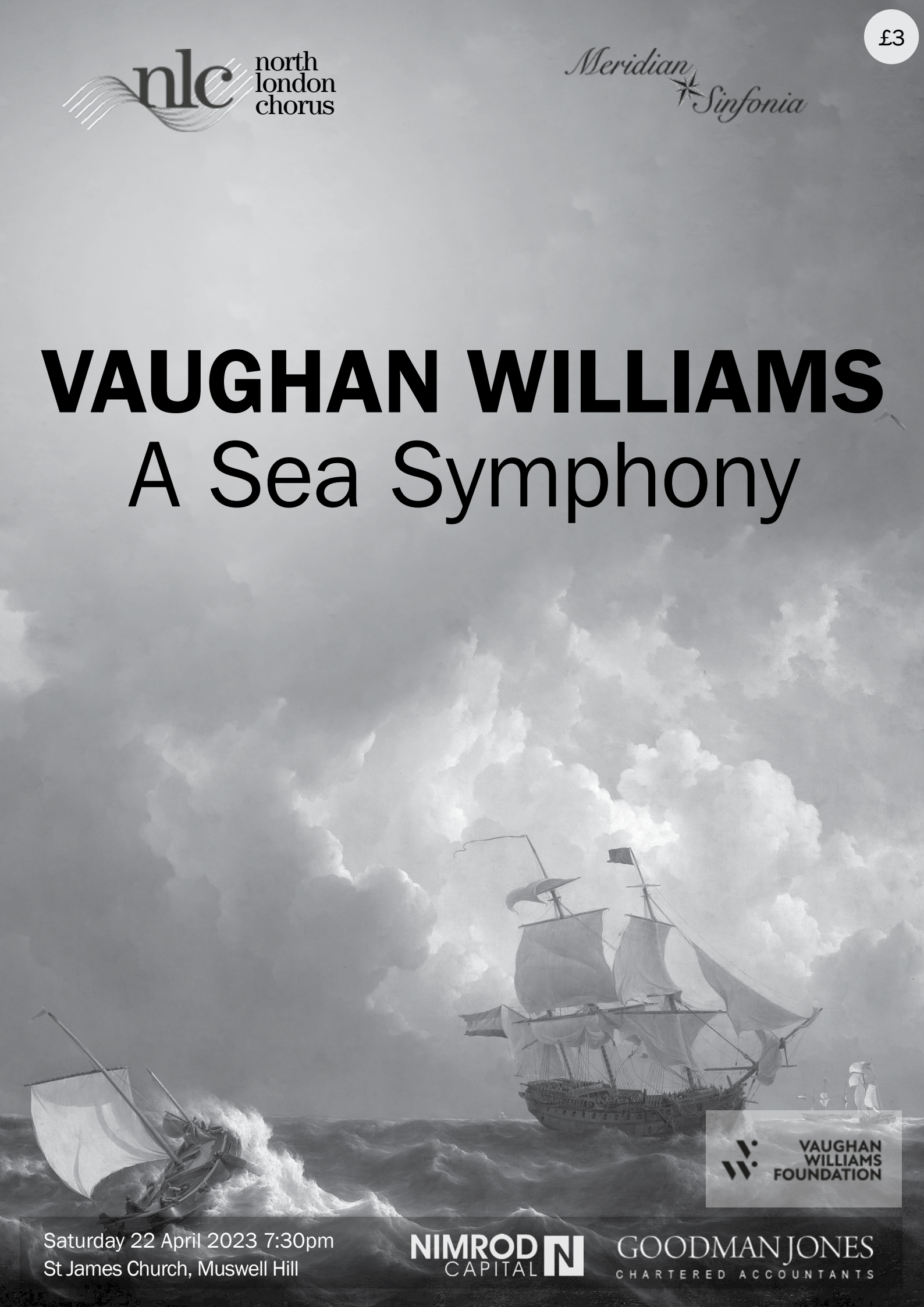


VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

A Sea Symphony



VAUGHAN
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Saturday 22 April 2023 7:30pm
St James Church, Muswell Hill

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VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

A Sea Symphony

Saturday 22 April 2023
St James Church, Muswell Hill

Soprano **Verity Wingate**
Baritone **James Cleverton**
Conductor **Murray Hipkin**

North London Chorus

Meridian Sinfonia
Eleanor Gilchrist leader

Tonight's performance has been
generously supported by the
Vaughan Williams Foundation



and by Murray Hipkin

Please remember to switch off all pagers, mobile phones and digital watch alarms.
The use of video cameras or other unauthorised recording devices is prohibited.

Thank you for your cooperation.

MESSAGE FROM MURRAY



This concert belatedly marks conductor Murray Hipkin's 60th birthday (in 2020) and also coincides with his 20th anniversary as musical director. Here he reflects on the influences and aspirations that led him into the world of choral music, and on the sense of belonging that being part of a choir community has brought.

On 5 April 2003 I conducted my first concert with the North London Chorus. The programme was Mozart's *Requiem*, *Dixit Dominus* and *Ave verum corpus*. That means I have conducted over 60 performances, led around 15 residential workshops and written at least 800 choir bulletins including the weekly "Message from Murray". I've still no idea if anyone reads them, but I hope you will enjoy reading this one.

The seeds for my career in choral music, and to a lesser extent, in opera and music theatre, were sown, I see now, at a very young age. My mother, Hilary, was a primary school teacher with music as her specialism and although she died tragically young, she was the driving force behind my taking piano lessons from the age of five, and although I hardly remember her, I like to think I can remember the sound of her singing voice. My father, Richard, was a BBC TV engineer who regularly worked on opera and concert broadcasts, so as soon as I was old enough, I was taken along to rehearsals and performances, sometimes sitting in the BBC van and sometimes in a box at the Proms with the presenters, just out of shot.

Both my parents were founder members of the Philharmonia Chorus, and consequently their collection of LPs and reel-to-reel tapes was nearly all choral music, including many recordings and concerts that they had taken part in. We had most of the the scores too, and I reckon that by the time I started secondary school I knew pretty well every bar of the Mozart, Brahms and Verdi *Requiems*, Bach's *B minor Mass*, *Elijah*, *Carmina Burana*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, and my two favourites, Britten's *Spring Symphony* and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*. My school had a very ambitious choir, and by the age of 12 I was the rehearsal accompanist. Although most of the repertoire was on a smaller scale, occasionally I got to play some of the pieces I knew so well by ear and since then there has never been a time in my life when I haven't been involved in playing for or conducting choirs. This experience was essential preparation for my "main" job at ENO since I learned at an early stage to sight read (and edit accordingly if necessary) quite challenging scores without fear and, crucially, without giving away the fact that I'd never seen them before. My first conducting job was with Cantorum Choir, a chamber choir of exceptional musicians based in Cookham-on Thames. I had to give up working with them when I moved to London in 2002, but shortly afterwards I saw that the North London Chorus was looking for a new musical director, and I fancied taking on some bigger repertoire with a larger group so I applied, got shortlisted, tried out. The rest, as they say, is history, and although NLC has had to share me for 13 of the last 20 years with my "other" choir, the Pink Singers, and although we have always been slightly at the mercy of my ENO schedule, I'm delighted to still be part of this wonderful, crazy musical community. It's the music that holds us together, of course - and we have made some wonderful music over the years - but it's also the feeling of family and belonging that is so important to me. That was never truer than during the pandemic, where our Thursday Zooms were a lifeline to many, me included. It's good to be back...

I mentioned a couple of favourite choral works earlier. Having reluctantly had to accept that the Britten is out of NLC's reach for reasons of space and budget, the Vaughan Williams is a glorious consolation prize. I'm still not sure that I can put my finger on why the piece captivates me. Perhaps it's the operatic scale of the writing, or the epic, mystical poetry of Whitman that Vaughan Williams sets so evocatively. Or maybe it's more about my own heritage. I've been rehearsing from the score that my mother used to sing from, and as I read all the pencilled instructions (no doubt taken down diligently straight from the lips of Sir Adrian

Boult or Otto Klemperer) I can't help thinking about all the art and music that connects us across the generations, always there, constant and comforting, rather like Whitman's sea.

*"All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and
enclose them."*

My father faithfully attended all my NLC concerts until he became unable to make the journey to London. He died in July 2022, and we read some of Whitman's text from the final movement of *A Sea Symphony* at his funeral. It was one of the last pieces he ever performed, and I'm delighted to sponsor tonight's soloists with funds from his estate. I would also like to thank all the friends who contributed over £2000 to mount this, my (belated) 60th birthday concert which I would like to dedicate to my parents Hilary (1933-1967) and Richard (1930-2022) to mark the incredible legacy they left me.



Murray with his father Richard, c.1973

MH April 2023



North London Chorus, April 2005

A SEA SYMPHONY

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958): A Sea Symphony (Symphony No. 1) (1903-9, revised 1918)

1 A Song for All Seas, All Ships
(Andante maestoso)

2 On the Beach at Night Alone (Largo
sostenuto)

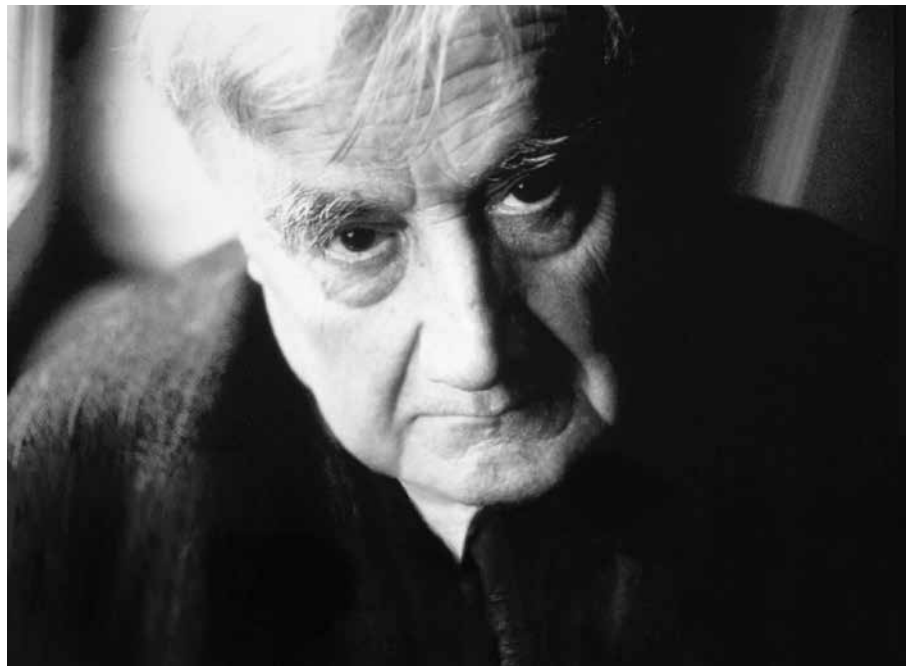
3 Scherzo – The Waves (Allegro
brillante)

4 The Explorers (Grave e molto
adagio)

“The plan of the work is symphonic rather than narrative or dramatic... The words as well as the music are treated symphonically...the orchestra has an equal share with the chorus and soloists in carrying out the musical ideas.” (Vaughan Williams’ Programme Note for the first London performance, February 1913)

Despite this claim, *A Sea Symphony* does not obviously conform to conventional symphonic structure. Its innovative hybrid character, combining orchestral symphonic elements equally with those of the choral genres of oratorio and cantata, differentiates it clearly from earlier symphonies with voices. Yet the contrasting complexities of the momentous opening and closing movements, despite their sometimes-episodic characters, sustain a strong thematic momentum. This is developed imaginatively and variously in the movements between them in ways that surely justify Vaughan Williams’ claim as an account of its form, rather than simply a description of its plan.

It was his most ambitious work and had taken more than six years to complete. By the time he conducted its first performance at the 1910 Leeds Festival on his 38th birthday, Vaughan Williams was recognised as



a significant composer with a strong reputation, but his work during the years from 1908 to 1911 transformed his status into that of a major figure. He returned from Paris in February 1908 after three months studying orchestration with Maurice Ravel in order, he had said at the time, to give his composing skills ‘a bit of French polish’. He later admitted that what he had really learnt from Ravel was ‘how to orchestrate in colour rather than in lines’, what Ravel himself characterised as ‘building an atmosphere of sound around the written notes’ – a quality well-displayed in the almost pictorial representations of sea and ships in the symphony Vaughan Williams was able finally to complete over the following months. During the same period he composed two other works – *Fantasia on English Folk Song* and *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* – which were also premiered in 1910, as well as beginning work on his first opera. This was an *annus mirabilis*

at the centre of an intensely creative period during which *A Sea Symphony* was the core work.

Many poems of Walt Whitman (1819-92) lend themselves to musical settings. He referred to his verses as songs and chants, insisting to one of his biographers that ‘during the gestation of the poems, the author was saturated for years with the rendering, by the best vocalists and performers, of the best operas and oratorios’. By 1855 he had found his distinctive voice, publishing 12 free-verse poems as the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, with a lengthy preface proposing his universalising project for poetry as ontology, epistemology and politics. His unshakeable self-confidence as the architect of the project is evident in the opening lines of ‘Song of Myself’, the first poem in the collection: ‘I celebrate myself/And what I assume you shall assume/For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.’ In the last edition, of more than

400 poems assembled by Whitman himself, he was 'determined to have the world know what I was pleased to do'. This was invariably conceived on a grand scale, often lengthy and with a sense both of and for occasions. D. H. Lawrence, who felt he owed Whitman a considerable debt in finding his own poetic voice, was critical nevertheless of his 'stridency and portentousness...A luridness about his beatitudes...All that false exuberance...Walt becomes in his own person the whole world, the whole universe, the whole eternity of time... He was everything and everything was in him'. Yet Lawrence thought him nevertheless 'a very great poet, of the end of life...Ahead of all poets, pioneering into the wilderness of unopened life'.

Vaughan Williams was introduced to Whitman's work by Bertrand Russell, when both were students at Cambridge in the 1890s. Like many of their contemporaries, they would have seen his work as expressing the spirit of a new age at the turn of the century. Ursula Vaughan Williams notes that from the early 1900s 'Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*...was his constant companion...and the idea of a big choral work about the sea – the sea itself and the sea of time, infinity, and mankind – was beginning to take shape'. He had already set Whitman's verse in 1907 for his mystical choral orchestral piece, *Towards the Unknown Region* and then the *Three Nocturnes* of 1908, but it was in his selection of texts to set for *A Sea Symphony* that he demonstrated the depth and familiarity of his knowledge of and commitment to it. His earlier settings of Whitman's work showed how to take advantage of the opportunities provided by free verse's indulgence in the intrinsic rhythms of verbal language, matching it with musical rhythms to create works of art greater than the sum of their parts.

The couplet: 'Behold, the sea itself/
And on its limitless, heaving breast,

the ships'; which opens and closes the text of the first movement of the symphony is taken from 'Song of the Exposition', composed by Whitman for an exhibition in New York in 1871, 'to outline the establishment of a great Cluster-Palace of Industry from an imaginative and Democratic point of view'. The substantive text, however, is from a poem with the same title: 'A Song for All Seas, All Ships', commemorating the loss of 800 people drowned in two steamships which sank during 1873.

Musically, the opening, marked *Andante Maestoso*, is a huge brass fanfare in B-flat minor for trumpets and horns preceding the choir's unaccompanied, declaratory imperative 'Behold, the...', followed by a timpani-led *brillante* orchestral accompaniment in the celebratory key of D-major to 'sea itself'. In his programme note for the first London performance, Vaughan Williams identified this chord sequence as the first of 'the two main musical themes which run through the four movements'. The second is the melody that follows it immediately to accompany 'and on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships'. Appropriately following sonata-like form, these dramatic expository opening passages are elaborated as a panoramic display of the lively business-like activities of ships of all types working at sea – 'coming and going, steaming in and out of port' – and developed further by the soloists. The baritone introduces an *allegro* to shanty rhythms as 'a brief rude recitative' encompassing the separate flags or signals of each ship, the 'unnamed heroes' who sail them over 'waves spreading far as the eye can reach' their 'dashing spray' whipped up by 'winds piping and blowing'. He leads the choir into a solemn, lyrical chant for 'all intrepid sailors whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay'. They are 'indomitable, untamed' as the sea itself, which

'unite the nations'; the 'old husky nurse' that has 'picked sparingly without noise...chosen and suckled' them to embody her.

It is at this point that Vaughan Williams begins his own engagement with Whitman's metaphysical project in a metaphorical universalising of both sailors and seas. The soprano soloist, echoed by the chorus, enters with the command to 'Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!' instructing the now anthropomorphised sea to 'reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one flag above all the rest/A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death'. The intensity of the orchestral accompaniment to this announcement emphasises its importance in bringing into focus 'the soul of man' as the centre of Vaughan Williams' engagement with Whitman's project, punctuating the passage with a succession of emphatic choral iterations of 'above death'.

Unaccompanied, the soprano soloist announces that this flag is to be 'Token of all brave captains and of all intrepid sailors and mates/And all that went down doing their duty'. Followed at first by female voices, then the full chorus, she leads an unfolding of the movement, first as a lament for those sailors lost at sea, then to a resolution as the baritone and chorus return to further universalise the flag-token as 'A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave sailors/All seas, all ships'. The movement closes with the chorus softly repeating 'All seas, all ships' as the opening injunction to 'Behold, the sea itself...' is recalled quietly.

A muted tone is thus set for the opening of the second movement, which also shares its title with the poem that provides its text: 'On the Beach at Night Alone'. This is the symphony's slow movement, its quiet

orchestral introduction suggesting swaying waves easing softly onto shore. Accompanied by a semi-chorus of altos, the baritone contemplates 'the clef of the universes and of the future/A vast similitude...' which spans and interlocks everything: all times, places, souls, living bodies, nations, identities, lives and deaths. Lawrence was justifiably critical of such 'lists of things boiled in one pudding cloth', as here, yet Vaughan Williams rescues it from monotony by the intensity of the full chorus's concluding, unaccompanied *ff* and *fff tutta forza crescendo* of 'This vast similitude spans...and always has spanned/And shall forever', punctuated by the orchestra beneath the soloist's quiet incantation of the title phrase before returning, softly and *misterioso*, to the quiet rhythms of the introduction and into the soft diminuendo, *molto tranquillo* of its lovely postlude.

The third movement sets a short poem as a scherzo entitled 'The Waves', to present a complete contrast. A bravura opening, marked *Allegro brillante*, harks back briefly to the opening fanfare of the first movement before evoking the sheer range and force of the ocean's 'myriad waves... lifting up their necks', whipped up by 'the whistling winds...tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship...bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying...undulating waves, liquid and buoyant, emulous...laughing and buoyant with curves'. This is Whitman at his flowing best, masterly employing graphic rhythmic alliterations to invoke the incessant movement and flow of the sea itself. As well as echoing and underscoring these fluctuating oceanic swells, Vaughan Williams uses the poem's closing lines to conjure one of the symphony's most magnificently sustained choral/orchestral passages, beginning 'Where the great vessel sailing...' and reaching its sublime climax at 'The wake of the sea ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome under

the sun'. Another brief fanfare of brass leads chorus and orchestra into expansive, alternating evocations of the waves in 'A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many fragments/Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following' until the movement concludes with a sequence of triumphal choral shouts of 'following', the last sustained as an unaccompanied echo after the orchestra falls silent. This is good poetry enhanced imaginatively by great music for both choir and orchestra – a joy to sing.

For the text of the final movement, Vaughan Williams made a judicious selection of just 55 of the 255 lines of Whitman's 'Passage to India'. Whitman described the poem enigmatically as 'but freer vent and fuller expression of what...lurks in my writings, underneath every page, every line, everywhere...last words... emblem of rest and aspiration... the justification for our identity, this grade of it, and outlet-preparation to another grade': effectively his own epitaph on his work. Vaughan Williams' selections from it and his title of 'The Explorers', both respects whilst inverting Whitman's sense of the poem as a final summation, presenting it rather as evidence for Lawrence's valuation of him as 'pioneering into the wilderness of unopened life'. The metaphor of the soul's transitional journey as a voyage over the oceans of being and experience becomes thus an account of the emergence and process of humankind itself, locating its genesis in the universalising mysteries of Judaeo-Christian myth.

Earth's place in the universe, invoked with slow solemnity by the chorus in a solemn *Grave e molto Adagio* opening, displays it as a 'vast Rondure, swimming in space', its 'visible power and beauty' accentuated by 'Unspeakable high procession of sun and moon and countless stars'. Beneath this cosmic vista, among

'the manifold grass and waters' the metaphysics of experiential being suggest 'inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention' and the chorus gently close the introduction with a quietly affirmative harmony of realisation: 'Now first it seems my thoughts begin to span thee'. The sense of mystery remains as tenors and basses chant the Pentateuchal Genesis myth in a soft march-like *andante*: 'Down from the gardens of Asia descending, Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them'. They are condemned unhappily to 'restless explorations...questionings, wandering, yearning', displaced in an ontological quest uttered faintly by the female voices: 'Wherefore unsatisfied soul? Whither O mocking life?'

In a return to an increasingly more animated *tempo*, basses lead the chorus into an assertive response: 'Yet soul be sure the first intent remains and shall be carried out' speculating that 'the time has arrived/ After the seas are all crossed' and the great captains, engineers and noble inventors 'have accomplished their work/Finally shall come the poet worthy that name/The true son of God shall come singing his songs'. To this portentous prophesy Vaughan Williams sets another spectacular climax for choir and orchestra. Following a triple repetition of 'finally' they move, *ff* and *largamente*, to announce this final advent of the poet, with basses leading all voices into a brief sequence of lusty fugal declensions on 'singing' before stridently triumphant harmonic chants of 'singing, singing his song'. The orchestra concludes this section of the movement with a flourishing *allegro*, befitting a sense that there has been a partial realisation of the poetic project.

There follows a semi-operatic interval in the form of a duet between soloists, celebrating what the realisation has made possible. Through singing his songs, the poet, 'the true son of God', has enabled the 'unsatisfied soul' to

transcend 'mocking life' and 'launch out on trackless seas/Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy' in what are now 'pleasant' rather than 'restless explorations'. Soul and body are united ('thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O Soul'), borne 'as through the regions infinite...O God...to range in range of thee.' The chorus join the soloists to endorse this transcendent realisation of the soulful self as 'thou actual me', before a further dramatic musical shift with hearty seafaring calls to 'hoist instantly the anchor...cut

the hawsers...shake out every sail' alongside cries of 'Away, O soul'. The soul is launched thus on its final 'reckless, exploring' journey of self-realisation, steering 'for the deep waters only...bound where mariner has not yet dared to go' risking 'the ship, ourselves and all'. The metaphor of sea voyage for the human soul's lifelong journey is reinvoked and Vaughan Williams's selection of Whitman's verse at this point anticipates Lawrence's appreciation of Whitman as 'the poet of the transitions of the soul as it

loses its integrity...of the soul's last shout and shriek, on the confines of death'. Yet Vaughan Williams leaves Whitman his mystic optimism, echoing perhaps his own sense of the religious – a cheerful agnosticism – as, with a tranquil call of 'O my brave soul! O farther sail!' the soloists insist the voyage is to be one of 'daring joy but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?'. They join the chorus to close the work with soft, low chants of 'O farther, farther, farther sail'.

Paul Filmer, April 2023

LIBRETTO

A Sea Symphony

Text by Walt Whitman

I A Song for All Seas, All Ships

Chorus

Behold, the sea itself,
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue,
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port,
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.
Behold, the sea itself,
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships.

Baritone, Chorus

Today a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship signal,
Of unnamed heroes in the ships – of waves spreading and spreading far as the eye can reach,
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful like a surge.
Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all intrepid sailors,
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay,
Picked sparingly, without noise by thee, old ocean, chosen by thee,
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest nations,
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Soprano, Chorus

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty.
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains young or old,

Soprano, Baritone, Chorus

A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave sailors,
All seas, all ships.

II On the Beach at Night Alone

Baritone, Altos

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.

Baritone, Semi-chorus

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,
All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

III Scherzo - The Waves

Chorus

After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,
Below a myriad, myriad waves hastening, lifting up their necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant with curves,
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the surface,
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearnfully flowing,
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome under the sun,
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many fragments,
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.

IV The Explorers

Chorus

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Covered all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters,
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Tenors, Basses

Down from the gardens of Asia descending,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, with restless explorations,
questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts
that sad incessant refrain,— 'Wherefore unsatisfied soul?
Whither O mocking life?'

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?

Chorus

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out,
 Perhaps even now the time has arrived,
 After the seas are all crossed,
 After the great captains and engineers have accomplished their work,
 After the noble inventors.
 Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
 The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Soprano, Baritone

O we can wait no longer,
 We too take ship O Soul,
 Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
 Fearless for unknown shores of waves of ecstasy to sail,
 Amid the wafting winds (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O Soul).
 Caroling free, singing our song of God,
 Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

Baritone

O Soul thou pleasest me, I thee.

Soprano, Baritone

Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
 Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like waters flowing,
 Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
 Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
 Bathe me, O God, in thee, mounting to thee,
 I and my soul to range in range of thee.

Soprano, Baritone, Chorus

O thou transcendent,
 Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
 Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them.

Baritone

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
 At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
 But that I, turning call to thee O Soul, thou actual me,
 And lo, though gently masterest the orbs,
 Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
 And fillest, swellest full the vastness of Space.

Chorus

Greater than stars or suns,
 Bounding O Soul thou journeyest forth;

Soprano, Baritone, Chorus

Away O Soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
 Cut the hawsers – haul out – shake out every sail!
 Sail forth – steer for the deep waters only.
 Reckless O Soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
 For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave Soul!
 O farther, farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail!

BIOGRAPHIES



VERITY WINGATE SOPRANO

Lyric soprano Verity Wingate is fast establishing herself as one of Europe's most promising young stars. Renowned for her "luminous soprano" and "vocally and theatrically

breathtaking performances" (*Trouw*). Verity has recently made her role and house debuts as Contessa Almaviva in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Malmö Opera, and as the title role in Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* for Bühnen Bern, Switzerland. Her future engagements include debuts at several significant venues including Oper Frankfurt, Staatsoper Hamburg and the Royal Festival Hall.

In the 2021/22 season, Verity made her role debut as the Governess in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* for Garsington Opera, to much critical acclaim. Her performance was noted by Opera Magazine as "a triumph". She also made her debut at English National Opera as Mrs. Naidoo in the famous Phelim McDermott production of Philip Glass' *Satyagraha*.

In 2021 Verity won second prize at the prestigious Hans Gabor Belvedere

Singing Competition in which she was also awarded a future engagement at Bühnen Bern, where she is currently performing *Iolanta*. In the same summer Verity was a member of the Young Singers Project for the Salzburg Festival where she performed *Die Schlepptägerin* in Strauss' *Elektra* under the baton of Franz Welser-Möst.

On the concert platform Verity has performed Mozart arias and ensembles with the Mozarteum Orchestra at the Mozarteum in Salzburg as part of the Salzburg Festival, as well as in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. She has performed at many concert venues around the world including the Wigmore Hall, Barbican Centre, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, New York's Lincoln Centre, St John's Smith Square and St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Verity began her career in Europe as a member of the Dutch National Opera Studio for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 seasons.



JAMES CLEVERTON BARITONE

British baritone James Cleverton studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and Zürich Opera's International Opera Studio.

Season 2022/23 saw James make his debut for Glyndebourne Festival

Opera as Astolfo in Handel's *Alcina* and his Opera North debut as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*. He also returns to Scottish Opera to create the role of Marco in a new production of *Gianni Schicchi* by Sir David McVicar and to the Royal Opera House to sing the role of Johann in *Werther* under the baton of Sir Antonio Pappano. Recent highlights include the role of Alberich in Keith Warner's production of *Das Rheingold* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Papageno in Sir Thomas Allen's production of *Die Zauberflöte* for Scottish Opera.

For ENO, he created the role of Horemhab in Phelim McDermott's critically acclaimed production of *Akhnaten* and subsequently performed the role of Kallenbach in his production of *Satyagraha*. He also performed the role of Aristaeus the Man in a new production of Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orpheus* directed by Daniel Kramer and conducted by Martyn Brabbins.

On the concert platform, recent performances include his Spanish debut singing the European premiere of Roberto Sierra's *Missa Latina* with the Orquesta y Coro Nacional at the Madrid National Concert Hall under the baton of Karen Kamensek, a concert performance of *Wozzeck* with Donald Runnicles and the BBC SSO, a concert performance of *Madame Butterfly* with Sir Mark Elder and the Halle, *Carmina Burana* at the Royal Albert Hall and Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* at the Cadogan Hall - both with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra - *Messiah* and Brahms *Requiem* with the CBSO at the Birmingham Symphony Hall, Beethoven's *9th Symphony* at St John's Smith Square and *Mozart by Candlelight* with the London Mozart Players at the Barbican. Future plans include returns to the Royal Opera House, Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera and *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Choral Society and the RPO.



MURRAY HIPKIN CONDUCTOR

Murray Hipkin studied at York University, the Guildhall and the National Opera Studio before joining the Music Staff of English National Opera (1983–1988) and then working for Opéra de Lyon, La Monnaie, Opera Factory, Scottish Opera and, as Musical Director, Opera Brava. Since returning to ENO in 1995, he has appeared in *Mahagonny*, *The Silver Tassie*, Leoncavallo's *La bohème*, *The Rake's Progress* and *Trial by Jury*; as Senior Répétiteur his productions over 25 seasons have included Phyllida

Lloyd's *Ring Cycle* and Terry Gilliam's *The Damnation of Faust*; as Assistant Conductor he worked on, most recently, *Sweeney Todd* (with Emma Thompson and Bryn Terfel), *The Barber of Seville*, *Sunset Boulevard* (starring Glenn Close), Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *Akhnaten*. In 2013 he played the solo piano in a revival of Deborah Warner's production of Britten's *Death in Venice* (available on DVD).

He has conducted *La bohème* (Surrey Opera, Opera Box); Salieri *Falstaff*, Haydn *La vera costanza*, Mozart *Apollo and Hyacinth*, Gluck *Le cinesi* (Bampton Classical Opera), and, for ENO, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado*, *The Gondoliers*, *Kismet*, *Carousel* (with Katherine Jenkins and Alfie Boe), *Chess* (with Michael Ball and Alexandra Burke) and *Man of La Mancha* starring Kelsey Grammar and Danielle de Niese. In July 2010 he was Associate Conductor of *The Duchess of Malfi* by Torsten Rasch (ENO/Punchdrunk).

Other highlights include assisting the composer John Adams and conducting on location for the Channel 4 film *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and *Pierrot Lunaire* with Björk at the Verbier

Festival. In September 2012 he assisted John Adams once again on *Nixon in China* at the BBC Proms and the Berlin Philharmonie, and in November 2018 he worked on *Sweeney Todd* for Bergen National Opera. In February 2009 Murray completed an eight-month sabbatical from ENO as Musical Director of *The Sound of Music* at the London Palladium, conducting over 170 performances.

He has been Musical Director of NLC since January 2003 and of the Pink Singers, Europe's longest running LGBT+ choir, since November 2010, and recently appeared as Music Supervisor and coach in the Sky Arts/ENO/Factory Films reality series *Anyone Can Sing*. The past year has included a return to Bampton Classical Opera to work on Haydn's *Fool Moon (Il mondo della luna)* and this August he will conduct *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado* and *The Yeoman of the Guard* as part of the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival at Buxton Opera House.

<https://gsfestivals.org/whats-on/>

Murray Hipkin is a member of English National Opera and appears by permission.

nlc Next concert

A Night at the Opera*

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Saturday 22 July 2023 at 7.30 pm
St James Church, Muswell Hill

accompanist Catherine Borner
conductor Chris Hopkins

*Also *Matinee at the Opera* - relaxed performance
Details to be announced

www.northlondonchorus.org

NORTH LONDON CHORUS



We are a talented and versatile amateur choir and have established a reputation for performances of a high standard since our first concert in 1977 under the direction of the late Alan Hazeldine. Our musical director since 2003 has been Murray Hipkin, senior répétiteur at English National Opera and also musical director of London's longest running LGBT+ choir, The Pink Singers. Murray's considerable experience of both choral music and opera, together with his enthusiasm and skills as teacher and conductor have enabled NLC to flourish through the development of an exciting and ambitious programme of performances drawn from the choral repertoire of the 16th to 21st centuries, as well as specially commissioned work from contemporary composers.

The choir benefits greatly from working with our vocal coaches Mark Oldfield and Yvette Bonner, and is privileged to have as its patrons the renowned operatic soprano Janis Kelly, recently appointed Professor and Chair of Vocal Performance at the Royal College of Music, and the baroque musicologist and Handel scholar and performer Laurence Cummings. Both have performed with us: in 2015 we were delighted to have Janis perform with us in Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral and Laurence conduct us in a workshop and concert performance of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in London.

We rehearse weekly on Thursday evenings from 7.45pm to 10pm at Martin School in East Finchley and on additional Wednesdays as concert dates approach. We give public concerts three times a year, usually to a full house at St James Church in Muswell Hill, though we are continuing to explore performing at larger venues in Central London after a successful performance of Brahms' *German Requiem* with the Berlin choir Cantus Domus at Milton Court in the Barbican Centre in 2014. This reciprocal visit by Cantus Domus was the follow-up to our visit to Berlin in November 2013 to perform the *War Requiem* with them at the Berliner Konzerthaus. As a result of that very positive experience we aim to maintain, Covid permitting, a triennial reciprocal touring programme with choirs in other countries. In November 2017 we performed in concert with the Swiss choir Contrapunto

at the City Church of St Jakob, Staffauer in Zurich, in celebration of their 30th anniversary. They, in turn, came to London later that month for a joint concert with us in Shoreditch Town Hall. The programme for both concerts included works by Mendelsohn and Vaughan Williams and a new composition by their artistic director, Beat Dähler.

We are a friendly choir and hold social events each year which include a fundraising quiz evening and a residential weekend workshop. As well as enabling us to work intensively on vocal technique and choral repertoire under expert specialist tuition, the workshop has as one of its highlights an enjoyable and relaxed Saturday evening concert of cabaret-style performances of music, song and humour displaying the considerable variety of our members' talents.

As a registered charity, one of whose aims is the promotion, maintenance, and improvement of the public's appreciation of choral music, we have been successful in raising funds to help subsidise our work. Through our own concerts and participation in local events we also support a number of other charities.

We have been able to sustain weekly rehearsals via Zoom throughout the Covid lockdowns of the past two years and in December 2020 many members participated in the London Handel Festival's *Messiah Reimagined*, broadcast live on YouTube, as part of the pre-recorded digital choir. We resumed socially distanced face-to-face outdoor rehearsals in June 2021, and indoor rehearsals and voice coaching in September of that year under strict safeguarding protocols. For our return to live concerts, the choir performed Britten *Saint Nicholas* in November 2021 in partnership with Finchley Children's Music Group under Grace Rossiter. One of the performances was a special relaxed one in the afternoon, suited to families with children and audience members with special needs.

We welcome new members and invite interested singers from all voice parts to attend one or two rehearsals prior to auditioning. Details are available at <https://www.northlondonchorus.org/joining/>.

SOPRANO

Jean Airey	Michaela Carlowe	Debbie Goldman	Marta Jansa	Alice MacKay
Gloria Arthur	Jenny Cohen	Rhona Graham	Ira Kalechman	Verity Preest
Helena Beddoe	Zoe Dowler	Amanda Horton	Susan Kempster	Joanne Walker
Jenny Bourne Taylor	Bernadette Gillespie	Enid Hunt	Alison Liney	Patricia Whitehead

ALTO

Anna Armbruster-Evans	Vicky Faure Walker	Katharine Hodgkin	Tessa Padel	Charlotte Smith
Vivienne Canter	Eleanor Flaxen	Jo Hulme	Annie Pang*	Julia Tash
Lucy Ellis	Hélène Gordon	Helen Jones	Joan Reardon	Pauline Treen
Sarah Falk	Viv Gross	Kathryn Metzenthin	Alison Salisbury	Catherine Whitehead

TENOR

Gary Bilkus	Pasco Fearon	Michael Parsons	Clive Seale*	Wilhelm Skogstad
Alan Chandler	Sue Heaney	Jeremy Pratt	Guy Shirm*	

BASS

David Allenby*	Shaun Davies	Andrew Frankl*	Yoav Landau-Pope	Andrea Sabbadini
Marcus Bartlett	Michael Derrick	Simon Gibeon	Tim Lutton	David Stone
Norman Cohen	Benjamin Ellis	David Hastings	Dan Newman	
John Crouch	Paul Filmer	Damien Kennedy*	Simon Pearson*	

* Guest performer

MERIDIAN SINFONIA**Violin**

Eleanor Gilchrist
AnneMarie McDade
Gavin Davies
Ellen Gallagher
Mari Minoda
Hailey Willington
Diane Moore
Jane Gomm
Valtie Nunn
Karen Anstee
Joseph Lowe

Viola

Stefanie Heichelheim
Geoff Irwin
Charlie Cross
Fran Gilbert

Cello

Ruth Aalford
Celine Barry
Hannah Lewis

Double Bass

Tim Amherst
Cath Rickets

Flute

Robert Manasse

Flute/Piccolo

Chris Hankin

Oboe

Adrian Rowlands

Cor Anglais

Maddy Aldis-Evans

Clarinet

Karl Durr-Sorensen
Karen Hobbs

Bassoon

Jo Turner
Siping Guo

French Horn

Richard Lewis
John Bareham
Kate Goldsmith
Nivanthi Karunaratne

Trumpet

Fraser Tannock
Alex Cromwell
Libby Foxley

Trombone

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NLC is a registered charity (no 277544) and is a member of Making Music, The National Federation of Music Societies





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with a little help from our friends



To mark our 40th Anniversary **Friends of North London Chorus** was launched in the summer of 2017, with a performance by our late **Friends of NLC** patron and renowned soprano Sally Silver.

We would be delighted to welcome more **Friends** to the scheme. Donations support and fund special projects, workshops, new commissions and similar activities within our charitable goals, and will also enable us to provide additional support to members in need who would otherwise find it difficult to sing with the choir.

The suggested donation is £40 per year (you are welcome to give more!) and you are warmly invited to join. Membership of Friends of NLC will entitle you to the following:

- Acknowledgement of your generous support in our concert programme (unless you prefer to opt out).
- Complimentary programmes.
- Complimentary interval drink from our range of wine and soft drinks (one per concert).
- Being amongst the first to know about our concerts and events via our mailing list.
- Priority booking for concerts.

If you would like to become a friend of the NLC, please join the scheme via our website

www.northlondonchorus.org/friends

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PAST CONCERTS - THE LAST TWELVE YEARS

27 Nov 2010	Orff <i>Carmina Burana</i> Elgar <i>From the Bavarian Highlands</i>	14 Jul 2014	Mendelssohn <i>Verleih' und Frieden</i> Brahms <i>Nänie</i> Brahms <i>Ein deutsches Requiem</i>	25 Nov 2017	Mendelssohn <i>Die erst Walpurgisnacht</i> Vaughan Williams <i>In Windsor Forest</i> Dähler <i>Byzantium</i>
26 Mar 2011	Mozart <i>Davidde Penitente</i> Beethoven <i>Christus am Ölberge</i>	22 Nov 2014	Beethoven <i>Mass in C</i> Haydn <i>Te Deum</i>	17 Mar 2018	Haydn <i>The Creation</i> <i>Insanae et vanae curae</i>
25 Jun 2011	Rossini <i>Petite Messe Solennelle</i> Lauridsen <i>O Magnum Mysterium</i> Barber <i>Agnus Dei</i>	21 Mar 2015	Fauré <i>Requiem Mass</i> Kodály <i>Missa Brevis</i> Liszt <i>Die Seligkeiten</i>	14 Jul 2018	Salieri <i>Requiem</i> Puccini <i>Messa di Gloria</i>
19 Nov 2011	Britten <i>Rejoice in the Lamb</i> Tavener <i>Svyati</i> Durufié <i>Requiem</i>	16 May 2015	Britten <i>War Requiem</i> 4 July 2015 Handel <i>Acis and Galatea</i>	17 Nov 2018	Britten <i>The Company of Heaven</i> Haydn <i>Nelson Mass</i>
24 Mar 2012	Handel <i>Israel in Egypt</i>	28 Nov 2015	Bach <i>Magnificat</i> , <i>Christmas Oratorio Parts 1,2,3</i>	9 Mar 2019	JS Bach <i>St John Passion</i>
30 Jun 2012	Dvorak <i>Mass in D</i> Howells <i>An English Mass</i>	12 Mar 2016	Mendelssohn <i>Elijah</i>	22 Jun 2019	Rutter <i>Magnificat</i> Vaughan Williams <i>Flos campi</i> Dyson <i>Hierusalem</i>
15 Dec 2012	King <i>Out of the Depths</i> <i>(First performance)</i> Mozart <i>Mass in C Minor</i>	11 Jun 2016	Bernstein <i>Mass (Choral Suite)</i> Whitacre <i>Five Hebrew Love songs</i> Copland <i>Old American Songs</i>	30 Nov 2019	Rossini <i>Petite Messe Solennelle</i> Verdi <i>Ave Maria, Va pensiero</i>
20 Apr 2013	J S Bach <i>Mass in B Minor</i>	20 Nov 2016	Verdi <i>Requiem</i>	27 Nov 2021	Britten <i>St Nicolas</i>
29 Jun 2013	Various <i>Summertime</i>	25 Mar 2017	Dove <i>The Passing of the Year</i> Brahms <i>Liebeslieder, Neue Liebeslieder</i>	9 Apr 2022	Brahms <i>Ein deutsches Requiem, Geistliches Lied</i>
21 Nov 2013	Britten <i>War Requiem</i>	1 Jun 2017	Mozart <i>Requiem</i> King <i>Out of the Depths</i>	2 Jul 2022	Cherubini <i>Requiem</i> Bach <i>Cantata 51</i> Mendelssohn <i>Psalms 42</i>
15 Mar 2014	Schubert <i>Mirjams Siegesgesang</i> Korngold <i>Passover Psalm</i> Mendelssohn <i>Hear My Prayer</i> Bernstein <i>Chichester Psalms</i>			3 Dec 2022	Handel <i>Dixit Dominus</i> Charpentier <i>Messe de Minuit pour Noël</i>

Please visit www.northlondonchorus.org for the full list dating back to the first concert in 1977

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