



EDINBURGH
ROYAL
CHORAL
UNION

From darkness to light

John Rutter
REQUIEM

and works by Parry, Britten and Durufle

Michael Bawtree Conductor
Joseph Beech Organ
Edinburgh Pro Musica Ensemble

Saturday 15 March 2025, 7.30 pm
Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

Garleton
Singers

the
meadows
chamber orchestra

Puccini - Messa di Gloria
Wagner - Siegfried Idyll
Elaine Hagenberg - Illuminare

Featuring:

Christian Schneeberger *Tenor*

Phil Gault *Baritone*

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

Garleton Singers

Stephen Doughty *Conductor*

Saturday 22nd March 2025 at 7.30pm

St. Cuthbert's Church, Lothian Rd. Edinburgh

Sunday 23rd March 2025 at 7.30pm

St. Mary's Parish Church, Haddington

Tickets available from Choir members, Kesley's Bookshop Haddington
or Garleton Singers website

Adults: £18 Students: £8 School children: £3

garletonsingers.co.uk

Scottish Registered Charity SC002500

PROGRAMME

Blest pair of sirens

C Hubert H Parry (1848–1918)

Arabesque No 1

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Sharron Griffiths *harp*

Messe “Cum júbilo” Op 11

Maurice Duruflé (1902–86)

Gloria
Sanctus
Benedictus

Syrinx

Claude Debussy

Matthew Howells *flute*

Finale (from Suite No 3 for Solo Cello, Op 87)

Benjamin Britten (1913–76)

Elias Rooney *violoncello*

Missa Brevis Op 63

Benjamin Britten

Kyrie
Gloria
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

INTERVAL

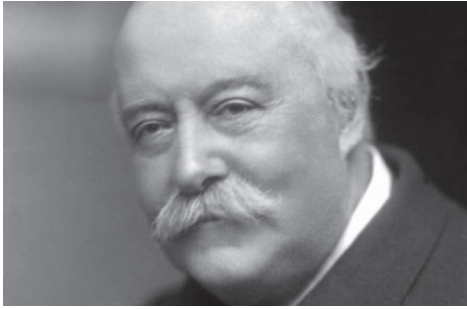
Requiem

Sir John Rutter (b.1945)

Requiem aeternam
Out of the deep
Pie Jesu
Sanctus
Agnus Dei
The Lord is my shepherd
Lux aeterna

Michael Bawtree *conductor*
Edinburgh Pro Musica Ensemble

Blest pair of sirens C Hubert H Parry



Charles Hubert Hastings Parry was a pivotal figure in the English musical renaissance of the late 19th/early 20th century. Director of the Royal College of Music from 1894 until his death, he composed prolifically in all forms, including opera. Alas, although probably the most widely acclaimed British composer of his day, his oeuvre is now largely forgotten, his being remembered by just three works, all of them choral: *Jerusalem* (“And did those feet”) of 1916; Psalm 122 (“I was glad”), composed for Edward VII’s coronation, and sung at every coronation since; and *Blest pair of sirens* (a setting of 17th-century poet John Milton’s “At a Solemn Music”). This last particularly is without doubt a flawless masterpiece – indeed the late Herbert Howells once said that he believed it to be “the finest choral work ever to have come out of these islands”(!)

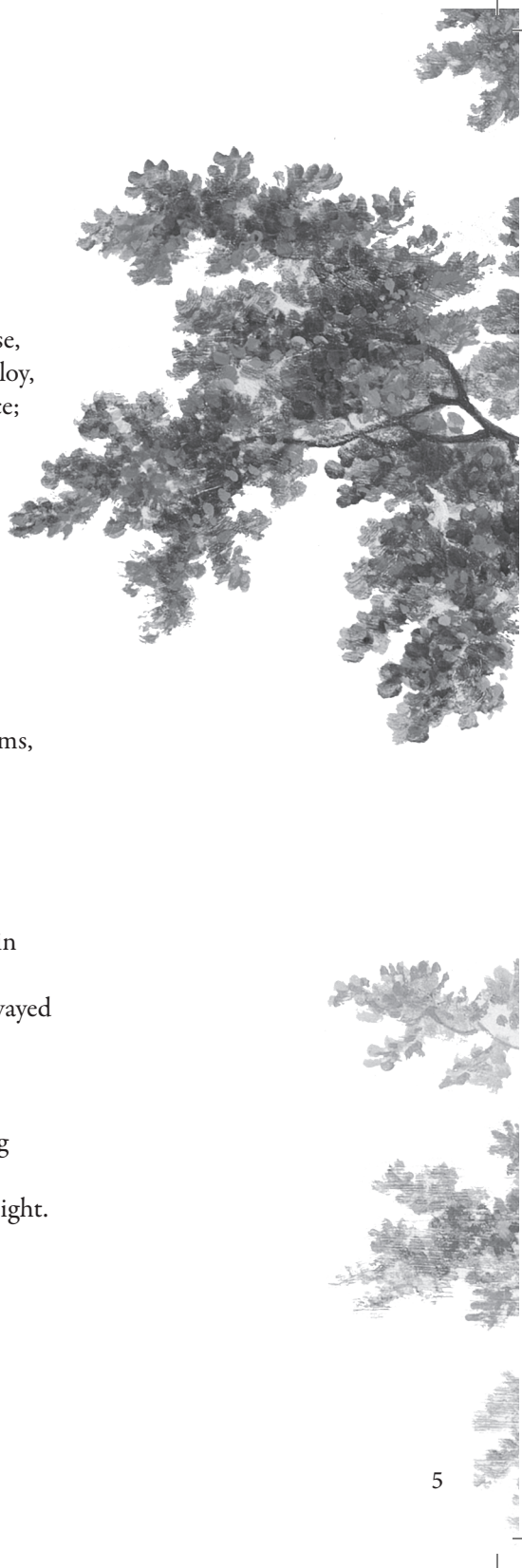
The piece was commissioned by Charles Stanford and the London Bach Choir and given its first performance at a concert given in St James’ Hall on 17 May 1887, as part of the celebrations to mark

Queen Victoria’s golden jubilee, where the composer noted: “[it was] received quite uproariously.”

The subject of Milton’s verse is, at few words, “the rapture experienced on listening to sacred music”; or, as another authority has put it: “man’s desire to join the heavenly music of the spheres,” and from first to last Parry’s music seems to grow effortlessly out of the words. Scored for eight-part choir and orchestra, the overall construction, with its instrumental ritornelli, is somewhat akin to that of a baroque concerto, although Parry’s vocal textures and harmonic vocabulary are very much those of Wagner and Brahms. Lack of space precludes a detailed analysis of the work – the notes will have to speak for themselves; but it might be pointed out that the composer’s response to the subtleties of the text is everywhere apparent – note the opening harmonies, echoing those of Wagner’s *Meistersinger* (which is also of course about “voice and verse”), the use of the “Tristan chord” at “Jarr’d against nature’s chime”, and the appearance of a broad, quasi-Elgarian tune in E-flat at “O may we soon again renew that song” (E-flat being the home key of the piece).

At tonight’s concert, and in the absence of a full symphony orchestra, we hear the work accompanied on the organ, but the performance should be none the worse for that! Indeed, such an orchestral reduction offers the skilled organist all sorts of opportunities for the employment of different tone colours ...

Morley Whitehead



Blest pair of sirens, pledges of Heav'n's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed pow'r employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure content,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long
To His celestial concert us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light.

John Milton

Messe “Cum júbilo” Maurice Duruflé



French organist and composer Maurice Duruflé was “titulaire” (chief organist) at the church of St Étienne-du-Mont, Paris, from 1930 until his death. As a composer he was severely self-critical, and despite living a long life his published oeuvre extends only to Op 11 (the *Messe “Cum júbilo”* of 1967) – his last work of any consequence. Dedicated “à ma femme” (his second wife, Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, was a fine organist too), the work is somewhat unusually scored for “baryton-solo, chœur de barytons, orchestre et orgue”: in fact, there are three different versions available – for full orchestra; for “chant, orgue et quintette à cordes (harpe, trompettes et timbales ad libitum)”; and for solo organ (and voices). There are five movements: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei; and of these we hear tonight the Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus.

Perhaps, firstly, a word about the title: simply, it is because the work incorporates the Gregorian mass ordinary known as “Cum júbilo”. Because the Gregorian setting is properly sung for masses honouring the blessed Virgin Mary, performances of Duruflé’s setting have often been associated with Marian feasts, at least in France; and indeed the first several performances of the work were during the month of May, which Catholic piety associates with the Virgin Mary.

The vocal lines (often lying high in the voice for baritones) are either “real” plainsong or at other times simply “plainsong-like”, supported by a rich and colourful (and, as far as the organist in an organ-only performance is concerned, virtuosic!) organ accompaniment. And certainly, those of us who know some of the master’s other works (the *Requiem*, for example) will straight away recognise the music as that of Maurice Duruflé, and no one else! Some commentators have seen fit to see the work as “a protest” from an arch-traditionalist at the strictures imposed by Vatican II – that the traditional music of the Roman liturgy, ie plainsong, still had something valid to say in the modern world, albeit in a contemporary form; but it seems that the composer was always at pains to deny this reading. Either way, it is a lovely work, and one which deserves to be heard more often. *Morley Whitehead*

Missa Brevis

Benjamin Britten



Britten, according to a note at the end of his score, completed his *Missa Brevis in D* on Trinity Sunday, 1959, and it remains his only liturgical setting of the Latin Mass. It was written “for George Malcolm and the boys of Westminster [RC] Cathedral”, and to mark Malcolm’s retirement from the post, being first performed there on 22 July that year. During his 12 years at Westminster Malcolm had built up a choir of some considerable reputation, the boys especially being famed for their bright (chesty?) “continental” tone – rather at odds with the somewhat more restrained, even unemotional tone of most other cathedral choirs of the time. It was, apparently, a sound of which Britten was particularly fond.

The work is scored for three treble lines, with three solo parts, and organ; and while intended for boys’ voices it works equally well, as in tonight’s concert,

for ladies’ voices. There are the usual four movements: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus/Benedictus, and Agnus Dei (there is no Credo in a *Missa Brevis*.)

Britten’s setting is short and to the point – some 10 minutes’ duration – and, apart from anything else, is an object lesson in “economy of means”. To cite but two or three examples: the Kyrie (“Slowly moving”), in ternary form, begins with a falling three-note rhythmic-melodic idea which is used in inversion at the central “Christe...”; the Gloria (“Lively”, in 7/8) is founded for almost its entirety upon a pedal ostinato for the organ, this being derived from the opening intonation; and the Sanctus (“Broadly”, in 3/2) employs a 12-note “tone-row” for the voices, this later transferred to the organ pedals. The Benedictus (“Slow and gentle”) is for two solo voices and bitonal (although not in an unpleasant way), solo III singing in G and being answered by solo I in C. The overall mood of the work so far might be described, for want of a better word, as cheerful and positive, but the “Slow and solemn” Agnus Dei is rather more serious than what has gone before: it is in 5/4 over an organ pedal ostinato encompassing a ninth, with percussive semitone clashes (on “soft reed”) in the organ RH, alongside which the voices weave somewhat sinister serpentine lines. The whole ends ppp, and, as one commentator has remarked, as though “the world were exhausted in its search for peace.” *Morley Whitehead*

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam
gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, rex caelestis, Deus Pater
omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem
nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus sanctus. Tu solus Dominus.
Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Amen.

Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis
peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

Kyrie

*Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.*

Gloria

*Glory be to God on high.
And on earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise thee. We bless thee.
We worship thee. We glorify thee.
We give thanks to thee for thy
great glory.
O Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father
almighty, O Lord the only-begotten Son,
Jesus Christ,
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us. Thou that takest away the sins of the
world, receive our prayer. Thou, that sittest at the
right hand of God the Father, have mercy on us.
For thou only art holy. Thou only art the Lord.
Thou only art most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the
Father. Amen. Glory be to God on high. Amen.*

Sanctus

*Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Benedictus

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna in the highest.*

Agnus Dei

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us. O Lamb of God, that
takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

Requiem

Composer's Note



Requiem was composed in 1985 and first performed in the United States by the church choir of my musical patron and friend Mel Olson. It was not the result of any commission, but simply something which sprang from studying the manuscript of the Fauré *Requiem* in Paris (could I too write a Requiem?) – and which was spurred on by a wish to remember in music my late father, who had died in the previous year.

Following the precedent established by Brahms and Fauré, among others, it is not a complete setting of the *Missa pro defunctis* as laid down in Catholic liturgy, but instead is made up of a personal selection of texts, some taken from the Requiem Mass and some from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The seven sections of the work form an arch-like meditation on themes of life and death: the first and last movements are prayers to God the Father on behalf of all humanity, movements two and six are psalms, movements three and five are personal prayers to Christ, and the central Sanctus is an affirmation of divine glory, accompanied by bells as is customary

at this point in the Mass. Gregorian chant is used, in fragmentary or disguised form, at several points in the work. Each of the two psalm settings has an instrumental obbligato, a feature inherited from Bach.

In style and scale, *Requiem* owes more to Fauré and Duruflé than to Berlioz, Verdi or Britten. It is intimate rather than grand, mostly contemplative and lyric rather than dramatic, consolatory rather than grim, approachable rather than exclusive. Would I write the same sort of Requiem today? Perhaps not, but it was what I meant at the time I wrote it, and unlike other genres of composition, a Requiem is something you only write once.
Sir John Rutter

Requiem aeternam

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion: et tibi reddetur
votum in Jerusalem. Exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison. [from *Missa pro defunctis*]
*Grant them rest eternal, Lord: and may light
perpetual shine upon them. Thou, Lord, art
worshipped in Sion: thy praises shall ever be sung
in Jerusalem. Hear, O Lord, hear my prayer;
to thee shall all mortal flesh return.
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.*

Out of the deep

Out of the deep have I called unto thee,
O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well the voice
of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is
done amiss: O Lord, who may abide it?
For there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt
thou be feared.

I look for the Lord: my soul doth wait for him,
and in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the
morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there
is mercy: and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.
[Psalm 130]

Pie Jesu

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem.
Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis sempiternam
requiem. [from *Dies irae, Missa pro defunctis*]
*Blessed Jesu, Lord I pray, in thy mercy grant them
rest. Lord our God, we pray thee, grant them
everlasting rest.*

Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus
Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.
[from *Missa pro defunctis*]
*Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and majesty.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name
of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona eis requiem.
*Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world: grant them rest.*
Man that is born of a woman hath but a short
time to live, and is full of misery.
He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he
fleeth as it were a shadow.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona eis requiem.
In the midst of life we are in death.
Of whom may we seek for succour?
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord:
he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet
shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth
in me shall never die. [Latin text from *Missa pro
defunctis*; English texts from the Burial Service,
1662 Book of Common Prayer]

The Lord is my shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture,
and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul and bring me forth in
the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil;
For thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table for me against them
that trouble me:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil and my
cup shall be full.
But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
[Psalm 23]

Lux aeterna

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me:
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,
for they rest from their labours.
Even so saith the Spirit.
Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine:
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Light eternal shine upon them, Lord, we pray:
With thy saints ever dwelling, for thy mercy's sake,
may they rest in peace.
Grant them rest eternal, Lord, and may light
perpetual shine upon them.*
[English text from the Burial Service;
Latin text from *Missa pro defunctis*]

Michael Bawtree conductor



A musician with a wide-ranging international career, British conductor and organist Michael Bawtree regularly conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and has directed the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Red Note Ensemble, the Orchestra of Scottish Opera, Orchestra North East and many performances for Scottish Ballet across the British Isles. He is co-Artistic Director of the Glasgow Bach Cantata Project, leading performers from across Scotland in the joyous task of performing all of Bach's cantatas over the next decade or more.

For seven years Bawtree was Assistant Music Director of the Lyrique-en-Mer summer opera festival in Brittany, returning there last summer to lead performances of Menotti's *The Telephone*. He joined the music staff at Glyndebourne for their 2018 production of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and has worked as guest chorus master for the BBC Singers, Danish National Opera and St Endellion Festival.

Since 2005, Michael Bawtree has been Chorus Director of the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union and Music Director of Glasgow Chamber Choir. He conducted a specially formed ensemble at His Majesty King Charles III's "Scottish Coronation" in Edinburgh in July 2023. A keen advocate of contemporary music, Bawtree has conducted world premieres of works by Judith Bingham, Paul Mealar, Cecilia McDowall, Richard Peat and Rory Boyle.

An avid traveller, Bawtree has been lucky to visit all corners of the globe while making music: he spent the summer of 2014 living in Mumbai, directing a choral project with 250 children from all walks of life; in October 2023, he was to be found on an island in north-west Greenland leading a week of workshops and performances with young musicians from across Scandinavia; last spring, he returned to Mumbai to perform Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony* with the Symphony Orchestra of India; most recently, he returned to Australia to lead a youth choir project in Brisbane.

As organist and continuo player, Bawtree performs regularly with all the Scottish orchestras and the London Symphony, Swedish Radio, Bergen Philharmonic and BBC Symphony orchestras. Organ recital invitations have taken him to all the major British cathedrals, Notre-Dame de Paris, Washington National Cathedral and Auckland Town Hall and to Bermuda, New England, California and across Scandinavia. Bawtree studied at Christ's College, Cambridge University, and at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he is now Lecturer in Conducting.

Joseph Beech organ



Joseph Beech is the Sub-Organist at Durham Cathedral, a position he took up in September 2019. As Sub-Organist, Joseph is the principal accompanist and assistant director of Durham Cathedral Choir, playing the organ for daily services in addition to the choir's schedule of broadcasts, concerts, recordings and tours. He plays an active role in conducting the choir, and recruiting and training the choristers. Prior to his appointment at Durham, Joseph was Assistant Master of the Music at St Mary's Cathedral here in Edinburgh. He has broadcast numerous times on BBC Radio 3 & 4 as both an organist and conductor.

Born in Nottingham in 1994, Joseph was Organ Scholar at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, before winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. As a prizewinning student of David Titterton, Joseph performed in London's major venues and played under conductors Marin Alsop, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Trevor Pinnock. Concurrent with his Academy studies, Joseph successively held organ scholarships at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace; the London Oratory; and St Paul's Cathedral. He graduated with a first-class degree in 2017, and was presented with one of the Academy's Regency Awards for "notable achievement". He also holds the Academy's licentiateship teaching diploma. In 2022 Joseph was elected to associateship of the Royal Academy of Music, an award made to alumni who have made a distinguished contribution to the music profession in their particular field.

Edinburgh Pro Musica Ensemble

Flute

Matthew Howells

Oboe

Irena Klimach

Timpani and percussion

Noah Chalamanda

Harp

Sharron Griffiths

Violoncello

Elias Rooney

Organ

Joseph Beech

With thanks to Graham Maclagan and the music department at George Heriot's School for the loan of the percussion instruments.

Edinburgh Royal Choral Union

Soprano

Jenny Bain
Mary Ball
Carolyn Beattie
Sophie Bleau
Eileen Burke
Moirra Burke
Libby Campbell
Jean Carse
Catherine Donaldson
Natalia Filipiak
Maureen Fowler
Henrietta Hales
Sally Hampton
Susie Hazeldine
Lauren Hope
Phyll Hoskyns-Abrahall
Zsófia Juhász
Michelle Keown
Holly Lawrenson Evans
Sally Leighton
Alison Macdonald
Aideliz Montiel
Joyce Moon
Chelsea Morison
Suzy Morrison
Seonaidh Morton
Anna Munro
Moirra Reekie
Yuxin Shen
Kirsten Shield
Maureen Stewart
Rosemary Stewart
Sally Swann
Cherry Tinniswood
Abigail Van der Lek
Jane Watson
Louisa Whalley
Julia Whitney-Hunter
Margaret Wilson
Pat Wood

Alto

Lindsey Anderson
Sheila Badenoch
Norda Barber
Pat Bell
Alice Bennett
Amanda Cowking
Phyllis Craig
Winnie Croall
Masha Dvoriashyna
Helena Dykes
June Gilles
Judy Hardy
Evelyn Henderson-Child
Johanna Howes
Liz Humphreys
Rosemary Ling
Maddie Luhrs
Fiona MacBeth
Laura Marshall
Helen Martin
Anne McLeod
Jane McLeod
Sophie Milne
Jody Moles
Bettina Mumenthaler
Rachel Nimmo
Lesley Orr
Aleksandra Porsin
Anne Robertson
Susan Rodger
Ruth Sinclair-Jones
Caroline Snell
Christine Thompson
Anna Townley
Sheila Wallace
Margaret West
Morag Williamson

Tenor

Chris Brown
Sylvain Ducatillon
Nathanael Fagerson
tenor scholar
Harry Lempriere-Johnston
tenor scholar
David Morgan
Les Morss
Jesper Smidt
Viesturs Spūlis
John Thompson

Bass

Richard Arnott
David Bagshaw
David Baird
Thomas Bender
David Benson
Alastair Bruce
Douglas Burke
Ewan Campbell
Simon Capewell
Simon Duffin
Allan Gray
William Haddock
Timothy Jacob-Owens
Malcolm Mahony
John-Paul Marney
Stuart Purves
Nigel Robb
David Tweedie
Stephen Tweedie
Ewan Walker
John Waugh
Colin Wilson

*Lists of singers and ensemble
correct at time of publication*

EDINBURGH ROYAL
CHORAL UNION

SUMMER CONCERT

Saturday 24 May 2025
St Cuthbert's Church,
Lothian Road, Edinburgh

Fraser David Macdonald

Conductor

Michael Bawtree

Conductor and Harpsichord

Join us for a celebration of summer: our programme will include Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, the world premiere of *Butterflies*, by our conducting fellow Fraser David Macdonald, and JS Bach's *Missa Brevis in A major* and Brandenburg Concerto No 5.



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EDINBURGH ROYAL CHORAL UNION

Michael Bawtree *chorus director*

Morley Whitehead *accompanist*

Fraser David Macdonald
conducting fellow

Established in 1858, the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union has played a significant part in the musical life of Scotland, having given the first Scottish performances of many works, including Bach's *B Minor Mass*. ERCU sang at the opening of the Usher Hall in 1914 and retains a strong association with that venue to the present day. Under the patronage of the Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, it has worked with orchestras such as the Hallé, the Royal Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Vienna Philharmonic, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Scottish Chamber and the Royal Scottish National under such legendary figures as Sir Henry Wood, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Otto Klemperer and Sir Adrian Boult. ERCU's annual new year presentation of *Messiah* at the Usher Hall

is a highlight of the festive season: in 2023 Sir James MacMillan was guest conductor at a sold-out performance.

ERCU continues to promote new music and give Scottish premieres, including *The Farthest Shore* by Paul Mealor, *The Voices of our Ancestors* by Thea Musgrave, *Shadow Aspect* by Judith Bingham, commissioned for the choir's 150th anniversary, *water psalms* by Thomas LaVoy, commissioned to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the opening of Greyfriars Kirk for worship, *Cantemus Igitur* by award-winning Scottish composer Rory Boyle and *Pietà* by Richard Blackford. Other highlights have included performances with Andrea Bocelli at Glasgow's Ovo Hydro; concerts to celebrate the Commonwealth Games and the centenary of the completion of the Usher Hall; visits to Orkney's St Magnus International Festival for concerts alongside the St Magnus Festival Chorus; and a sell-out performance at the magnificently restored McEwan Hall of Verdi's *Requiem* side by side with the Edinburgh University Chamber Choir and student instrumentalists.

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Chris, ERCU member

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