

Handel's Messiah

Sunday 5 December, 2021
St John's Church, Buxton

**BUXTON
MUSICAL
SOCIETY**

Helen Groves – *soprano*
William Towers – *countertenor*
Bradley Smith – *tenor*
Marcus Farnsworth – *bass*
Ken Brown – *trumpet obbligato*
Chorus and Orchestra of the
Buxton Musical Society
leader – Steven Wilkie

Conducted by
Michael Williams



Programme £2.00

Part I

1	Sinfonia (Overture)	
2	Comfort ye, comfort ye my people	<i>Accompagnato</i> Tenor
3	Ev'ry valley shall be exalted	<i>Air</i> Tenor
4	And the glory, the glory of the Lord	Chorus
5	Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts	<i>Accompagnato</i> Bass
6	But who may abide the day of His coming?	<i>Air</i> Counter-tenor
7	And He shall purify	Chorus
8	Behold, a virgin shall conceive	<i>Recitative</i> Counter-tenor
9	O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion	<i>Air</i> Counter-tenor and Chorus
10	For behold, darkness shall cover the earth	<i>Accompagnato</i> Bass
11	The people that walked in darkness	<i>Air</i> Bass
12	For unto us a Child is born	Chorus
13	Pifa	Pastorale
14a	There were shepherds abiding in the field	<i>Recitative</i> Soprano
14b	And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them	<i>Accompagnato</i> Soprano
15	And the angel said unto them	<i>Recitative</i> Soprano
16	And suddenly there was with the angel	<i>Accompagnato</i> Soprano
17	Glory to God in the highest	Chorus
18	Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion	<i>Air</i> Soprano
19	Then shall the eyes of the blind be open'd	<i>Recitative</i> Counter-tenor
20	He shall feed His flock like a shepherd	<i>Duet</i> Counter-tenor, Soprano
21	His yoke is easy, His burthen is light	Chorus

INTERVAL (Strictly 15 minutes)

Part II

22	Behold the Lamb of God	Chorus
23	He was despised	<i>Air</i> Counter-tenor
24	Surely, He hath borne our griefs	Chorus
25	And with His stripes we are healed	Chorus
26	All we like sheep, have gone astray	Chorus
27	All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn	<i>Accompagnato</i> Tenor
28	He trusted in God	Chorus
29	Thy rebuke hath broken His heart	<i>Accompagnato</i> Tenor
30	Behold, and see if there be any sorrow	<i>Air</i> Tenor
31	He was cut off out of the land of the living	<i>Accompagnato</i> Tenor
32	But Thou didst not leave his soul in hell	<i>Air</i> Tenor
33	Lift up your heads	Chorus
34	Unto which of the angels said he at any time	<i>Recitative</i> Tenor
35	Let all the angels of God worship Him	Chorus
36	Thou art gone up on high	<i>Air</i> Counter-tenor
37	The Lord gave the word	Chorus
38	How beautiful are the feet of them	<i>Air</i> Soprano
39	Their sound is gone out into all lands	Chorus
40	Why do the nations so furiously rage together?	<i>Air</i> Bass
41	Let us break their bonds asunder	Chorus
42	He that dwelleth in heaven	<i>Recitative</i> Tenor
43	Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron	<i>Air</i> Tenor
44	Hallelujah	Chorus

Part III

45	I know that my Redeemer liveth	<i>Air</i> Soprano
46	Since by man came death	Chorus
47	Behold, I tell you a mystery	<i>Accompagnato</i> Bass
48	The trumpet shall sound	<i>Air</i> Bass
49	Then shall be brought to pass	<i>Recitative</i> Counter-tenor
50	O death, where is thy sting?	<i>Duet</i> Counter-tenor, Tenor
51	But thanks be to God	Chorus
52	If God be for us, who can be against us?	<i>Air</i> Soprano
53	Worthy is the Lamb that was slain	Chorus
	Amen	Chorus

Messiah (1741)

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Helen Groves – soprano

William Towers – counter-tenor

Bradley Smith – tenor

Marcus Farnsworth – bass

Trumpet Obligato

Ken Brown

Continuo

Harpichord

David Francis

Cello

Naomi Turner

Bass

David Lund

Buxton Musical Society Chorus

Orchestra of Buxton Musical Society

Leader Steven Wilkie

Conducted by

Michael Williams

Handel was born in Halle, near Leipzig in Saxony-Anhalt in 1685 and spent his childhood there and attended its newly formed university. He was appointed for a year as probationary organist at the city's Domkirche in 1702 after which he moved to Hamburg for a few years and then to Italy, initially to Florence and then Rome. His compositions soon showed the influence of Italian opera, but his choral writing particularly still retained some Germanic traditional style.

Armed with this unique blend of skill and experience, it was no surprise that, when he decided to move to England in 1710, he met with immediate success. His opera *Rinaldo*, the first Italian-language opera written specifically for the London stage, was a great success with the public, despite negative reactions from literary critics hostile to the contemporary trend towards Italian entertainment in English theatres. By 1712, he had made up his mind to remain permanently in London. He had already worked as Kapellmeister to the German prince George, the Elector of Hanover, so when he became King George I of Great Britain, Handel's place in the royal court was securely established. In 1727 he was granted British citizenship by means of an Act of Parliament.

However, in the 1730s, the emotional and financial toll of producing operas, as well a change in audience tastes, contributed to Handel's growing interest in sacred oratorios. This newly developing form required neither elaborate scenery nor foreign stars. He had previously written several works of this type, most notably *Israel in Egypt* and *Saul*, and for both these works he had taken a libretto by Charles Jennens, a wealthy landowner from Gopsall Hall near Bosworth in Leicestershire.

Jennens was keen to have more of his work set to music by Handel and it is believed that he started the collection of scriptures that form the *Messiah* text in 1739. By 10 July 1741 he was able to write to his friend Edward Holdsworth:

Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but I hope I shall persuade him to set another Scripture Collection I have made for him, & perform it for his own Benefit [taking the bulk of the box office] in Passion Week. I hope he will lay out his whole genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excells every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah.

Much is often made of the astounding speed with which Handel composed *Messiah*, in an interlude somewhere between three and four weeks in August and September 1741. "He would literally write from morning to night," says Sarah Bardwell of the Handel House Museum in London. However, this was not unusual for Handel's composition method. The musicologist Donald Burrows of the Open University points out that many of Handel's operas, of comparable length and structure to *Messiah*, were composed within similar timescales between theatrical seasons. Handel commenced his next oratorio, *Samson*, within a week of finishing *Messiah*, and completed his draft of this new work in a month.

At the time Handel was composing *Messiah*, his reputation in London was uncertain. His last two Italian operas, *Imeneo* and *Deidamia*, were both failures with fickle London audiences. It is probably with this in mind that he accepted an invitation to visit and perform in Dublin at the request of William Cavendish, 3rd Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Much to Jennens' consternation, he took with him the score of *Messiah* and after a series of successful subscription concerts, he set about arranging the premiere of his new oratorio in the New Music Hall in Fishamble Street.

As soon as I came to town, I heard to my great satisfaction, that he had set Messiah, but this receiv'd some allay from the account given me at the same time, that he had carry'd it into Ireland; where it seems there is a subscription for him of 500 guineas.

As news of the new work spread around the city a public final rehearsal was arranged and on 13 April 1742, the day of the premiere, 700 people attended. So that the largest possible audience could be admitted to the concert, gentlemen were requested to remove their swords, and ladies were asked not to wear hoops in their dresses. The takings amounted to around £400 (about £72,000 at today's value), providing about £127 to each of the three nominated charities and securing the release of 142 indebted prisoners.

The warm reception accorded to *Messiah* in Dublin was not repeated in London when Handel introduced the work at the Covent Garden Theatre on 23 March 1743. The first performance was overshadowed by views expressed in the press that the work's subject-matter was too exalted to be performed in a theatre. Handel persevered, however, and a solution was found with the recently-built chapel of the Foundling Hospital in what is now Bloomsbury. The building was appropriate for performances of sacred works of this size and Handel could build a partnership with the charity that would be beneficial to both. It is sometimes thought that his enthusiasm for this charity might have stemmed from his memories of a similar organisation in his birthplace, Halle.

In 1749 he approached the Hospital and offered to stage a benefit concert in the chapel. The Hallelujah Chorus, which was still largely unknown in England at that time, was one of the featured items. The benefit concert was a huge musical and financial success, and the following year he returned to the chapel to conduct a second benefit concert for the charity. This time he chose *Messiah*.

There is little doubt about Handel's own fondness for the work. The benefit concerts for London's Foundling Hospital, became an annual event and Handel conducted or attended every performance until his death in 1759. Also in that year, when he was blind and in failing health, he insisted on attending an April 6 performance of *Messiah* at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden. Eight days later, Handel died at home.

The nineteenth century saw the adoption of the work as an annual event by many amateur and professional groups, particularly in the north of England. It was little surprise therefore that the newly formed Buxton Musical Society chose to perform it in their inaugural concert on 3 December 1944 and subsequently the following April. Many performances by the Society followed, although the loss of committee minute books makes it unclear exactly how many. What is clear, however, is that tonight's conductor, the Society's Musical Director Michael Williams, is about to conduct his eighteenth performance.

Fake News?

No one has ever been able to figure out just why audiences started standing up for the Hallelujah Chorus.

Theories abound, the most common being that King George II, attending the London premiere of *Messiah* in March of 1743, was so moved by the Hallelujah Chorus that he stood up – and if the king stands, everybody stands. The only problem is that there is no contemporary evidence he was even at the concert; newspapers and eyewitnesses conspicuously fail to report any royal presence.

Previous *Messiah* performances from the Society Minute Books

3 December 1944

Elena Danieli, Gladys Ripley, Walter Glynne, Joseph Farrington.
The first concert of the newly formed Society “failing Gladys Ripley it was suggested that Kathleen Ferrier be approached”

1 April 1945

Messiah Pts 2 & 3

16 December 1945

(shortened version at Devonshire Royal Hospital)

23 December 1945

Owen Brannigan (Pavilion Gardens)

22 December 1946

21 December 1947

(“substantial loss on this performance”)

18 December 1949

“failing Miss Alsop, Miss Isobel Baillie”

20 May 1950

At Tideswell, for their 600th anniversary

Missing details

16 December 1962

Alfreda Hodgson conductor — Fred Parnell. St John's (memorial concert for Charles Lockett)

Dec-66

Exact date not recorded

14 December 1969

Joan Bletcher, Yvonne Newton, N Jenkins, P Ravenscroft,
cond Michael Williams

10 December 1972

David Johnson, Caroline Crawshaw, et al Pavilion Gardens

14 December 1975

Pavilion Gardens

15 December 1977

Come & Sing (for Samaritans)

10 December 1978

Pavilion Gardens

6 December 1979

Come & Sing (for Opera House funds)

20 December 1981

(postponed till 7.3.82, because of SNOW) Pavilion Gardens

16 December 1984

Sandra Dugdale, Malcolm Knowles

13 December 1987

Pavilion Gardens

27 April 1989

Come & Sing— Methodist Church

9 December 1990

Postponed OWING TO SNOW to 14 April 1991 Pavilion Gardens

5 December 1993

7 December 1997

17 December 2000

student soloists from RNCM

7 December 2003

26 November 2006

soloists Chris Underwood pupils St John's

22 November 2009

Helen Groves, Susanna Spicer, Joshua Ellicott, Marcus Farnsworth — St John's

25 November 2012

Helen Groves, David Gould, Joshua Ellicott, Marcus Farnsworth

22 November 2015

Julie Cooper, David Gould, Andrew Mackenzie Wicks, Matthew Hargreaves

25 November 2018

Julie Cooper, Matthew Venner, Andrew Mackenzie Wicks, Andrew Slater

Messiah

1. Sinfonia (Overture)

2. Accompagnato – Tenor

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

(Isaiah 40: 1–3)

3. Air – Tenor

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry moutain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

(Isaiah 40: 4)

4. Chorus

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

(Isaiah 40: 5)

5. Accompagnato – Bass

Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts: Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come.

(Haggai 2: 6–7)

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

(Malachi 3: 1)

6. Air – Counter-tenor

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.

(Malachi 3: 2)

7. Chorus

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

(Malachi 3: 3)

8. Recitative – Counter-tenor

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us.

(Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23)

9. Air and Chorus – Counter-tenor

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your god!

(Isaiah 40: 9)

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

(Isaiah 60: 1)

Chorus

O thou that tellest. . . etc.

10. Accompagnato – Bass

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

(Isaiah 60: 2–3)

11. Air – Bass

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

(Isaiah 9: 2)

12. Chorus

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9: 6)

13. Pifa ("Pastoral Symphony")

14a. Recitative – Soprano

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

(Luke 2: 8)

14b. Accompagnato – Soprano

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

(Luke 2: 9)

15. Recitative – Soprano

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

(Luke 2: 10–11)

16. Accompagnato – Soprano

And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

(Luke 2: 13)

17. Chorus

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men."

(Luke 2: 14)

18. Air – Soprano

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

Rejoice greatly. . . da capo

(Zechariah 9: 9–10)

19. Recitative – Counter-tenor

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing

(Isaiah 35: 5–6)

20. Duet – Counter-tenor & soprano

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

(Isaiah 40: 11)

Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest.

Take his yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

(Matthew 11: 28–29)

21. Chorus

His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

(Matthew 11: 30)

22. Chorus

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

(John 1: 29)

23. Air – Counter-tenor

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

(Isaiah 53: 3)

He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

He was despised. . . da capo

(Isaiah 53: 6)

24. Chorus

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

(Isaiah 53: 4–5)

25. Chorus

And with His stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53: 5)

26. Chorus

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53: 6)

27. Accompagnato – Tenor

All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:

(Psalm 22: 7)

28. Chorus

"He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him."

(Psalm 22: 8)

29. Accompagnato – Tenor

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort him.

(Psalm 69: 20)

30. Arioso – Tenor

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

(Lamentations 1: 12)

31. Accompagnato – Tenor

He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

(Isaiah 53: 8)

32. Air – Tenor

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

(Psalm 16: 10)

33. Chorus

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

(Psalm 24: 7–10)

34. Recitative – Tenor

Unto which of the angels said He at any time: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?"

(Hebrews 1: 5)

35. Chorus

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

(Hebrews 1: 6)

36. Air – Counter-tenor

Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even from Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among the

(Psalm 68: 18)

37. Chorus

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers.

(Psalm 68: 11)

38. Air – Soprano

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

(Isaiah 52: 7; Romans 10: 15)

39. Chorus

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

(Romans 10: 18; Psalm 19: 4)

40. Air – Bass

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed.

(Psalm 2: 1–2)

41. Chorus

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

(Psalm 2: 3)

42. Recitative – Tenor

He that dwelleth in Heav'n shall laugh them to scorn; The Lord shall have them in derision.

(Psalm 2: 4)

43. Air – Tenor

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

(Psalm 2: 9)

44. Chorus

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

(Revelation 19: 6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever

(Revelation 11: 15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Revelation 19: 16)

Hallelujah!

45. Air – Soprano

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

(Job 19: 25–26)

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

(I Corinthians 15: 20)

46. Chorus

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(I Corinthians 15: 21–22)

47. Accompagnato – Bass

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

(I Corinthians 15: 51–52)

48. Air – Bass

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

(I Corinthians 15: 52–53)

49. Recitative – Counter-tenor

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

(I Corinthians 15: 54)

50. Duet – Counter-tenor & tenor

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

(I Corinthians 15: 55–56)

51. Chorus

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(I Corinthians 15: 57)

52. Air – Soprano

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

(Romans 8: 31)

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

(Romans 8: 33–34)

53. Chorus

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Amen.

(Revelation 5: 12–14)

Michael Williams – Musical Director – Buxton Musical Society

Michael Williams was born in Buxton as were all four of his grandparents. He first learnt the piano at the age of six under Maurice Pitt and at 13 won a scholarship to Cheltenham College where he learnt both piano and organ and played in the Cricket XI. In 1961, he went up to Worcester College, Oxford to read law, and after graduation returned home to qualify as a solicitor.

In 1966 he was appointed Assistant Conductor of the Buxton Musical Society and the following April made his conducting debut in Grieg's *Piano Concerto*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* later that year being his first choral piece. His official appointment as Conductor followed the next season and since then he has conducted well over 200 choral and orchestral works including all Elgar's mature choral compositions, both Bach Passions, nine of Handel's great oratorios and most of the standard choral and instrumental repertoire of the classical period and the 19th and 20th centuries.

He has worked with many distinguished singers and instrumentalists including Richard Lewis, Alexander Young, James Gilchrist, Iona Brown, Steuart Bedford and Anthony Goldstone and many other well-known contemporary artists.

He was appointed MBE in 1997 in recognition of his first 25 years as Conductor of the Buxton Musical Society and of the part he played in reopening Buxton Opera House and the establishment of the Buxton Festival. He has conducted at least one orchestral item in each Festival since 1980, one of which has been broadcast by the BBC in all but six years since 1996.

He has been a church organist since his schooldays. Since 1985 he has been Organist and Choirmaster of St John's Church, Buxton and in 2016 was honoured to be one of the first four recipients of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Cranmer Award for services to church music.

So far as is known, he remains the only person to have conducted all three of Elgar's major choral works and played cricket at Lord's. The fiftieth anniversary of his first appearance on the rostrum was celebrated in April 2017 with a performance of Elgar's *The Kingdom*.



Extract from the first committee minute book of the newly formed Buxton Musical Society:

Concert: Sunday, 3 December 1944
Work: Handel – Messiah
Soloists: Elena Danieli, Gladys Ripley, Walter Glynn, Joseph Farrington
Note: The agency wrote to say that if Gladys Ripley was unavailable they had a very promising contralto called Kathleen Ferrier . . .

Many of the early performances of Handel's *Messiah* were given in aid of charity, most notably the Foundling Hospital in London. *Messiah* was the first work performed by the newly created Buxton Musical Society in 1944 and we thought it fitting to revive the tradition and make this a performance in aid of a charity combining both music and health. We therefore ask you to give generously to the retiring collection in aid of **Music in Hospitals and Care**.



Music in Hospitals & Care (MiHC) is a national charity founded in 1948 to benefit sick, disabled and vulnerable adults and children through the provision of high quality, therapeutic concerts and music sessions. They work across the healthcare spectrum, in hospitals, hospices, special needs schools and community outreach venues. A particular initiative that they have been developing recently is the wonderful ICU-Hear project that provides soothing, calming music for the benefit of critical care patients.

MiHC musicians are highly skilled professionals selected for their engagement skills as well as their excellent musicianship. They encourage and enable participation during these sessions helping to promote social, emotional and physiological benefits.

The concerts are carefully thought out in terms of repertoire and delivery, ensuring they are appropriate to the healthcare audience – they are always entirely focused on maximising engagement as well as the promotion of feelings of wellbeing.

MiHC is delighted that Buxton Musical Society is supporting them again this year with a performance of *Messiah*. Money raised from this concert will be used to further its activity in the region, bringing joy to more people through live music.

"I shall show you a collection I gave Handel, called Messiah, which I value highly. He has made a fine entertainment of it, though not near so good as he might and ought to have done. I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition; but he retained his overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Handel, but much more unworthy of the Messiah."

Charles Jennens, librettist of *Messiah* in a letter to Edward Holdsworth



HELEN GROVES studied singing with Heather Harper at the Royal College of Music in London. Highlights of her solo career have included performances at the Lincoln Center (New York) of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment to recitals of Baroque cantatas at Wigmore Hall and the Purcell Room, London. As an ensemble singer, she

has sung with many of the UK's leading groups from The Tallis Scholars to I Fagiolini to staged productions with Sir Simon Rattle including Rameau's *Les Boréades* at the Salzburg Festival and Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* with the Berlin Philharmonic. Most recent ensemble projects have included *St John Passion* at the Barbican with Riccardo Minasi and *Messiah* with Richard Egarr and The Academy of Ancient Music.

In 2001 Helen moved with her family to Cambridge and has steadily built a thriving teaching practice with students from across the university, Hills Road Sixth Form College to local schools. She coaches voices at St Catharine's College Chapel Girls' Choir and Great St Mary's, the University Church. She boasts an increasing number of students continuing on to post graduate performance studies and beyond.

With the outbreak of the pandemic Helen turned to on-line teaching. However she is delighted to be back in person both with her teaching and professional engagements, including this return to Buxton, recording sessions in Salisbury and preparing for a solo recital (including Berg's *Seven Early Songs*) in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge.

Helen was last in Buxton three years ago performing Rossini's *Petite Messe Solonnelle* and is thrilled to be back tonight.

I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God himself.

George Frideric Handel



William Towers read English at Cambridge University and was a postgraduate scholar at the Royal Academy of Music. He appeared extensively as a soloist in Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Bach Cantata Pilgrimage and his performances in the complete Bach series have been issued on CD.

His opera engagements have included Medoro (Handel *Orlando*) and Farnace (Mozart *Mitridate Re di Ponto*) for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden; Oberon (Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for Teatro La Fenice Venice, Teatro Petruzzelli Bari, Teatro Municipale Valli Reggione Emilia, Staatsoper Hanover, for the Royal Opera at the Linbury, and for the Aldeburgh Festival; Apollo (Britten *Death in Venice*) for La Monnaie Brussels, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Luxembourg Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Prague State Opera, Aldeburgh Festival, Oper Frankfurt and the Bregenz Festival; Ottone (Handel *Agrippina*), Ruggiero (Vivaldi *Orlando Furioso*) and Egeo (Handel *Teseo*) for Frankfurt; Ottone (Handel *Ottone*) and Ozia (*La Guiditta*) at the Casa da Musica Porto; Orfeo (Gluck *Orfeo*) in Monte-Carlo; Ottone (Monteverdi *L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for the Teatro Real Madrid and Frankfurt; Orlando (Handel *Orlando*) at the Goettingen Festival, at the Drottningholm Theatre and with the Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco; Giunio (Porpora *L'Agrippina*) for the Barber Institute; Poro (Handel *Poro*) at the Goettingen Festival; Giulio Cesare (Handel *Giulio Cesare*) for Gothenburg Opera; Unulfo (Handel *Rodelinda*) for the Bolshoi Moscow; Marco Fabio (Caldara *Lucio Papirio Dittatore*) for Buxton International Festival; Radamisto (Handel *Radamisto*) for English Touring Opera; Cristiano Mago (Handel *Rinaldo*) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Lotario (Handel *Lotario*) for the London Handel Festival; and Eustazio (Handel *Rinaldo*) for Grange Park Opera.

Equally at home in contemporary work William's roles include 5th Innocent in Harrison Birtwistle's *Minotaur* for the Royal Opera Covent Garden, John Adams's *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* for Theater Bonn, The Guest in the UK premiere of Salvatore Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici*, Bishop Baldwyn in Birtwistle's *Gawain*, Der Leiermann in Benedict Mason's *Playing Away*, Lance in the world premiere of Paul Frehner's *Sirius on Earth* and Little James in Birtwistle's *The Last Supper*.

His oratorio and recital schedule has featured appearances in many major venues and festivals in the UK and abroad, including the Wigmore Hall, Symphony Hall Birmingham, Barbican Hall, Royal Albert Hall, the Grosses Festspielhaus Salzburg, Konzerthaus Vienna, Fundación Juan March Madrid, National Auditorium Madrid, Three Choirs Festival, Ravenna Festival, Flanders Early Music Festival, the Festival de Musique Ancienne de Lyon and La Chaise Dieu. Recent concert performances include Handel's Solomon in Estonia and Latvia, Handel's Belshazzar with Nicholas McGegan in San Francisco, Bach's Mass in B minor with Orquestra Simfonica De Les Illes Balears and Jonathan Cohen, Handel's *Messiah* in Dresden with the MDR and with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Laurence Cummings, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Lars Vogt, Bach's *St John Passion* with the BBCNOW and John Butt, Bach's *Easter Oratorio* with the BBCNOW and Steven Devine, and the premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's *Angel Fighter* in the Leipzig Bach Festival.

Recent highlights have included William's role debut as the Refugee in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* for Pacific Opera, Victoria Canada, and include reprising the role of Cristiano Mago in *Rinaldo* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera on tour. The 2020/21 season sees the release of William's solo disc 'Handelian Pyrotechnics' with the Armonico Consort on Signum Classics.

Bradley Smith – tenor



Bradley studied at St John's College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy of Music. While at the Academy he was a prize-winning finalist in the Joan Chissel Prize for Schumann Lieder, winner of the Blythe-Buesst Aria Prize, and winner of the Tom Hammond Opera Prize. His career has enabled a comfortable balance between the opera stage and the concert platform. In his oratorio work he is regularly engaged to sing the evangelist and tenor solos in the Bach passions, Handel's *Messiah*, and other repertory staples with major orchestras internationally. He performs

regularly at St John's Smith Square, the Cadogan Hall, King's Place, Birmingham Symphony Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and with the Hanover Band.

Recent highlights include Britten's *Serenade for Tenor and Horn*, Schumann's *Liederkreis* Op. 39, Fauré's *La bonne chanson* at King's Place, Britten's *War Requiem*, a new song cycle for tenor and harp by Amelia Clarkson for the Presteigne Festival in North Wales, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* for the Odensee Symphony Orchestra. Operatic highlights include Damon *Acis and Galatea* (English National Opera), Mr Denham *True Story of King Kong* (Theater Magdeburg), Arsete *La Dori* and Lelio *Le nozze in Sogno* (Innsbruck Festival of Early Music), Oduardo *Ariodante* (with the English Concert at Theater an der Wien, the Barbican, the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, and the Théâtre Champs-Élysées), Albert Herring *Albert Herring* (Buxton International Festival), Tamino *Die Zauberflöte* (LFO Young Artists' Tour), and Peter Quint *The Turn of the Screw* (Young Artist Opera Holland Park). With Royal Academy Opera he played Tom Rakewell *The Rake's Progress*, the Male Chorus *The Rape of Lucretia*, le Prince Charmant *Cendrillon*, and le petit vieillard *L'enfant et les sortilèges*.

Future engagements include concerts in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, as well as UK performances at, St John's Smith Square, Birmingham Symphony Hall, and King's Place.

What a wonderful thing it is to be sure of one's faith! How wonderful to be a member of the evangelical church, which preaches the free grace of God through Christ as the hope of sinners! If we were to rely on our works — my God, what would become of us? .

George Frideric Handel

Marcus Farnsworth – bass



Marcus Farnsworth was awarded first prize in the 2009 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition and has appeared in recital at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, La Monnaie, Brussels with Julius Drake; on a UK tour of Schubert *Winterreise* with James Baillieu; for Leeds Lieder with Graham Johnson and at Opéra de Lille with Simon Lepper. He has appeared many times at Wigmore Hall with Malcolm Martineau, Julius Drake and Graham Johnson, the Myrthen Ensemble and Joseph Middleton and with the Carducci Quartet.

This season includes a return to English National Opera for Bill Bobstay in Gilbert and Sullivan *HMS Pinafore*; a European tour of Purcell *King Arthur* and *The Fairy Queen* with Vox Luminis; a French baroque programme with the Academy of Ancient Music and Peter Whelan; an Oxford Lieder recital presenting Cheryl Frances-Hoad's new song cycle *Everything Grows Extravagantly*; *Winterreise* with Martin Roscoe for Manchester Chamber Concerts Society and a Dame Myra Hess concert at Wigmore Hall with the Nash Ensemble.

Last season highlights included performances of Bach *St John Passion* with the *Antwerp Symphony Orchestra*; *Guglielmo Così fan tutte* at Longborough Opera, and Colin Matthews *The Great Journey* at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival. On the recital platform he appeared with James Baillieu in a BBC Lunchtime recital and at Wigmore Hall with James Cheung.

Marcus has worked regularly with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, most notably in Turnage *The Silver Tassie*, the world premiere of Cheryl Hoad's *Last Man Standing* and Hubbard in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* conducted by the composer. With the London Symphony Orchestra he appeared in concert performances of Bernstein *Candide* conducted by Marin Alsop and for the 2017 BBC Proms, Marcus performed Maxwell Davies *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group conducted by Sian Edwards. Outside the UK he has performed in Cologne with the Aurora Orchestra and Nicholas Collon in HK Gruber's *Frankenstein!!* and made his debut at Teatro Real Madrid in Kurt Weill *Street Scene*.

Previous operatic roles include *Guglielmo Così fan tutte* and Strophon *Iolanthe* for ENO; *Sid* in Britten *Albert Herring* in concert with the BBC SO and Ned Keene *Peter Grimes* at Edinburgh International Festival and on tour and recorded with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner; Demetrius A *Midsummer Night's Dream* on tour with the Aix-en-Provence Festival and Eddy in Turnage *Greek* for Boston Lyric Opera.

Marcus's expansive concert repertoire includes Britten *War Requiem*; Elgar *The Apostles*; Orff *Carmina Burana*; Berlioz *L'enfance du Christ* and the Brahms and Fauré *Requiem* with conductors including François-Xavier Roth, Paul McCreesh and Bernard Labadie. He has also sung Bach *St John Passion* (bass arias) with the Ulster Orchestra; Bach *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion* (bass arias and Christus) with the Gabrieli Consort and Monteverdi *Vespers* on tour with Emmanuelle Haïm.

Marcus is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Southwell Music Festival.

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2021–22 Season - Save the dates!

CHORUS & ORCHESTRA

Sunday 12 December 2021	A Celebration of Christmas Music	We are joined by the choir of Fairfield Endowed C of E Junior School as we sing a range of Christmas carols and songs with accompaniment from the four manual St John’s organ. Audience participation is obligatory!
Sunday 27 February 2022 7.30pm	Mendelssohn <i>Elijah</i>	This milestone in the choral repertoire makes a welcome return to the Society’s programme. The dramatic inclusion of a contest of the Gods, the resurrection of a dead youth and the invocation of rain to a parched Israel ensures a gripping performance throughout.
Sunday 10 April 2022 7.30pm	Music and Majesty	As we approach the national celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022 the Buxton Musical Society presents a programme of British music including Elgar’s <i>Sea Pictures</i> and Constant Lambert’s <i>Rio Grande</i> .
Sunday 17 July 2022 11.00am	Festival Mass Beethoven’s Mass in C	Following the 250th anniversary of his birth last year, we perform Beethoven’s first mass as part of the Buxton International Festival. Chorus and Orchestra join the congregation at St John’s Church as they celebrate Eucharist.
Saturday 23 July 2022 9.30 onwards	Sing it in a day Haydn — Creation	Singers are invited to take part in Buxton International Festival by joining Buxton Musical Society and Orchestra in a performance of Haydn’s <i>Creation</i> . The work will be rehearsed during the day for an evening performance in St John’s Church with full orchestra and soloists. Applications will be prioritised to ensure a balanced choir.

All events take place at St John’s Church, Buxton



Further details of all our concerts can be found on the Society’s website:

buxtontonmusicalsociety.org.uk