

Nantwich Choral Society

MENDELSSOHN

Elijah

Alison Phillips - soprano

Hanna-Liisa Kirchin - mezzo-soprano

Peter Kirk - tenor

Dingle Yandell - bass-baritone

The Northern Concordia Orchestra

John Naylor - Conductor

Nantwich Civic Hall

Sunday 26 March 2017 3:30 pm

Chairman's Welcome

On behalf of the Nantwich Choral Society I would like to welcome you to our concert. The choir, now in its 44th 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 blest with a fine accompanist, Simon Russell, who will be heard on the organ today.

This afternoon we have forsaken the architectural glories of our usual venue, St Mary's Nantwich, for the rather utilitarian reason that we need a larger performance space to accommodate a large orchestra. Although Mendelssohn greatly admired and was influenced by Bach and Handel, in composing *Elijah* he did not limit himself to the rather slender resources of singers and players that were available to those earlier composers. Instead we have a work on a grand scale, written for large nineteenth-century concert halls and sizeable numbers of performers. *Elijah* is a much-loved work which tells a dramatic story and contains many beautiful choruses and solos, some of which, such as *Lift thine eyes* and *O rest in the Lord*, have taken on a life of their own and are well-known to many people who have never heard the work in its entirety.

As ever, we are delighted to welcome the Northern Concordia Orchestra 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 today's concert as much as we will enjoy performing it for you.

Kay Foster

Elijah - Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

Mendelssohn was born into a wealthy and cultured Berlin family. His grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn, was a renowned philosopher and his father, Abraham, was a highly successful banker. After Felix became famous Abraham would sometimes joke, *'I used to be known as the son of my father; now I am known as the father of my son!'*

Felix was a precociously gifted child, so much so that the finest musicians of the day hailed him as a second Mozart. This comparison was by no means without foundation; by the time he had reached his mid-teens Mendelssohn had composed a large number of mature works, including twelve string symphonies and his first symphony for full orchestra, written when he was only fifteen. He was sixteen when he wrote the *String Octet*, and the wonderful overture *A Midsummer Night's Dream* followed a year later. Mendelssohn's extraordinary gifts were not confined to composition; he went on to become a brilliant pianist and organist, a fine string player and an inspirational conductor. He was also a very good artist and was widely read.

Yet another dimension to Mendelssohn's glittering career was his far-reaching influence as an organiser and administrator. As a result of his tireless efforts with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Leipzig Conservatory which he founded in 1843, he raised performance standards to new heights and created many opportunities for contemporary composers and performers. He made a major contribution to the revival of interest in Bach's music, which at that time was virtually unknown to the general public. In 1829, when he was still only twenty, he conducted the first public performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* since Bach's death, an event which, probably more than any other, provided the impetus for the 19th century rediscovery of Bach. He was also a great admirer of the music of Handel and Haydn, whose oratorios he conducted in Leipzig. Mendelssohn visited England many times, where he was received with adulation, feted by the press, and became a great favourite of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

No sooner had Mendelssohn's first oratorio, *St. Paul*, received its premiere at the Lower Rhine Festival in 1836, than he began thinking about a suitable subject for a new oratorio. The idea of one based on the life of the Old Testament prophet, Elijah, particularly appealed to him. In 1836 he wrote to his friend and librettist Carl Klingemann, *'If you would only give all the care and thought you bestowed upon St. Paul to an Elijah or a St. Peter or even an Og of Bashan!'* Unfortunately no suitable libretto was forthcoming, not even an *Og of Bashan*, and with the ever-pressing demands of his other work he regretfully put the idea to one side. It was to be another ten years before it came to fruition.

The subject of *Elijah* remained dear to his heart, however, so in 1838 he enlisted the help of his old friend, Pastor Julius Schubring, in drafting a libretto. Mendelssohn had very definite ideas about this. He wrote to Schubring, *'...the dramatic element should predominate. The personages should act and speak as if they were living beings.'* Schubring disagreed. He clearly felt that the oratorio should be in the nature of a sermon in music, stressing the moral and uplifting aspects of the Old Testament texts, and that any degree of dramatic realism was inappropriate in a sacred work. As a result of these disagreements the project was once more dropped.

Then in 1845 the Birmingham Festival committee wrote to Mendelssohn, asking him if he would write a new oratorio for the following year's Festival. Mendelssohn had attended previous Festivals in 1837, when he had conducted *St. Paul*, and in 1840, when the *Hymn of Praise* had

been performed. On both occasions he had enjoyed great success. He wrote back accepting the new commission, adding, *'Since some time I have begun an oratorio and hope I shall be able to bring it out for the first time at your Festival; but it is still a mere beginning and I cannot yet give you any promise as to my finishing it in time.'* He returned to *Elijah* with renewed enthusiasm, mostly compiling the libretto himself this time, though he still required Schubring's assistance in selecting suitable texts. He worked feverishly on the score to ensure that it was completed according to schedule.

The first performance, conducted by Mendelssohn himself, took place on the 26th August 1846 before an audience of two thousand who had packed into Birmingham Town Hall for the eagerly-awaited event. It was an unprecedented success. No less than four choruses and four arias were encored, and the applause evidently bordered on the hysterical. Mendelssohn recounted the experience in a letter to his brother. *'No work of mine went so admirably the first time of execution, or was received with such enthusiasm by both the musicians and the audience,'* he wrote. The Times' music correspondent was even more effusive. *'The last note of Elijah was drowned in a long-continued unanimous volley of plaudits, vociferous, and deafening,'* he reported. *'Mendelssohn..... descended from his position on the conductor's rostrum; but he was compelled to appear again, amidst renewed cheers and huzzas. Never was there a more complete triumph; never a more thorough and speedy recognition of a great work of art.'* It was without doubt the crowning glory of Mendelssohn's spectacularly successful career, but tragically it was to prove his last major triumph. A lifetime of overwork now brought rapidly failing health, and when his beloved sister Fanny unexpectedly died, he never recovered from the shock. He died on 4th November 1847.

Ever since Handel's *Messiah* had first captivated audiences in 1743, the oratorio form had occupied a pre-eminent position in the concert halls of England. After its resounding first performance, *Elijah* immediately established itself as second only to *Messiah* in the public's affections. It received countless performances in the years just after its composition and this enormous popularity continued scarcely unabated throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Some measure of this may be judged by the fact that it was performed at the Three Choirs Festival every year from 1847 to 1930.

During the austere post-war period there was a considerable reaction against Mendelssohn's music. To what extent this was an after-effect of the rampant German anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 40s is difficult to determine, but the generally held view, particularly in some sections of the musical establishment, was that his life had been too easy and too comfortable, and that as a consequence his music, with its classical elegance and understated emotion, was superficial and distinctly inferior. In addition, the oratorio as a musical experience was by now less popular with audiences. Because of these changes in the musical climate, and also because of its previous over-exposure, *Elijah* almost disappeared from the repertoire of a great many choral societies. Thankfully, in recent years there has been a more balanced attitude to Mendelssohn, avoiding both the excessive adulation which surrounded him during his lifetime and the equally absurd denigration of more recent times.

Structurally the work is clearly influenced by the choral masterpieces of Bach and Handel, but its highly dramatic style, at times bordering on the operatic, constitutes a significant step forward from its Baroque predecessors. *Elijah* has many other outstanding qualities: the imaginative orchestration, the spontaneity and energy of the counterpoint, the variety which Mendelssohn

brings to the recitatives to ensure that they always maintain the dramatic impetus, and the sheer beauty of many of the arias and choruses. Above all, there is no mistaking the work's considerable dramatic impact, epitomised by the vivid characterisation of Elijah himself.

John Bawden

Mendelssohn's Elijah – The Story

Background

Dateline: Israel, c 865 BC. Ahab is king. Some 60 years before he came to the throne the country was divided when the ten northern tribes, led by Jereboam, rebelled against Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Judah was left with the two remaining tribes and the capital city of Jerusalem, the key religious and strategic centre.

Without Jerusalem, Jereboam had to find other centres of worship, and so he set up golden calves to serve initially as symbols of the presence of Jehovah. This was a rather ambivalent gesture since the bull was also an object of Canaanite worship (a nature god, a Baal) and so began the invasion of foreign gods. Jezebel, Ahab's wife who was a daughter of the King of Tyre in Phoenicia, accelerated the process. The Phoenicians worshipped the nature god Melkart, known to the Israelites like all foreign gods as Baal. When Jezebel married Ahab she brought the idols, priests and prophets of her own religion with her.

Prologue (No1)

Worship of Jehovah (God, the Lord of Israel) has dwindled. Elijah the prophet is very much a lone voice. He puts a curse on the whole country: there will be no precious rain until he gives the word.

The drought has become severe, but the people refuse to turn to God (Nos 2-5)

As the overture ends the people cry for help. At first wearily and then more angrily they complain about the lack of water. Obadiah, Elijah's servant, tells them that the remedy is in their own hands: because of their transgressions Elijah has sealed the heavens through God's power. If they forsake their idols and return to God, if they truly seek him with all their hearts, God will relent.

Oh no, say the people. God mocks us; he has cursed us and will destroy us. He is a hard, jealous God and he will keep blaming a fourth generation for their great-grandparents' sins even though usually his mercies fall on those who love him and keep his commandments.

Elijah goes into hiding, and stays with a widow whose son he restores to life (Nos 6-9)

In the meantime, Elijah is instructed to go into hiding in the east of the country at the brook of Cherith where ravens will find food for him. But even the water in the brook runs out, so he is further instructed to go to Zatepah where a widow will look after him. God will arrange that the supply of food will last until he sends rain again for a new crop.

The widow has a critically ill son and is really alarmed when Elijah arrives. Somewhat perversely, she blames Elijah for her son's illness because she thinks that the presence of a Man of God automatically brings hidden sins to light. God can no longer ignore them and will seek retribution. Her son becomes so ill he stops breathing. Elijah prays to God that the child may live. The widow's scepticism turns to belief when her son revives. Elijah urges her to fear God with all her heart, her soul and her might. The chorus comment that 'Blessed are those who fear God – they ever walk in the ways of peace. Through darkness light comes to the upright.'

The public contest to find 'Top God' (Nos 10-17)

On the third anniversary of his original curse Elijah resolves to visit King Ahab and arrange for God to send rain again. Ahab regards Elijah as a real troublemaker, but Elijah boldly tells him to his face that it is Ahab himself and his ancestors who have caused all the trouble by worshipping Baal. He manages to persuade Ahab to gather the whole population at Mount Carmel and to summon the prophets of the gods whom the queen supports. There can be a contest to determine which god is top god – 'whose god is Lord'. He instructs that a bullock should be killed as a sacrifice (a burnt offering), but the fire under it is not to be lit. They must call upon their gods, he will call upon Jehovah, and whichever god causes the fire to be ignited shall be God the Lord.

Elijah invites the others to have first turn – there are a lot of them, but he is the only prophet of God left. The priests cry more and more urgently to Baal for a response. Elijah mocks them – perhaps he's in a meeting, out hunting or travelling somewhere? Perhaps he's asleep – why not cry louder and wake him up? Even though they try to wake him up, Elijah tells them that they are wasting their time. Their increasingly desperate cries are met by complete silence.

Elijah invites the people to gather round him and then calmly calls upon God – the god of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, the ancestors of the people – to prove himself and to show that Elijah is acting under his instructions. He asks that God will answer him, that he will show the people that he is Lord God and that the people's hearts may again be turned back to him. At this critical moment Mendelssohn inserts a Lutheran chorale as a sort of sung creed, a statement of universal belief in God.

Elijah invokes God's angels, his ministers of flaming fire, to descend. To the people's amazement fire descends from heaven and consumes the sacrifice. They fall in worship on their faces, acknowledge that Jehovah is God and declare that they will have none other.

Flushed with success, Elijah immediately calls for all the prophets of Baal to be seized and executed. 'Isn't Gods word like a hammer that breaks even rocks into pieces?' he declaims. The alto soloist reflects; 'Woe unto those who forsake God, destruction shall fall on them for they have transgressed against him. Even though God has redeemed them, they have fled from him: Woe unto them.'

The people pray for God's forgiveness: He sends rain in response (Nos 18-20)

Obadiah, ever pragmatic, asks Elijah to help the people because the need for rain is desperate. The heathen gods failed miserably to bring rain: only God can solve the problem. So Elijah prays to God for rain and the people repeat his prayer. Elijah sends a child to see if rain clouds are gathering over the sea but there is nothing. Elijah says the lack of rain is God's answer to the

people for rejecting him. The people ask for forgiveness and pray to God. At the third attempt Elijah makes an impassioned plea to God, the child announces a rapidly gathering rainstorm and the people joyfully give thanks to God because rain falls at last on the thirsty land.

SECOND PART

Introduction (Nos 21-22)

The second part of the oratorio opens with a soprano aria in which the people of Israel are reminded to pay attention to God for he will comfort and strengthen them. The chorus pick up the theme of 'Be not afraid, thy help is near, says God the Lord.'

Elijah accuses King Ahab of provoking God. Queen Jezebel turns the tables on Elijah who, dispirited, is forced into hiding in the wilderness (Nos 23-29)

Now full of confidence, Elijah accuses King Ahab of provoking God in the first place by worshipping Baal and killing the righteous; as a result of his actions, God will wreak revenge on the people of Israel. The Queen stirs up the people – 'Haven't you heard what Elijah has prophesied against Israel?' 'Yes, we've heard it', say the people. 'Well, who governs the country, King Ahab or Elijah' asks the queen, calling for Elijah's blood and blaming him for the famine. 'Yes', say the people, 'it was Elijah who put the curse on the land in the first place. Why has he spoken in the name of the Lord? He shall die!'

Obadiah warns Elijah to escape to the wilderness and begs for his blessing before he leaves. Once there, Elijah's confidence is shattered and he prays to God that his life may come to an end – 'It is enough.' Despite all his efforts, the people of Israel have forsaken God and killed his prophets. 'Now let me die, Lord take away my life.' He goes to sleep in the wilderness under a juniper tree.

But God's angels gather round him and instruct him to look up to the mountains because God is coming to help him. The chorus comments that God watches over Israel and never slumbers or sleeps.

Elijah has difficulty keeping his spirits up, but he is told to go to Mt Sinai by an angel. God appears to him there and he is gathered up to heaven in a whirlwind (Nos 30-39)

An Angel wakes Elijah and tells him that he has a long journey to go to Horeb (aka Sinai), God's sacred mountain. Elijah asks God why he doesn't come down from heaven and amaze his adversaries – 'Why have you let them forsake you? Please let me die'. The Angel answers him: 'Rest in the Lord, be patient and he will grant your wish.' The chorus urge steadfastness: 'He who shall endure to the end will be saved'.

Night falls, and Elijah prays again to God. An angel appears and tells him to stand on the mountain because God in all his glory will appear. The weather becomes violent: there is a hurricane, a tsunami, an earthquake and a firestorm, but God wasn't in any of them. Then there was a still, small voice, and onward came the Lord. Above him the seraphim stand who cry to each other 'Holy, holy is God the Lord. His glory has filled all the earth.'

The chorus reassure Elijah: 'Go on your way, for now God has seven thousand followers.' 'Yes', says Elijah – 'I go on my way in the strength of the Lord. Even though the mountains depart and the hills are removed, God's kindness and peace will not depart from me.'

The chorus describe how Elijah looks as though he is on fire. He overthrows mighty kings and hears the judgements of the future at Mount Horeb, and when God is ready to receive him in heaven a fiery chariot and horses appear which envelop him in a whirlwind. The tenor comments: 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in their heavenly Father's realm.'

Epilogue - commentary on Elijah's role in the transformation from the old to the new covenant (Nos 40-42)

The soprano remarks that God sent Elijah before the Great Day of the Lord so that he could turn the hearts of the people lest God come and smite the earth with a curse. 'O come unto him', sing the combined soloists, 'and your soul will live forever.'

The chorus declare as the oratorio concludes: 'Then shall your light break forth as the light of morning..... and the glory of the Lord ever shall reward you. O Lord our Creator, how excellent your name is in all the heavens.'

John Naylor

ELIJAH - THE TEXT

FIRST PART

INTRODUCTION

Elijah As God the Lord of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

OVERTURE and No 1 CHORUS

The People Help, Lord! Wilt Thou quite destroy us? The harvest now is over, the summer days are gone, and yet no power cometh to help us! Will then the Lord be no more God in Zion?

RECITATIVE CHORUS

The deeps afford no water; and the rivers are exhausted! The suckling's tongue now cleaveth for thirst to his mouth: the infant children ask for bread, and there is no one breaketh it to feed them!

No 2 DUET AND CHORUS

The People Lord, bow Thine ear to our prayer.

Duet Zion spreadeth her hands for aid; and there is neither help nor comfort.

No 3 RECITATIVE

Obadiah Ye people, rend your hearts and not your garments for your transgressions; even as Elijah hath sealed

the heavens through the word of God. I therefore say to ye, forsake your idols, return to God: for He is slow to anger, and merciful, and kind and gracious, and repenteth Him of the evil.

No 4 AIR

Obadiah If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me. Thus saith our God. 'Oh! that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come before his presence.

No 5 CHORUS

The People Yet doth the Lord see it not: He mocketh at us; His curse hath fallen down upon us; His wrath will pursue us, till He destroy us. For He, the Lord our God, He is a jealous God; and He visiteth all the fathers' sins upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. His mercies on thousands fall - fall on all them that love Him and keep his commandments.

No 6 RECITATIVE

An Angel Elijah! get thee hence; depart and turn thee eastward: thither hide thee by Cherith's brook. There shalt thou drink its waters; and the Lord thy God hath commanded the ravens to feed thee there: so do according unto His word.

No 7 DOUBLE QUARTET

Angels For He shall give His angels charge over thee; that they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest; that their hands shall uphold and guide thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

RECITATIVE

An Angel Now Cherith's brook is dried up, Elijah; arise and depart, and get thee

to Zarephath; thither abide; for the Lord hath commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. And the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

No 8 RECITATIVE AND AIR

The Widow What have I to do with thee, O man of God? Art thou come to me, to call my sin unto remembrance? - To slay my son art thou come hither? Help me, man of God! My son is sick! And his sickness is so sore, that there is no breath left in him! I go mourning all the day long; I lie down and weep at night. See mine affliction. Be thou the orphan's helper.

RECITATIVE

Elijah Give me thy son. Turn unto her, O Lord my God; in mercy help this widow's son! For Thou art gracious; and full of compassion, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Lord my God, O let the spirit of this child return that he again may live.

The Widow Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee?

Elijah Lord my God, O let the spirit of this child return that he again may live!

The Widow The Lord hath heard thy prayer, the soul of my son reviveth!

Elijah Now behold, thy son liveth!

The Widow Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that His word in thy mouth is the truth. What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits to me? *Both* Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. O blessed are they who fear Him!

No 9 CHORUS

Blessed are the men who fear Him: they ever walk in the ways of peace. Through darkness riseth light to the upright. He is gracious, compassionate; He is righteous.

No 10 RECITATIVE AND CHORUS

Elijah. As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth before whom I stand; three years this day fulfilled, I will show myself unto Ahab; and the Lord will then send rain again upon the earth. *Ahab:* Art thou Elijah? He that troubleth Israel! *Chorus* Thou art Elijah, he that troubleth Israel!

Elijah I never troubled Israel's peace: it is thou, Ahab, and all thy father's house. Ye have forsaken God's commands; and thou hast followed Baalim! Now send and gather to me the whole of Israel unto Mount Carmel: there summon the prophets of Baal, and also the prophets of the groves who are feasted at Jezebel's table. Then we shall see whose God is God the Lord.

Chorus And then we shall see whose God is the Lord.

Elijah Rise then, ye priests of Baal: select and slay a bullock, and put no fire under it: uplift your voices, and call the God ye worship: and I then will call on the Lord Jehovah: and the God who by fire shall answer - let him be God!

Chorus Yea, and the God who by fire shall answer - let him be God!

Elijah Call first upon your God: your numbers are many. I, even I, only remain - one prophet of the Lord! Invoke your forest-gods and mountain deities.

No 11 CHORUS

Priests of Baal Baal, we cry to thee; hear and answer us! Heed the sacrifice we offer! Hear us, O hear us, Baal! Hear, mighty god! Baal, O answer us! Let thy flames fall and extirpate the foe! O hear us, Baal!

No 12 RECITATIVE

Elijah Call him louder, for he is a god! He talketh, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth; so awaken him: call him louder!

CHORUS

Priests of Baal Hear our cry, O Baal! Now arise! Wherefore slumber?

No 13 RECITATIVE

Elijah Call him louder! He heareth not. With knives and lancets cut yourselves after your manner: leap upon the altar ye have made: call him and prophesy! Not a voice will answer you; none will listen, none heed you.

CHORUS

Priests of Baal Hear and answer, Baal! Mark how the scorner derideth us! Hear and answer!

RECITATIVE

Elijah Draw near, all ye people: come to me!

No 14 AIR

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel!
This day let it be known that Thou art
God and I am Thy servant!

O show to all this people that I have done
these things according to Thy word! O
hear me, Lord, and answer me; and show
this people that Thou art Lord God and
let their hearts again be turned!

No 15 CHORUS

Angels Cast thy burden upon the Lord,
and He shall sustain thee. He never will
suffer the righteous to fall: He is at thy
right hand. Thy mercy, Lord, is great; and
far above the heavens. Let none be
made ashamed that wait upon Thee.

No 16 RECITATIVE

Elijah O Thou, who makest Thine angels
spirits; Thou, whose ministers are
flaming fires; let them now descend!

CHORUS

The People The fire descends from
heaven; the flames consume his offering!
Before Him upon your faces fall! The Lord
is God: O Israel, hear! Our God is one
Lord: and we will have no other Gods
before the Lord!

RECITATIVE

Elijah Take all the prophets of Baal; and
let not one of them escape you: bring
them down to Kishon's brook; and there
let them be slain.

CHORUS

The People Take all the prophets of Baal;
and let not one of them escape us: bring
all, and slay them!

No 17 AIR

Elijah Is not His word like a fire: and like
a hammer that breaketh the rock in
pieces? For God is angry with the wicked
every day: and if the wicked turn not, the
Lord will whet His sword; and He hath
bent His bow and made it ready.

No 18 AIR (Alto)

Woe unto them who forsake Him!
Destruction shall fall upon them, for they
have transgressed against Him. Though
they are by Him redeemed, yet they have
spoken falsely against Him.

No 19 RECITATIVE AND CHORUS (Tenor)

Obadiah O man of God, help thy people!
Among the idols of the Gentiles, are
there any that can command the rain, or
cause the heavens to give their showers?
The Lord our God alone can do these
things.

Elijah O Lord, Thou hast overthrown
thine enemies and destroyed them. Look
down on us from heaven, O Lord; regard
the distress of Thy people: open the
heavens and send us relief: help, help
Thy servant now, O God!

The People Open the heavens and send
us relief; help, help Thy servant now, O
God!

Elijah Go up now, child, and look toward
the sea. Hath my prayer been heard by
the Lord?

The Youth There is nothing. The heavens
are as brass above me!

Elijah When the heavens are closed up
because they have sinned against Thee;
yet if they pray and confess Thy name,

and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them; then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin! Help, send Thy servant help, O God!

The People Then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin! Help! send Thy servant help, O God!

Elijah Go up again, and still look toward the sea.

The Youth There is nothing. The earth is as iron under me!

Elijah Hearest thou no sound of rain? Seest thou nothing arise from the deep?

The Youth No, there is nothing.

Elijah Have respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, O Lord my God! Unto Thee will I cry, Lord, my rock; be not silent to me; and Thy great mercies remember, Lord!

The Youth Behold, a little cloud ariseth now from the waters; it is like a man's hand! The heavens are black with clouds and with wind: the storm rusheth louder and louder!

The People Thanks be to God for all His mercies!

Elijah Thanks be to God, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for evermore!

No 20 CHORUS

Thanks be to God! He laveth the thirsty land! The waters gather; they rush along; they are lifting their voices! The stormy billows are high; their fury is mighty. But the Lord is above them and Almighty!

SECOND PART

No 21 AIR (Soprano)

Hear ye, Israel; hear what the Lord speaketh: - "Oh hadst thou heeded my commandments" Who hath believed our report; to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him oppressed by tyrants. Thus saith the Lord: "I am He that comforteth; be not afraid, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee". Say; who art thou, that thou art afraid of a man that shall die; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the earth's foundations? Be not afraid, for I, thy God will strengthen thee.

No 22 CHORUS

Be not afraid, saith God the Lord. Be not afraid, thy help is near. God, the Lord thy God, saith unto thee, 'Be not afraid!' Though thousands languish and fall beside thee, and tens of thousands around thee perish, yet still it shall not come nigh thee.

No 23 RECITATIVE AND CHORUS

Elijah The Lord hath exalted thee from among the people: and over his people Israel hath made thee king. But thou, Ahab, hast done evil to provoke him to anger above all that were before thee: as if it had been a light thing to walk in the sins of Jereboam. Thou hast made a grove and an altar to Baal, and served him and worshipped him. Thou hast killed the righteous, and also taken possession. And the Lord shall smite all Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He shall give Israel up, and thou shalt know He is the Lord.

The Queen Have ye not heard he hath prophesied against all Israel?

Chorus We heard it with our ears

The Queen Hath he not prophesied also against the King of Israel?

Chorus We heard it with our ears.

The Queen And why hath he spoken in the name of the Lord? Doth Ahab govern the kingdom of Israel while Elijah's power is greater than the king's? The gods do so to me, and more if, by tomorrow about this time, I make not his life as the life of one of them whom he hath sacrificed at the Brook of Kishon!

Chorus He shall perish!

The Queen Hath he not destroyed Baal's prophets?

Chorus He shall perish!

The Queen Yea, by the sword he destroyed them all!

Chorus He destroyed them all!

The Queen He also closed the heavens!

Chorus He also closed the heavens!

The Queen And called down a famine upon the land.

Chorus And called down a famine upon the land.

The Queen So go ye forth and seize Elijah, for he is worthy to die; slaughter him! Do unto him as he hath done!

No 24 CHORUS

Woe to him, he shall perish; for he closed the heavens! And why hath he spoken in the name of the Lord? Let the guilty prophet perish! He hath spoken falsely against our land and us, as we have heard with our ears. So go ye forth; seize on him! He shall die!

No 25 RECITATIVE

Obadiah Man of God, now let my words be precious in thy sight. Thus saith Jezebel: 'Elijah is worthy to die'. So the mighty gather against thee, and they have prepared a net for thy steps; that they may seize thee; that they may slay thee. Arise then, and hasten for thy life; to the wilderness journey. The Lord thy God doth go with thee: He will not fail thee, He will not forsake thee. Now be gone, and bless me also.

Elijah Though stricken, they have not grieved! Tarry here my servant: The Lord be with thee. I journey hence to the wilderness.

No 26 AIR

Elijah It is enough, O Lord; now take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers. I desire to live no longer: now let me die, for my days are but vanity!

I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have broken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away.

No 27 RECITATIVE

See, now he sleepeth beneath a juniper tree in the wilderness: and there the

angel of the Lord encampeth round about all them that fear Him.

No 28 TRIO

Angels Lift thine eyes to the mountains, whence cometh help. Thy help cometh from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He hath said, thy foot shall not be moved: thy keeper will never slumber.

No 29 CHORUS

Angels He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps. Shouldst thou, walking in grief languish He will quicken thee.

No 30 RECITATIVE

An Angel Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey before thee. Forty days and forty nights shalt thou go; to Horeb, the mount of God.

Elijah O Lord, I have laboured in vain; yea, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain! O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down; that the mountains would flow down at Thy presence, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, through the wonders of Thy works! O Lord, why hast Thou made them to err from Thy ways, and hardened their hearts that they do not fear Thee? O that I now might die!

No 31 AIR

Angel O rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him; and He all give thee thy heart's desires. Commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him, and fret not thyself because of evildoers.

No 32 CHORUS

He that shall endure to the end shall be saved.

No 33 RECITATIVE

Elijah Night falleth round me, O Lord! Be not Thou far from me! Hide not Thy face, O Lord, from me; my soul is thirsting for Thee, as a thirsty land.

An Angel Arise now! get thee without, stand on the mount before the Lord; for there His glory will appear and shine on thee; Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.

No 34 CHORUS

Behold! God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind rent the mountains around, brake in pieces the rocks, brake them before the Lord: but yet the Lord was not in the tempest.

Behold! God the Lord passed by! And the sea was upheaved, and the earth was shaken: but yet the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there came a fire: but yet the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came a still small voice.

And in that still voice, onward came the Lord.

No 35 RECITATIVE

Above Him stood the Seraphim, and one cried to another.

QUARTET AND CHORUS

Angels Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord - the Lord Sabaoth! Now His glory hath filled all the earth.

No 36 RECITATIVE AND CHORUS

Chorus Go, return upon thy way! For the Lord hath yet left Him seven thousand in Israel knees which have not bowed to Baal; go, return upon thy way; thus the Lord commandeth.

RECITATIVE

Elijah I go on my way in the strength of the Lord. For Thou art my Lord; and I will suffer for Thy sake. My heart is therefore glad, my glory rejoiceth, and my flesh shall also rest in hope.

No 37 AIR

Elijah For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but thy kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of Thy peace be removed.

No 38 CHORUS

Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like a fire; his words appeared like burning torches. Mighty kings by him were overthrown. He stood on the mount of Sinai, and heard the judgements of the future; and in Horeb its vengeance.

And when the Lord would take him away to heaven, lo! there came a fiery chariot, with fiery horses; and he went by a whirlwind to heaven.

No 39 AIR (Tenor)

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in their heavenly Father's realm. Joy on their head shall be for everlasting. and all sorrow and mourning shall flee away for ever.

No 40 RECITATIVE

Behold, God hath sent Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children unto their fathers; lest the Lord shall come and smite the earth with a curse.

QUARTET.

O come every one that thirsteth, O come to the waters: come unto Him. O hear, and your souls shall live for ever.

No 42 CHORUS

And then shall your light break forth as the light of morning breaketh and your health shall speedily spring forth then; and the glory of the Lord ever shall reward you.

Lord our Creator, how excellent Thy Name is in all the nations! Thou fillest heaven with Thy glory. Amen!

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Jenny Brown
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Alison Phillips - soprano

Alison studied at the Northern School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music. Throughout her career she was fortunate to be able to combine her work as a primary school teacher and latterly as a head teacher with her singing.

For several years Alison was a member of the BBC Northern Singers under their director, Stephen Wilkinson, recording and broadcasting live on radio and television, and taking part in many of the major British music festivals. As a solo oratorio singer she has sung with choral societies throughout the north west of England.

Since retiring from teaching Alison has pursued her interest in choral conducting and two years ago was delighted to be offered the post of conductor of The Nantwich Singers, the local a cappella ensemble. She has also recently been appointed Musical Director of St Mary's Church in Nantwich.

Hanna-Liisa Kirchin - mezzo-soprano

British mezzo soprano Hanna-Liisa Kirchin is a recent alumna of the National Opera Studio and studies with soprano Nelly Miricioiu. She is a graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music and ENO's Opera Works.

Future highlights include Flora in a new production of *La Traviata* with Nederlandse Reisopera, The Mayor's Wife in Janacek's *Jenufa* with Grange Park Opera, Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Longborough Festival Opera, and covering the role of Arsace in Handel's *Partenope* at English National Opera.

2015 included the World Premiere of Nigel Osborne's "Bosnian Voices" with the critically acclaimed Liverpool Philharmonic 10/10 ensemble, and an appearance at the Oxford Lieder Festival.

In the 2016 season she made an international debut as Fidalma *Il Matrimonio Segreto* - in a coproduction between Dutch National Opera, De Nederlandse Reis Opera and Opera Zuid - and UK debuts as Wowkle *La Fanciulla Del West* with Grange Park Opera, and Ruggiero *Alcina* with Longborough Festival Opera. Previous appearances have included Buxton Festival Opera, British Youth Opera and Bayerische Staatsoper.

Awards have included the Miriam Licette Scholarship (Help Musicians UK), the RNCM Elizabeth Harwood Memorial Prize and an Opera Awards Foundation Bursary. She was a finalist in the Jette Parker Young Artist auditions at Covent Garden in 2014 and 2015, and a 2015 Les Azuriales Young Artist.

Peter Kirk - tenor

British tenor Peter Kirk made his Royal Opera (Covent Garden) debut in the 2015/16 Season to critical acclaim as Chulak in *The Firework-Maker's Daughter*. Other engagements in 2015/2016 included *Judas Maccabeus* with the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra in Katowice, *Dichterliebe* at the Wiltshire Music Centre, Antonio (*Liebersverbot* by Wagner) at L'Opera National du Rhin and Lysander *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hyogo Performing Arts Centre Japan.

Peter studied International Politics at the University of Wales before being awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music, London (RCM) where he graduated from the Royal College of Music International Opera School (RCMIOS) with the Eric Shilling Prize for Opera, he then became a member of Opéra national du Rhin's opera studio.

Engagements elsewhere have included the Festival d'Aix en Provence, English Touring Opera, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and English National Opera.

Peter maintains a varied concert programme, his performances of Handel's *Messiah* with the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square and the Polish National Chamber Choir in Gdansk garnered critical praise. He has performed Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* for Dortmund Musikverein, Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* with the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra in Katowice, and Haydn's *The Seasons* & Bach's *Magnificat* both for L'Orchestre Mozart, Toulouse.

In the 2016/2017 season Peter will sing the role of Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in the Jubilee Hall Aldeburgh, return to L'Opéra national du Rhin sing Paolino (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*) in a UK tour. His concert engagements will see him perform in a Bernstein Gala with Yutako Sado and the Tonkünstler Orchestra, Vienna, and two

performances of the Bach *B-minor mass* in St Martin-in-the-fields, London.

For Nantwich Choral Society he has previously been the tenor soloist in *Hiawatha* (Coleridge Taylor) and *Petite Messe Solonelle* (Rossini)

Dingle Yandell - bass-baritone

British Bass-Baritone Dingle Yandell studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Brian Parsons and now studies singing independently with Jessica Cash. He is recent alumnus of The National Opera Studio, London and is the grateful recipient of a Sybil Tutton Opera Award administered by Help Musicians UK.

Recent operatic roles have include the title role in *Don Pasquale* for Rye Arts Festival, Don Alfonso and Figaro from scenes of the *Da Ponte* Operas at Opera North conducted by Aleksandar Markovic. Talbot from *Maria Stuarda* and Collatinus from *The Rape of Lucretia* at Welsh National Opera directed by Elaine Kidd. Mel from scenes of *The Knot Garden* at Sadlers Wells directed by Graham Vick. The Jester from *The Remarkable Rocket* by the Waste Paper Opera company for the Tête à Tête Festival in London. and Plutone in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* in Germany for Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata. He has recently given a recital of operatic arias for Rhinegold Live at the Conway Hall, a recital of German Lieder with Ian Burnside and a recital of English Song with Susan Bullock.

Recent solo work includes *A Venetian Coronation* with the Gabrieli Consort under Paul McCreesh at the Lincoln Centre in New York and a tour with Holland Baroque. Future roles will be Colliné (cover) from *La Bohème* with Scottish Opera, Seneca from Monteverdi's *Poppea* with BacCollegium Japan in Tokyo. Dingle will also be joining the Alvarez Young Artist Program at Garsington Opera in 2017 singing the role of the Doctor Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

For eight years Dingle toured internationally with the award-winning British ensemble Voces8. He has also appeared regularly on BBC Radio, Classic FM and MPR and made many recordings for Signum Records and Decca Classics.

Solo concert engagements have included Bach *Christmas Oratorio* and Handel *Messiah* at Hitomi Hall, Tokyo, and with the Orchestra of Opera North, Bach *Wachet Auf* and *Erfreut Euch* at Dijon

Opera House, Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music* directed by John Wilson at The Royal Festival Hall, Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* at Isumi Hall, Osaka, 'The Cold Song' from Purcell's *King Arthur* with Les Inventions, Purcell *O Sing Unto the Lord* with Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort, *Phoebus* in Purcell *Dido and Aeneas* with Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata at The Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht. Beethoven 9th *Symphony* at Colston Hall in Bristol, *Theodora* with Basingstoke Choral Society, Dvorak *Stabat Mater* at Winchester Cathedral, Rossini *Stabat Mater* for the Rossini Society,

In 2013 Dingle composed and performed the Bass-Baritone role for part-improvised opera *The Lingerer* by Max Perryment, one of ENO's shortlisted mini-operas.

He was the bass soloist in the memorable NCS 40th Anniversary performance of *Messiah*.

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 H.M. 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 *Enigma Variations* with the Northern Concordia Orchestra, and Handel *Coronation Anthems* and the *Dettingen Te Deum* with the 18th Century Sinfonia.

Performances in 2015 and 2106 included Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Requiem* and Duruflé's *Requiem* with NCS, Tewkesbury Abbey, Brecon Cathedral and 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.

Plans in 2017 include Rutter's *Magnificat* and *Sprig of Thyme* and Verdi *Requiem* with NCS, Durham and Peterborough cathedrals 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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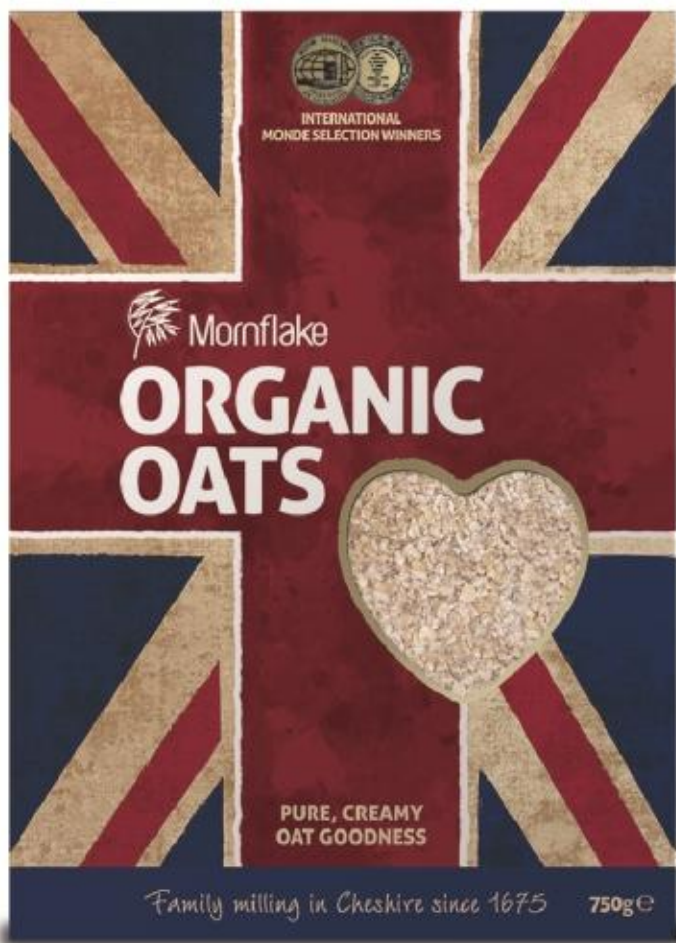
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Programme of events

2017

Saturday 15 July 2017, 7.30 pm

St Mary's Church, Nantwich

John Rutter: Magnificat and The Sprig of Thyme

Harriet Goodwin, mezzo-soprano

Ensemble Arpège de Mâcon and

The Nantwich Sinfonia

Sunday 22 October 2017, **3.30 pm**

Victoria Hall, Hanley

Verdi: Requiem

Emma Short, soprano

Susan Marrs, mezzo-soprano

David Butt Philip, tenor

Dingle Yandell, bass-baritone

with Ceramic City Choir and

The Northern Concordia Orchestra

Saturday 16 September 2017

St Mary's Church, Acton

Singing Day

Saturday 16 December 2017

St Mary's, Nantwich

Family Carol Concert

with Nantwich Young Voices