

BATH BACH CHOIR

MID SUMMER VESPERS

Music by Tallis, Morales,
Guerrero, Buxtehude, Rossini, Fauré,
Rachmaninov, Gjeilo

Saturday 3 July 2021

7.30 pm

Bath Abbey

Katie Bunney *saxophone*

Cassandra Dalby *mezzo-soprano*

Huw Williams *organ & piano*

NIGEL PERRIN

conductor

Bath Bach Choir has been rehearsing
– and will perform – under carefully controlled,
Covid-safe conditions.

www.bathbachchoir.org.uk

THIS EVENING'S PROGRAMME

To mark our long-awaited return to live singing, Bath Bach Choir is delighted to present Midsummer Vespers. This is not a liturgical performance of Vespers: rather a montage of evocative choral music appropriate for the end of the day. The music is drawn from seven different centuries, and our intention is that, wherever you are seated in Bath Abbey this evening, you will feel surrounded by an atmospheric theatre of sound and echoes of the ages.

We open with a 14th-century chant in praise of the Virgin Mary from the Llibre Vermell de Montserrat, sung in three-part canon; this leads into a vigorous call to worship the Lord – the opening of Rachmaninov's choral masterpiece known as the All-Night Vigil, or Vespers. Following on, Cassandra Dalby leads the choir in Blagoslovi, dushe moya, Ghospoda (*Bless the Lord, O my soul*), in which the high voiced angels praise God in the heavens while, supported by the lower voices, the soloist leads with the text of the psalm.

Accompanied on the organ by Huw Williams, we sing Gabriel Fauré's gentle but fervent Cantique de Jean Racine (*Gathered here in thy presence, receive the hymns we offer...*) – a piece that holds new meaning for the choir as it was our first 'lockdown' recording, a project that kept our spirits up during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020.

A distant octet will then sing Tallis's O Nata Lux (*O Light of Light... vouchsafe us at the end to be one with thy beautiful Body*).

Although the Magnificat generally marks the conclusion of a liturgical Vespers, we have chosen to insert a setting by German baroque composer Dietrich Buxtehude here, as a vibrant and joyful interlude.

A second octet will sing Tallis's familiar prayer, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*.

Inspired by the Hilliard Ensemble's recording of Morales's penitential motet *Parce mihi Domine*, with Jan Garbarek improvising on saxophone, we are revisiting this stunningly beautiful and moving piece. We're delighted to welcome back former Bath Young Musician of the Year Katie Bunney, who brings her own exquisite style of saxophone improvisation.

Back to Vespers, we'll turn our attention to Rachmaninov's iconic *Bogoroditse Devo* (sometimes referred to as his *Ave Maria*), with its impassioned alto parts typical of the Russian ecclesiastical idiom.

It was fashionable in the Renaissance era to compose multi-choir motets – many of you will be familiar with Tallis's 40-part motet in eight choirs of five parts each. In our next offering, Spanish composer Francisco Guerrero makes do with just 12 parts, with three choirs (of four parts each) representing the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We hope you enjoy the passing of sound around the space of Bath Abbey, and the stirring climaxes. (*Two Seraphim called one to another: Holy is the Lord of Hosts. Full of Thy Glory is the whole earth.*)

Ola Gjeilo's contemporary *Evening Prayer* (2010) was the composer's first choral work to incorporate solo instrumental improv, weaving together saxophone and voice in an incredible tapestry of sound.

Finally, the *Agnus Dei* from Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* features again our guest soloist, Cassandra Dalby. Rossini's Mass is neither little nor solemn; he fondly referred to it as "the final sin of my old age".

We hope you enjoy this evening's foray back into the light and what promises to be a joyful reunion for singers of Bath Bach Choir.

.....
Llibre Vermell de Montserrat (14th century)

O virgo splendens

.....
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

Priidite, poklonimsia

and

Blagoslovi, dushe moya, Ghospoda

from All-Night Vigil

.....
Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Cantique de Jean Racine

.....
Thomas Tallis (?1505–1585)

O nata lux de lumine

.....
Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707)

Magnificat

.....
Thomas Tallis (?1505–1585)

If ye love me

.....
Cristóbal de Morales (?1500–1553)

Parce mihi, Domine

.....
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

Bogoroditse Devo

from All-Night Vigil

.....
Francisco Guerrero (1528–1599)

Duo Seraphim

.....
Ola Gjeilo (1978–)

Evening Prayer

.....
Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

Agnus Dei

from *Petite Messe Solennelle*

.....
**The audience is kindly
requested to refrain from applauding
until the end of the concert.**

CASSANDRA DALBY mezzo-soprano

Cassandra Dalby is a London-born mezzo-soprano whose voice allows her to tackle music from Handel to Rossini, with a particular interest in Scandinavian song. She began her career at the age of eight by winning a choral scholarship to Salisbury Cathedral. As a soloist she began performing before royalty aged nine. By age 11 she had recorded a debut solo album for Signum Classics using her middle name Emilia. In 2018 Cassandra graduated from Trinity Laban Conservatoire with a first class Bachelor of Music degree under the tutelage of Alison Wells. She is now in the first year of her MA at the Royal Academy of Music with Catherine Wyn-Rogers.



Operatic roles have included Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, chorus in *Acis and Galatea*, Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas* with Hurn Court Opera, and *Gossip* in Britten's *Noyes Fludde*. In June 2016 she performed in the new opera *Banished* by Stephen Mcneff

which had its world premiere at Blackheath Halls with Trinity Laban. In 2018 Cassandra performed the role of Bianca in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at Stratford Circus Theatre, and in 2019 the role of Third Lady with Hurn Court Opera.

HUW WILLIAMS organ & piano

Huw Williams is Director of Music at Bath Abbey, where he trains and conducts its renowned choirs of boys, girls and lay-clerks. As well as directing the abbey's services during Easter, Advent and Christmas, he has also helped establish weekday Choral Evensongs. As a conductor and award-winning organist, he previously served as Director of Music at Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, where he conducted the music for Prince George's christening and numerous other events in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and members of the royal family. He is Music Director



of Cantemus Chamber Choir, one of Wales's finest choirs. Huw also enjoys an international reputation as an organ recitalist and accompanist. He was principal organist at St Paul's Cathedral for ten years, where his Organ Spectacular recording received the Gramophone

Editor's Choice award. He has made over 20 recordings as accompanist to *The Sixteen*. Recent performances include Messiaen's stunning *La Nativité* at Bath Abbey and concerts at Bristol and Wells Cathedrals. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and former Organ Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, his musical achievements led to him being awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

KATIE BUNNEY saxophone

Katie graduated from St Catherine's College, Oxford, in June 2021 with a BA in Music. She has been offered a scholarship to study for a Masters in Saxophone with Kyle Horch at the Royal College of Music, beginning in September. As a soloist, Katie enjoys performing varied repertoire ranging



from contemporary electronic music, such as the recent premiere of Matt Collins's *June* for saxophone and Moog synthesiser, to her own arrangements of Bach. Katie also enjoys performing in ensembles, having been the principal saxophonist of the

National Youth Wind Orchestra GB and the Oxford University Wind Orchestra, woodwind tripler with the National Youth Music Theatre UK and a member of Oxford-based funk band *Dot's Funk Odyssey*.

Whilst Katie has kept busy over the past year (directing a virtual musical, recording the premiere of Gary Pike's saxophone concerto and participating in many 'digital orchestras'), she is absolutely delighted to be performing live with Bath Bach Choir this evening.

NIGEL PERRIN conductor

Nigel Perrin is the internationally renowned Artistic Director & Conductor of Bath Bach Choir, a role he has fulfilled since 1990 bringing inspired musical leadership and outstanding performance to Bath, its environs and beyond. Former King's Singer and founder of award-winning chamber choir Bath Camerata, Nigel also directs masterclasses, summer schools and choral weekends all over the world. He began his musical career as a chorister at Ely Cathedral, became a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he studied under Sir David Willcocks, and subsequently became well known as the high voice of *The King's Singers*. In a career full of memorable experiences, highlights include recording 25 albums; performing in the Royal Variety Show



at the Palladium for the Queen Mother's 75th birthday; re-establishing Bath Festival Chorus and working with Kiri te Kanawa for the Bath Festival; directing the choir for the *Three Tenors* concert in Royal Crescent, Bath; conducting Britten's *War Requiem* in Russia;

winning Sainsbury's (now BBC) Choir of the Year with Bath Camerata; performing the south-west premiere of James MacMillan's *St John Passion*; training and conducting the Wells Cathedral School Chamber Choir; many live Radio 3 broadcasts; and forming and directing an ensemble to record the National Anthem for the Queen's Christmas Broadcast.

BATH BACH CHOIR

Bath Bach Choir is a group of around 80 singers who perform with passion and precision, regularly delighting and thrilling audiences in Bath and beyond. The choir was originally formed in 1946 to sing Bach's *Mass in B minor*. Today, alongside the great choral masterpieces, it also regularly performs stunning contemporary works, and is of course well known for its annual feast of light Christmas music. The choir has been directed by Nigel Perrin for 31 years, during which he has brought fun, challenge and purpose to its rehearsals and brilliance to its performances.

Musical Director

Nigel Perrin

President

David Hill MBE

Vice Presidents

Elizabeth Bates
Eleanor Robertson
Jonathan Willcocks

Founder

Cuthbert Bates

Honorary Patron

The Mayor of Bath

Registered Charity

No. 1043756

If you would like to join the choir as a Singing Member, please contact the Membership Secretary, Helen Roberts, for details and to arrange an audition. 01225 858 199
membership@bathbachchoir.org.uk

We are very grateful for the continued support given by the Bath Bach Choir's Patrons & Friends. If you are interested in joining please contact the Secretary to the Patrons & Friends, Janet Read, to receive details of subscriptions. 07890 995 356
patrons@bathbachchoir.org.uk

SOPRANO

Jo Addison
Anna Allan
Hilary Bandy
Priscilla Bishop
Kathrin Cockhill
Sara Foster
Mary George
Elizabeth Gray
Doris Greenroyd
Jo Hay

Abi McGillivray
Anna Mumford
Hilary Oliver
Eleanor Parker
Kate Perrin
Hannah Rees
Helen Roberts
Margaret Roberts
Ursula Steinhoff
Cathy Wolf

ALTO

Ruth Barber
Frances Best
Pam Brierley
Ali Cameron-Daw
Sue Cook
Harriet Feilding
Sue Greetham
Caroline Gumbley
Becky Homent

Kate Hunloke
Sara Layen
Sue Millar
Jane Paton
Janet Read
Jocelyn Ridley
Henrietta Samler
Victoria Westwood

TENOR

Mark Brierley
Andrew Clark
Paul Edwards

Simon Ingram-Hill
Peter Woodward
Richard Young

BASS

Will Acton
John Bandy
Jamie Hay
Richard Hunt
Bob Hussey

Chris Jager
Geoff Lamb
Andrew Taylor
Tony Thornburn
Brian Woodford

As always, grateful thanks go to Marcus Sealy, Bath Bach Choir's regular accompanist, for his skills and support.

BATH BACH CHOIR PATRONS

GOLD PATRONS

Mr A Acton
Mrs M Aldridge
Mrs P Bishop
Mrs J Cacasas
Mr B Chappill
Mr L George

Mrs K Gray
Dr M Gumbley
Mrs P MacArthur
Mr P Maine
Mr M Maude
Mrs S Summers

PATRONS

Mrs M Coggan
Mrs S Donlan
Mr D Ensor
Mrs H Feilding
Mr W Hutchison
Mrs B Ley

Mrs P Mackay
Mrs F Padwick
Mrs J Rice
Mrs E Robertson
Mrs K Wight

LIFE PATRONS

Mrs J Constantine
Captain B Woodford CBE RN

HONORARY PATRONS

The Steinhoff Family

Bath Bach Choir would like to thank our **Friends & Patrons** for their generosity in supporting this evening's performance and for their ongoing support during these difficult months.

We also thank all those who have worked tirelessly to get us back to the starting line – **Nigel, our magnificent committee, Bath Box Office, Bath Abbey** – and thanks to all of you for coming to share this evening of live music with us.