

Royal *free*
Music Society

Hampstead
Sinfonietta

Spring Concert

Saturday 3rd March, 7.30pm

St Mark's Church

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RFMS QUIZ EVENING

8th March, 7pm for 7.30pm

**Upstairs at The Stag, 67 Fleet Rd,
Hampstead, London NW3 2QU**

£10 per person

All welcome!

Programme

Monteverdi: Beatus Vir
Bach: Orchestral Suite no. 3

Interval

Bach: Brandenburg Concerto no. 3
Bach: Magnificat in D

The Hampstead Sinfonietta is conducted by Andrew Rochford
The Royal Free Music Society is conducted by Benjamin Wolf

Soloists:

Maud Millar (soprano)
Rose Martin (mezzo-soprano)
Matt Pochin (tenor)
Benjamin Seifert (baritone)

Welcome

Welcome to our first concert of 2018 in which we are delighted to be joined once again by the Hampstead Sinfonietta orchestra. Tonight, the choir will be singing *Beatus Vir* ('Blessed is the man') by Monteverdi and J.S. Bach's *Magnificat in D*. The choir will be conducted by Benjamin Wolf and accompanied by the Hampstead Sinfonietta, with our wonderful soloists, Maud Miller, Rose Martin, Matthew Pochin and Benjamin Seifert. The orchestra will be conducted by Andrew Rochford for their performances of Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D* and the *Brandenburg Concerto No 3 in G*.

On this occasion, we would like to express the choir's heartfelt congratulations to our conductor, Benjamin Wolf, on his recent marriage to Rebekka Friedman, as well as thanking him for all his hard work and determination in teaching us these beautiful and challenging pieces. We would also like to thank our accompanist, Gill Cracknell, for her exceptional skills and patience during our weekly rehearsals. In addition, we are grateful to the Hampstead Sinfonietta for joining us again for tonight's performance. And, as ever, we would like to express our gratitude to the parish of St. Mark's and the Reverend William Gulliford for allowing us to perform in this beautiful venue, and to you, the audience, for coming to support us. We hope you enjoy the evening.

The image shows two handwritten signatures side-by-side. The signature on the left is "Diana" and the signature on the right is "Lucinda". Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing script.

Diana Parkinson and Lucinda Sturgis,
Co-Chairs, RFMS Choir

Programme notes

by Benjamin Wolf & Andrew Rochford

Beatus Vir

Monteverdi (c. 1582 – 1652)

Monteverdi is famous as a composer of both secular and sacred music, including madrigals, operas and his much-loved *Vespers*. *Beatus Vir* is another of Monteverdi's most popular works. The text comes from Psalm 112, and portrays the admirable character of the man who fears God and does good deeds, whilst noting the envy of the wicked people who observe his goodness.

The piece sounds simple, but is more complex than it seems. It is sparse in texture, frequently jumping between solo passages for individual voice parts, and features a prominent repeated motif on the words 'beatus vir' ('Blessed is the man', the words with which the piece opens).



The middle section, in triple meter (three beats to a bar), is more joyful, and contains virtuosic passages for soprano, tenor and bass voices. Monteverdi's technique here is similar to the technique that he used when writing madrigals, as he makes the character of the music match the meaning of the words. *Exaltabitur in Gloria* ('He will be exalted in glory') is fast and joyful, while the wicked man gnashing his teeth is portrayed with the exaggerated consonants of 'dentibus suis...fremet'. The final section returns to the musical style of the opening, finishing with a wonderfully rich 'gloria et in saecula saeculorum... amen'.

Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major (BWV 1068)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Overture – Air – Gavotte I – Bourrée - Gigue

Despite Bach's German origins, his four *Orchestral Suites* were influenced by the French style of orchestration which was fashionable in German aristocratic circles at the time. The *Orchestral Suites* were almost certainly composed whilst Bach was living in Köthen and then adapted for the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig when he took over as its director in 1729. The Collegium Musicum had been founded by the German Baroque composer, Telemann, in the early 18th Century as an ensemble of local musicians who gathered weekly to give performances at the Café Zimmermann. Directorship of Collegium Musicum provided Bach with ample opportunity to try out his secular instrumental music.

In Baroque music, a suite consisted of a set of contrasting movements based on dance forms. The scoring for *Suite No. 3* is especially sumptuous: Bach adds a complement of three trumpets and timpani to the usual string and basso continuo ensemble, as well as two oboes. It is set in the key of D major which Baroque composers often used to express exuberance, power and glory (as in the *Magnificat*). This is music to entertain, rich in melodic beauty, rhythmic vigour and festive spirit.

The *Overture* starts with a majestic slow introduction which is followed by a lively fugue and finishes with a recapitulation featuring a slight adaptation of the original theme. The second movement 'Air' requires little introduction, it is easily one of the most famous pieces of Baroque music. It was given cult 'rock and roll' status as the riff in Procul Harum's 'Whiter Shade of Pale' and made famous during the '80s as the theme for a well-known brand of cigar.

The last three movements turn back to France, specifically French dance models, each with a unique rhythmic profile. The '*Gavotte*' was a favourite in the court of King Louis XIV, the Sun King, as was the '*Bourrée*', while the animated step of the '*Gigue*' makes for a toe-tapping conclusion to the *Suite*.



Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major (BWV 1048)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Allegro moderato – Adagio - Allegro

It is most likely that the six *Brandenburg Concertos* were written during Bach's time at court in Weimar and later at Köthen; the slightly unusual orchestration reflecting the instruments available at court. The six '*Concertos with several instruments*', as they were originally known, were dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt and only later became known as the *Brandenburg Concertos*. Indeed, it is unlikely that the *Brandenburg Concertos* were ever performed in Bach's time; the manuscripts were kept in the Margrave's library and, despite being discovered after his death in 1734, were not published until 1850.

Concerto No. 3 was written for the court orchestra at Weimar; there is no woodwind as the piece was written for three violins, three violas, three cellos and basso continuo. The outer movements are typical of a concerto grosso of the time although the distinction between ripieno (full ensemble) and concertino (small group of soloists) is blurred.

The second 'movement', however, is merely two chords: a Phrygian half-cadence. Most scholars believe the half cadence is an opportunity for an improvised cadenza for one or more instruments. Modern recordings vary in their interpretation, some simply playing the two chords whilst others prefer extravagant solo cadenzas.

Magnificat in D (BWV 243)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Magnificat anima mea – Et exsultavit spiritus meus – Quia respexit humilitatem – Omnes generationes – Quia fecit mihi magna – Et misericordia – Fecit potentiam – Deposuit potentes – Esurientes implevit bonis – Suscepit Israel puerum suum – Sicut locutus est – Gloria Patri

The *Magnificat* is one of the most popular of Bach's shorter choral works. The text, which comes from the Gospel of Luke, consists of the words spoken by Mary on visiting the mother of John the Baptist. The text became a common hymn, and is used particularly in evening services, including those of the protestant Lutheran church to which Bach belonged. While many of the Lutheran texts were German, for major feast days the church retained the Latin text. Bach first wrote his *Magnificat* for Christmas, incorporating four extra German texts. However, he later revised it for other uses, making some changes to the orchestration and removing the extra texts. It is this simpler version that we perform tonight.

The music contains many elements of Baroque dance, and also a complex counterpoint that is vocally challenging (as so often, Bach chose to follow the demands of musical structure and musical ideas rather than the physical limitations of the human voice). The first section is a lilting 'magnificat' in triple time ('My soul magnifies the Lord'). This lilting triple time continues into the second section, a solo aria ('And my spirit has rejoiced in God my saviour'). The third section, still a solo, is slower and sparser in texture, befitting the text ('For he has regarded the humility of his handmaiden'). The choir leaps in passionately on the



words, 'For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed', the words 'all generations' being repeated particularly emphatically.

The next two sections are again for soloists, first a bass aria ('For he that is mighty has done great things for me'), and then a duet for alto and tenor ('And his mercy is from generation to generation for those who fear him'). The more triumphant words that follow are again given to the choir, who sing of God's strength ('He has showed strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts'). A tenor aria follows ('He has put down the mighty, and has exalted the humble'). This mood, in which the singer praises the attributes of God, continues into the alto's aria ('He has filled the hungry with good things, and has sent the rich away empty'). This is followed by a trio, for which the soloists will be joined by a small number of choristers ('He has received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy').

The final sections return to the triumphant mood of the previous choral sections. First we hear a fugal section on the words 'Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros' ('As he said to our fathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever'). Then Bach builds a rich '*Gloria*', beginning with the bass voices, but bringing in the other voices of the choir in turn. Finally he returns to the lilting music of the first section, employing a musical joke that can be found in the work of other composers too – on the words 'as it was in the beginning, so it is now', he uses the same music that he used at the beginning.



The Royal Free Music Society

The Royal Free Music Society Choir was formed in 1995 by a group of healthcare professionals working in the Royal Free Hospital. It has grown into a large and vibrant choir with members from the hospital and the local area. The choir performs three concerts a year and recent performances have included Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and Mozart's *Requiem*, as well as joining the Beckenham Concert Band last summer for a programme of excerpts from various musicals. In December, we made a new international connection when we travelled to Paris to sing Christmas carols alongside a French choir who perform South American choral music. We are looking forward to their return visit later this year. Once again, at Christmas time, we sang carols at King's Cross and outside the Royal Free Hospital to raise money for St. Mungo's and the hospital charity. For more information about the choir, please visit our website: www.royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk.

Conductor: 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 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, the USA, Germany and Russia.

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 75th 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.



**The Royal Free Music Society would like to thank
their loyal Patrons:**

**Adrian Cahill, Billy Elkins, Patsy Henley and
David Gluckman**

The Hampstead Sinfonietta

The Hampstead Sinfonietta was formed in the early 2000s and has co-existed with the Royal Free Music Society ever since. The orchestra performs two or three times a year and draws players from across London who are attracted by the opportunity to perform varied repertoire, including choral works which may not be available to more traditional orchestras, as well as chamber works, symphonies and concertos.



Conductor: Andrew Rochford

Andrew studied singing with Geraldine Hackett-Jones and started playing the bassoon at the age of 10 under the tutelage of Charles Cracknell, OBE. He has since had tuition from Gareth Newman (London Mozart Players & Royal Academy of Music, and an old pupil of Charles). Andrew has performed solo concerti with Lawyers Music and the Abbots Langley Symphony Orchestra; and when time permits, he plays with the London Charity Orchestra. After leaving school in Canterbury, Andrew completed a degree in Medical Biochemistry at King's College, London. He then studied Medicine at the Royal Free where he was a founding member of the choir in 1995. Andrew trained in London and is a Gastroenterologist at Newham University Hospital, Barts Health NHS Trust; he has a special interest in Clinical Nutrition and has recently been seconded to NHS Improvement as Regional Clinical Director for the Emergency Care Improvement Programme in the South of England.

Soloists

Maud Millar (soprano)

Maud Millar is a graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, where she held a choral scholarship, and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. She currently studies with John Evans.

Maud's concert work includes Stravinsky's *Mass* with the London Symphony Orchestra and Valery Gergiev, Thomas Adès' *Five Eliot Landscapes* under the composer himself and, in her BBC Radio 3 debut, Oliver Knussen's *Trumpets* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In 2013 she also performed Britten's *Cabaret Songs* at the Barbican and made her debut at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in a programme of Schumann and Mendelssohn Lieder under Peter Schreier. She has performed operatic roles such as Musetta/*La Bohème* at Cadogan Hall and Gretel/ *Hansel and Gretel* at LSO St. Luke's.



Maud's operatic work includes Nella/*Gianni Schicchi*, Mademoiselle Jouvenot/*Adriana Lecouvreur* and Miss Ellen/ *Lakmé* for Opera Holland Park, Fiordiligi/ *Cosi Fan Tutte* for Hampstead Garden Opera and the title role in Katarzyna Brochocka's *The Young Wife* for OperaUpClose. On the 2014 Signum Records recording of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which spent several weeks at Number 1 on the Classical Chart, she recorded the roles of Bottle, Humpty Dumpty and Duchess, and thereafter added the role of Duchess to her 2015 performances. Recent engagements have included Arvo Pärt's *Passio* with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge at Kings Place, *Donna Elvira* for the Ahmadi Music Group in Kuwait, and a transfer of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to the Linbury Studio at the Royal Opera House.

Rose Martin (mezzo-soprano)

Rose was raised in Kent, starting singing in the Kent Youth Choirs and was later educated at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and as a choral scholar at King's College London. She trained on The Sixteen's young artist programme, and has sung with a myriad of professional groups, including The Sixteen, The Erebus Ensemble, London Voices, Platinum Consort and the London Contemporary Orchestra. Rose has a busy and varied career consisting of performing, teaching and conducting several workplace and community choirs. Rose enjoys variety and thus her recent musical projects have included singing Monteverdi on Radio 3, recording for Radiohead, and scratching out ceilidh tunes on a (newly learnt) violin.



Matthew Pochin (tenor)

Matthew began his career as a chorister, and choral scholar at Hereford Cathedral before studying at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. After a brief stint as a pastry chef, Matthew moved to South London in 2007 to continue his career as a singer.



Matthew has held positions at several churches across the city and currently sings with the choirs of St John's Wood Parish Church and Belsize Square Synagogue. He is a member of the unique Jewish barbershop group bOYbershop, performing traditional Jewish liturgical music and folksongs as well as close harmony

standards and original comedy songs. In recent years, the group has released an album of traditional Sephardi and Ladino melodies, toured to Strasbourg for interfaith festivals and sung for the Chief Rabbi and Holocaust survivors. Matthew is also a founder member and Artistic Director of *Scaramella*, specialising in music for men's voices from the Renaissance to modern close harmony. He also sings with Brighton-based Onde Sonore, who perform madrigals and opera from the Italian renaissance.

Oratorio appearances in 2017 included evangelist and tenor soloist in Bach's *St John Passion*; soloist in Bach's *B minor Mass* and *Magnificat*; soloist in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Recent recitals include *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Schwanengesang* (Schubert), *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis, Op.24* (Schumann) as well as works by Mario Castellnuovo-Tedesco, Parry, Purcell and Quilter.

Benjamin Seifert (baritone)

Benjamin 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.



Benjamin 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.

Benjamin was recently seen as the Mayor in Pop Up Opera's *Docteur Miracle*, a short excerpt 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*.

Would you consider becoming a Patron of the Royal Free Music Society?

The vital contribution made by our patrons enables our choir to offer subsidised membership to those on low incomes and supports our charitable efforts in the community - singing for St Mungo's charity, for the Royal Free Hospital Charity and in St Mark's Community Carol service.

If you enjoyed tonight's concert and can help the choir flourish, a minimum annual donation of £100 entitles you to free tickets for our concerts. Your name will also be added to our Patrons list and will be on our website.

If you would like to know more, please speak to one of the Chairs or email us at info@royalfreemusicssociety.org.uk.

Our international musical adventures

There is something quite magical about singing in a choir – stepping out of our busy lives and working side by side to get to grips with a piece of music. We let go of our outside worries, access a different part of the brain and breathe as one. So imagine what it's like for us to sing alongside a completely new choir – one that speaks a different language, in a different city, in a different country. We might not all be able to understand each other in conversation, but when we sing together, those boundaries fall away.

Two years ago, we were invited to join a choir in the Italian city of Genoa performing Vivaldi's *Gloria* in the magnificent Ducal Palace. Last November, the Italian Coro Polifonico from Fermignano sang Mozart's *Requiem* with us here in London. And in December we celebrated Christmas in Paris with the Groupe Vocal Antara.



It is a real thrill for us singers and, hopefully for audiences as well, these collaborations bring extra depth and new dimensions. Away from the singing, we have fun too. In Paris, the Groupe Vocal Antara threw us a wonderful welcome party and we also had enough free time to see something of the city, with time to explore the Louvre, the Catacombs, Christmas markets and the Paris Mosque. This summer, we are planning a trip to central Italy to sing with our friends in Fermignano and later in the year, we look forward to a return visit from our new Parisian friends.

Singing in tonight's concert

Soprano

Ann Lloyd, Danielle Cahill, Dorothy Connell, Edna Young, Eleanor Blackman, Elizabeth Segu, Emily Hurrell, Gillian Cracknell, Henrietta Spalding, Jane Hassid, Janet High, Janice Tunney, Jen McClelland, Justine Cohen, Kat Mountford, Leonida De Montfort, Lesley Gould, Lucy Swart-Mallett, Maggie Sinclair, Mary Goyder, Mireille Levy, Roszie Omoregie, Sara Henley, Sarah Hammond, Sarah Pepperrell, Teresa Elkins, Veronica Soskin

Alto

Annie Sedley, Barbara Bryant, Catherine Bercusson, Diana Muggleston, Diana Parkinson, Jacquie Hamel, Jane Matheson, Jessie Twiest, Katharine Hodgson, Libby Harris, Lucinda Sturgis, Sophie Jackson

Tenor

Barbara Foster, Dennis Bury, John O'Shea, Peter Davies, Richard Haydon, Robert Salmon, Sarah Carrier

Bass

Ashitey Ollennu, Bill Aldridge, David Usborne, Gallin Hornick, James Kennedy, Kazuhiro Hiraki, Michael McKay, Nick Jackson, Paul Styles

Playing in tonight's concert

Violin:

Tanya Barringer
Amanda Bass
Sarah Carter
Ceri Evans
Sophie Park
Abigail Tan
Richard Vidler

Viola:

Jeremy Cook
Mark Denza
Helen Dodds

Cello:

Freddie Carter
Paul McLoughlin

Flute:

Tracy James
Chris Wilkes

Oboe:

Dan O'Kelly

Trumpet:

Gideon Brooks
Sarah Owens
Jacob Rosenberg

Timpani:

Ellie Wood

New players are always welcome! Please get in touch with us via
info@royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk if you would like to know more.



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