

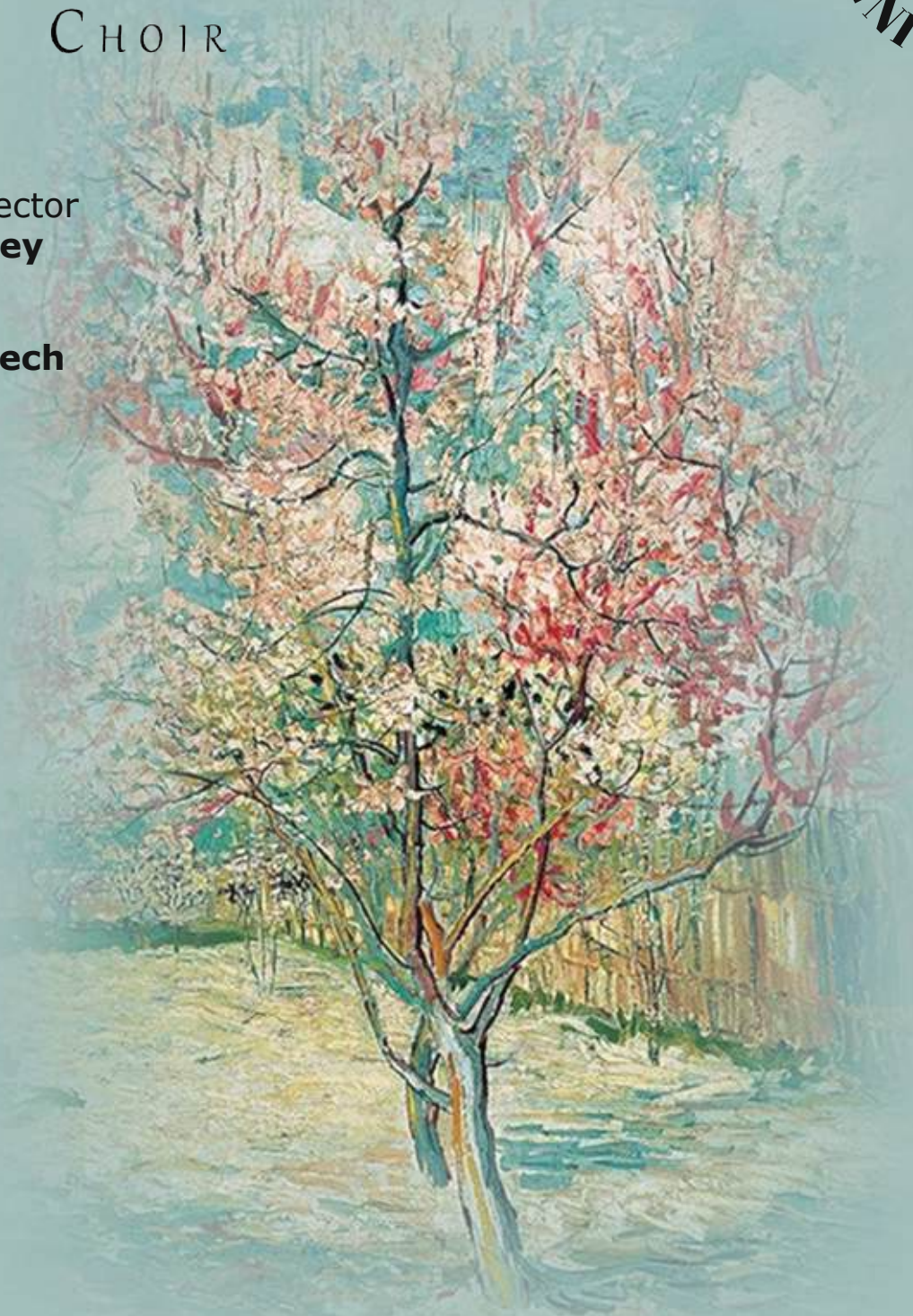


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Musical Director  
**Paul Tierney**

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**Joseph Beech**



# **A Celebration of Choral Favourites**

**Featuring Bach, Finzi, Britten and Bruckner**

**7.30pm Saturday April 25 2026**

**St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen**



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Aberdeen Bach Choir  
Musical Director – Dr. Paul Tierney

## **A Celebration of Choral Favourites**

Saturday 25 April 2026  
St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen  
7:30 pm

J.S. Bach - Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied BWV 225  
J.S. Bach - Concerto in C Major BWV 595 (Organ)  
Bruckner - Motets: Locus Iste; Christus Factus Est; Os Justi  
Monteverdi - Beatus Vir

### Interval

Britten - Hymn to St Cecilia  
Finzi - Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice  
Ireland - Greater Love Hath No Man  
Harris - Flourish for an Occasion (Organ)  
Parry - I Was Glad

Joseph Beech – Organ

Guerra Crockett and Bryan Dargie – Violins  
Soloists from the Choir

Please switch off mobile phones.

In an emergency, remain seated until given instructions by the stewards.  
Toilets are in the choir vestry at the rear of the Cathedral and in the Gatehouse.  
Please return to your seat promptly after the interval.

## **Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied (BWV 225) – Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* (BWV 225) is one of Bach's most exuberant and technically dazzling motets. Probably composed in the late 1720s in Leipzig, where Bach served as Thomaskantor, the work was likely written for a special civic or church occasion rather than a routine Sunday service. Unlike many of Bach's cantatas, it is scored for double choir without independent instruments (though instruments often doubled the voices in performance), reflecting the rich choral tradition of the city.

The motet sets verses from Psalm 149 and Psalm 150 alongside a stanza of the chorale *Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren* by Johann Gramann (Poliander). The three-movement structure is symmetrical and architecturally elegant:

“Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied” (Psalm 149:1-3)

Chorale and Psalm setting: “Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet” (Psalm 103:13) intertwined with the chorale

“Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten” (Psalm 150:2,6)

The motet is scored for two four-part choirs (SATB + SATB). Bach exploits spatial and textural contrast throughout, using antiphonal exchanges between the choirs, fugal passages of breathtaking contrapuntal complexity, dense eight-part textures and dance-like rhythms and buoyant syncopation.

The opening movement begins with a series of cascading melismas on the word “Singet”, immediately establishing a spirit of joyful proclamation. Bach combines festive vitality with intricate counterpoint, creating a sonic tapestry that feels both spontaneous and rigorous in its construction and organisation.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied!

Die Gemeinde der Heiligen

sollen ihn loben,

Israel freue sich des,

der ihn gemacht hat.

Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich

über ihrem Könige.

Sie sollen loben seinen Namen

im Reihen,

Mit Pauken und mit Harfen

sollen sie ihm spielen.

*Sing to the Lord a new song!*

*The congregations of saints*

*shall praise him,*

*Let Israel rejoice in the one*

*who has made him.*

*Let the children of Zion be joyful*

*by way of their King.*

*they shall praise his name*

*in ring dancing;*

*with drums and with harps*

*they shall play to him.*

The second movement provides profound contrast. One choir sings the chorale melody in straightforward homophony, while the other weaves an expressive setting of Psalm 103 around it. This simultaneous presentation of congregational hymn and biblical text exemplifies Bach's theological and musical synthesis; the chorale representing the voice of the faithful community, the Psalm text offering poetic reflection on God's mercy.

#### **Aria – Choir I**

Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an!  
Denn ohne dich ist nichts getan  
mit allen unsern Sachen.  
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,  
und trägt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,  
so wirst du's ferner machen.  
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest  
auf dich und deine Huld verlässt!

*God, take further care of us,  
For without you nothing in all our affairs  
Is accomplished.  
Be therefore our shield and light;  
And if our hope does not betray us,  
Then you will further carry it.  
Well for him who just steadfastly  
Relies on you and your favour.*

#### **Chorale – Choir II**

Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet  
Über seine junge Kinderlein  
So tut der Herr uns allen  
So wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein  
Er kennt das arm Gemächte  
Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub  
Gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen  
Ein Blum und fallend Laub  
Der Wind nur drüber wehet  
So ist es nicht mehr da  
Also der Mensch vergehet  
Sein End, das ist ihm nah

*Like a father has mercy  
on his little young children:  
the Lord acts in the same way toward us all  
if we fear him innocently, childlike.  
He knows the wretched creatures;  
we are, Lord knows, but dust.  
Just like grass to the rake,  
like a flower and falling foliage,  
the wind merely wafts over it,  
and it is there no more:  
In the same way, the human being passes;  
His end, it is near.*

Particularly striking is the extended fugue on “Alles was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn” in the final movement. Here, Bach builds layer upon layer of imitative entries, culminating in an electrifying affirmation of universal praise.

Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten,  
Lobet ihn in seiner großen Herrlichkeit.  
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn,  
Halleluja!

*Praise the Lord about his deeds  
Praise him about his great glory.  
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord,  
Hallelujah.*

While firmly rooted in Lutheran liturgical tradition, the motet shows awareness of older polyphonic styles as well as contemporary vitality. Bach draws on the Venetian double-choir tradition, German motet conventions of the 17th century and his own mature contrapuntal mastery. The result is a work that bridges Renaissance polychoral grandeur and Baroque dynamism.

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* stands among Bach's greatest choral achievements. Even during his lifetime, it was admired for its brilliance, and in the 18th century it was one of the few works that remained in circulation. Later musicians, including admirers in the circle that revived Bach's music in the 19th century, regarded it as a supreme example of choral art.

Radiant, jubilant and architecturally masterful, the motet embodies the Baroque ideal of music as both praise and proclamation. It is at once a celebration, confession of faith and a dazzling display of compositional genius.

## **Concerto in C major, BWV 595 - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Concerto in C major, BWV 595* is one of several organ transcriptions he made of Italian instrumental concertos during the early years of his career. Written during his time in Weimar (c. 1708–1717), these works reflect Bach's fascination with the vibrant, clear style of Italian composers—particularly the concerto form popularised by figures such as Antonio Vivaldi. Opus BWV 595 is Bach's organ arrangement of a concerto by Prince Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, a talented young nobleman and composer whose works were admired at the Weimar court.

The piece follows the traditional three-movement concerto structure: a lively opening *Allegro*, a lyrical central slow movement, and a spirited final movement. In adapting the concerto for organ, Bach transforms the dialogue between soloist and orchestra into a dynamic interplay between manuals and pedal. The opening movement captures the rhythmic vitality and bright tonal character typical of the Italian concerto style, with clear thematic statements and energetic sequences.

The middle movement provides contrast through a more reflective atmosphere. Here, Bach highlights the organ's singing qualities, allowing the melodic line to unfold gracefully over a gently supportive accompaniment. The final movement returns to the brilliance of the opening, featuring lively figurations and buoyant rhythms that showcase both virtuosity and structural clarity.

Opus BWV 595 illustrates an important stage in Bach's artistic development. Through these concerto transcriptions, he absorbed the formal clarity, rhythmic drive and expressive possibilities of the Italian style—elements that would later shape many of his own original works. The piece therefore stands not only as an engaging organ work, but also as a window into the musical influences that helped form the Baroque era's greatest composer.

## Three Graduals – *Locus iste*, *Os justi*, *Christus factus est* – Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

The sacred choral music of Anton Bruckner occupies a central place in his output and reflects the composer's deep personal faith. Before achieving fame for his monumental symphonies, Bruckner spent many years working as a church organist and teacher, and his lifelong devotion to the Catholic liturgy profoundly shaped his compositional voice. Among his most admired sacred works are the short motets written for use in the Mass. Three of the finest examples—*Locus iste*, *Os justi*, and *Christus factus est*—demonstrate Bruckner's remarkable ability to combine austere liturgical tradition with rich Romantic harmony.

*Locus iste* (1869) was composed for the dedication of the Votive Chapel of the New Cathedral in Linz. The Latin text "This place was made by God" celebrates the sanctity of a church building. Bruckner sets it for unaccompanied choir with luminous simplicity. The music unfolds in balanced phrases, gradually building in warmth and harmonic colour before returning to a quiet, reverent close. Its clarity and serenity have made it one of Bruckner's most frequently performed choral works.

Locus iste a Deo factus est,  
inaestimabile sacramentum,  
irreprehensibilis est.

*This place was made by God,  
a priceless sacrament;  
it is without reproach.*

*Os justi* (1879), written for the feast of St Augustine, reflects Bruckner's deep interest in Renaissance church music. The motet is composed in the Lydian mode and is intentionally restrained in its harmonic language, echoing the purity of earlier polyphonic traditions. Dedicated to the choirmaster Ignaz Traumihler, who favoured the ideals of the Cecilian movement, the piece avoids dramatic chromaticism and instead creates a flowing, contemplative texture that highlights the clarity of the sacred text.

Os justi meditabitur sapientiam,  
et lingua ejus loquetur iudicium.  
Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius,  
et non supplantabuntur gressus ejus.

*The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,  
and his tongue speaks what is just.  
The law of his God is in his heart:  
and his feet do not falter.*

In contrast, *Christus factus est* (1884) reveals the more dramatic side of Bruckner's sacred style. The text, drawn from the Epistle to the Philippians, reflects on Christ's obedience "unto death, even death on a cross". Bruckner responds with music of intense emotional depth. Gradual dynamic growth, expressive chromatic harmony, and a powerful climax convey the gravity of the Passion narrative before the motet subsides into a final moment of quiet reverence.

Christus factus est pro nobis  
obediens usque ad mortem,  
mortem autem crucis.

Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum  
et dedit illi nomen,  
quod est super omne nomen.

*Christ became obedient for us unto death  
even to the death, death on the cross.*

*Therefore God exalted him  
and gave him a name  
which is above all names.*

Together, these three Graduals illustrate the breadth of Bruckner's sacred language from the serene simplicity of *Locus iste*, through the austere modal purity of *Os justi*, to the profound expressive intensity of *Christus factus est*. They stand as enduring examples of the way Bruckner united ancient liturgical traditions with the harmonic richness and spiritual intensity of the Romantic era.

### **Beatus vir – Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)**

Claudio Monteverdi's *Beatus vir* is one of the most jubilant and theatrically vivid psalm settings of the early Baroque. Published in 1640 in Monteverdi's *Selva morale e spirituale*, during his long tenure as Maestro di Cappella at Basilica di San Marco in Venice, the work represents the full maturity of a composer who transformed sacred music by fusing Renaissance polyphony with the expressive power of the emerging Baroque style.

By the time Monteverdi composed *Beatus vir*, he had already revolutionised secular music with works such as *L'Orfeo*. In Venice, he brought similar dramatic vitality into sacred genres. The *Selva morale e spirituale* ("Moral and Spiritual Forest") is a vast anthology of sacred works for varied forces, reflecting both the splendour of Venetian liturgy and Monteverdi's stylistic range.

*Beatus vir* sets Psalm 112 (113 in the Vulgate numbering), traditionally sung at Vespers on major feast days. The psalm text celebrates the blessedness of the righteous, divine justice and enduring faith—subjects ideally suited to festive, ceremonial music.

Beatus vir, qui timet Dominum:  
In mandatis ejus rolet nimis.  
Potens in terra erit semen ejus;  
Generatio rectorum benedicetur.  
Gloria et divitiae in domo ejus;  
Et justitia ejus manet  
in saeculum saeculi.  
Exortum est in tenebris  
lumen rectis:  
Misericors,  
et miserator et justus.  
Jucundus homo qui miseretur  
et commodat.  
Disponet sermones suos in iudicio:  
Quia in aeternum non commovebitur.  
In memoria aeterna  
erit justus.  
Ab auditione mala non timebit.  
Paratum cor ejus sperare in Domino;  
Confirmatum est, cor ejus:  
Non commovebitur,  
Donec despiciat inimicos suos.  
Dispersit, dedit pauperibus:  
Justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi,  
Cornu ejus exaltabitur  
in gloria.  
Peccator videbit, et irascetur;  
Dentibus suis fremet et tabescet.  
Desiderium peccatorum peribit.  
Gloria Patri, et Filio,  
et Spiritui Sancto,  
Sicut erat in principio,  
et nunc et semper,  
et in secula saeculorum.  
Amen.

*Blessed is the man who fears the lord:  
He delights greatly in his commandments.  
His seed will be mighty on earth;  
The generation of the upright will be blessed.  
Wealth and riches are in his house;  
And his righteousness endures  
for ever and ever.  
Unto the upright there arises  
light in the darkness:  
He is gracious,  
and full of compassion, and righteous.  
Good is the man who is full of compassion  
and lends.  
He will guide his affairs with discretion:  
Because he will not be moved for ever.  
The righteous will be  
in everlasting remembrance.  
He will not be afraid of evil tidings.  
His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;  
His heart is established:  
He will not be moved,  
Until he gazes at his enemies.  
He has dispersed, he has given to the poor:  
His righteousness endures for ever and ever,  
The strength of his soul will be exalted  
with honour.  
The sinner will see it, and will be grieved;  
He will gnash with his teeth and melt away.  
The desire to sin will be lost.  
Glory be to the Father, and the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit  
As it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.*

Monteverdi composed more than one setting of this psalm; the best-known version from 1640 is scored for six voices (SSATTB) with soloists drawn from the ensemble, instruments (typically strings and continuo) and basso continuo foundation.

The writing alternates fluidly between grand, full-ensemble proclamations, intimate solo or duet passages and concertato exchanges between voices and instruments. This interplay reflects the concertato style, a hallmark of early Baroque sacred music, in which contrasting forces create drama and colour.

From its opening, *Beatus vir* projects brilliance and rhythmic vitality. Repeated-note figures and buoyant triple-time passages generate forward momentum and celebratory energy. Monteverdi frequently employs echo effects between voice groups, spirited melismas, dance-like rhythms and sudden shifts between homophony and imitation. These devices illuminate the psalm text with striking clarity. When the text speaks of prosperity and strength, the music expands outward in confident gestures; when referencing righteousness and mercy, textures soften and become more lyrical.

Working at the Basilica di San Marco, Monteverdi inherited the polychoral traditions established by composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli. Although *Beatus vir* is not strictly a double-choir piece in the grand Venetian manner, it reflects that legacy in its spatial awareness and brilliant sonorities. The architecture of San Marco—with opposing choir lofts and resonant acoustics—encouraged music that sparkled with antiphonal brilliance.

As customary in Vespers psalm settings, the work concludes with the “Gloria Patri”. Here Monteverdi intensifies the festive character, building cumulative energy toward the final “Amen”. The concluding passages often feature exhilarating rhythmic propulsion and tightly woven vocal interplay, embodying both theological affirmation and musical triumph.

*Beatus vir* stands at the intersection of Renaissance counterpoint and Baroque expressivity. Renaissance is characterised by imitative textures and balanced polyphony; Baroque by basso continuo, virtuosic solos, rhythmic dynamism and dramatic contrasts.

Monteverdi’s sacred music demonstrates that spiritual expression could be as emotionally direct and theatrically compelling as opera. In this psalm setting he transforms liturgical praise into a radiant musical spectacle.

## INTERVAL

## Hymn to St Cecilia, Op. 27 – Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Benjamin Britten composed *Hymn to St Cecilia*, Op. 27 in 1942, setting a text by his close friend and collaborator W. H. Auden. The work is dedicated to St Cecilia, the patron saint of music, and has become one of Britten's most celebrated pieces for unaccompanied choir.

The origins of the piece lie in Britten's return journey to the UK from the United States during the Second World War. Much of the work was written while he was at sea crossing the Atlantic, although some of the original sketches were confiscated by customs officials and had to be rewritten once he arrived in England. The completed work was premiered on St Cecilia's Day (22 November) 1942 by the BBC Singers under the direction of Leslie Woodgate.

Auden's text is a richly imaginative tribute to the power of music. Each of the three sections is introduced by a recurring invocation to St Cecilia. The poem moves between playful wit, introspection and moments of spiritual reflection. Britten mirrors this variety with music of remarkable colour and sensitivity, exploring the full expressive range of the choir.

The lively and rhythmically intricate opening section, full of bright textures and playful word-setting, catches fully the mood of the poem.

In a garden shady this holy lady  
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,  
Like a black swan as death came on  
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:  
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin  
Constructed an organ to enlarge her  
prayer,  
And notes tremendous from her great  
engine  
Thundered out on the Roman air.  
Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,  
Moved to delight by the melody,  
White as an orchid she rode quite naked  
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;

At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing  
Came out of their trance into time again,  
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses  
The huge flame flickered and eased their  
pain.  
Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and  
startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

The central section contrasts sharply, introducing more mysterious harmonies and flowing lines that evoke a dreamlike atmosphere.

I cannot grow;  
I have no shadow  
To run away from,  
I only play.  
I cannot err;  
There is no creature  
Whom I belong to,  
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat  
When it knows it  
Can now do nothing  
By suffering.  
All you lived through,  
Dancing because you  
No longer need it  
For any deed.

In the final section, Britten builds toward a joyful and expansive conclusion before the work ends quietly with the simple invocation “Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions”.

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,  
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,  
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all  
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,  
Where Hope within the altogether strange  
From every outworn image is released,  
And Dread born whole and normal like a  
beast  
Into a world of truths that never change:  
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.  
O dear white children casual as birds,  
Playing among the ruined languages,  
So small beside their large confusing words,  
So gay against the greater silences  
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the  
head,  
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,  
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the  
stain,  
Lost innocence who wished your lover  
dead,  
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin  
Is drawn across our trembling violin.  
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the  
stain.  
O law drummed out by hearts against the  
still  
Long winter of our intellectual will.  
That what has been may never be again.  
O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving  
breath  
Of convalescents on the shores of death.  
O bless the freedom that you never chose.  
O trumpets that unguarded children blow  
About the fortress of their inner foe.  
O wear your tribulation like a rose.  
Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and  
startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

*Hymn to St Cecilia* is a vivid example of Britten’s mastery of choral writing. With its transparent textures, inventive rhythms, and deep responsiveness to language, the work celebrates both the beauty of the human voice and the enduring inspiration of music itself. It remains a cornerstone of the twentieth-century choral repertoire and a fitting homage to the saint who symbolises music’s spiritual power.

## Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice, Op. 26 – Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Gerald Finzi composed *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* in 1946, creating one of the most substantial and expressive anthems in the twentieth-century English choral repertoire. Written for mixed choir and organ, the work sets a devotional Eucharistic poem by the seventeenth-century metaphysical poet and priest Richard Crashaw. Finzi, who had a lifelong affinity for English poetry, responds to Crashaw's richly symbolic language with music that is both deeply contemplative and structurally expansive.

Lo, the full, final Sacrifice  
On which all figures fix't their eyes  
The ransomed Isaac, and his ram;  
The Manna, and the Paschal Lamb.

O dear Memorial of that Death  
Which lives still, and allows us breath!  
Rich, Royal food! Bountiful Bread!  
Whose use denies us to the dead!

Jesu Master, just and true!  
Our Food, and faithful Shepherd too!

Live ever Bread of loves, and be  
My life, my soul, my surer self to me.

O let that love which thus makes thee  
Mix with our low Mortality  
Lift our lean Souls, and set us up  
Convictors of thine own full cup  
Coheirs of Saints. That so all may  
Drink the same wine; and the same way  
Nor change the Pasture, but the Place  
To feed of Thee in thine own Face.

Help Lord, my Faith, my Hope increase;  
And fill my portion in thy peace  
Give love for life; nor let my days  
Grow, but in new powers to thy name and  
praise.

The piece unfolds in a single continuous movement lasting around fifteen minutes, but within this span Finzi shapes a carefully balanced musical architecture that reflects the changing imagery of the text. The opening begins quietly and reverently, with the choir entering in smooth, flowing phrases supported by a gentle organ accompaniment. Finzi's characteristic harmonic language—warm, lyrical, and subtly shifting—creates an atmosphere of devotion and calm reflection.

As the text develops, the music becomes increasingly animated. Finzi alternates between homophonic choral writing, where the voices move together in rich chords, and more fluid contrapuntal textures that allow individual lines to unfold expressively. The organ part grows in prominence as the work progresses, not merely accompanying but intensifying the harmonic colour and helping shape the long musical phrases.

A central climax arrives at the words “O dear Memorial of that Death”, where the music broadens dramatically. Here Finzi builds a powerful crescendo through layered vocal entries and glowing harmonies, the choir expanding into full sonority while the organ reinforces the sense of grandeur and solemnity. This moment forms the emotional and structural peak of the work.

Following this culmination, the music gradually relaxes into a more reflective mood. Finzi returns to a calmer, more transparent texture allowing the choir to sing with quiet warmth and clarity. The closing section gently subsides into stillness, ending with a sense of peaceful contemplation that mirrors the spiritual resolution of the text.

Throughout the anthem, Finzi’s writing shows his gift for long, arching melodic lines, sensitive word-setting and a harmonic language both richly expressive and unmistakably English. *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* stands as one of his finest sacred works, uniting poetic insight with musical depth to create a deeply moving meditation on the mystery of the Eucharist.

## **Flourish for an Occasion – William Harris (1883-1973)**

William Harris (1883–1973) was one of the most distinguished figures in twentieth-century English church music. Best known for his choral works and his long tenure as Organist of St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, Harris composed music marked by lyrical warmth, noble harmony and a deep understanding of the English cathedral tradition. Alongside his celebrated anthems and service settings, he also wrote several works for organ, including the brilliant *Flourish for an Occasion*.

As the title suggests, *Flourish for an Occasion* is a ceremonial work designed to convey splendour and festivity. The piece reflects Harris's instinctive sense of grandeur and his ability to write idiomatically for the organ, drawing on the instrument's full palette of colour and power. Though relatively short, the work is carefully crafted to create a strong sense of momentum and architectural shape.

The music opens with bold, fanfare-like figures that immediately establish a festive character. These brilliant gestures evoke the sound of trumpets and ceremonial brass, a sonority that organists can highlight through the instrument's bright reed stops. The opening material provides the basis for much of the piece, as Harris develops the rhythmic motifs through sequences and expanding harmonic progressions.

Contrasting passages introduce flowing textures and fuller chords, allowing the music to broaden before returning to the assertive rhythmic energy of the opening idea. Harris's harmonic language remains firmly rooted in the English cathedral tradition—rich but clear, balancing grandeur with clarity of line.

The work builds toward a confident and resounding conclusion, bringing together its fanfare-like motifs in a final burst of brilliance. *Flourish for an Occasion* exemplifies Harris's gift for ceremonial music: concise, uplifting and perfectly suited to moments of celebration within the great acoustic spaces of church and cathedral.

## **Greater Love Hath No Man – John Ireland (1879-1962)**

*Greater Love* is one of the most powerful and widely performed choral works by the English composer John Ireland. Written in 1912, just before the outbreak of World War I, the anthem later became closely associated with remembrance services and memorials for those who died in the war.

Ireland sets a compilation of biblical texts drawn primarily from the Bible, including passages from the Song of Solomon and the Gospel of John. The central line, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”, gives the piece its title and emotional core. These texts speak of sacrifice, love and remembrance, themes that gained profound resonance as the First World War unfolded.

Many waters cannot quench Love, neither can the floods drown it.

Love is strong as death.

Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Who, His own self bare our sins in His own Body on the tree.

That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.

Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

That ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness, into His marvellous light.

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Musically, the anthem reflects Ireland’s gift for rich yet restrained harmonic language and expressive choral writing. The work unfolds in a series of contrasting sections, opening with sombre reflection it gradually builds to moments of intense emotional and harmonic richness before returning to a quieter, contemplative conclusion. The organ accompaniment supports the choir with warm sonorities and subtle colour, enhancing the work’s reflective atmosphere.

Today, *Greater Love* remains one of Ireland’s most cherished sacred works, admired for the sincerity of its expression and its moving tribute to the ideals of sacrifice and enduring love.

## **I Was Glad (Psalm 122) – Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918)**

Hubert Parry composed *I Was Glad* in 1902 for the coronation of Edward VII at Westminster Abbey. Revised for subsequent coronations, including that of George V in 1911, it is now one of the most iconic ceremonial works in the English choral repertoire. Written for choir, organ, brass and orchestra (though tonight with organ alone) the anthem sets verses from Psalm 122: “I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord”.

I was glad, glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is builded as a city, that is in unity in itself.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.

Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces.

From the opening bars, Parry establishes a tone of grandeur and celebration. The anthem begins with a bold and exultant choral proclamation, built on broad melodic lines and full harmonic textures. The music reflects both the ceremonial context of its first performance and Parry’s characteristic style—noble, expansive and rooted in the great tradition of English sacred music.

One of the work’s most distinctive features connects Parry’s anthem to centuries of royal ceremony dating back to the coronation of James II in 1685 when the music pauses to allow the traditional Vivat acclamations, “Vivat Rex” or “Vivat Regina” to be sung by scholars of Westminster School as the monarch processes through the Abbey. As this section is specifically for coronations, it will not be sung in tonight’s performance.

The work continues with passages of contrasting character, Parry alternating between jubilant, full-voiced choral writing and more reflective sections, such as the prayerful “O pray for the peace of Jerusalem”. Here the music becomes more flowing and lyrical, offering a moment of calm within the otherwise celebratory atmosphere of the work. The anthem builds once more toward a majestic conclusion, returning to the jubilant spirit of the opening with resounding chords and triumphant rhythms. Parry’s rich harmonies and expansive choral textures create a powerful sense of culmination, perfectly suited to the grandeur of a coronation ceremony.

*I Was Glad* is one of the most beloved works in the English choral tradition, both a magnificent ceremonial anthem and a testament to Parry’s gift for combining musical splendour with spiritual dignity.

## Joseph Beech - Organ

Joseph Beech is the Sub-Organist of Durham Cathedral, a position he has held since 2019. He is the principal accompanist and assistant director of the Cathedral Choir, and shares in all aspects of the recruitment and training of the choristers.

Joseph is a prizewinning graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, London, where he was a scholarship student of David Titterton. As a student, Joseph performed in most of London's major venues, won the Academy's inaugural Dorothy Cooper organ competition (2016), and gained the Licentiate teaching diploma. Upon graduating with a first-class degree, Joseph was presented with a Regency Award for notable achievement. In 2022, he was elected to Associateship of the Royal Academy of Music in recognition of his significant contribution to the music profession.



Joseph successively held organ scholarships at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, HM Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace, the London Oratory and St Paul's Cathedral. Prior to his appointment at Durham, Joseph was Assistant Master of the Music at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh; his organ playing on the choir's 2019 recording of works by Kenneth Leighton was critically acclaimed as "entirely flawless" and "greatly impressive". He has broadcast regularly as an organist and conductor on BBC Radio 3 and 4.

Aside from his work at the cathedral, Joseph maintains a busy performance schedule, with recent and forthcoming concerts across the UK as well as Ireland, Germany and Italy, and enjoys dedicating time to organ teaching at Durham University. In his spare time he is undertaking postgraduate studies in history at the University of Aberdeen.

## Guerra Crockett and Bryan Dargie - Violins

The Choir will be accompanied in the Monteverdi Beatus Vir by two local violinists, both of whom have accompanied Aberdeen Bach Choir as members of Aberdeen Sinfonietta..

### Guerra Crockett

Guera was born in Aberdeen and studied violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 1991 she joined the Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, then went on to become a member of the Ulster Orchestra and, later, the Orchestra of Scottish Opera. She has also freelanced with the Orquesta do Porto, the RSNO and the SCO. Guera now teaches violin at Aberdeen City Music School, the University of Aberdeen and NESMS. She is a member of the Cargill Trio, has been leader of Aberdeen Sinfonietta and helped create a new contemporary music ensemble 'Any Enemy' which made its debut at the Sound Festival in 2018.

### Bryan Dargie

Bryan Dargie graduated in music from Aberdeen University, and continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Frederick Grinke. After several years' professional playing in London, he returned to Aberdeen where he established himself as a leading violinist and violin teacher, with wide experience of solo playing, of leading orchestras, in particular Aberdeen Sinfonietta, and of chamber music performance.

## Join the Choir



@aberdeenbachchoir

Aberdeen Bach Choir is always keen to recruit new members. Follow us on social media to find out more.



@aberdeenbach

We will be singing Bach's Christmas Oratorio on 5 December 2026. Rehearsals begin on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> August. Contact our Membership Secretary at [info@aberdeenbachchoir.com](mailto:info@aberdeenbachchoir.com) if you are interested in joining us.



## Dr Paul Tierney – Musical Director

Paul was born in Edinburgh in 1984 but grew up in Hawick in the Scottish Borders. He graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 2006 with a first-class BMus (Hons.) degree and in 2012 with a PhD in Composition, also from the University of Aberdeen. He has taken part in numerous masterclasses with singers such as Donald Maxwell, Raimund Herinx, Cate Hughes, Irene Drummond, Margaret Cable and Stephen Varcoe. In 2005, he was awarded the Ellie Pirie award by Aberdeen Bach Choir and North East of Scotland Music School. In 2006 Paul was awarded the first Derek Ogston Postgraduate Music Scholarship from the University of Aberdeen.



As a soloist, Paul has performed with many groups including Aberdeen Choral Society, University of Aberdeen Choral Society and Chapel Choir, Concordia String Orchestra, Aberdeen Orpheus Choir, Peterhead Choral Society, Inverurie Choral Society, Roxburgh Singers and the Queen's Cross Charity Concert. He also performed with the Hereford International Summer School Chorus in the role of Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Paul has also performed with the Gustavus Adolphus New Music Ensemble in Minneapolis, USA. He gives numerous recitals of English Song and Lieder and gave the first Scottish performance of *To a Poet* by Gerald Finzi. He has also received rave reviews for his performances of *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* of Schubert; "Tierney's singing was a revelation!"

Paul is active as a conductor and composer and has studied with Alasdair Nicholson, Sally Beamish and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies as part of the first St Magnus Composers Course. His piece *Threnody* was premiered by the Kreisler ensemble at the St Magnus Festival. Paul's music has also been performed by the Edinburgh Quartet, members of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Gemini Ensemble and Lontano Ensemble.

Paul's work, *Gallowgate Lard*, based on the painting by Ken Currie, was commissioned as part of the 2009 Sound Festival and was given its first performance by Roberto Fabricciani, Tadej Kenig and Rohan de Saram.

Paul was also featured as principal guest composer in the New Music Festival XXVII at the Dana School of Music, Youngstown State University, Ohio, USA in May 2011. In June 2011 his percussion concerto *Landscape from a Dream* was performed by the Inverurie Orchestra. He recently presented a paper on the influence of Far Eastern music on the music of Benjamin Britten at the conference 'Britten 100: An American Music Centenary' at Illinois State University, USA.

Paul was musical director and conductor of the Haddo House Choral and Operatic Society from 2017-2025 and musical director of the Inverurie Orchestra from 2007-2019. With Haddo, performances included *Elijah* by Mendelssohn, *Nelson Mass* by Haydn, *Te Deum* by Dvorak and *Samson* by Handel in the presence of the society's patron HRH Prince Edward. Paul was the founding director of the University of Aberdeen New Music Group and has also conducted the University of Aberdeen Chapel Choir, the Learig Orchestra, Aberdeen Sinfonietta and University of Aberdeen Gilbert and Sullivan Society. He has conducted performances of Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Octandre* by Varese. Paul has taken part in numerous choral conducting masterclasses working with conductors including Stephen Layton (Polyphony), Neil Ferris (BBC SO) and Matthew Hamilton (Hallé) conducting the Hallé Choir in a masterclass performing Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Paul has been musical director of Aberdeen Bach Choir since 2022 and is currently the Curriculum Manager for Performing Arts and Animation at the North East Scotland College in Aberdeen.

# Aberdeen Bach Choir Singers

## **Soprano 1**

Pauline Buchan **M**  
Hanne Gadegaard **F**  
Cathy Guthrie  
Anna Hamilton **B**  
Kathleen Haw  
Pamela Hoy  
Clare Johnson  
Eunchai Kang  
Kerstin Kröger  
Margaret Macaulay  
Nina MacDonald-Lewis  
Isla Maitland  
Sandra Massey  
Margaret Nicholson  
Hannah Ratcliffe **I**  
Tayla Sanders  
Marta Visocchi  
Hazel Wilkins  
Catherine Wilkinson

## **Soprano 2**

Aimee Alcock  
Kate Graham  
Margaret Heald  
Anne Henderson  
Julia House  
Jane Jones  
Fiona Leslie  
Elaine Miller  
June Rhind  
Pamela Shand  
Angela Slater **B**  
Alyson Smith  
Karen Smith  
Ros Studd  
Janet Wendes

## **Alto 1**

Caroline Campbell  
Barbara Crane  
Althea Dickens  
Isobel Ford  
Phyllis Garden  
Lorna Herbert  
Ruth Howarth  
Janet MacDonald  
Kate Mason  
Jo McPherson  
Lindsey Mountford  
Lesley Mowat  
Adele Perry  
Akintunde Obisean  
Sheila Robertson  
Dawn Smith  
Doreen Taylor  
Clare Wilkie

## **Alto 2**

Kiran Angadi  
Libby Brand  
Alison Campbell  
Ailsa Cantlay  
Rosemary Feilden  
Helaena Fine **B, M**  
Helen Goodyear  
Jennifer Greener  
Louise Page  
Tracey Robinson  
Sarah Stevens  
Val Thomas

## **Tenor 1**

Mercedes Acevedo  
Brian Caswell  
Paul Davison  
Bruce Irvine **M**  
Mandy MacDonald  
Janet Ogilvie **M**

## **Tenor 2**

Robert Black  
Peter Cserne  
Alan Maitland  
James Millar  
Alan Scott **B, F**  
Alex Wallace

## **Bass 1**

Daniel Berg **I**  
Ian Downie  
David Goodban  
Duncan Hart  
Jim Hunter **M**  
George Lawrence  
Graham Mountford  
Mike Radcliffe **B**  
John Woodhead

## **Bass 2**

Mark Edwards  
Jim Hardy  
Roger Hessian  
Mike Longhurst  
Mark Rodgers  
Brian Wilkins

## **Rehearsal Pianist**

Ben Marsden

**Choir Soloists** B: Britten; F: Finzi; I: Ireland; M: Monteverdi

## Aberdeen Bach Choir

Founded as the Aberdeen Bach Society by Charles Sandford Terry in 1913 and reconstituted as the Aberdeen Bach Choir in 1956, the choir usually performs two main concerts a year, in April and December. The repertoire of the choir is comprehensive and drawn from a wide variety of cultures, styles and periods. Past concerts have included the following works:

J.S. Bach	Christmas Oratorio, Easter Oratorio, St Matthew Passion, St John Passion, Magnificat in D, Mass in B Minor
Beethoven	Mass in C
Bernstein	Chichester Psalms
Bruckner	Mass in F, various motets
Buxtehude	Nimm von uns Herr du treuer Gott, Jesu meines Lebens Leben, Der Herr is mit mir
G. Gabrieli	Hodie Christus Natus Est, O Magnum Mysterium, Salvator Noster, Beata Virgo Maria
M. Haydn	Missa Trinitatis, Missa Sanctae Theresiae
Jenkins	The Armed Man
Lassus	Missa Bell' Amfitrit' Altera, Domine Exaudi
Liszt	Missa Choralis
Monteverdi	Vespro della Beata Vergine 1610, Dixit Dominus, Confiteor, Beatus Vir
McLeod	Chronicle of St Machar (Bach Choir commission)
Mozart	Missa Brevis in D, Missa Brevis in F, Requiem, Great Mass in C Minor, Vesperae Solennes de Confessore
Praetorius	Magnificat Quinti Toni
Purcell	Te Deum, Ode to St Cecilia
Rutter	Magnificat, Gloria, Requiem
Schubert	Mass in G, Mass in E Flat
Stravinsky	Symphony of Psalms
Vierne	Messe Solennelle
Vivaldi	Beatus Vir, Domine ad adiuvandum me Festina, Gloria
Walton	Te Deum, The Twelve

Aberdeen Bach Choir is always keen to recruit new members. Anyone interested in joining the choir should email the membership secretary, Sandra Massey at [info@aberdeenbachchoir.com](mailto:info@aberdeenbachchoir.com)

*Aberdeen Sinfonietta, which regularly provides the orchestra for Aberdeen Bach Choir's concerts, is joining in the choir's 70th anniversary celebration by putting on a concert on Wednesday 29th April, a few days after the choir's own celebration event. For this occasion the orchestra is returning to its original form as a string ensemble, and, like the choir, it will perform some of its favourite pieces. Aberdeen Sinfonietta looks forward to its first concert in Mannofield Church, and to being conducted by Aberdeen Bach Choir's Musical Director, Paul Tierney.*

ABERDEEN  
*Sinfonietta*

# SPRING CONCERT

## String Ensemble

WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2026 19:30  
Mannofield Church, Aberdeen

Programme includes double concertos by Vivaldi and Bach and suites by Grieg (Holberg) and Holst (St Paul's)

Soloists:  
Bryan Dargie and Guera Crockett (violins), Alison MacDonald and Martin Couzin (cellos)

Conductor:  
Paul Tierney



Tickets from [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)  
or at the door.

Tickets £15  
Concessions £10  
Under 16s Free



Sat 9 May, 7.30pm  
Aberdeen Music Hall

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# Schumann Cello Concerto

Maxim Emelyanychev conductor  
Philip Higham cello

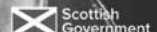
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70 YEAR  
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*Sinfonietta*



# BACH: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

7.30pm Saturday 5 December 2026 - St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen

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**Paul Tierney** - Musical Director  
**Bryan Dargie** - Leader

**Elinor Rolfe Johnson** - Soprano  
**Tom Lilburn** - Counter-Tenor  
**Nathan Vale** - Tenor  
**Ross Cumming** - Baritone





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