



# Messiah

Handel

Conductor *Alexander Hamilton*

Orchestra *Music for Awhile*

Leader *Maggie Faultless*

Soloists *Mhairi Lawson, Stephen Harvey*

*Nicholas Mogg, James Oxley,*

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December at 19.00

Kindly sponsored by: *Blair Foundation, Bishop's Eye, Forsey & Son*



## Welcome

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Wells Cathedral for a performance of Handel's Messiah by The Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society, WCOS.

Many of you will be regular supporters of the WCOS and some of you will be members of our congregation but to those of you who are here for the first time a special welcome.

The famous scissor arches of the cathedral are a stunning testament to the engineering skills of medieval England. They make an iconic frame for a choir and orchestra and the unique acoustics of this famous cathedral can only be experienced by attending a service or performance.

Enjoy the oratorio and do come again and appreciate the many features of this very special place. I know that the WCOS has some exciting plans for next year and beyond and so I hope you will sign up to their mailing list to ensure you are kept informed.

Anne Gell  
Acting Dean of Wells



The cathedral has a loop system.  
Hearing aids may be switched to the position T.



George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

# MESSIAH

A Sacred Oratorio

Words by Charles Jennens

**Alexander Hamilton** conductor

**Mhairi Lawson** soprano

**Stephen Harvey** countertenor

**James Oxley** tenor

**Nicholas Mogg** baritone

**Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society**

**Music for Awhile Orchestra** (on period instruments)

**Maggie Faultless** leader

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Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society is affiliated to Making Music.



# MESSIAH



When Handel settled in London in 1712 there was already a thriving Italian opera scene and he soon became its leading figure, with a succession of brilliant works.

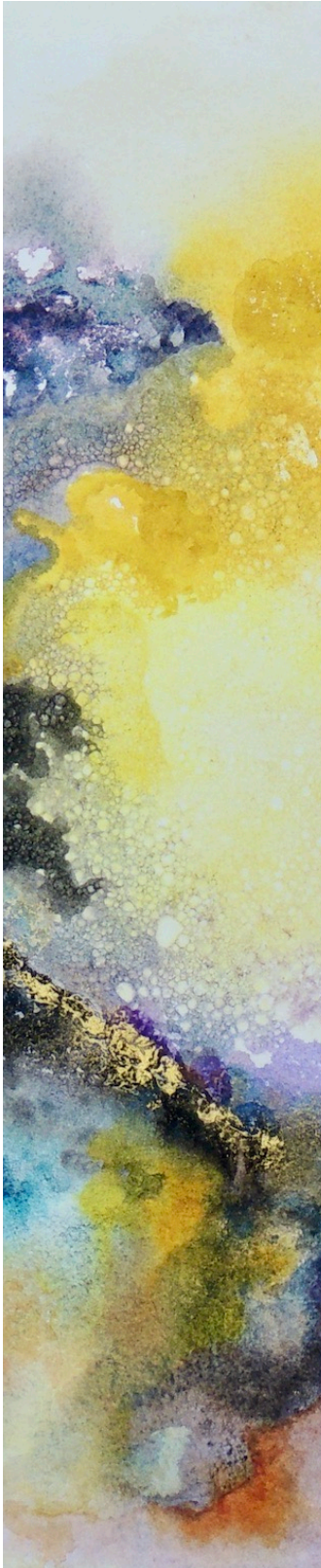
However, then, as now, the economics of opera were constantly on a knife-edge and despite their critical acclaim, Handel's Italian operas never attracted large audiences, being supported only by aristocracy and the upper classes. People were increasingly intolerant of the unfamiliar language, ridiculous plots, arrogant soloists and over-elaborate music. Handel had invested heavily in his own company and faced with possible bankruptcy the ever-resourceful composer turned to oratorio as a potential solution.

Though oratorio has much in common with opera it is not staged and is consequently a great deal less costly to produce. It was a genre in which Handel had already experienced some modest success, beginning with his first English oratorio, *Esther*, composed in 1720. Handel's oratorios were deliberately aimed at a new audience: the Protestant middle classes. The musical style was largely direct and straightforward and the librettos, in English, were generally based on passages from the Old Testament, a common literary heritage with which everyone was thoroughly familiar.

In an era of increasing prosperity and expanding empire these vivid biblical stories of larger-than-life heroes leading a people who, if they followed God's law, were specially protected and given victory over their enemies, must have held particular resonance for the middle classes of eighteenth-century London. Musically, Handel's most significant innovation was his use of the chorus, which was given a much greater role and now enjoyed equal status with the soloists. His monumental style of choral writing, calculated to impress with great blocks of vocal sound – exemplified in such pieces as the 1727 coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest* – was ideally suited to the task.

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





Though *Messiah* shares many common characteristics with Handel's other twenty or so oratorios, it is the least typical in several respects: more choruses than others, except *Israel in Egypt*; it does not have a newly written libretto but one compiled from existing short passages from the Bible; no named characters or narrative, just a series of contemplations on the life of Christ and redemption.

The success of *Messiah* owes much to the fine libretto compiled for Handel by Charles Jennens, who had previously collaborated with him on his oratorio *Saul*. The work is divided into three parts:

**Part One** begins with the prophecies of Christ's birth leading into the chorus '*For unto us a child is born*', with its powerful setting of the words 'Wonderful' and 'Counsellor'; recitatives depicting the angels bringing the good news to the shepherds; and the imaginative final chorus, '*Glory to God*', which ends with a diminuendo as the angels disappear from sight.

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

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

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

Handel composed *Messiah* in just twenty-four days, a remarkably short space of time but not exceptional by his own extraordinary standards. More than 250 years have passed since its first performance, yet *Messiah*'s status as one of the great icons of European music remains undiminished, and it continues to speak to millions of people of many cultures and faiths around the world.

## PART ONE

1. Sinfonia *Overture*
2. Recitative *Tenor*  
*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people*
3. Air *Tenor*  
*Ev'ry valley shall be exalted*
4. Chorus  
*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*
5. Recitative *Bass*  
*Thus saith the lord, the Lord of hosts*
6. Air *Countertenor*  
*But who may abide the day of His coming*
7. Chorus  
*And He shall purify the sons of Levi*
8. Recitative *Countertenor*  
*Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*
9. Air and Chorus *Countertenor*  
*O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion*
10. Recitative *Bass*  
*For behold, darkness shall cover the earth*
11. Air *Bass*  
*The people that walked in darkness*
12. Chorus  
*For unto us a child is born*
13. Pastoral Symphony
14. Recitatives *Soprano*
  - a) *There were shepherds abiding in the field*
  - b) *And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them*

15. Recitative *Soprano*  
*And the angel said unto them "Fear not ..."*
16. Recitative *Soprano*  
*And suddenly there was with the angel*
17. Chorus  
*Glory to God in the highest*
18. Air *Soprano*  
*Rejoice greatly, Oh daughter of Zion*
19. Recitative *Countertenor*  
*Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened*
20. Air *Soprano and Countertenor*  
*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*
21. Chorus  
*His yoke is easy and His burthen is light*

## PART TWO

22. Chorus  
*Behold, the Lamb of God*
23. Air *Countertenor*  
*He was despised and rejected of men*
24. Chorus  
*Surely he hath borne our griefs*
25. Chorus  
*And with his stripes we are healed*
26. Chorus  
*All we like sheep have gone astray*
27. Recitative *Tenor*  
*All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn*

28. Chorus

*He trusted in God*

29. Recitative Tenor

*Thy rebuke hath broken his heart*

30. Air Tenor

*Behold, and see if there be any sorrow*

31. Air Tenor

*He was cut off out of the land of the living*

32. Air Tenor

*But thou didst not leave his soul in hell*

36. Air Countertenor

*Thou art gone up on high*

38. Air Soprano

*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach*

40. Air Bass

*Why do the nations so furiously rage together*

41. Chorus

*Let us break their bonds asunder*

42. Recitative Tenor

*He that dwelleth in Heav'n*

43. Air Tenor

*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*

44. Chorus

*Hallelujah*

**INTERVAL**

**PART THREE**

45. Air Soprano

*I know that my Redeemer liveth*

46. Chorus

*Since by man came death*

47. Recitative Bass

*Behold, I tell you a mystery*

48. Air Bass

*The trumpet shall sound*

52. Air Soprano

*If God be for us, who can be against us*

53. Chorus

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*

*Amen*



“... many scholars have spent months, and even years, poring over its libretto. The conclusions they have come up with regarding the intentions of the librettist, Charles Jennens, have sparked much controversy over the years. Because of Jennens’ personal, religious beliefs, many scholars are concerned that much of his libretto is designed to discredit all other religions and proclaim Christianity as the only viable declaration of faith. The evidence for this is littered throughout the libretto of the Messiah from the language he chose to use, verses he decided to combine, and the resources he may have referenced. Some believe that Jennens simply took the scriptures and weaponized them against any religion opposed to Christianity. Others oppose this school of thought, believing that he did not intend to erase other religious points of view, but merely set out to affirm his own.”

*From: A critical Analysis of the Libretto in Handel's Messiah, Augustana College 2020*





**George Frideric Handel** (1685 –1759) was a German-British Baroque composer well known for his operas, oratorios, anthems, concerti grossi, and organ concertos. Handel received his training in Halle and worked as a composer in Hamburg and Italy before settling in London in 1712, where he spent the bulk of his career and became a naturalised British subject in 1727. He was strongly influenced both by the middle-German polyphonic choral tradition and by composers of the Italian Baroque. In turn, Handel's music forms one of the peaks of the "high baroque" style, bringing Italian opera to its highest development, creating the genres of English oratorio and organ concerto, and introducing a new style into English church music. He is consistently recognized as one of the greatest composers of his age.

Handel started three commercial opera companies to supply the English nobility with Italian opera. In 1737, he had a physical breakdown, changed direction creatively, addressed the middle class and made a transition to English choral works. After his success with *Messiah* (1742), he never composed an Italian opera again. His orchestral *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* remain steadfastly popular. One of his four coronation anthems, *Zadok the Priest*, has been performed at every British coronation since 1727. Almost blind, he died in 1759, a respected and rich man, and was given a state funeral at Westminster Abbey.

Since the late 1960s, interest in Handel's music has grown. The musicologist Winton Dean wrote that "Handel was not only a great composer; he was a dramatic genius of the first order." His music was admired by Classical-era composers, especially Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

*Messiah notes and Handel biography by John Bawden*



## Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton is Acting Director of Music at Wells Cathedral, a position he took up in December 2022, having been Assistant Director of Music since 2020.

In this role, Alexander oversees all aspects of the Cathedral's musical life. He is the principal director of Wells Cathedral Choir and is responsible for the training and care of the Choristers. Alexander is also Artistic Director of Cathedral Commissions and Music Director of Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society. Recent and forthcoming performances as a conductor include Bach *Christmas Oratorio*, *Mass in B minor* and *St John Passion*, Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*, Fauré *Requiem*, Handel *Coronation Anthems* and *Messiah*, and John Rutter *Gloria*, *Magnificat* and *Requiem*. In May 2023, he curated the Sound of Wells Festival 2023, which featured over 300 musicians from the community; the Festival returns in May 24.

Prior to taking up his appointments in Wells, Alexander held organ scholarships at Westminster Abbey, Trinity College, Cambridge and St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. He has studied the organ with Henry Fairs, Ann Elise Smoot, Colin Walsh and Stephen Farr. Alexander read Music as Organ Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he accompanied the choir in its schedule of services, concerts and tours. He has appeared as both accompanist and soloist on a number of critically-acclaimed recordings, including discs of music by Stanford, Finzi, Vaughan Williams, Cecilia McDowall and Owain Park, and also features on a recent album by the internationally-renowned vocal ensemble Voces8.

Alexander won First Prize in the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition 2015. Recent engagements have included a Bach concert at the St Albans International Organ Festival, and recitals at the London Organ Day, King's College, Cambridge, St Paul's Cathedral, St John's Smith Square and Westminster Abbey. During 2016-17, he was Artistic Director of Bach at Trinity, a year-long recital series surveying the complete organ works of Bach. He has tutored for Creative Oundle for Organists courses and is the principal organ teacher at Wells Cathedral School.



## Margaret Faultless

Founder and Artistic Manager of Music for Awhile Margaret Faultless has had a varied musical career, as leader of a West End musical and the violinist in contemporary music ensembles but is best known as a specialist in historical performance practice. She is a leader of The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with whom she has performed all over the world: at Glyndebourne, the Lincoln Centre New York, Tokyo, Vienna, Paris, the Salzburg Festival and frequently at the South Bank in London. She was on the Board of Directors for many years and currently directs the OAE Experience scheme for young professionals. Margaret was leader of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra in their ten-year Bach cantata project, performing and recording every cantata. She was also a member of The London Haydn Quartet, whose CD of the Opus 9 quartets was hailed as “one of the great Haydn quartet recordings.” A graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, she is Director of Performance at the Faculty of Music, and lectures and broadcasts on performance. She is an Honorary Fellow of Birmingham Conservatoire - the city in which she grew up. Margaret is the Becket Chair of Historical Performance at The Royal Academy of Music and is currently a member of their governing body, is the recipient of the prestigious Honorary Membership of The Royal Academy of Music and a Professor of the University of London.

In 1996 Simon Whistler and Margaret Faultless decided to celebrate their love of a tiny church in its magical setting with a concert, inviting musician friends of international standing to perform. The church was All Saints', Alton Priors, and Music for Awhile was born. Its annual focus remains the summer festival in the Vale of Pewsey but there are many other performances throughout the year, including a chamber series, which for many years was held at Conock Manor. Festival programmes have included performances of early English opera, masques and theatre music. Music for Awhile has premiered new editions of manuscript material from the British Library and has created new works combining music and poetry. The Cecil King Memorial Foundation and other sponsors, support our series of concerts in churches, fundraising for these historic buildings, as well as bringing professional music-making of the highest calibre to local communities. These chamber recitals give rise to adventurous programming, notably in creating arrangements of large-scale works for more intimate venues. As well as performing chamber recitals in churches, the larger MFA ensemble collaborates with choirs performing major choral works in venues such as Westminster Abbey, Bath Abbey, and the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford.

Tonight we are thrilled to be back in Wells to perform the Messiah with a choir with whom we've performed for over a decade, with another collaboration in the inspirational surroundings of Wells Cathedral.



# The Orchestra

<b>1st violin</b>	<i>Maggie Faultless</i> <i>Rachel Stroud</i> <i>Ellen Bundy</i> <i>Jean Paterson</i>	<b>Cello</b>	<i>Carina Drury</i> <i>Camilla Morse-Glover</i>
<b>2nd violin</b>	<i>Nia Lewis</i> <i>Alice Poppleton</i> <i>Anna Bingham</i> <i>May Robertson</i>	<b>Oboe</b>	<i>Leo Duarte</i> <i>Grace Scott Deuchar</i> <i>Zoe Shevlin</i>
<b>Viola</b>	<i>Francesca Gilbert</i> <i>Hannah Gardiner</i>	<b>Bassoon</b>	<i>Paul Sharp</i> <i>Brendon Musk</i>
<b>Bass</b>	<i>Zaynab Martin</i>	<b>Trumpet</b>	<i>Scott Bywater</i> <i>Benedict Williams</i>
		<b>Timps</b>	
		<b>Harpichord</b>	
		<b>Organist</b>	<i>William Drakett</i>

# The Choir

## Soprano

*Nancy Akrill*  
*Ali Ballamy*  
*Debbie Bettles*  
*Stefanie Bongs*  
*Pam Booth*  
*Maureen Boylan*  
*Hilda Breakspear*  
*Kate Brown*  
*Denise Bush*  
*Ruth Bush*  
*Barbara Calverley*  
*Felicity Chapman*  
*Katherine Constable*  
*Sandra Freeborn*  
*Sue Gould*  
*Karen Green*  
*Susan Hanson*  
*Becky Hughes*  
*Dot Hunter*  
*Carolyn Legg*  
*Ruth Lickfold*  
*Della Luetchford*  
*Jennie Lunnon*  
*Rosemary Mann*  
*Sarah May*  
*Jan Merritt*  
*Jane Needle*  
*Ann Parsons*  
*Mo Pickford*  
*Gill Round*  
*Frances Rowe*  
*Janet Saxon*  
*Maggie St Quintin*  
*Christine Tudor*  
*Jan Weaver*  
*Claire Webster*  
*Jessica Wharton*  
*Lucy Williams*

## Alto

*Jenny Abraham*  
*Christine Barker*  
*Iona Bastin (C/S)*  
*Caroline Blyth*  
*Vivienne Burgess*  
*Louise Burton*  
*Liz Carey*  
*Rosemary Cooke*  
*Polly Corbishley*  
*Gill Cumming*  
*Sue Curragh*  
*Gill Deamer*  
*Joan Dovey*  
*Robin Duijs*  
*Liz Falzon*  
*Elsa Field*  
*Wendy Gregory*  
*Shelley Gudgin*  
*Faith Guest*  
*Elizabeth Hand*  
*Jenny Harrow*  
*Catherine Hay*  
*Frannie Hewitt*  
*Lynne Jarman*  
*Madeleine Jennings*  
*Deborah Jonas*  
*Amanda Karpinski*  
*Sian Landers*  
*Sophie Laurie*  
*Jessica Leach*  
*Alex Lemanski*  
*Jennifer Mackenzie*  
*Pippa Mains*  
*Liz Metcalfe*  
*Muriel Mitcheson*  
*Mary Newman*  
*Caroline Nicholls*  
*Claire Pennack*

## Alto

*Kathy Pinches*  
*Janet Ravenscroft*  
*Arlene Roberts*  
*Sheila Ruffle*  
*Janet Rundle*  
*Celia Smith*  
*Sue Stoughton-Harris*  
*Celia Townend*  
*Fleur-Louise Turner*  
*Lynn Waldron*  
*Sue Wells*  
*Olivia Wilkinson*  
*Jo Wright*  
*Christine Young*

## Tenor

*Peter Beange*  
*Ian Bynoe*  
*Richard Garstang*  
*Alex Jenkins (C/S)*  
*Chris Lambert-Shiels*  
*Peter Lawrence*  
*Nigel Lloyd*  
*Martin Lovell*  
*Michael Lovering*  
*Carol Moreton*  
*Chris Morley*  
*Chris Ray*  
*Stacey Williams*

## Bass

*David Abels*  
*Nick Allan*  
*Patrick Aspinall*  
*Chris Boddie*  
*Michael Calverley*  
*John Castree*  
*Peter Dunkin*  
*Peter Farrell*  
*Adrian Grey*  
*Michael Harris*  
*Richard Henderson*  
*Christian Hughes*  
*Andrew Hunt*  
*Tony Iveson*  
*Chris Jenkins*  
*John King*  
*Michael Leach*  
*Brian Marshall*  
*Richard Needle*  
*Roger Parsons*  
*Paul Reynolds*  
*Lukas Russell (C/S)*  
*Robert Smallcombe*



## Mhairi Lawson Soprano

Mhairi Lawson has performed in opera houses and concert halls worldwide. In the UK, she has regularly collaborated with such companies as The Gabrieli Consort & Players, The Academy of Ancient Music, English National Opera, The Early Opera Company and The Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and with many leading conductors such as William Christie, Sir Charles Mackerras, Paul McCreesh, Jane Glover and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, in repertoire ranging from traditional folksong to opera.

This season, Mhairi sings Purcell's King Arthur with the Early Opera Company in London, Bach's B minor Mass with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Mozart's Requiem with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, and returns to the Academy of Ancient Music.

Recent highlights include performances of Handel's Messiah with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and also the Dunedin Consort, Haydn's Creation with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra and also the Arctic Philharmonic, Bach's St Matthew Passion with Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht and also BBC NOW, regular residencies at the Carmel Bach Festival in the USA, and performances of Purcell's King Arthur on tour with the Gabrieli Consort.

A keen recitalist, engagements have included songs from the British folksong tradition and Lieder by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Strauss and Wolf with appearances in the Edinburgh Festival, Newcastle and York Universities, and recordings for BBC Radio 3.

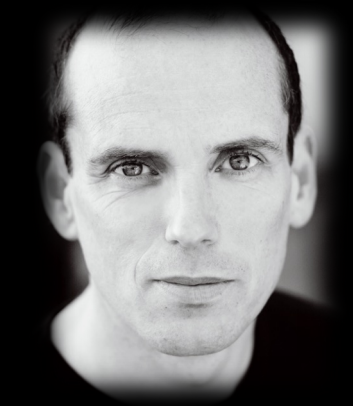


## Stephen Harvey Counter-tenor

Stephen Harvey studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Nicholas Clapton and Iain Ledingham and was formerly a student at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. Stephen currently studies with Elizabeth Donovan.

Stephen and his family moved to Wells, Somerset, in 2008, where he currently sings as a Vicar Choral within the Cathedral Choir. Besides this, Stephen continues his work as a soloist with various choirs and choral societies throughout the UK and Europe and has worked under such directors as William Christie, Laurence Cummings, Matthew Halls and Jeffrey Skidmore, among others. Stephen has performed with the period instrument ensembles The King's Consort - for whom he was one of their young artist in 2008 - Retrospect, and The Cecile Consort. On the concert platform, some highlights include solo performances at the Wigmore Hall for the King's Consort, a staged Baroque restoration project of Purcell's 'Orpheus Britannicus' with Mercurius Company at Cadogan Hall, performing the cantata for alto and soprano 'Amarilli Vezzosa' in the London Handel Festival under Laurence Cummings and performing duets with the late James Bowman in the Lichfield Festival.

Stephen's next solo performance is Carmina Burana in Dubai.



## James Oxley Tenor

James Oxley's recent highlights include the title role in Handel's Jephtha at Teatr Wielki in Poznan, Handel's Messiah with the National Symphony Orchestra in Ireland, De Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht and also the Krakow Philharmonic, Bach Cantatas with the Oxford Bach Soloists, Dyson's Quo Vadis at the Three Choirs Festival, Bach's B Minor Mass with The Bach Choir, Trond Kverno's St Matthew Passion with the Oslo Cathedral Choir, Bach's St Matthew Passion with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Bach's St John Passion with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and Bach's Christmas Oratorio with the Norwegian Wind Ensemble and also with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

He has appeared at the vast majority of major concert halls in the UK, and his engagements have taken him throughout Europe, the USA, New Zealand, Australia and Asia, and especially to France where he has worked with Philippe Herreweghe, Hervé Niquet and Christophe Rousset. He has given performances of Israel in Egypt with Il Fondamento in France and Belgium, Lully Alceste and Rameau Les Indes Galantes with L'Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing and Jean-Claude Malgoire and has performed at the Göttingen Handel Festival in Germany.



## Nicholas Mogg Baritone

Nicholas is currently a member of the Solo Ensemble at the Staatsoper Hamburg, where his current and recent roles include Dancairo/Morales Carmen, Baron Dauphol La Traviata, Il Commissario Imperiale Madama Butterfly, and L'Officier Dialogue des Carmélites. He has performed in several world premières from composers including Samuel Penderbayne, Lorenzo Romano, Johannes Harneit, and Salvatore Sciarrino. In the 23/24 season, Nicholas will make several major role debuts at Staatsoper Hamburg, including Ned Keene Peter Grimes, Silvio I Pagliacci, Guglielmo Così Fan Tutte and Don Fernando Fidelio.

He is an Oxford Lieder Young Artist, a Britten-Pears Young Artist, a Park Lane Group Young Artist, a Live Music Now Artist, a Drake Calleja Scholar, and a member of the Royal Academy's prestigious Song Circle. As a recitalist, he has established a successful duo partnership with pianist Jâms Coleman, and together they have performed recitals at Wigmore Hall, the Oxford Lieder Festival, Two Moors Festival, Roman River Festival, and the Ryedale Festival. Their debut recording of music by Carl Loewe was released in December 2021 to widespread critical acclaim.

Concert highlights include appearances as a soloist at the Barbican Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and the Philharmonie de Paris with conductors including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Ton Koopman, and Daniel Reuss.





## ***Bringing exciting choral music to Somerset***

Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society (WCOS) was founded in 1896 and is one of the South West's leading choral societies. It performs the great choral works with some of the UK's finest soloists and professional orchestras in the glorious surroundings of the 'Queen of English Cathedrals'.

## **THE NEXT DECADE**

The members of WCOS have been considering how we can share the excitement of choral music with the people of Somerset and beyond in the coming years. It is agreed that we should:

- Be proud of our 130-year history.
- Broaden the range of music beyond traditional oratorios to embrace modern composers and trends.
- Engage with different cultures and musical styles.
- Enjoy performing in 'The Queen of English Cathedrals' with imaginative and creative use of the space to enhance the audience experience.
- Develop relationships with other organisations such as WoWFest and Glastonbury Extravaganza to expand our performances outside the cathedral.
- Attract younger and more diverse audiences and choir members by engaging and performing with local schools and youth groups.
- Use "Come and Sing" days with popular conductors and composers to share the experience of singing and performing large choral works with the wider community.
- Emphasise the benefits of singing to the general well-being both of performers and audiences.

***We hope you will join us on our journey***



**NEWS & MAILING LIST**

*Scan QR codes to join our mailing list and to buy tickets*

**TICKETS**



## PLANNED EVENTS

In reaching out to wider audiences we have the following events in planning which are geared to broader appeal:



Saturday 20 January 2024

### **Wells Community Day**

WCOS will support Project Factory and Wells Community Network and perform in this all-day event, just after mid-day.

Tuesday 6 February 2024

### **Bach Day**

We are supporting Wells Cathedral School in its one-off *Come and Sing* Bach Day featuring the music to match the Seasons. There will be a concert performance at 14.00.

Saturday 23 March 2024

### **Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius***

Conductor *Alexander Hamilton*

Orchestra *Southern Sinfonia*

Soloists *to be confirmed*

Saturday 22 June 2024

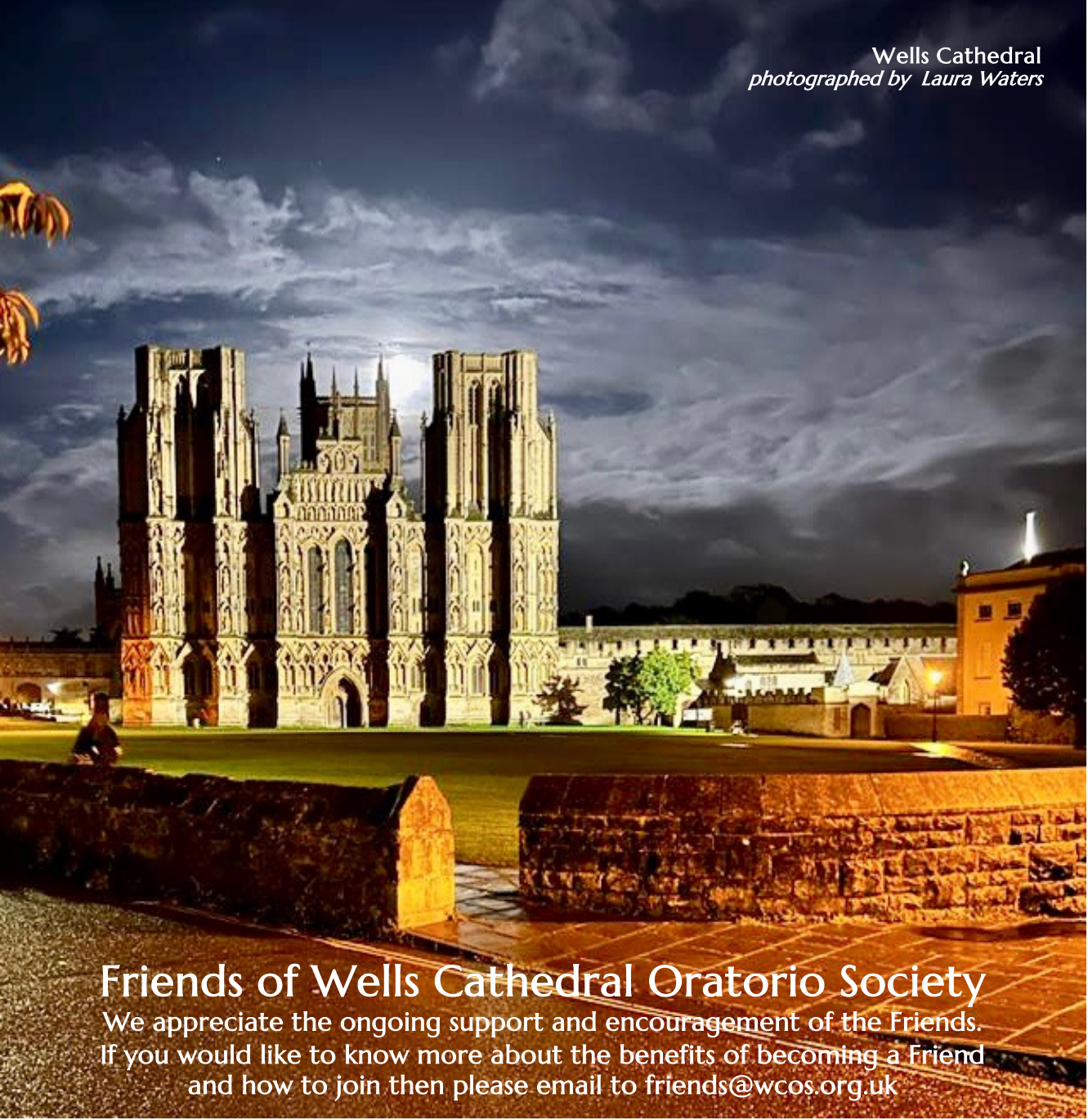
**Come and Sing "The Armed Man"** *with Sir Karl Jenkins* in his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday year. This will lead to an exciting performance of *The Armed Man* on 7 December 2024 under the baton of Sir Karl.

Saturday 20 July 2024

### **WOW Fest – Beethoven 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony**

We have been invited to lead the choral element of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, best known for the "*Ode to Joy*", supporting youth orchestras from across UK and Europe and performed in Wells Cathedral. Participation is open to public with rehearsal on 6/7 July

In August 2025 we have been invited to open Glastonbury Extravaganza which is certainly reaching out to new audiences. Next stop Pyramid stage, maybe!



## Friends of Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society

We appreciate the ongoing support and encouragement of the Friends.  
If you would like to know more about the benefits of becoming a Friend  
and how to join then please email to [friends@wcso.org.uk](mailto:friends@wcso.org.uk)

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Our first full sponsor is the **Bishop's Eye** *contemporary eatery and wine bar* and the associated **Blair Foundation**. Thank you so much Louis, Pip and the **Blair Foundation**.

Located adjacent to the Cathedral in the market square, Bishop's Eye is highly recommended for its locally-sourced sharing platters, cakes, coffees, wines and much more. *So why not pop in?*

**Sam Forsey**, a choral singer himself in a number of choirs, has for some years offered his support to our society as Independent Examiner of our accounts. This year his family company of funeral directors is a concert sponsor as well.

Thank you Sam and Forsey and Son.



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# Bach Day

Wells Cathedral, Tuesday 6th February 2024 from 9.30am

A day full of musical activities, singing, performances and so much more...

There will also be a singing workshop from 11.00am  
with a performance at 2.30pm

Open to everyone and all abilities. Please come along and join in.  
(email Laetitia Stott on [l.stott@wells-cathedral-school.com](mailto:l.stott@wells-cathedral-school.com)  
to register for the singing)

For more information on the day, please visit:  
<https://wells.cathedral.school/bachday>



## The Friends of Wells Cathedral Grand Organ Appeal

Music has been at the heart of the life of Wells Cathedral for more than 1100 years. Whilst our exceptional Cathedral Choir is at the forefront of our musical reputation, the organ plays a vital part and is now in urgent need of complete refurbishment. With the goal of raising £2m by 2026, the Friends of Wells Cathedral Grand Organ Appeal has already secured funding and pledges in excess of £700,000. Please visit our website to find out more about how you can help secure our Cathedral's musical life for the next generation.

Join us and Support the Appeal  
[www.wellsgrandorganappeal.org.uk](http://www.wellsgrandorganappeal.org.uk)





Autumn Concert of Choral Favourites







## Wells, The Queen of Cathedrals

*Photograph by Dimitris Koutroumpas  
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*Cover painting "Vortex of Gold"  
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