



*Sidmouth*  
Choral Society

**Soprano** Bel Hartley  
**Mezzo Soprano** Maria Brown  
**Tenor** Michael Graham  
**Bass** Matthew Cann  
**Conductor** David Davies  
**Organist** Geoffrey Morgan  
**Continuo** Andrew Benoy

*G. F. Händel*

# Messiah

**Saturday 27 April 2024**

## Welcome

This year sees the 283rd anniversary of the composition of a work that is regarded as being a masterwork of the choral repertoire whose recognition globally now is, perhaps, something that the then 56-year old Georg Friedrich Händel could scarcely have imagined.

Tonight Sidmouth Choral Society is delighted to contribute its own performance to this legacy, and will be presenting some of Händel's optional movements that, ordinarily, are not included. The choir is joined by four wonderful soloists and two versatile keyboardists, whose account of the orchestral accompaniment is adorned by trumpet and drums.

The appeal of the work across the board to singers, instrumentalists and listeners alike is assured, and seasoned musicians will doubtless have taken part in several performances in their lifetime. The versatility of the work, together with its accessibility, have contributed to its success, while its durability has seen it performed by all manner of ensembles, from the most sophisticated of professional groups to steel drum bands on tropical beaches. The 1992 Gospel interpretation recording *Messiah: A Soulful Celebration* demonstrates yet another facet of the timelessness and adaptability of the work, and is recommended to anyone who might be interested in an alternative approach immersed in ancient African rhythms. Critically, that interpretation is inspired as much by the text as by the music, and clearly shows a personal engagement between the performers and their personal relationship with the Christian message.

Whether you are a person of any religious belief or none, *Messiah* brings together themes of the hope for peace that seem as

### Sidmouth Choral Society Committee

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<b>Musical Director</b>	David Davies
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### Contact details

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desperately needed today as ever. For Christians, religious texts of messianic prophecy are ingeniously woven together in this work by the librettist Charles Jennens, who creates a narrative as thought-provoking now as it was to the Georgian Protestant mind.

And, indeed, its Georgian context provides one enduring question: in any performance of Messiah should the audience stand for the chorus 'Hallelujah' or not? The tradition – it is claimed – dates back to a performance when George II rose to his feet out of admiration for the music, and, not wishing to embarrass a monarch seemingly left high and dry, his courtiers and those around him also rose to their feet. There are myriad conspiracy theories around this too, such as George II having gout and needing to relieve his agony by getting up, or the possibility he might have been very bored by this point in the proceedings, and just fancied a stretch. It's also puzzling why he didn't get up for other, equally rousing choruses if admiration was his reason ... we shall simply never know. However, this evening we leave the onus of decision-making to anyone sitting at the front of the church: if you stand with conviction, all will follow!

We hope that you enjoy this evening's performance, and thank you for supporting us.

*David Davies*

Musical Director

## **David Davies** Conductor

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David Davies was appointed as Musical Director to Sidmouth Choral Society in January 2024. He trained as an organist, pianist and conductor at Eton College, Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University. David has held church and cathedral appointments both in the USA and the UK, most recently as Organist at Buckfast Abbey, Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral and Sub-Organist and Director of the Girls' Choir at Guildford Cathedral.

He was Director of the Oxford Cantata Choir, Atlanta Schola Cantorum, the Surrey Festival Choir (founded by Ralph Vaughan Williams) and of the Exeter Bach Society. As an orchestral conductor he has worked with the Yale Sinfonia, the Guildford Philharmonic and the London Festival Orchestra, and frequently performs with orchestral players across the Southwest.

David has given concerts across the USA, Japan, South Africa and in several European countries, and has appeared on numerous recordings and broadcasts. He is currently the organist at the University of Exeter, at Wellington School, Somerset, and at Blundell's School, Tiverton.



## Part 1

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*The prophecy and realisation of God's plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah*

1. Sinfonia
2. Comfort ye my people
3. Every valley shall be exalted
4. And the glory of the Lord
5. Thus saith the Lord
6. But who may abide the day of his coming?
7. And he shall purify
8. Behold, a virgin shall conceive
9. O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion
10. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth
11. The people that walked in darkness
12. For unto us a child is born
14. There were shepherds abiding in the field
15. And the angel said unto them
16. And suddenly there was with the angel
17. Glory to God
18. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion
19. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened
20. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd
21. His yoke is easy and his burthen is light

## Part II

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*The accomplishment of redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, mankind's rejection of God's offer, and mankind's utter defeat when trying to oppose the power of the Almighty*

22. Behold the Lamb of God
23. He was despised

24. Surely he hath borne our griefs
25. And with his stripes we are healed
26. All we like sheep have gone astray
27. All they that see him, laugh him to scorn
28. He trusted in God that he would deliver him

## Interval 15 minutes

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29. Thy rebuke hath broken his heart
30. Behold and see if there be any sorrow
31. He was cut off out of the land of the living
36. Thou art gone up on high
37. The Lord gave the word
38. How beautiful are the feet of them
39. Their sound has gone out into all the lands
40. Why do the nations so furiously rage
41. Let us break their bonds asunder
42. He that dwelleth in heaven
43. Thou shalt break them
44. Hallelujah!

## Part III

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*A Hymn of Thanksgiving for the final overthrow of Death*

46. Since by man came death
47. Behold, I tell you a mystery
48. The trumpet shall sound
49. Then shall be brought to pass
52. If God be for us, who can be against us?
53. Worthy is the Lamb

**Bel Hartley** Soprano

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Bel's singing career in Devon started when she took up a place as a choral scholar with the University of Exeter Chapel Choir. During her time in the choir, she took part in many high-profile performances, including performances of Händel's Messiah and Bach's B Minor Mass, and also traveled domestically and abroad on tours to Bath and Germany. During her time here, she has established herself as a soloist, singing solos with local choral societies and choirs, including Händel's Messiah, Haydn's Creation, Mozart's Requiem and Sparrow Mass, and most recently Mozart's Coronation Mass with the Exmouth Choral Society. She also sings with the St. Peter's Singers at Exeter Cathedral, and with Exodus, the newly-formed alumni choir for the University of Exeter Chapel Choir, with whom she recently sang in Westminster Abbey.



**Maria Brown** Mezzo Soprano

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Maria is a graduate of The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she was awarded with full scholarships throughout her vocal training. She studied with Professor Stephen Robertson and graduated in 2010 with a Masters in Opera from the Alexander Gibson Opera Studio.

Maria began singing at a young age, with the RSNO Junior Chorus and Chamber Choir, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and then later the RCS Chamber Choir, gaining valuable experience in

performing a wide variety of classical repertoire. She has performed with conductors such as Sir Antonio Pappano, Sir Mark Elder, Richard Hickox and performed at/with the Royal Opera House, Scottish Opera, Raymond Gubbay Ltd, the RSNO and at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Her operatic roles have included; *Apprentice* Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (Royal Opera House), *Mercedes* Carmen (Scottish Opera Tour), *Carmen* (Garden Opera Tour), *Carmen* (Streetwise Opera), *Cherubino* The Marriage of Figaro (East 15 Academy), *Ernestina* Love's Luggage Lost (Minotaur Music). Whilst at the RCS she performed the roles of *Marcellina* Marriage of Figaro, *Dryade* Ariadne auf Naxos, *Princess Maria* War and Peace (with Scottish Opera) and *Daumer's Sister* Kasper Hauser. Maria's Oratorio repertoire has included; Händel's Messiah, Mozart Requiem, Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle, Serenade to Music Vaughan Williams, Haydn Nelson Mass, Mendelssohn Elijah, Vivaldi's Gloria, Haydn St Nicholas Mass, Britten Rejoice in the Lamb, Stravinsky Mass, Pergolesi Stabat Mater.



Maria has been a member of the Royal Opera House extra chorus since 2011, where she performs regularly. She also works on various projects with the ROH Learning and Participation department, including; ROH Insights (Hansel and Gretel), Opera Lullabies (ROH Family Days), Create and Sing (The Magic Flute Schools Film). Upcoming highlights include; ROH Japan Tour of Turandot in June 2024.

**Michael Graham** Tenor

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Since 2012 Michael Graham 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's iconic Metropolitan Cathedral, St David's Cathedral and Exeter Cathedral. In September 2013, Michael became 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 Musical Director of Budleigh Salterton Male Voice Choir, and is currently Director of Music of the University of Exeter Choral Society. He is also responsible for the chorister programme at Blundell's School and is a vocal tutor for the choristers at Exeter Cathedral School. In his role as newly-appointed Musical Director of West Devon Chorale Michael is excited to be working with a fine ensemble that performs diverse music.

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.

**Matthew Cann** Bass

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Matthew Cann was educated at The King's School, Gloucester. Whilst there, he was a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral and later head chorister under the direction of Dr. John Sanders, participating in the world famous Three Choirs Festivals that took place in Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford. His further education took him to Colchester to study piano and voice where he gained a first in piano performance. After Colchester he went to Oxford for a post-graduate teaching diploma in secondary music.



Once his education was finished he became a Lay Clerk at Norwich Cathedral as well as teaching piano and being an examiner for the Royal School of Church Music. He has been a Lay Vicar of Exeter Cathedral Choir since September 2006 and is a piano and singing teacher at Exeter School and The Maynard. During his time at Gloucester, Norwich and Exeter Cathedrals he has been involved in numerous television appearances, radio broadcasts, tours and recordings. He has sung in front of Royalty and through those choirs worked with such prominent composers as the late John Tavener and Arvo Pärt. He is a published composer writing mainly for unaccompanied choir and has had one of his anthems broadcast on BBC Radio 3. He also conducts his own choirs called "Antiphon" that has made two disc recordings to date with Willowhayne

Records, as well as The Torbay Singers. He is in demand as a soloist singing parts in the Bach Passions and B Minor Mass, Händel's Messiah and numerous other works.

### **Geoffrey Morgan** Organ

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Geoffrey Morgan's career has been unconventional. As a very young schoolboy he played regularly in Baptist, Methodist and Congregational churches and, upon leaving school at sixteen, Geoffrey started an organbuilding apprenticeship with J. W. Walker and Sons Ltd. As a graduate student of Trinity College of Music he played for regular concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and on London's South Bank.



In 1975, Geoffrey's promising career as a teacher was interrupted when he won first prize in the London Organ Week competition 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, U.S.A., 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 performed internationally and his solo CD "English Contrasts", recorded at Guildford Cathedral, received a five-star

category in Choir and Organ. He 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 he has been organist of Christchurch Priory in addition to pursuing his own freelance recital work. Having now been appointed Organist Emeritus there he is still playing regularly at the Priory and elsewhere.

### **Andrew Benoy** Continuo

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Andrew Benoy (accompanist) is organist at St Francis, Woolbrook and took up the role of accompanist for Sidmouth Choral Society in January 2018. His musical studies started in Bromley, continuing in Exeter under Lionel Dakers at the Cathedral whilst gaining an honours degree in Physics at the University, where he was Chapel Choirmaster.



Relocating to Watford, he was organist and choirmaster at St. Michael's church for 41 years, simultaneously following a career as a research scientist. He was active with the RSCM in St. Albans, holding positions of Area Secretary, Publicity Officer and 'Voice for Life' examiner. Following early retirement, Andy worked as an organist at the West Herts Crematorium for ten years, before moving to Sidmouth in 2017 with his wife, Pat.

## Sidmouth Choral Society Members

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### Sopranos

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Julie Andrews  
Angela Bea  
Pat Benoy  
Sheila Birch  
Margaret Brooke  
Joy Carlyle  
Rebecca Davies  
Sue Diffey  
Sue Dixon  
Barbara Dustan  
Smith  
Joan Edgecumbe  
Lesley Emery  
Lucy Fenner  
Katherine Finney  
Rachel Fox  
Jennifer Jones  
Deidre Loyd  
Brenda Long  
Rosie Maggs  
Margaret Moss  
Alison Newell  
Elizabeth Peace  
Alice Price  
Deborah Robertson

### Val Rowling

Fiona Rozier  
Gillian Scrace  
Gertrude de Waard  
Kay Wood

### Altos

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Pauline Belton  
Sara Bond  
Gillian Connell  
Nicola Channon  
Wendy Deakin  
Isobel Francis  
Jacquie Freeman  
Gill French  
Susan Gregory  
Denise Lyon  
Rosemarie Luff  
Gill Minett  
Linda Osborne  
Nicki Parkins  
Val Pidgeon  
Rosemary Pulling  
Brenda Richards  
Monica Tombs  
Judith Whittaker

### Tenors

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Dot Ball  
Janie Bennett  
Keith Diffey  
Ian Fleming  
Dilly Fung  
Carol Laird  
Denese Molyneux  
Nigel Price  
Barbara Theisen  
David White

### Basses

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

## Thank You

The members of Sidmouth Choral Society would like to thank:

David Davies and Andy Benoy for their good humour and excellent music direction during rehearsals.

Libraries Unlimited for supplying our vocal and orchestral scores.

Paragon Books for kindly handling the advance sales of our tickets for all our concerts.

Tracey at Sidmouth Print for her assistance in producing our publicity material.

Molyneu(x) Financial Planning and Green Studio Garden Design for their sponsorship of the Society.

And YOU for coming to listen to us this evening – we hope you enjoyed our concert and look forward to seeing you at our next event in December:

*Gloria* Sidmouth Choral Society's celebration of music for the festive season for Choir, Brass and Organ takes place in Sidmouth Parish Church on Saturday, 14th December 2024 at 5.00pm

In addition to a programme of popular audience and congregational carols, the Choir's programme will include John Rutter's dynamic *Gloria* and *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*, William Mathias *Sir Christemas*, Samuel Scheidt *A child is born in Bethlehem*, David Davies *Carol of the Huron* and arrangements of much-loved traditional French and English carols.

Please add the date to your diary now, and come to enjoy an afternoon of wonderful music and mince pies in this atmospheric celebration of Christmas.





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