

HAYDN THE CREATION



National Symphony Orchestra

Conductor:
Barbara Höfling

Soloists:
Alexandra Stevenson (soprano)
Fraser Ellson (tenor)
Timothy Nelson (bass)

Saturday
15 Nov 2025

**Holy Trinity,
Guildford High Street.**

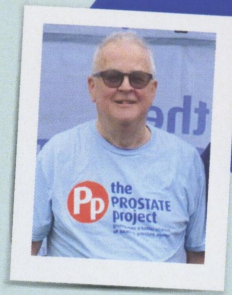
Vivace
Chorus



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A message from Martin Davies
Chairman of the Prostate Project



Pp the
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of beating prostate cancer

Over the last 25 years, the Prostate Project has raised more than £11 million, money that has been used in the research, diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer.

Based at The Stokes Centre for Urology at Royal Surrey Hospital, our charity has helped to establish Guildford as a world leading centre of excellence, supporting research, sponsoring PhD studies, purchasing equipment, and raising awareness of the need for more men to 'Get Tested'.

The PSA blood test is an effective early indicator of potential problems for a disease that usually presents no symptoms in its early stages. More than 14,000 men in the UK die each year from prostate cancer, and many of these deaths are preventable because caught early enough, prostate cancer is usually curable.

If you, or someone you know is a man aged between 50 and 70, has a family history of the disease, or is black, you should ask your GP for a free PSA blood test. It really is a simple fact that this quick test can save, and prolong the lives of a great many men.

The Prostate Project is a volunteer led charity, and if you would like to know more about our work or have any questions about the PSA Test, or prostate cancer, please visit our website.

Thank you to the Vivace Chorus for allowing me the opportunity to say a few words about the Prostate Project, together we can give men a better chance of beating prostate cancer.

Regards,

Martin Davies



Man Van



Our volunteers

info@prostate-project.org.uk | www.prostate-project.org.uk

07724 465 883

Registered Charity No.1078523



Vivace
Chorus

The Creation

Joseph Haydn

Alexandra Stevenson

Soprano

Fraser Ellson

Tenor

Timothy Nelson

Bass

National Symphony Orchestra

Vivace Chorus

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The Creation

Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)



Joseph Haydn
Portrait by Thomas Hardy, 1792

Until the year 1790, Haydn was probably the least cosmopolitan amongst the major composers of the eighteenth century. His employer, the music-loving Prince Nicolaus Esterházy, kept him very busy, and on an extremely short leash, in his provincial outpost of the Austrian Empire.

However, the succession to the Esterházy principality in 1790 of his rather less cultured son, Prince Anton, had, for Haydn, the fortunate

effect of reducing his obligations to his employer, so that he was at last free to visit some of the musical centres around Europe where his music had already earned him the reputation of being, with Mozart, the greatest living composer.

In 1791, during the first of his two visits to London, Haydn attended the Handel festival at Westminster Abbey, where performances of *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt*, given by enormous choral and orchestral forces, made a huge impression on him. When his London promoter Johann Peter Saloman subsequently presented him with an oratorio libretto entitled *The Creation of the World*, which was said to have been written for Handel in the 1740s, Haydn was inspired to turn his own creative energies towards composing an oratorio.

On his return to Vienna, Haydn gave the libretto to the prominent music-lover and *littérateur* Gottfried van Swieten, who translated it into German, and also adapted the English version – it is impossible to be sure how much, as the original libretto is lost. The process of composing the music lasted

from late 1796 until the spring of 1798, when it was first performed. Haydn conceived the work bilingually, and it was published, most unusually for the time, with both English and German words. It was performed with great success all over Europe, and quickly became Haydn's most popular work.

There are three main sources for the text: *Genesis* chapter one, the *Book of Psalms* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The structure of the libretto is modelled on Book 7 of Milton's epic poem, in which the archangel Raphael describes to Adam and Eve how God the Son set out from heaven, accompanied by hosts of angels and archangels, to create the world in six days.

The part of Raphael in Haydn's oratorio is played by the bass soloist. To achieve more musical variety, Haydn's librettist re-allocates parts of the narrative to two more archangels, Uriel, played by the tenor soloist, and Gabriel, played by the soprano.

Before Creation, there was Chaos, which Milton describes as "a vast, immeasurable abyss, outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild". The orchestra depicts this in the Introduction. Archangel and chorus use the words of the book of Genesis to describe the creation of light – the Big Bang. The tenor, Uriel, describes the frightened reaction of the evil spirits to God's first act of creation, then the chorus of angels proclaims what they have witnessed: "A new-created world springs up at God's command." The first day ends.

This pattern continues: at the beginning of each day, an archangel announces, "And God said...", quoting the book of Genesis. The text and music elaborate on God's creative acts on that day, often using Milton's memorably picturesque words (the "serpent error" of the rivers on day two, the fields "in verdure clad" on day three, the earth "opening her fertile womb" on day six), before the angels mark the end of each

day in celebratory chorus. After the climax of the sixth day, the creation of humankind, the angelic chorus announces the end of the process of creation: "Achieved is the glorious work". The concluding section of the oratorio is a description of life in paradise, with the Soprano and Bass soloists now playing the roles of Adam and Eve, which ends with a final chorus of praise.

Haydn was both inspired and moved by his subject matter. In a letter he wrote:

The Creation has always been considered the sublimest and most awe-inspiring image for mankind. To accompany this great work with appropriate music could certainly have no other result than to heighten these sacred emotions in the listener's heart, and to make him highly receptive to the goodness and omnipotence of the Creator.

Haydn's music in the oratorio is many-faceted. He delights in picturesque musical descriptions: thunder and lightning as the sky is created, the foaming billows of the sea, the roar of the lion and the bounding of the flexible tiger. Despite the work's instant popularity with audiences across Europe, these literalistic descriptions attracted stern censure from music critics, who felt that music should express the sensations and feelings aroused in man by the natural world, not simply imitate the noises it makes.

In between these passages, both the angelic and earthly creations unite in hymns of utmost sublimity to the Creator. Both of these aspects reflect the world view of Haydn's time: the beauties of nature were a preoccupation of many artists, while Enlightenment philosophy held that the universe was an orderly place, whose natural laws were an expression of the divine Creator, as well as being the proper focus for scientific inquiry. Haydn had been fascinated on his first visit to London by the forty-foot telescope of court astronomer William

Herschel (who was a keen amateur oboist, as well as the discoverer of the planet Uranus). When, four years later, Haydn came to set the words of Psalm 19 in "The Heavens are telling", the image of the stars and planets joining with the mountains, rivers and seas of the earth in song to the Creator, was as consonant with the discoveries of Newton, scientific hero of the Enlightenment, as it was with Haydn's own Catholic faith.

It was Darwin's scientific work which posed fundamental questions about a literal acceptance of the creation story told by Genesis, Milton, and Haydn, and it is a quirk of history that the year of Haydn's death was also that of Darwin's birth.

The closing paragraphs of *The Origin of Species* recapitulate themes from the Enlightenment when they allude to "...what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator", then, as a final coda, present a sketch of

...this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.

It may lack the poetry of "How many are thy works O God! Who may their number tell?" But the meanings are not too far apart.

Programme note by kind permission of Dr. Peter Foster
Director of Music, Oxford High School
Director of Music, St. Helen's Church Abingdon

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Part I

Overture

The Representation of Chaos

The First Day

Recitative (Raphael)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Chorus

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Recitative (Uriel)

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Aria (Uriel)

Now vanish before the holy beams the gloomy shades of ancient night. The first of days appears. Now chaos ends, and order fair prevails. Affrighted fly hell's spirits black in throngs: Down they sink in the deep abyss to endless night.

Vivace Chorus

The murky, roiling, dissonant orchestral opening of The Creation is among Haydn's most famous and ingenious innovations: in his quest to depict the chaos of primordial nothingness, he ends up writing harmonic progressions that won't be seen again for nearly a hundred years. Out of this darkness emerge the first stirrings of divine creativity (told by one of the three Archangels to whom the bulk of the oratorio's narration is entrusted), culminating in one of the most celebrated musical surprises in musical history; if you're new to the work, we won't spoil it for you.

Gone with a sweep of God's hand is the tumult of the opening movement, replaced by a "new-created world" of sunny A major, into which the chorus steps with the tentative wonder of Dorothy into Oz. The "despairing rage" of the fallen spirits of hell is brutal but shortlived – a classic example not only of Haydn's decisive text-painting, but also of his chronic inability to stay angry for very long at a stretch.

Chorus

Despairing cursing rage attends their rapid fall. A new-created world springs up at God's command.

The Second Day

Recitative (Raphael)

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. Now furious storms tempestuous rage, like chaff, by the winds impelled are the clouds, by sudden fire the sky is inflamed, and awful thunders are rolling on high. Now from the floods in steam ascend reviving showers of rain, The dreary wasteful hail, the light and flaky snow.

Aria (Gabriel)

The marvellous work behold amazed the glorious hierarchy of heaven; and to the ethereal vaults resound the praise of God, and of the second day.

Chorus

And to the ethereal vaults resound the praise of God, and of the second day.

As God creates weather in the cosmos, so Haydn creates it in the orchestra: furiously fast-moving notes for the "dreadful" thunderstorms, gentle triplets for the spring rain, aimless tremolos for the "wasteful" hail, and soft spiky quavers for the snowfall. (In this recitative as in others later in the oratorio, Haydn illustrates the text in the orchestra before the singer voices it, as if to invite the audience into a guessing game.)

When Baron Gottfried von Swieten took his editorial quill to the work of The Creation's now-anonymous English author, he brought with him an unmistakably (and sometimes regrettably) Teutonic sense of syntax; hence the confusing first clause of this charming number, which means to say that the hierarchy of heaven – i.e. the heavenly host – beholds (with amazement!) God's work-in-progress, not vice versa.

The Third Day

Recitative (Raphael)

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of waters called he seas: and God saw that it was good.

Aria (Raphael)

Rolling in foaming billows, uplifted, roars the boisterous sea. Mountains and rocks now emerge, their tops among the clouds ascend. Through the open plains, outstretching wide, in serpent error rivers flow. Softly purling, glides on through silent vales the limpid brook.

Recitative (Gabriel)

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Aria (Gabriel)

With verdure clad the fields appear, delightful to the ravished

Water, water everywhere! Haydn follows the more staid, Biblically-based recitative with a particularly enthusiastically illustrated aria:

The "boisterous sea" churns in angry semi-quavers, but yields midway through the aria to the softly gliding brook.

Listen for Haydn's text-painting, most obviously in the wandering of the serpentine river, but subtly, too, in the spiky "mountains and rocks" poking through the clouds.

With lyricism and lilt the plant kingdom makes its soothing entrance into the new world.

It's not hard to imagine a young twisting vine searching for sunlight at the long melismas that end the phrase "...shoots the healing plant."

sense; by flowers sweet and gay enhanced is the charming sight. Here fragrant herbs their odours shed; here shoots the healing plant. With copious fruit the expanded boughs are hung; in leafy arches twine the shady groves; over lofty hills majestic forests wave.

Recitative (Uriel)

And the heavenly host proclaimed the third day, praising God and saying,

Chorus

Awake the harp, the lyre awake, in shout and joy your voices raise. In triumph sing the mighty God. For he both heaven and earth has clothed in stately dress.

The Fourth Day

Recitative (Uriel)

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, and to give the light upon the earth; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years. He made the stars also.

The chorus returns to exhort the masses (of angels – humans haven't yet been created, technically) to lift their voices and instruments in praise of God's unfolding works.

Haydn gives us the oratorio's first fugue at the text "For he both heaven and earth has clothed in stately dress."

Is there a more glorious passage in all of Classical-Era music than the sunrise Haydn evokes at the midpoint of these two recitatives? Never, perhaps, has a harmonized D-major scale been so expansive or so expressive.

Recitative (Uriel)

In splendour bright is rising now the sun, and darts his rays; a joyful, happy spouse, a giant proud and glad to run his measured course. With softer beams, and milder light, steps on the silver moon through silent night. The space immense of the azure sky a countless host of radiant orbs adorns. And the sons of God announced the fourth day, in song divine, proclaiming thus his power:

Chorus with Trio

The heavens are telling the glory of God, the wonder of his work displays the firmament. To day that is coming speaks it the day, the night that is gone to following night. In all the lands resounds the word, never unperceived, ever understood.

Alas, the text that follows represents the height of Enlightenment-Era overwriting, yet it's easy to forgive, both for its earnest eagerness and for its felicitous position between two of the work's most memorable moments.

The oratorio's most excerpted movement, well known to church-choir singers worldwide, concludes Part I in full C-major splendour, with God's word transformed into a verdant, vibrant new planet ready for habitation.

Part II

The Fifth Day

Recitative (Gabriel)

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Aria (Gabriel)

On mighty pens uplifted soars
the eagle aloft, and cleaves the
air, in swiftest flight, to the
blazing sun. His welcome bids to
morn the merry lark, and cooing
calls the tender dove his mate.
From every bush and grove
resound the nightingale's
delightful notes; no grief affected
yet her breast, nor to a mournful
tale were tuned her soft,
enchancing lays.

Recitative (Raphael)

And God created great whales,
and every living creature that
moveth; and God blessed them,
saying, be fruitful all, and
multiply. Ye winged tribes, be
multiplied, and sing on every
tree; multiply, ye finny tribes,
and fill each watery deep; be
fruitful, grow, and multiply, and
in your God and Lord rejoice.

Recitative (Raphael)

And the angels struck their
immortal harps, and the wonders
of the fifth day sung.

The birds are the first of the
fauna to arrive, by means of
one of the most elaborately
virtuosic arias in the oratorio.
Haydn's text-painting gets a
full workout here: Listen for
the soaring and hovering of
the eagle, the trills of the
cooing dove, and the sweet
song of the nightingale, who
in these young, fresh days of
the earth has not yet acquired
the mythological mournfulness
that will come to define her
symbolically later on.

In the depths of the ocean we
find a classic example of
Haydn's blend of humour and
creativity:

The violins sit silent while the
lower strings, divided into
multiple parts, slither and
writhe like great watery beasts.

Trio

Gabriel

Most beautiful appear, with
verdure young adorned, the
gently sloping hills; their narrow,
sinuous veins distil, in crystal
drops, the fountain fresh and
bright.

Uriel

In lofty circles play, and hover in
the air, the cheerful host of birds;
and as they flying whirl their
glittering plumes are dyed as
rainbows by the sun.

Raphael

See flashing through the deep in
thronging swarms the fish a
thousand ways around.
Upheaved from the deep, the
immense Leviathan sports on the
foaming wave.

Trio

How many are thy works, O
God! Who may their numbers
tell?

Chorus with Trio

The Lord is great, and great his
might. His glory lasts for ever
and for evermore.

The abundance and diversity
of God's blessings find voice
in this rapturous sequence,
which opens with an
expository recitative,
continues into a charming trio
(the melody recalls the famous
"La ci darem la mano" from
Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), and
closes with a rousing chorus of
praise, lit thrillingly by vocal
fireworks from the soloists.

The Sixth Day

Recitative (Raphael)

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind.

Recitative (Raphael)

Straight opening her fertile womb, the earth obeyed the word, and teemed creatures numberless, in perfect forms, and fully grown. Cheerful, roaring, stands the tawny lion. With sudden leap the flexible tiger appears. The nimble stag bears up his branching head. With flying mane, and fiery look, impatient neighs the noble steed. The cattle, in herds, already seek their food on fields and meadows green. And over the ground, as plants, are spread the fleecy, meek, and bleating flocks. Unnumbered as the sands, in swarms arose the hosts of insects. In long dimension creeps, with sinuous trace, the worm.

Haydn must have practically drooled in anticipation when he saw all the opportunities this recitative offered him.

He writes his very own "carnival of the animals," complete with roaring lion, bounding tiger, rearing horse, lowing cattle, and baaing sheep (notice that the sheep don't have their own melody—they merely duplicate the cattle's tune, because they're sheep), but saves the best for last with an irritating swarm of insects and a slimy worm.

Aria (Raphael)

Now heaven in fullest glory shone; Earth smiled in all her rich attire; the room of air with fowl is filled; the water swelled by shoals of fish; by heavy beasts the ground is trod: but all the work was not complete; there wanted yet that wondrous being, that, grateful, should God's power admire, with heart and voice his goodness praise.

Recitative (Uriel)

And God created Man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Man became a living soul.

Aria (Uriel)

In native worth and honour clad, with beauty, courage, strength, adorned, erect, with front serene, he stands a man, the lord and king of nature all. His large and arched brow sublime of wisdom deep declares the seat! And in his eyes with brightness shines the soul, the breath and image of his God. With fondness leans upon his breast the partner for him formed, a woman, fair and

The aria that follows, by contrast, is majestic and regal (except for the comic relief of the thunderous footfall of the "heavy beasts"), celebrating the near-complete animal kingdom. All that's missing is the human creature, who will make his-and-her entrance in the next movement.

The "beauty, courage, strength," and "wisdom" of the newly-created Adam reflect the human qualities most prized in Enlightenment-era philosophy, and Eve embodies that age's ideal of womanhood with her grace and deference. (Listen to the lingering "joy" at the end of the movement; is it a suspended moment of pure happiness, or a melancholy foreshadowing of the fall to come, or both?)

This aria may well have been among the last works Haydn ever heard performed: A soldier in Napoleon's invading army sang it for Haydn several days before the composer's death in 1809, as a gesture of appreciation and respect.

graceful spouse. Her softly-smiling virgin looks, of flowery spring the mirror, bespeak him love, and joy, and bliss.

Recitative (Raphael)

And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the heavenly choir, in song divine, thus closed the sixth day.

Chorus

Achieved is the glorious work; the Lord beholds it, and is pleased. In lofty strains let us rejoice, our song let be the praise of God.

Trio

Gabriel and Uriel

On thee each living soul awaits; from thee, O Lord, all seek their food; thou openest thy hand, and fillest all with good.

Raphael

But when thy face, O Lord, is hid, with sudden terror they are struck; thou takest their breath away, they vanish into dust.

Part II concludes with a sequence that sandwiches a beautifully reflective trio – the last joint statement from the three Archangels – between two mighty choral movements.

The trio reminds the new inhabitants of the earth of the “God giveth and God taketh away” rules under which their new world operates – note especially the bass’s chilling entrance at “But when from them thy face is hid.”

The chorus, in joyous B-flat major, gives no quarter to such conflict; Haydn ends the first (and shorter) of the choral sections with a bright and busy fugue, and the second with an even more ingenious double fugue. Creation is complete – but the story is not.

Trio

Thou sendest forth thy breath again, and life with vigour fresh returns; revived earth unfolds new strength and new delights.

Chorus

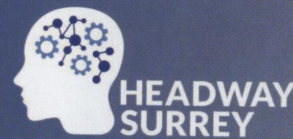
Achieved is the glorious work; our song let be the praise of God. glory to his Name for ever. He sole on high exalted reigns. Hallelujah!

Interval (20 minutes)

Refreshments will be available at the back of the church

Vivace Chorus is proud to support Headway Surrey.

After the interval, **Mandy Ferguson, Chair of Trustees**, will give a short talk about the work of the charity. There will be a retiring collection - please give generously to support their vital work!



Supporting Surrey’s adult brain injury community to live well and thrive



Part III

Recitative (Uriel)

In rosy mantle appears, by music sweet awaked, the morning, young and fair. From heaven's angelic choir pure harmony descends on ravished earth. Behold the blissful pair, where hand in hand they go: their glowing looks express the thanks that swell their grateful hearts. A louder praise of God their lips shall utter soon; then let our voices ring, united with their song.

Duet (Adam and Eve)

By thee with bliss, O bounteous Lord, both heaven and earth are stored. This world so great, so wonderful, thy mighty hand has framed.

Chorus

For ever blessed be his power, his Name be ever magnified.

Adam

Of stars the fairest, pledge of day, that crownest the smiling morn; and thou, bright sun, that cheerest the world, thou eye and soul of all;

Part III gives us the longest movement in the oratorio: the three-part Hymn sung by Adam, Eve, and the chorus of angels. In the adagio that begins the movement, we can imagine the newly-created pair exploring their new home with all the awe and delight of a young couple on "Grand Designs", reviewing (and marvelling at) the chronological catalogue of God's creations as described in Part I and Part II of the work.

Chorus

Proclaim in your extended course the almighty power and praise of God.

Eve

And thou that rulest the silent night and all ye starry hosts, everywhere spread wide his praise in choral songs about.

Adam

Ye mighty elements, by his power your ceaseless changes make; ye dusky mists, and dewy streams, that rise and fall through the air;

Chorus with Duet

Resound the praise of God our Lord. Great his name, and great his might.

Eve

Ye purling fountains, tune his praise; and wave your tops, ye pines. Ye plants, exhale, ye flowers, breathe to him your balmy scent.

Adam

Ye that on mountains stately tread, and ye that lowly creep; ye birds that sing at heaven's

The chorus of angels encourages them along the way, first in hushed tones and then in sprightly counterpoint.

gate, and ye that swim the
stream;

Adam and Eve

Ye creatures all, extol the Lord;

Chorus

Ye creatures all, extol the Lord;
him celebrate, him magnify.

Adam and Eve

Ye valleys, hills, and shady
woods, made vocal by our song,
from morn to eve you shall
repeat our grateful hymns of
praise.

Chorus

Hail! bounteous Lord! Almighty,
hail! Thy word called forth this
wondrous frame, the heavens
and earth thy power adore; we
praise thee now and evermore.

Adam

Our duty we have now
performed, in offering up to God
our thanks. Now follow me, dear
partner of my life, thy guide I'll
be; and every step pours new
delights into our breasts, shows
wonders everywhere. Then
mayest thou feel and know the
high degree of bliss the Lord

The movement culminates
with a massive homophonic
statement of praise and
another of Haydn's masterful
fugues.

Having admired their new
surroundings, Adam and Eve
turn their attention to each
other. (In Adam's opening line
– "Our duty we have now
performed / In offering up to
God our thanks / Now follow
me...." – there is almost a
sense of crossing off an item
on his to-do list in order to get
to the exciting stuff.

allotted us. And with devoted
heart His bounties celebrate.
Come, follow me, thy guide I'll
be.

Eve

O thou for whom I am, my help,
my shield, my all, thy will is law
to me; so God our Lord ordains;
and from obedience grows my
joy and pride.

Adam

Graceful consort, at thy side
softly fly the golden hours; every
moment brings new rapture,
every care is lulled to rest.

Eve

Spouse adored, at thy side purest
joys overflow the heart; life and
all I have is thine; my reward thy
love shall be.

Adam and Eve

The dew-dropping morn, O how
she quickens all! The coolness of
even, O how she all restores!
How grateful is of fruits the
savour sweet! How pleasing is of
fragrant bloom the smell! But,
without thee, what is to me the
morning dew, the breath of even,
the savoury fruit, the fragrant

Haydn doesn't miss this; listen
to the spring in the step of the
accompaniment at these words.)

The happy couple's love duet
is reminiscent of Mozart opera
in its lyricism and wit, and the
hunting-horn calls from the
orchestra at the quicker
second section give the
movement the feel of a folk
dance at a country wedding.

bloom? With thee is every joy enhanced, with thee delight is ever new, with thee is life incessant bliss, thine, thine, it all shall be.

Recitative (Uriel)

O happy pair! and happy still might be if not misled by false conceit. Ye strive at more than granted is; and more desire to know, than know ye should.

Chorus

Sing the Lord, ye voices all, magnify his name through all creation, celebrate his power and glory, let his name resound on high. Praise the Lord. Utter thanks. The Lord is great, his praise shall last for aye. Amen.

Blink during this recitative, and you might miss the fact that the story of Adam and Eve does not, in fact, have a happy ending. How typical that the eternally optimistic Haydn should freeze the loving couple in permanent bliss, with only the barest hint of the transgression and eviction to come!

One more powerful hymn of praise; one more robust double fugue; one last flare of virtuosity from the soloists (plus a heretofore unused alto) – and the “glorious work” is achieved. Amen!

End

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eliza@ocwomenschorus.org

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Alexandra Stevenson

Soprano

A graduate of the Universities of Edinburgh and London, Alexandra trained on the Associated Studios Opera Programme.

Concert engagements in UK and Europe have included the works of Strauss *Four Last Songs*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 9* (most recently in Cadogan Hall), Bach *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*, Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, Rossini *Stabat Mater* and Mahler *Symphony no. 4*.



Photo © Jane Stevenson

A champion of contemporary repertoire, Alexandra has given several world premières including Patrick Hawes' *Te Deum* (conducted by the composer) and works by Cecilia McDowell.

Alexandra has recently performed as a soloist on BBC Radio 3 and has been a Partner Solo Artist for Classic FM, for whom she has performed at the Royal Opera House, and marked national occasions such as the coronation of King Charles III.

She has given recitals at Smith Square Hall in London and the Usher Hall in Edinburgh, and has regularly appeared as a guest soloist with the Band and Orchestra of HM Royal Marines.

Alexandra's operatic performances include Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, Monica in *The Medium*, Le Feu and Le Rossignol in *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*. She has also sung jazz at the Pigalle Club, London.

An experienced singing teacher and choir director, she has taught singing at Charterhouse School for over a decade.

Fraser Ellson



Photo © George Ellison

Tenor

Fraser is a professional Lay Clerk and music educator who has been based in Surrey for the past two years. He attended Kimbolton School, took a BA in Music at the University of Nottingham and was then selected as a member of the Genesis 16 cohort of 2020/21, working with Harry Christophers and Eamonn Dougan. From there he went to Whitgift School as a Graduate Music Assistant, enjoying a fruitful year singing under Justin Miller and taking lessons with Nicholas Mulroy.

He sings as Tenor Lay Clerk at Guildford Cathedral and runs the Schools Singing Programme for the Catholic Primary Schools of Surrey - teaching primary school music has become a real passion and continues to inspire him to become a more well-rounded musician every day. He has recently been appointed Musical Director of Liss Community Choir.

Alongside these commitments Fraser maintains a freelance singing career (including BBC broadcasts) with the London Contemporary Orchestra, Stag Consort, Worth Abbey Choir, Croydon Minster Choir and Arundel Cathedral Choir (singing on their recent album 'Jubilate Deo'). He has recently been away on tour in Denmark with Guildford Cathedral, and Paris with Worth Abbey (both these tours proving highlights of his career so far).

Aside from singing, Fraser is into his cars and will attempt a round of golf from time to time!

Timothy Nelson

Timothy Nelson gained a degree in Physiology from Cardiff University before studying at the Royal College of Music International Opera School, where he was awarded the McCulloch Prize for Opera and won the Bruce Millar Gulliver Prize, the Joan Chissell Schumann Competition and the Gerald Moore Award Singers Prize. He was also a Jerwood Young Artist at the Glyndebourne Festival.



Photo © Olivia Da Costa

Baritone

Operatic experience includes Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* for English National Opera, Marcello in *La Bohème* for Opera North, Nathan in the world premiere of *Pleasure* for Opera North, Aldeburgh Music and the Royal Opera House, Sid in *Albert Herring* at the Grange Festival, Antenor in *Dardanus* for English Touring Opera, the title role in *Eugene Onegin* for Wild Arts, Falke in *Die Fledermaus* and Escamillo in *Carmen* for Diva Opera.

Recent solo performances include Handel *Messiah* live-streamed for the London Handel Festival, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle* at The Three Choirs Festival, Haydn *Creation* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the English Haydn Festival, Bach *St John Passion* at Cadogan Hall and the world premiere of Robert Taub's *Some Call it Home* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Away from singing, Timothy is an avid rugby and cricket fan and a keen golfer. He can often be found on the golf course trying to lower his handicap.

National Symphony Orchestra

Leader: Matthew Scrivener

Principal Conductor: Paul Bateman



The National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) is one of the longest-established and most versatile professional freelance orchestras working in Britain today. Formed during the Second World War in the 1940s, the NSO's musicians were, by necessity, young and enthusiastic, and this dynamic performing tradition continues to this day.

The NSO has a hugely impressive recorded legacy as well as a busy diary of live concert performances. The orchestra is admired for its versatility and the ability to communicate, whilst connecting with audiences with consistent commitment and passion.

In 2024, with Rimma Sushanskaya, they performed and recorded a complete cycle of the Beethoven Symphonies, including a performance of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* at Cadogan Hall on May 7th, which was the exact 200th anniversary, to the day, of the first performance. The NSO has recently enjoyed hugely successful tours to China, Saudi Arabia and New York, performed film and video concerts at the Barbican Centre, and recorded the scores for several BBC dramas, including *Wolf Hall*, *Father Brown* and *Shakespeare and Hathaway*.

The orchestra continues its series of classical concerts at Smith Square Hall, as well as Cheltenham Town Hall where it memorably performed Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*. The NSO coordinated a video project for the Women's Global Orchestra with Alicia Keys which achieved 5 million YouTube hits in its first week.

In 2018, the orchestra topped the classical charts for weeks collaborating with presenter Alan Titchmarsh and composer Debbie Wiseman for a project named "The Glorious Garden".

In 2022, the NSO was chosen to perform for Queen Elizabeth in one of her final appearances, at the Platinum Jubilee Celebration at Windsor Castle, watched by an audience of millions.

They have toured to Spain with Katherine Jenkins and Alfie Boe and were proud to play at the ceremony marking the handover to the nation of the new Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre in Loughborough in the presence of Prince William and the Prime Minister.

In July 2023 the orchestra toured to the Riyadh Film Music Festival for a series of concerts, immediately after completing recording projects of new concertos by the Argentine composer, Polo Piatti, and a new English string music disc for Quartz Records with Rimma Sushanskaya.

A live vinyl recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* was made in May and released on the Chasing the Dragon record label.

The NSO prides itself on the huge audiences that regularly support its concerts, and although based in London, the orchestra performs throughout the United Kingdom, drawing its fine players from all round the country.

Barbara Höfling



Photo © D. Gauweiler

Conductor

Barbara grew up in Hanover, Germany and studied violin, singing and choral conducting at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater. She then split her career equally into solo singing work, including recording 3 solo CDs with Lied and chamber music, which won her a Supersonic Award for best Lied recording, and choral singing, working for some of the best choirs in the world, including RIAS Chamber Choir, BBC Singers, Berlin Radio Choir and the Monteverdi Choir.

Throughout her career she has directed choirs and orchestras in Germany and later in the UK. She is the founder and MD of the German Choir of London, which she took to perform at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Notre Dame Paris, Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral to name just a few.

In 2022 she was appointed Associate Chorus Director and Head of Vocal Development of the London Symphony Chorus. In this capacity she worked regularly with LSO conductors such as Simon Rattle, Lionel Sow and François Xavier Roth.

In 2024 she became the MD of the Winchester Festival Choir.

Barbara has worked with numerous choirs in the UK and abroad, including the London Philharmonic Choir, Chineke Voices, Coventry and Canterbury Cathedral Choirs, CBSO Chorus and Cologne Radio Choir.

She runs regular Workshops and Masterclasses on Choral Repertoire, Consort Singing and Vocal technique.

Barbara is a keen supporter of contemporary music and has to date commissioned more than 80 choral and solo works.

In her free time she is a keen cyclist and tries to keep the brambles in check in the garden.

About Vivace Chorus

Barbara Höfling

Music Director

Francis Pott

Accompanist

Richard Dacey

Chairman



Vivace Chorus at the Royal Albert Hall, July 2025

Photo © Ash Mills

Vivace Chorus is a flourishing, ambitious and adventurous choir based in Guildford, Surrey. We enjoy singing traditional choral classics alongside the challenge of contemporary and newly commissioned music – there's something for everyone at Vivace!

The choir began in 1946 as the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and was rebranded as Vivace Chorus in 2005. We have an enviable reputation for performing first-class concerts across a wide range of musical repertoire. Particular successes include a sell-out performance in May 2011 of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, the "*Symphony of a Thousand*", at the Royal Albert Hall, a highly acclaimed performance in November 2012 of Britten's *War Requiem* and another Royal Albert Hall success in May 2014 when we performed the Verdi *Requiem*. In 2017 we celebrated our 70th birthday with the Philharmonia Orchestra in the Royal Festival Hall and 2018 saw a sell-out performance at G Live Guildford for our "Concert for Peace".

In July 2025, we returned again to the Royal Albert Hall, where we were joined by other local choirs, the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra and internationally renowned soloists Nicky Spence and Lucy Crowe, to perform Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë Suite No. 2*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and the spectacular *Te Deum* by Hector Berlioz.

That concert marked the end of an era, as it was our last with Jeremy Backhouse, who has now retired after 30 years of dedicated service to Vivace – his passion for choral music and sheer enthusiasm for music-making were evident at every rehearsal and performance.

We are delighted now to welcome Barbara Höfling as our new Music Director, and look forward to working with her over the years to come, to build on Jeremy's legacy, and take Vivace on to new heights.

She is supported by Francis Pott, who is an academic and a composer of international repute, and an accomplished concert pianist – who better to accompany our rehearsals?

We have also enjoyed successful European and UK tours, including trips to France, Italy, Germany, Austria, the Baltic states and, most recently, northern Spain.

We are always happy to welcome new members, so if you would like to try us out, do come along to any of our regular rehearsals on Monday evenings at 7.15 in the Guildford Baptist Church, Millmead, Guildford.

Just contact our membership secretary, Becky Kerby, at membership@vivacechorus.org or pay a visit to our website, vivacechorus.org. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram (@Vivace_Chorus) and X (Twitter) - @VivaceChorus.

The Chantry Singers

Con Brin
HRTCT
The Humphrey Richardson Taylor
Charitable Trust

Peter Hicks - Conductor

Handel's Messiah

Saturday 29th November 2025 7.30 pm
St Nicolas Church
Guildford
GU2 4AW

Tickets: £18 (16 and under: £2)
Scan the QR code or phone
07969 906 439



Registered Charity No. 1128357

Vivace Chorus Singers

FIRST SOPRANO

Sandra Adamson
 Amelia Atkinson
 Jan Barklem
 Helen Beevers
 Mary Broughton
 Jo Haviland
 Isabel Holdaway
 Isobel Humphreys
 Becky Kerby
 Claudia Loiacono
 Fran MacKay
 Suzie Maine
 Sue Norton
 Robin Onslow
 Sian Prentice
 Gillian Rix
 Sarah Smithies
 Barbara Tansey
 Joan Thomas
 Hilary Vaill
 Georgie von
 Schweinitz
 Miriam White

SECOND SOPRANO

Gill Backhouse
 Sarah Badger
 Scarlett Close
 Ann Fuller
 Alex Nash
 Kate Peters
 Helen Seeley

Mary Somerville
 Sarah von
 Schweinitz
 Samantha Wilkins
 Christine Wilks
 Eiri Williams
 Lesley Worrall

FIRST ALTO

Anna Arthur
 Barbara Barklem
 Jackie Bearman
 Jane Brooks
 Amanda Burn
 Philippa Curtis
 Valentina Faedi
 Anna Griffiths
 Lynne Hargreaves
 Sheila Hodson
 Sheena Kaighin
 Jean Leston
 Kerry Manning
 Lis Martin
 Charlotte
 Mathieson

Penny McLaren
 Rosalind Milton
 Lilly Nicholson
 Elinor Pinnegar
 Linda Ross
 Catherine
 Shacklady
 Heather Shepherd

Marjory Stewart
 Julia Stubbs
 Valerie Thompson
 Hilary Trigg
 Anna Williams

SECOND ALTO

Geraldine Allen
 Evelyn Beastall
 Mary Clayton
 Liz Curry-Hyde
 Sheena Ewen
 Liz Hampshire
 Pauline Higgins
 Penny Macfarlane
 Lois McCabe
 Kay McManus
 Val Morcom
 Pamela Murrell
 Sonja Nagle
 Lucy Schönberger
 Jo Stokes
 Rosey Storey
 Esther Van Rooyen
 Alison Vincent

FIRST TENOR

Bob Bromham
 Rosie Jeffery
 Audrey Kueh
 Martin Price
 John Trigg
 Susie Walker

SECOND TENOR

Drew Alcott
 Geoff Johns
 Stephen Linton
 Charles Martin
 Graham Vincent
 Tim Wray

FIRST BASS

Phil Beastall
 Richard Broughton
 Richard Dacey
 Mick De Pomerai
 Jeremy Johnson
 Andrew Linden
 Malcolm Munt
 Chris Newbery
 David Protheroe
 Andrew Skinner
 Philip Stanford
 Rob Walker
 Kieron Walsh

SECOND BASS

Peter Andrews
 Stuart Gooch
 Nick Gough
 Neil Martin
 Chris Peters
 Andrew Robertson

Vivace Chorus Patrons

The Vivace Chorus is extremely grateful to all patrons for their support.

Honorary and Life Patrons

Jeremy Backhouse
 John Britten
 James Garrow

John and Jean Leston
 John Trigg MBE

Patrons

Richard & Mary Broughton
 Amanda Burn
 Humphrey Cadoux-Hudson CBE
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 Andrea & Gunter Dombrowe
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 Geoffrey Forster
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 Ron & Christine Medlow

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 Dennis & Marjory Stewart
 Idris & Joan Thomas
 Pam Usher
 Rob and Susie Walker
 Anthony J T Williams

BECOME A VIVACE PATRON

If you have enjoyed this concert, why not become one of our patrons? We have a loyal band of followers whose regular presence at our concerts is greatly appreciated. With the valued help of our patrons, we are able to perform a wide range of exciting music, with world-class, professional musicians in venues such as G Live, Dorking Halls, the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall.

We are also now offering benefits for **Corporate Patrons**, with packages including advertising in our concert programmes, choir website and social media, and free concert tickets.

If you are interested, please contact Anna Arthur by emailing: patrons@vivacechorus.org, or visit vivacechorus.org/vc/content/patrons

Vivace Chorus dates for your diary

The Mayor of Guildford's Christmas Concert

Sunday 14th Dec. 2025 7:00pm Holy Trinity Church, Guildford

Join Vivace Chorus and the Mayor of Guildford for the season's most popular carol concert, attracting a capacity audience at Holy Trinity Church on Guildford High Street. This concert is a festive mix of traditional and contemporary music, along with your favourite audience carols, all in aid of the Mayor's Local Support Fund.

Come and Sing: Join us for a day of a cappella singing!

Saturday 24th Jan 2026 10:00am Guildford Baptist Church

Our popular Come and Sing is back for 2026! Join our new Music Director, Barbara Höfling for a day exploring beautiful a cappella music by composers including Schumann, Bruckner, Whitacre and Ešenvalds. Learn how to blend your voice with other singers to create a choir that's an instrument all by itself – and of course, there's the famous Vivace lunch!

A Symphony of Voices

Saturday 21st March 2026 7:30pm Holy Trinity Church, Guildford

There's something about the sound of voices that's uplifting for the soul. That's why our spring concert is a programme of beautiful a cappella (unaccompanied) songs from a wide range of composers – from Schumann to Whitacre.

We'll also be joined by internationally renowned organist, Stephen Farr, who has held many cathedral appointments, including at Guildford Cathedral, where he was Organist and Master of the Choristers from 1999 to 2007.

Join us for this wonderful concert that puts the choir front and centre, introducing you to new favourites and old friends.

Further details at vivacechorus.org

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Vivace Chorus is a Registered Charity No. 1026337



Vivace
Chorus

Rotary in Guildford and
Vivace Chorus present



THE MAYOR OF GUILDFORD'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Conductor: Barbara Höfling

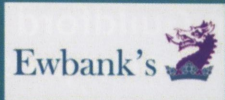
in aid of
**The Cheryl King Trust
& The Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice**

**Sunday
14 Dec 2025
at 7pm**

Holy Trinity Church, Guildford.



Tickets: £18 (Adults); £8 (Child/Student).
Includes programme. Tickets available online at
rotaryinguildford.org or vivacechorus.org



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with

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Curator and Researcher of theatrical art



Sunday 16th November 2025
15:00

St Mary's Church, Worplesdon, GU3 3RE

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Come & Sing

Works by Bruckner,
Schumann, Whitacre
and others

with **Barbara Höfling**,
Vivace's new and highly
respected conductor and
vocal health specialist.

**Tenors
come free**

Find out more at
vivacechorus.org

**Saturday
24 Jan 2026
10am - 4.30pm**

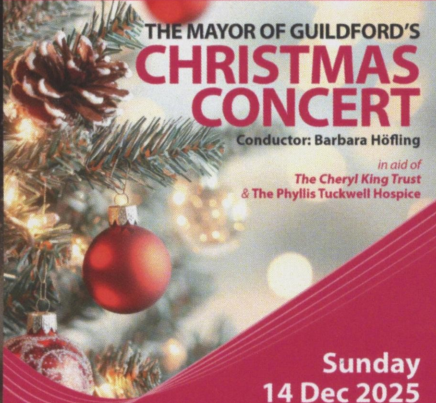
Guildford Baptist Church

**Vivace
Chorus**

Tickets: £25
Book online: vivacechorus.org

Registered Charity No. 1207710

FUTURE CONCERTS



  **Vivace Chorus** Rotary in Guildford and Vivace Chorus present

THE MAYOR OF GUILDFORD'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT
Conductor: Barbara Höfling

in aid of
The Cheryl King Trust & The Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice

Sunday
14 Dec 2025
at 7pm

Holy Trinity Church, Guildford.

Registered Charities: Rotary No 1201415 / Vivace No 1036337



Come & Sing

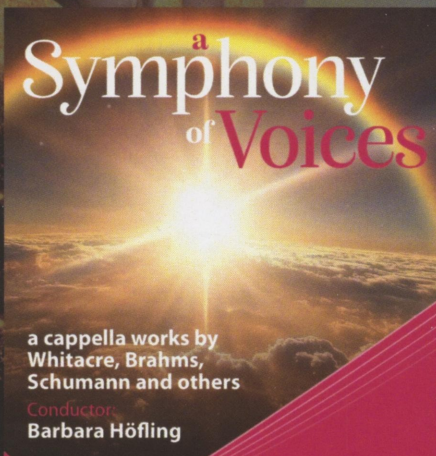
Works by Whitacre, Brahms, Schumann and others

with **Barbara Höfling**, Vivace's new and highly respected conductor and vocal health specialist.

Saturday
24 Jan 2026

Vivace Chorus Guildford Baptist Church

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a Symphony of Voices

a cappella works by Whitacre, Brahms, Schumann and others

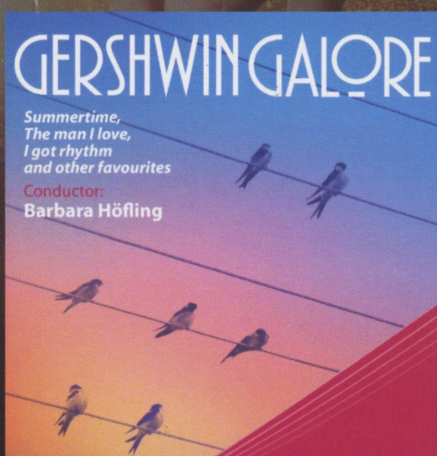
Conductor: **Barbara Höfling**

Saturday
21 March 2026

Holy Trinity, Guildford High Street.

Vivace Chorus

Registered Charity No. 1207710



GERSHWIN GALORE

Summertime, The man I love, I got rhythm and other favourites

Conductor: **Barbara Höfling**

Sunday
20 June 2026

Vivace Chorus Holy Trinity, Guildford High Street.

Registered Charity No. 1207710