

Elijah

Mendelssohn

Sidmouth
Choral Society

Saturday 12 April at 7.00pm

WELCOME *from David Davies*

Thank you for joining us this evening.

Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah* has long been an enduring piece of art in the world of oratorio. A thrilling account - shot through with melody, harmonic richness and dramatic word-painting - that says much about Mendelssohn's inventiveness, *Elijah* has remained a staple of the British choral society scene since its triumphant first performance in Birmingham Town Hall on the morning of 26th August, 1846. Its German premiere, the following year, failed to herald the same kind of lasting acclaim that the work enjoyed in this country, and it fell prey to aspects of the hateful and convenient anti-semitic rhetoric among members of the cultural elite that tarnished so much artistic endeavour at that time.

The text we sing this evening is William Bartholomew's translation of Julius Schubring's German libretto, a work that has its feet in a conversation that took place between Mendelssohn and Karl Klingemann in 1836. The story of Elijah, the prophet, is pivotal in all the Abrahamic religions and his name takes on a messianic status as the fore-runner of the Messiah; indeed, for Christians, he can be seen in some instances as the so-called 'Christ-figure'.

In Mendelssohn's oratorio, Elijah's exhortation to pagans to return to God rather than to continue worshipping

their idols, and the sequence concerning the widow and her son, provide dramatic intrigue particularly in the first half. Significantly, passages from Isaiah are reserved until the second part: Elijah – ‘he that troubleth Israel’ – now addresses the state, a ‘winnowing fire’ figure rooting out infidelity to God not merely among those who chose not to believe in him but among those who professed to be believers.

Musically, Mendelssohn often responds to the directness of the text with energy and imagination, displaying an abundance of beautiful melody, immersive drama and deft writing for soloists and chorus alike.

We hope that you enjoy this evening’s performance!



An extract from Mendelssohn’s autograph score for the 1846 performance – Elijah’s majestic aria, ‘Lord God of Abraham’.

PART ONE

Introduction & Overture

Help, Lord (*chorus*)

Lord, bow thine ear (*duet and chorus*)

If with all your hearts (*recit and aria*)

Yet doth the Lord (*chorus*)

For he shall give his angels (*recit and double chorus*)

What have I to do with thee (*recit, aria and dialogue*)

As God the Lord (*recit and chorus*)

Baal, we cry to thee (*chorus*)

Hear, our cry, O Baal (*recit and chorus*)

Lord God of Abraham (*recit and aria*)

Cast thy burden upon the Lord (*tutti*)

The fire descends from heaven (*recit and chorus*)

Is not his word like fire (*aria*)

Woe unto them (*aria*)

Open the heavens (*recit and chorus*)

Thanks be to God (*chorus*)

INTERVAL of fifteen minutes

PART TWO

Hear ye, Israel (*aria*)

Be not afraid (*chorus*)

The Lord hath exalted thee (*recit and chorus*)

Woe to him (*chorus*)

Man of God (*recit*)

Lift thine eyes (*chorus*)

He watching over Israel (*chorus*)

Arise, Elijah (*recit*)

O rest in the Lord (*aria*)

He that shall endure (*chorus*)

Night falleth round about me (*recit*)

Behold, God the Lord (*chorus*)

Go, return upon thy way (*chorus and recit*)

Then did Elijah (*chorus*)

Then shall the righteous (*aria*)

Behold, God hath sent Elijah (*recit*)

And then shall your light break forth (*chorus*)

PERFORMERS



Héloïse West (*soprano*) was born in Devon and received a gifted pupil award when she joined the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. She gained an Entrance Exhibition to the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with an LRAM and a Bachelor of Music degree in performance. Having also studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Héloïse continued to receive coaching from Robin Bowman, Jessica Cash, Lionel Friend and Peter Adcock. Her performances include the major works by Bach, Brahms, Elgar, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Poulenc, Rossini, Vaughan Williams and Verdi, while her operatic excerpts and roles have included Helena (*A Midsummer Nights Dream*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), Monica (*The Medium*), Rusalka, First Lady (*Magic Flute*), The Governess (*Turn of the Screw*) and the title role in *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* by Lawrence Roman, which premiered in London and at The Buxton Festival.



Laurence Blyth (*alto*) was appointed Musical Director of Wellington Choral Society in 2021, and recently stepped down from similar positions with Exmouth Choral Society and Exeter Choral Society. He is a former director of the

chamber choir *In Ecclesia* and for many years was the Musical Director of “Sing for Somerset” working with the Mid Somerset Orchestra and Somerset Voices at Wells Cathedral.

Educated at Norwich School, Laurence Blyth read music at the University of Exeter and conducted the University Singers. He subsequently graduated with a master’s degree in choral conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. At RWCMD his studies with Simon Halsey, Adrian Partington and Neil Ferris were supported by the Busenhart Morgan-Evans Foundation and the EMI Music Sound Foundation. He also conducted in masterclasses with Edward Caswell, Peter Broadbent, Sarah Tenant-Flowers, John Butt, Robert Dean and Eric Whitacre.

Laurence has also performed widely as a countertenor soloist, including works by Britten, Purcell, Mozart, Handel, Bach, Kodaly and Orff. He is a former member of Truro Cathedral Choir, Exeter Cathedral Choir and Buckfast Abbey Choir.



Since 2012 **Michael Graham** (*tenor*) has established himself as a charismatic musician based in the South West, forging a dynamic career as a singer, conductor and keyboard artist. Brought up and educated in the city of Liverpool, Michael was awarded an organ scholarship at his home church of St Bartholomew's, Rainhill. In 2007 he attended the Junior Royal Northern College of Music, studying voice with the late Jeff Lawton, and developed his interest in conducting and accompaniment at this time. Michael subsequently went on to hold positions at cathedrals across the UK including Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, St David's Cathedral and Exeter Cathedral. In September 2013, Michael became the newly appointed Organist and Director of Chapel Music at the University of Exeter in conjunction with his Lay-Vicarship at Exeter Cathedral. Under his direction, the University Chapel Choir has gained a distinguished reputation, and has undertaken an impressive portfolio of broadcasts, concerts and international tours. The Choir is now regarded as one of the premier young ensembles in the South West. For nine years Michael was the Musical Director of the Budleigh Salterton Male Voice Choir, and is currently Director of Music of the University of Exeter Choral Society and the West Devon Chorale. He is also responsible for the chorister programme at Blundell's School and is a vocal tutor for the choristers at Exeter Cathedral School. As a tenor soloist Michael has appeared on numerous broadcasts and recordings and undertakes concerts nationally both as a solo recitalist and in oratorio performances.



Julian Rippon (*Elijah*) is in constant demand as a soloist around the South West, performing in a wide range of choral and operatic works with many of the foremost groups in the region. He is also a full-time member of Exeter Cathedral Choir, featuring as soloist on CD recordings and live BBC Radio 3 broadcasts of Choral Evensong.

Julian began his singing career as a boy chorister with St Paul's Cathedral Choir, and continued to sing regularly while an Engineering undergraduate at Cambridge University. He moved to Japan in 1990, and later to Shanghai, returning to the UK in 2007. While in the Far East, Julian appeared frequently as soloist, both on the stage and in the concert hall. His solo repertoire includes *Monteverdi Vespers*, *Handel Messiah* and *Judas Maccabeus*, *Bach B Minor Mass*, *St John Passion*, *St Matthew Passion* and *Christmas Oratorio*, *Mozart Requiem*, *Beethoven Symphony No. 9*, *Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle*, *Verdi Requiem*, *Brahms Requiem*, *Mahler Symphony No. 8*, *Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony* and *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, *Orff Carmina Burana*, *Durufié Requiem*, *Britten War Requiem*, and *Goodall Requiem*.

Julian also sang the title role in *Elijah* two weeks ago, under the direction of Laurence Blyth, and last week performed in *Walton Belshazzar's Feast* at Exeter Cathedral, conducted by Michael Graham.



Geoffrey Morgan (*organ*) won first prize in the London Organ Week competition in 1975 and later, at aged thirty-one, the organ scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford. From this followed the post of Assistant Organist at Westminster

Abbey, where for much of the time he worked under the direction of Simon Preston, playing for many special services and performing at the Royal Wedding of 1986. After ten years at the Abbey, Geoffrey became Visiting Professor of Organ at Yale University, later taking up the post of Sub Organist at Guildford Cathedral in 1989, where he was also Diocesan Organ Adviser, and Conductor of Fleet Choral Society.

Geoffrey has been involved in many recordings and BBC broadcasts, both as a soloist and accompanist. His solo CD *English Contrasts*, recorded at Guildford Cathedral, received a five-star category in 'Choir and Organ'. He has played the organ internationally, is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and of Trinity College of Music; and in 2006 was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Guild of Church Musicians, for his services to Church Music.

Since 2002 Geoffrey has been Organist of Christchurch Priory, and was appointed Organist Emeritus there in 2021. In this new role he is still playing regularly at the Priory and elsewhere.



During the last fourteen years **David Davies** (*director*) has established a reputation as one of the most exciting organists in the southwest. Having trained at Eton, Magdalen College, Oxford and at Yale University, David has gone on to hold church and cathedral posts both in the UK and in the USA. He

was Sub Organist and Director of the Girls' Choir at Guildford Cathedral, Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral and Organist of Buckfast Abbey. David is currently on the teaching staff at Blundell's School, Tiverton and at Wellington School, Somerset. He is Organist at the University of Exeter and Director of Music at Sidmouth Parish Church.

SIDMOUTH CHORAL SOCIETY

Soprano

Julie Andrews
Angela Bea
Margaret Brooke
Sallie Coley
Rebecca Davies
Sue Diffey
Muff Dudgeon
Barbara Dustan-Smith

Alto

Pauline Belton
Liz Bramley
Gillian Connell
Wendy Deakin
Isobel Francis
Jacquie Freeman
Gill French
Vanessa Hunziker

Soprano

Joan Edgecumbe
Lucy Fenner
Katherine Finney
Nicky Hobbs
Naomi Hogg
Elaine King
Brenda Long
Deidre Loyd
Rosie Maggs
Madeleine Millington
Elizabeth Peace
Alice Price
Jean Quinn
Judy Reeves
Deborah Robertson
Fiona Rozier
Val Rowling
Gillian Scrace
Gertrude de Waard
Kay Wood

Tenor

Dorothy Ball
Janie Bennett
Keith Diffey
Ian Fleming

Alto

Denise Lyon
Rosemarie Luff
Gill Minett
Linda Osborne
Nicki Parkins
Brenda Richards
Monica Tombs
Judith Whittaker

Bass

Don Archer
Peter Atkinson
John Brindley
Malcolm Davies
Colin Fenner
Brian Hall
David Lewis
Brian Major
Steve Minett
David de la Mothe
Andrew Peers
Andrew Scott
David Scrace
Tony Warren
Simon Whittaker

Tenor (continued)

Dilly Fung

Phil Hobbs

Charles King

Carol Laird

Denese Molyneux

Nigel Price

CHOIR COMMITTEE

Chairman Denese Molyneux

Musical Director David Davies

Secretary Denise Lyon

Membership Secretary Brenda Richards

Treasurer & Concert Manager Judith Finch

Music Librarian Deborah Robertson

Website Manager Bunny Warren

CHARITABLE STATUS & CONTACT DETAILS

Sidmouth Choral Society is a Registered Charity
No. 1032640 and a member of 'Making Music' (NFMS)

Email: sidmouthchoral@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.sidmouthchoral.co.uk>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sidmouth Choral Society would like to thank:

Andrew Benoy (accompanist);

Barbara Theisen (poster design);

Libraries Unlimited (score hire);

Paragon Books (advance tickets and publicity);

Sidmouth Print (poster and programme printing)

and our Sponsors:



<https://greenstudiogardendesign.com>



<https://www.molyneuxfp.co.uk>

SAVE THE DATES at the PARISH CHURCH

Eternal Light: A Concert for Peace

Saturday 8th November 2025, 7pm

Sidmouth Choral Society is joined by the acclaimed University of Exeter Chapel Choir to perform works appropriate for Remembrance to commemorate eighty years since the end of the Second World War.

Movements from *Eternal Light Requiem* by Howard Goodall, and *Requiem* by Maurice Duruflé

Welcome Yule!

Saturday 13th December 2025, 5pm

Sidmouth Choral Society is joined by Maria Brown, *mezzo soprano*, and Andrew Millington, *organ*, for its annual festive celebration of Christmas. In addition to seasonal favourites, the Choir will perform James Whitbourn's charming *Missa Carolæ*.

Requiem, W A Mozart

Saturday 18th April 2026, 7pm

This iconic and much-loved masterwork will be performed by Sidmouth Choral Society alongside other popular choral pieces by Mozart and Haydn.