

**HEXHAM ORPHEUS
CHOIR**

CONDUCTOR GLENN DAVIS

ROSSINI



**PETITE MESSE
SOLENNELLE**

Saturday 27th March 2010 7.30 PM

QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL, HEXHAM

THE HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR



CONDUCTOR GLENN DAVIS

With guest accompanists Alan Fearon & Michael Haynes

Choir rehearsal pianist
Margaret Huntington



Tonight's Soloists



Claire McKenna - Soprano

Claire studied BA Joint Honours in Music and Philosophy at Birmingham University and received vocal tuition from Andrea Calladine at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Last year she completed a Master of Music in vocal performance at Trinity College of Music, studying with Teresa Cahill and Alistair Young and was awarded the Worshipful Company of Musicians Alcard Award. Her recent work as a soloist includes Bach *Johannes Passion* (TCM conducted by Richard Egarr), Bach Mass in B Minor (Alnwick and District Choral Society), and Dvorak *Stabat Mater* with Hexham Abbey Festival Chorus last year.



Emma Banks – Contralto

Emma has lived in the North East for the last five years having spent time studying and working in London and Liverpool. During this time, Emma has had experience of both choral (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus, London Symphony Chorus and Northern Sinfonia Chorus) and solo singing (various local choirs and a small group called The Flash Gordons). Her repertoire includes works by Haydn, Mozart, and Goodall and the *St John Passion* by J.S. Bach.



Robyn Lyn Evans – Tenor

Robyn Lyn Evans comes from Ceredigion, Mid Wales. A graduate of Trinity College Carmarthen. Robyn's singing career started at a young age in the Eisteddfod competitions of Wales. Through the years, competition highlights have been the National Eisteddfod of Wales scholarship 1998; International Young Singer of the Year Llangollen International Eisteddfod 1999; National Eisteddfod of Wales Osborne Roberts Memorial Prize 2000 and Lampeter Eisteddfod Blue Riband; 'best tenor' prize National Mozart Competition 2000 & 2001; runner-up in the W Towyn Roberts Memorial Scholarship 2001 National Eisteddfod of Wales; finalist of London Welsh Society Singer of the Year 2005 and winner of the David Ellis Memorial Prize 2007 (Blue Riband) at the Flint National Eisteddfod of Wales 2007.

Since graduating from the RCM, he has numerous concert, radio and television appearances to his name and operatic roles which to date include *Il Duca*, *Rigoletto* and *Dr Blind*, *Die Fledermaus* (Pavilion Opera); *Tebaldo cover*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Opera North), *Gérald*, *Lakmé* and *Prince, Rusalka* (Opera School Wales); *Ferrando*, *Così fan tutte* (Hand Made Opera); *Alfredo*, *Die Fledermaus* (Bristol Opera); *Abdullah*, *Nabucco* (Bunny Port Opera) and 1st *Soldier*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Benjamin Britten International Opera School).

He is a regular on the concert platform with performances taking him to the Royal Philharmonic Hall Liverpool, Usher Hall Edinburgh, St David's Hall Cardiff, the Cathedrals of Gloucester, Worcester, Llandaff and St Davids and as guest soloist with choirs touring Europe.



David Sparrow – Bass

David was until his recent retirement Director of Music at King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford. After academic studies at Durham and Cambridge Universities, he took the position of Assistant Master of the Music at Chelmsford Cathedral, a post he held for eighteen years. He has accompanied many broadcasts of Choral Evensong and Songs of Praise for the BBC, and plays harpsichord and organ continuo with many local groups in Essex. In 1991 David received a Civic Award for services to the arts. Under his guidance the Senior Orchestra of King Edward VI Grammar School gained an enviable reputation locally for the high standard of its performances. David has conducted the Chelmsford Singers, the Writtle Singers and for many years was assistant conductor of the Essex Symphony Orchestra. He also adjudicates at music festivals and deputises as a lay clerk in Chelmsford Cathedral Choir. He currently sings with the much acclaimed London-based Joyful Company of Singers in concerts and festivals both here and abroad. In his spare time he enjoys travel, especially walking the hills and mountains of Britain and Europe.

Musical Director



Glenn Davis - Conductor

Glenn has been involved with choral music all his life, directing the Tynemouth Consort and then, from 1979 to 2007, the Priory Singers. Under Glenn's leadership over the past 10 years the Hexham Orpheus Choir has gone from strength to strength. Concerts have included Brahms' Requiem, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Handel's *Messiah* in Hexham Abbey. In 2006 the choir gave what is thought to be the first performance in the North of England of the *Missa Aedis Christi* by Howard Goodall. In a departure from their usual repertoire last year the choir gave a rapturously received performance of *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff.

Guest Accompanists



Alan Fearon - Piano

Timpanist Alan Fearon has enjoyed a long association with the Northern Sinfonia – he played with the orchestra in 1968 (the Sinfonia's tenth anniversary concert) and as well as playing timpani, harpsichord and piano with the orchestra he also conducts on a regular basis and is the founder and Chorus-master of the highly successful Northern Sinfonia Chorus. He is actively involved in The Sage Gateshead's Learning and Participation programme and regularly works with The Sage Gateshead's youth orchestra, Young Sinfonia. In the 1980s, Alan conducted the music to Abel Gance's epic silent film 'Napoleon' and was asked to reconstruct the scores of two classic Eisenstein films, 'Battleship Potemkin' and 'October'. Since then he has conducted these films throughout the UK and Europe, and with the Israel Philharmonic in Tel Aviv. More recently Alan has conducted the original score to Chaplin's 'City Lights' with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as well as the Sinfonia at The Sage Gateshead.

Alan's interest in opera and music theatre has led to many successful co-productions involving Northern Sinfonia including a production of Kurt Weill's 'Threepenny Opera' with Northern Stage.



Michael Haynes - Harmonium

Michael studied at The Birmingham Conservatoire and The Royal Academy of Music. He has been Director of Music at Hexham Abbey for 10 years; where he runs a Boys and Men's Voices Choir, Girls' Choir and an adult Chamber Choir. Previously he had worked at St Alban's Cathedral (Organ Scholar), Winchester College (Assistant Organist), Clifton College (Assistant Director of Music), Roedean School (Organ/Piano Teacher) and The University Church in Cambridge (Director of Music).

Michael holds a 1st Class Honours Degree in Music and the Fellowship and Choir Master Diplomas of the Royal College of Organists. He has recorded CDs and featured in various broadcasts both as an organist and choir director. He has given recitals in many English Cathedrals; also King's College Chapel (Cambridge), Westminster Abbey, in Germany and the USA. As an Examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Michael has worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Europe.

THE HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

Sopranos

Sarah Barker
Carolyn Below
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Chris Boothroyd
Janet Davies
Jill Dexter
Pip Emler
Christine Fenwick
Nancy Gash
Rosemarie Herdman
Annette Marlowe
Tanya Pless-Mulloli
Bronya Read
Ann Reed
Nuala Rose
Jay Thacker
Carolyn Vasey
Brenda Watson
Caroline Watson
Ros Woodward

Altos

Margaret Bainbridge
Lou Baxter
Wendy Busby
Pat Crompton
Sheila Dance
Liz Dixon
Davina Dwyer
Alice Emmerson
Val Hooker
Rita Howell
Vivien Hubbuck
Anita Jeffries
Judith Murray
Liz Nisbet
Rachel Ogilvie
Pat Rose
Audrey Shiel
Janet Storrie
Catherine Stott
Gill Thompson
Jean Wilks
Jennie Winter

Tenors

John Barker
John Below
John Boothroyd
John Brewster
Keith Brunton
Malcolm Chainey
Tom Frost
Tim Grew
Barry Kadleck
Susan Kent
Dorothy Peters
Richard Place
Peter Vasey

Basses

James Arkless
John Crawford
Robert Firth
Michael Jackson
Tom Kelsey
Don Macleod
Keith Mallinson
Tony May
Owen McArdle
Esme Ryder
John Rose
Jack Shiel
Peter Stott

PROGRAMME

Petite Messe Solennelle – Rossini

Part 1

Kyrie – Christe Soloists and chorus
Gloria – Laudamus Soloists and chorus
Gratias - Terzetto Contralto, tenor and bass
Domine Deus Tenor solo
Qui tollis Duet for soprano and contralto
Quoniam Bass solo
Cum Sancto Spiritu Soloists and chorus

Part 2

Credo Soloists and chorus
Crucifixus Soprano solo
Et resurrexit Soloists and chorus
Preludio religioso Harmonium
Sanctus Soloists and chorus
O Salutaris Soprano solo
Agnus Dei Contralto solo and chorus

Interval – refreshments will be served

PROGRAMME NOTES

PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE GIOACCHINO ROSSINI (1792 – 1868)

Born on February 29 in Pesaro, an Adriatic seaside resort, dying in Paris on November 13, Rossini's artistic life seems to fall into three phases. From the age of eighteen to thirty-nine was highly successful composer of Italian opera, most notably *The Barber of Seville* in 1816. After the performance of *William Tell* in 1829, he retired from operatic composition, however. The middle period of his life was troubled by illness, including depression, and insomnia, although he was still capable of artistic success with the *Stabat Mater*, finally completed in 1843. (This was performed by the Orpheus in 2000.) It was Rossini's return to Paris in 1855, along with his second marriage to his former mistress, Olympe Pelissier, that began a much happier phase. Their Paris home hosted a ten-year series of early evening Saturday soirées for which he composed a string of short pieces mainly for piano and voices, jokingly entitled "Sins of My Old Age". The *Religious Prelude* and the Soprano's *O Salutaris* in tonight's Mass first saw life in that form.

The Rossinis lived in the social world of artists and composers (Gounod, Liszt, Meyerbeer, Saint-Saens and Verdi all attended events at their home.) and mixed with the fashionable and the well-to-do of the capital. It was for one of their number, the Countess Pillet-Will (wife of a prominent banker) that Rossini composed the "final sin of my old age", as he called it, the "Little Solemn Mass". This was first performed in the Pillet-Will's private chapel on March 14th 1864. It was to be his last substantial composition, although he did write music for Meyerbeer's funeral after the latter's death six weeks later. (Meyerbeer's own nephew had presented Rossini with his own attempt at a funeral march to be informed that it might have been better if he had died and his uncle had written the march.)

In an age of expanding orchestral forces and of extra demands on singers who had to cope with the weight of Wagnerian opera, Rossini's Mass looks backward. He had met two sisters, the soprano and contralto Carlotta and Barbara Marchisio, whose singing reminded him of what he considered to be a vanishing vocal golden age. They sang in the first performance. Then, instead of the Grandes Messes and ever plus Grandes Messes Rossini writes for "petite" forces. The original performance was given by only twelve trained singers (twelve of three sexes would be enough said the composer: men, women and castrati.....) and accompanied only by piano and harmonium. Rossini later scored the accompaniment for orchestra, but most musicians feel that something is lost, especially the unique sound of the harmonium. This was especially popular in France, and tonight Michael is playing on an instrument made in Paris in 1880.

The term "Solennelle" may seem a typical Rossinian joke when listening to the tenors extrovert *Domine Deus*, but the grave *Christe Eleison*, written in a deliberately old style, à la Palestrina, the "tragic eloquence" (Richard Osborne) of the *Qui Tollis* and the *Agnus Dei* show that Rossini had greater depths than his own self-cultivated image of a bon viveur and wit. (The tempo direction for the *Credo* is "A Christian Allegro!") All in all, he was "a composer full of animal spirits yet capable of the noblest gravity," in the words of Leigh Hunt, written in 1850.

SPECIAL THANKS

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