

Summertown Choral Society
conductor: Duncan Saunderson

Haydn

Spring & Summer

from The Seasons

Dvořák: Songs of Nature

Bartók: Four Slovak Folk Songs

Arensky: Praise the Lord in Heaven

Louise Wayman, soprano

Benjamin Durrant, tenor

Brian McAlea, bass

Julian Littlewood, piano



Saturday 4th June 2016

St Andrew's Church

Programme

Haydn THE SEASONS

Part I : Spring

OVERTURE

RECITATIVE *Behold where surly winter flies*

CHORUS *Come, gentle spring*

RECITATIVE *At last the bounteous sun*

AIR *With joy the impatient husbandman*

RECITATIVE *Laborious man hath done his part*

TRIO & CHORUS *Be propitious, bounteous heaven*

RECITATIVE & AIR *Our fervent prayers are heard*

DUET & CHORUS *Spring, her lovely charms unfolding*

CHORUS *God of Light*

Bartok FOUR SLOVAK FOLKSONGS

Wedding Song from Poniky

Song of the Hayharvesters from Hiadel

Dancing Song from Medzibrod

Dancing Song from Poniky

～ INTERVAL ～

Dvořák

SONGS OF NATURE, OP. 63

Melodies Fell into My Soul

Ev'ning Bells Ring

In the Rye Fields

Out of the Woods

Come, let us Dance and Sing Together

Haydn

THE SEASONS

Part II : Summer

RECITATIVE *Her face in dewy veil conceal'd*

AIR *From out the fold the shepherd drives*

RECITATIVE *Lo! Now aslant the dew-bright earth*

TRIO & CHORUS *Behold on high he mounts*

RECITATIVE *Now swarms the village o'er the mead*

RECITATIVE *'Tis noon, and now direct the sun*

CAVATINA *Distressful nature fainting sinks*

RECITATIVE *Oh welcome now, ye shady groves!*

AIR *Oh how pleasing to the senses*

RECITATIVE *Behold! Slow settling o'er the lurid grove*

CHORUS *Hark! The deep tremendous voice*

TRIO & CHORUS *Now cease the conflicts fierce of winds*

Arensky

Praise ye the Lord in Heaven

Summertown Choral Society

Duncan Saunderson, *conductor*



Louise Wayman, *soprano*

Benjamin Durrant, *tenor*

Brian McAlea, *bass*



Julian Littlewood, *piano*

Summertown Choral Society was founded in 1961. The choir is directed by Duncan Saunderson and the accompanist is Julian Littlewood. New members are always welcome, without audition, to this friendly and well-established choir. The choir season runs from September to June and we perform two concerts each season. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings 8–9.30pm at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Lonsdale Road, Summertown.

Rehearsals for our new term start on Thursday 8th September at 8 p.m. Why not come and join us? SCS has vacancies for all voices and we would be delighted to see you in September! Please support us by spreading the word.

More information about the choir, including details of repertoire, can be found on the choir's website at www.summertownchoral.org.uk.

Programme Notes

Haydn: *The Seasons*

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), born in Rohrau, Austria, moved towards the end of his life to Vienna in 1795, where he came under the influence of a far-sighted patron and fellow composer, Baron Gottfried van Swieten, one of the chief architects of Emperor Joseph II's educational and religious reforms, who encouraged Haydn to write *The Seasons*. As a former diplomat, van Swieten was acquainted with the music of Bach and Handel and was particularly interested in large choral works. Van Swieten supplied Haydn with a libretto based on a poem in blank verse first published in 1730, expanded in 1744, with help from Pope and Lyttleton, by the Scottish poet James Thomson (1700-48), the author of *Rule, Britannia*. This Enlightenment text saw the earth and natural world as part of an increasingly ordered universe, with mankind's position in it in balance, the text exploring the natural events of the seasons from a human perspective, but as part of an ordered divine cosmos. This is, therefore, both a secular and a sacred cantata. While it describes the annual farming round and its traditional pursuits, at a deeper level it is a delineation of the cycle of human life itself. Haydn's music, first performed in 1801, has an exuberance and humour characteristic of his later works.

After an overture and depiction of the retreat of winter, *Spring* begins with soloists and chorus welcoming the arrival of the season. The husbandman is seen ploughing; here Haydn quotes from his Symphony No 94 (*The Surprise*). This is followed by an entreaty to make the land fruitful, on which mankind depends. The singers then express the joy of going into the fields. *Spring* concludes with a chorus praising God who is seen as giving everything and gladdening the people's hearts.

In *Summer*, following an introduction, the shepherd drives his flock out into the fields. Haydn then writes a Turner-esque portrayal of a dazzling sunrise for chorus, followed by a vivid portrayal of a thunderstorm. Next we hear the shepherd walking home, a quail calling, crickets chirping and frogs croaking, at evening under a starry sky, while the chorus intones the evening bell.

Dvořák: *Songs of Nature*

Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904) was born in Nelahozeves near Prague, the son of an innkeeper and butcher. He was much encouraged and assisted by Brahms, and influenced by composers from his native Bohemia.

Songs of Nature Op. 63 has words by Vítězslav Hálek (1835–74), with an English translation for this performance by Fergus Black. The work has a natural freshness and incorporates or imitates Czech folksong. Dvořák, a master of both melody and key-changes, transports us into a magical, hypnotic world. No 1 *Melodies fall into my soul* describes how songs come into the poet's mind. He is compelled to set them down, whether they are joyful or sad; they are like a dream. No 2 portrays the sounds of nature in the forest at evening, such as the cuckoo and nightingale, and the tolling of a church bell. In No 3 as the poet watches the ripening grain, he hears an orchestra of musicians playing for him to dance to. No 4 expresses the gradual coming of spring, with the smells, the colours and the sounds, which are likened to shawm and violin. No 5 likens the natural world to a spiritual experience for which the city-dweller is longing. The nightingale sings a chant, nature is the Bible whose pages open before a receptive observer; Earth and Heaven are one.

Bartók: *Four Slovak Folksongs*

Béla Bartók (1881–1945) was born in Sannicolau Mare, Transylvania (now Romania). His mother was from Slovakia and he was educated there in Bratislava. After his father's death in 1888 he and his mother moved to Budapest. His interest in folksong was awakened while he was staying on a Slovak farm and heard a servant singing. Altogether he transcribed many folksongs, including about 3,400 from Slovakia. The *Four Slovak Folksongs for Mixed Chorus and Piano*, published in 1917, have slow-moving harmonies and aching key-transitions. In No 1 a mother sends her daughter away to be married, but the daughter refuses to marry a 'bad husband' and turns herself into a blackbird. No 2 is a haymaking song, in irregular rhythms, suggesting the strength and exuberance of the harvest workers. No 3 is dance-like and lively. No 4 imitates the drone of bagpipes.

Arensky: Praise ye the Lord in Heaven

Anton Arensky (1861-1906) was born in Novgorod, Russia. He was musically precocious while young and studied in St Petersburg with Rimsky-Korsakov. His opera *A Dream on the Volga* was successfully premiered in Moscow in 1891. Despite living a somewhat dissolute life, he composed many religious works and was much influenced by folksong. His motet *Praise Ye the Lord in Heaven* is strikingly beautiful and was probably composed for the Imperial Choir of St Petersburg, of which he was director from 1895.

Andrew Crispus-Jones

The Choir

Sopranos

Victoria Alexander, Jane Amies, Gill Atkinson, Judith Atkinson, Liz Baird, Wendy Ball, Gillian Beattie, Nicky Boughton, Victoria Cairns, Margrit Campbell, Suzanne Cloke, Fiona Crosse, Rosemary Tilly Dearden, Maureen Downes, Jackie Eatock Taylor, De Grant, Debbie Hamilton, Angela Hassall, Anne Kendall, Gillian Morriss-Kay, Chela Nunez, Sally Prime, Moira Robinson, Laura Rugeroni, Elina Screen, Eliza Swinn and Julia Wigg.

Altos

Stuart Archard, Diane Benfield, Caroline Best, Hilary Blair, Vreni Booth, Marie Bridge, Emma Britton, Alison Broadbent, Helen Brown, Vicky Bullard, Rosie Butler, Sue Cavanna, Gillian Chapman, Diana Chandler, Karin Eldredge, Felicity Feeny, Gerry Guinan, Janet Howarth, Elizabeth Johnston, Alison Jones, Manda Joyce, Jill Jukes, Jenny Kitovitz, Claire Lewis, Rosie Lodwick, Elsa Morgan, Meg Movshon, Di O'Meara, Jo Poulton, Marion Robertson, Amanda Saville, Frances Simpson, Louise Talbot, Lynda Ware and Jackie Weaver.

Tenors

Philip Booth, David Crispin, Alastair Dent, Hugo Everitt, Iain McLean, Sasha Ockendon, Olivier Sète, Keith Skerrett and David Wedge.

Basses

Chris Andrews, Paul Blaikley, Clive Booth, Charles Bridge, Anthony Cohen, Andrew Crispus Jones, Tony Gillman, Nigel Hamilton, Tom Kempton, John McLeod, Jack Miller, Jean-Louis Metzger, Jack Miller, Royston Morgan, Patrick O'Meara, Chris Romney, David Roulston, Peter Shaw, Clive Williams, Simon Wratten, Stuart Wright and Keith Young.

The Soloists

Louise Wayman, soprano

Louise, originally from Dorset, studies at the Wales International Academy of Voice with Dennis O'Neill and Nuccia Focile. Previously she studied at Birmingham Conservatoire with Christine Cairns winning prizes for Oratorio, English Song, Lieder, Opera, Academic Achievement and Recitals.

Opera credits include Amore in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Adina in scenes from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, all with Birmingham Conservatoire, Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen* for Oxford International Links, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for Operamus, Soprano Solo 4 in Stockhausen's *Mittwoch aus Licht*, Giannetta in *The Elixir of Love* by Donizetti with Midland Opera and Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for Moon-Little Theatre. She also sang for the theatre piece, *Trauerzeit*, with Belgian actor Johan Leysen and composer Dominique Pauwels.

Solo engagements have included Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's C Minor Mass and *Exsultate, jubilate*, Haydn's *Creation* and *Nelson Mass* and Bach Cantatas in liturgy at St Michael at the North Gate, Oxford. She was a finalist in the 2012 Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards and the 2015 Dean and Chadlington and London Bach Singing Competitions.

www.louisewayman.com

Benjamin Durant, tenor

Benjamin Durrant is a young British tenor, currently studying for a Master of Performance degree at the Royal College of Music where he is the Cuthbert Smith Scholar, generously supported by a Douglas and Hilda Simmonds Award, and the Josephine Baker Trust. He studies with Tim Evans-Jones and Gary Matthewman.

Recent and future solo engagements include Handel's *Messiah* for Reigate and Redhill Choral Society, Bach's *St John Passion* (Evangelist) at Ely Cathedral, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* at Chichester Cathedral, Haydn's *Stabat Mater* at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and Mozart's *Requiem* with Jersey Festival Choir.

Recent and future opera roles include *Tamino* (*Die Zauberflöte*) in the RCM opera scenes, as well as *Husband* (76 Days) and *Martin* (Killer Graphics) for Crime and Punishment, a series of freshly composed mini operas produced by the Royal College of Music in association with Tête à Tête directed by Bill Bankes-Jones.

In addition to solo performing, Benjamin also enjoys ensemble singing, and has performed with groups such as The Sixteen, Stile Antico, Chapelle du Roi, and Contrapunctus, as well as with the choirs of Westminster Cathedral, The Choir of the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London, and Temple Church, London.

Benjamin started singing at the age of seven with the choir of St. John's College, Cambridge under Christopher Robinson. He went on to read Biochemistry at Magdalen College, Oxford where he was a choral scholar under Daniel Hyde, before spending two years as a Lay Clerk at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford under Stephen Darlington.

Brian McAlea, *bass*

Northern Irish baritone, Brian McAlea, graduated from Oxford University in 2015 where he read Music and sang with the Choir of New College under both Professor Edward Higginbottom and Professor Robert Quinney. He is currently studying for a postgraduate degree in Vocal Studies with Robert Dean at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama for which he is kindly supported by The Peter Nutting Charitable Trust, The Kathleen Trust, The Chizel Educational Trust, The Michael James Music Trust and The Robert Vivian Memorial Trust.

Solo highlights include Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at this year's Oxford Early Music Festival; Handel's *Messiah* with the Instruments of Time and Truth in the Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona conducted by Edward Higginbottom; MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* with the Britten Sinfonia, conducted by Eamonn Dougan; Brahms's *Requiem* with the Blenheim Singers; and Mozart's *Requiem* and Haydn's *Seasons* with the Oxford University Chorus.

Opera highlights include Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas* with Sestina; Dr. P in Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* with New Chamber Opera; and the role of the Cold Genius in Purcell's *King Arthur* also with Sestina. He is currently working as a member of the chorus in Nevill Holt Opera's productions of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*.

Julian Littlewood, *piano*

Julian held an organ scholarship while reading music at St Peter's College, Oxford (1994-1997). He then completed a Masters and a PhD in music analysis, on variation form in the works of Johannes Brahms, at King's College, London. He works as a graphic designer, but continues to perform frequently. He is Chapel Organist at Wadham College, organist at All Saints' Church Headington, and has accompanied SCS since 1997.

55 years and still singing!

1961 was a special year for many reasons: Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space; John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President of the United States; the music entrepreneur George Epstein met the Beatles, and Angela Mortimer beat Christine Truman in an all-British women's final at Wimbledon. Closer to home, in St Michael's Church Summertown, in December the Summertown Choral Society put on its first concert (Fauré's *Requiem*). Fifty-five years later, more than 500 people have joined the ranks of space travellers (none apparently from SCS!), the US expects to have a woman running for President, and vinyls of the Beatles are collectors' classics. SCS, as we're affectionately known, is going from strength to strength, with some hundred concerts to its credits - our historical records for the 1960s and early 1970s are incomplete, so it may in fact be more. Which means that some two thousand members have sung with us. Some can only stay for a season or two – Oxford has a very mobile population – but others are well into their second or even third decade in the choir. So what makes SCS special?

Our website (www.summertownchoral.org.uk) gives a few clues. First, it's a combination of music and pleasure. 'We are a large and inclusive choir in which members of all standards enjoy singing. Musicianship is fostered with a planned rehearsal schedule, workshops and opportunities to sing in smaller groups. The social side of music-making is also something we enjoy, with regular events, parties, and an annual choir holiday. Everyone should be able to enjoy choral singing and we try to make this happen.'

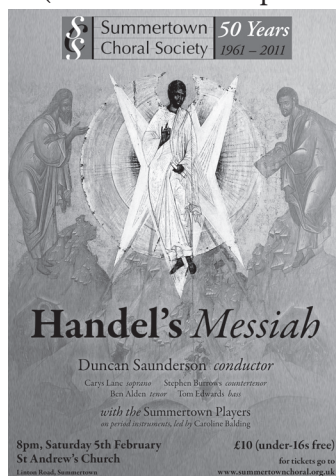


Secondly, the repertoire is unusually varied. Obvious favourites like Handel's *Messiah* or Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* are certainly revisited – they've both featured roughly once a decade – but we've ranged recently from Monteverdi's *Vespers* to contemporary works commissioned especially for the choir, including Bill Ives's *Songs of Ariel*, based on texts from Shakespeare, and, for the choir's Golden Jubilee concert in 2011, Philip Moore's *Three Oxford*

Songs. Since its foundation, SCS has taken on major works such as Brahms's *German Requiem* and Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor* alongside less familiar miniatures such as Britten's *Five Flower Songs* and Randall Thompson's *Frostiana*. In February 2012, the choir performed J.S. Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with period instruments: '... this seemed a particularly spirited and heartfelt performance. Conductor Duncan Saunderson was bristling with purpose as he took to the stand, and the 130-strong choir was in fine fettle, delivering the choruses with commitment and enthusiasm.' (*Oxford Times*, February 2012).

Last and not least, the choir has been led and accompanied by a series of committed musicians. 2016 marks Duncan Saunderson's 20th anniversary as director of SCS. Duncan graduated from the Guildhall School of Music in 1985, and regularly deputised in the choirs of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral under some of the finest choral conductors including John Scott, Simon Preston, and Barry Rose. He then joined New College Choir as a professional lay-clerk in 1990, and for nearly twenty-five years sang six evenings a week under Edward Higginbottom, Oxford University's first Professor of Choral Music. During this time, New College Choir recorded more than fifty discs (winning International Gramophone Awards 1998/2008), and toured in the USA, Japan, Australia and most European countries. Duncan now combines singing and conducting (including directing SCS on Thursday evenings!) with singing-teaching in London and Oxfordshire.

If you want to explore musical pastures new and familiar, with a very friendly, large choir, under the baton of a seasoned director (and with an exceptional accompanist, as you'll discover tonight), our 2016-17 season offers you the chance. Rehearsals for the January 2017 concert start in September 2016, and it's 'basically Bach' (three parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* and the motet 'Lobet den Herrn') with a foray into Buxtehude (the Danish-German Baroque composer). Our 2017 summer concert, in early June, will bring the idiom of Romantic opera, combining Puccini's earliest *Mass* with a selection of opera choruses. We look forward to seeing you!



Saturday 4th February 2017

Bach:
Christmas Oratorio
(parts 4–6)

Buxtehude: 'Ad ubera portabimini'
from *Membra Jesu Nostri*

Bach: *Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden*

St Andrew's Church, Summertown

Saturday 3rd June, 2017

Puccini:
Messa di Gloria

Opera Choruses

St Andrew's Church, Summertown

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www.summertownchoral.org.uk