



Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra
and
Tamesis Chamber Choir
present

Handel's *Messiah*

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Sunday 4th December 2022,
6pm

St Joseph's College

A welcome from Tamesis and APO

A chamber choir such as Tamesis seldom has the chance to perform large-scale choral works so this collaboration with Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra (APO), along with four outstanding professional vocal soloists, is particularly special. APO has just marked its 20th anniversary and Tamesis will do so next year: this feels like a belated or early joint celebration!

APO and Tamesis have come together to perform several times before - it's always an exhilarating experience, because we share common goals in our music-making and approach. Of course, that means a high standard of musical performance. But just as importantly, we all want to make classical music accessible, enjoyable, welcoming and memorable for both musicians and audience members.

We're delighted that our musical directors Andrew Taylor and Louise Rapple Moore conceived this concert performance of *Messiah* and hope it will be an uplifting opener to your festive season. Performed by a chamber orchestra and choir, our *Messiah* ensemble is smaller than you may have seen before - it's actually truer to Handel's original concept. We hope you enjoy our bright, nimble and energetic performance this evening.

Notes on the programme

When Handel settled in London in 1712 there was already a thriving Italian opera scene and he soon became its leading figure, with a succession of brilliant works flowing from his pen. However, then, as now, the economics of opera were constantly on a knife-edge and making a profit on these costly ventures was difficult and unpredictable. Despite their critical acclaim, Handel's Italian operas never attracted large audiences. They were mainly supported by the aristocracy and the upper classes. Public taste was changing quickly, though, and by the 1730s people were becoming increasingly intolerant of the unfamiliar language, ridiculous plots, arrogant soloists and over-elaborate music. They now demanded something less highbrow and more home-grown. Box office revenues started to plummet as rival companies competed with each other for the dwindling audiences and the costs of opera production escalated. Handel had invested heavily in his own company and this alarming collapse seriously affected his finances.

Faced with possible bankruptcy the ever-resourceful composer turned to oratorio as a potential solution to his financial difficulties. Though oratorio has much in common with opera it is not staged and is consequently a great deal less costly to produce. It was a genre in which Handel had already experienced some modest success, beginning with his first English oratorio, *Esther*, composed in 1720. He now found himself working more and more on oratorios and in February 1741 he staged his last Italian opera, which closed after just three performances.

Handel's oratorios were deliberately aimed at a new audience: the Protestant middle classes. The musical style was largely direct and straightforward and the librettos, in English, were generally based on passages from the Old Testament, a common literary heritage with which everyone was thoroughly familiar. In an era of increasing prosperity and expanding empire these vivid Biblical stories of larger than life heroes leading a people who, if they followed God's law, were specially protected and given victory over their enemies, must have held particular resonance for the middle classes of eighteenth century London. Musically, Handel's most significant innovation was his use of the chorus, which was given a much greater role and now enjoyed equal status with the soloists. His monumental style of choral writing, calculated to impress with great blocks of vocal sound - exemplified in such pieces as the 1727 coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest* - was ideally suited to the task.

Wife For A Hat. This follows roles as Bertram in *La donna del lago*, Souffleur in *Viva la Diva* and Lensky [cover show] in *Eugene Onegin* (Buxton International Festival), Acis in *Acis and Galatea* (The Zimmermann Band), Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Aberdeen University Opera Society), Anatol in *Vanessa* (Brickhouse Theatre), Tony in *West Side Story* (Piggott's) and Don Eusebio in *L'occasione fa il ladro* (British Youth Opera). He will conclude his studies with the roles of King Ouf in Chabrier's *L'étoile*, Mozart in *Mozart and Salieri* by Rimsky-Korsakov and Young Man in *A Feast in Time of Plague* by César Cui before becoming an Alvarez Young Artist at Garsington Opera, covering the roles of Ringmaster in *The Bartered Bride* and Major Domo and Officer in *Ariadne Auf Naxos*.

www.williamsearletenor.com



Alex Jones - Bass

Alex has completed, with distinction, a Masters in Vocal Studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied with Marilyn Rees, and was awarded a Concert Recital Diploma for outstanding performance in his final recital.

Prior to his studies, he spent a gap year as a choral scholar at Wells Cathedral, followed by three years as a choral scholar at King's College, London. When in London he continues to sing at various churches in the City, including St. Bride's Fleet Street, Marylebone Parish Church, St. George's Hanover Square and The Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace. He now works with a number of consorts and choirs both at home and abroad, such as The Dunedin Consort, Britten Sinfonia and Philharmonia Voices. He enjoys performing as a soloist for many choral societies, works including Bach's *St. John Passion*, *St. Matthew Passion* and *Magnificat*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Requiem* and Jenkins' *The Armed Man*. He has also worked as a soloist with the London Symphony Chorus, performing Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* as well as *Carmina Burana* in the Sound Unbound Festival.

Alex enjoys performing on the stage, most recently singing Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Opera Holland Park as a Young Artist. Previously, he has sung with various companies including Hampstead Garden Opera, The Co-Opera Company, and London Youth Opera, performing such roles as Papageno from Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Krushina in Smetana's *Bartered Bride*. He has also performed in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* in the Barbican Centre with Joyce DiDonato, and Guccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* with Christopher Purves.



Elinor Carter - Mezzo-Soprano

Elinor Carter (mezzo-soprano) grew up in York in a family of musicians. Her father's advice to her as a teenage was 'Don't be a musician, and don't be a teacher'. Elinor now splits her time between singing and teaching. What a rebel!

After a degree in Modern Languages from Clare College, Cambridge, where she was a choral scholar, Elinor went on to train at the Royal College of Music, winning prizes for Bach, Handel and English song. As a soloist, she has performed in Europe and America and recorded Vivaldi's *Gloria* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner. Elinor is based in Wallingford and conducts a small a cappella group as well as teaching all ages and abilities.



Will Searle - Tenor

Welsh tenor William Searle is one of the UK's most promising singers of oratorio, performing *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall, Bach's *Magnificat* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Cadogan Hall, and in a world premiere at Carnegie Hall in New York. For three years, he was a featured artist with the charity Making Music and future engagements include *Messiah* in Dereham, *St John Passion* in London and Framlingham, Haydn's *The Seasons* at Bath Abbey, Bach's *Magnificat* in Aberdeen and the Verdi *Requiem* in Cheltenham. Praised as 'stylish and appealing' (The Financial Times) and 'vocally-skilled, intelligent and mature' (Wales on Sunday), he has also performed with Simon Over and the Southbank Sinfonia in a live Christmas recital on Classic FM and with Graham Johnson in the Schubertiade at the Wigmore Hall. Thanks to the support of the Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Opera Award, he currently studies with Scott Johnson at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Alexander Gibson Opera School, where he recently played Oliver Sacks in Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His*

In 1741 Handel had already begun work on a new work, *Messiah*, when he received an invitation from the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to visit Dublin. He accepted the invitation, taking his *Messiah* score with him. It was first performed at the New Music Hall, Dublin, in April 1742, and was an unqualified success. One effusive review ran: 'Words are wanting, to express the exquisite Delight [*Messiah*] afforded to the admiring, crowded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestic and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear.' In addition to its musical impact, its success was also due to the general approval of the donation of a large part of the proceeds to various Dublin charitable institutions, a pattern later repeated in London with the Foundling Hospital.

Though *Messiah* shares many common characteristics with Handel's other oratorios, it is the least typical in several respects: it has more choruses than any other except *Israel in Egypt*; it does not have a newly written libretto but one compiled from existing short passages from the Bible; and it has no named characters or overall narrative, presenting instead a series of contemplations on the life of Christ and Christian redemption. The success of *Messiah* owes much to the fine libretto by Charles Jennens, who had previously collaborated with Handel on his oratorio *Saul*. Jennens' extensive knowledge of literature and music made him in many ways an ideal creative partner for Handel, though the relationship was not without its tensions.

The work is divided into three parts. Part One deals first with the prophecies concerning Christ's birth. An appealing sequence of Christmas movements follows, comprising the chorus 'For unto us a child is born', with its powerful setting of the words 'Wonderful' and 'Counsellor'; recitatives depicting the angels bringing the good news to the shepherds; and the imaginative final chorus, 'Glory to God', which ends with a *diminuendo* as the angels disappear from sight.

Part Two is the dramatic heart of the work. It tells of Christ's passion, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Here we find a wide range of emotional expression, from the crowd's derisive taunts in 'He trusted in God', to the heartbreaking alto aria, 'He was despised' and the bass soloist's fierce rage in 'Why do the nations'. This part ends, though, on a gloriously optimistic note, with trumpets, drums and chorus blazing out their triumphant 'Hallelujah!'.

Part Three consists entirely of commentary, principally on the resurrection and the theme of Christian redemption. In a work that abounds in superb music, this section contains some of Handel's most inspired writing, beginning with the radiant soprano aria, 'I know that my redeemer liveth'. Equally superb is the bass aria, 'The trumpet shall sound', with its spectacular trumpet solo. However, it is in the towering final choruses, 'Worthy is the Lamb' and 'Amen', that Handel truly surpasses himself with music that carries all before it in an exultant affirmation of faith.

Throughout, Handel's writing for orchestra and solo voices is masterly, the fruits of a lifetime's musical experience. Arguably, though, it is the choruses that raise *Messiah* onto a different plane, thanks to Handel's unerring ability to grasp the dramatic potential of each text and the astonishing power and variety of his choral writing.

Handel composed *Messiah* in just twenty-four days, a remarkably short space of time but not exceptional by his own extraordinary standards. What is almost beyond comprehension, however, is how in these three weeks he was able to create a work of such sustained inspiration, power and seemingly inexhaustible invention. More than 250 years have passed since its first performance, yet *Messiah's* status as one of the great icons of European music remains undiminished, and it continues to speak to millions of people of many cultures and faiths around the world.

John Bawden

MESSIAH

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

PART ONE

- Sinfonia
- Recit. Comfort ye my people
- Air Ev'ry valley shall be exalted
- Chorus And the glory of the Lord
- Recit. Thus saith the Lord
- Air But who may abide the day
of his coming?
- Chorus And he shall purify
- Recit. Behold, a virgin shall conceive
- Air and Chorus O thou that tellest good
tidings to Zion
- Recit. Behold, darkness shall cover
the earth
- Air The people that walked in
darkness
- Chorus For unto us a child is born
- Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)
- Recit. There were shepherds abiding in
the field
- Recit. And the angel said unto them
- Recit. And suddenly there was with the
angel
- Chorus Glory to God
- Air Rejoice greatly, O daughter of
Zion
- Recit. Then shall the eyes of the blind
- Air He shall feed his flock
- Chorus His yoke is easy, and his burthen
is light

MAIN INTERVAL

in Church music as an organist and choir director and founded Tamesis in 2003. She also directs Tamesis Cathedral Singers, an occasional choir that sings Cathedral Evensongs twice a year.

Louise is founder and director of Shiplake and Hagbourne Community Choirs, both choirs for singers of all ages and abilities singing a mainly popular repertoire. In October 2013 she was delighted to be recognised for both her work as a Choral Director and her charitable fund-raising efforts by being named Creative Woman of the Year in Sue Ryder's annual 'Women of Achievement' awards at the Madejski Stadium in Reading. In 2017 she gained her LRSM in Choral Conducting via the Advanced Conducting Course with the Association of British Choral Directors.



Ellie Neate - Soprano

Ellie Neate is a soprano and 2022 opera course graduate from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. This season she has played Cleopatra in *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra* for Buxton International Festival, Milica in *Svadba* and Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park* for Waterperry Opera Festival, Cunegonde in *Candide* for Blackheath Halls Community Opera, and is currently covering the role of Elsie Maynard in *The Yeomen of the Guard* for English National Opera. In 2023 she will sing Daughter 1 in Philip Glass' *Akhmaten* at ENO.

Opera experience also includes Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* for British Youth Opera/Silent Opera, for which she won the Basil A Turner Award, and Lucy in *The Telephone*, *La Fée in Cendrillon* (Viardot), and Laurette in *Le docteur Miracle* (Bizet) at the Guildhall School. In concert Ellie has sung Adès' *Five Eliot Landscapes* at the Oxford Lieder Festival, with Nicky Spence and Julius Drake in a BBC broadcast from Wigmore Hall, and *Carmina Burana* with the London Symphony Chorus in the Barbican Hall.

Her studies on the Guildhall opera course were generously supported by The Fishmongers' Company and Help Musicians UK.

www.ellieneate.com



Andrew Taylor - APO Music Director

Andrew started his musical training at the age of seven as a chorister of Earley St. Peter's Church under the direction of the late Gary Turner. Other early musical influences were his wonderful piano teacher, Anne Nunn, and the late Roger Johnson at Reading Blue Coat School who encouraged Andrew to learn the oboe. Under the guidance of Hazel Todd and Sophia McKenna this became Andrew's main instrument, but while reading music at Cardiff University he also began to learn the art of conducting with Huw Gareth Williams.

In 2002, Andrew returned to Reading and set up the Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra (APO). As music director he has conducted over 70 concerts, with repertoire ranging from small-scale Albinoni and Vivaldi (directed from the oboe and harpsichord, respectively) through to conducting nearly 150 performers for Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*. He is committed to promoting young musicians and new music, overseeing the commissioning of over 30 pieces in 20 years. In November 2019, Andrew was presented with a Pride of Reading award for cultural contribution to his home town.

Away from APO and other musical engagements, Andrew earns his crust developing training for train drivers and can still occasionally be seen at the controls of the green machines of Great Western Railway. During the Covid-19 lockdowns he developed a bewildering obsession with running and has since run two marathons.



Louise Rapple Moore - Tamesis Musical Director

Louise studied conducting at the Conservatoire de Pau in southern France whilst at university and began her conducting career by directing the Reading University Singers. She spent several years

PART TWO

- Chorus Behold the Lamb of God
Air He was despised
Chorus Surely he hath borne our griefs
Chorus And with his stripes we are healed
Chorus All we like sheep are gone astray
Recit. All they that see him laugh him to scorn
Chorus He trusted in God
Chorus Lift up your heads, O ye gates
Recit. Unto which of the angels said he at any time
Chorus Let all the angels of God worship him
Air How beautiful are the feet
Air Why do the nations so furiously rage together?
Chorus Let us break their bonds asunder
Recit. He that dwelleth in heaven
Air Thou shalt break them
Chorus Hallelujah

SHORT INTERVAL

PART THREE

- Air I know that my redeemer liveth
Chorus Since by man came death
Recit. Behold, I tell you a mystery
Air The trumpet shall sound
Chorus Worthy is the lamb that was slain

Tamesis Chamber Choir



Sopranos

Miranda Bradshaw
Rebecca Connell
Clare Garner
Louise Hill
Julie Kench
Jennifer Lucas
Vicky Mason
Anne Owen
Suzanne Smith
Tamsyn Wilson

Tenors

Tim Beavan
Nick Brown
Aled Elmore
Laurence Hicks
Jude Watts

Altos

Sarah Finch
Charlie Hobson
Ellen Luckins
Catherine Mann
Emily Reed
Alison Wilkins

Basses

James Allen
Andy Button
John Cobb
John Gabriel
Andrew Grigg
Trevor Mansfield
Patrick Moore

Tamesis Chamber Choir was founded in 2003. The choir of around 28 singers has carved a niche in the Berkshire area: members are auditioned each year to maintain the highest standards, and we sing high-quality music with only a few rehearsals for each concert. It's also important to us that we have a lively social aspect!

Tamesis is the Latin name for the River Thames, reflecting our links to Reading and the surrounding area. We regularly perform to raise funds for local and national charities including Macmillan, Sue Ryder, Water Aid, ABF The Soldiers' Charity and Rotary International. The choir has featured several times on local radio and on BBC Radio 3.

Tamesis has been styled 'one of Berkshire's best ensembles' in local press. Our repertoire ranges from sacred to popular music, spanning the centuries from the renaissance period to the present day. Our three CDs, *Spirituals*, *Remembrance* and *Christmas*, will be on sale this evening.

We re-audition formally each September but do sometimes have vacancies during the year, so if you are interested in singing with us, contact Louise on lourap@gmail.com.

Our next event is a concert of Shakespeare songs, on Saturday 25th March at St Mary's Church in Henley. Please do come along!

Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra



Violin 1

Aoife Dudley (leader), Becky Stewardson, Karen Sercombe, Chico Chakravorty

Violin 2

Karen O'Brien, Vicky Colbourne, Mel le Breuille
Anne Taylor

Violas

Michael Eisinger, Fergal Marsh

Cellos

Melanie Hopkin, Stephen Nash

Double bass

Kate Addis

Oboe

Michael Rowley, Helen Lofthouse

Bassoon

Vikta Harvey

Trumpets

Henry Morley, Alison Davidson

Timpani

Emma Stoffer

Harpichord/organ

Nigel Wilkinson

The Aldworth Philharmonic is a non-professional orchestra based in Reading, Berkshire and has just celebrated its 20th anniversary. It's named after the founder of Reading Blue Coat School, Richard Aldworth. Its rehearsal model is project-based, usually for a couple of weekends before each concert to allow local musicians who can't make weekly rehearsals the chance to play. Rehearsals are full of laughter and fun, as well as seriously hard work.

APO presents two or three formal concerts per year, plus a variety of workshops, educational events and performances at festivals. These are all renowned not just for high quality music, but also for the unstuffy atmosphere, warm welcome and APO 'buzz'. Repertoire spans a wide range of styles, periods and composers, as well as presenting lesser-known works alongside the popular classics, especially music by living composers.

Please join APO at their Winter Concert, at 7:30pm on Saturday 11th February in the Great Hall at Reading University.