

RIPON
CONCERTS

Chamber music with passion

Songs and Poems of Remembrance



Sunday 10 November 2024, 3pm
Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Programme

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Patron: Julius Drake

Sunday 10 November 2024 | Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

Songs and Poems of Remembrance

Nicholas Watts – tenor
Simon Armitage – poet laureate
David Cowan – piano
Robert Ashworth – horn
Chapter House Youth Choir
Charlie Gower-Smith – conductor
Sam Brophy – tenor

Programme

Introductory music: **Hildegard of Bingen**

Anthem for Doomed Youth
Wilfred Owen

Goodbye France by **Irving Berlin**

Considering the poppy
Simon Armitage

The Lads in their Hundreds by **George Butterworth**
Words by **A. E. Housman** (from *A Shropshire Lad*)

In Avondale
Simon Armitage

Is my team ploughing? by **George Butterworth**
Words by **A. E. Housman** (from *A Shropshire Lad*)
(The voice of the ghost is sung by Sam Brophy)

Ave verum corpus T92 by **William Byrd**

The parable of the old man and the young
Wilfred Owen

Ha'nacker Mill by **Ivor Gurney**
Words by **Hilaire Belloc**

Futility
Wilfred Owen

Black Stichel by **Ivor Gurney**
Words by **Wilfred Wilson Gibson**

Remains
Simon Armitage

Ubi Caritas by **Gjeillo**

Canticle III: Still falls the rain
For Tenor, Horn and Piano by **Benjamin Britten**
Words by **Edith Sitwell**

Rain
Edward Thomas

Roses of Picardy by **Haydn Wood**
Words by **Frederick Weatherly**

The Thankful
Simon Armitage

The Land of Might-have-been by **Ivor Novello**
Words by **Edward Moore**

The Bed
Simon Armitage

The road home by **Stephen Paulus**
Words by **Michael Dennis Browne**

The Darkling Thrush
Thomas Hardy

we get on with



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Introduction

Wars always end. No war lasts forever except in some people's minds. And then we say "never again". And the next war starts. At the time of writing, newspaper headlines warn that we are on the brink of another world war. Our emotions have become almost deadened by pictures and accounts of current conflicts throughout the world as we witness the total devastation of people, their lives, their hopes and aspirations, their homes, their cities and landscapes. We see the refugees. We then rewind to pictures of past conflicts and the images are the same – perhaps even more vivid in monochrome?

Maybe it takes art to remind us of the awfulness of war, and work out how we can pay fitting tribute to those who have died, their bereaved relatives and friends.

Today is Remembrance Sunday, when the focus has traditionally been on the 1914–18 war. This is reflected in the poems and music of this concert. Much poetry was written about that conflict but the message remains universal.

There is a particular focus on the poems of Wilfred Owen. Many of his finest poems were finalised when he was billeted in Ripon pending his return to the Western Front in 1918 (see later *Wilfred Owen and Ripon*); his poems were used in Britten's *War Requiem*. They reflect his first-hand experience of the brutality, horror and futility of war.

Four of the poems by Simon Armitage were written for a 2014 television documentary to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of WWI make uncomfortable reading and bring us up with a jolt.

The lyrics of many of the songs written at this time however pick up the image of the rural idyll that many soldiers yearn for. Ivor Gurney and George Butterworth used the wistful words of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.

Poetry can also bring hope for the future, which must also be a powerful component of remembrance.

Roger Higson

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REFLECTION BY NICHOLAS WATTS

In villages, towns and cities throughout Europe and beyond, you will find memorials to the soldiers who fell in the World Wars. I grew up in a small village just outside of York, and the plaque there includes the names of two family members, Vincent Watts and Robert Gott, my great-grandfather and great-great uncle.

It is hard for me to imagine the grief that my great-grandmother, Annie Watts, must have felt at losing both her husband and brother within months of each other. Vincent was killed at the battle of the Somme, aged 27, and left behind a wife and infant son.

The poetry and songs chosen for this remembrance concert describe not only the horrors endured in the war, but also reflect on sorrows felt in the aftermath. Some of the songs included were popular at the time, and their words must have been particularly poignant to the people who lived through this period of history.

At a time of great tension in our world, the moments of choral music, sung by young singers from our local area, are intended to provide a moment of quiet reflection on the continuing relevance of these words and songs today.

© *Nicholas Watts*



POEMS BY SIMON ARMITAGE

Four poems formed part of a one-hour documentary commissioned by the BBC, broadcast on BBC Two, to coincide with the centenary of WWI. Over 700,000 British service personnel are estimated to have lost their lives during that conflict, and the film followed seven lesser-known or untold stories, notionally one story and an accompanying poem for every 100,000 dead. Commemoration was the film's central theme; as well as writing an elegy, I wanted to consider how the fallen might be remembered for the next 100 years, now that the war is lost to living memory. Through the work of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney and others, poetry and 'the Great War' have become inextricably bound, so poetry felt like an entirely appropriate, even natural mode of expression for telling stories in the film, and exploring ideas, and paying respect.

Considering the poppy

The poppy is a 'ruderal', an opportunist species which takes advantage of fresh, raw soil and disturbed ground, which is why it flourished among the muddy trenches and blast-craters of the battlefields. As well as letters and documents, the archive of the Imperial War Museum, London, houses all kind of war-time paraphernalia, including a pressed poppy, picked for his wife in Devon by a soldier called Joseph Shaddick. The flower might have been a token of love, or recognised as a moment of colour and vibrancy among so much darkness and death, though no one at that time

could have anticipated its role as an icon of remembrance. Leached of its pigments and painfully brittle, Joseph Shaddick's hundred-year-old poppy looks like a butterfly fossil, or a drawing of a cross-section of the heart. It looks like an archetype.

In Avondale

Amy Beechey lived on Avondale Street in Lincoln. Of her eight sons who went to war, five were killed: Harold, Barnard, Frank, Charles, Leonard. Their letters and postcards to their mother, from as far away as Gallipoli and Egypt, are held in the Lincolnshire Archives, many of them cheery and full of adventure. But the boxes contain more sombre and upsetting correspondence, standard forms filled in and signed by military administrators, beginning with the phrase, 'Dear Madam, it is my painful duty to inform you ...' After the first such letter Amy would have recognised their shape and colour as they dropped through the letterbox; their meaning wasn't in doubt - it was a question of which name would be in the envelope, which son wouldn't be coming home.

Remains

Arthur Heath was a classicist, a fellow of New College, Oxford, and a brilliant young thinker and writer, engaged with ideas of political equality and social justice. On the eve of being called away to war he found solace and consolation in art, and continued to write inspiring, upbeat letters from the Western Front. During his time in military service he seemed to acknowledge death almost as an inevitability, and was killed in action on his twenty-eighth

birthday. This poem turns its attention to the lost generation, that great swathe of the population whose potential was never realised and whose bones are still breaking surface in the fields of Belgium and France.

The Thankful

Helperthorpe in the Yorkshire Wolds has no war memorial. It's one of just a handful of communities in Britain known as 'thankful villages', where all those who went off to the war came home. Inside the porch of St Peter's Church there's a roll of honour, 'in thankful memory of the safe return of all the men', and the first name on that list is Arthur Brown. Arthur was a Wagoner, driving a horse and cart through pastoral English farmland one minute, then next minute transporting munitions and supplies up the line and ferrying the wounded and dead back to base. Arthur Brown never travelled outside Britain again, and looked back at the war as a futile conflict. The poem was read by his grandson, Ted Atkinson, in his farmhouse a mile or so from the monument at Sledmere with its vivid depictions of the Wagoners at work in the fields of Yorkshire and the field of battle.

Source: Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic by Simon Armitage (Faber 2019). Used with the author's permission

The fifth poem, *The Bed*, was written to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the burial of the unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey. I read the poem at the Armistice Service at Westminster Abbey in 2020. It is published under Poet Laureate poems on www.simonarmitage.com

© Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate

Wilfred Owen in Ripon



"This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War. Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

These words were drafted by Wilfred Owen in a cottage in Borrage Lane here in Ripon in the preface to a collection of his poems, published after his death.

Owen was wounded after only 30 days' action on the Western Front (the average survival of soldiers was six weeks), when a shell exploded two yards from him. He was invalided out with shell shock, sent to

Craiglockhart Hospital near Edinburgh, where he met Siegfried Sassoon, before re-joining his regiment engaged in coastal defence and training in Scarborough. There he started on a collection of poems which he completed when he moved to Ripon prior to fatally returning to the Western Front.

In contrast he spent several happy months in Ripon, enjoying amongst other things the delights of Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey and visits to Ripon Cathedral. By day he trained for the fighting which would ultimately kill him and in warm spring evenings would return down a quiet country lane to his new-found retreat and recall his vivid memories of life in the trenches, described in a letter home as: *"hideous landscapes, foul language, everything unnatural, broken, blasted; the distortion of the dead, most execrable sights on earth. In poetry we call them the glorious. But to sit with them all day, all night... and a week later come back and find them sitting there in motionless groups, THAT is what saps the soldierly spirit..."*

About the composers and poets

Hildegarde of Bingen

Also known as the Sibyl of the Rhine, Hildegarde of Bingen was a German Benedictine Abbess and polymath active as a writer, composer, philosopher mystic, visionary and as a medical writer and practitioner during the high middle ages. She is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony as well as the most recorded in modern history. She has been considered by a number of scholars to be the founder of scientific natural history in Germany.

Irving Berlin (1888–1989)

With a life that spanned more than 100 years and a catalogue that boasted over 1,000 songs, Irving Berlin epitomised Jerome Kern's famous maxim that "Irving Berlin has no place in American music - he *is* American music."

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)

An English poet and soldier, Owen was one of the leading poets of the First World War. His poems on the horrors of the trenches were much influenced by his mentor, Siegfried Sassoon, and stood in contrast to the public perception of war at the time.

See also *Wilfred Owen in Ripon*

George Butterworth (1885–1916)

An English composer best known for his settings of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, Butterworth was born in London and grew up in York. He attended Aysgarth preparatory school, where he played the organ, going on to Eton College and Trinity College, Oxford.

He was a close friend of Vaughan Williams, and together they collected and catalogued many English folk songs. He was killed in the Battle of the Somme.

Alfred Ernest Housman (1859–1936)

Housman was an English classical scholar and poet. After an initially poor performance while at university, he took employment as a clerk in London and established his academic reputation by first publishing as a private scholar. Later Housman was appointed Professor of Latin at University of London and then at the University of Cambridge. He is now acknowledged as one of the foremost classicists of his age and has been ranked as one of the greatest classical scholars of any time. In 1896, he emerged as a poet with *A Shropshire Lad*, a cycle in which he poses as an unsophisticated and melancholy youth.

William Byrd (1539–1643)

Byrd was an English organist and composer of the Shakespearean age who is best known for his development of the English madrigal. He was a pupil of Thomas Tallis, and his first authenticated appointment was as organist at Lincoln Cathedral. In 1572 he returned to London to take up his post as a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, where he shared the duties of organist with Tallis.

In 1577, the same year that recusancy (the refusal to attend Anglican services) laws began to be enforced, Byrd and his family moved to Harlington, Middlesex. Despite being a devout lifelong Roman Catholic,

and in spite of his close social contact with many other Catholics, some of whom were certainly implicated in treasonable activities, his own loyalty to the government was never questioned and he managed to compose for the court and church.

Ivor Bertie Gurney (1890–1937)

Poet and composer Ivor Bertie Gurney was born in Gloucester. Gurney's godfather, Alfred Hunter Cheesman, a local vicar and bachelor, encouraged him in his artistic and creative pursuits. Gurney read widely in Cheesman's library and eventually won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, though his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. Gurney joined the 2nd/5th Gloucesters in 1917 and served in France. He was twice wounded, the second time by gas. He returned to the Royal College of Music to study with Ralph Vaughan Williams, but manic depression caused erratic behaviour and he left the school again. Though he went through a period of intense creativity in the late 1910s, his mental state had deteriorated by 1921 and he was institutionalised in 1922. Gurney continued to write both songs and poetry during his years in asylums. Best known for his musical compositions, Gurney wrote a prodigious number of songs – around 300 – as well as numerous chamber and instrumental works. He often set poems to music, including works by Hilaire Belloc, Will Harvey, and many Elizabethan poets. His poetry often reflected his war experiences and love of the Gloucestershire countryside.

Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953)

Belloc is considered one of the most controversial and accomplished men of letters of early 20th-century England. He was an extremely versatile writer, who is best known for his original light verse for children. He was a passionate debater, becoming President of the Oxford Union in the 1890s, an accomplished historian and essayist and an MP representing Salford for four years. Much of his work is underpinned by his staunch and orthodox Catholic faith. The story of 'Ha'nacker Mill' was inspired by the fate of an actual mill that Belloc knew in Sussex. The working mill had been struck by lightning in 1905 and was badly damaged. By the time Belloc, a great lover of the Sussex Downs, came across it in the 1920s, it was derelict. In the final stanza the poem states emphatically, 'England's done', and the use of 'never' drives home the picture of abandonment and desolation. Is Belloc mourning not just the destruction of a mill but the passing of a way of life?

Ola Gjeillo (b. 1978)

Gjeillo is a Norwegian composer who began playing the piano at the age of five. He studied music at the Norwegian Academy of Music, the Juilliard School and the Royal College of Music. He is known mainly for his compositions of choral music.

Wilfred Wilson Gibson (1878–1962)

Born in Hexham, Gibson lived later in London and Gloucester. A close friend of Rupert Brooke, Gibson was one of the founders of the Dymock poets, a group of writers who lived in and around the

village of Dymock on the Gloucestershire/ Herefordshire border, in the years immediately before the outbreak of World War I.

Gibson's poetry was greatly influenced by his experiences during WW1. Having been denied entry into the army for several years due to his poor eyesight, Gibson was finally allowed to become a soldier in 1917. Two years later he was injured, and left the battlegrounds. His wartime experience recognisably leaked into his poetry, and dominates whole editions of his work.

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Britten was a leading British composer of the mid-20th century, whose operas were considered the finest English operas since those of Henry Purcell in the 17th century. He was also an outstanding pianist and conductor.

Britten composed as a child and at the age of 12 began several years of study under the composer and teacher Frank Bridge.

He started the now world-famous Aldeburgh festival with tenor Peter Pears and librettist Eric Crozier.

Britten's largest choral work is the *War Requiem* (1962) for choir and orchestra, based on the Latin Requiem mass text and the poems of Wilfred Owen.

Pre-eminent among Britten's non-theatrical music are his song cycles. In 1954 he was asked to compose a piece in memory of his close friend Noel Mewton-Wood, the Australian pianist. The poem on which this piece (*Canticle III*) is based is by Edith Sitwell (qv) and was first published in 1941.

It was written after the air raids on London in 1940. The poem is dark, and full of the disillusion of World War II. It speaks of the failure of man, and of the yet unconditional love of God.

Edith Sitwell (1887–1964)

Sitwell's early work was often experimental, creating melody, using striking conceits, new rhythms, and confusing private allusions. Her efforts at change were resisted, but, "losing every battle, she won the campaign," (*New Statesman*) and emerged the high priestess of 20th-century poetry.

Her career traces the development of English poetry from the immediate post-World War I period of brightness and jazzy rhythms through the political involvements of the 1930s and the return to spiritual values after World War II. Her technique evolved, and, although she always remained a poet committed to the exploration of sound, she came to use sound patterns as an element in the construction of deep philosophic poems that reflect on her time and on man's condition. Edith Sitwell needs to be remembered not only as the bright young parodist of *Façade*, but as the angry chronicler of social injustice, as a poet who has found forms adequate to the atomic age and its horrors, and as a foremost poet of love.

Edward Thomas (1878–1917)

Edward Thomas was a poet, critic and biographer who is best known for his careful depictions of rural England and his prescient understanding of modernity's tendency toward disconnection, alienation and unsettledness.

One of England's most important poets, Thomas wrote all of his poetry over a three-year span, 1914–17, and was much more widely known as a critic and prose writer during his lifetime.

Thomas's experiences of World War I, which echo and sometimes intrude on his poems, distinguish his work from his predecessors.

Like so many poets of his generation he perished shortly after arriving in France in the Battle of Arras.

Frederick Edward Weatherly (1948– 1929)

Weatherly was an English lawyer, author, lyricist and broadcaster. He is estimated to have written the lyrics to at least 3,000 popular songs, among the best-known of which are the sentimental ballad *Danny Boy* set to the tune *Londonderry Air*, the religious *The Holy City* and the wartime song *Roses of Picardy*.

Weatherly remained active both as an author and as a barrister until the end of his life. *The Times* wrote of his dual career: "His fertility was extraordinary, and though it is easy to be contemptuous of his drawing-room lyrics, sentimental, humorous and patriotic, which are said to number about 3,000 altogether, it is certain that no practising barrister has ever before provided so much innocent pleasure."

Haydn Wood (1882–1959)

Wood was born in the West Yorkshire town of Slaithwaite. In 1897, at the Royal College of Music, he studied composition with Charles Villiers Stanford.

From 1913 he toured extensively with the soprano Dorothy Court whom he had married in 1909. During this period he wrote popular ballads for her to sing, including his most popular song, *Roses of Picardy*, reportedly selling 50,000 sheet music copies per month and earning a six-figure royalty sum.

Ivor Novello (1893–1951)

Welsh actor-manager, composer and playwright, best known for his lush, sentimental musicals, Ivor Novello served with the Royal Naval Air Service during World War I and became famous with a phenomenally successful patriotic wartime song, *Keep the Home Fires Burning* (1915).

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

Hardy was one of the most renowned poets and novelists in English literary history. His youth was influenced by the musicality of his father, a stonemason and fiddler, and his mother, Jemima Hand Hardy, often described as the real guiding star of Hardy's early life. Though he was an architectural apprentice in London, and spent time there each year until his late 70s, it was Dorset that provided Hardy with material for his fiction and poetry.

From 1898 until his death in 1928 Hardy published eight volumes of poetry; about one thousand poems were published in his lifetime.

Hardy forged a modern style that nonetheless hewed closely to poetic convention and tradition. Hardy's poetry, like his fiction, is characterised

by a pervasive fatalism. In the words of biographer Claire Tomalin, the poems illuminate “the contradictions always present in Hardy, between the vulnerable, doom-struck man and the serene inhabitant of the natural world.”

Stephen Paulus (1949–2014)

Stephen Paulus was a prolific American composer of classical music. He wrote over 600 works for chorus, opera, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo voice, concert band, piano and organ, receiving premieres and performances throughout the world.

He writes:

“I had discovered a tune in a folk song book called *The Lone Wild Bird*. I fell in love with it, made a short recording and asked my good friend and colleague, Michael Dennis Browne, to write new words for this tune. The tune is taken from *The Southern Harmony Songbook* of 1835. It is pentatonic and that is part of its attraction. Pentatonic scales have been extant for centuries and are prevalent in almost all musical cultures throughout the world. They are universal. Michael crafted three verses and gave it the title *The Road Home*. He writes so eloquently about “returning” and “coming home” after being lost or wandering.”

A note from librettist Michael Dennis Browne on *The Road Home*

“What I was looking for was a significant simplicity, something memorable and resonant and patterned, but not as complex as poems can often be, need to be; I wanted something immediate. Little by little, the words came. I thought of the speaker as a persona rather than myself, though of course there needed to be a “personal vibration” to it (to use Robert Lowell’s term). I was also trying to suggest the consolation that can come to someone of faith, in times of great stress, as a result of prayer and an abiding belief in divine mercy.”

FURTHER READING

Simon Armitage’s poems: *Considering the poppy*, *In Avondale*, *Remains* and *The Thankful* are published in *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic* (Faber)

The Bed can be found at www.simonarmitage.com

The other poems in the programme are readily available in collections of war poems and online.

About the performers

Nicholas Watts – Tenor

Nicholas Watts trained at the Royal College of Music, and the Benjamin Britten International Opera School, under the tutelage of Margaret Kingsley. Whilst at the RCM, he won the college’s Concerto Prize, for his performance of Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*. He was also selected to take part in Les Arts Florissants’ prestigious Le Jardin des Voix programme in 2007.

Recent highlights have been the title role in Opera North’s critically-acclaimed production of *Orpheus*, a collaborative project with South Asian Arts UK, which was awarded the UK Critic’s Choice Award for ‘Outstanding Achievement in Opera’ 2022, and the roles of Prologue/Peter Quint *The Turn of the Screw*, in a live broadcast for OperaVision.

Operatic roles have included: Count Belfiore *La Finta Giardiniera* (Royal Opera House), Oduardo Ariodante, Lucano *The Coronation of Poppea* (English National Opera), Oronte *L’incoronazione di Dario* - Vivaldi, Eustazio *Armida* (Garsington Opera), Pisandrus *Il ritorno d’Ulisses* (Birmingham Opera Company), Acis *Acis and Galatea* (Early Opera Company), Ferrando *Così fan tutte* (Longborough Festival Opera and Opera North), La Gloire *The Indian Queen* - Purcell (Les Arts Florissants), Liberto *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, Scaramuccio *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Theater an der Wien), Albert *Albert Herring* (Opera North/Birgitta Festival), Sailor *Dido and Aeneas*, Vašek *The Bartered Bride*, Don Curzio *The Marriage of Figaro*, Count Almaviva *The Barber of*

Seville, Pong *Turandot*, Jack *Into the Woods*, The Defendant *Trial by Jury*, Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni*, Camille de Rosillon *The Merry Widow*, Prologue/Peter Quint *The Turn of the Screw*, and Tamino *The Magic Flute* (Opera North).

Nicholas also enjoys a varied concert career, performing with orchestras and choirs throughout the UK and Europe, including the Hallé Orchestra (with Sir Mark Elder), Monteverdi Choir & English Baroque Soloists, London Handel Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Irish Baroque Orchestra and Black Dyke Band.

Simon Armitage – Poet Laureate

Simon Armitage was born and grew up in West Yorkshire. He is the recipient of numerous prizes and awards, including the Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry and the PEN Prize for Translation. He has published over a dozen poetry collections, including *Magnetic Field: the Marsden Poems*, and an acclaimed medieval translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. His new book *Blossomise* was an instant *Sunday Times* bestseller this year. Armitage also writes, records and performs with the band LYR and has received an Ivor Novello Award for his song writing. His recent book *Never Good with Horses* features his song lyrics for the first time and celebrates his ear for the music of language. A regular broadcaster, Armitage presents the popular BBC Radio 4 series *The Poet Laureate has Gone to his Shed* and writes extensively for television and radio. His poetry in response to conflict featured in *Out of the Blue 9/11* (Channel 4), *Forgotten Heroes: The Not Dead* (Century

Films) and *The Great War: An Elegy* (BBC 2). Commissioned by 14-18 NOW, the exhibition and book *Still* conveys a sequence of his poems in response to panoramic aerial photographs of battlefields associated with the Battle of the Somme. Armitage is Professor of Poetry at the University of Leeds. *A Vertical Art* brings together the vibrant and engaging lectures from his tenure as Oxford Professor of Poetry (2015-2019). He received a CBE for his services to poetry in 2010 and was appointed Poet Laureate in 2019.

www.simonarmitage.com

David Cowan – piano

David Cowan has been Head of Music at Opera North since 2015. From 1986–95 he was vocal coach at the Hochschule Mozarteum in Salzburg, 1995–98 Head of Music at the Badisches Staatstheater in Karlsruhe, 1998–2000 Musical Director of the Opera Studio of the Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg; 2001–2015 he was engaged at Theater Basel, Switzerland, where he was Head of Music, conductor and casting director. He also worked at the Salzburg Festival as répétiteur in opera productions under renowned conductors including Heinz Holliger and Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

He has conducted a varied repertoire, including amongst other stage works *Die Zauberflöte*, *La Cenerentola*, *Zaïde*, *L'Histoire du Soldat*, *Carmen*, *The Indian Queen*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and the musicals *Hair* and *Fame*.

He has worked as guest coach and assistant conductor in the Opera Houses of Lyon, Strasbourg, Palermo, Lisbon, Genoa and Dublin, and as a teacher and coach at the music colleges and conservatoires of Karlsruhe, Munich, Zürich, Basel, Strasbourg, Manchester (RNCM), Glasgow (RCS), as well as at the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme, Royal Opera House, the National Opera Studio and the Harewood Artists of ENO.

He has performed as a song accompanist with numerous singers, including Simon Keenlyside and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and recently in several chamber music recitals with musicians from the orchestra of Opera North. In 2023 he made his debut as an accompanist at Leeds Lieder.

Robert Ashworth - horn

Robert Ashworth studied the horn at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester with the renowned teacher Sydney Coulston, gaining a 1st class diploma and the award of Laureate. After freelancing with most of the regional orchestras, he was appointed Principal Horn with the Orchestra of Opera North in 1978. He made several appearances as a soloist (Mozart and Strauss Concerti) and was a regular member of the chamber group *The Music Serenade*, making an acclaimed CD recording of wind octets by Mozart, Beethoven and Hummel.

Robert is an active member of both the British Horn Society and the International Horn Society, performing at many of the former's local seminars. In 1997, with

his Opera North colleagues, he founded the *Opera North Horn Club* (now the *Northern Horn Club*) - providing a forum for professional, amateur and student horn players. Having taught for several years at the RNCM he now concentrates more on private teaching and working on books of exercises to promote good playing habits ('*Horn Warm Ups*' and '*Beyond the Warm Up*' published by June Emerson Wind Music and more recently '*Kaleidoscope: a practice book for horn players*' published by edition db).

The highlight of his 43 years at Opera North would have to be the several performances of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* which is freely available online. <https://www.operanorth.co.uk/the-ring-cycle/>

In addition to his Opera North commitments Robert has made guest appearances over the years with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the LSO, RPO, RLPO, BBC Philharmonic, SCO, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (latterly in rehearsals for *Tosca* at Grange Opera). He also plays the hand horn and baroque horn appearing with the Academy of Ancient Music, the Hanover Band, The Sixteen, The English Concert and the Cambridge Baroque Camerata.

For several years he has run a small publishing business, '*edition db*', which continues to expand. In the summer of 2022 he relinquished his post at Opera North after 43 seasons but intends to continue playing, practising, publishing, coaching and teaching for the foreseeable future.

Charlie Gower-Smith - conductor

Charlie is a conductor of choirs and orchestras, in demand for working at all levels with warmth and fun whilst demanding precision and excellence. He is Musical Director of Jervaulx Singers and the Chapter House Youth Choir.

Jervaulx Singers is a leading vocal ensemble based in North Yorkshire and performing across the UK. Since founding the group in 2021, Charlie has driven the development of the group to establish it as one of the finest vocal ensembles in the country. He formed a unique approach to programming, creating narrative-driven programmes to tell stories by combining choral music with solo song and semi-staged opera extracts, to rave reviews from audiences.

Charlie is Musical Director of the Chapter House Youth Choir, a post which he has held since the group's founding in 2016. Under his leadership, the group has grown and thrived, establishing itself as the go-to group in York for the city's most able singers to be stretched and challenged.

Charlie has worked extensively with The Voices of the River's Edge Choir at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music (formerly Sage Gateshead). He assisted Grace Rossiter for their performances in the BBC Proms in 2022 and 2023, and was a regular conductor with the choir during its formative stage, working to build the singers' skills ready for further high-profile performances with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, such as live *Home Alone* shows.

Former posts include director of Leeds Chamber Choir, with whom he gave regular broadcasts of BBC Radio 4LW's Daily Service, director of the Thirsk Sinfonia Orchestra, with whom he directed a broad range of symphonic repertoire, and assistant director of the Hallé Ancoats Community Choir. He has worked with numerous choral societies, including the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus, Chorus of the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Trinity Singers Cambridge.

As a choral animateur, Charlie has worked extensively delivering singing in the workplace, engaging employees in the joy of making music to develop a workforce. He has led workplace choirs for John Lewis, Addleshaw Goddard, Macmillan Cancer Support, Leeds City Council, and TransPennine Express, a Hallé Corporate Choir.

Charlie is a board member of Made with Music, a not-for-profit organisation delivering early years, primary school and family music in and around Leeds.

Sam Brophy - tenor

Sam is a tenor in the Chapter House Youth Choir and was a finalist in the 2022 BBC Young Chorister of the Year competition.

Chapter House Youth Choir

The Chapter House Youth Choir was established in 2016 and has since performed in some amazing events, including sharing a platform with The King's Singers, rehearsing with composer John Rutter, and singing live for the BBC Radio 4's Daily Service. It regularly works with the UK's finest artistic talent, including the Gesualdo Six, Gabrieli Consort and English Touring Opera.

The Youth Choir offers young singers aged 13-19 a place to sing choral music to the very highest standard. The choir is a fun and dedicated group of musicians from a wide range of backgrounds who love to sing. Rehearsals are in central York on Tuesdays during term time, 5.30pm-7pm.



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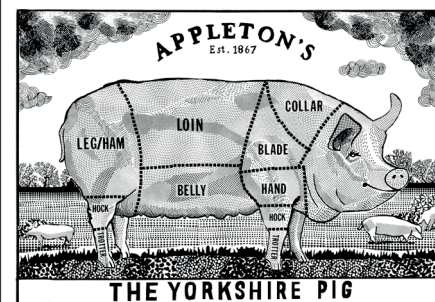
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North Yorkshire Music & Arts Events Diary

Visit www.st-cecilia.org.uk for full details of Music & Arts events in the Ripon area.



Chapter House Choir, York

Choral Celebrations

St Olave's Church, York

16 Nov 2024, 7.30pm

Harrogate Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven, Grieg and Wagner

Royal Hall, Harrogate

16 Nov 2024, 7.30pm

Ripon Choral Society, with Harrogate Ladies'

College choir

Carmina Burana and music by English composers

Ripon Cathedral

16 Nov 2024, 7.30pm

Harrogate Choral Society

Taylor Scott Davis, Matthew Coleridge, Rebecca Dale and Franck

St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate

23 Nov 2024, 3pm

Ripon Concerts

Prince Bishops Brass

Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

8 Dec 2024, 3pm

Chapter House Choir, York

Christmas Concert

York Minster

20 Dec 2024, 7.30pm

Jervaulx Singers

In dulci jubilo

St John's Church, Sharow

21 Dec 2024, 7.30pm

Ripon Concerts

Iyad Sughayer

Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

12 Jan 2025, 3pm

St Cecilia Orchestra

Winter Concert - see opposite

Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

25 Jan 2025, 7.30pm

Harrogate Philharmonic Orchestra

Beethoven, Graener and Price

St Mark's Church, Harrogate

8 Feb 2025, 7.30pm

Ripon Concerts

Tim Lowe - cello

Jack Liebeck - violin

Katya Apekisheva - piano

Holy Trinity Church, Ripon

9 Feb 2025, 3pm

Paulinus Singers

Spring Concert

St John's Church, Sharow

15 Feb 2025, 7.30pm

Jervaulx Singers

Ten-course Musical Tasting Menu

St John's Church, Sharow

1 Mar 2025, 7.30pm

Richmondshire Concerts

Carducci Quartet

Richmond School

8 Mar 2025, 7.30pm

Ripon Concerts

Kosmos Trio

St John's Church, Sharow

9 Mar 2025, 3pm

York Musical Society

Spring Concert

York Minster

15 Mar 2025, 7.30pm

Harrogate Choral Society

Mozart, Wainwright and Pärt

St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate

22 Mar 2025, 3pm

St Cecilia Orchestra

Over Land and Sea,

with mezzo-soprano Beth Taylor

Ripon Cathedral

22 Mar 2025, 7.30pm

Ripon Choral Society

Bach St John Passion

Ripon Cathedral

5 Apr 2025, 7.30pm

Richmondshire Concerts

Lumas Winds

Richmond School

12 Apr 2025, 7.30pm

Please see the website for full programme details.

Prince Bishops Brass

8 December 2024**

Bach to Boogie, via Gershwin & Bernstein



Prince Bishops Brass

Iyad Sughayer – Piano

12 January 2025**

Mozart, Schubert, Sibelius, Khachaturian



Iyad Sughayer

Tim Lowe – Cello

Jack Liebeck – Violin

Katya Apekisheva – Piano

9 February 2025**

Debussy, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky



Tim Lowe, Jack Liebeck, Katya Apekisheva

Kosmos Trio

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