



**Royal Free Music Society Choir**  
**Summer Concert**

**Saturday 18th June, 7.30pm**

**Puccini: Messa di Gloria**  
**& summer songs by Vaughan Williams,**  
**Dvorak, Elgar & Parry**

**Conductor: Benjamin Wolf**

**Soloists: William Petter (tenor)**

**Benjamin Seifert (baritone)**

# Programme

Elgar: *As Torrents in Summer; My love dwelt in a Northern land*

Vaughan Williams: *The Dark Eyed Sailor; Just as the Tide was Flowing*

Dvořák: *Melodies fell into my soul; In the rye fields;*

*Come, let us dance and sing together*

Parry: *My Soul, There is a Country; I Know My Soul hath Power*

Stanford: *Justorum Anima; Beati Quorum Via*

Ireland: *Ladslove; Goal and Wicket; The Vain Desire* (Tenor solo)

Tosti: *Oh! Quanto io t'amerei!; Ideale* (Baritone solo)

Interval

Puccini: *Messa di Gloria*

**Conductor:** Benjamin Wolf

## Soloists

William Petter (tenor)

Benjamin Seifert (baritone)

The choir is accompanied by Gillian Cracknell on piano

# Welcome

Dear Audience

Welcome to our Summer concert! Tonight the choir will be singing Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* which we recently performed in Genoa with a wonderful Italian choir and orchestra in the sumptuous surroundings of the Ducal Palace. We look forward to singing this piece again in the beautiful surroundings of St John's Wood Church. We will also be singing a selection of shorter pieces by Vaughan Williams, Dvorak, Elgar and Parry, and our wonderful soloists will be performing some solo pieces.

As always, we would like to extend our thanks to our Music Director, Benjamin Wolf and to our excellent accompanist, Gill Cracknell, as well as to the members of the committee who oversee the running of the choir. We are also extremely grateful to the Royal Free Hospital who provide our rehearsal space; to Father Anders Bergquist and the parish of St John's Wood Church for this wonderful concert venue; and to our valued patrons for their continued support.

Please make a note of our future concert dates to be found later in this programme. We are always ready to welcome new members if you would like to join the performers rather than the audience; details are on our website: [www.royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk](http://www.royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk).

We hope you enjoy the evening.

Nick Jackson, Lucinda Sturgis and Diana Parkinson

Co-Chairs

# Programme notes

by Benjamin Wolf

## **Sir Edward Elgar**

*As Torrents in Summer; My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*

We begin tonight's concert with two short pieces by Sir Edward Elgar, who was the pre-eminent British composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Elgar was a great lover of the British countryside, and so perhaps it is unsurprising that both songs contain poetic imagery inspired by nature. The first piece, whose words were written by Longfellow, comes from a larger work entitled *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* (first performed in 1896). It speaks of divine love, suggesting a parallel between summer rivers which flood because of rains many miles away and people who are saved by a divine love that they cannot see. The second is a part-song which was first performed in 1890. The words are spoken by a woman who remembers her dead lover, and the green forest in which they sat and watched the moon.

## **Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams**

*The Dark Eyed Sailor; Just as the Tide was Flowing*

Vaughan Williams was amongst the most famous of English composers in the early twentieth century. Like Elgar, he was very much influenced by the English countryside. However, whereas Elgar's musical language was particularly influenced by the European and Wagnerian traditions, Vaughan Williams sought inspiration in English folksong. Like many other musicians of his time, he both collected folksongs and used them as the basis of his compositions. The two pieces that we perform tonight are arrangements of songs about sailors and the sea, and they are both also about love.

## **Antonin Dvořák**

*Songs of Nature: Melodies fell into my soul; In the rye fields; Come, let us dance and sing together*

British composers were not alone in seeking inspiration from nature. Many Romantic composers of the nineteenth century were similarly inspired. These songs, composed to Czech texts, in 1882, are similar to the Elgar pieces as they combine images of nature, love and God.

### **Sir C. Hubert Parry**

*My Soul, there is a Country; I Know My Soul hath Power*

Parry was also among the best known of English composers in the early twentieth century. He is now perhaps most famous for his hymn *Jerusalem* and choral works such as *I was Glad*. The two songs we are singing tonight come from his *Songs of Farewell*, a set of six choral pieces composed between 1916 and 1918 (the last two years of Parry's life, and also years that were dominated by news from the First World War). These works are deeply contemplative, with texts that explore the nature of humanity and the possibilities of life after death.

### **Sir Charles Villiers Stanford**

*Justorum animae; Beati quorum via*

Like Parry, Stanford is now best remembered for his choral works, though both composers also wrote instrumental and orchestral works. Stanford came from Ireland, but settled in London, where he earned a reputation as both a composer and a teacher of composition. These two motets, composed for the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, have become staples of the English choral tradition. They combine elements of traditional counterpoint with a beautiful lyricism and a dramatic harmonic language which recalls European contemporaries such as Fauré.

## **John Ireland**

*Ladslove; Goal and Wicket; The Vain Desire*

John Ireland was also a well-known British composer of the early twentieth century. He was himself a student of Stanford, and was the teacher of a number of prominent composers from the younger generation (including, for a time, Sir Benjamin Britten). He was perhaps best known as a composer of instrumental and chamber music, though some of his choral works and hymns are still performed today. These songs are settings of poems by A.E. Housman (from his famous collection *A Shropshire Lad*).

## **Sir Paolo Tosti**

*Oh! Quanto io t'amerei! (Oh how much I would love you!); Ideale (My idol)*

Tosti was a famous singing teacher and song composer of the nineteenth century. He studied in Naples, subsequently becoming singing teacher to Princess Margherita of Savoy (who was later Queen of Italy). Ultimately he moved to London, settling here in 1880 and, in the same year, was appointed singing teacher to the royal family. In 1894, he became Professor of Singing at the Royal Academy of Music and was knighted in 1908. His style is reminiscent of both nineteenth-century popular ballads and the Italian operatic style.

## **Giacomo Puccini**

### *Messa di Gloria*

#### **Kyrie;**

**Gloria** (Gloria in excelsis Deo; Laudamus Te; Gratias agimus tibi (Tenor Solo); Domine Deus; Qui Tollis; Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi; Quoniam Tu Solus Sanctus; Cum Sancto Spiritu);

**Credo** (Credo in unum Deum; Et Incarnatus Est (Tenor Solo); Crucifixus etiam pro nobis (Bass solo); Et resurrexit; Et in Spiritum Sanctum; Et unam sanctam; Et vitam venturi saeculi);

#### **Sanctus;**

**Benedictus** (Bass solo);

**Agnus Dei** (Tenor and Bass solos with choir)

This mass setting was completed in 1880, while Puccini was a student at the Istituto Musicale G. Pacini in Lucca. It was his only major sacred composition, as his subsequent career focussed on the creation of the operas for which he is now famous. To some extent this piece can be understood as a composition exercise of the kind that many nineteenth-century composers undertook in order to learn their craft. It contains many of the elements that were common in mass composition of the time, including imitative counterpoint in the *Kyrie* and a fugal setting of the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* (a section which was traditionally set as a fugue, both in early eighteenth-century masses and also in works by later composers such as Mozart and Verdi). Whether or not Puccini viewed it as a study piece, he did not seek to promote it beyond its original performance. The manuscript was not rediscovered until the 1950s, when an American priest was researching a biography of the composer. It was subsequently performed in Chicago in 1952, thereafter becoming a popular work and receiving regular performances and recordings.

While there are no direct parallels between the music of the mass and the music of Puccini's operas, there are elements of operatic style evident in the composition. The tenor soloist's *Gratias Agimus Tibi* is decidedly operatic in its

range and style, while the long, unison melodies of the *Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi* and the *Credo* are reminiscent of Verdi's famous opera choruses. There is also a nineteenth-century emphasis on long, flowing melodies (a particular characteristic of Italian composition), as well as a larger orchestration than would have been used in mass settings of earlier centuries and an idiomatic use of brass instruments in key transitional passages (though this evening we are performing only with piano).

The work begins with a gentle and lyrical setting of the *Kyrie* (containing a more forceful middle section for the words *Christe Eleison*). This is followed by the Gloria section of the mass. This contrasting section includes a rather dainty opening melody, a rich setting of the *Laudamus Te* and the tenor soloist's principal aria, *Gratias Agimus*. The climax of this section is the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* fugue, which includes a reprise of the Gloria melody. The *Credo* section includes the mass's most lyrical and long-flowing melodies, particularly in the opening *Credo* and the bass's solo *Crucifixus*. Yet it also contains elements of imitative counterpoint in the *Et Resurrexit*. As is traditional, the final three sections of the mass (the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*) are softer and more gentle than many of the preceding movements, though also shorter than parallel movements in masses by some of Puccini's more famous predecessors. The work concludes with a peaceful duet between the tenor and bass soloists and the choir.

# Benjamin Wolf

Benjamin Wolf works as a conductor, pianist, composer, singer and academic. He is Music Director of the Royal Free Music Society, the Zemel Choir, the Wallace Ensemble and the Belsize Square Synagogue. In addition he is a regular conductor of the Quorum chamber choir.

Performances with the Zemel Choir have included appearances at the new European Jewish Choral Festivals, Holocaust memorial services for the Mayor of London, a broadcast for the BBC's Songs of Praise and tours to Europe, Israel and the USA.

Activities with the Wallace Ensemble have included performances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, while the professional choir of Belsize Square Synagogue has been featured on BBC radio and television.

Recent performances with the Belsize choir have included Westminster Abbey's 'Service of Solemn Remembrance and Hope on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Kristallnacht' and performances for the International Louis Lewandowski Festival in Berlin. In February 2015 he conducted both the Zemel and Belsize choirs at a service at Westminster Abbey commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Performances with the Royal Free have included large-scale oratorios such as Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and tours to Genoa in 2015 and 2016.

# Benjamin Seifert

Benjamin Seifert (baritone) read Modern Languages at St Peter's College, Oxford. He then trained on ENO's *The Knack* and at the Royal Academy of Music. In 2004 he performed as a soloist in Orlando Gough's *For the Public Good* at ENO and has since sung at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Cadogan Hall, the Purcell Room and the Wigmore Hall.

He has worked with the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company at Buxton, British Youth Opera, Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera by Definition, Tête à Tête Opera and Arcola Opera. Operatic roles include Colas (*Bastien & Bastienne*), Zaretsky (*Eugene Onegin*) Harlekin (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Don Giovanni, the Count, (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Bill Bobstay (*HMS Pinafore*), the Foreman (*Trial by Jury*) and Marcello (*La Bohème*) at the Soho Theatre, winning the Olivier Award for Best New Opera Production. He was recently seen as the Mayor in Pop Up Opera's *Docteur Miracle*, a short except of which was performed live on Radio 3's *In Tune*. Oratorio work includes *Messiah*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Fauré's *Requiem* and the *St Matthew Passion*.

# William Petter

William Petter is a freelance tenor, choral director and singing teacher based in London. He began his musical life as a chorister at New College, Oxford, under the direction of Edward Higginbottom. Whilst studying for a degree in Neuroscience at University College, London, he started singing as a tenor, and went on to study as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, for which he gained the highest award, distinction with DipRAM.

As a singer, he enjoys a busy oratorio career, working for groups including Oxford Bach Choir, Oxford Harmonic Society, Hull Bach Choir, Queen's Park Singers, Chigwellian Singers and Benson Choral Society. He gives recitals and has performed *Die Schöne Müllerin* in Oxford, Petts Wood and Burgh House, Hampstead, and an English song recital in Oxford, for which he was given an award by the John Ireland trust. He also enjoys consort work, working with groups including The Sixteen, the Choir of the Enlightenment, Philharmonia Voices, Britten Sinfonia Voices, London Voices, Westminster Abbey Choir, Westminster Cathedral Choir and other London church choirs.

William is the Director of Music at the Church of St Magnus the Martyr, whose choir has recently released two CDs of previously unrecorded liturgical music by 19th century operatic composers. He also directs an amateur chamber choir, Sine Nomine Singers in Bickley, and from 2011 until March of this year conducted Concordia Voices in Hampton Hill.

# Singing in tonight's concert

## **Soprano:**

Ann Lloyd  
Danielle Cahill  
Edna Young  
Elizabeth Elaine Segu  
Jane Hassid  
Justine Cohen  
Leonida De Montfort  
Maggie Sinclair  
Roszie Omoregie  
Sara Henley  
Sarah Hammond  
Sarah Pepperrell  
Teresa Elkins  
Tricia Pank  
Veronica Soskin

## **Alto:**

Annie Sedley  
Barbara Bryant  
Diana Muggleston  
Diana Parkinson  
Emma Dunning  
Janet Paraskeva  
Katharine Hodgson  
Katy Makin  
Libby Harris  
Lucinda Sturgis  
Mireille Levy  
Sophie Jackson  
Wendy Stallings

## **Tenor:**

Barbara Foster  
John O'Shea  
Mark Denza  
Peter Davies  
Richard Haydon  
Sarah Carrier

## **Bass:**

Ashitey Ollenwu  
Bill Aldridge  
Gallin Hornick  
Kazuhiro Hiraki  
Nick Jackson  
Paul Styles  
Richard Newton

## **Our heartfelt thanks to our loyal Patrons:**

Adrian Cahill, Billy Elkins, Patsy Henley and David Gluckman

# Future concerts

## **Autumn concert 19th November 2016**

Joint concert with the Zemel Choir

Haydn's *Creation*

## **Spring concert 2017**

Haydn's *Nelson Mass*

## **Summer concert 2017**

Joint concert with the Beckenham Big Band

Jazz classics

## **Autumn concert 2017**

Allegri's *Miserere*

Mozart's *Requiem Mass in D Minor*

**For more information, visit our website:**

**[www.royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk](http://www.royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk)**

**The Royal Free Music Society is a registered charity (1151170)**