

Bach's Christmas Oratorio

28-29 Nov 2024

PROGRAMME

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Bach's Christmas Oratorio

Thursday 28 November, 7.30pm, The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh Friday 29 November, 7.30pm, City Halls, Glasgow

BACH Christmas Oratorio (Cantatas Nos 1-3) (Sung in German) Interval of 20 minutes after Cantata No 2

Václav Luks Conductor Julia Doyle Soprano Helen Charlston Mezzo Soprano Robin Tritschler Tenor Florian Störtz Bass Baritone SCO Chorus Gregory Batsleer Chorus Director



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WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

BACH (1685-1750)

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248 (Cantatas Nos 1-3) (1734-35) Johann Sebastian Bach was a busy man. That much is clear from his extensive and wideranging musical output, his plate-spinning lifelong responsibilities across performing, teaching, composing and more, and also the travels he undertook. It was especially the case in Leipzig, where he settled in 1723 as a 38-year-old, and where he lived with his family until his death in 1750.

Bach's role in Leipzig was nominally as Kantor, which involved overseeing the city's religious music at its two most prominent churches, the Thomaskirche and the Nikolaikirche. It was in that capacity that he wrote more than 200 church cantatas during his 27-year tenure, as well as the St Matthew Passion and St John Passion. But he also threw his musical net far wider, directing the city's Collegium Musicum orchestra in front of huge audiences (most famously at the fashionable Café Zimmermann coffee house), and hopping between high-class soirées where he'd join colleagues for what we'd now call chamber music. The town council took notice – especially when it received a complaint that he was neglecting his religious and educational duties. Bach later described the councillors as 'very strange and little interested in music, so that I have to live amid almost constant vexation, envy and persecution'.

Leipzig might not have always appreciated Bach's wide-ranging activities, but there's no denying the enormous productivity of his years in the city. Almost as soon as he arrived, he set out to compose a cantata for every Sunday and feast day in the church calendar, eventually producing a new cantata every week for around three years. At that time, the adopted Italian musical form of the cantata would provide a significant focal point in a Lutheran service. Its clearly differentiated



Johann Sebastian Bach

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sections served particular purposes: choruses would rouse or move the congregation; arias would allow contemplation of a particular week's religious themes; and chorales would encourage listeners to sing along with hymn tunes they probably already knew.

By the early 1730s, however, Bach had amassed such a heap of cantatas that he knew he'd be able to reuse many of them in day-to-day services. His thoughts therefore turned to bigger projects, among them an appropriately lavish work inspired by the Christmas story, which he had planned for Leipzig's 1734-35 Christmas season. There was a problem, however. The prospective new piece would clearly be intended for use in church, but Leipzig's traditional Lutheran services simply didn't have space or time for a lengthy choral creation. In fact, anything longer than a more traditional cantata would be too much.

Bach hit on an ingenious solution, however. His Christmas Oratorio would in fact consist of six separate cantatas, each intended for a specific feast day during the city's Christmas calendar. The first, intended for Christmas Day, would describe the birth of Jesus, while the second (for 26 December) would cover the Annunciation to the Shepherds, and the third (for 27 December) would deal with the Adoration of the Shepherds. Jumping slightly ahead, the fourth cantata (for 1 January) would describe the circumcision and naming of Jesus, while the fifth (for the first Sunday after New Year) would cover the Journey of the Magi, and the sixth and final cantata (for Epiphany) would describe the Adoration of the Magi.

In that way, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* is an overarching, unified piece conceived as a single entity (Bach's carefully planned out key relationships, for a start, make that clear). But it's also a collection of six separate, almost stand-alone pieces: you can either binge on the whole lot (like a modern-day streaming set) or just sample selected parts. Either choice will bring rewards, insights and revelations.

Indeed, there's plenty to suggest that Bach specifically intended each of the *Christmas Oratorio*'s cantatas to have its own character and mood: bright and celebratory for the joining of believers and newborn Messiah in the first cantata, for example, but far more bucolic in the pastoral-themed second, which introduces the shepherds. Similarly, each cantata can legitimately be performed on its own, or in combinations with others. Accordingly, in tonight's concert, we'll hear parts one, two and three, covering the birth of Jesus through to the Adoration of the Shepherds.

It proved a neat response to the conventions of Leipzig's seasonal services, and also a surprisingly forward-looking conception of a monumental piece whose multiple parts would be performed across several days – just like, Wagner's epic 'Ring' cycle or Stockhausen's even more gargantuan, week-long *Licht* operas in the 19th and 20th centuries respectively. For those with buses to catch, however, rest assured that Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* is on a rather smaller scale than those two musical monoliths.

It's known that the *Christmas Oratorio*'s cantatas duly received their first performances in December 1734 and January 1735, divided across Leipzig's Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche (some were performed in both locations). The work's libretto – almost certainly by Bach's regular collaborator, lawyer and poet Christian Friedrich Henrici, otherwise known as Picander – was published in advance and distributed among congregations, so that they could prepare themselves. After those first performances, however, the work wasn't heard again for more than a century, when it was presented to audiences in December 1857 by Berlin's Sing-Akademie.

And though its division across six separate parts might partly conceal its power and impact, the Christmas Oratorio is undeniably one of Bach's most lavish musical achievements, standing alongside the St Matthew Passion, St John Passion and even the mighty B minor Mass in terms of sheer ambition and scope. That's an even more remarkable achievement when you consider that Bach shamelessly pilfered some of his own back catalogue for substantial parts of it. In 1733, he'd written two secular cantatas, one to celebrate the birth of Friedrich Christian of Saxony, the other to honour Maria Josepha, later Electress of Saxony. The music of those cantatas was good, Bach knew, though their texts – conceived very much to celebrate those particular figures – might mean they'd never be heard again. Bach was therefore understandably keen to recycle some of their music

Let's leave aside the question of selfplagiarism, or reusing material that you've already created: it might be frowned upon in the 21st century, but three centuries ago it was a commonplace practice (Handel, for example, did it all the time). More interesting is the question of reusing music originally created to honour very much earthly, human figures, and reconfiguring it to celebrate the ineffable glories of God. It's been suggested that, in some ways, there was little division between the sacred and the secular in Bach's mind. Wasn't humankind, after all, merely an earthly representation of God's will? Perhaps a more mundane explanation is that, certainly for Bach, royal figures often assumed an almost god-like status, representing merely

Another challenge facing Bach, however, was how to adapt the rather abstract form and tone of a conventional cantata into something that could vividly tell a story. For that, he found a simple but effective solution. As in the *St Matthew Passion* and *St Luke Passion*, a tenor soloist would assume the role of the Evangelist, a narrator whose responsibility it is to guide the audience.

another elevated level in the grand hierarchy between the Almighty and the hoi polloi.

Another challenge facing Bach, however, was how to adapt the rather abstract form and tone of a conventional cantata into something that could vividly tell a story. For that, he found a simple but effective solution. As in the *St Matthew Passion* and *St Luke Passion*, a tenor soloist would assume the role of the Evangelist, a narrator whose responsibility it is to guide the audience. Bach went further, however, in also assigning some of his other soloists to particular parts – an angel in the second cantata, for example. Even the chorus gets in on the act, taking the role of the heavenly choir in part two, or the shepherds in part three.

In fact, it's been argued that Bach paid particularly close attention to the choral elements of the *Christmas Oratorio*'s cantatas,

partly with the simple aim of conveying the splendour and wonder of its story. It's true, for example, that the work's opening chorus stands among the most majestic pieces he created. But another reason may have been to engage, if not actively involve the listener. The tunes of the Christmas Oratorio's chorales, or hymns, would have been well known to 18th-century listeners, who would have been expected to join in, thereby inserting themselves directly into the drama and themes of the work. The same can't be said of 21st-century listeners, of course, so feel free to sit back and simply listen. But bear in mind that those moments of reflection and praise also contain some of Bach's most sumptuous, sometimes surprising harmonies, as though the composer was intent on revitalising something familiar and making it striking and new all over again - something he surely did with the Christmas Oratorio as a whole.

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LIBRETTO

BACH (1685-1750)

Christmas Oratorio, (Cantatas Nos 1-3) sung in German (1734-35)

Cantata No 1

Coro

Jauchzet, frohlocket! Auf, preiset die Tage, rühmet, was heute der Höchste getan! Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die Klage, stimmet voll Jauchzen und Fröhlichkeit an! Dienet dem Höchsten mit herrlichen Chören, lasst uns den Namen des Herrschers verehren!

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Es begab sich aber zu der Zeit, dass ein Gebot von dem Kaiser Augusto ausging, dass alle Welt geschätzet würde. Und jedermann ging, dass er sich schätzen ließe, ein jeglicher in seine Stadt. Da machte sich auch auf Joseph aus Galiläa, aus der Stadt Nazareth, in das jüdische Land zur Stadt David, die da heißet Bethlehem; darum, dass er von dem Hause und Geschlechte David war: auf dass er sich schätzen ließe mit Maria, seinem vertrauten Weibe, die war schwanger. Und als sie daselbst waren, kam die Zeit, dass sie gebären sollte.

Chorus

Triumph, rejoice! rise, praising these days, tell ye what this day the Highest hath done! Abandon fear and banish complaining, Join, filled with triumph and gladness, our song! Serve ye the Highest in glorious chorus, let us the name of our ruler now honour!

Recitative (Evangelist)

It occurred, however, at the time that a decree from the Emperor Augustus went out that all the world should be enrolled. And everyone then went forth to be enrolled, each person unto his own city. And then as well went up Joseph from Galilee from the city of Nazareth into the land of Judea to David's city which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and of the lineage of David, to be enrolled there with Mary, who was betrothed to be his wife, and she was pregnant. And while they were in that place, there came the time for her to be delivered.

Recitativo

Nun wird mein liebster Bräutigam, nun wird der Held aus Davids Stamm zum Trost, zum Heil der Erden einmal geboren werden. Nun wird der Stern aus Jakob scheinen, sein Strahl bricht schon hervor. Auf, Zion, und verlasse nun das Weinen, Dein Wohl steigt hoch empor!

Aria

Bereite Dich, Zion, mit zärtlichen Trieben, den Schönsten, den Liebsten bald bei Dir zu sehn! Deine Wangen müssen heut viel schöner prangen, eile, den Bräutigam sehnlichst zu lieben!

Choral

Wie soll ich Dich empfangen Und wie begegn' ich Dir? O aller Welt Verlangen, o meiner Seelen Zier! O Jesu, Jesu, setze mir selbst die Fackel bei, damit, was Dich ergötze, mir kund und wissend sei!

Recitativo

Und sie gebar ihren ersten Sohn und wickelte ihn in Windeln und legte ihn in eine Krippen, denn sie hatten sonst keinen Raum in der Herberge.

Recitative

Now is my dearest bridegroom, Now is the prince of David's line Is, as earth's redeeming comfort, Here born in time amongst us. Now will shine bright the star of Jacob, Its beam even now breaks forth. Rise, Zion, and abandon now thy weeping, Thy fortune soars aloft.

Aria

Prepare thyself, Zion, with tender affection, The fairest, the dearest soon 'midst thee to see!

Thy cheeks' beauty Must today shine much more brightly, Hasten, the bridegroom to love with deep passion.

Chorale

How shall I then receive thee And how thy presence find? Desire of ev'ry nation, O glory of my soul! O Jesus, Jesus, set out for me thy torch, that all that brings thee pleasure by me be clearly known.

Recitative (Evangelist)

And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him within a manger, for they had no other room in the inn for them.

Choral e Recitativo

Er ist auf Erden kommen arm, wer will die Liebe recht erhöhn, die unser Heiland vor uns hegt? Dass er unser sich erbarm, ja, wer vermag es einzusehen, wie ihn der Menschen Leid bewegt? Und in dem Himmel mache reich, des Höchsten Sohn kömmt in die Welt, weil ihm ihr Heil so wohl gefällt, und seinen lieben Engeln gleich. So will er selbst als Mensch geboren werden. Kyrieleis!

Aria

Großer Herr, o starker König, liebster Heiland, o wie wenig achtest Du der Erden Pracht! Der die ganze Welt erhält, ihre Pracht und Zier erschaffen, muss in harten Krippen schlafen.

Choral

Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein, mach Dir ein rein sanft Bettelein, zu ruhn in meines Herzens Schrein, dass ich nimmer vergesse Dein!

Chorale and Recitative

He is to earth now come so poor, Who will the love then rightly praise, which this our Saviour for us keeps? That he us his mercy show Yea, is there one who understandeth how he by mankind's woe is moved? And in heaven make us rich The Highest's Son comes into the world Because its salvation pleases him so well, And to his own dear angels like. That he is willing to be born as a man. Lord, have mercy!!

Aria

Mighty Lord, O strongest sovereign, Dearest Saviour, O how little Heedest thou all earthly pomp! He who maintains the whole world, and created its glory and adornment, must within the hard crib slumber.

Chorale

Ah my beloved Jesus-child, Make here thy bed, clean, soft and mild For rest within my heart's own shrine, That I no more fail to be thine!

Cantata No 2

Sinfonia

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend auf dem Felde bei den Hürden, die hüteten des Nachts ihre Herde. Und siehe, des Herren Engel trat zu ihnen, und die Klarheit des Herren leuchtet um sie, und sie fürchten sich sehr.

Choral

Brich an, o schönes Morgenlicht, und lass den Himmel tagen! Du Hirtenvolk, erschrecke nicht, weil Dir die Engel sagen, dass dieses schwache Knäbelein soll unser Trost und Freude sein, dazu den Satan zwingen und letztlich Friede bringen!

Recitativo

(Evangelist) Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen: (Engel) Fürchtet euch nicht, siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude, die allem Volke widerfahren wird. Denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt David.

Sinfonia

Recitative (Evangelist)

And there were shepherds in that very region in the field nearby their sheepfolds, who kept their watch by night over their flocks. And see now, the angel of the Lord came before them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

Chorale

Break forth, O beauteous morning light, And bring day to the heavens! Thou shepherd folk, be not afraid, for to thee the angel telleth That this the helpless little boy Shall be our comfort and our joy, here to conquer Satan And peace at last to bring us!

Recitative

(Evangelist) And the angel spake unto them: (Angel) Be not afraid, see now, I proclaim to you news of great gladness, which all the nations of the world will learn. For to you today is the Saviour born, who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David.

Recitativo

Was Gott dem Abraham verheißen, das lässt er nun dem Hirtenchor erfüllt erweisen. Ein Hirt hat alles das zuvor von Gott erfahren müssen. Und nun muss auch ein Hirt die Tat, was er damals versprochen hat, zuerst erfüllet wissen.

Aria

Frohe Hirten, eilt, ach eilet, eh ihr euch zu lang verweilet, eilt, das holde Kind zu sehn! Geht, die Freude heißt zu schön, sucht die Anmut zu gewinnen, geht und labet Herz und Sinnen!

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und das habt zum Zeichen: Ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen.

Choral

Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall, des Herrschaft gehet überall! Da Speise vormals sucht ein Rind, da ruhet itzt der Jungfrau'n Kind.

Recitativo

So geht denn hin, ihr Hirten, geht, dass ihr das Wunder seht: Und findet ihr des Höchsten Sohn in einer harten Krippe liegen, so singet ihm bei seiner Wiegen aus einem süßen Ton und mit gesamtem Chor dies Lied zur Ruhe vor!

Recitative

What God to Abraham did promise, He now allows to the band of shepherds to be shown as fulfilled. A shepherd had all beforehand to learn from God. And now also a shepherd must of the deed, that was promised in the past, first know of the fulfilment

Aria

Joyful shepherds, haste, ah hasten, Ere ye here too long should tarry, Haste, the gracious child to visit! Go, your gladness is too fair, Seek his grace's inspiration, Go and comfort heart and spirit.

Recitative (Evangelist)

And let this be your sign: ye will discover the babe in swaddling clothes there wrapped and in a manger lying.

Chorale

Look there, he lies in manger drear Whose power reacheth ev'rywhere! Where fodder once the ox did seek, There resteth now the Virgin's child.

Recitative

So go then there, ye shepherds, go, That ye this wonder see: And when ye find the Highest's Son Within an austere manger lying, Then sing to him beside his cradle In tones that sweetly ring And with assembled choir This song of slumber bring!

Aria

Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh, wache nach diesem vor aller Gedeihen! Labe die Brust, empfinde die Lust, wo wir unser Herz erfreuen!

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und alsobald war da bei dem Engel die Menge der himmlischen Heerscharen, die lobten Gott und sprachen:

Coro

Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe und Friede auf Erden und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen.

Recitativo

So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und singet, dass es uns heut so schön gelinget! Auf denn! Wir stimmen mit euch ein, uns kann es so wie euch erfreun.

Choral

Wir singen Dir in Deinem Heer aus aller Kraft, Lob, Preis und Ehr, dass Du, o lang gewünschter Gast, Dich nunmehr eingestellet hast.

Aria

Sleep now, my dearest, enjoy now thy rest, Wake on the morrow to flourish in splendour! Lighten thy breast, With joy be thou blest, Where we hold our heart's great pleasure!

Recitative (Evangelist)

And suddenly there was with the angel the multitude of the host of heaven, praising God and saying:

Chorus

Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and good will towards men.

Recitative

Tis meet, ye angels, to sing and triumph, That we today have gained such fortune! Up then! We'll join our voice to yours, We can as well as ye rejoice.

Chorale

We sing to thee amidst thy host With all our strength, laud, fame and praise, That thou, O long desiréd guest, Art come into this world at last.

INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES

Cantata No 3

Coro

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen, lass Dir die matten Gesänge gefallen, wenn Dich Dein Zion mit Psalmen erhöht! Höre der Herzen frohlockendes Preisen, wenn wir Dir itzo die Ehrfurcht erweisen, weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget steht!

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und da die Engel von ihnen gen Himmel fuhren, sprachen die Hirten untereinander:

Coro

Lasset uns nun gehen gen Bethlehem und die Geschichte sehen, die da geschehen ist, die uns der Herr kundgetan hat.

Recitativo

Er hat sein Volk getröst, er hat sein Israel erlöst, die Hülf aus Zion hergesendet und unser Leid geendet. Seht, Hirten, dies hat er getan; geht, dieses trefft ihr an!

Chora

Dies hat er alles uns getan, sein groß Lieb zu zeigen an; des freu sich alle Christenheit und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit. Kyrieleis!

Chorus

Ruler of heaven, give ear to our stammer, Let these our weary refrains bring thee pleasure, As thee thy Zion with psalms doth exalt! Hear thou our hearts, though, exultant with praises, As we to thee here our homage now render, For our salvation stands strong and secure!

Recitative (Evangelist)

And when the angel went away from them up to heaven, said the shepherds one to another:

Chorus

Let us now go quickly to Bethlehem and this event now witness which hath here taken place, that which the Lord made known to us.

Recitative

He brought his people hope, He hath his Israel redeemed, His help from Zion he hath sent us And all our suffring ended. See, shepherds, this thing hath he done; Go, is what you will find!

Chorale

This hath he all for us brought forth, His great love to manifest; Rejoice thus all Christendom And thank him in eternity. Lord, have mercy!

Duetto

Herr, Dein Mitleid, Dein Erbarmen Tröstet uns und macht uns frei. Deine holde Gunst und Liebe, Deine wundersamen Triebe machen Deine Vatertreu wieder neu.

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und sie kamen eilend und funden beide, Mariam und Joseph, dazu das Kind in der Krippe liegen. Da sie es aber gesehen hatten, breiteten sie das Wort aus, welches zu ihnen von diesem Kind gesaget war. Und alle, für die es kam, wunderten sich der Rede, die ihnen die Hirten gesaget hatten. Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.

Aria

Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder fest in Deinem Glauben ein! Lasse dies Wunder, die göttlichen Werke, immer zur Stärke Deines schwachen Glaubens sein!

Recitativo

Ja, ja, mein Herz soll es bewahren, was es an dieser holden Zeit zu seiner Seligkeit für sicheren Beweis erfahren.

Choral

Ich will Dich mit Fleiß bewahren, Ich will Dir Leben hier, Dir will ich abfahren, mit Dir will ich endlich schweben voller Freud ohne Zeit dort im andern Leben.

Duet

Lord, thy mercy, thy forgiveness, Comforts us and sets us free. Thy most gracious love and favour, Thy most wonderful affection Here make thy paternal faith New again.

Recitative (Evangelist)

And they went forth quickly and found there both Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. But when they had seen this, they spread the word which had been told unto them concerning this child. And all to whom it came wondered at the story which had been reported to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept to herself all these sayings, and she pondered them within her heart.

Aria

Keep thou, my heart now, this most blessed wonder fast within thy faith always! And let this wonder, these godly achievements, Always serve to strengthen your weak faith!

Recitative

Oh yes, my heart shall ever cherish All that at this most gracious time To its eternal bliss With certain signs of proof hath witnessed.

Chorale

I will thee steadfastly cherish, For thy sake My life make, In thee I will perish, With thee will I one day hover Full of joy Beyond time in the other life.

Recitativo (Evangelist)

Und die Hirten kehrten wieder um, preiseten und lobten Gott um alles, das sie gesehen und gehöret hatten, wie denn zu ihnen gesaget war.

Choral

Seid froh dieweil, dass euer Heil ist hie ein Gott und auch ein Mensch geboren, der, welcher ist der Herr und Christ in Davids Stadt, von vielen auserkoren.

Coro

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen, lass Dir die matten Gesänge gefallen, wenn Dich Dein Zion mit Psalmen erhöht! Höre der Herzen frohlockendes Preisen, wenn wir Dir itzo die Ehrfurcht erweisen, weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget steht!

Recitative (Evangelist)

And the shepherds then turned back again, glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had seen and heard, just as it had been told to them.

Chorale

Be glad this while, For your salvation Is born as both God and man, The one who is The Lord and Christ In David's city, out of many chosen.

Chorus

Ruler of heaven, give ear to our stammer, Let these our weary refrains bring thee pleasure, as thee thy Zion with psalms doth exalt! Hear thou our hearts, though, exultant with praises, as we to thee here our homage now render, for our salvation stands strong and secure!

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ENDS

Conductor

VÁCLAV LUKS



Václav Luks studied at the Pilsen Conservatoire and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, and furthered his education with the specialised study of early music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland.

In 2005 he founded the Prague baroque orchestra Collegium 1704 and the vocal ensemble Collegium Vocale 1704. Under his leadership, the ensembles have made guest appearances at prestigious festivals, have performed in important European concert halls in such cities as Berlin, Vienna, Salzburg, Brussels, Amsterdam, Warsaw and London, and have shared the stage with some of the world's most acclaimed singers including Magdalena Kožená, Karina Gauvin, Vivica Genaux, Sandrine Piau, Philippe Jaroussky, Bejun Mehta, Sarah Mingardo, Adam Plachetka, and Andreas Scholl.

Since 2021 has been guest conducting the Handel & Haydn Society in Boston, and for the 2022-2025 seasons he is an artist-in-residence of the Kammerakademie Potsdam.

Besides working intensively with Collegium 1704, Václav Luks also appears with other acclaimed orchestras in the field of early music such as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Netherlands Bach Society, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Concerto Köln, and La Cetra Barockorchester Basel.

His engagements with modern orchestras include collaborations with the Czech Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and the Southwest German Radio Symphony Orchestra among others. At a benefit concert for the restoration of the Notre Dame Cathedral, Václav Luks conducted the Orchestre nationale de France, with which he has been appearing regularly since 2019, and the French radio station France Musique devoted five broadcasts of its series *Grands interprètes de la musique Classique* to him. In June 2022 he was honoured with France's Ordre *des Arts et des Lettres* for his significant contributions to culture.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Soprano

JULIA DOYLE



Originally from Lancaster, Julia studied Social and Political Sciences at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge before embarking on a singing career, and has since performed all over the world and become established as a specialist soprano in Baroque repertoire.

She has performed Bach *St John Passion* at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam (Sir John Eliot Gardiner), and in Toronto (Tafelmusik), *St Matthew Passion* at Alice Tully Hall in New York (Philippe Herreweghe), *Christmas Oratorio* in Sydney and Melbourne with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (Richard Tognetti), BWV 202 with Music of the Baroque in Chicago (Nicholas Kraemer), BWV 199 with Bach Vereniging (Alfredo Bernadini), Mozart *Exsultate Jubilate* at the Cité de la Musique in Paris (Arsys Bourgogne), *Mass in C Minor* in Budapest (Györgi Vashegyi), Handel *Occasional Oratorio* at the Halle Handel Festival (English Concert), *La Resurezzione* at the Wigmore Hall (London Handel Orchestra), *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Richard Cooke) and at the Palace of Versailles with The King's Consort (Robert King), *Apollo e Dafne* with Concerto Copenhagen (Alfredo Bernadini), Haydn *Nelson Mass* in the Canary Islands with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightement (Eamonn Dougan), Haydn *Paukenmesse* and Beethoven Symphony No 9 with J.S. Bach Stiftung (Rudolf Lutz), and Haydn *Creation* in St Paul's Cathedral with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Recent and future engagements include Mozart *Mass in C Minor* in Toronto with Tafelmusik, tours of Europe performing Vivaldi Juditha Triumphans and Messiah with The King's Consort, Handel Aci, Galatea e Polifemo at Halle Handel Festival (Peter Neumann), performances of *Messiah* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, City of Birmingham Choir, Rias Kammerchor as well as at Canterbury Catherdral and York Minster, a European tour of *St John Passion* with the Orchestra of the 18th Century, Bach Cantatas with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, concerts and recordings of Bach *St John Passion* with J.S. Bach Stiftung (Rudolf Lutz), *St Matthew Passion* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Handel Occasional Oratorio with Bayerische Rundfunk (Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin) as well as recitals in Cambridge and Norfolk with the lutenist Matthew Wadsworth.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Mezzo Soprano

HELEN CHARLSTON



Helen Charlston was recently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist (2021-23), and finalist of the 2021 Kathleen Ferrier Awards for which she was a recipient of the Ferrier Loveday Song Prize. In 2023 she won a Gramophone Award for Best Concept Album, and collected the Vocal award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards, both for her second Delphian album *Battle Cry*, the only recording that year to win at both ceremonies.

This season, Helen makes her debut at the Gran Teatre del Liceu as Sesto in Calixto Bieito's production of *Giulio Cesare* conducted by William Christie, and sings Handel's *Messiah* at BBC Proms with The Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Bach's *St John Passion* with the Academy of Ancient Music, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with WDR Köln under Simon Halsey and Bach's *Magnificat* with RIAS Kammerchor under Justin Doyle in South Korea. In recital she performs *Battle Cry* with Toby Carr at Brucknerhaus Linz, with Sholto Kynoch at the Oxford International Song Festival, a programme of Handel with the Prague Philharmonia at Lobkowicz Palace, and she returns to Wigmore Hall.

Other opera appearances have included her debut at Versailles Royal Opera singing Dido in Purcell *Dido & Aeneas*, at Grange Festival singing Sorceress/Spirit in the same opera and most recently she covered the title role in Charpentier *Médée* at Opéra national de Paris. She has also toured two semi-staged productions with Les Arts Florissants and William Christie singing Dido and Rosmira in Handel *Partenope* across France and Canada.

Recent appearances on the concert platform include premieres of a new song cycle written for her as a companion piece to Schumann *Dichterliebe* by Héloïse Werner at the Oxford International Song Festival and Wigmore Hall, Bach *B minor mass* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Richard Egarr, as well as Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the BBC Proms with Maxim Emelyanychev, Britten's *Phaedra* live in concert with BBC Philharmonic, Handel's *Messiah* with the Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, and Britten Sinfonia, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* with the RIAS Kammerchor at the Berlin Philharmonie with Justin Doyle, Mahler *Lieder eines fahrenden gesellen* with BBC Philharmonic and Irene in Handel *Theodora* with Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco. Tenor

ROBIN TRITSCHLER



A previous BBC New Generation Artist and Royal Academy of Music graduate, Irish tenor Robin Tritschler is acclaimed for his "radiantly lyrical" voice, garnering praise from critics and audiences alike.

Highlights this season see Robin tour Monteverdi *Vespers* with Ensemble Pygmalion and Raphaël Pichon, Beethoven 9 with Pichon in Paris, embark on a *Messiah* concert tour with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, join the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Václav Luks, and the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra with Daniel Reuss. Robin will also make his Australian debut singing recitals in Adelaide with Olli Mustonen and returns to the Wigmore Hall, London.

Last season Robin made his debut with the London Symphony Orchestra for Bruckner's *Te Deum* conducted by Nathalie Stutzmann. He also joined Raphaël Pichon and the Munich Philharmonic for concerts of Mozart's *Mass in C minor* and returned to the Salzburg Festival with Maxime Pascal. Previous highlights also include opening the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's season with performances of *Beethoven's Symphony No* 9 with Stutzmann, returning later as the Evangelist in performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Robin also joined the Ulster Orchestra for Haydn's *The Creation* (Daniele Rustioni), Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Oslo Domkor and later with the Dresdner Kreuzchor and for Glyndebourne Festival Opera Robin sang Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) with Evan Rogister.

Bass Baritone

FLORIAN STÖRTZ



German bass-baritone Florian Störtz announced his arrival on the European concert scene with victories at 2023 International Handel Singing Competition and the 2023 Helmut Deutsch Song Competition. Together with pianist Mark Rogers he also took the Prix de mélodie at the 2023 Lili et Nadia Boulanger competition in Paris and won the Young Artists Platform at the International Song Festival Zeist, Utrecht 2024.

Florian's 24-25 season sees important débuts singing Bach and Charpentier with the Monteverdi Choir under Christophe Rousset, Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Václav Luks, Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ* with the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic under Paul McCreesh and *Bach B Minor Mass* with The English Concert directed by Kristian Bezuidenhout. A current Rising Star of the Enlightenment, his many forthcoming engagements with the ensemble include a European tour of the *Matthäuspassion* under Jonathan Cohen. He will record his début recital disc with pianist Aleksandra Myslek for Delphian.

Florian recently sang Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Masaaki Suzuki and Handel's *Esther* at the London Handel Festival with Laurence Cummings. His recording of Duruflé's *Requiem* with the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge and Stephen Layton is released by Hyperion and was awarded a Diapason d'Or.

He has given recitals in Leeds with Graham Johnson, Zell am See with Helmut Deutsch, a German song programme at Carnegie Hall with Renée Fleming's SongStudio as well as French song recitals at Salle Cortot, Paris and Wigmore Hall. He also presented Handel and Purcell at the Händel-Festspiele Halle. Florian is an alumnus of the Royal Academy of Music and the Britten Pears Young Artist Programme and recevies generous support from the City Music Foundation. Having enjoyed his upbringing in the vocal music environment around Trier Cathedral, Germany he is now based in London.

Chorus Director

GREGORY BATSLEER



Gregory Batsleer is acknowledged as one of the leading choral conductors of his generation, winning widespread recognition for his creativity and vision. Since taking on the role of SCO Chorus Director in 2009 he has led the development of the Chorus, overseeing vocal coaching, the SCO Young Singers' Programme and the emergence of regular a capella concerts. As well as preparing the Chorus for regular performances with the Orchestra, he has directed successful appearances at the Edinburgh International Jazz, East Neuk, Glasgow Cathedral and St Andrews Voices Festivals, at Greyfriars Kirk and on the SCO's Summer Tour.

In 2021 Gregory took up the position of Festival Director for the London Handel Festival. He leads programming and development of the Festival, fulfilling its mission to bring Handel's music to the widest possible audiences. Since 2017 he has been Artistic Director of Huddersfield Choral Society and was Chorus Director with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2015 - 2021.

As guest conductor, Gregory has worked with many of the UK's leading orchestras and ensembles. Recent highlights include performances with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, RSNO, Hallé Orchestra, Black Dyke Band, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Orchestra of Opera North, Manchester Camerata, SCO and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

From 2012 to 2017, he was Artistic Director of the National Portrait Gallery's Choir in Residence programme, the first ever in-house music programme of any gallery or museum in the world. He has curated and devised performances for the Southbank Centre, Wilderness Festival and Latitude and collaborated with leading cultural figures across a variety of different art forms. Gregory is the co-founder and conductor of Festival Voices, a versatile ensemble dedicated to cross-art collaboration.

As a non-executive director, Gregory sits on the board of Manchester Camerata. His outstanding work as a choral director was recognised with the 2015 Arts Foundation's first-ever Fellowship in Choral Conducting.

Gregory's Chair is kindly supported by Anne McFarlane

Biography

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023. Their latest recording, of Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8, was released on 1 November.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.

SCO CHORUS



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus, under the direction of Gregory Batsleer since 2009, has built a reputation as one of Scotland's most vibrant and versatile choirs. Widely regarded as one of the finest orchestral choruses in the UK, it celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2021.

Members enjoy the unique opportunity of performing with one of the world's leading chamber orchestras, working with international conductors including Maxim Emelyanychev, Andrew Manze, Harry Christophers, Richard Egarr, Václav Luks and Sir James MacMillan.

The Chorus appears regularly with the Orchestra in Scotland's major cities. Recent concerts have covered a wide range of music including Bach Mass in B minor, Brahms Requiem, Stravinsky Mass, Haydn *Creation*, a rare performance of Vaughan Williams *Flos Campi* and the premiere of *The Years* by Anna Clyne, SCO Associate Composer 2019-2022. The world premiere of Sir James MacMillan's *Composed in August* was a highlight of the 2023-24 Season.

The SCO Chorus also performs a capella, both digital and live, in music ranging from Thomas Tallis to new work by Anna Clyne and Jay Capperauld. Its annual Christmas concerts have established themselves as a Season highlight; the Chorus also enjoys appearing on the SCO's Summer Tour.

Other notable out-of-Season appearances have included critically-acclaimed performances with the SCO at the BBC Proms in Handel's *Jephtha* in 2019 and in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 2023. The Chorus appeared in a semi-staged performance of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the 2023 Edinburgh International Festival, resulting in an immediate re-invitation for *Così fan tutte* in 2024.

Our Young Singers' Programme was established in 2015 to nurture and develop aspiring young singers. It is designed for young people with a high level of choral experience and ambitions to further their singing with a world-class ensemble.

Further information at **sco.org.uk**

The SCO Chorus Young Singers' Programme is kindly supported by the Baird Educational Trust and the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust.

YOUR CHORUS TONIGHT

Gregory Batsleer Chorus Director

Stuart Hope Associate Chorusmaster

Emma Morwood Voice Coach

Susan White Chorus Manager

* Young Singers' Programme

SOPRANO

Kirstin Anderson Naomi Black Maria Campbell* Morven Chisholm Mairi Day Nicola Henderson Lisa Johnston Katie McGlew Jenny Nex Ciara O'Neill* Annike Petin Kotryna Sarkutė Alison Williams

ALTO

Shona Banks Sarah Campbell Judith Colman Anne Gallacher Jennie Gardner Claire Goodenough Holly Gowen* Anne Grindley Caroline Hahn Melissa Humphreys Elaine McAdam Jan Raitt Linda Ruxton

TENOR

Matthew Andrews Andrew Carvel Ben Evans* Colin French Peter Hanman Theodore Hill Fraser Macdonald* Keith Main Michael Scanlon Paul Vaughan

BASS

Conrad Boyle* Hugh Hillyard-Parker Richard Hyder Donald MacLeod Sandy Matheson Kenneth Murray Douglas Nicholson David Paterson Fraser Riddell Peter Silver Stephen Todd RoderickWylie

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