



Hexham Orpheus Choir

Haydn
Nelson Mass

Vaughan Williams
Toward the Unknown Region

Saturday 9th November 2024
St Andrew's Church - Corbridge

Welcome to The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Our Hexham Orpheus Choir performs a number of major concerts each year in and around Tynedale. Additionally, the choir participates in a variety of musical events, such as carol concerts and charity fundraising events, appearing over the years at various venues including Hexham Abbey, the Queen Elizabeth High School and churches throughout the region.

As a non-auditioned choir, the Orpheus provides a platform for people of differing musical backgrounds to come together and perform a wide variety of choral music, from renaissance to contemporary. New members are always made very welcome and are encouraged to participate in the choir's active social calendar.

Rehearsals normally take place at Trinity Methodist Church (Beaumont Street, Hexham NE46 3LS) on Wednesday evenings from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm, usually in school term-time only.

What you will hear tonight

Rhosymedre, Ralph Vaughan Williams – Organ Solo, Warren Smith

Toward the Unknown Region, Ralph Vaughan Williams – Chorus and Organ

Saraband (in modo elegaico), Herbert Howells – Organ Solo, Warren Smith

The Ground, Ola Gjeilo – Chorus and Piano

Interval

Missa in Angustiis (Nelson Mass) - Joseph F. Haydn

Conductor: Denis McCaldin

Denis McCaldin is a renowned British conductor and a leading expert on the music of Joseph Haydn. His distinguished career spans conducting, research, and education, with a particular focus on choral and orchestral repertoire. As Director of the Haydn Society of Great Britain, Denis has significantly contributed to the promotion and understanding of Haydn's works. He has conducted numerous performances of Haydn's music, including symphonies, oratorios, and operas, bringing a scholarly yet vibrant approach to these works. He has also edited a number of Haydn's works and one of his CDs (featuring his edition of the Little Organ Mass) has received a Gramophone Critic's Choice award.

He has also held academic positions, including Director of Music at Lancaster University. In addition to his expertise in Haydn, he has led performances with major orchestras like the Halle and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, earning recognition for his dynamic and insightful interpretations.

Further details are available at <http://www.haydnsocietyofgb.co.uk>



Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

was a prominent British composer known for his deep connection to English folk traditions and his innovative contributions to 20th-century classical music. His works are characterized by a distinctive blend of modernism and pastoral lyricism, often drawing on folk songs and hymn tunes for inspiration. One of his early significant works, **Toward the Unknown Region** (1907), marked a turning point in his career, signalling the emergence of his mature style.



Set to a text by American poet Walt Whitman, whose transcendentalist themes of exploration, nature and the soul resonated with Vaughan Williams's own artistic vision, the piece is based on Whitman's poem "Darest Thou Now O Soul," from *Leaves of Grass*. It reflects the composer's fascination with the mysteries of existence and the human spirit's journey beyond the material world.

The work unfolds in a sweeping, expressive manner, blending rich harmonies and dynamic contrasts, culminating in a powerful climax that suggests a triumphant embrace of the unknown. This composition not only showcased Vaughan Williams' ability to fuse words and music into a deeply spiritual experience but also helped establish him as one of Britain's foremost composers of his time.

*Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?
No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.
I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.
Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.
Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfill O soul!*

Prelude on the hymn tune 'Rhosymedre' was performed at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, at the request of her sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale. This piece was also featured at the weddings of her two sons, Prince William in April 2011, and Prince Harry in May 2018, as well as during the coronation of Charles III and Camilla in 2023.

Saraband (in modo elegiaco) by Herbert Howells is a poignant and introspective piece, originally written for string orchestra. Its lyrical lines and rich harmonies evoke a profound sense of longing and reflection.

The Ground by Ola Gjeilo is a hauntingly beautiful choral work, blending simplicity with emotional depth, that explores themes of connection and reflection. Its lush harmonies and evocative melodies create an atmospheric soundscape, inviting listeners to contemplate the depths of human experience.



Missa in Angustiis (Nelson Mass) (Hob.XXII:11)

J. F. Haydn (1732-1809)

Kyrie Gloria Credo Sanctus Benedictus Agnus Dei

Joseph Haydn's so-called *Nelson Mass*, was composed in 1798, the same year as the premiere of his great oratorio, *The Creation*, and of Nelson's victory over the French at Abukir. He entered the work in his catalogue as *Missa in angustiis* – Mass in time of stress. Its more common name came later.

Politically, this was a difficult period in European history and inflation forced Prince Esterhazy to disband the courtly wind-players from his orchestra, shortly before Haydn began to compose this mass. Faced with this setback, the composer made do with what remained - strings, three trumpets, timpani and organ. And as if to compensate, the solo vocal parts were expanded in importance - particularly those for the soprano and bass.

The *Kyrie* shows Haydn's exceptionally subtle understanding of the limited forces at his disposal. The movement begins, followed by the choir and finally the soprano soloist, whose part in this segment is of almost concerto-like importance. The music is in three sections, the central paragraph [*Christe*] being mainly for the choir, whose overlapping entries contrast dramatically with the striking octaves of the outer ones.

Kyrie Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. *Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.*
Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

The *Gloria* reflects Haydn's skill as a symphonic composer. It has three movements, the first using a 'call and response' pattern between the soprano soloist and the choir. The central *Qui tollis* is a noble bass solo, underpinned by hushed unison chanting from the chorus. The final *Quoniam* returns initially to the music of the *Gloria* before concluding with a spirited fugue on the words 'in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen.'

Gloria Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo,	<i>Glorify to God in the highest,</i>
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis...	<i>And peace on earth to men of good will...</i>
Qui tollis peccata mundi	<i>You who take away the sin of the world</i>
Miserere nobis.	<i>Have mercy on us.</i>
Qui tollis peccata mundi...	<i>You who take away the sin of the world...</i>
Quoniam tu solus sanctus,	<i>For You alone are holy</i>
tu solus Dominus...	<i>You alone are Lord...</i>

The *Credo* text presents a severe challenge to any composer and Haydn's experimental turn of mind prompts him to begin with a canon in octaves. Sopranos and tenors lead off and are imitated one bar later by altos and basses. To devout believers, the mystery of 'God made flesh' requires a particularly sensitive setting for the *Et incarnatus*. Haydn finds several deft gestures, such as the hollow octaves for 'crucifixus est pro nobis' [he was crucified for us] and the shocked silence after 'et sepultus est' [and was buried]. *Et resurrexit* celebrates the miracle of the resurrection with almost defiant exultation, especially at the words 'non, non, non erit finis' - 'his kingdom shall have no end'.

Credo	Credo
Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium...	<i>I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen...</i>

Et Incarnatus est	He became incarnate
de Spiritu Sancto, ex Maria virgine; et homo factus est...	<i>from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was made man...</i>

Et resurrexit ...	He rose again...
et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.	<i>I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.</i>

The high point in the celebration of the mass is the *Sanctus*, and Haydn respects this by beginning with two hushed phrases before bursting out with a cry of adoration before the more vigorous 'Pleni sunt coeli' section. The six words of text in the *Benedictus* are shared between the soloist and chorus before the calm atmosphere in the original scoring is shattered by loud fanfares for trumpets and timpani. It was probably this passage that reminded the first audience of Nelson's victory and prompted later ones to call the work after him. Repose is restored by the solo quartet in the *Agnus Dei*. Haydn was sometimes criticised for making his church music too cheerful. Such comment might be levelled at this *Dona Nobis Pacem* which is clearly conceived as a symphonic finale. When challenged, his reply was characteristically naïve and honest - 'at the thought of God my maker, my heart leaps for joy and I cannot help it if my music does the same'.

Sanctus	Sanctus
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis.	<i>Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosannah in the highest.</i>

Benedictus	Benedictus
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis.	<i>Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest.</i>

Agnus Dei	Agnus Dei
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.....dona nobis pacem.	<i>Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.....grant us peace.</i>



Warren Smith – Accompanist and Organ Soloist

Warren is currently Director of Music and organist for Saint Mary's Parish Church, Ponteland, Director of Music for the Tyne Valley based chamber choir Jubilate and sings bass in the 2016 BBC Choir of the Year, Voices of Hope.

In 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 his daylight hours

In his free time, Warren enjoys traveling the world and exploring the culinary delights on offer at fancy restaurants with his wife, Michelle.

Spotlight on our soloists from the choir

Carolyn Below - Soprano



Carolyn has always loved singing and has sung with numerous choirs and music groups throughout her life. She enjoys a range of music including light music and pop as well as classical pieces.

Carolyn joined her first choral society in Ryton aged 12 and became an established member of the choir, singing with them for almost 30 years. She often sang solos for the choir as well as being a guest soloist for other local choirs including Ovingham and Riding Mill. She joined Hexham Orpheus in 2010 and currently sings with them and Antiphon.

Siobhan Stephenson - Alto



Siobhan was very lucky to have discovered choral singing (and football) at High School in Ipswich, continuing whilst studying in Manchester, then at Alnwick Choral Society for twelve years. After moving to Haydon Bridge 13 years ago, she eventually joined Hexham Orpheus Choir during the pandemic and is loving singing big choral works again. She also continues to sing with the Rock Festival Choir (nothing to do with Rock music!), Alnwick's chamber choir, where a major highlight was singing Rachmaninov Vespers in Greyfriars Kirk at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Siobhan is now most often found at the Nurture Project in Haydon Bridge, converting a field into a Community Garden.

Peter Vasey - Tenor



Peter has been singing in public most of his life, ranging from skiffle, through pop to operetta with occasional solo parts. More recently he has been mainly involved with oratorio; he has sung solos with local choral societies including Bishopwearmouth, Ryton, Ovingham, and of course Hexham Orpheus. Of particular note was the part of St Nicholas in Britten's eponymous work with North Tyne and Redewater Choral Society. At present most of his singing is with Hexham Orpheus and the Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia with whom he has also taken solo parts.

Graeme Helliwell - Bass



Graeme joined the HOC in the Autumn season of 2017. He is also an active member of the Chorus of Royal Northern Sinfonia at the Glasshouse, Gateshead and has recently sung with the Chorus of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

He started off his musical journey as a trumpeter and chorister, developing a love of performance from an early age, joining both the Helensburgh Oratorio Choir and Helensburgh Savoy Theatre Company, at the age of 15.

Acknowledgements

- Members of the committee and the many others who have helped put together this event, including Anabel Gammidge, Julia Grint, John Below, Graeme Helliwell, Jenny McKay, Steve Lloyd, Warren Smith, Mark Edwards, Denis McCaldin, Tim Grew and Len Young
- Programme notes by Graeme Helliwell and Denis McCaldin
- Accompanist. Special thanks to Warren Smith for being with us through rehearsals and tonight's concert.
- Cover image: Painting by J. M. Turner, *Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight* (1835)

The Choir – Not all our subscribing members are with us this evening, but we are indebted to everyone's ongoing support and input throughout the year. Together, they are...

Sopranos

Anne Bagley
Sarah Barker
Deborah Beasley-
Suffolk
Carolyn Below
Paddy Burridge
Elspeth Christie
Lizzie Cooper
Judi Cornforth
Sally Dodgson
Fiona Hewitt
Meg McCaldin
Liz McNeil-Grist
Mary Oswell
Tanja Pless-Mulloli
Ann Reed
Katie Rose
Katie Selby
Katie Urwin
Katie Vasey
Katie Welch

Altos

Celia Atherton
Marion Bates
Lou Baxter
Lorraine Clay
Sheila Dance
Anabel Gammidge
Liz Gray
Julia Grint
Julie Harrison
Caroline Howard
Rita Howell
Claire Huddleston
Margaret Huntington
Margret Jacot
Linda Lord
Val Mallinson
Susan Morse
Joanna O'Neill
Bronya Read
Jenny Sadgrove
Siobhan Stephenson
Pam Vennart
Jean Wilks
Anne Wilson

Tenors

John Below
Malcolm Chainey
Bill Day
Charles Drax
Tim Grew
Leigh Harrison
Steve Lloyd
Pat Marriott
Stella Mason
Denis McCaldin
Jenny McKay
Steve Middleton
Rachel Ogilvie
Peter Vasey

Basses

Stuart Dearlove
Warwick Eden
Martyn Farrer
Graeme Helliwell
Chris Hewitt
Bob Hull
Richard Jackson
Nick Lord
Keith Mallinson
Owen McArdle
Mick McCabe
John Rose
Michael Scott
Paul Stirk
Jim Vennart
Chris Welch

Mark Edwards - Musical Director



Mark, originally from Edinburgh, is a trained percussionist who transitioned to conducting, earning his Masters in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he received the Brierley Kershaw Prize. He won the National Brass Band Conducting Competition in 2017 and was a semi-finalist in the Città Di Brescia Conducting Competition. He has served as assistant conductor for the RTE Concert Orchestra and covered for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, collaborating with notable ensembles like the BBC Philharmonic. In addition to directing the award-winning Voices of Hope choir, he has rehearsed tonight's programme, though is sadly unable to join our concert on this occasion.