

Leith Hill Musical Festival



Registered Charity No.275176

December 2014: For immediate release

Brian Kay celebrates 20 years as conductor of Leith Hill Musical Festival

The 2015 Leith Hill Musical Festival is a double celebration as we mark our 110th anniversary year and Brian Kay's 20th as Festival Conductor.

The season includes our commission from one of the world's most popular choral composers, Bob Chilcott, *Dances of Time*. Five contrasting pieces dance us through various ways of looking at time, particularly poignant for Bob and Brian who have known each other for 50 years. It is premièred by the Division 1 choirs on Friday 10th April.

Our President, John Rutter, has very kindly written a short piece as a gift for Brian and the Festival. *Awake, ye heavenly choirs*, will be performed at the Division 2 and 3 concerts (Thursday and Saturday).

Thursday sees a rare performance of the only recently discovered *The Garden of Proserpine* by our founding conductor, Ralph Vaughan Williams, alongside a choral favourite, Mozart's *Requiem*.

Another contemporary composer, Cecilia McDowall's work can be heard on Saturday night. *A Fancy of Folksongs* is a suite of four imaginative arrangements and compliments Franz Schubert's *Magnificat*, itself recalling the joyfully expressive music of the earlier composer, Joseph Haydn, from whose famous oratorio *The Seasons*, the choirs will perform *Spring*.

Our 8th March concert, when independent singers join those from the twelve Festival choirs, will be *Messiah* and our Youth Choirs' Competition takes place on 14th March.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

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All competitions and concerts take place at Dorking Halls, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1SG.

How to Book:

Via the LHMF Box Office:

Download a booking form for full details at:

<http://www.lhmf.org.uk/>

Email: Boxoffice@lhmf.org.uk

Tel: 01403 240093

Via the Dorking Halls

<http://www.dorkinghalls.org.uk>

Tel: 01306 881717

Tickets £9 - £22. Three and four concert Season tickets are available via the LHMF Box Office only.

The Festival competitions are open to the public from 9 a.m. each day and the entrance fee includes a programme.

Division 1 choirs
Buckland & Betchworth, Capel, Holmbury St Mary & Oxshott

Division 2 choirs
Beare Green & Newdigate, Bookham, Mickleham & Shalford

Division 3 choirs:
Dorking, Epsom, Horsley & Leatherhead

The **Leith Hill Musical Festival** is a unique choral event. It enables choirs to both engage in friendly competition and to combine to perform together in a concert with a professional orchestra and soloists.

It was founded in 1905 by **Lady Evangeline Farrer** and **Margaret Vaughan Williams**. **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, Margaret's brother, was the Festival conductor from its founding until retiring in his eighties in 1954. He wrote works specifically for the Festival and most of his major choral works have been performed here. **Brian Kay** has been the inspirational conductor since 1995. Our Festival President is **John Rutter** CBE.

The main Festival is held annually in Dorking over a three-day period around Easter. Each morning is devoted to a competition between choirs who sing set pieces, extracts from major works and a song of their own choice. The afternoon is spent rehearsing together and then in the evening there is a concert performance with a professional orchestra and soloists. There are currently twelve choirs taking part and these are divided into three groups, each competing and performing on one of the Festival days.

In March, Festival members and independent singers are invited to take part in a performance of one of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, the St. John Passion or Handel's Messiah. A Youth Choirs competition is also held in the Spring Term and is very popular with around thirty school and young people's choirs taking part.

Brian Kay

Brian Kay divides his working life between the broadcasting studio and the concert platform. His many presentations for BBC radio have included 'Brian Kay's Sunday Morning', 'Brian Kay's Light Programme', the weekly listeners' request programme '3 for all' and 'Choirworks' (all Radio 3); on Radio 2 the popular programmes 'Melodies for You' and 'Friday Night is Music Night'; and for Radio 4, 'Comparing Notes' and 'Music in Mind'. His former BBC World Service programme 'Classics with Kay' reached an audience of millions all over the world. Brian's television presentations have included the competitions to find the Cardiff Singer of the World and the Choir of the Year, and for fifteen years the New Year's Day Concert from Vienna. He has twice won a Sony Award as Music Presenter of the Year, including the coveted Gold Award in 1996.

On the concert platform, he presents and narrates concerts with many of the leading orchestras. His narrations include *Peter and the Wolf*, *Paddington Bear's First Concert*, *Tubby the Tuba*, *Babar the Elephant*, *The Snowman*, *The Musicians of Bremen*, *Walton's Façade*, Honegger's *King David* and Bliss's *Morning Heroes*.

As well as conducting the Leith Hill Musical Festival he conducts the Burford Singers, near to his home in the Cotswolds. He is Principal Conductor of [The Really Big Chorus](#), with which he regularly directs massed voices in London's Royal Albert Hall, together with recent concerts in Salzburg, Seville, Prague, Venice, Cape Town and Dubrovnik, and a performance of

Handel's *Messiah* in Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall. He was, for ten years, chorus master of the Huddersfield Choral Society, and conductor of the Cheltenham Bach Choir, the Bradford Festival Choral Society, the Cecilian Singers of Leicester, and the Kendal-based Mary Wakefield Westmorland Festival. He frequently guest-conducts choirs and orchestras in many parts of the country. Further afield, in New Zealand he has conducted the Orpheus Choir of Wellington and the Auckland Choral Society, and in Sheffield, Massachusetts, the Berkshire Choral Festival. He is a Vice President of the Association of British Choral Directors and of the Royal School of Church Music.

Brian has twice appeared at the Royal Variety Show: in 1978, as a member of the King's Singers (he was a founder member and, as the bass voice in the group, performed over 2,000 concerts world-wide); and in 1987, conducting the Huddersfield Choral Society. He sang the voice of Papageno in the Hollywood movie 'Amadeus' (his wife, the soprano Gillian Fisher sang Papagena). He has also been the lowest frog on a Paul McCartney single, one of the six wives to Harry Secombe's Henry VIII, and a member of the backing group for The Pink Floyd!

Bob Chilcott

Bob Chilcott, described by The Observer as "a contemporary hero of British Choral Music", has become one of the most widely performed composers of choral music in the world. He has a large catalogue of works published by Oxford University Press which reflects his wide taste in music styles and his commitment to writing music that is both singable and communicative.

From his catalogue of larger works, *Salisbury Vespers*, written in 2009, was first performed by over 600 singers and players in Salisbury Cathedral. His *Requiem* of 2010 has now been performed in sixteen countries, and his large-scale cantata, *The Angry Planet*, was premièred in the 2012 BBC Proms by 550 adult and young singers. In March 2013 his *St John Passion* was premièred in Wells Cathedral by the Cathedral Choir conducted by Matthew Owens. More recently he wrote *The King shall rejoice* for the service at Westminster Abbey to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Of his smaller works, *A Little Jazz Mass* remains a favourite with choirs around the world as do many of his pieces for children's choir, including the piece with sign language, *Can you hear me?* which was performed at the 2004 Song Festival in Estonia by over 7000 children.

Between 1997 and 2004 he was conductor of the chorus of The Royal College of Music in London and since 2002 he has been Principal Guest Conductor of The BBC Singers. He has been privileged to conduct many choirs in some 35 countries over the last ten years. Over the coming eighteen months he will conduct in Canada, the USA, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

There are four recordings of his music on the Signum label performed by The BBC Singers, The King's Singers, The Sirens, and The NFL Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir. In 2015 Signum will release two further discs, including the *St John Passion*. His *Requiem* is recorded on the Hyperion label by the Choir of Wells Cathedral, and The Wellensian Consort and Commotio have recorded music for chamber choir and for Christmas for Naxos. His music has been recorded by many other choirs and groups including Tenebrae, The Cambridge Singers, The Choir of King's College, Cambridge and The Choir of Westminster Abbey.

John Rutter

John Rutter was born in London in 1945 and received his first musical education as a chorister at Highgate School. He went on to study music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he wrote his first published compositions and conducted his first recording while still a student.

His compositional career has embraced both large and small-scale choral works, orchestral and instrumental pieces, a piano concerto, two children's operas, music for television, and specialist writing for such groups as the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble and the King's Singers.

His larger choral works, Gloria (1974), Requiem (1985), Magnificat (1990), Psalmfest (1993) and Mass of the Children (2003) have been performed many times in Britain, North America, and a growing number of other countries.

He co-edited four volumes in the Carols for Choirs series with Sir David Willcocks, and, more recently, has edited the first two volumes in the new Oxford Choral Classics series, Opera Choruses (1995) and European Sacred Music (1996).

From 1975 to 1979 he was Director of Music at Clare College, whose choir he directed in a number of broadcasts and recordings.

After giving up the Clare post to allow more time for composition, he formed the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir primarily dedicated to recording, and he now divides his time between composition and conducting.

He has guest-conducted or lectured at many concert halls, universities, churches, music festivals, and conferences in Europe, Africa, North and Central America and Australasia.

In 1980 he was made an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, and in 1988 a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians.

In 1996 the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Lambeth Doctorate of Music upon him in recognition of his contribution to church music.

He was honoured in the 2007 Queen's New Year Honours List, being awarded a CBE for services to music.

John Rutter's music is published by Oxford University Press, Hinshaw Music Inc. and Collegium Music Publications.
