

Peter Stallworthy studied Music at King's College, London and the Royal Manchester College of Music. As a pianist he was a first prize winner in the National Chopin Competition and was awarded the Ricordi Prize for Conducting. During this period he appeared on both TV and radio as an accompanist and studied conducting with Sir Charles Groves, George Hurst and Maurice Handford.

Over the last forty years he has enjoyed widespread acclaim as a conductor of choirs and orchestras across the North of England and in 2005, together with his wife Hilary, founded Cheshire Sinfonia and Cheshire Chorale, which both continue to build on an enviable reputation for inspirational performances under his baton. Peter took over as Conductor of the Swale Singers in September 2018.

Tim Harper has been Assistant Director of Music at Ripon Cathedral since September 2014. He trained as organ scholar successively at St Barnabas Church, Dulwich, Clare College, Cambridge, Canterbury Cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral; as a pupil of David Sanger, he gained the major prizes at ARCO and FRCO and was subsequently awarded the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. In 2010 he was appointed Assistant Director of Music at Birmingham Cathedral. Alongside his cathedral duties, he enjoys recital, accompanying and continuo work and is accompanist to the early music course NORVIS. In 2016 he developed an interest in transcription through his arrangement of *A Colour Symphony* by Arthur Bliss, while in 2020 he ventured into YouTube online recitals with his *Six Sixes* series from Ripon Cathedral.

Emma Wardell's interest in singing began while she was a student at Durham University. She studied with contralto Norma Procter and soprano Charlotte Jackson, and has taken part in masterclasses with Emma Kirkby and Malcolm Martineau. In 2011, Emma had the pleasure of performing Elgar's *Sea Pictures* with Richmondshire Orchestra, and has enjoyed singing as a soloist with the Swale Singers, the Wensleydale Chorus and Louth Chamber Choir over many years

Originally hailing from Manchester, **Michael Monument** is the Director of Music at Altrincham Grammar School for boys but is no stranger to Yorkshire, working as head of Music at Easingwold School for 10 years.

Mike is a member of Cheshire Chorale and a former member of York Opera as well as regularly performing as a Double Bass player.



The Swale Singers are grateful for the support of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust through the Roger Stott Community Grants programme, and the support of the Friends of Swale Singers. If you would like to become a Friend, please use the insert in the programme or see swalesingers.com

Swale Singers Concert

4th December 2021, 3pm

St Mary's Church Arkengarthdale

Conductor: Peter Stallworthy

Organist: Tim Harper

Mezzo-Soprano Soloist: Emma Wardell

Baritone Soloist: Michael Monument

Gabriel Fauré **Cantique de Jean Racine**

Gabriel Fauré **Requiem**

Introit – Kyrie
Offertorium
Sanctus
Pie Jesu
Agnus Dei
Libera Me
In Paradisum

Interval (please remain in your seats)

John Rutter **Feel The Spirit**

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
Steal Away
I got a robe
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Ev'ry time I feel the spirit
Deep River
When the saints go marching in

We would like to dedicate this performance to all those who have passed away since the choir's last concert, and in particular to our much-missed members, Gavin Graveson, Sheila Keenan, Michael Mason and our founder Shelagh Thomlinson.

Cantique de Jean Racine

Gabriel Fauré

This afternoon's two pieces by the French composer Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) are probably his works best known to British audiences. They are both religious, although Fauré's oeuvre was largely secular. The *Cantique de Jean Racine*, written when he was only 19, won him a prize at the École Niedermeyer in Paris where he received his musical education; it has become one of his most popular works. The text is a 1688 French paraphrase by the poet and dramatist Jean Racine of a Latin hymn for Matins (Morning Prayer) from the Daily Office (The Prayer of the Church). The melody is simple, calm and measured and the triplet figuration in the accompaniment is maintained throughout. It is a remarkable work for a 19-year-old, showing an ease and maturity suggestive of the mindset of a much older composer.

Requiem

Gabriel Faure

The *Requiem* by Gabriel Fauré is one of the most beloved works in the choral repertoire; for many choral singers in Britain, it will come second only to *Messiah* as the work they have most frequently performed. The reasons for its enduring popularity are not hard to find; the work, although austere is not gloomy and has about it a serene seriousness and features beautiful and restrained melodies along with inspired harmonies.

Fauré was an agnostic but a setting of the Requiem, although ostensibly a liturgical work, evokes the hopes and fears that confront us all, believer and non-believer alike; there is thus a universality that is not found in other Mass settings or settings of other religious texts. Fauré's own comments on the work are illuminating: '....It is thus that I see death: as a happy deliverance, an aspiration towards happiness above, rather than as a painful experience.....As to my Requiem, perhaps I have also instinctively sought to escape from what is thought right and proper, after all the years of accompanying burial services on the organ! I know it all by heart. I wanted to write something different.'

There are so many highlights. The solemn and serene melodies in the *Introit-Kyrie* are striking and memorable, as is the more complex *Offertorium* with its canon for altos and tenors; the sublime baritone solo which follows features simple but inspired harmonies and modulations,

and the movement is crowned with a luminous *Amen* coda. The *Sanctus*, restrained and meditative, contains just one big climax and is followed by the much sung and affecting *Pie Jesu* for the soprano soloist. The gentle *Agnus Dei*, with the melody given to the tenors is reminiscent of the *Introit*, and indeed the opening of the work makes a brief reappearance, but only after the extraordinary *Lux Aeterna*, a mysterious and hushed middle section featuring complex harmonic progressions. The solemn tread of the *Libera Me* leads ultimately into the central *Dies Irae*, Fauré's one concession to the post-mortal terrors evoked so vividly in the Requiems of Mozart, Berlioz and Verdi. The final *In Paradisum* touchingly and beautifully evokes another realm where the angels lead the soul to eternal rest.

Entirely appropriately, the Requiem was sung at Fauré's own funeral at the Madeleine in November 1924. One suspects that there were few dry eyes in the church during that performance.

Feel the Spirit

John Rutter

That the black Africans, enslaved in the southern states of the USA, should have been compelled to adopt the Christian faith of their 'masters' is unsurprising. What is surprising is that so many not only accepted it but embraced it and took it to their hearts, discovering a depth of meaning in it that eluded most of their white owners. One fruit of this was the black church movement in the US, with its powerful and distinctive message. Another was the emergence of music including the numerous spirituals which evolved over many years and which were written down from the mid nineteenth century onwards.

Rutter is one of the most performed choral composers in the world today. In 'Feel the Spirit' he manages to do justice to several spirituals; there are seven 'movements' but more than seven spirituals included. There is more than a little influence from jazz and blues, a reminder that these forms also originated in black American music. From the vehemence of 'Joshua fit the battle of Jericho', through the weary anguish of 'Sometimes I feel like a motherless child', the effervescent 'I got a robe' and the calm aspiration of 'Deep River' to the uproariously triumphant 'When the Saints', Rutter scarcely puts a foot wrong showing his great talent for arranging, animating and enlivening the music of others. It is a great sing.

Programme Notes: Mark Harrison