

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Dvořák
Slavonic Dance Op. 46 No. 8

Poulenc
Organ Concerto
Simon Russell – organ

Dvořák
Stabat Mater

Milly Forrest - soprano

Susan Marrs - mezzo-soprano

Stephen Newlove - tenor

Jacob Phillips - bass

The Nantwich Sinfonia

John Naylor - Conductor

St Mary's Church, Nantwich

Saturday 24th March 2018, 7.30 pm

On behalf of the Nantwich Choral Society I would like to welcome you to our concert. The choir, now in its 45th season, began its life as an evening class but rapidly took on a life of its own and has become one of the most accomplished and well-regarded choirs in the North West of England. For the last eleven years we have been fortunate to have the inspirational John Naylor as our Music Director and we are also blessed with a fine accompanist, Simon Russell, who will be heard to full effect as a soloist on the organ today.

Dvořák is perhaps not the first composer one thinks of in connection with the choral music repertoire, though some of his orchestral pieces are deservedly extremely popular and the lovely 'Song to the Moon' from his opera *Rusalka* is also well known. I hope we will demonstrate this evening that his *Stabat Mater* is worth getting to know every bit as much as the popular favourites that he wrote. While inevitably of a reflective and moving nature, as befits a setting of the Latin poem about the Virgin Mary's grief at Christ's crucifixion, the *Stabat Mater* is also very uplifting, particularly in the last movement.

Unusually tonight, the whole of the first part of the concert before the interval will be orchestral. One of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* and Poulenc's sparkling and impressive *Organ Concerto* are on the bill for the enjoyment of choir and audience alike.

As ever, we are delighted to welcome the Nantwich Sinfonia and today's soloists. After all the hard work of rehearsing, much of the reward that we amateur singers experience comes from having the opportunity to perform with an orchestra of professional musicians.

This opportunity comes, however, at a price, and the resources required to put on our concerts are considerable. We wish to acknowledge our gratitude for the legacies, sponsorships, gifts, grants and donations which help us maintain and develop our musical standards. Recently we have received grants from Cheshire East and Nantwich Town Council, and we are very grateful for ongoing support from the Harding Trust. Without the generosity of these bodies and others it would not be possible for our choral society to put on concerts of a high standard, using professional soloists and orchestral players as required. I hope you, the audience, will enjoy tonight's concert as much as we will enjoy performing it for you.

Kay Foster

COMMENTARY

Antonín Dvořák - Slavonic Dances

Prior to the publication of the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, Dvořák was a relatively unknown composer and was of modest means. Consequently, he had applied for the Austrian State Prize fellowship (German "Stipendium") in order to fund his composing work. After he won the prize three times in four years (1874, 1876 and 1877), Johannes Brahms, as one of the members of the committee responsible for awarding the stipend, referred Dvořák to his own publisher, Fritz Simrock. The first of Dvořák's music to be published by Simrock was the *Moravian Duets*, which attained widespread success; encouraged, Simrock asked the composer to write something with a dance-like character.

Unsure how to begin, Dvořák used Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* as a model—but only as a model; there are a number of important differences between the two works. For example, whereas Brahms made use of actual Hungarian folk melodies, Dvořák only made use of the characteristic rhythms of Slavic folk music: the melodies are entirely his own. Simrock was immediately impressed by the music Dvořák produced (originally for piano four hands), and asked the composer for an orchestral version as well. Both versions were published within the year, and quickly established Dvořák's international reputation. The enormous success of the Op. 46 dances led Simrock to request another set of *Slavonic Dances* in 1886; Dvořák's subsequent Op. 72 dances met with a similar reception.

The pieces, lively and full of national character, were well received at the time and today are considered among the composer's most memorable works, occasionally making appearances in popular culture.

Francis Poulenc - Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani

Born into a wealthy family in 1899, Francis Poulenc enjoyed comfortable private means all his life and never had to work for a living. His natural talent was evident at an early age, and private lessons in piano and composition were sufficient to confirm his vocation as a composer; he was almost unique among successful French composers in having no formal conservatoire training - a deficiency which the more academically minded members of the musical establishment were never able to accept.

The organ concerto was commissioned by Princesse Edmond de Polignac in 1934, as a piece with a chamber orchestra accompaniment and an easy organ part that the princess could probably play herself. Princesse Edmond de Polignac ('Winnie' to her friends) was previously Winnaretta Singer, an enthusiastic painter, pianist and organist with a passion for the arts. Heiress of the Singer sewing-machine fortune, she had left her native America and settled in France, where she married into the French aristocracy and devoted her life to artistic patronage.

Poulenc quickly abandoned the idea of simplicity for something much more grandiose and ambitious. He wrote: "The concerto...is not the amusing Poulenc of the Concerto for two pianos, but more like a Poulenc en route for the cloister." The death of a colleague and friend, the young critic and composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud, in the spring of 1936 made Poulenc go on a pilgrimage to the Black Virgin of Rocamadour, where he rediscovered his Christian faith. This new religious conviction not only nurtured an interest in religious music, which he began to compose, but also highly influenced his incomplete Organ Concerto. Indeed, Poulenc referred to it as being on the fringe of his religious works.

Poulenc himself had never actually composed for the organ before, and so he studied great baroque masterpieces for the instrument by Bach and Buxtehude; the work's neo-baroque feel reflects this. Poulenc was also advised about the instrument's registration and other aspects by the organist Maurice Duruflé. Duruflé was also the soloist in the private premiere of the work on 16 December 1938, with Nadia Boulanger conducting, at Princesse Edmond's salon. The first public performance was in June 1939 at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, with Duruflé once again the soloist and Roger Désormière conducting.

As the full title of the piece denotes, the piece is scored for a solo organ, timpani and a string orchestra. The piece uses such comparatively small forces, relative to Poulenc's other concertos, so that the piece could be played in any small space with an organ, such as Princesse Edmond's salon. Such performances were quite popular in France at the time. The piece would have been premiered on a Cavaillé-Coll instrument, as the company supplied many organs to private customers, one of whom was the princess.

About 20 minutes in length, the Organ Concerto in G minor comprises seven continuous sections. Respectively, these are: *Andante*, *Allegro giocoso*, *Subito andante moderato*, *Tempo allegro. Molto agitato*, *Très calme: Lent*, *Tempo de l'allegro initial* and *Tempo d'introduction: Largo*. Each movement often differs substantially in style, tone and texture. For example, the opening movements are loud and quite violent, with substantial organ chords; yet the following middle movements are much calmer, softer and more emotional.

Although the work is not organized into the three distinct movements of a typical concerto, it retains something of the conventional fast-slow-fast structure. Poulenc described it as "grave and austere," a great step in a new direction. "Properly speaking," he further explained, "it is not a concerto *da chiesa* (church concerto), but in limiting the orchestra to strings and timpani, I made performance in church possible."

The essence of the 'religious' Poulenc is distilled in the exquisite final pages, after the return of the initial Baroque flourish: transparent rocking phrases from the organ, followed by the hushed, intense processional of muted solo viola and plucked strings, on a bed of sensuous organ chords.

Not long before her death in exile in England during the war, the Princesse de Polignac wrote to Poulenc to thank him for the happiness which his work had brought her; her memories of 'her' Organ Concerto were expressed in five simple words—'its profound beauty haunts me'.

Antonín Dvořák - Stabat Mater

Antonín Dvořák began work on his setting of the text of the *Stabat Mater* in 1876 and completed in 1877. The text is a 13th-century Catholic hymn to Mary, which portrays her suffering as Jesus Christ's mother during his crucifixion. Its author may be either the Franciscan friar Jacopone da Todi (ca. 1230–1306) or Pope Innocent III. The title comes from its first line, *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, which means "the sorrowful mother was standing".

The hymn was sung at the liturgy for the commemoration of Our Lady of Sorrows. It was suppressed, along with hundreds of other sequences, by the Council of Trent, but restored to the missal by Pope Benedict XIII in 1727 for the Feast of the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Dvořák's setting of the *Stabat Mater* comes from a place of great personal tragedy, yet expresses tremendous hope. In 1875 Dvořák's oldest daughter, Josefa, died only days after her birth. The grieving Dvořák turned to the ancient text of the *Stabat Mater*, which describes Mary's grief at the death of her son. He completed an outline of the entire work but found it too painful and could not finish any of the movements. Two years later, his second daughter Ruzena, then a toddler, died when she drank from a bottle of phosphorus used to make matches. Shortly after, his first-born son Otakar died of smallpox. The now-childless 36-year old composer returned to the *Stabat Mater* sketches and completed the work within a month. It is one of the towering monuments of choral music. Dvořák's is by far the longest and most serious setting of the *Stabat Mater* text. Although conceived and written on a massive scale, Dvořák's setting of the *Stabat Mater* is very personal, focusing almost exclusively on the act of grieving as a path to the comfort of paradise.

The first performance took place on 23 December 1880 at the concert of the Association of Musical Artists in Prague. The performers included the operatic ensemble of the Czech Provisional Theatre, under the conductor Adolf Čech. The composer Leoš Janáček conducted the work a year and half later, on 2 April 1882, in Brno. Performances abroad (Budapest and London) soon ensued.

Stabat Mater, Dvořák's first work on a religious theme, lasts for some 85 minutes and is divided into ten individual parts: only the first and the last part are thematically connected:

1. *Quartetto, Coro. Andante con moto (Stabat Mater dolorosa)*
2. *Quartetto. Andante sostenuto (Quis est homo, qui non fleret)*
3. *Coro. Andante con moto (Eia, Mater, fons amoris)*
4. *Basso solo, Coro. Largo (Fac, ut ardeat cor meum)*
5. *Coro. Andante con moto, quasi allegretto (Tui nati vulnerati)*
6. *Tenore solo, Coro. Andante con moto (Fac me vere tecum flere)*
7. *Coro. Largo (Virgo virginum praeclara)*
8. *Duo. Larghetto (Fac, ut portem Christi mortem)*
9. *Alto solo. Andante maestoso (Inflammatus et accensus)*
10. *Quartetto, Coro. Andante con moto (Quando corpus morietur)*

Like Dvořák's symphonies, the most profound music in the *Stabat Mater* is in the first and last movements: both are lengthy and are the only movements to use all four soloists, choir and orchestra. They are also the only movements in triple time. Both use the same thematic material, which builds to tragedy in the opening movement and turns to transcendence in the final movement.

The first movement is an extended sonata form in symphonic style. It opens with a long orchestral introduction, then repeated with the chorus. A contrasting second theme is introduced by the soloists. A development section leads to the return of the opening material.

The second and next-to-last movements are written for soloists and orchestra only, with no choir. The third and seventh are for chorus and orchestra only with no soloists. The fourth and sixth are for soloists accompanied by half the choir (women in movement four and men in movement six).

The fifth movement, which forms the keystone of the structure, is for choir and orchestra with no soloists, and is the only movement in a compound time, synthesizing the triple time of the outer movements and the duple (two beats) time of the middle movements into six/eight time.

The final movement recalls the opening themes of the work, but then turns into the major key for a triumphant Amen fugue of considerable complexity.

Dvořák's greatest gift as a musician is his ability to write beautiful, lyrical, unforgettable melodies. And there are so many in the *Stabat Mater*, and yet, just one melody. Dvořák takes the unusual step of writing a coda to almost every movement of this work, where the main theme is transfigured into a major key, as if no amount of grief or sadness can overcome his faith in paradise. He then chooses a new key for the next movement and bases his new theme on the transfigured version of the previous melody.

In one sense, Dvořák's entire *Stabat Mater* is the journey of one sad theme looking for every possible method of resolution. In the finale of the last movement, when Dvořák

takes the unusual step of removing the orchestra entirely, and the choir breaks out unaccompanied into an amazing hymn of praise: "When my body dies, grant that to my soul be given the glory of paradise," you realise that the journey is over and that Dvořák believes that his children are in a better place. It is one of the most powerful declarations of faith in the history of music. (Dvořák's faith seemingly was rewarded, the year after completion of *Stabat Mater*, with the birth of the first of six children who grew to adulthood.)

After the relative frivolity of the earlier *Slavonic Dances* it was the *Stabat Mater* that launched Dvořák as not just a very good, but as one of the great composers.

Programme

Antonín Dvořák - Slavonic Dance Op. 46 No. 8

Francis Poulenc - Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani

Pause while the Choir take their seats

Antonín Dvořák - Stabat Mater

Short pause between movements 5 and 6

Stabat Mater – Text and Translation

Stabat mater dolorosa
juxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendebat Filius.

A mother stood grief-stricken.
by the cross, weeping,
while her son was hanging there.

Cujus animam gementem,
contristatam et dolentem,
pertransivit gladius.

As she shared in his sorrow
And grieved, a sword
Pierced her groaning heart.

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta,
mater unigeniti.

O how sorrowful and afflicted
was that blessed woman,
the mother of the only-begotten one.

Quæ mærebat et dolebat,
pia mater, dum videbat
et tremebat cum videbat
nati pænas incliti.

Devoted mother, who mourned
and grieved while she saw,
who trembled,
seeing the punishment of her glorious son.

Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
matrem Christi si videret
in tanto supplicio?

Who is the man who would not weep
If he saw the mother of Christ
in such torment?

Quis non posset contristari,
Christi matrem contemplari
dolentem cum filio?

Who could not share in the sorrow,
were he to contemplate
the mother of Christ grieving for her son.

Pro peccatis suæ gentis
vidit Jesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum.

She saw Jesus in agony
and subjected to whips
for the sins of his nation.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
moriendo desolatum,
dum emisit spiritum.

She saw her sweet child
desolate in his dying moments,
as his spirit slipped away.

Eia mater, fons amoris,
me sentire vim doloris
fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Alas, mother, fountain of love,
let me feel the force of your grief,
so that I may bemoan with you.

Fac ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Chrstum Deum
ut sibi complaceam.

Let my heart burn
with love of Christ our Lord
so that I may please him.

Sancta mater, istud agas,
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.

Tui nati vulnerati,
tam dignati pro me pati,
pænas mecum divide.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero.

Juxta crucem tecum stare,
Te libentte sociare
in planctu desidero.

Virgo virginun præclara,
mihi jam non sis amara,
fac me tecum plangere.

Fac, ut portem Christi mortem,
passionis fac consortem,
et plagas recolorere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
cruce hac inebriari,
ob amorem filii.

Inflammatum et accensum,
per te Virgo, sim defensum,
In die judicii.

Fac me cruce custodiri,
morte Christi præmuniri,
confoveri gratia.

Quando corpus morietur,
fac, ut anime donetur
paradisi gloria. Amen.

Holy mother, do just that,
let the blows of the crucified one
drive strongly into my heart.

Share with me the punishment
Of your wounded son
who suffered so worthily for me.

Let me truly weep with you,
grieve with you for him, crucified,
for as long as I live.

I long to stand by the cross with you,
gladly keeping company
with you in your lamentation.

Virgin, most noble of virgins,
do not now be bitter towards me,
let me lament with you.

Let me bear Christ's death,
let me share in his sufferings
and receive the blows.

Let me be wounded by the lashes,
intoxicated by that cross,
through love for your son.

Blazing and scorched,
may I be protected by you Virgin,
on the day of judgement.

Let me be guarded by the cross,
defended by the death of Christ,
fostered by grace.

When my body has died,
let it be that the glory of paradise
is granted to my soul. Amen.

Translated by Emma Marshall

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Roger Boulton
Paul Durant
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Acknowledgements

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The Nantwich Sinfonia

Violin	Alison Loram	Clarinet	Heather Thomas
	Jayne Robinson		John Priest
	Kate Pelling		
	Jac McKeigue	Bassoon	Jane Williams
	Ann Lawes		Andrew Bassey
	Sarah Heald		
	Stavros Kokkinos	Horn	Peter Richards
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			Claire Burnell
			Claire Dawes
	Julian Robinson	Trombone	Greg McEwan
Cello	Della Hickey		Trevor Jones
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	Becca Nelson		
	Jonathon Arch	Timpani/percussion	David Lewis
Flute	Emma Lindsay		
	Ruth Hayward		
Oboe	Richard Weigall		
	Marcia Ferran		

The Nantwich Sinfonia – leader Alison Loram

The Nantwich Sinfonia consists of experienced professional musicians gathered from the region, but some from much further afield. Its leader Alison Loram began playing the violin through Shropshire's County Music Service, going on to study at the Royal College of Music and London University. Playing related musculoskeletal problems led Alison to the Alexander Technique which she has taught at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire since 1993. After gaining a BSc, MSc and PhD, Alison also developed a career as an independent research scientist and she is a practitioner with the British Association of Performing Arts Medicine.

Since she began playing the violin again in 2011, Alison has given solo and chamber music recitals in Birmingham, Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire, and has performed as

soloist with the St John's Festival Orchestra of Chester, which, along with the Stockport Symphony Orchestra, she guest-led in 2016. Alison plays with professionally with orchestras in the Midlands and North West including the English Symphony orchestra and Orchestra Pro Anima. Future engagements include a performance of the Bruch violin concerto with St John's Festival Orchestra and a lunchtime recital at St Mary's with pianist Christopher Symons.

Milly Forrest - soprano



London-born soprano Milly Forrest graduated with First Class honours from the Royal Academy of Music undergraduate course in July 2017 and she has just started her Masters at the Royal College of Music studying with Alison Wells and Gary Matthewman.

In July 2017 Milly was asked by the director of the Wigmore Hall to step in for the last song concert of the season replacing Ruby Hughes. She sang alongside Elizabeth Watts, Mary Bevan, Benjamin Appl and many others.

On the operatic stage Milly has sung Susanna from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Clorinda from *La Cenerentola* by Rossini, Nora from *Riders to the Sea*, Vaughan Williams and Fiordiligi from *Così fan tutte*. Baroque music has been a large part of her training thus far.

Last spring, Milly worked with Laurence Cummings on a baroque dance project with the Royal Academy as part of the London Handel Festival. Milly will appear again with the London Handel festival in March this year at the Wigmore Hall.

Milly has worked with directors such as John Ramster, Chris Cowell, James Hurley, Rebecca Meltzer and Hugh Wooldridge. This academic year the Minerva Foundation, The Josephine Baker Trust and the Claus Oppenby Charitable Trust are supporting Milly.

Milly appeared as the soprano soloist in the NCS performance of Haydn's *Creation* in 2016.

Susan Marrs – mezzo soprano



Susan graduated from Trinity College of Music, London, after winning The Ricordi Opera Prize and The Trinity College Singing Department Prize.

Susan works extensively as a concert soloist and her wide Oratorio repertoire includes performances of Elgar's major works, Verdi's *Requiem*, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, Mozart's *C Minor Mass*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and *St. Matthew Passion*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* and *Stabat Mater*, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* and Karl Jenkins *The Armed Man*.

Susan sings with “London Voices” under the direction of Terry Edwards and Ben Parry, and has participated in numerous concerts and recordings of works by Bach, Stravinsky, Ligeti, Boulez, Sir John Tavener, Sir Michael Tippett and Sir Paul McCartney. Film score recordings have included *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, *The Hunger Games* and *Fantastic beasts and where to find them*.

2017 season has included performances of Duruflé’s *Requiem* with Cheshire Sinfonia, Elgar’s *The Kingdom* in Arundel Cathedral, Elgar’s *Sea Pictures* with Crosby Symphony Orchestra, Bach’s *St John Passion* with Edinburgh Bach Society and performances with London Voices of Beethoven’s *Fidelio* at the Royal Festival Hall.

Susan has made many appearances with Nantwich Choral Society, most recently and most notably in the Society’s widely acclaimed performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* in The Victoria Hall, Hanley.

Susan is a Fellow of Trinity College, London.

Stephen Newlove - tenor



Stephen Newlove was born in Great Driffield, East Yorkshire and sang as a chorister in Beverley Minster before studying for a music degree at Huddersfield, followed by a Masters in composition at the University of Hull. As an experienced singer in the choirs of York Minster, Chester and Manchester Cathedrals, Stephen has broadcast on radio and television and featured on a number of acclaimed recordings. He has also sung with the Britten Singers.

Stephen’s repertoire covers all eras of music from the renaissance through to the twentieth century; from Monteverdi to Maxwell Davies. Solo engagements include Monteverdi *Vespers of 1610* with the Orchestra of the Golden Age and His Majesty’s Sagbutts and Cornetts, arias in Bach *St John Passion* with the English Haydn Orchestra and *Mass in B minor* with Manchester Camerata, Evangelist in *St Matthew* and *John Passions*, arias and Evangelist in *Christmas Oratorio*, *Magnificat* plus numerous Bach cantatas.

In recent times memorable performances have included Handel *Saul* and *Passion of Christ*, Charpentier *Messe de Minuit pour Noël*, the Haydn *masses*, Mozart *Requiem* and *Great C minor Mass*, Schubert *Mass in E flat* and *G*, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle*, *Stabat Mater*, Dvořák *Stabat Mater*, *Mass in D* and *Requiem*, Mendelssohn *Elijah*, *St Paul* and *Hymn of Praise*, Puccini *Messe Di Gloria*, Verdi *Requiem*, Janacek *Otcenas*, Elgar *The Kingdom*, George Dyson *Canterbury Pilgrims*, Britten *St Nicolas Cantata*, Ramírez *Misa Criolla*, Peter Maxwell Davies *Solstice of Light*.

Stephen has been invited to perform with many choral societies throughout the country including East Riding County Choir, Birmingham and Bradford Festival Choral Societies, Carlisle International Summer Festival, Ripon, Harrogate and Ludlow Choral Societies.

Stephen's musical interests not only involve performing and composing but also conducting. He is Musical Director of St Helens Choral Society as well as Director of Music at Merchant Taylors' Girls' School in Crosby, Liverpool.

Stephen has sung regularly with Nantwich Choral Society, including performances of *Messiah* and Bach's *St John Passion*

More information about Stephen can be found at www.stephennewlove.com

Jacob Phillips – baritone



Jacob Phillips was born in London and raised in Cheshire where he was a student of the JRNCM studying singing with Thomas Schulze. Jacob was later awarded an entrance scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where he now studies under the guidance of Professor Mark Wildman and Matthew Fletcher. While at The Royal Academy of Music, he has been the recipient of the Rutson Memorial Prize and Harry Fisher Memorial prize and supported generously by the Philip Hattey Scholarship. Jacob is the 2016 winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary award and the 2017 winner of the Somerset Song Prize's Most Promising Young Singer Prize.

In June 2017, Jacob gave his debut solo recital at the Lymm Festival, performing works by Schubert, Schumann and Vaughan Williams. Jacob also recently made his debut with the RAM's prestigious Song Circle at the Austrian Cultural Forum, singing songs by Butterworth, Somervell and Finzi.

Recent performances as a soloist on the concert platform include Purcell's *Ode to St.Cecilia* in Bath, Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem* in Winchester, Haydn's *The Creation* in Nantwich and Handel's *Messiah* in St. Sepulchres Holborn. Jacob also performs chorally in many of the RAM's Kohn Bach Cantata series having worked alongside Iain Ledingham, Margaret Faultless, Rachel Podger and Philippe Herreweghe.

On the operatic stage Jacob performed in the chorus of the RAO's performance of Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*. In the summer of 2017 Jacob performed the Roles of Guglielmo and Il Conte in opera scenes across the Italian province of La Spezia under the direction of Iain Ledingham.

Future performances as a soloist on the concert platform include Mozart's *Requiem* for Lymington Choral Society and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* in Amersham under the

direction of Iain Ledingham. In June 2018 he will perform an Austrian themed recital in the Italian Cultural Institute of London for the Royal Academy of Music.

Jake has previously appeared with Nantwich Choral Society in performances of *Messiah* and Haydn's *Creation*.

Simon Russell - organist



Simon was born in Liverpool. He studied organ at Birkenhead School with Timothy Lawford and then at Cambridge as Organ Scholar at St. Catharines's College, where he continued studies with Gillian Weir and the late Peter Le Huray. After Cambridge he was appointed Assistant Organist at Chester Cathedral but decided after a while to keep music as a hobby and gain fortune from computer keyboards.

He was firstly accompanist and then Music Director of the Hoylake Choral Society from 1982 until he moved, in 2000, to Nantwich where he is Organist at St Mary's Parish Church. He is an annual recitalist at Chester Cathedral and is on the 'reserve' organist list covering holiday periods and other absences. He is also in demand as an organ tutor and has many Associated Board and other pupil distinctions and diploma successes to his credit.

Simon is currently the Northern Region Coordinator for the RSCM and enjoys a flourishing freelance programme as an organ recitalist in great demand.

Simon was appointed accompanist to Nantwich Choral Society in 2010.

John Naylor, conductor



As conductor, singer and organist, John combines extensive performance experience in world-class choirs with a lifelong passionate interest in choral music and its performance. Following a successful business career he now devotes most of his activities to conducting, choir development and church administration. His original training was as a choral scholar at St John's College, Cambridge with the great Dr George Guest after keyboard studies with Conrad Eden at Durham Cathedral where he was a chorister (1957 – 61), a music scholarship at Rossall School and singing studies with Wilfrid Brown and Lyndon van der Pump from The Royal College of Music.

He subsequently became a professional member of the Chapel Royal Choir of St Peter ad Vincula at H.M. Tower of London and The Monteverdi Choir and Louis Halsey Singers, appearing at The Proms, The South Bank, The Aldeburgh Festival and in numerous broadcasts and recordings. He has sung in the cathedral choirs of Carlisle, Christ Church Oxford and Chester where until recently he could still be occasionally spotted on the back row!

John has been Director of The Lydian Singers since founding the choir in 1980. They are now one of the leading chamber choirs in the North West and have performed extensively in the North West, Spain, France, Italy and in most of the cathedrals in Great Britain, often returning several times by invitation. He also conducts The Open University Chapel Choir.

John was appointed Music Director of Nantwich Choral Society in September 2005 for whom he has now conducted highly acclaimed performances of works in the mainstream choral repertoire including Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Bach's *St John Passion* and *St Matthew Passion* (both in Chester Cathedral), and Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* with Ensemble Vocal Arpège de Mâcon, Mozart's *Requiem* and Bach's *B minor Mass* with the period instruments of the 18th Century Concert Orchestra, Vaughan Williams *Sea Symphony* and *The Lark Ascending*, Haydn's *The Seasons* and *The Dream of Gerontius* in Chester Cathedral, Coleridge Taylor's *Hiawatha* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations* with the Northern Concordia Orchestra, and Handel's *Coronation Anthems* and the *Dettingen Te Deum* with the 18th Century Sinfonia.

Performances in 2015 and 2016 included Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Requiem* and Duruflé's *Requiem* with NCS; weekends at Tewkesbury Abbey, Brecon Cathedral, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Schubert *Mass in G* at The Lymm Festival with The Lydian Singers, and Ely, Ripon and St Albans cathedrals with OUCC. He conducted an especially memorable performance of Bach's *St John Passion* at Easter 2016 with his former colleague Rogers Covey-Crump as the Evangelist.

2017 included Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Rutter's *Magnificat* and *Sprig of Thyme* and Verdi *Requiem* with NCS, Durham and Peterborough cathedrals and Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* at The Lymm Festival with The Lydian Singers, and Blackburn, Liverpool and Oxford cathedrals with OUCC.

In addition to his musical activities, John has been Chairman of the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance since 2012. He is also a member of the General Synod of the Church of England.



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Programme of events 2018/2019

Saturday 23 June 2018, 7.30 pm

St Mary's Church, Nantwich

Gilbert and Sullivan

Gala Concert

with Richard Suart

Saturday 10 November 2018, 7.30 pm

St Mary's Church, Nantwich

Karl Jenkins

The Armed Man

Saturday 15 December 2018, 6.30 pm

St Mary's Church Nantwich

Family Carol Concert

with Nantwich Young Voices