

hailshamchoral.org



Hailsham Choral

Bach

Christmas Oratorio

Corelli Christmas Concerto



Saturday 7th December
2024, 7.30pm

Conductor
Jozik Kotz

Orchestra Leader
Alison Bury

Soloists
Jennifer Witton
Rebecca Hughes
Ben Hancox-Lachman
Andrew Rupp

Retiring collection in aid of Children with Cancer Fund

PROGRAMME ORDER

Christmas Oratorio - Parts I and II

The running order of the pieces, together with the words in both German and English, are found in the accompanying booklet, Text and Translation.

INTERVAL

Christmas Concerto

- I. Vivace - Grave
- II. Allegro
- III. Adagio - Allegro - Adagio
- IV. Vivace
- V. Allegro
- VI. Largo *Pastorale*

Christmas Oratorio - Part III

Running order from page 9 of Text and Translation.



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and the *Christmas Oratorio*



In 1722, Johann Kuhnau, the *Kantor* of the *Thomaskirche* Leipzig, died. Bach was one of six applicants for the vacancy, but was far from first choice for the job. This went to Georg Philip Telemann, who despite being elected unanimously by the appointing Council, turned down the offer. The second choice was Christophe Graupner, a former pupil of Kuhnau, but he declined to leave his current position and withdrew. It was only then, the Council turned to Bach, although it is not clear how much support he actually received. Certainly the Burgomeister (Mayor) wanted him, although another official is reported to have said, 'since the best musicians were not available, [we] had no option but to take one of the mediocre ones'!

Bach held the post of *Thomaskantor* from May 1723 until his death. This was a very demanding job which involved, among many other things, composing and directing the music for the city's two principal Lutheran churches, *Thomaskirche* (St Thomas' Church), and *Nikolaikirche* (St Nicholas' Church), while supervising and training the musicians at two others. He also had to teach Latin and Music at the nearby *Thomasschule*. Despite the heavy workload, Bach composed much of his greatest music during this period, including some of the outstanding masterpieces of Western music.

The *Christmas Oratorio* was written for Christmas 1734 and comprises six parts, each part a separate cantata intended for performance at a church service on a specific feast day over the Christmas period. The work was not conceived as one continuous piece, in the manner of (say) Handel's, *Messiah*, or Bach's other oratorios. The libretto, based on the Gospels of Luke (Parts I-IV) and Matthew (Parts V-VI), was probably compiled by Christian Henrici (known as Picander), a librettist known to have worked frequently with Bach during his time in Leipzig.

The first three parts were incorporated within services on the first three days of Christmas: 25th, 26th and 27th of December. The remaining parts were for New Year's Day (Circumcision and Naming of Jesus), the First Sunday of the

New Year (Flight into Egypt) and Epiphany (Coming and Adoration of the Magi). Performances were shared between services at *Thomaskirche* and *Nikolaikirche* - sometimes at one church in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

Like many composers of his day, Bach was accomplished at ‘recycling’ music previously written for other purposes. Given the unrelenting demands on his time at Leipzig, it is not surprising he used this process extensively in the *Christmas Oratorio*, taking the majority of the choruses and arias from earlier works. Adapting existing music to a new purpose is known as ‘parody’ and the *Christmas Oratorio* is a particularly sophisticated example. Alongside newly composed sections, Bach incorporated music from three secular cantatas written during 1733-1734, a lost church cantata from earlier in 1734, and two extracts from his own *St John Passion* of 1724.



The beginning of the orchestral introduction to the opening chorus.

The three secular cantatas were written for the Court of the Elector of Saxony. Two were for the celebration of birthdays - the 11 year-old Crown Prince Friedrich and the Electress, Maria Joseph. The third was to celebrate the first anniversary of the Elector being crowned King August III of Poland. The shelf-life of each cantata would have been very short, so re-using the music in a more significant and less ephemeral setting, is fully understandable.

Most of the new text and the earlier music complement each other remarkably well.¹ It is difficult to imagine the *Christmas Oratorio's* wonderful opening chorus, with its glorious, colourful orchestral accompaniment, in any context other than a joyful celebration of Christmas Day - yet the music was adapted from *Hercules at the Crossroads*, a secular cantata written for the birthday of an 11 year-old boy!

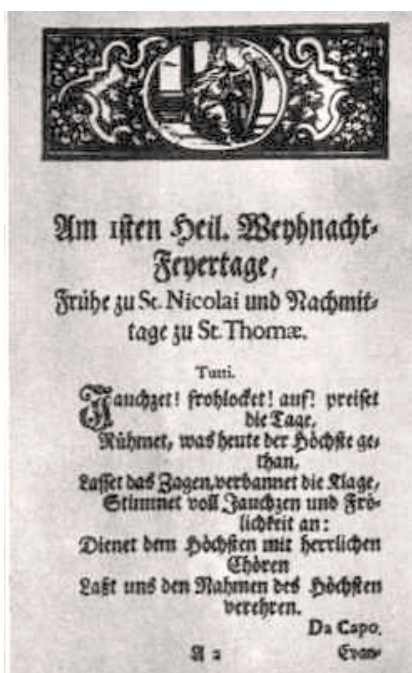
¹ The fit is so good that some experts believe Bach may have had the music's subsequent use in mind when writing the earlier works.

There are only two places in the whole work where planned adaptations proved unsuccessful and new settings had to be composed - the alto *aria* in Part III,² and the opening *chorus* of Part V.³ New music was also written for all the *recitatives* and the marvellous orchestral *Sinfonia*, which opens Part II. The latter creates a wonderful image of the shepherds in the field, looking after their sheep.

This evening's performance will be of the first three parts of the *Christmas Oratorio*. Performing all six takes rather a long time, so it is quite usual to come across concerts offering only part of the full sequence - typically, Parts I-III or IV-VI.

The first three parts follow the narrative of the birth of Jesus given in Martin Luther's translation of Luke's Gospel:

- I. The Birth (Luke 2: vs 1-7)
Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem; the child is born and placed in a manger.
- II. The Annunciation to the Shepherds (Luke 2: 8-14)
Angels announce the birth of Christ to the shepherds.
- III. The Adoration of the Shepherds (Luke 2:15-20)
The shepherds go to Bethlehem and tell what they have witnessed; Mary treasures these things and ponders them in her heart.



The scriptures from Luke provide a good narrative framework, but are not the only biblical content in the libretto. John's Gospel is used occasionally to add deeper spiritual meaning, while references to God's promise to Abraham, and the books of Isaiah and the Song of Solomon, remind listeners that the Old Testament prophesied much that was later revealed in the New. In addition, many of the words of joy and praise expressed in the choruses, have their origin in the Psalms.⁴

A page of the libretto, as printed in 1734. The text is of the opening chorus:

*Jauchzet frohlocket
(Shout for joy, rejoice)*

² Schließe, mein Herze (*Text and Translation*, number 31)

³ Ehre sei dir Gott!

⁴ Psalms 97, 98, 100 and 150.



There are a number of characters mentioned in the Gospel narrative (Mary, Shepherds, Angels, etc.) and within the *Christmas Oratorio*, both the choir and the soloists have occasional, temporary roles as characters. For example, in Part II, the soprano briefly takes the role of the Angel of the Lord addressing the shepherds, the alto assumes the part of Mary and the choir becomes the Heavenly Host. In Part III, the choir takes the role of the shepherds, while the alto once again assumes the role of Mary.

This illustration is from an 8th century illuminated manuscript showing the Angel of the Lord addressing the shepherds.

In the *Christmas Oratorio*, Bach differentiates elements of Lutheran worship, by assigning different types of musical presentation to specific roles.

The gospel narrative is obviously central to the whole work and is delivered by the tenor soloist in the role of *Evangelist*. This music uses *recitativo secco* (*dry recitative*), where there is an emphasis on following the rhythms and stresses of speech, and there is no repetition. The *recitative* is underpinned by a sparse *continuo* accompaniment, which this evening is played on chamber organ and 'cello. The main purpose is to communicate the Bible text with absolute clarity and minimal distraction.

Interpretation of the gospel is delivered using *recitativo accompagnato* (*accompanied recitative*). Here, the narrative is paused and the soloists use non-Biblical texts to interpret the spiritual significance of the gospel narrative. Accompaniments are more elaborate and employ a wider variety of orchestral instruments.

Further reflection on the gospel takes place in the *aria*, only now the lyrics are of rhyming poetry. The musical settings are more sophisticated and can be quite florid. Repetitions in the text are commonplace and *arias* are the longest items in the whole work. They are mostly set for one or other of the soloists, although there is an *aria duet* in Part III.

The *chorale* goes beyond the interpretation and reflection seen so far, to an affirmation of faith by the congregation. It is a type of hymn, introduced into church services by Martin Luther, so that the congregation could participate in musical worship. Hundreds of *chorales* appear in Bach's church music, yet

he very rarely composed any of the melodies himself. Instead, he used tunes written by others and provided them with sophisticated harmonies.⁵ Most, if not all the *chorale* melodies in the *Christmas Oratorio*, would have been known to the congregation, who are likely to have joined in the more straightforward settings. However, some of the *chorales* are pitched rather high, while others have elaborate orchestral accompaniments. Both these factors would have limited the congregation's ability to participate.⁶

An interesting mixture of *chorale* and *recitative* occurs in Part I, where the soprano soloist sings a *chorale* melody, line by line, each of which is 'answered' by the bass soloist, using *accompanied recitative*.

Choruses are used in more than one way in the *Christmas Oratorio*. The two which open Parts I & III are full of joy and praise, adding depth and impact to the work. The opening chorus of Part III is repeated at its end, providing a suitably up-beat conclusion. As we have seen already, the other two *choruses* assume roles as characters in the story and so become part of the narrative.

As far as we know, after the Leipzig performances of 1734/5, the *Christmas Oratorio* was not repeated in Bach's lifetime. Its second performance was in Berlin on 17th December 1857 - over 120 years later.



Leipzig in the time of Bach, showing Thomaskirche, and to its left Thomasschule

⁵ Bach harmonised around 400 chorales. Typically, they are in four-parts - soprano, alto, tenor, bass, with the melody allocated to the soprano. The congregation would be expected to sing the melody.

⁶ Using the numbering in *Text and Translation* - 12, 23 & 28 are pitched rather high, while 9 & 23 have sophisticated orchestral accompaniments.

Archangelo Corelli (1653-1713) and the *Christmas Concerto*



Corelli was an Italian composer and violinist who came originally from the small town of Fusignano in the province of Ravenna. His father died shortly before he was born and along with four older siblings, young Archangelo was raised by his mother. There is little reliable information about his childhood and early education, but we do know he eventually went to study in Bologna, home to Europe's oldest university and a flourishing centre for music. Corelli said later that his education was focused mainly on the violin. After Bologna, he may have travelled to France, Germany and Spain,⁷ but by 1675 had settled in Rome. He soon came to the attention of a number of wealthy patrons whose support enabled him to pursue his career free from financial worries.

Corelli became a highly regarded figure in the Roman musical world: a virtuoso violinist and influential teacher, a conductor and a composer. He was received in 'the best' social circles, and elected to the most prestigious artistic and intellectual society of the day, the *Arcadian Academy of Rome*. His reputation grew, and he achieved great fame and success throughout Europe, yet he never went on tour, and his compositional output was limited to six published collections and a few single pieces.

As a composer, Corelli was a perfectionist who spent many long hours planning and writing his works, which were only sent for publication after careful and multiple revisions. In 1708 he wrote:

After so many and extensive revisions, I have rarely felt the confidence to deliver to the public the few compositions that I sent to the press.

He also limited his choice of genres, and all his published compositions are for stringed instruments and continuo - there are no parts for any other type of instrument nor any for singers. This is very unusual for the time and Corelli was the first composer to achieve fame without leaving any compositions for the voice. His works were hugely popular both during his lifetime and for a long time afterwards, prompting numerous reprints.

⁷ Experts dispute whether or not these visits took place.

Corelli's greatest influence on other composers was in the development of the *concerto grosso*. This form features a small group of solo instruments (the *concertino*) contrasting with a larger string orchestra (the *ripieno*). There is also a keyboard *continuo* played on harpsichord or chamber organ.

Corelli did not invent the *concerto grosso*, but he brought it to such a level of perfection that the Opus 6 set of 12 concertos, published posthumously the year after his death, provided a model for later composers, such as Bach, Handel and Vivaldi. His concertos were particularly popular in England and well into the 19th century were even preferred to those by Handel. A music dictionary from 1827² sums up his legacy:

Corelli's concertos have withstood all the onslaught of time and fashion, more firmly than his other works. Harmony is so pure, the parts so clearly, judiciously and ingeniously arranged, and the overall effect...is so majestic, solemn and sublime, that they disarm any criticism and make one forget everything that has ever been composed in the same genre.

Of all Corelli's concertos, the *Christmas Concerto* has remained one of the composer's most popular works. The manuscript bears the words, *Fatto per la notte di Natale (Written for Christmas night)* and while there is nothing particularly 'Christmassy' about the first five movements, wonderful though they are, the sixth is a *pastorale*, conjuring-up an image of shepherds in the field. This piece follows in a long tradition of stylised, Italian-influenced, 'shepherd music' evoking a feeling for Christmas. Other well-known examples are those by Bach in Part II of the *Christmas Oratorio*, and the *Pifa* in Handel's *Messiah*.



Corelli was so successful in his life time that he amassed a fortune of 120,000 marks, along with a fine collection of art and violins. He is buried in the Pantheon at Rome (see plaque opposite) not far from the artist, Raphael.

² *A Dictionary of Musicians from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* by John S. Salisbury, 1827.

Jennifer Witton - Soprano

Following studies at the Guildhall Opera School, where she won the prestigious Gold Medal competition, Jennifer began her career at Glyndebourne. Following various small roles, she performed the title role in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, both for the festival and on tour. Since then, her work has expanded to include the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Opera North and Wexford Festival Opera.

On the concert platform, Jennifer has performed at all the leading London Concert Halls. She has worked with conductors such as Marin Alsop, John Wilson and Martyn Brabbins, performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company, given song recitals and enjoyed much competition success. Current and future engagements include her debut in the role of *Elle La Voix Humaine* by Poulenc at the French Institut, Edinburgh, and continued workshops at Glyndebourne for a premiere in Autumn 2025. Jennifer is also looking forward to covering the part of Christine at the Royal Opera House in the premiere of *Festen* by Mark-Anthony Turnage in 2025.



Rebecca Hughes – Mezzo Soprano



Rebecca achieved a Degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Vocal Performance and Opera at Birmingham Conservatoire and Licentiate of Trinity College London. Whilst at the Conservatoire she won a Kathleen Ferrier Trust award and a Music Sound Fund award.

She has performed with Grange Park Opera and New Sussex Opera, among other touring opera companies, playing roles such as Romeo in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and Friquette in Offenbach's *Belle Lurette*. As a concert soloist, performances include Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *St John Passion*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and

Rossini's *Stabat Mater & Petite Messe Solennelle*. She has sung for a variety of choral societies, including Seaford, Shrewsbury and Norwich, Royal College of Organists, Royal Free Singers, Derby Cathedral Choir and Choir of St John's. Recent engagements include Mercedes from Bizet's *Carmen* with South East Opera, Siebel from Gounod's *Faust* with New Sussex Opera and Verdi's *Requiem* with Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Future engagements include, The Governess from Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* with Midsummer Opera, and Eboli from Verdi's *Don Carlo* with Opera Unboxed. Alongside singing, Rebecca also teaches and gives vocal workshops to choral societies in and around East Sussex.

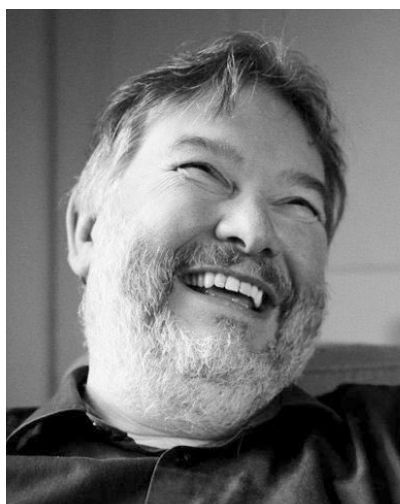
Ben Hancox-Lachman - Tenor

Ben grew up near Herstmonceux and recently graduated with an MRes in structural biology from Imperial College, London. In addition to his scientific aspirations, he is pursuing a career as a tenor, currently focusing on song and oratorio. He has extensive experience with choirs and other vocal ensembles, and is always a popular soloist with us at Hailsham.

Ben has performed as soloist from a young age and was a prize-winner in the 2017, AESS competition, as well as taking roles in Handel's *Messiah*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Bach's *St John Passion*. More recently, Ben has performed Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Maunder's *Olivet to Calvary*, and the title role in Handel's *Samson*, in addition to participating in a live studio recording at Herstmonceux Castle and performing several song recitals. These included Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, *Liederkreis op.24 & 39*, and Beethoven's *An die fern Geliebte*. In 2025, he will sing *Don Basilio* and *Don Curzio* for Harrow Opera, as well as recoding a new cycle of songs by composer Nicholas Smith in Beijing.



Andrew Rupp - Bass



Andrew was born in Canterbury and started singing there as a Cathedral Chorister. He made his operatic debut in 1996 as The Vicar in Britten's *Albert Herring* for British Youth Opera. Since then he has sung roles at Glyndebourne, Berlin Staatsoper, English National Opera, Royal Opera, Opera North, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, etc.

He was High priest of Jupiter in ENO's *Castor and Pollux*, returning there to sing *Bosun* in their new production of *Billy Budd*. He also sang the title role in Walton's *The Bear* for both Northern Ireland Opera and the Royal Academy of Music.

As a member of the BBC Singers, Andrew performs frequently on Radio 3 and has been a soloist on many occasions, singing works ranging from Bach to Birtwistle. He was a soloist at The Last Night of the Proms in 2017 and again in 2023.

Other concert work includes *The Sea Symphony* at both the Royal Festival Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, the work's Chinese première. He also sang with L'Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris and Cologne under the direction of Pierre Boulez, and was a soloist in the all-night performances of John Tavener's *The Veil of the Temple* in London, Amsterdam and New York.

Jozik Kotz

Conductor and Musical Director

Jozik was born in Oxford of Polish-Australian parents. After reading music at the University of York and singing as a lay-clerk at York Minster, he won a post-graduate scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier, Royal Overseas league and Richard Tauber competitions. In 1993, he was winner of the South East Arts competition, which led to his debut at the Wigmore Hall.



Jozik subsequently performed operatic roles with English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Opera Factory, Garsington and Grange Park; and in Paris, Vienna, Zurich, Madrid, Aix-en-Provence and Lisbon. He has appeared as a soloist at the Proms and with the BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia and English Chamber orchestras. His CD recordings include baroque cantatas for Hyperion, Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* and Gavin Bryar's *Dr Ox's Experiment* for Deutsche Grammophon, and Paray's *Mass* with the Scottish National Orchestra, which was nominated for a Grammy award.

Jozik has been our Musical Director since 2006. In 2019 he stepped down for two years to pursue other matters, but he returned in 2021 and we are delighted he is back with us.

William Hancox

Rehearsal and Concert Accompanist



William Hancox has been our rehearsal and concert accompanist since 2020. He has a great depth of experience, performing as a soloist, chamber musician and accompanist, throughout the UK and internationally. He has played in many major venues, broadcast for Classic FM and the BBC and made a number of CD recordings. He has held staff pianist positions at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Trinity College of Music and the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh.

In Europe, William has given concerts in Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and Iceland. Several trips to China have involved masterclasses, song recitals, solo recitals and concerts in the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing. This evening, William is playing the chamber organ continuo as part of the orchestra.

Hailsham Choral Society

Musical Director

Jozik Kotz

Assistant Musical Director

Barbara Edwards

Rehearsal Accompanist

William Hancox

Chair

Milly Clark

Secretary

Julie Mitchell



HailshamChoralSociety

QR Code:



Orchestra

Violin 1

Alison Bury (Leader)
Andrew Roberts

Flute

Neil McClaren
Laura Piras

Violin 2

Julia Bishop
Abigail Brown

Oboe

Richard Earle
Gail Hennessy

Viola

Jan Schlapp
Dorota Kolinek

Oboe da caccia

Hannah Blumsohn
Sadie Kerlake

'Cello

Sebastian Comberti
Sophie Willis

Bassoon

Zoe Shevlin

Double Bass

Peter McCarthy

Trumpet

Paul Bosworth
Robert Farley
Sam Pierce

Chamber Organ

William Hancox

Timpani

Ryan Hepburn

The Choir

Sopranos

Jane Allen
Pat Collingwood
Janet Cox
Catriona Dunbar
Barbara Edwards
Nancy Gillio-Terry
Jacqueline Good
Sandra Grusd
Hilary Hartley
Valerie Hyland
Helen Kotz
Susan Lahache
Susan Lewis
Penny Livermore
Anne McNamee
Lynn Petit
Marion Ponting
Mary Reilly
Lis Turner
Iris Warren

Sopranos (cont.)

Sue White
Nicola Williams

Altos

Jane Allcorn
Milly Clark
Pam Cornish
Susan Cowling
Dot Evans
Liz Fitzpatrick
Barbara Fry
Aruna Green
Jean Hill
Sarah Owen
Sue Simpson
Sarah Owen
Liza Stewart
Rosalind Taylor-Byrne
Fiona Tilley
Caroline van den Berg
Ann Walker

Tenors

Nigel Baelz
Richard Barrow
Paul Carter
David Gillham
Nick Gosman
Eckard Peterson
Robert Slater

Basses

Adam de Belder
Ian Collins
Simon Dodds
Peter Gilbert
Ed Griffiths
Walter Hare
Martin Hole
Robin Hooper
Graham Keeley
Simon Marsden
Tony Pittman
Jonathan Statter

If you are interested in singing with the choir, or would like more information, please contact our membership secretary:

hcsjoin@hailshamchoral.org

Rehearsals are held during 'term time' on Thursday evenings from 7.30-9.30 in the Community Hall, Hailsham. We normally perform four concerts a year.



Hailsham
TOWN COUNCIL

Children with Cancer Fund

Children with Cancer is a small, local charity based in Polegate and Willingdon. It has been going for about 26 years and is currently supporting over 150 families.

The charity was started to help families with children suffering from cancer, offering support and small gifts to bring some light into their lives. It is overwhelming to be told your child has cancer and sometimes the small things can make a big difference.

When a child is first diagnosed, the charity provides things like gift vouchers to help pay for food or petrol. It also offers a choice of 'three wishes', which could include something like Lego, a cinema visit, a Spa day, or other item or event.

The charity has three caravans available for parents and children to use for a week, providing a chance to have fun together and make some happy memories. Also, one-off events are organised throughout the year, such as visits to the pantomime or bowling.

Every year, the charity pays for about ten families to enjoy a special holiday on the Isle of Wight. This enables them to get to know each other, have a good time together and share experiences in an informal setting.

Your donation tonight will help to bring some smiles and fun into the lives of children with cancer.

Thank you.



Future Events with Hailsham Choral Society

Mendelssohn's *Elijah*

Saturday 29th March 2025

7.30pm

All Saints' Church, Eastbourne

Following our highly successful collaboration with Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra & Choir in performing Verdi's *Requiem* earlier this year, another exciting joint venture is being planned for Spring 2026, a performance of Elgar's great masterpiece, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

~~~~~

If you would like to be kept informed of forthcoming concerts, you can become a Friend of the choir. Please fill in your details below and hand this programme to a steward or choir member, and we will add you to our email list.

Name: .....

Email Address: .....

Member of Making Music

- The National Federation of Music Societies

Member of Eastbourne & District Choirs Association

Registered Charity 1100408

[www.hailshamchoral.org](http://www.hailshamchoral.org)