



# ROSSINI

# PETITE MESSE

# SOLENNELLE

HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR DIRECTOR MARK EDWARDS

SATURDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2023

HEXHAM ABBEY

SOPRANO: HANNAH FUMOLEAU REYNOLDS

MEZZO: EMMA BANKS

TENOR: DAVID PISARO

BASS: KEIR MCGREGOR

PIANO: WARREN SMITH

ACCORDION: VALERIE BARR

# PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE

# GIOACHINO ROSSINI

## Part 1

1. Kyrie - Christe (*Soloists and chorus*)
2. Gloria Laudamus (*Soloists and chorus*)
3. Gracias (*Terzetto for contralto, tenor and bass*)
4. Domine Deus (*Tenor solo*)
5. Qui Tollis (*Duet for soprano and contralto*)
6. Quoniam (*Bass solo*)
7. Cum Sancto Spiritu (*Soloists and chorus*)

## Part 2

8. Credo (*Soloists and chorus*)
9. Crucifixus (*Soprano solo*)
10. Et Resurrexit (*Soloists and chorus*)
11. Preludio religioso (*accordion*)
12. Sanctus (*Soloists and chorus*)
13. O Salutaris Hostia (*Soprano solo*)
14. Agnus Dei (*Contralto solo and chorus*)

## There will be an Interval after Part 1

“Thou knowest, O Lord, as well as I, that really I am only a composer of opera buffa” Rossini, dedication to *Petite Messe Solennelle* (1864). This is also the man who variously said, “Give me a laundry list and I will set it to music”, “Every kind of music is good, except the boring kind” and, “One can’t judge Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* after a first hearing, and I certainly don’t intend to hear it a second time.” Gioachino Rossini must be one of the most outrageous figures in the composers’ archive.

Notoriously idle and slapdash, his successes were almost equal in number to his failures. A third of his operas at least are just rehashes of earlier works. Everywhere he went, he ran into trouble with critics, audiences, mistresses, even the Austrian secret police and he seems to have moved all over Europe at various times escaping ‘local difficulties’. His productive life as a composer was short, only about twenty years, during which time he wrote 38 operas, 19 sacred works, some 13 instrumental works and numerous songs.

From about 1829 after the composition of *William Tell*, he fell into a period of ill health, both mental and physical. He did not write another opera or barely another note until his old age. At the same time, he seems to have amassed a fortune and gained numerous rewards and honours. He had a knack of getting a lucrative contract to produce a work which never materialised, and then re-locating elsewhere in Europe. The less he did, the more people liked him. He lived like a modern celebrity, getting away with it because we just love his tunes, and he makes us feel good!

The *Petite Messe Solennelle* was written in 1863 to inaugurate the private chapel of the Count and Countess Pillet-Will and had its first performance on 14 March 1864. Scored for chorus, soloists, piano and harmonium, Rossini described it as the last of his ‘sins of old age’. The harmonium, invented and patented in 1841, to give a reed organ capable of expression, was used for the first performance. In our performance the harmonium has been replaced by an accordion. Rossini proposed that an accordion could be used, but this was thought to be too ‘popular’ for a religious work. For much of the piece, it provides the legato glue in the piano’s bouncy and percussive contributions.

**Part 1** begins with the *Kyrie*, a teasing opener with long suspenseful lines in the chorus over a constant piano bass. Suddenly, this stops and the following *Christe eleison* is a surprising piece of polyphonic, a capella writing in Renaissance style. The *Kyrie* returns and moves now into a major tonality.

The *Gloria Laudamus* is assertive, operatic and spiritual.

*Gratias agimus tibi* is a trio for alto, tenor, and bass with piano. This begins in a pleasant enough manner but builds into a richly contrapuntal texture that is most satisfying.

*Domine Deus* is a tenor solo and the kind of piece which might have prompted Beethoven to tell Rossini to stick to writing comic operas! Especially as the tune is almost a perfect copy of one found in Beethoven's string quartet Op.18 no.4.

Soprano and contralto soloists restore a suitable mood in *Qui tollis* and we can picture here two strong but worried women on stage grieving for the state of the world but placing their faith in God. The bass picks up his aria as the wise counsellor coming onto stage for *Quoniam*. Always so reassuring to have a man around in troubled times! The chorus returns to the opening *Gloria* music and extends it for *Cum sancto spiritu*. This is the chirpiest and most life-affirming Amen you will ever hear.

### — Interval —

**Part 2** begins with the *Credo*. This feels like more orthodox 19<sup>th</sup> century sacred music, but Rossini cannot resist some dramatic recitative style at 'and was made man'. This sets up the next aria *Crucifixus* to be sung by the soprano in a lyrical, amorooso style. Now our heroine is kneeling at the foot of the cross for sure. The chorus puts a stop to this with the words *Et resurrexit* and then takes us on a lengthy romp through the remaining words of the creed.

The instrumental *Preludio religioso* is the most heartfelt section of the whole piece. Why this complete change of mood? Was the elderly Gioacchino beginning to think that you cannot entirely laugh off life, death and that which is to come? Certainly, the choral *Sanctus* which follows is short and unconvincing compared with most Masses. Rossini inserts *O salutaris hostia* at this point. This is not normally in the Mass. It is a hymn of benediction, but he only sets the first verse which has us beset by foes and hoping for the best.

The final section *Agnus Dei* needs to come up trumps for us, and for a while...but, no, we will not give away the ending.



## MARK EDWARDS MMus

## DIRECTOR OF MUSIC



Originally from Edinburgh, Mark trained as a percussionist before taking up conducting, and has recently completed his Masters in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying with Clark Rundell and Mark Heron, where he was awarded the Brierley Kershaw Prize for Conducting. In 2017, Mark won the National Brass Band Conducting Competition and more recently was a semi-finalist in the Citta' Di Brescia-Giancarlo Facchinetti Conducting Competition.

Comfortable working on large scale projects for both orchestra and choir, he has recently directed larger repertoire including: Elgar – *The Dream of Gerontius*, Vaughan Williams – *A Sea Symphony*, and Verdi *Requiem*. As assistant conductor, he has taken rehearsals for RTE concert orchestra and acted as cover conductor for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Mark has also worked on projects with

BBC Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Psappha ensemble, assisting conductors such as Sir Mark Elder, Vasily Petrenko, Vassily Sinaisky, John Storgårds and Simone Young. In December 2022, he conducted two Christmas concerts with Raymond Gubbay 'A Dickensian Christmas' at The Bridgewater Hall and Hull City Hall.

As musical director for the award-winning chamber choir 'Voices of Hope' (recent winners of the BBC Choir of the Year Competition), Mark has curated numerous programmes including a recent jazz inspired concert with Will Todd and a concert of new commissions with Neil Ferris. He is also musical director for New Tyneside Orchestra, City of Leeds Youth Orchestra and is a lecturer in Conducting at Newcastle University. He has also undertaken masterclasses with renowned conductors such as Sir Mark Elder, Marin Alsop and David Hill.

During his time in Manchester, he worked with a variety of RNCM ensembles conducting a large range of repertoire including a number of premieres. With a keen interest in contemporary music, Mark has worked with Royal Northern Sinfonia, London Sinfonietta Academy and Streetwise Opera on new compositions. Recent highlights include performing at the Royal Albert Hall, London and Symphony Hall, Birmingham and live broadcasts for various BBC3 programmes.

## HANNAH FUMOLEAU REYNOLDS (SOPRANO)

Hannah studied at the University of Wales, Cardiff with John Hugh Thomas and has since furthered her vocal studies with singers as eminent as Ghislaine Morgan, Claire Powell, Elizabeth Cragg, Lynne Dawson, Mhairi Lawson, Poppy Holden, Mary Hitch and Dane Chalfin.



A prolific choral singer, in 2001 Hannah was awarded a place in the Choir and Orchestra of the Stuttgart Bach Festival. She sang under Nigel Perrin with Exeter Festival Chorus before relocating and joining the Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia in 2006. She is a founder member of the award-winning chamber choir Voices of Hope and the St James Consort.

Hannah's solo repertoire includes Bach *St John Passion*, *Magnificat*; Brahms *A German Requiem*; Bob Chilcott's *Christmas Oratorio*; Faure *Requiem*; Handel *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah*; Haydn *Creation* and various masses; Karl Jenkins *The Armed Man*; Mendelssohn *Elijah*,

*Hymn of Praise*; Rossini *Petit Messe Solennelle*; Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, *Requiem*, *Coronation Mass*; Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem*; Vivaldi *Gloria*. She performed the solo John Cage work *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* live on BBC Radio 3, and since 2021 she has been involved with the Brundibar Festival.

In recital, Hannah is incredibly passionate about English and American Art Song. She also loves to get her teeth into music from the last 30 years and, in particular, enjoys programming works by composers who are often under-represented in classical music.

## EMMA BANKS (MEZZO)

Emma has lived in the North East for over 15 years having spent time studying and working in London and Liverpool. Singing has always played a large part in Emma's life. Her choral experience includes large works as well as small group work, and now mainly involves performing as part of award-winning chamber choir, Voices of Hope. Highlights have included winning choir of the year in 2016, performing live on Radio 3 and working with conductors/composers such as John Rutter, Ūriks Eenvalds and Will Todd.

Emma's recent solo engagements include Elgar *Dream of Gerontius*, Mozart *Requiem* and Jenkins *The Armed Man*.



## DAVID PISARO (TENOR)

Well-weathered tenor, David Pisaro has sung for many a high and low occasion – whether for royalty or as a vagabond. In January 2004, David embarked on a coast-to-coast walking tour of Schubert's *Die Winterreise* performing at ten venues in thirteen days. The documentary, directed by Tom Pollock, has been premiered by WNED TV. David starred in the premier of *Microsoft the Opera* creating the role of Bill Gates at the opening of the Battersea Art Centre Opera Festival and Lord Byron in the premiere of *Byron* with Spitalfields Opera. Solo engagements in Spain have included Handel's *Messiah* with the Orquesta de Cámara Andaluza conducted by David Temple in Seville, and with the Orquesta Ciudad de Almeria in Almeria. With the Orquesta de Cámara Andaluza he toured Britten's *Les Illuminations* throughout Andalucia and performed Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for the CajaSol Concert Series with the OCA in Seville as well as Schumann's *Dichterliebe* in Seville for the Los Lunes Festival.

Over the past few years, David has created a variety of new roles for the Swaledale and Ryedale Festival Operas, the Durham Mysteries, and for (Opera North DARE Fellow) Cheryl Frances-Hoad's new Opera *Amy's Last Dive* as a part of the Cultural Olympiad festivities for Yorkshire in Bridlington and Leeds. He was the wannabe Internet-multi-millionaire in the multi-media extravaganza that was *Random Access Memory* the Opera. He created two roles in new operas by Patrick Dineen as the Soldier in the animated opera *Poets of Loss* for Collective Encounters in Liverpool and the Last Polar Bear in *The Polar Bear Waltz* for Liverpool's Light Night Festival.

He is an experienced oratorio soloist of repertoire ancient to modern and has a range to include a few baritone parts when needed, having performed Brahms' *Requiem* with PraeClassica in Newcastle as well as having been a two-for-one-deal Baritone and Tenor Soloist for *Carmina Burana* at the Sage Gateshead.

He is also a versatile choir director and workshop leader working with choirs across the North of England, from primary school children, hormonally challenged teenagers, to nervous OAPs his lively and innovative teaching style brings confidence and a great sense of fun to all, regardless of ability or background. From 2006 to 2021 he was a workshop leader and performer for Streetwise Opera for which he played Peter Grimes, under the charming direction of Duncan Ward in their recent touring film production *The Answer To Everything*.

As well as maintaining solo engagements throughout the UK and Europe, David is currently working as a Tenor Lay Clerk at Ripon Cathedral, Director of the Middlesbrough Town Hall Community Choir, and is one of the Head Idea People for NorthEast Opera.

## KEIR McGREGOR

Keir is a newly-qualified Music teacher across primary and secondary ages in the North-East, currently working at the Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation, and will be joining the Music Department at Dame Allan's School in the new academic year. After graduating from Selwyn College, Cambridge in 2019 with a first in Music, he went on to become a Choral Scholar at Norwich Cathedral, and following this completed a Primary PGCE at Newcastle University in 2022. He now holds a position as a Principle Lay Clerk at Newcastle Cathedral. Although singing throughout his childhood, Keir's first introduction to liturgical choral singing came at university, where he was a member of Selwyn College Chapel Choir under Sarah MacDonald throughout his degree; this springboarded his enjoyment of choral and solo singing, with recordings in Ely Cathedral and international tours, and encouraged him to continue this beyond university. Keir is also a member of small-scale vocal groups in the North-East such as Vox Populi and St. James' Consort, as well as occasionally dusting the cobwebs off his cello!



## PIANO: WARREN SMITH

Warren is currently Director of Music and Organist for St Mary's Parish Church, Ponteland, Director of Music for the Tyne Valley based chamber choir Jubilate, Accompanist for the Hexham Orpheus Choir, and singing bass in the 2016 Choir of the Year 'Voices of Hope.'

In September 2019, Warren took up the role of Head of Choir, Teaching Assistant and Piano & Singing Tutor at Mowden Hall Preparatory School, which certainly fills up the daylight hours!

If there's any free time to be had, Warren enjoys travelling the world and exploring the culinary delights on offer at fancy restaurants with his wife, Michelle.



## ACCORDION: VALERIE BARR



Valerie has been playing accordion since she was four and studied with world renowned accordionist, Djordje Gajic at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she graduated with a Masters in Music Performance in 2020. She enjoys the versatility of her freelance work as a soloist and chamber musician, and has performed with the BBC Philharmonic, the Hallé, Scottish Opera, London Concertante, Szene12, Glasgow Barons, Glasgow Experimental Music Series and as half of the Armonia Duo with violinist, Eddy Betancourt. She has also played in productions of Puccini's *La Bohème* (chamber) and *Cabaret*, and has appeared on BBC Radio 3 and Celtic Music Radio. She also regularly plays with Pogues tribute band, the Pogue Traders.

At seventeen, Valerie made her concerto debut playing the Piazzolla *Aconcagua concerto* with the West of Scotland Schools Symphony Orchestra, and has since performed the concerto with her

own chamber arrangement. She has performed in national and international festivals such as the Festival Internazionale Fisarmonica in Castelfidardo, Italy, the International Accordion Competition in Vilnius, Lithuania, and has attended masterclasses with Claudio Jacomucci, James Crabb, Miloš Milivojević, Bjarke Mogensen, Raimondas Sviackevičius and Varavin Lyudmila Vasilievna. She attended the Italian Accordion Academy 2019-21 with Claudio Jacomucci, and received classes in performance, transcription, composition and improvisation. She particularly enjoys chamber improvisation and is continually looking to develop this skill. As well as performing, Valerie is passionate about pedagogy and youth music. She is currently an instrumental tutor with the Diocese of Leeds Music Programme and works in Leeds Cathedral as well as many schools within the area. Before moving to Leeds, Valerie worked for many years with RCS Juniors and Early Years programmes, where she remains a deputy tutor, and for several years has taught on the annual RCS Accordion Summer School alongside Djordje Gajic. She has also very much enjoyed working with Live Music Now Scotland since 2019. Valerie is keen to promote the accordion as a classical instrument and to raise awareness of it in the classical music world, while also celebrating its versatility in many other genres.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Tony May** and **Margaret Huntington**, for the loan of lighting equipment as well as to Tony May for erecting and managing the lighting.

**Members of the committee and many others who have helped**, for their valuable contributions throughout this project including Anabel Gammidge, Julia Grint, Graeme Helliwell, Nick Lord, Linda Lord and Esther Urwin.

**Programme Design:** Nick Lord

**Cover Photograph:** part of the ceiling of the baptistery in Florence (Nick Lord)

## HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

Hexham Orpheus Choir (Charity Registration 514942) is dedicated to performing and promoting access to classical music in Tynedale. We have around 85 members and always welcome new singers. Our members range from the very experienced to the less so and both are equally welcome. For the less experienced, if you have a singing voice, an innate feel for pitch and rhythm and a desire to practise and develop your singing and sight reading, then membership of the choir is a great way to develop your skills.

<http://hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk/>

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Anne Bagley	Christine Anderson	John Below	Allen Christer
Sarah Barker	Cherry Christer	Malcolm Chainey	Stuart Dearlove
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Fiona Hewitt	Margaret Huntington	Stella Mason	Bob Hull
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Meg McCaldin	Val Mallinson	Rachel Ogilvie	Don Macleod
Liz McNeil Grist	Hilary McKendrick	John Ross	Keith Mallinson
Cicely Mortimer	Susan Morse	Peter Vasey	Tony May
Tanja Pless-Mullolli	Joanna O'Neill		John Rose
Ann Reed	Bronya Read		Paul Stirk
Nuala Rose	Jenny Sadgrove		Jim Vennart
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We hope to see you there!

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*None of us are or none of us is? Comma or semi-colon? Affect or effect? Loose or lose? Practise or practice?*



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