



# ***WHITEHALL CHOIR***

***Conductor: Paul Spicer***

*with*

***BRANDENBURG BAROQUE***

***SOLOISTS***

*and*

***Sophie Bevan (soprano); Celeste Lazarenko (soprano);  
Christopher Ainslie (counter-tenor); Thomas Hobbs (tenor);  
Vojtech Safarik (baritone)***



## ***GF Handel: Saul***

***Friday, 16 November 2007, 7.30pm***

***Programme: £2***

**ST. JOHN'S, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON SW1**

***General Manager: Paul Davies***

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**St. John's, Smith Square**

# Handel's *Saul*

## Jennens, Handel and *Saul*

*Saul* was the first of four collaborations between Handel and Charles Jennens, a librettist who has been treated more severely by musical historians than he perhaps deserves. Most of Jennens' contemporaries, friend and foe alike, thought him at times a pompous, over-bearing boor: "Solyman the Magnificent," Dr Johnson called him. Some also recognized a balancing side. He could almost serve as prototype for the classic, educated English squire dilettante: wealthy (but not idly so); amply gifted and cultivated; sanguine; testy about criticism from which, in any event, his position generally shielded him; intellectually curious and culturally ambitious. Taken together, his collaborations with Handel in addition to *Saul* — *Messiah*, *L'Allegro* and *Belshazzar* — constitute a paradigm of the English oratorio at both beginning and summit.

What Jennens had that appealed to Handel was a refined sense of dramatic principles, a knack for portraying complex characters with economy of means, the ability to synthesize material from various sources into a coherent narrative, and a gift on occasion for vivid imagery. Jennens had a poetic soul, if not always the poet's tongue.

Handel wrote *Saul* during the summer of 1738, consistent with his customary practice: composition during the warm months; copying, revising and rehearsing in the autumn; performances during the winter and spring. It follows by five years his first great English oratorio, *Athalia*. During the five-year interval, Handel created nine new Italian operas for a dwindling and finally disinterested public. The Cecilian ode, *Alexander's Feast* (performed by the Whitehall Choir on 27 March 2002), was composed in 1736. In 1737 Handel suffered a paralytic stroke which affected both body and mind, but during the autumn made a remarkable recovery with the help of the baths at Aachen.

During the summer of 1738 if Handel suffered any lingering effects of his illness the masterful score of *Saul* fails to reveal it. With this towering edifice Handel, in Winton Dean's words, "raised the Old Testament oratorio to its highest point, and produced one of the supreme masterpieces of dramatic art, comparable with the *Oresteia* and *King Lear* in the grandeur of its theme and the certainty and skill of its execution." Jennens, to his credit, preserved from the biblical account the most promising elements: the women's welcome to David, the first javelin-throwing, the episode of the image, the Feast of the New Moon, and above all the visit to the Witch of Endor and raising of Samuel's ghost. He invented Merab's haughtiness from whole cloth, and cast the king's moral disintegration and madness more in Greek terms than Jewish: his is not so much a defiance of Jehovah as an imperious will gone awry, with punishment the inevitable consequence. "A dangerous lunatic is repulsive; a man who refuses to bow when fate has him beaten is a tragic figure," says Dean.

Handel's response to these compelling characters is comprehensive in terms of formal organization and in the smallest details of musical expression. *Saul*'s unpredictability and violence are balanced in the characterizations of David and Jonathan, characterizations that reveal compassion, vulnerability, gentleness. Handel seems to be less interested in David the conqueror than in David the artist, the peacemaker. Jonathan is not as fully realized. His is a tragedy of torn loyalties: father *versus* friend. His music is sublime, but we are curious to know him better. Merab and Michal, *Saul*'s two daughters, are, on the other hand, vivid and complete personalities, one the very picture of arrogance and snobbery (at least in the beginning), the other direct, open, "vernal," Dean calls her. In the small roles in *Saul* Handel's mastery of musical characterization is also sure. The Amalekite, the Witch of Endor, Samuel's ghost, even the messenger Doeg whose dire objective David dodges at the last possible instant — all are memorably realized, and the more remarkably so for the brevity of their appearances.

The most important character though ("on a par with the King himself," says Dean) is the chorus. To them falls the responsibility of portraying the triumphant joy and the despondency of a whole people. In the two monumental choruses that frame Part II, they philosophize, in the first, on the futility of envy and, in the other, warn of the fatal consequences of rage. But they are also direct players in the action. They *are* the people of Israel.

The orchestra is grand, one of the largest in all 18th-century music. In addition to the usual trumpets and drums, winds, strings, and continuo organ, Handel calls upon trombones, harp, and carillon (a bell-like keyboard instrument); and he deploys them with rich imagination. The instrumental symphonies, or sinfonias, all represent the passage of time, although the music does not necessarily attempt to characterize the events that take place during these intervals.

With *Saul* Handel at last found his footing in a medium that was truly indigenous to his adopted home and, more important, that broke breathtaking new ground in the art of music drama. This new mastery was hard won; but it liberated him at last from his self-imposed Italian bondage.

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**George Frideric Handel**

**SAUL**  
(1739)

An Oratorio; or Sacred Drama  
Words by Charles Jennens

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

Saul, King of Israel - Vojtech Safarik  
Jonathan, son of Saul - Thomas Hobbs  
David - Christopher Ainslie  
Merab, daughter of Saul - Sophie Bevan  
Michal, daughter of Saul - Celeste Lazarenko  
Abiathar, High Priest - Thomas Hobbs  
Witch of Endor - Sophie Bevan  
Abner, Captain of the Host - Ashley Marshfield (from the choir)  
Apparition of Samuel, the Prophet - Keith Long (from the choir)  
Doeg, a Messenger - Ian White (from the choir)  
An Amalekite - Jonathan Williams (from the choir)  
Chorus of Israelites – Whitehall Choir

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**PART ONE**

**1. Sinfonia:**

(Allegro/Larghetto/Allegro)

**2. Chorus**

How excellent Thy name, O Lord,  
In all the world is known!  
Above all Heav'ns, O King ador'd,  
How hast Thou set Thy glorious throne!

**3. Air (soprano)**

An infant rais'd by Thy command,  
To quell Thy rebel foes,  
Could fierce Goliath's dreadful hand  
Superior in the fight oppose.

**4. Trio (alto, tenor, bass)**

Along the monster atheist strode,  
With more than human pride,  
And armies of the living God  
Exulting in his strength defied.

**5. Chorus**

The youth inspir'd by Thee, O Lord,  
With ease the boaster slew:

**6. Chorus**

Our fainting courage soon restor'd,  
And headlong drove that impious crew.

**7. Chorus**

How excellent Thy name, O Lord,  
In all the world is known!  
Above all Heav'n's, O King ador'd,  
How hast thou set Thy glorious throne!  
Hallelujah!

**8. Recitative (Trio)**

*Abner*  
Behold, O king, the brave, victorious  
youth,  
And in his hand the haughty giant's head.

*Saul*  
Young man, whose son art thou?

*David*  
The son of Jesse,  
Thy faithful servant, and a Bethlemite.

*Saul*  
Return no more to Jesse; stay with me;  
And as an earnest of my future favour,  
Thou shalt espouse my daughter: small  
reward  
Of such desert, since to thy arm alone  
We owe our safety, peace and liberty.

**9. Air**

*David*  
O king, your favours with delight

I take, but must refuse your praise:  
For every pious Israelite  
To God alone that tribute pays.

**10. Recitative**

*Jonathan*

Oh, early piety! Oh, modest merit!  
In this embrace my heart bestows itself;  
Henceforth, thou noble youth, accept my  
friendship,  
And Jonathan and David are but one.

**11. Recitative**

*Saul*

Thou, Merab, first in birth, be first in  
honour:  
Thine be the valiant youth, whose arm has  
sav'd  
Thy country from her foes.

*Merab (aside)*

Oh, mean alliance!

**12. Air**

*Merab*

My soul rejects the thought with scorn,  
That such a boy, till now unknown,  
Of poor plebeian parents born,  
Should mix with royal blood his own!  
Though Saul's commands I can't decline,  
I must prevent his low design,  
And save the honour of his line.

**13. Air**

*Michal*

See, with what a scornful air  
She the precious gift receives!  
Though e'er so noble, or so fair,  
She cannot merit what he gives.  
Ah, lovely youth, wast thou design'd  
With that proud beauty to be join'd?

**14. Sinfonia**

**15. Recitative**

*Michal*

Already see the daughters of the land,  
In joyful dance, with instruments of music,  
Come to congratulate your victory.

**16. Chorus**

Welcome, welcome, mighty king!  
Welcome all who conquest bring!  
Welcome David, warlike boy,

Author of our present joy!  
Saul, who hast thy thousands slain,  
Welcome to thy friends again!  
David his ten thousands slew,  
Ten thousand praises are his due!

**17. Recitative**

*Saul*

What do I hear? Am I then sunk so low,  
To have this upstart boy preferr'd before  
me?

**18. Chorus**

David his ten thousands slew,  
Ten thousand praises are his due!

**19. Recitative**

*Saul*

To him ten thousands, and to me but  
thousands!  
What can they give him more, except the  
kingdom?

**20. Air**

*Saul*

With rage I shall burst his praises to hear!  
Oh, how I both hate the stripling, and fear!  
What mortal a rival in glory can bear?

**21. Recitative**

*Jonathan*

Imprudent women! Your ill-timed  
comparisons, I fear, have injured him you  
meant to honour. Saul's furious look, as  
he departed hence,  
Too plainly shew'd the tempest of his soul.

*Michal (to David)*

'Tis but his old disease, which thou canst  
cure:  
Oh, take thy harp, and as thou oft hast  
done,  
From the king's breast expel the raging  
fiend,  
And soothe his tortur'd soul with sounds  
divine.

**22. Recitative**

*Abner*

Racked with infernal pains, ev'n now the  
king  
Comes forth, and mutters horrid words,  
which hell,  
No human tongue, has taught him.

**23. Air**

*David*

O Lord, whose mercies numberless  
O'er all thy works prevail:  
Though daily man Thy law transgress,  
Thy patience cannot fail.  
If yet his sin be not too great,  
The busy fiend control;  
Yet longer for repentance wait,  
And heal his wounded soul.

**24. Sinfonia: Harp solo**

**25. Recitative**

*Jonathan*

'Tis all in vain; his fury still continues:  
With wild distraction on my friend he  
stares,  
Stamps on the ground, and seems intent  
on mischief.

**26. Air**

*Saul*

A serpent, in my bosom warm'd,  
Would sting me to the heart:  
But of his venom soon disarm'd,  
Himself shall feel the smart.  
Ambitious boy! Now learn what danger  
It is to rouse a monarch's anger!

**27. Recitative**

*Saul*

Has he escap'd my rage?  
I charge thee, Jonathan, upon thy duty,  
And all, on your allegiance, to destroy  
This bold, aspiring youth; for while he  
lives,  
I am not safe. Reply not, but obey.

**28. Recitative**

*Jonathan*

O filial piety! O sacred friendship!  
How shall I reconcile you? Cruel father!  
Your just commands I always have  
obeyed:  
But to destroy my friend, the brave, the  
virtuous,  
The godlike David, Israel's defender,  
And terror of her foes! To disobey you —  
What shall I call it? 'Tis an act of duty  
To God, to David — nay, indeed, to you.

**29. Air**

*Jonathan*

No, cruel father, no!  
Your hard commands I can't obey.  
Shall I with sacrilegious blow  
Take pious David's life away?  
No, cruel father, no!  
No, with my life I must defend  
Against the world  
My best, my dearest friend.

**30. Chorus**

Preserve him for the glory of Thy name,  
Thy people's safety, and the heathen's  
shame.

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**I N T E R V A L**  
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**PART TWO**

**31. Chorus**

Envy, eldest born of hell,  
Cease in human breasts to dwell,  
Ever at all good repining,  
Still the happy undermining!  
God and man by thee infested,  
Thou by God and man detested,  
Most thyself thou dost torment,  
At once the crime and punishment!  
Hide thee in the blackest night:  
Virtue sickens at thy sight!  
Hence! Hence! Hence!  
Cease in human breasts to dwell.

**32. Recitative**

*Saul*

Hast thou obey'd my orders, and destroy'd  
My mortal enemy, the son of Jesse?

*Jonathan*

Alas, my father! He your enemy?  
Say, rather, he has done important service  
To you, and to the nation; hazarded  
His life for both, and slain our giant foe,  
Whose presence made the boldest of us  
tremble.

**33. Air**

*Jonathan*

Sin not, O king, against the youth,  
Who ne'er offended you;  
Think, to his loyalty and truth,

What great rewards are due!  
Think with what joy this godlike man  
You saw, that glorious day!  
Think, and with ruin, if you can,  
Such services repay.

**34. Air (duet)**

*Saul*  
As great Jehovah lives, I swear,  
The youth shall not be slain:  
Bid him return, and void of fear  
Adorn our court again.

*Jonathan*  
From cities stormed, and battles won,  
What glory can accrue?  
By this the hero best is known,  
He can himself subdue.

**35. Air**

*Jonathan*  
Wisest and greatest of his kind,  
Who can in reason's fetters bind  
The madness of his angry mind!

**36. Recitative**

*Jonathan*  
Appear, my friend.

*Saul*  
No more imagine danger:  
Be first in our esteem; with wonted valour  
Repel the insults of the Philistines;  
And as a proof of my sincerity,  
(Oh, hardness to dissemble!) instantly  
Espouse my daughter Michal.

**37. Recitative**

*Michal*  
A father's will has authorized my love:  
No longer, Michal, then attempt to hide  
The secret of my soul. I love thee, David,  
And long have loved.  
Thy virtue was the cause;  
And that be my defence.

**38. Duet**

*Michal*  
O fairest of ten thousand fair,  
Yet for thy virtue more admir'd!  
Thy words and actions all declare  
The wisdom by thy God inspir'd.

*David*  
O lovely maid! Thy form beheld,

Above all beauty charms our eyes,  
Yet still within thy form conceal'd,  
Thy mind, a greater beauty, lies.

*Both*

How well in thee does Heav'n at last  
Compensate all my sorrows past.

**39. Chorus**

Is there a man, who all his ways,  
Directs, his God alone to please?  
In vain his foes against him move:  
Superior pow'r their hate disarms;  
He makes them yield to virtue's charms,  
And melts their fury down to love.

**40. Recitative**

*David*  
Thy father is as cruel, and as false,  
As thou art kind and true.  
When I approach'd him,  
New from the slaughter of his enemies,  
His eyes with fury flam'd, his arms he  
rais'd,  
With rage grown stronger; by my guiltless  
head  
The javelin whizzing flew, and in the wall  
Mock'd once again his impotence of  
malice.

**41. Duet**

*David*  
At persecution I can laugh;  
No fear my soul can move,  
In God's protection safe,  
And blest in Michal's love.

*Michal*

Ah, dearest youth, for thee I fear!  
Fly, begone, for death is near!

*David*

Fear not, lovely fair, for me:  
Death, where thou art, cannot be;  
Smile, and danger is no more.

*Michal*

Fly, for death is at the door!  
Ah, dearest youth, for thee I fear!  
See, the murd'rous band comes on!  
Stay no longer, fly, begone!

**42. Recitative**

*Michal*  
Whom dost thou seek?  
And who has sent thee hither?

*Doeg*  
I seek for David, and am sent by Saul.

*Michal*  
Thy errand?

*Doeg*  
'Tis a summons to the Court.

*Michal*  
Say he is sick.

*Doeg*  
In sickness or in health,  
Alive or dead, he must be brought to Saul;  
Show me his chamber.

*(He discovers David's bed with a dummy image in it)*

Do you mock the king?  
This disappointment will enrage him more:  
Then tremble for th'event.

**43. Air**

*Michal*  
No, no, let the guilty tremble  
At ev'ry thought of danger near.  
Though numbers, arm'd with death,  
assemble,  
My innocence disdains to fear.  
Though great their power as their spite,  
Undaunted still, my soul, remain:  
For greater is Jehovah's might,  
And will their lawless force restrain.

**44. Sinfonia**

**45. Recitative**

*Saul*  
The time at length is come when I shall  
take  
My full revenge on Jesse's son.  
No longer shall the stripling make  
His sov'reign totter on the throne.  
He dies — this blaster of my fame,  
Bane of my peace, and author of my  
shame!

**46. Recitative**

*Saul*  
Where is the son of Jesse? Comes he not  
To grace our feast?

*Jonathan*  
He earnestly ask'd leave

To go to Bethlem, where his father's  
house,  
At solemn rites of annual sacrifice,  
Requir'd his presence.

*Saul*  
O perverse, rebellious!  
Thinkst thou I do not know that thou hast  
chose  
The son of Jesse to thy own confusion?  
The world will say thou art no son of mine,  
Who thus canst love the man I hate; the  
man  
Who, if he lives, will rob thee of thy crown:  
Send, fetch him thither; for the wretch  
must die.

*Jonathan*  
What has he done? And wherefore must  
he die?

*Saul*  
Darest thou oppose my will? Die then  
thyself!

*(Saul throws javelin at Jonathan, but misses...)*

**47. Chorus**

Oh, fatal consequence of rage,  
By reason uncontroll'd!  
With every law he can dispense;  
No ties the furious monster hold:  
From crime to crime he blindly goes,  
Nor end, but with his own destruction  
knows.

**PART THREE**

**48. Recitative**

*Saul*  
Wretch that I am, of my own ruin author!  
Where are my old supports? The valiant  
youth,  
Whose very name was terror to my foes,  
My rage has drove away. Of God  
forsaken,  
In vain I ask his counsel. He vouchsafes  
No answer to the sons of disobedience!  
Even my own courage fails me! Can it be?  
Is Saul become a coward? I'll not believe  
it!  
If Heav'n denies thee aid, seek it from hell!

**49. Recitative**

*Saul*  
'Tis said, here lives a woman, close  
familiar  
With th'enemy of mankind: her I'll consult,  
And know the worst. Her art is death by  
law;  
And while I minded law, sure death  
attended Such horrid practices. Yet, oh  
hard fate,  
Myself am now reduc'd to ask the counsel  
Of those I once abhorr'd!

**50. Recitative (duet)**

*Witch*  
With me what would'st thou?

*Saul*  
I would, that by thy art thou bring me up  
The man whom I shall name.

*Witch*  
Alas! Thou know'st  
How Saul has cut off those who use this  
art.  
Would'st thou ensnare me?

*Saul*  
As Jehovah lives,  
On this account no mischief shall befall  
thee.

*Witch*  
Whom shall I bring up to thee?

*Saul*  
Bring up Samuel.

**51. Air**

*Witch*  
Infernal spirits, by whose pow'r  
Departed ghosts in living forms appear,  
Add horror to the midnight hour,  
And chill the boldest hearts with fear:  
To this stranger's wond'ring eyes  
Let the prophet Samuel rise!

**52. Recitative**

*Samuel*  
Why hast thou forc'd me from the realms  
of peace  
Back to this world of woe?

*Saul*  
O holy prophet!  
Refuse me not thy aid in this distress.  
The num'rous foe stands ready for the  
battle:

God has forsaken me: no more he  
answers  
By prophets or by dreams: no hope  
remains,  
Unless I learn from thee what course to  
take.

*Samuel*  
Hath God forsaken thee? And dost thou  
ask  
My counsel? Did I not foretell thy fate,  
When, madly disobedient, thou didst spare  
The curst Amalekite, and on the spoil  
Didst fly rapacious? Therefore God this  
day  
Hath verified my words in thy destruction,  
Hath rent the kingdom from thee, and  
bestow'd it  
On David, whom thou hatest for his virtue.  
Thou and thy sons shall be with me  
tomorrow,  
And Israel by Philistine arms shall fall.  
The Lord hath said it: He will make it good.

**53. Sinfonia: The Battle**

**54. Recitative (duet)**

*David*  
Whence com'st thou?

*Amalekite*  
Out of the camp of Israel.

*David*  
Thou canst inform me then.  
How went the battle?

*Amalekite*  
The people, put to flight, in numbers fell,  
And Saul, and Jonathan his son, are dead.

*David*  
Alas, my brother! But how knowest thou  
That they are dead?

*Amalekite*  
Upon mount Gilboa  
I met with Saul, just fall'n upon his spear;  
Swiftly the foe pursu'd; he cried to me,  
Begg'd me to finish his imperfect work,  
And end a life of pain and ignominy.  
I knew he could not live, therefore slew  
him;  
Took from his head the crown, and from  
his arms  
The bracelets, and have brought them to  
my lord.

*David*  
Whence art thou?

*Amalekite*  
I am an Amalekite.

**55. Air**

*David*  
Impious wretch, of race accurst!  
And of all that race the worst!  
How hast thou dar'd to lift thy sword  
Against th'anointed of the Lord?

*(To one of his attendants, who kills the Amalekite.)*

Fall on him, smite him, let him die!  
On thy own head thy blood will lie;  
Since thy own mouth has testified,  
By thee the Lord's anointed died.

**56. Dead March**

**57. Chorus**

Mourn, Israel, mourn thy beauty lost,  
Thy choicest youth on Bilboa slain!  
How have thy fairest hopes been cross'd!  
What heaps of mighty warriors strew the plain!

**58. Solo and Chorus**

*Israelites*  
O fatal day! How low the mighty lie!

*David and Israelites*  
O Jonathan! How nobly didst thou die,  
For thy king and people slain.

*David*  
For thee, my brother Jonathan,  
How great is my distress!  
What language can my grief express?  
Great was the pleasure I enjoy'd in thee,  
And more than woman's love thy  
wondrous love to me!

*David and Israelites*  
O fatal day! How low the mighty lie!  
Where, Israel, is thy glory fled?  
Spoil'd of thy arms, and sunk in infamy,  
How canst thou raise again thy drooping  
head!

**59. Recitative**

*Abiathar*  
Ye men of Judah, weep no more!

Let gladness reign in all our host;  
For pious David will restore  
What Saul by disobedience lost.  
The Lord of hosts is David's friend,  
And conquest will his arms attend.

**60. Chorus**

Gird on thy sword, thou man of might,  
Pursue thy wonted fame:  
Go on, be prosperous in fight,  
Retrieve the Hebrew name!  
Thy strong right hand, with terror arm'd,  
Shall thy obdurate foes dismay;  
While others, by thy virtue charm'd,  
Shall crowd to own thy righteous sway.



## *Paul Spicer*



Paul Spicer began his musical training as a chorister at New College, Oxford. He studied with Herbert Howells and Richard Popplewell (organ) at the Royal College of Music in London, winning the Walford Davies Organ Prize in his final year.

As well as being conductor of the Whitehall Choir, Paul conducts the acclaimed Finzi Singers, with whom he has made 15 CDs for Chandos, the Birmingham Bach Choir, and the Chamber Choirs at the Birmingham Conservatoire where he is professor of choral conducting.

Until July 2001 Paul Spicer was Artistic Director of the Lichfield International Arts Festival and the Abbotsholme Arts Society, posts he relinquished in order to pursue a completely freelance musical career. Earlier in his career he spent time as a teacher of music at Uppingham School and Ellesmere College, before moving on to become a recording producer. He was Senior Producer for BBC Radio 3 in the Midlands until 1990, and today is in great demand as a recording producer and as a composer.

His large-scale *Easter Oratorio*, commissioned for performance in Lichfield Cathedral in July 2000, was described by *The Independent* as “almost operatic in its inherent drama” and as being “a major contribution to the choral society repertoire”. It was subsequently recorded, and was one of the Editor’s Choices in *Gramophone* magazine’s April 2006 issue, in which John Steane proclaimed: “The *Easter Oratorio* is a major work and the best of its kind to have appeared, certainly since the death of Howells, probably since Howells’s *Hymnus Paradisi*.” Other commissions have included anthems for the enthronement of Tom Wright as Bishop of Durham in October 2003, a Choral Festival in Long Island, USA, in May 2004, and the centenary of the Birmingham Diocese in 2005. Paul’s composition “The Deciduous Cross”, recorded by the Whitehall Choir, is available to buy via [www.whitehall.org.uk](http://www.whitehall.org.uk) .

Paul Spicer’s highly acclaimed biography of his composition teacher, Herbert Howells, which was published in August 1998, went into its second edition exactly a year later and is progressing to its third edition. He is a contributor to the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and has begun work on a full-scale biography of Sir George Dyson, commissioned by the Dyson Trust. Paul Spicer is a member of the Council of Lichfield Cathedral, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an Honorary Research Fellow of Birmingham University and an Honorary Fellow of the Birmingham Conservatoire.

# *Soloists*

## *Sophie Bevan (Soprano)*



Sophie Bevan was born in London in 1983. She is a student at the RCM's Benjamin Britten International Opera School. She is grateful for the support from a Joseph and Jill Karaviotis Scholarship and awards from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and the Musicians Benevolent Fund. Sophie won the Kathleen Ferrier Young Person's Competition in October 2003.

Since coming to the RCM she has worked extensively as a soloist. Engagements have included Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Windsor Castle, Bach's *St John Passion* for the London Mozart players, Handel's *Messiah* with the English Chamber Orchestra at Cadogan Hall, and Handel's *Samson* and Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* at St John's Smith Square for Whitehall Choir and Paul Spicer.

Sophie made her operatic debut with her local chamber opera company at the age of 15, singing Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and has since sung the roles of Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Mabel (*The Pirates of Penzance*). Recently she sang the title role in the London premiere of Royer's *Zaide, Reine de Grenade* at St John's, Smith Square, gaining an enthusiastic review from *The Times*.

Future plans include concerts with the London Mozart players and the English Chamber Orchestra.

## *Celeste Lazarenko (Soprano)*



Celeste Lazarenko is an Australian soprano studying with Rudolf Piernay. In September 2004 Celeste took up the offer of a place in the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera course. The Guildhall has offered a fees scholarship for this prestigious place care of the benefactors the Gwen Catley Scholarship and the Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers. She has a double Masters degree in Performance from the Guildhall, London, and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australia, a Diploma in Opera from the Sydney Conservatorium and a Bachelor of Visual Arts degree from the University of Sydney, majoring in painting.

Celeste has recently returned to London after four performances of *Messiah* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonia Choir in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House in December 2005, conducted by Richard Gill, and performed the role of *Nanetta* in the Guildhall production of *Falstaff* in March 2006. Recently she has won the Countess of Munster Award, the Helpmann Award, the Australian Music Foundation Award, and the Marten Bequest, and was a finalist in the prestigious Kathleen Ferrier Competition 2005, at the Wigmore Hall, London, where she was described in *The Daily Telegraph* (U.K.) as '...the most darkly intense of the lot.... Electrifying.'

## *Christopher Ainslie (Counter-tenor)*



Christopher Ainslie began singing as a chorister in the choir of St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, his home city. In 2005 he moved to London to study at the Royal College of Music.

Christopher's recent performance in the title role of Handel's *Porro* (conducted by Laurence Cummings, and part of the 2007 London Handel Festival) was highly acclaimed. Other opera roles include the cover of Ottone in the English National Opera production of *Poppea*, Medoro in *Orlando* with Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells, Alessandro in *Tolomeo Rè d'Egitto*, in the 2006 London Handel Festival and Arsamenes in an Edinburgh Festival Fringe production of *Xerxes*. Recent oratorio performances include Handel's *Solomon*, conducted by Laurence Cummings, *The Messiah*, conducted by Sir David Willcocks and *Belshazzar* (Cyrus) in the Frauenkirche in Dresden, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Worcester Cathedral and Vivaldi's *Gloria* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Christopher is the winner of the *Michael Oliver Prize* in the 2007 Handel Singing Competition, and recipient of the Hulbert Award through the London Handel Society.

Upcoming engagements include the premiere of Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* (Innocent 4) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Handel's *Messiah* with the London Handel Orchestra, and Handel's *Messiah*, in Philadelphia, with the Philadelphia Orchestra. While qualifying as a chartered accountant in Cape Town, Christopher studied singing part time and since moving to London has had lessons with Mark Tucker, Paul Farrington, Ryland Davies and David Daniels and has sung in masterclasses with Michael Chance, Peter Harvey, Ashley Stafford and Sarah Walker.

Christopher is grateful for the support of *Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells* and the Richard Carne Trust.

## ***Thomas Hobbs (Tenor)***



Thomas Hobbs was born and brought up in Exeter and started musical life as a trumpeter. He began singing at age sixteen, studying with Brian Northcott and deputising in Exeter's Cathedral Choir. Thomas recently graduated in history from King's College London. He also studied singing with Ian Partridge, and now studies with Neil Mackie at the Royal College of Music, where he is the Peter Pears Scholar. He is increasingly in demand as a consort singer and soloist both in England and abroad.

As a consort singer, his recent concerts include a number of performances with The Binchois Consort, with Jeffrey Skidmore's Ex-Cathedral Consort, with Tenebrae and the English Concert under the direction of Nigel Short, with Stephen Layton's Polyphony and with the choir of Westminster Abbey. He has recently been recording with the Cardinal's Musick as part of their William Byrd series, with The Sixteen, with the choir of Westminster Abbey and with Polyphony.

As a soloist, Thomas's recent concert engagements include Finzi's *Dies Natalis*, Handel's *Messiah*, *Acis & Galatea* and *Chandos Anthems*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *B minor Mass*, the role of Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Berlioz's *Te Deum* and Monteverdi's *Vespers*, whilst in recital he has given performances of Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*, Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge*, Finzi's *Young Man's Exhortation* and Britten's *Abraham and Isaac*. He also sang the role of the Evangelist in Bach's *St Mark Passion* for Paul Spicer and the Whitehall Choir at St John's, Smith Square in March 2007. Future plans range from productions at the RCM to lieder recitals and concert appearances both in England and abroad. Thomas is supported by the Josephine Baker Trust. He has recently been awarded a Susan Chilcott Scholarship and made a Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist.

## ***Vojtěch Šafařík (Bass)***



Vojtěch Šafařík, bass-baritone, was born in the Czech Republic. He started his vocal studies with Roman Janál at the Prague State Conservatory, from which he graduated in 2005. Vojtěch is currently studying with Ryland Davies at the Benjamin Britten International Opera School, Royal College of Music, London, where he is the Derek Butler Trust Scholar, and he is also supported by the Josephine Baker Trust.

Vojtěch's operatic roles include Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (BBIOS), Father in Mozart's *The Jewel Box* (Bampton Classical Opera), Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Vrchní in Vítězslav Novák's *Lucerna* (Czech Republic). In 2005 he was selected for the International Opera Studio at the Komische Oper, Berlin, where he performed the role of Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) under Kirill Petrenko.

Vojtěch appears frequently as a soloist in concerts; performances have included Mozart's *Mass in C minor* with Sir Charles Mackerras at the RCM, and with Paul Spicer and the Whitehall Choir this summer, a concert version of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* with Sir Roger Norrington in Salzburg, Polyphemus in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Bampton Classical Opera, Fauré's *Requiem* for the Brighton Music Festival, and Bach's *St. John Passion* with the London Mozart Players. He also appeared live in a BBC3 broadcast with Bampton Classical Opera.

Vojtěch is an associate artist of the Classical Opera Company. He has participated in several master classes (Sommerakademie Universität Mozarteum Salzburg with Rudolf Knoll, RCM with Sir Thomas Allen, Roger Vignoles, Sarah Walker and Gerald Finley), and he is the winner of the Anglo-Czechoslovak Trust competition in London 2003, and the holder of the Madeline Finden Memorial Trust Award 2005 and the Robert Hendra Award.

His future plans include the role of Count Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (BBIOS), Caldara's *La Contesa dei Numi* (International Music Festival Český Krumlov, Czech Republic) and the double role of Badger Priest in Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* (Music at Woodhouse).

*Other solo parts sung by:*

**Ashley Marshfield** - ABNER (nos. 8 and 22)

**Ian White** - MESSENGER (no. 42)

**Keith Long** - SAMUEL (no. 52)

**Jonathan Williams** – AN AMALEKITE (no. 54)

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## **WHITEHALL CHOIR – FUTURE PROGRAMME 2007/2008:**

### **CHRISTMAS MUSIC**

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
St Stephen's, Rochester Row, SW1  
Tickets on the door

### **MONTEVERDI: 1610 VESPERS**

Thursday 10 April, 2008  
Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street, W1

### **ENGLISH SECULAR MUSIC**

Monday 7 July 2008  
The Banqueting House, Whitehall

If you would like to be kept informed of Whitehall Choir initiatives and events, please sign up for our

"e-alerts" via the website – [www.whitehallchoir.org.uk](http://www.whitehallchoir.org.uk) .

# ***Brandenburg Baroque Soloists***

**BRANDENBURG BAROQUE SOLOISTS** is one of the exciting new orchestras playing on period instruments.

Whitehall Choir has worked with the Brandenburg Sinfonia for many years, but this is the first time we have worked with **Brandenburg Baroque Soloists**, a judicious mixture of regular Sinfonia players who play on both modern and original instruments with some of the finest period instrument specialists. The repertoire of the orchestra has expanded steadily to include the standard baroque choral classics including Handel's Messiah and Bach's Passions.

## **Violin 1**

Persephone Gibbs  
Elizabeth McCarthy  
George Crawford  
Maryanne Szucs

## **Violin 2**

Hetty Wayne  
Rachel Rowntree  
Lorna Geller  
Felicity Broome-Skelton

## **Viola**

Claire Barwick  
Wendy Kelly  
John Rogers

## **Cello**

Gay Amhurst  
Dominic O'Dell

## **Bass**

Johnny Gee

## **Flute**

Christine Garrett  
Soile Pykkonen

## **Oboe**

Geoffrey Coates  
Belinda Paul

## **Bassoon**

Katrina Russell  
Rebecca Stockwell

## **Organ /Carillon**

Robin Kimber

## **Trumpet**

Howard Rowntree  
Simon Munday

## **Sackbut**

George Bartle  
Amy Wetmore  
Alastair Warren

## **Timpani**

Janne Metsapelto

## **Harp**

Fontane Liang

## **Orchestra Event Manager**

Bob Porter



## ***THE WHITEHALL CHOIR***

**President:** Sir Brian Bender, KCB

**Conductor:** Paul Spicer

**Accompanist:** James Longford

### ***The Whitehall Choir***

After its wartime origins in 1941 as a lunchtime madrigal group in the Board of Trade, the Whitehall Choir has grown and become a permanent and thriving choir, performing regularly at major London venues, and sometimes more widely in the UK. Its repertoire ranges from the Renaissance to the 21st century, and includes challenging unaccompanied pieces as well as larger choral works performed alongside professional soloists and orchestral musicians. Paul Spicer's appointment as Conductor and Musical Director has continued and enhanced the Choir's regular contribution to the London music scene. Most recently our programme has included Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Haydn's *Imperial Mass* at St John's, Smith Square, Rachmaninov's *Vespers* at St Paul's, Knightsbridge, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* at the Cadogan Hall, and the Fauré *Requiem* at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. In 2007 the Choir also went on tour in Toulouse, France where they performed a varied programme two separate venues. In 2006 the Choir performed the London premiere of Paul Spicer's *The Deciduous Cross* along with Bruckner's *Mass in E Minor* at St John's, Smith Square, and both works feature on the Choir's recent (January 2007) CD recording available to purchase from our website.

**If you would like to sing with the Whitehall Choir** please visit our website [www.whitehallchoir.org.uk](http://www.whitehallchoir.org.uk), or alternatively contact Nicola Kirkup 020 7215 6566 (daytime only) for details. Should places be available in the choir, membership is subject to a short audition. Registered Charity no. 280478.

#### **Sopranos**

Joanna Bradley  
Gill Carruthers  
Hilary Davies  
Imogen Davies  
Ruth Eastman  
Jacky Erwtman  
Rebecca Gill  
Kate Goulden\*  
Shelley Haley  
Claire Johnston  
Nicola Kirkup  
Margaret Lauder  
Leane Mercier-Tardif  
Fiona Murray  
Simone Nauerth  
Lesley Raymond  
Rachel Salisbury  
Ruth Soroko  
Yvette Street  
Vicky Sweetman  
Sue Vincent  
Joanna Worrell

#### **Altos**

Helen Audaer  
Rose Chandler  
Tamsin Cousins  
Monica Darnbrough  
Miranda Douce  
Samantha Foley  
Katherine Howes  
Kate Mole  
Jean Orr  
Marion Paul  
Caroline Price  
Penny Prior  
Moira Purkiss  
Claire Short  
Liz Walton\*  
Lis Warren

#### **Tenors**

Colin Altman \*  
Michael Grubb  
Patrick Haighton  
Ken Holmes  
Simon Lancaster  
Ashley Marshfield  
Philip Pratley  
Danny Tomkins  
Ian White  
Jonathan Williams

*\*Part Representative*

#### **Basses**

Chris Gotto  
Laurence Grace  
Richard Grafen  
Michael Growcott  
Michael Hope  
Martin Humphreys  
Andrew Hyde  
Simon Lawson  
Keith Long  
William Longland  
Brendan O'Keeffe  
Malcolm Todd\*  
David Wedmore

## **WHITEHALL CHOIR COMMITTEE, 2007-08**

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Miss P. J. Owen

Mr Roy Owen

Mr John Warren

Capt. B. V. Woodford, CBE, RN

For further details about Friends of Whitehall Choir, please email [friends@whitehallchoir.org.uk](mailto:friends@whitehallchoir.org.uk)

*The Choir is very grateful for the support that it continues to receive from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, DBERR (formerly DTI)*

*The Choir would like to thank all the helpers on the night.*

*The Choir would also like to extend its thanks to Peter Asprey for his assistance in preparing the Choir for tonight's performance.*

ANTON BRUCKNER MASS IN E MINOR  
PAUL SPICER THE DECIDUOUS CROSS



WHITEHALL CHOIR  
WITH THE BRANDENBURG SINFONIA  
CONDUCTED BY PAUL SPICER



**During 2007 the Whitehall Choir produced a CD, featuring the first recorded performance of Paul Spicer's *The Deciduous Cross*. On this disc the Choir has also recorded Bruckner's *Mass in E minor*. The CD is on sale via our website [www.whitehallchoir.org.uk](http://www.whitehallchoir.org.uk).**

*"...instrumental writing which is assured, inventive and colourful...a performance which is committed and compelling..." Organists' Review, October 2007.*

*"...Definitely recommended!" Bruckner Journal, November 2007.*