LONDON CONCERT CHOIR

est. 1960

President Roderick Williams OBE

Music Director Mark Forkgen



A Symphony of Psalms

Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 7:45pm Holy Trinity Sloane Square

Programme £3

lcchoir.uk



WELCOME TO HOLY TRINITY SLOANE SQUARE

Please note:

- The consumption of food is not allowed in the Church. •
- Please switch off mobile phones and alarms on digital watches. •
- Flash photography and audio or video recording are not permitted. •
- There will be an interval of 20 minutes during which drinks will be served

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Programme designed by Stephen Rickett and edited by Eleanor Cowie

Wit acknowledgements to Making Music for the Stravinsky Programme Note.

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A Symphony of Psalms

Psalm settings by Franck, Gabrieli, Howells, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Kodály

Stravinsky: Symphony of Psalms

Mark Forkgen conductor

Ben Markovic *organ/piano* Dominika Mak *piano* London Concert Choir

There will be an Interval of 20 minutes after the Elgar

A Symphony of Psalms

This concert of contrasting psalm settings by composers from the 17th to the 20th Centuries illustrates the wide variety of themes in the Book of Psalms, from praise and celebration to thanksgiving, prayer, despair and hope.

The Book of Psalms is an anthology of Hebrew religious hymns attributed to King David and others. They were composed over several centuries and put together in the fifth century BCE. There are 150 psalms In the Jewish and Western Christian traditions, and several more in the Eastern Christian churches.

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)

PSALM 150

FOR SATB CHORUS AND ORGAN

Psalm 150, *Praise ye the Lord*, the very last in the Book of Psalms, is a fervent exhortation to praise God in music. Franck wrote this setting of a French version of the text in 1883 for the inauguration of the organ at a college for young blind people in Paris. The piece includes bold harmonies and chromaticism, while the basically simple choral writing, composed with the young students in mind, contrasts with the complexity of the organ part.

Alleluia!
Praise God, hidden in his
sanctuary,
Praise God who reigns in his immensity.
Praise him in his strength and his mighty miracles,
Praise him in his glory and his majesty!
Praise him with the voice of
loud trumpets,
For him let the harp join with the lyre
Praise him in your festivals, to the sound of the timbrel,
on the organ and the lute, sing again!
May the cymbals in your hands resonate for him, in loud and joyful harmony. Let every living thing that breathes, Every sigh that is exhaled, Say: Praise to him, praise to the King of heaven. Alleluia!

GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1557–1612) JUBILATE DEO

FOR SSAATTBB CHORUS

Gabrieli's masterly eight-part setting of *Jubilate Deo* includes verses from a number of psalms. A native of Venice, where he was organist at St Mark's, Gabrieli probably wrote the work in around 1605. The inclusion of the words 'Deus Israel conjugat vos' suggests that it was intended for the Feast of the Ascension, when each year the Doge celebrated the marriage of Venice to the sea by casting a ring into the lagoon.

Jubilate Deo omnis terra, (Ps 100:1)	Be joyful in the Lord, all the earth,
quia sic benedicetur homo qui timet	for so he that fears the Lord shall be
Dominum. (Ps 128:5)	blessed.
Jubilate Deo omnis terra.	Be joyful in the Lord, all the earth.
Deus Israel conjugat vos et ipse sit vobiscum.	May the God of Israel unite you and
<i>(Tobit 7:15)</i>	himself be with you.
Mittat vobis auxilium de sancto, et de Sion tueatur vos. (Ps 20:2)	May he send you help from the sanctuary and strengthen you from Sion.
Jubilate Deo omnis terra.	Be joyful in the Lord, all the earth.
Benedicat vobis Dominus ex Sion, qui fecit	May the Lord who made heaven and earth
caelum et terram. (<i>Ps 134:4</i>)	give you his blessing from Sion.
Jubilate Deo omnis terra.	Be joyful in the Lord, all the earth.
Servite Domino in laetitia. <i>(Ps 100:1)</i>	Serve the Lord with gladness.

HERBERT HOWELLS (1892–1983) PSALM-PRELUDE, SET 1, NO. 1

FOR ORGAN

Like Stanford (his teacher) and Vaughan Williams, Holst and Parry, Howells wrote in a distinctively English style, developed around the turn of the 20th Century, which combined a regard for tradition with a new way of using musical language.

Howells had been an organ pupil at Gloucester Cathedral and his compositions display his deep familiarity with the instrument's capabilities, combining rich harmonies with intricate counterpoint. This Psalm-Prelude dates from 1915 and is a musical meditation on Psalm 34, verse 6, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles". (It may be relevant that 1915 was the year in which Howells was diagnosed with Graves' disease and given six months to live; fortunately he was treated successfully and lived to be 90.)

The piece begins slowly, *poco appenato* (suffering) in D minor. The music grows in volume and urgency to a climax then gradually subsides, finally resolving on a hushed chord of D major.

HERBERT HOWELLS

LIKE AS THE HART DESIRETH THE WATERBROOKS (PSALM 42)

FOR SATB CHORUS AND ORGAN

Like as the Hart is a 'quietly intense' and poignant setting by Howells of the first three verses of Psalm 42, expressing the psalmist's anguished longing for God. It was written in January1941, when the composer was snowed up in the West country, away from the air assault on London.

After an organ introduction, the tenor and bass voices present a lyrical melody in unison, followed by the sopranos. These are interwoven with impassioned contributions from the full choir._

Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night: while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God?

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) PSALM 43: RICHTE MICH, GOTT, OP. 78, NO. 2 FOR SSAATTBB CHORUS

As a composer of sacred music, Mendelssohn is probably best known for his oratorios, including *St Paul*, which the choir will perform next March, but he also set numerous psalms, and composed cantatas, anthems, motets and other liturgical pieces in Latin, German, and English. The anthem *Richte mich*, *Gott* (Judge me, O God) was written in 1843.

Mendelssohn uses two four-part choirs, one of sopranos and altos, the other, tenors and basses. The upper and lower voices often sing alternately, with the tenor and bass voices generally singing in unison in contrast with the four-part harmony of the female choir. Richte mich, Gott, und führe meine Sache wider das unheilige Volk, und errette mich von den falschen und bösen Leuten. Denn du bist der Gott meiner Stärke; warum verstössest du mich? Warum lässest du mich so traurig geh'n, wenn mein Feind mich drängt? Sende dein Licht und deine Wahrheit, dass sie mich leiten zu deinem heiligen Berge, und zu deiner Wohnung.

Dass ich hineingehe zum Altar Gottes, zu dem Gott, der meine Freude und Wonne ist, und dir, Gott, auf der Harfe danke, mein Gott. Was bretrübst du dich, meine Seele, und bist so unruhig in mir? Harre auf Gott! Denn ich werde ihm noch danken, dass er meines Angesichts Hülfe, und mein Gott ist. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: and deliver me from deceitful and unjust men. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: that they may lead me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling.

That I may I go unto the altar of God, unto God who is my joy and delight: and praise thee upon the harp, O God my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet thank him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934) GIVE UNTO THE LORD (PSALM 29), OP.74

FOR SATB CHORUS AND ORGAN

The anthem *Give unto the Lord* was written for the Festival service celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Sons of the Clergy at St Paul's Cathedral on 30 April 1914.

Beginning in grand ceremonial style, the anthem presents a series of vivid images of the voice of the Lord ruling the natural world: powerful, full of majesty, breaking the cedars and shaking the wilderness. After a reflective section 'In His temple...', there is a return to the grandeur of the opening and the anthem concludes in a gentler mood with the assurance of 'the blessing of peace' – a peace which was soon to be shattered.

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The Voice of the Lord is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth, It is the Lord that ruleth the sea, The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.

Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

Yea, the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire; Yea, the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; And strippeth the forests bare.

In his temple doth every one speak of His glory. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The Lord sitteth above the water-flood; And the Lord remaineth a King for ever. The Lord shall give strength unto his people; The Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882-1967)

PSALM 114: WHEN ISRAEL CAME OUT OF EGYPT FOR SATB CHORUS AND ORGAN

Kodály was one of the outstanding personalities of 20th-century Hungarian culture. Almost as well-known for his work in music education as for his compositions, he wrote an enormous quantity of choral music. This straightforward setting of Psalm 114, dating from 1958, describes how the mountains and hills leapt for joy after the Red Sea parted to allow the Israelites to escape from slavery in Egypt.

When Israel came out of Egypt And the House of Jacob from out the bonds of a stranger's land, Judah he made his sanctuary And his dominion Israel where lay the promised land.

Great rivers parted when they saw it, Jordan's great waters fell before it, Mountains of rock skipped forth like the rams, And the hills leap'd as the lambs, skipped as the little new lambs. Tell it, O sea, what ailed thee? That thou fledst. Thou Jordan that wast driven back? Ye mountain peaks, ye little hill and tree, As the young lambs ye leap'd from the earth; O mighty hills what ailed thee?

Ttremble before the Lord God of Jacob, Thou mighty peaks and hills that fear him, tremble before thy King, Who made the waters from the standing rock, Who turned the flint into a flowing stream.

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971) SYMPHONY OF PSALMS

FOR SATB CHORUS AND PIANO DUET

Stravinsky composed the *Symphony of Psalms* for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 50th anniversary in 1930. Written during the composer's neo-classical period, the piece is profoundly spiritual and stemmed from his recent religious reawakening, which had led him to return to the Russian Orthodox Church. There are three movements, performed without a break, and the texts sung by the choir are drawn from the Vulgate Latin Bible.

Stravinsky explained his reason for calling the work a Symphony by stating that "It is not a symphony in which I have included Psalms to be sung". On the contrary, "it is the singing of the Psalms that I am symphonising". In its original form, the work was scored for choir and orchestra, but his son Svyatoslav later produced this version for choir and piano duet.

I.

The first movement opens with a prelude-like section in which Stravinsky's predilection for rhythm is immediately apparent. He also sometimes uses an octatonic scale, consisting of alternating tones and semi-tones. An accompaniment of flowing decorative figurations is punctuated irregularly by urgent E minor chords; this interval proves to be a defining characteristic of the whole movement. The singing of the psalm is led by the altos, chanting a melody comprising basically only two notes (E and F) a minor second apart. The chorus sings its lines mainly in slow block chords (with passing notes) over a busy, running accompaniment. Stravinsky described this first movement as "the prayer of the sinner for divine pity". Exaudi orationem meam, Domine,
et deprecationem meam;
auribus percipe lacrimas meas.Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and my supplication;
give ear to my tears.Ne sileas, quoniam advena ego sum apud te,
et peregrinus, sicut omnes patres mei.Be not silent, for I am a stranger with thee,
and a sojourner as all my fathers were.
O forgive me, that I may be refreshed,
before I depart and am no more.

Psalm 38: Verses 13 and 14 in the Vulgate (Ps 39: 12 & 13, Authorised Version)

II.

The second movement, which he described as "the recognition of grace received", is a double fugue: one subject, reminiscent of the counterpoint of Bach, is assigned to the accompaniment and characterised by wide leaps; the other subject, sung by the chorus, is less angular in structure but complements the first perfectly. After a brief pause, the voices re-enter *fortissimo*, singing together the text 'Et immisit in os meum canticum novum' and the movement ends as they sing 'et sperabunt in Domino' in a quiet unison.

Expectans expectavi Dominum, et intendit mihi.	I waited patiently for the Lord, and he was attentive to me.
Et exaudivit preces meas,	And he heard my prayers,
et eduxit me de lacu miseriae	and brought me out of the pit of misery
et de luto faecis.	and the miry clay.
Et statuit super petram pedes meos,	And he set my feet upon a rock,
et direxit gressus meos.	and directed my steps.
Et immisit in os meum canticum novum, carmen	And he put a new song into my mouth,
Deo nostro. Videbunt multi, et timebunt, et	a song to our God. Many shall see, and
sperabunt in Domino.	shall fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Psalm 39: 2-4 (Ps 40: 1-3, AV)

III.

The final movement is a "hymn of praise and glory" to the text of Psalm 150. A hushed 'Alleluia' is followed by a slow opening section, beginning with the words 'Laudate Dominum' (Praise the Lord).

After a faster instrumental passage full of quirky rhythms, the choir sings the next verse of the psalm, beginning with 'Laudate Eum' (Praise Him), interspersed with syncopated interjections of 'Laudate Dominum' and a repeat of the introductory 'Alleluia'. Next comes a brief episode in which the piano part gallops along in brisk triplets, which Stravinsky said was inspired by a vision of Elijah's chariot ascending into the heavens.

He noted that the final section "must be thought of as issuing from the skies", as "agitation is followed by the 'calm of praise'". Towards the end there is an echo of the 'Alleluia', and the work finishes on a radiant chord of C major.

Alleluia.

Laudate Dominum in sanctis Eius. Laudate Eum in firmamento virtutis Eius. Laudate Eum in virtutibus Eius, Laudate Eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis Eius.

Laudate Eum in sono tubae. [Laudate eum in psalterio et cithara] Laudate Eum in timpano et choro, Laudate Eum in cordis et organo, Laudate Eum in cymbalis benesonantibus.

Laudate Eum in cymbalis jubilationibus. Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum. Alleluia. Laudate Dominum.

Alleluia.

Praise the Lord in His sanctuary. Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts, Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. [Praise him with the psaltery and harp.] Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. Praise Him with strings and organ. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals.

Praise Him with joyful cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Alleluia. Praise ye the Lord.



MARK FORKGEN CONDUCTOR



Mark Forkgen has been the Music Director of London Concert Choir since 1996. He is also Music Director of Canticum chamber choir, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of Kokoro (the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's New Music Group) and Director of Music at Tonbridge School.

He has conducted major UK orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, English Chamber Orchestra, Northern Philharmonia and Manchester Camerata, and appeared at major venues, including the Royal Festival Hall, the Royal Albert Hall and the Barbican. Outside the UK he has conducted in Denmark, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Eire, the Czech Republic, Italy, Bulgaria and Hong Kong.

A specialist in the field of choral and contemporary music, Mark also enjoys an active life as a pianist, focusing on twentieth-century and contemporary music, and has been Conductor and Artistic Advisor for a number of highly acclaimed festivals.

Highlights this Autumn include a programmes of Marian music and one charting the life of Christ ('From Advent to Ascension'), Brahms' Symphony No 4, a production of *Guys and Dolls* and masterclasses in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

BEN MARKOVIC ORGAN/PIANO



Ben is a London-based freelance pianist, organist, and teacher. He holds the post of Director of Music and Organist at St Mary's, Barnes, and is studying on a scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music for a Masters' degree in Collaborative Piano, under the tutelage of Joesph Middleton and Michael Dussek. He is active as an accompanist, having performed across London and beyond with ensembles including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the St Martin's Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of the London Choral Sinfonia.

A recent graduate from the University of Cambridge, Ben read music at Queens' College, holding the Aliki Vatikioti Organ Scholarship and both the Beament Prize and Michael Williamson Instrumental Scholarship. He was an accompanist on the Sir Arthur Bliss Lieder Scheme 2022/3, and has performed in masterclasses with Sir Thomas Allen, Iestyn Davies, Roderick Williams and Ailish Tynan.

He was a finalist in the 2023 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition and is a regular accompanist with the Rodolfus Foundation and National Children's Choir of Great Britain. In 2023/4, he held the post of Organ Scholar at St Stephen's, Walbrook with St Martin-in-the-Fields, accompanying the renowned Choral Scholars, St Martin's Voices Emerging Artists and Chamber Choir in services, concerts and on tour in Utrecht, and has taught piano at Tonbridge School.

Ben holds both the Fellowship Diploma of the Royal College of Organists and the Licentiateship of Trinity College London (in piano performance), passing with distinction. He has given recitals at venues including St John's College, Cambridge; Trinity College, Cambridge; St Edmundsbury Cathedral; Birmingham Cathedral and Worcester Cathedral.

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DOMINIKA MAK PIANO



Dominika Mak is a Polish classical pianist, currently undertaking the Master of Arts course at the Royal Academy of Music under the tutelage of Christopher Elton (Professor Emeritus). While completing her BA and MPhil in Music at Trinity College, Cambridge, Dominika became the Artistic Director of a College Music Society, a choral soprano in Trinity College Choir, under Stephen Layton OBE, a Chopin scholar, an avid accompanist, and a solo pianist. In the past, Dominika has benefited from tuition from professors Pascal Nemirovski at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and Graham Caskie at Chethams' School of Music.

The 'liquidity' of Dominika's performances of Chopin's works has been described as 'perfection.' Recent performances include his Piano Concerto op. 21 in F minor with Sam Gray and TCMS Orchestra, Preludes op. 28 and Sonata in B Minor op. 58. Dominika is also a keen promoter of the works of Polish composers such as Szymanowski and Bacewicz, as well taking a keen interest in French composers from Rameau to Ravel. She has given performances at St John's Smith Square, St James's Piccadilly, St Martin-in-the-Fields, West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge, and other venues. She has taken masterclasses with Yevgeny Subdin, Ann Queffélec, Wojciech Świtała, Katya Apekisheva, Tessa Nicholson, Stephen Hough and other esteemed pianists and is a keen chamber music player. A choral scholarship in Trinity College Choir under Stephen Layton led to accompanying Brahms' Requiem (piano duet) with Trinity College Choir and The Holst Singers in London and Cambridge.

Future performances include a concert in the National Gallery Myra Hess Series, at the London POSK Chopin Gala, the Oxford and Cambridge Club, The Mathiesen Gallery, and Isle of Man with Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto. Recent successes include the Oxford and Cambridge Prize, Third Prize in the Royal Academy of Music Schumann Song Competition, and finalist of the Yamaha Music Scholarship. Dominika holds the Help Musicians Myra Hess Award for the academic year 2024-2025. She is a beneficiary of Talent Unlimited Charity.



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One of London's leading amateur choirs, London Concert Choir celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2020. The choir is notable for the commitment and musicality of its performances in an unusually varied repertoire and regularly appears with Mark Forkgen at London's premier concert venues, while tours abroad have included visits to France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain.

The choir's 50th anniversary was marked by two performances of Britten's *War Requiem*. Other major works have included Rachmaninov's choral symphony *The Bells* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms' *German Requiem* and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, all with Southbank Sinfonia. The choir has also taken part in the St John's Smith Square Christmas Festival, together with Southbank Sinfonia.

Operas in concert performance have ranged from Purcell's King Arthur and Dido and Aeneas to Gershwin's Porgy and Bess. Performances with Counterpoint period instrumental ensemble include Handel's Messiah, Bach's St Matthew and St John Passions and Christmas Oratorio, Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 and Mozart's 'Great' C minor Mass. LCC has also performed Rachmaninov's Vespers and Will Todd's Mass in Blue and a selection of highlights from the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

London Concert Choir often gives concerts for charity, including Christmas Carol concerts in aid of St George's Hospital Children's wards. Among the choir's new music commissions have been A Light not yet Ready to Go Out by Alison Willis, in aid of Breast Cancer Now, and Per Ardua ad Astra, a major work by Roderick Williams to commemorate the centenary of the RAF.

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LONDON CONCERT CHOIR

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London Concert Choir appreciates the encouragement of our audiences, especially those of you who come along regularly, bringing friends and family with you, and those who share the word about our achievements, enhancing our reputation.

As one of London's leading choirs we want to share our joy in making music with as many people as possible, but performing large concerts at major venues with professional soloists and orchestras requires more financial support than we can get from ticket sales alone. We rely on donations from our Friends, Companions and Patrons who give regularly.

We would love you to join them by becoming a regular financial supporter! You will receive a mention in our concert programmes, regular communications from the Choir, invitations to supporter events and the gratitude of our membership!

To find out more, please email: supporters@londonconcertchoir.org

JOINING THE CHOIR

London Concert Choir welcomes new members, who are invited to attend a few rehearsals before an informal audition. Rehearsals are on Monday nights at Bloomsbury Baptist Church near Tottenham Court Road station. If you are interested in joining the choir, please fill in your details online at: **Iondonconcertchoir.org**

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

If you would like to receive advance information about our concerts, you can join the choir's free mailing list by clicking on the link on the home page of the website.

The information you provide is subject to data protection regulations (GDPR) and as such will be used exclusively by London Concert Choir.

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FUTURE CONCERTS

SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER 2024, 7:30PM ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH, PONT STREET, SW1 ADVENT CONCERT

WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2024, 7:45PM HOLY TRINITY SLOANE SQUARE, SW1 CAROLS FOR CHOIR AND AUDIENCE

WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2025 CADOGAN HALL, SLOANE SQUARE, SW1 MENDELSSOHN – ST. PAUL (IN GERMAN)

MONDAY 14 JULY 2025, 7:30PM CADOGAN HALL, SLOANE SQUARE, SW1 DUKE ELLINGTON – SACRED CONCERT