



Thomas Tallis Society Choir
Musical Director Eamonn Dougan



Pledges of Heav'n's Joy

Music for the Heavens

Directed by Mark Wilde

Blest Pair of Sirens
- Parry -

Faire is the Heaven
- Harris -

Bring us, O Lord God
- James MacMillan -

Hail, Queen of Heaven
- Rihards Dubra -

Seek him that maketh the seven stars
- Jonathan Dove -

&

- Duruflé Requiem -

For centuries mankind has looked in wonder at the heavens – or, at least, the sky above, which before the invention of the aeroplane was long equated with the domain of God and his angels. It is no accident that many of the works we are performing tonight evoke the “spangled Heav’ns”, whether in Jonathan Dove’s sparkling organ part in *Seek him that maketh the seven stars*, or the awe-inspiring spaciousness conveyed by Duruflé’s *In Paradisum* which ends his *Requiem*. There is majesty, too, in the double choir masterpieces of Parry and Harris, and, by contrast, a sense of apprehension at the prospect of one’s soul reaching that blessed place in the works of MacMillan and Dubra.

06 October 2019

Blest Pair of Sirens (1887)

Hubert Parry (1848-1918)

Hubert Parry's setting of Milton's *Ode at a Solemn Music* for double choir, known by its opening line 'Blessed Pair of Sirens', was hailed by the British musicologist Donald Tovey as "an epoch in British musical history". (Tovey's engaging and thought-provoking essay on this choral work, published in the volume of his essays *Concertos and Choral Works*, is warmly recommended.)

Parry took at least twenty years to compose this masterful work. Having originally sketched ideas for a setting of Milton's poem in 1867, he left this until 1886 when he was nudged by a commission from his colleague Charles Villiers Stanford. Now in charge of the London Bach Choir, Stanford was determined to raise its standards as well as programme a work suitable to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in the following year. Fortuitously, when Stanford consulted Sir George Grove, editor of the now famous dictionary of music, as to what might be an appropriate text, Grove suggested Milton's *Ode at a Solemn Music*.

Parry composed his setting fairly rapidly, only stumbling when it came to the final line of Milton's text. Yet with encouraging feedback from his close colleague and former piano tutor Edward Dannreuther, he was able to send the complete vocal score to Stanford in time for rehearsals starting on 1 March 1887. When Grove attended a rehearsal on 29 March, as Parry recalled, "G. jumped up with tears in his eyes and shook me over and over again by the hand and the whole choir took up the cue...and applauded vociferously. It was encouraging."

Setting Milton's poem is no easy task. Its very first sentence runs, without a stop, for a good eleven lines before reaching – as Tovey says – "the first possible stopping-place after telling what Voice and Verse are to do". Even that is not the end of the sentence, but a comma! Parry's triumph was to effectively mirror the masterful structure of Milton's poem while setting his words to a natural-sounding and unceasing flow of melody. He uses dramatic key changes as "punctuation" to mark the poem's structure, and such is his consummate mastery that his mischievous allusion to Wagner's *Tristan* chord at the words "harsh din" is reached quite naturally. Then follows perhaps the most quintessentially English passage, the yearningly falling phrase that sets the words "O may we soon again renew that song": that phrase not only caught Elgar's ear (Parry being one of the few fellow English composers he consistently admired), but also appears to echo in English music through much of the following century.

Faire is the Heaven (1925)

William H. Harris (1883-1973)

William H. Harris enjoyed a distinguished career as an organist, principally at St George's Chapel, Windsor, a post he held 1933-61. While in that post, he also taught piano to the princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Although Harris published relatively few compositions, the work for which he is most celebrated, *Faire is the Heaven*, is superbly written for double choir and remains firmly in the English choral repertory. Though composed in 1925, it very much sustains the pre-First World War style of Parry and Stanford – and in fact appears to have followed the example of Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* in its dramatic trajectory.

Harris took his text from Edmund Spenser's *An Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*, originally published in 1596. Selecting lines from three of the poem's stanzas, Harris created a text with which he was able to broadly mirror the ternary structure of Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, the lively middle section being devoted to the 'Cherubins' and 'Seraphins', with effective use of brief, dazzling dissonance to suggest their 'fiery light'.

Bring us, O Lord God (2009)

James MacMillan (b1959)

To follow *Faire is the Heaven* with this work may seem appropriate, since Harris's other celebrated if not so well-known double choir work sets the same John Donne text set here by the Scottish composer James MacMillan. Written for just four-part choir, MacMillan's sound world is nonetheless far more modern than Harris's, and indeed more disturbing, while also reaching back to an older choral tradition: that of the English Elizabethan age of Tallis and Byrd.

Undoubtedly the character of MacMillan's setting reflects the circumstances of his original commission. The piece was commissioned on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Schola Cantorum of Oxford in memory of Lydia Corfe Press, a member of that venerable choir, who died two years earlier, aged 24, in a mountain climbing accident. As well as singing in Schola Cantorum, Lydia also sang for several years in TTS and we are honoured to give our first performance of this fantastic piece in Lydia's memory.

Donne's prayer asks that the Christian soul should be brought into "that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music". MacMillan's setting underlines the nature of this plea by iterating three times the opening words "Bring us" before proceeding to the rest of the text.

Hail, Queen of Heaven (2008)

Rihards Dubra (b1964)

Born in Riga, Latvia, Rihards Dubra was raised a Catholic by his grandparents. He studied composition at the Latvian State Conservatory, and while still a student began teaching harmony and composition at the Jūmala School of Music, where he continues to work today. He was for a time organist at Our Lady of Suffering Church in Riga, and is presently cantor of St Mary Magdalene Church in that city. Himself deeply religious, Dubra has devoted himself to sacred music, and describes his own work as 'a style of meditation'.

Hail, Queen of Heaven, his first composition in English, was commissioned for the Louth Contemporary Music Society's festival Baltic Voices, held in Ireland in February 2008. Only a little shorter in length than Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, it falls into several sections, beginning with the evocation "Hail, Queen of Heaven". Though mostly straightforwardly tonal and diatonic, Dubra uses striking key changes, unexpected moments of chromaticism, and episodes of aleatoric imprecision (where sections of the choir are given specific phrases to sing but are instructed to improvise their speed of delivery) to create an otherworldly effect. In strong contrast, the work's mid-point features a more earthy dance-like episode, by which Dubra deliberately evokes a more medieval sensibility in the act of worship.

Seek him that maketh the seven stars (1995)

Jonathan Dove (b1959)

Jonathan Dove was long associated with Glyndebourne, and has composed several operas, including the highly successful family opera *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (in the premiere of which our present conductor, Mark Wilde, played the villainous Cat!). Dove is even better known for his choral works, including *The Three Kings*, a carol commissioned for the Choir of King's College, Cambridge's Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in the year 2000.

Seek him that maketh the seven stars for choir and organ was composed in 1995 and was first performed at St James's Church, Piccadilly in June that year. Its words are taken from the *Book of Amos* and Psalm 139. Dove himself has written: "I came across these words about light and stars while looking for a text to set as an anthem for the Royal Academy of Arts' annual Service for Artists: I thought these images would have a special meaning for visual artists. The anthem begins with a musical image of the night sky, a repeated organ motif of twinkling stars that sets the choir wondering who made them. The refrain 'Seek him' starts in devotional longing but is eventually released into a joyful dance, finally coming to rest in serenity."

* * * INTERVAL * * *

(Drinks served in the Church Hall directly opposite the church)

Requiem (1947)

Maurice Duruflé (1902-86)

Maurice Duruflé was one of France's leading organists: he not only gave the premiere of Poulenc's Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani in 1938, but he also played a crucial role in helping Poulenc find the correct registrations to realise the organ "colours" the composer had envisaged. Duruflé himself had studied composition under Paul Dukas, and like his teacher was painstaking and fastidious in his creative work, publishing only ten works in all. Duruflé admired Ravel's work above all, most especially his *Daphnis et Chloé*, *Le tombeau de Couperin*, and *Ma Mère l'Oye*. Though he denied that Fauré (who happened to be Ravel's teacher) had any significant influence on his own work, there can be little doubt that Fauré's Requiem had a strong formative influence at least on Duruflé's own masterpiece.

Duruflé's protest against Fauré's influence may partly have been motivated by his wretched childhood experience. Aged ten, when he had shown a marked gift for music, Duruflé had been taken by his father to Rouen, under the impression they were simply visiting the Normandy capital to see its historic sites; there the young Duruflé was abandoned without warning in the dark and dank premises of Rouen's Cathedral Choir School. Fauré's music at that time was part of the choristers' regular diet; but then so was a good deal of other music which Duruflé relished, including – from 1914 onwards – the Gregorian plainchant which would become so associated with the Rouen school, and indeed Duruflé's own music. His involvement with this ancient tradition was reinforced when in 1919 he began lessons with the organist Charles Tournemire in Paris, who introduced Duruflé to the art of elaborating and improvising upon its themes.

Duruflé's Requiem was originally conceived as an organ suite based on Gregorian chants from the Mass of the Dead. Yet, as he himself recalled: "After I had finished two of them (the Sanctus and the Communion), it seemed to me that it was difficult to separate the Latin words from the Gregorian text to which they are so intimately connected." Then in 1941, with France divided between the Vichy regime and the Nazi-occupied north, he received a commission from the Vichy government for a symphonic poem. Duruflé accepted this for the sake of the much needed 30,000 francs (inflation in wartime France being such that between 1939 and August 1944 wages rose by 63 per cent), yet then proceeded to write a work not only completed several years past the original deadline (and well after the war had finished) but which also stretched the definition of tone poem well beyond its breaking point. This work, completed in September 1947, he dedicated to the memory of his father, who had died of flu on 5 February 1945, and to whom he remained devoted despite his childhood trauma.

Notwithstanding Duruflé's disavowal of Fauré, his Requiem shares something of the serenity of his predecessor's, and clearly follows the elder composer's sequence of movements: the only difference lies in the 'Sanctus', where Duruflé includes the Benedictus section omitted by Fauré. Yet, in contrast to the Fauré, Duruflé's has moments of striking drama, first heard in the 'Domine Jesu Christe' movement at the plea "libera eas de ore leonis" (free them from the lion's mouth), sung *forte* by the choir above a hectic accompaniment (as opposed to Fauré's very restrained response to the same text). There is also a certain lush quality, very much derived from Ravel: in the opening of the 'Sanctus' there's something of the gurgling dawn chorus from *Daphnis*, or perhaps a touch of *Tombeau*; and there's a poignant hint of *Ma Mère l'Oye*'s 'Fairy Garden' in the arching organ melody of 'Agnus Dei'. Duruflé's genius was to fuse Ravel's influence with the ageless Gregorian chants he knew and loved so well to form a soundworld very much his own. As the critic from *Le Figaro* wrote in 1948, Duruflé's Requiem "offers the surprise of many shimmering chords that appear suddenly from the Gregorian aridity, just as a flower blossoms by chance in the desert land."

MARK WILDE – DIRECTOR

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Mark Wilde is a tenor, musical director, and teacher. Born in Scotland his musical career started as a cathedral chorister before attending the University of East Anglia and then the Royal College of Music. Upon leaving the RCM, Mark ran a church choir alongside his burgeoning singing career. Eventually opera and concert engagements took over and his choral direction went into abeyance for some years. Mark has performed roles with all of the main opera companies in the UK, and many abroad, as well as soloist with many of the leading groups and

orchestras such as The Sixteen, The Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, The Dunedin Consort, The Hallé, etc. Most recently Mark sang Iro (*The Return of Ulysses*) with Pinchgut Opera in Sydney and Verdi Requiem with Deutsche Philharmonie Merck. Mark appears on a number of recordings of opera, oratorio, and song. His work with renowned pianist David Owen Norris continues to rediscover and neglected song repertoire. Their most recent recording of bilingual songs by Parry, Sterndale Bennett and Battison Haynes, “Songs and Sonnets”, has recently been released on the EM label.

Mark returned to musical direction in the last few years and now works with a number of choirs and groups. He is musical director of Lincoln Choral Society, The Lincoln Chorale, and the University of Lincoln Choir. He has also worked regularly on projects with Royal Holloway University of London Chapel Choir, The University of Warwick Chorus and Chamber Choir, and now the Thomas Tallis Society. In theatre he has musically directed large scale community productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jekyll & Hyde The Musical*, and *Oliver!* in Lincoln Cathedral.

As a vocal pedagogue, Mark teaches at the Royal Academy of Music, the University of Lincoln, and the Royal Holloway University of London. He has overseen the young artists scheme for Waterperry Opera Festival, for whom he is also a trustee, since its inaugural season in 2018; giving masterclasses, coaching, and mentoring the young singers.

Mark lives in Lincoln with his family and an ever-growing menagerie; currently a dog, a cat, two rats and four hens. He enjoys walking, reading and cooking.

DOUGLAS TANG – ORGANIST



Douglas is a versatile musician working as conductor, keyboardist and coach with professional and amateur musicians of all ages.

He is Music Director of Southern Opera, Conductor of Ex Collegium, Artistic Director of the Dulwich Song Festival, Music Director of ArchiCantores, Director of Music at St Mary’s Long Ditton and an Opera Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music. Previous posts include Assistant Director of Music of St Mary’s Cathedral Sydney and Chapel Organist of the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich.

Born in Hong Kong, Douglas grew up in a Swiss-German international school before winning a scholarship to study in England, attending Harrow School and Dulwich College. He was a proficient pianist and flautist before taking up the organ at a late stage. After winning an organ scholarship he studied music at King’s College Cambridge. With a strong background in the English choral tradition, he ultimately deciding to pursue a career as a freelance conductor and keyboardist. As a conductor his love is for English romantic repertoire, with a penchant for composers such as Stanford, Howells, Parry and Elgar. Recent conducting engagements have included Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* with Ensemble OrQuesta, the Choralies Festival in France and at the Vielklang Festival in Germany, and conducting the choir of Exeter College Oxford at the Tower of London. Upcoming engagements include a recording of Stanford’s music with Ex Collegium and Southern Opera’s production of Handel’s *Acis & Galatea*.

As a keyboard player, Douglas works as a collaborative pianist and repetiteur in art song and opera. As an orchestral musician he has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Britten Sinfonia, the London Sinfonietta and the Aurora Orchestra and, as a continuo player, with the Academy of Ancient Music, the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment and the London Mozart Players. He has built up an extensive discography and has broadcast to millions worldwide on TV and radio.

ANGHARAD ROWLANDS – CHORAL AMBASSADOR



Described by Gramophone Magazine as “arresting”, Angharad Rowlands is a Welsh mezzo-soprano currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Voice at Trinity Laban under Sarah Pring. She is the 2019/20 recipient of the Drapers de Turckheim Award.

Angharad made her debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in the 18/19 season as 2nd Bridesmaid in a revival of David McVicar’s production of *Le nozze di Figaro*. In demand as both an ensemble singer and soloist, Angharad works regularly with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir. Her recent oratorio highlights include Handel’s *Dixit Dominus* and Bach’s *Magnificat* for Eamonn Dougan/Thomas Tallis Society with the Orchestra of The Sixteen; Janáček’s *Glagolitic Mass* for Highgate Choral Society, and Bach’s *Mass in B minor* and Mozart *Vespers* at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

In 2017 Angharad graduated with MA (Hons) in Art History from the University of St Andrews. During her studies she was selected to join the Monteverdi Choir Apprentices Programme and has since worked internationally with the ensemble both as a soloist and as a member of the choir. Her solo appearances include Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* at Palau de la Música, Barcelona, Philharmonie de Paris and the Kursaal, San Sebastián as well as the role of Endless Pleasure in a semi-staged production of Handel’s *Semele* directed by Thomas Guthrie. She also features as a soloist on “Love is Come Again”, the choir’s most recent CD release.

Upcoming projects include a concert of Bach and Handel with the Paragon Singers, and tours to South America and the USA with the Monteverdi Choir. Angharad is extremely grateful to the Drapers de Turckheim and Split Infinitive Trust for their generous support.

WILLIAM FORD – CONDUCTING AMBASSADOR



Since singing as a treble at New College, Oxford William Ford has been immersed in choral music as a singer, director and organist. He is now a distinguished conductor and accompanist, and is currently organist and teacher of academic music at King’s College School, Wimbledon.

Whilst attending Durham University he was Director of Music at Castle College, conducting regular services and concerts including Handel’s *Messiah* and Faure’s *Requiem*. He also played an instrumental part in Durham Opera Ensemble, répétiteur for their inaugural gala shows of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*; and musically directing performances of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Jonathon Dove’s *Mansfield Park*. He frequently appeared as a bass soloist, singing with choirs such as the Durham University Choral Society, Yarm Choral Society, the Bishops Consort, Durham Cathedral Choir, Durham University Chamber Choir and National Youth Chamber Choir.

Since moving to London, he has continued to pursue a freelance singing, playing and conducting career and joined the Thomas Tallis Society in 2017. He is excited to extend and further his current choral ambassadorship as the first conducting ambassador of the society, working under Eamonn Dougan both vocally and in musical direction.

THOMAS TALLIS SOCIETY CHOIR

The Thomas Tallis Society, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in the 2015-16 season, takes its name from the 16th century composer who worked in the Royal Court in Greenwich and is buried in the crypt of the Parish Church of St Alfege.

The choir was founded by Philip Simms, who was organist and choirmaster at the church from 1964 to 2000, and our links with the church continue to the present.

Philip was succeeded by Stephen Dagg, Director of the Centre for Young Musicians at Morley College, London and organist at St Alfege Church, in 2006. During our 50th anniversary year we were delighted to appoint Eamonn Dougan as our new Musical Director.

With around 45 auditioned voices TTS presents four or five concerts a year in the beautiful setting of St Alfege Church. Although many of the choir members live locally in Greenwich, TTS attracts musicians from all over London owing to the high standards it maintains. All singers are required to have very good sight-reading abilities as the choir works on a few concentrated rehearsals before each concert.

We are always keen to recruit new voices. If you are interested, please contact our membership secretary Kathryn Strachan strac157@ntlworld.com.

Follow us on Twitter: @TTSoc. Look out for updates on [facebook.com/ThomasTallisSociety](https://www.facebook.com/ThomasTallisSociety).

Sopranos Phoebe Clapham, Alana Clark, Imogen Faris, Ellie Jestico, Claire Jones, Philippa Kent, Chloe Lam, Rachel Lethbridge, Jenny Standage, Kathryn Strachan, **Emma Wilkins**, Emma Wright

Altos Caitlin Brooks, Rosemary Burch, Miriam Coe, Susan Dean, Judith Evans, Moira Fitzgerald, Bryony Ford, Sally Hughes, Sonia Johnson, **Angharad Rowlands**, Alice Shelton, Alice Wright

Tenors Justin Eeles, Andrew Greene, Larry Howes, **Chris Huggon**, Alan Jolly, Andrew Lang, John Parsons, **Will Wright**

Basses Thomas Atherton, Rick Brooks, Cyril Cleary, **William Ford**, Simon Gallie, Andrew Harper, Daniel Jaffé, Nigel Press, John Sutton, Geoff Woodhouse

Bold denotes TTS Choral Ambassadors

FRIENDS AND PATRONS



We are very grateful to our faithful group of Patrons and Friends that have been loyally supporting us for a number of years. Their generosity and support have really helped the Society to keep going. A reliable yearly income is a huge benefit in planning programmes and means we can budget more accurately.

We are very keen to increase the number of Patrons and Friends to help us go forward in a sustainable manner and we would love your support as either a Patron or Friend.

A Friend contributes £30 per year and this special relationship with the choir is recognised by:

- A newsletter with early notification of concerts
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party
- Recognition of support in TTS programmes.

As a Patron of the Society you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
- Free concert programmes
- Separate interval or pre-concert complimentary drinks table
- Acknowledgment of support of the Society in the programme
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party.

Please consider whether you could support TTS by becoming a Patron or a Friend of the Society. Speak to Carole tonight or contact her at carolelowe@rocketmail.com.

We would like to recognise the important contribution of the following TTS Patrons:

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FOR YOUR DIARY – All in St Alfege Church, Greenwich

Saturday 9 November 2019 – Greenwich International Early Music Festival – Conflict and Resolution
JC and JS Bach Cantatas with soloist Nicholas Mulroy

Saturday 18 January 2020: A celebration of the 100th birthday of one of our patrons, Trevor Dannatt

Saturday 7 March 2020: Programme to be announced

Saturday 27 June 2020: Programme to be announced

With thanks to the Churchwardens of St Alfege for their continued unremitting and enthusiastic support.