

Portishead
Choral
Society

Portishead Choral Society

Conductor: Jonathan Palmer

Bristol Brass Consort

Richard Lennox (Organ)

Festive Music for Voices, Brass and Organ

Saturday 7th December 2024 at 7.30pm

**Portishead Methodist Church
High Street, Portishead, BS20 6EN**

Contact us via the website:
www.portisheadchoral.co.uk/contact



Registered Charity No 1039773

**making
music**

Please ensure mobile electronic devices are on silent

PROGRAMME

I was glad

Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918)

Parry composed this setting of verses from Psalm 122 for the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, revising it for George V's Coronation in 1911 by adding a more impressive introduction. Settings of the text by Purcell, John Blow, and other musicians had been sung at previous Coronations, but it is Parry's revised anthem that has been used subsequently, as well as being performed on State occasions and at royal weddings. At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953, the anthem was sung as the Queen entered at the west door of Westminster Abbey and processed into the Church. The full choir begins the anthem, then divides into two at the words "Jerusalem is builded". The central section, a contemplative prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, is sung by the semi-chorus before the whole choir re-combines and the music builds to its final climax. The "Vivats" are Latin acclamations with which the King's Scholars of Westminster School have traditionally greeted kings and queens on their arrival at Westminster Abbey for their coronation. Since Westminster Abbey released the words and music of the new Vivat acclamations that were sung at the Coronation of Their Majesties The King and The Queen on Saturday 6th May 2023, we decided to include them in our performance: "Vivat Regina Camilla! Vivat Rex Carolus!" ("Long live Queen Camilla! Long live King Charles!")

I was 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 at 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.

Music for Brass Quintet

Italian Ground

Orlando Gibbons

The Oak and the Ash

17th century traditional

Renaissance Dances (from *The Danserye*)

Tielman Susato

La Mourisque, Bransle quatre Bransles, Ronde, Ronde Mon Amy, Basse Danse Bergeret

Although the use of brass instruments for chamber music may seem to be a twentieth century innovation, in reality, the almost forgotten fact is that prior to the 17th century, brass instruments were much more frequently used in chamber music and in small ensembles than they are today or were during the Classical and Romantic periods. Before approximately 1600, and for a good many years afterwards, much instrumental music was written for flexible combinations ("to be played with any kind of instruments" – Gabrieli) There is considerable literary and pictorial evidence, contemporary to those times, showing that performance of these open score works by brass instruments was very much the rule.

Ecce Sacerdos Magnus

Anton Bruckner

This is probably the most extrovert of all of Bruckner's motets, with an extreme dynamic range. He broke off work on his Eighth Symphony in 1885 to compose it to celebrate the thousandth anniversary of the Diocese of Linz. To give an appropriate sense of magnificence to the proceedings, Bruckner accompanies the choir with the organ and three brass instruments, harking back to the sonorities of the Gabriellis in 16th century Venice. However, Bruckner chooses to end the motet *molto pianissimo*. This was also performed at the Coronation on 6th May, 2023.

Locus Iste

Philip Stopford (1977-)

Following an opening chant, this setting features a recurring theme with flowing melodic lines and a soaring ending.

This place is the work of God, a mystery surpassing all comprehension; above all reproach.

Hallelujah Chorus

Handel

The miraculous composition of Messiah, the complete 260-page oratorio, began on August 22, 1741, and was composed in just 24 days, when Handel finished the final orchestration on September 14, 1741. He clearly did not get much sleep or food during this time. His servants would often find him in tears as he composed. When he completed *Hallelujah*, he reportedly told his servant, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself seated on His throne, with His company of Angels."

INTERVAL

Choir

A Boy Was Born

Benjamin Britten

This is the theme for a set of six variations of Britten's Christmas cantata *A Boy Was Born*, Op.3. It was completed in 1933 whilst he was still only nineteen.

Gaudete

arr. J Palmer

The Latin text of this medieval song of praise dates from around 1420 and the popularity of the piece is largely due to the folk group Steeleye Span whose interpretation was a hit in 1973.

The Shepherd's Farewell (from *The Childhood of Christ*)

Hector Berlioz

While this is not a carol, it is a perennial favourite and certainly maintains a strong foothold in the Christmas story and the ensuing days of Christ's life following his birth in Bethlehem.

Sussex Carol

English trad. arr. Willcocks

For many, the best-loved carol arrangements are those of David Willcocks; they span his career as co-editor of *Carols for Choirs* and as conductor of the UK's finest choirs.

Brass Quintet

Ding Dong Merrily on High

trad. arr Paul Harris

Angelus ad Virginem

trad. arr Paul Harris

Past Three o'Clock

trad. arr. Roger Harvey

Carols (for Choir, Audience and Organ)

arr. Jonathan Palmer

I Saw Three Ships

What Child is This?

Good King Wenceslas

Carols (for Choir, Audience, Brass and Organ)

arr. Jonathan Palmer

Come all You Worthy Gentlemen

The Holly and the Ivy

God Rest you Merry Gentlemen

“I have always loved the idea of involving the audience in a musical performance, especially at Christmas time when audiences always seem to want to join in. In these arrangements, the essential principle is the elimination of the routine repetition of singing through countless verses, by presenting certain challenges that will keep everyone ‘on their toes’. The role of the audience is not optional; they often alternate with the choir and have their own part to sing. There are also key changes to contend with, and sections where the men and ladies sing separately. Keep your wits about you, make sure you have a word-sheet, and join in with the fun!” – Jonathan Palmer

Jonathan Palmer



After a distinguished teaching career in a variety of schools, Jonathan decided to retire in 2007 in order to concentrate on his composition, and for eight years was a part-time research student at the University of Bristol. In August 2010 he was awarded the Raymond Warren Prize for Composition. Having studied under Professor Geoff Poole and Professor John Pickard, he completed his PhD in Composition in January 2015, and became a Fellow of Trinity College, London, in Composition.

Over the years he has conducted numerous choral societies and orchestras. His choice of repertoire is varied, from Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Schubert to Vaughan Williams, Bernstein, Gershwin, and Rutter. In 1984, he directed performances of Olivier Messiaen's *Trois Petites Liturgies* at Sherborne Abbey and Clifton

Cathedral, and in 2007, conducted a large-scale performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* with massed choirs at the Colston Hall, Bristol.

Jonathan was appointed Musical Director of Portishead Choral Society in September 2013. During the 2013-14 season, he directed the choir in Handel's *Messiah*, Gounod's *Messe Solennelle de Sainte-Cécile* and Edward German's *Merrie England*. In the spring of 2014, he composed a special new cantata for the choir to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. *Awake the Voice*, a thirty minute work in six movements for chorus, soloists, audience and orchestra, received its first performance in Gordano School, Portishead in December 2014. It was subsequently performed again in December 2018 in Clifton Cathedral in a collaborative Christmas-themed concert with Nailsea Choral Society and Chew Valley Choral Society. He enjoys the challenge of devising imaginative programmes for the concerts, and always tries to combine sacred and secular, familiar and the less-known, old and new, while seizing any opportunity for the audience to participate! In June 2019, the finale of the concert *From Russia with Love* even required the audience to sing in Russian!

In 2009, he was appointed as a Choral Director for Choirs at Sea, and for a time, enjoyed numerous voyages on cruise ships forming choirs from the passengers. However, with the pandemic, he withdrew from that activity, and is now a member of a team of visiting speakers. He plays the cello and particularly enjoys playing chamber music. In his spare time he enjoys maintaining his classic cars, instrument restoration, cooking and travelling.

Richard Lennox



Richard joined Portishead Choral Society as their accompanist in September 2016 and has played for their rehearsals and concerts over the past six years. He has recently worked with Weston Operatic Society as their Musical Director for *9 To 5 The Musical* at the Playhouse Theatre in Weston Super Mare, and has played in many concerts around the West Country. He played a return online concert with the internationally acclaimed bass/baritone Jonathan Viera *Live from the Steinway Room*, recorded on Sunday 30th October 8pm, and still available to view on YouTube and Facebook.

Richard plays all genres of music, which makes him an exciting professional musician. His other accomplishments include accompanying students for their exams (vocalists and Instrumentalists) at dance schools in Epsom and Cheltenham. Last year he had the privilege of accompanying one of the BBC Singers, Jamie W Hall, performing with Weston Choral Society.

Each year Richard has the pleasure of performing at the Royal Albert Hall - a Christian event *Prom Praise* with the All Souls Orchestra and Choir, playing on their mighty organ and their Steinway piano. He also accompanies their soloists, including Mike Smith, Graham Kendrick, and Jonathan Viera.

Richard has had several interviews with Radio Bristol, and been invited to play his music; they are excellent in promoting his work. Various CDs have been recorded by Richard, with sincere thanks accorded to Chris Emmerson.

Bristol Brass Consort



Trumpets: Paul Harris, Tom Deakin
Horn: Paul Tomlinson
Trombone: John Cornick
Tuba: Simon Derrick

Bristol Brass Consort is the premier symphonic brass ensemble in the South West. Formed in 1985, it is a symphonic brass ensemble which regularly performs established

brass repertoire as well as lesser known works and new commissions. The group regularly performs for music societies, festivals, concert series and weddings. Bristol Brass Consort is structured as a brass quintet as its core ensemble, consisting of two trumpets, French horn, trombone and tuba. The group also expands to bigger formations including brass dectet and 18-piece large ensemble depending on the repertoire.

Their CD *Festive Brass* has just been re-issued. It is a selection of 15 of their favourite Christmas carols and songs, available to purchase direct from the Bristol Brass Consort website, on Amazon, and other online music specialist sellers.

Portishead Choral Society

In 2025, Portishead Choral Society will be celebrating its Platinum Jubilee. The Society was formed in 1955 with Winston Jackson as Hon. Conductor and Chairman. Subscriptions were set at five shillings per year. The first concert, in Holy Week 1955, was *The Passion of Christ* by Sir Arthur Somervell.

The 10th Anniversary concert in 1965 included two works by Gordon Jacob, *Highways and News from Newtown* (Portishead was expanding at the time and the motorway was being built), with the composer in the audience.

In 1990 the Society celebrated its 35th Anniversary with a performance, by an augmented choir conducted by Ian Sloan, of Verdi's *Requiem* in the Colston Hall, Bristol.

2005 saw the choir celebrating its Golden Jubilee. The Spring concert, entitled *Music for Lent* featured an *a capella* setting of the Mass, *The Neretva Mass*, written for the choir by its conductor, Jonathan Coore. The Jubilee Concert was in Clifton Cathedral, where the choir sang Robert Latham's setting of Psalm 150, which was commissioned for the occasion, and Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man*.

The Diamond Jubilee in 2015 marked a significant step forward for the Society, with two concerts in Gordano School Hall accompanied by the Portishead Sinfonia, formed specially for the occasion. The December 2014 concert featured Handel's *Zadok the Priest*, Bach's *Magnificat in D* and *Awake the Voice!* – a work written for the choir by Jonathan Palmer. The March concert featured music by Mozart and Haydn, with the climax being a performance of Mozart's *Requiem*. In June the choir returned to Portishead Methodist Church for *An Evening at the Opera*.

In 2025, to celebrate its Platinum Jubilee, Portishead Choral Society will hold a large-scale Gala event of classical works with an orchestra plus soloists. To accommodate the choir, orchestra, soloists and piano, the concert will take place in the Gordano School hall. The programme for this Gala concert is:

- Mozart: *Vesperae Solennes De Confessore*, K 339
- Shostakovich: *Piano Concerto No 2 in F*, with Richard Lennox as soloist
- Beethoven: *Mass in C*, Op.86

Make a note in your diary, and if you enjoy singing, new members are always welcome, with no audition! See our website portisheadchoral.co.uk for more information.

Saturday 12th April 2025 at 7.30pm in Gordano School

Portishead Choral Society

President: Pamela Rudge, GRSM(Hons), ARCM

Registered Charity No: 1039773

www.portisheadchoral.co.uk

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Platinum Jubilee Gala Concert

Saturday 12th April 2025 at 7.30pm in Gordano School

Our Platinum Jubilee Gala Concert will feature Mozart *Vesperae solennes de confessore*, Shostakovich *Piano Concerto No 2* (with Richard Lennox as soloist) and Beethoven *Mass in C*, with Portishead Sinfonia and vocal soloists.

New members are always welcome, with no audition! For more information, please see our website portisheadchoral.co.uk, contact a member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk. Rehearsals are at Portishead Methodist Church on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm.

Members of the choir are available to sing at weddings, funerals, and other events – please see our website, contact a committee member, or email contact@portisheadchoral.co.uk.

Clevedon Choral Society – for information, please visit www.clevedonchoralsociety.org.uk

Nailsea Choral Society - for information, please visit www.nailseachoral.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The society is affiliated to Making Music, the charity that represents and supports amateur choirs, orchestras, and music promoters throughout the United Kingdom.

The society is grateful for the sponsorship and hosting of our website by 34sp.com, who provide free website hosting for registered UK charities.

Programme notes: Jonathan Palmer

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