

WOKINGHAM CHORAL SOCIETY - IN COLLABORATION WITH
EASTWOOD CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
PRESENT

Sturm und Drang

German Romantic Myths & Legends



Saturday 21 March 2026 7.30pm

All Saints Church
Wokingham
RG40 1TN

Programmes £3

wcs

registered charity 274853

Cover image is of Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria by Helmut H. Kroiss on Pixabay

Concert Programme

Beethoven: *Mass in C major (Op 86)*

Interval (20 minutes)

Schumann: *Overture and Hymnus der Geister Ariman's (Chorus of the Spirits) from Manfred (Op 115)*

Schubert: *Jägerchor (Hunters' Chorus) and 3rd Entr'act from Rosamunde (Op 26)*

Mendelssohn: *Titania's Lullaby and Nocturnes 3&4 from A Midsummer Night's Dream (Op 61)*

Humperdinck: *Abendsegen (Evening Prayer) from Hänsel und Gretel*

Soprano: Hannah Dienes-Williams

Mezzo-soprano: Hannah Bennet

Tenor: Will Searle

Bass: Patrick Keefe

Eastwood Chamber Orchestra

Directed by George de Voil

Please silence mobile phones.

No photographs or recordings may be taken during the performance.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Programme Notes

Sturm und Drang

Sturm und Drang was an arts movement (1765–1775) originating in Germany that formed a transition period between the Age of Enlightenment and Weimar Classicism and Romanticism. The movement rejected the emphasis in Enlightenment on order, rationality and structural improvement and emphasised the importance of artistic freedom and emotional authenticity and rebelliousness. The name literally translates to English as Storm and Stress although the word Drang really in this context means drive or urge. The movement took its name from the 1776 play *Sturm und Drang*, a work by one of its proponents, dramatist and novelist Friedrich von Klinger. In literature Sturm und Drang is typified by the early works of Goethe and Schiller who explored subjective experience, and nature. A parallel movement in the visual arts was exemplified by the works of Vernet, Wolf and Fuseli with paintings of storms and shipwrecks showing the terror and irrational destruction wrought by nature.

In music composers shifted towards agitated and highly emotional compositions in which minor keys and dynamic extremes predominated. While Joseph Haydn is often considered the main proponent of Sturm und Drang (e.g., Farewell Symphony No. 45), Mozart's work during the 1770s was also deeply influenced by this artistic movement.

Tonight, we highlight the work of composers who were composing later in the early Romantic period, but whose works often drew inspiration from the period of Sturm und Drang. Beethoven was deeply influenced by the movement, which he absorbed through the works of his mentors (like Haydn and Neeffe) and his own reading of literature by Goethe and Schiller. Some of his early piano sonatas with their quicksilver mood shifts and level of tension were typical of the style.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) : Mass in C

It was Prince Nikolaus Esterházy II, whose family had been longtime patrons of Franz Joseph Haydn, who commissioned the Mass to celebrate his wife's name day. Between 1796 and 1802, Haydn had composed several choral masses to mark the occasion. After Haydn retired from service to the Esterházy family, the Prince hired other prominent composers to write the mass each year. Beethoven, who had little experience setting liturgical texts, drew inspiration from the works of Haydn and in a letter to Prince Esterházy, Beethoven wrote, "I shall hand you the Mass with considerable apprehension, since you, most excellent prince, are accustomed to have the inimitable masterpieces of the great Haydn performed for you." In fact, the Mass has much in common with Haydn's works, it has a quartet of soloists who alternate with the chorus and elaborate fugues in the Gloria and Credo movements. It has echoes of Haydn's Mass in Time of War (1796), also in C Major, in its dramatic use of timpani and brass. However, the first performance did not go well; it was under rehearsed and apathetically performed. The Prince was confused by the work and reportedly asked Beethoven, "But my dear Beethoven, what is this you have done now?" The Esterházy court expected a Mass suitable for liturgical use on the Princess's name day but Beethoven delivered a work that had all the structure of the Ordinary of the Mass but with a symphonic style and tension that would not have been out of place in the concert hall. A few days later, Prince Esterházy wrote in a letter to a friend, "Beethoven's Mass is unbearably ridiculous and detestable, and I am not convinced that it can ever be performed properly. I am angry and mortified." Beethoven did not give the score to the Prince and in 1812 had the score published and rededicated to a Vienna patron, Prince Ferdinand Kinsky.

It was not a work that gained instant popularity and it was rarely performed. It was only later in the late 19th century that musicians and scholars began to reassess the work as an important transitional piece, and a monumental work that bridges the classical and roman-

tic eras. Today the “Mass in C Major” stands out not only for its technical brilliance but also for its emotional depth and spiritual resonance.

The work has the traditional movements in the Ordinary of the Mass:

1. Kyrie:

The movement begins with a gentle orchestral prelude, setting a contemplative mood. The entry of the chorus, singing “Kyrie eleison” (Lord, have mercy), is almost prayer-like, enhanced by the subtle accompaniment from the orchestra. One of the defining features is the use of contrasting dynamics and the delicate interplay between the chorus, soloists and orchestra bringing a dynamic quality to the movement.

2. Gloria:

It is a highly dramatic and energetic movement with strong rhythmic drive and sharp dynamic contrasts. sudden forte choral interjections amidst soft solos. The “Qui tollis” section turns suddenly sombre, emphasizing suffering. The Gloria’s traditional closing fugue on “Cum sancto spiritu” lasts disproportionately longer than those in Haydn’s masses.

3. Credo:

This is the most structurally complex movement which utilizes sharp, sudden changes in dynamics and texture interspersing the full chorus with intimate solos. The “et incarnatus est” is a serene lyrical section which features a notable clarinet solo. The “Et resurrexit” is introduced by the bass soloist with an energetic change in tempo. The movement finishes in a dramatic double fugue on “Et vitam venturi saeculi,” known for its complexity and rapid tempo.

4. Benedictus:

Unlike the grandiose, settings of the Benedictus by Haydn (which were expected by patrons like Prince Esterházy), Beethoven treats the text with a gentle, personal, and almost pastoral quality. He skilfully blends the solo quartet with the chorus, allowing the soloists to carry the main melody while the chorus provides sustained harmonic support. The movement transitions into the “Osanna in excelsis,” which breaks the calm with a joyful, faster Allegro in A major, characterized by a bustling, fugal structure.

5. Agnus Dei:

The Agnus Dei alternates between powerful forte passages of dark tension and peaceful contemplative prayer in which soloists and chorus interact. The movement opens in C Minor with a relatively unusual 12/8 metre and rhythmic orchestration. A dramatic word painting passage introduces the “miserere,” (have mercy) with four consecutive bars of weak-beat sforzando accents. The movement ends in pianissimo with a final prayer of *domina nobis pacem* (give us peace) in which Beethoven cleverly reintroduces the music of the Kyrie.

Schumann (1810-1856):

Overture to Manfred:

The overture is from Schumann’s dramatic incidental music to Lord Byron’s epic poem Manfred. Renowned for its intense emotional turbulence, it captures Manfred’s, defiance, guilt and existential despair, and is often considered one of Schumann’s finest orchestral achievements. The music opens with three stabbing, dramatic chords, leading into a slow introduction. It includes a haunting “Astarte” theme, associated with Manfred’s lost beloved, characterized by a sorrowful, chromatic melody.

Hymnus der Geister Arimans:

It is known as the Chorus of the Spirits which is sung by the demonic spirits who serve Arimanes, the evil and tyrannical ruler in Manfred. It is dark, massive and ritualistic with menace created by the stark rhythm and harmonic tension. The Hymnus der Geister Ariman’s is unusual in Schumann’s portfolio and shows his fascination with the macabre, the

supernatural and psychological extremes. It stands apart from the more familiar warmth of his lyrical Lieder and piano works and his symphonies.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828):

Entr'acte No. 3 in B-flat major from Rosamunde, D. 797

Schubert wrote the incidental music to *Rosamunde* (Princess of Cyprus) a four-act play written by the German poet Wilhelmina von Chézy. The play had a disastrous premiere in 1823 as it was considered trivial and full of absurdities. However, Schubert's music was widely praised, and this famous, lyrical Romantic-era piece is now often performed by orchestras, ensembles and solo piano

Jägerchor ("Hunters Chorus")

This chorus was another highlight of Schubert music from *Rosamunde*. The music and lyrics evoke the atmosphere of the Greek Cypriot countryside and celebrate the joy of hunting. It evokes sunlit fields, listening for game, and the excitement of pursuit; a typical example of Romantic era pastoral.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847):

Nocturne from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

Written in 1843, Mendelssohn's incidental music for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was composed at the request of King Frederick William IV of Prussia. The Nocturne underscores the scene where the four lovers (Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, Helena) are sleeping in the forest after the chaotic events caused by Puck's magic. It is renowned for its tranquil horn melody, romantic orchestration, and gentle, dreamlike atmosphere.

Titania's Lullaby:

The song occurs as Queen Titania prepares to sleep in her bower. She asks her fairy attendants for a "roundel and a fairy song" to ward off evil creatures—such as spiders, beetles, and snails—and to protect her from harmful spells. The soprano soloists and chorus alternate in a structured "verse-refrain" pattern throughout. The movement ends with the soloists and chorus echoing one another in a "duettino" style, fading into a gentle whisper as Titania falls asleep.

Engelbert Humperdinck (1854 -1921):

Abendsegen (Evening Prayer) - arr. George de Voil

This wonderful piece comes from Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel*. The libretto, by the composer's sister Adelheid Wette, was based on the folktale made familiar by the Brothers Grimm. Humperdinck's *Evening Prayer* is among the most cherished moments in late-Romantic opera. It appears near the close of Act II when the lost children kneel at dusk to pray for protection before falling asleep in the forest. The music's calm, hymn-like character is enhanced by its steady paced and luminous orchestral support, creating a serene atmosphere of trust and innocence. In the prayer fear gives way to reassurance as angels are said to watch over the children through the night.

Notes by Chris Dunning

Ludwig van Beethoven

Mass in C major

1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, have mercy,
Lord, have mercy.

2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam
tuam,
Domine Deus, rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,

Lord God, heavenly king,
O God, almighty Father.

Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, agnus Dei, filius patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;

Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten son,
Lord God, lamb of God, son of the father,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us.

qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris, miserere
nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus
Dominus, tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe, cum sancto spiritu: in gloria
Dei Patris.
Amen

For you alone are the holy one, you alone
are the Lord, you alone are the most high,
Jesus Christ, with the holy spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

3. Credo

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium,
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum, ante omnia saecula,
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum, consubstantialem
patri:
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines et propter
nostram salutem descendit de coelis,
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato;
passus et sepultus est,
et resurrexit tertia die,

I believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one being with the
Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down
from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the
Virgin Mary and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again

secundum scripturas,
et ascendit in coelum,
sedet ad dexteram Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare
vivos et mortuos,
cuius regni non erit finis.
Et in spiritum sanctum, Dominum et
vivificantem:
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et
conglorificatur:
qui locutus est per prophetas.
Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et
apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem
peccatorum.
Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
et vitam venturi seculi.
Amen

4. Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus
Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

5. Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

6. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem

in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the
living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is
worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic
Church.
I acknowledge one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins.
I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the
world, grant us peace.

Interval - 20 minutes

Robert Schumann

Hymnus der Geister Ariman's (Chorus of the Spirits) - extract from *Manfred*

Heil unsrem Meister! Herrn der Erd und
Luft!
Auf Wolk' und Welle wandelnd,
Seine Hand regiert die Elemente,
Die in's alte Nichts sein hoher Wille bannt

Er athmet, Sturm zerwühlt der Wogen Tanz;

Er spricht, der Donner rollt aus
Wolkenflammen;
Er blickt der Sonnenstrahl flieht seinen
Glanz;

Er regt sich bebend bricht die Welt
zusammen!

Vulkane spriessen seinem Fusstritt auf;
Pest ist sein Schatten;
durch der Himmel Gluth herolden die
Kometen seinen Lauf;
Planeten brennt zu Asche seine Wuth.
Ihm opfert Krieg auf blutigem Altar;

ihm zollt der Tod; das Leben ist ganz sein,
bringt ihm endlose Todeskämpfe dar;
Sein ist der Geist in einem jeden Sein!

Hail our master! Lord of the earth and the
air!
Wandering upon cloud and wave,
His hand rules the elements,
Banishing them to the ancient void with his
higher will

He breathes, storms churn up the dance of
the waves;

He speaks, thunder rolls flaming from the
clouds;

He looks, the sunlight flees his radiance;

He moves, the world collapses, quaking!

Volcanoes erupt from his footsteps;

His shadow is pestilence;

Through the glow of the heavens the
comets herald his path;

His fury burns planets to ashes.

The sacrifices of war go to him on bloodied
altar;

Death defers to him; life is entirely his,

Bringing unto him endless agonies;

His is the spirit that resides in everything!

Franz Schubert

Jägerchor (Hunters' Chorus) extract from *Rosamunde*

Wie lebt sich's so fröhlich im Grünen;
Im Grünen bei fröhlicher Jagd,
Von sonnigen Strahlen durchshienen,
Wo reizend die Beute uns lacht.

Wir lauschen und nicht ist's vergebens,
Wir lauschen im duftenden Klee.
Oh sehet das Ziel unseres Strebens.
Ein schlankes, ein flüchtiges Reh,

Getroffen bald sinkt es vom Pfeile,
Doch Liebe verletzt, dass sie heile,
nicht bebe, du schüchternes Reh,
die Liebe gibt Wonne für Weh

Life is so joyful in the green countryside,
In the green countryside at the joyful hunt,
With beams of the sun shining through,
Where our prey is teasing us.

We listen carefully, and it is not in vain,
We listen carefully in the fragrant clover.

Oh look at the goal of our striving,
A slender roe deer on the run!

Struck by an arrow it soon sinks down,
Yet love wounds in order to offer healing,
Do not tremble, bashful roe deer,
Love offers happiness in exchange for pain.

Translation by Malcolm Wren; source schubert-
song.uk

Felix Mendelssohn

Titania's Lullaby - extract from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good-night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good-night, with lullaby.

Engelbert Humperdinck

Abendsegen (Evening Prayer) extract from *Hänsel und Gretel*

Abends, will ich schlafen gehn
vierzehn Engel um mich stehn;
zwei zu meinen Häupten,
zwei zu meinen Füßen,
zwei zu meiner Rechten,
zwei zu meiner Linken,
zwei die mich decken,
zwei die mich wecken,
zwei die mich weisen
zu Himmels Paradiesen!

Evenings, when I go to sleep,
Fourteen angels with me keep,
Two are at my head,
Two at the foot of my bed,
Two are at my right hand,
Two are at my left hand,
Two in covers tuck me,
Two at morning wake me,
Two who point the way to rise
To heaven's paradise!



Hannah Dienes-Williams

Soprano

Hannah is a London based soprano working across Europe as a soloist and ensemble singer, specialising in contemporary music. She graduated with Distinction in her MA from the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded the DipRam for her final recital, the Edlee Prize for Singing and the Edwin Samuel Dove Prize, selected from the whole of the Academy. From 2026 she is an Equilibrium Young Artist, mentored by Barbara Hannigan.

In 2026, Hannah returns to the Salzburger Festspiele for Huber's 'miserere hominibus', alongside solo debuts with Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Tangram LSO Associate Artist, London Mozart Players, Savaria Symphony Orchestra, Instruments of Time and Truth and at Louth Contemporary Music Society. Alongside these, she will perform three symphonic song cycles written for her and will premiere two solo voice shows with new commissions. In 2025, Hannah debuted with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Riot Ensemble and London Sinfonietta, as well as singing as a chorus member at English National Opera. Whilst studying, she was a member of the Academy Song Circle and supported by the Josephine Baker Trust, as well as being chosen for the Glyndebourne Opera Lab. Before this, Hannah studied Music at Clare College Cambridge, where she graduated with a First and the Lester Brough Prize for Music. Hannah regularly sings with the Edward Grieg Kor in Norway, EXAUDI, The Carice Singers, and Cantando Admont in Austria.

Her solo oratorio work for the 2026 spring season includes: Bach's 'St Matthew Passion', Beethoven's 'Mass in C', Haydn's 'Creation', Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', Mozart's 'Great Mass in C Minor' and Orff's 'Carmina Burana'.



Hannah Bennett

Mezzo-soprano

Hannah Bennett is a British mezzo soprano from Luton, Bedfordshire, based in London. She was a 2023 and 2024 Alvarez Young Artist with Garsington Opera, an Opera Holland Park 2021 Young Artist, a Leeds Lieder 2019 Young Artist and semi finalist for the 2022 Kathleen Ferrier Awards. Hannah recently worked with Glyndebourne for their 2025 Autumn season, and looks forward to joining Glyndebourne again this year for their 2026 Summer Festival.

Onstage, recent roles include: Leila *Iolanthe* and Edith *The Pirates of Penzance* both with the National Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company, Pippetto *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* (Donizetti) Wexford Festival Opera, Second Bridesmaid *Le nozze di Figaro* Garsington Opera, Lazuli *L'Étoile* (Chabrier) RCS Opera, Olga *Four Sisters* (Elena Langer) RCS Opera, Alice *Rip van Winkle* (Planquette) Gothic Opera and Marcellina *Le nozze di Figaro* Opera Holland Park - 2021 OHP Young Artists Scheme. Hannah has also worked with Scottish Opera, Opera North, Waterperry Opera Festival and Nevill Holt Opera.

In concert, Hannah has performed at the Wigmore Hall, Oxford Lieder, the Amersham Music Festival and Leeds Lieder. In September 2023, Hannah performed in Stravinsky's *Les Noces* at Sadler's Wells as part of English National Ballet's triple bill production "Our Voices", in partnership with Opera Holland Park. Hannah made her debut at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2024 as a soloist and part of an ensemble of 12 "Emerging Artist" singers, performing Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* at Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, led by Mark Austin and James Baillieu. In August 2024, Hannah returned to Waterperry Opera Festival in "*Nights Not Spent Alone*"; a staged production of Jonathan Dove song cycles, alongside Musical Director / Pianist Ashley Beauchamp and directed by Thomas Henderson.

Hannah trained on the Alexander Gibson Opera School course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, studying under Scott Johnson, and is an alumna of the Royal Academy of Music where she completed her Master of Arts, studying with Yvonne Howard, and Bachelor of Music, studying with Kathleen Livingstone. Whilst at the Academy, she was a member of the prestigious Song Circle and a Bach Cantata Scholar; where she featured as a soloist and regular chorus member for the RAM / Kohn Foundation Bach Cantata Series.



Will Searle Tenor

Anglo-Welsh tenor William Searle is enjoying the start of an international concert career, appearing in Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall and with Manchester Camerata, in J. S. Bach's *Magnificat* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Cadogan Hall and in a world premiere at Carnegie Hall, New York, as well as in Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with the Orquestra do Algarve, Handel's *Israel in Egypt* for the *Semana de Musica Religiosa Cuenca*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at the Festival de Torroella and evangelising J. S. Bach's *St John Passion* at the Festival Lyrique-en-Mer. He was a finalist in the 2025 Leach Competition for oratorio and English song and he has appeared with Graham Johnson as part of the Wigmore Hall Schubertiade. He recently recorded the tenor solos on Richard Blackford's *The Black Lake* with the Britten Sinfonia, having previously collaborated with Harriet Burns, Sebastian Wybrew and Marc Verter on a disc of the lieder of Robert Franz.

On the opera stage, William enjoyed two years as an Alvarez Emerging Artist at Garsington Opera, playing *Ufficiale Il barbiere di Siviglia* and covering *Basilio Le nozze di Figaro* and *Circusmaster The Bartered Bride*. Other recent roles include *Saint-Brioche* [cover] *The Merry Widow* (Scottish Opera), *Tamino The Magic Flute* (The Merry Opera Company), *Bertram La donna del lago*, *Souffleur Viva la Diva!*, *Lensky* [cover] *Eugene Onegin* (all Buxton International Festival), *Sergente Marocchino La Ciociara* (Wexford Festival Opera), *Le Chef des Castellans Le Carnaval de Venise (Vache Baroque)* and *Gastone La Traviata* (Wedmore Opera). He currently studies with Susan McCulloch, having trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and as a Sybil Tutton Award holder at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Upcoming operas include a return to the role of *Basilio* with Wild Arts and the world premiere of *Rosalind* by Peter Hugh White with the London Mozart Players.

www.williamsearletenor.com



Patrick Keefe Baritone

A current Harewood Artist at English National Opera and winner of Glyndebourne's John Christie Award, Patrick is becoming known for his "dark, savoury voice and megawatt stage presence" (The Spectator). Recent roles include: Schaunard La Bohème, Marullo Rigoletto, Figaro Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Le Dancaire Carmen and the Marchese d'Obigny La Traviata for ENO, Figaro Il Barbiere di Siviglia for Waterperry Opera, Eugene Onegin for Brunswick Vocal Arts, Il Conte Le Nozze di Figaro for the Glyndebourne Tour, Notario Don Pasquale for the Glyndebourne Festival, and Robert Dedo Die schwarze Maske for the NOSPR under Marin Alsop for medici.tv.

Patrick studied at the University of Oxford, where he obtained a BA and then a Master's with distinction in Music Theory and Composition. He then studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Royal Academy of Music. He won First Prize in the 2021 Richard Lewis/Jean Shanks Award, 2nd Prize in the 2021 Pavarotti Prize, and the Musician's Company's Prudi Hoggarth Audience Prize 2023. He was a Jerwood Young Artist at Glyndebourne in 2022, and is represented by Rayfield Allied.



Eastwood Chamber Orchestra

Eastwood Chamber Orchestra (ECO) is a small non-professional chamber orchestra performing high quality concerts in the Earley and Wokingham areas. It was established in 2019 by Robert and Clare Spencer (viola; cello) to bring together the best players from across Berkshire and the surrounding area to play mainly late baroque and classical works, along with other interesting chamber orchestra and string orchestra repertoire. The orchestra is fortunate to be conducted regularly by Philip Ellis, whose extensive professional conducting career has seen him work with orchestras and ballet companies all over the world.

Please come and enjoy ECO's next concert of works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Beethoven on Saturday 18th April 2026 at All Saints Church, Wokingham. Visit our website www.eastwoodco.org to buy tickets in advance and to join our mailing list.



George de Voil Musical Director

George de Voil's reputation as a conductor took off in 2014 when he made the world première recording of Charles Villiers Stanford's Mass in G, Op. 46. The disc, on which he directed choral and orchestral forces, was praised by BBC Music Magazine and Gramophone, and led to George being named a Classic FM "Young Artist to Watch". MusicWeb International praised his "stylish" direction, calling his recording of Parry's Songs of Farewell "exciting and full of conviction", while Martin Bird declared in the Elgar Society Journal, "George de Voil is something of a find... He may be young, but his innate musicianship, his feeling for line, for balance, for phrasing, for the placing of chords, is exciting...". Choir & Organ remarked, "the fresh-voiced Exeter College Choir achieve a superb blend under their intelligent young conductor".

This year George marks a decade as Director of Music at St James's, Sussex Gardens, in London, with its fine professional choir. Under his leadership, the distinguished musical tradition of this church has been revitalised, with an exciting concerts programme and a major rebuild by Mander Organs of the 1882 Hill instrument. For six years George was Head of Choral Music at Wellington College, where he built the reputation of the Chapel Choir, leading a number of successful foreign tours.

Alongside his role as Musical Director of Godalming Choral Society, he is proud to hold the directorship of Wokingham Choral Society, where his predecessors include Edward Gardner, Paul Daniel, and Stephen Layton. Highlights for 2024-25 include directing Elgar's Dream of Gerontius in Guildford Cathedral, Britten's St Nicholas with the choir of St George's School, Windsor Castle, and Mendelssohn's Elijah in the Memorial Chapel at Charterhouse.

A prizewinning Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, with a first class degree from Oxford University, George has broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and given organ concerts in Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral, as well as across the UK and Europe. On New Year's Day in 2025 he broadcast on Radio 3 accompanying the Rodolfus Choir, with music by Schubert and Haydn alongside a new commission by Roderick Williams. George studies orchestral conducting with Russell Keable and is on the full-time teaching staff of King's College School, Wimbledon.

Wokingham Choral Society

President - Edward Gardner OBE

Vice Presidents - Stephen Layton MBE, Aidan Oliver

Wokingham Choral Society was formed by a small group of enthusiasts in July 1951.

Edward Gardner OBE

Edward was Musical Director of WCS from 1997 until 2002. Starting his career as a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral Edward attended Eton College, the University of Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. In 2005 he was a winner of the Young Artist prize of the Royal Philharmonic Society, and in March 2006 he was appointed Music Director of the English National Opera. During his time with the ENO, he was also Principal Guest Conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, until 2016. In 2013 Edward was appointed as principal guest conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, becoming its principal conductor from the 2015-16 season. In 2012 he was awarded an OBE for his Services to Music in the Queen's Birthday Honours. At the start of the 2021-22 season Edward took up his new role as principal conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Stephen Layton MBE

Stephen was Musical Director of WCS from 1991 to 1997. He won scholarships to Eton College and then Kings College, Cambridge as an organ scholar under Stephen Cleobury. Whilst studying at Cambridge, Stephen founded and is Director of the mixed-voice choir Polyphony. He was appointed the Musical Director of the Holst Singers in 1993. His former posts include Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Choir, Chief Guest Conductor of the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the City of London Sinfonia and Director of Music at the Temple Church in London. In 2006 Stephen was appointed Fellow and Director of Music at Trinity College, Cambridge. However he has recently announced that he will retire from Cambridge this summer in order to devote more time to his international guest conducting career. Stephen was awarded an MBE for services to classical music in October 2020.

Aidan Oliver

Aidan was Musical Director of WCS from 2002 - 2007. He has been Chorus Director at Glyndebourne since 2019. He is one of the UK's leading choral directors, with wide experience across the whole spectrum of symphonic, liturgical, operatic and contemporary music. Alongside his work at Glyndebourne, he directs the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, which plays a central role each year in the Edinburgh International Festival; he is also the founding director of Philharmonia Voices, the professional choir that has collaborated with the Philharmonia Orchestra on many of its most ambitious choral-orchestral projects over many years. He has worked regularly on the music staff of ROH and ENO, and his former positions include Director of Music at St Margaret's Westminster and Associate Conductor of the St Endellion Summer Festival in Cornwall.

Wokingham Choral Society thank our Friends and Patrons for their support:

Peter Allington
Brian Courtenay
Steve Davies
Robin Eaglen

Norma Emery
Nigel Foster
Barbara Hulse
Anne Kingston

We are supported by other Friends and Patrons who prefer to remain anonymous.

Friends and Patrons

If you enjoy our concerts but don't want to sing, please consider becoming a Friend or Patron of Wokingham Choral Society. Your subscription (from £30 p.a.) helps to fund our future performances. We stay in touch with our Patrons and Friends between concerts through newsletters and WCS social events. Friends and Patrons also benefit from discounted tickets. We will acknowledge your support in our programmes, with your agreement.

Business Patrons

Business Patrons benefit from multiple discounted tickets, reduced advertising rates in our concert programmes and acknowledgement of their support both on our website and in our concert programmes.

Concert Sponsors

As an individual, business or other organisation, you may also sponsor a concert. The benefits of our concert sponsorship scheme include discounted tickets, and reduced advertising rates and acknowledgement of your support in our concert programmes.

For full details of the above schemes, visit the WCS website at www.wokingham-choral-society.org.uk and click on the "Support Us" tab.

Wokingham Choral Society thank the following organisations for their support this season:

Wokingham Town Council
PWG Consulting (BioPharma) Ltd
Newbury Building Society, Wokingham
Jay Design and Print
Wokingham Information Centre

WCS members 2025

Sopranos

Claire Aldridge	Christine Davies	Christiana Kwan	Noeline Sanders
Sue Allan	Jan Doherty	Katy Lethbridge	Irene Simons
Phaedra Ashford	Helen Foster	Judy Mak	Cheryl Slater
Lynsay Atkins	Rhoda Hart	Sue McColm	Emma Walker
Audrey Brown	Claire Hiscock	Jane Mellor	Penny Ward
Sue Budge	Ann Iles	Margot Nowell	Sheila White
Fiona Butler	Caroline Irwin	Marilyn Payler	Nicola Woodman
Sandie Cleaver	Christina Jordan	Charlotte Pickford	Marjorie Yau
Marion Connah	Sally-Ann Krzyzaniak	Emma Reid	

Altos

Elizabeth Asplen	Astrid Cobb	Diane Lawton	Anne Stratford
Teri Austen	Liz Davies	Judith Mills	Jo Tremlett
Hilary Blake	Dinah Ford	Polly Poon	Doris Tse
Angela Borland	Jenny Eaglen	Katy Relton	Claire Ward
Inge Burton	Holly Ferrari	Marilyn Rogers	Lorna White
Vivien Canning	Caroline Fulton	Paula Seddon	Marilyn Wright
Jan Carpenter	Anne Haycocks	Anna Sigurdardottir	
Wendy Chan	Pam Hibbert	Pam Slatter	
Sharon Chappell	Joan King	Elizabeth Spriggs	

Tenors

Phil Evans	Kwok Kit Lau	Richard Payler	Daniel Spring
Simon Gilbert	Gary Jordan	Alison Sears	Richard Turner
Robert Grindley	David Kitching	Martin Smith	David Ward

Basses

Peter Ambrose	Peter Goodson	Nigel Mellor	Danny Walsh
Neil Arden	Rob Heap	Martin Nowell	Richard Whittington
Rod Bromley	Tim Iles	Fred Preston	
Chris Dunning	Ralph Jaconello	Steven Robinson	
Jeremy Farrow	Robert Knowles	John Wallis	

WCS honorary life members

Hazel Hunter
Fred Preston
Linda Skilton

Wokingham Choral Society Committee

Chair: Katy Lethbridge	Tenor Representative: Richard Payler
Secretary: Penny Ward	Bass Representative: Tim Iles
Treasurer: Ralph Jaconello	Librarian: Fiona Butler
Concert Manager: Anne Stratford	Membership Secretary: Caroline Fulton
Soprano Representative: Phaedra Ashford	Publicity: Chris Dunning
Alto Representative: Hilary Blake	

WCS non-committee support roles:

Friends & Patrons Coordinator: Jenny Eaglen

Staging Managers: Richard Whittington and Jeremy Farrow

Events Coordinator: Rhoda Hart and Richard Turner

Ticket Sales Manager: Ann Iles

100 Club Coordinator: Claire Hiscock

Marketing Design: Jo Tremlett

Thank you to our Front of House team - Paul Lethbridge, Steve Barge, Sally Knowles and David Canning.

Join WCS for fun, friendship and song!

Wokingham Choral Society is an auditioned choir renowned for the high standard of our classical choral singing and for quality performances of classical and 'lighter' music.

For over 70 years, our friendly, hard-working choir has enjoyed singing and performing together. We pride ourselves on our welcoming ethos and our wish to make good music accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

We offer an exciting and varied programme of four concerts a year. Our two major concerts feature great works from the classical repertoire, as well as lesser-known pieces, performed alongside professional soloists and orchestras. We sing a family Christmas concert and a summer concert of lighter music. We enjoy musical collaborations with other choirs and musicians, and organise regular social events, 'come & sing' workshops and tours to perform at inspiring venues.

New members are welcome, to sing with us contact:
membership@wokingham-choral-society.org.uk



WCS with soloists and full orchestra - Spring Concert March 2025 - 'The Dream of Gerontius' at Guildford Cathedral

Our next event

Summer Concert - "Saturday Night at the Movies"

Saturday 20 June 2026

2026-27

75TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Autumn Concert

Stanford: Mass in G,
Rutter: Magnificat

Saturday 7 November 2026

Family Christmas Carol Concert

Saturday 5 December 2026

Spring Concert - War & Peace

Haydn Nelson Mass, Vivaldi & Bach

Saturday 20 March 2027

75th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday 19 June 2027

Our concert venue is All Saints Church, Wiltshire Rd,
Wokingham, RG40 1TN

Scan QR code for tickets

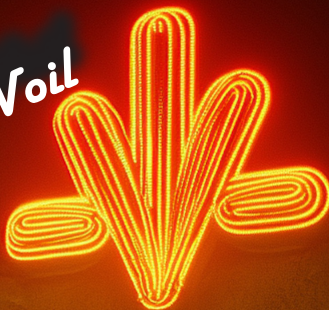


Summer Concert

"Saturday night
at the movies"

Director: George de Voil

wfs



Saturday 20 June 2026 7.30pm

All Saints Church
Wiltshire Rd
Wokingham
RG40 1JN