella Swallow
Lucy Wilding
Sarah Westley
Tai-Mi Song

Bass

Merheban Gillett
Jan Zahourek
Kate Aldridge
Laura Campbell

Flute

Robert Manasse
Kimberley Boyle
Lynn Peters

Piccolo

Nicola Smedley

Oboe

Stephen Hudson
Rachel Broadbent
Katie Bennington

Cor Anglais

Sophie McMillan

Clarinet

Juan Lluna
Felicity Vine
Kristal Hamson

Bass Clarinet

Sarah Watts

Bassoon

Adam McKenzie
Tom Hardy
Robert Bourton

Contra Bassoon

Rosie Cow

Horn

Dave Lee
Adrian Uren
Nick Wolmark
Jason Koczur
Emma Whitney
Susie Koczur

Trumpet

Chris Deacon
Gillian Hicks
David Geoghegan

Trombone

Susan White
Mark Townend
Andrew Lester

Tuba

Adrian Miotti

Timpani

Tristan Fry

Percussion

Tim Evans
Janne Metsapelto
Sarah Stuart

Harp

Vicky Lester

Celeste

Christopher Herrick

About Vivace Chorus

Jeremy Backhouse Music Director

Francis Pott Accompanist

James Garrow Chairman

Vivace Chorus has two aims: to make music of the highest standard and to have fun while doing so.

The choir has come a long way since it began over 60 years ago as the Guildford Philharmonic Choir, gaining over time an enviable reputation for performing first-class concerts across a wide range of musical repertoire.



Since 1995, the choir has thrived under the exceptional leadership of our Music Director, Jeremy Backhouse, ably supported by Francis Pott. Jeremy's passion for choral works and his sheer enthusiasm for music-making are evident at every rehearsal and every performance, and Francis is not just a very fine rehearsal accompanist but is also a composer of international reputation and a concert pianist in his own right. Hence we are delighted that Francis will be taking centre-stage performing Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2* in tonight's concert.



We relish the opportunity to perform more unusual works such as Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, or Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* as much as the great choral masterpieces of Verdi, Bach, Brahms, Handel or Haydn. At a more intimate level, we are at home with the works of Fauré, Tavener, Allegri or Lauridsen. Contemporary music is an important

feature of the repertoire and our 'Contemporary Choral Classics' series, which has featured works such as Will Todd's *Mass in Blue*, is designed both to challenge the choir and to promote the classics of the future.

Our most recent successes have included a sell-out performance of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, the 'Symphony of a Thousand', at the Royal Albert Hall in May 2011, involving five choirs and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jeremy, and a performance last November of the Brahms *Requiem* which prompted a reviewer to say, "Guildford is indeed most fortunate to have such a great ensemble in its midst". In March this year we made our highly successful debut at Guildford's new venue 'G Live' with a very popular programme – *A Night at the Opera* – see page 21 for a review. We are very pleased to welcome back two of the soloists for tonight's concert.

To start the 2012-2013 season, we will be performing Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* in November. Composed and first performed 50 years ago to celebrate the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral, it has become one of the defining masterpieces of the 20th century.

In addition to our own concerts, we also sing in charity concerts such as the Shooting Star CHASE Carol Concert, at the Mayor of Guildford's Carol Concert and, with our good friends the Brandenburg Sinfonia, we sing twice a year in the superb venue of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

We also, on occasion, venture further afield. Trips abroad have included visits to Freiburg, Germany, to sing with the Freiburger Bachchor and, in June 2009, to France where we gave concerts of music from the early 16th to late 20th centuries in the cathedrals of Paris (Notre-Dame), Rouen and Beauvais. Next month we are off on tour again, this time giving concerts in Strasbourg, Heidelberg and Freiburg.

New members are always welcome, so if you love beautiful choral music and want to have fun singing, please contact Jane Brooks at membership@vivacechorus.org to find out how you can be a part of our exciting future. We rehearse in Holy Trinity Church, Guildford High Street, on Monday evenings.

For more information, do visit our website, vivacechorus.org, where you can also sign up to receive information about our concerts, email us on info@vivacechorus.org or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.



Vivace Chorus Singers

FIRST SOPRANOS

Christine Asbridge
Helen Beevers
Mary Broughton
Elaine Chapman
Rachel Edmondson
Mo Kfour
Susan Norton
Margaret Perkins
Gillian Rix
Carol Terry
Joan Thomas
Sally Varley

SECOND SOPRANOS

Jacqueline Alderton
Anna Arthur
Marianne Illsley
Jane Kenney
Krystyna Marsden
Alison Palmer
Kate Peters
Isobel Rooth
Judy Smith
Philippa Smith
Paula Sutton
Christine Wilks
Frances Worpe

FIRST ALTOS

Barbara Barklem
Penny Baxter
Jane Brooks
Liz Durning
Kate Emerson
Jean Leston
Judith Lewy
Lois McCabe
Kay McManus
Christine Medlow
Rosalind Milton
Mary Moon

Penny Muray
Gill Perkins
Lesley Scordellis
Catherine Shacklady
Ann Smith
Marjory Stewart
Hilary Trigg
Maggie Woolcock

SECOND ALTOS

Valerie Adam
Evelyn Beastall
Sylvia Chantler
Mary Clayton
Elizabeth Evans
Valerie Garrow
Margaret Grisewood
Barbara Hilder
Carol Hobbs
Yvonne Hungerford
Margaret Mann
Val Morcom
Jacqueline Norman
Beryl Northam
Sheila Rowell
Prue Smith
Jo Stokes
Rosey Storey
Anne Whitley
June Windle
Elisabeth Yates

FIRST TENORS

Mike Bishop
Bob Bromham
Bob Cowell
Tim Hardyment
Nick Manning
Martin Price
Chris Robinson
John Trigg

SECOND TENORS

John Bawden
Ewan Bramhall
Peter Butterworth
Tony Chantler
Geoff Johns
Stephen Linton
Peter Norman
Jon Scott
John Thornely

FIRST BASSES

Phil Beastall
John Britten
Stephen Chowns
Michael Golden
Brian John
Jeremy Johnson
Eric Kennedy
Jonathan Long
Chris Newbery
Adrian Oxborrow
Chris Peters
Robin Privett
David Ross
Philip Stanford
Barry Sterndale-Bennett

SECOND BASSES

Peter Andrews
Roger Barrett
Norman Carpenter
Geoffrey Forster
James Garrow
Stuart Gooch
Nick Gough
Michael Jeffery
Neil Martin
Roger Penny
Michael Taylor



A Night at the Opera, 17 March 2012

From a review by Gillian Ramsden

A venture to thrill the heart of this ex-opera singer took place last night at G Live. Guildford's new concert venue hosted the Vivace Chorus in an exciting programme of operatic favourites old and new. We are used to the serious side of this choir in the soaring space of Guildford Cathedral, even the plush grandeur of the Royal Albert Hall, but tonight we saw Vivace in a new light. Singing one or two works chosen to complement each other in a programme is one thing, but dipping a toe into so many, and varied, styles of opera, (not an oratorio in sight), is not a venture for the faint hearted!

The Brandenburg Sinfonia opened the programme with a lively performance of the overture from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and then the stage quickly filled with townsfolk eager to welcome the picadors and toreadors in *The March of the Toreadors* from Bizet's *Carmen*... The singing was full of vitality and the difficult choral entries in this Bizet chorus were precisely executed.

As number after number went by, the choir showed mastery of French, German, Italian and Russian, not just the language but the styles too. The broad sweeps of sound in the choruses from *Die Meistersinger* and *Boris Godunov* were a joy. Only in the *Easter Hymn* did the musical entries get behind as the choir moved on-stage already singing, but it happens at Covent Garden too!

The Triumphant scene from Verdi's *Aida* encapsulated all the strengths of this excellent choir; beautiful *piano* singing, especially in the section for ladies only; full rich *forte* sections, and excellent entries. Thanks too to the wonderful trumpets.

All the soloists deserve mention: Sara Lian Owen has a soprano voice which showed itself capable of singing with the colour necessary for Dido's *Lament* but also able to spin out the limpid lines of Rusalka's *Song to the Moon*. However it was in the Puccini arias that it found its home.

Thomas Faulkner's bass had all the 'Russian' darkness necessary for *Boris* and I expect to hear more of him in the future. Gareth Brynmor John has a baritone voice of great beauty and flexibility and sang with ease and control; another voice to look out for in future. The tenor, Philip Modeno, brought us all the opera 'pops'... with all the full and ringing tone one has come to expect when hearing these well-loved numbers. Special praise for *Nessun Dorma*... just imagine singing *that* straight after the *Brindisi*!

The orchestra in full flight sometimes overpowered the singers, but this is an accomplished group, as it showed in its sparkling performance of the *Polovtsian Dances*. This was an encore to be proud of, and a definite 'party piece' for Vivace.

Thanks to Jeremy Backhouse for conducting throughout with such verve and commitment; quite a *tour-de-force*.

Vivace Chorus Patrons

The Vivace Chorus is extremely grateful to all Patrons for their financial support.

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Mrs Doreen Bellerby MBE

Dr John Trigg MBE

Platinum Patrons:

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Maggie van Koetsveld

Without the help of Patrons, together with grants and our other fundraising efforts, we would be unable to perform such a wide-ranging and exciting repertoire. Patrons receive certain benefits so if you would like to join do please contact Barry Sterndale-Bennett on 07753 958726 or email patrons@vivacechorus.org.

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CENTENARY CELEBRATION 1911 - 2011

Vivace Chorus dates for your diary

RNLI Gala concert

Saturday, 13 October 2012 – Holy Trinity Church

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*

Saturday, 17 November 2012 – Guildford Cathedral

Composed and first performed 50 years ago for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral, the *War Requiem* has become one of the defining masterpieces of the 20th century – a devastating meditation on the pity of war that is every bit as relevant today. This is a large-scale but poignant work, interspersing the war poetry of Wilfred Owen, killed just a week before the end of World War 1, with the text of the *Requiem* mass. It is a timeless message to everyone worldwide. There will be a retiring collection in aid of 'Help for Heroes'.

A note from Vivace Chorus bass John Britten, Benjamin Britten's nephew:

My Uncle Benjamin experienced World War 1 as a young child in much-bombed Lowestoft. Although his passionate pacifism will have been reinforced by the many wars of the 20th century, notably the Spanish Civil War and World War 2, I feel that the seeds of his attitudes and convictions were already being sown by what he saw and heard in his first five years of life. The War Requiem was perhaps his greatest effort to warn of the dangers and horrors of war.

**Further details at vivacechorus.org
or from info@vivacechorus.org**

The staging for tonight's concert is owned by the Association of Surrey Choirs.

To hire please contact Carrie Tinsley, Cathedral Office. tel: 01483 547870

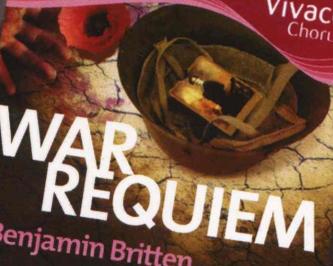
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Looking forward
to seeing you next
season ...

Vivace Chorus



WAR REQUIEM
Benjamin Britten

Saturday
17th Nov 2012
7:30 pm Guildford Cathedral

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Vivace Chorus



Come and Sing

Bach:
Mass in B minor

Saturday
26th January 2013
Booking opens 1st October

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CONCERTO
ELGAR

Soloist:
Julian
Lloyd
Webber

The Music
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Saturday
9th March 2013
7:30 pm G Live

Will Todd:
Angel Song II

John Rutter:
Mass of the Children

Paul Mealor:
Ubi caritas et amor

Bob Chilcott:
Requiem

Vivace
Chorus



Saturday
25th May 2013
7:30 pm Guildford Cathedral

In November we celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest works of the 20th Century; in March we're 'Music Making' with Julian Lloyd Webber and in May you can come to hear the music of four fantastic, living British composers. Or, 'Come and Sing' Bach with us in January.

FRONT NAVE £22:00

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