

Choir set for the Royal Albert Hall

A CHOIR has defied the cuts by funding its own performance of large-scale classical music at the Royal Albert Hall (RAH).

The Vivace Chorus, which rehearses at Holy Trinity Church, Guildford, is to perform Mahler's epic 8th symphony – *The Symphony of a Thousand* – at the Kensington venue on Sunday May 15.

They will be backed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and joined by three other choirs for a total of 600 singers and more than 100 instruments.

Choir chairman James Garrow said: "We've planned this for two years and had to raise £50,000 in

sponsorship and funding. The RAH were very sensible as we are a small choir from Guildford and they didn't want us to lose money, but I knew we could do it."

Sponsors include Spotify in what is the digital music service's first foray into classical music.

Liz Durning, a singer in the choir for five years, said: "We did a mini-tour of France where we appeared at Notre Dame, but certainly this is the biggest thing we've ever done."

Conductor Jeremy Backhouse said: "We want to spread the word about how good a choir we are and the RAH performance is part of this. There's a lot at stake."

Mahler's 8th, described as a defining human statement for its century, poses other challenges apart from sheer scale.

Alto Sue Fletcher said: "As a singer it's pretty intense and a lot of concentration is required. Mahler uses lots of interesting sounds and there's tricky intonation. It will certainly need a lot of energy."

Mr Backhouse believes the choir's ambition extends beyond the May 11 performance: "The Proms are certainly something we will target. Performing at the Hall will prove to people that we can do it."

Tickets are available from the Royal Albert Hall box office.



James Garrow, Liz Durning and Sue Fletcher in Guildford High Street. (Ref: SA1120320)