

Hailsham Choral Society

Samson

by

**George Frideric
Handel**

Saturday 1st April 2023

7.30pm

**All Saints' Church
Eastbourne**



This Concert is Dedicated to the Memory of Kathy Castell 7th November 1951 - 2nd February 2023



Kathy was a soprano in Hailsham Choral Society for over 20 years. She loved the choir and took part in many choir visits and social events, often joined by her husband Graham. Kathy also served as a committee member and choir librarian. She had a full and busy life - she and Graham have five children, and fostered over 50. Kathy gained a Masters Degree in child development and trauma, and provided training on fostering children.

It is poignant that Kathy learned Handel's *Samson*, along with the rest of HCS, in the early part of 2020, but a Covid lockdown cancelled the concert. This was when Kathy was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer. The following years were filled with gruelling treatments, yet she was unfailingly positive and brave, endeavouring to do as much as possible each day, living life as fully as she could. We miss her and are honoured to have some of Kathy's family with us this evening, including her son Nick as part of the choir.

Samson

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)



The best-known of Handel's oratorios is undoubtedly *Messiah*, which he famously wrote in 24 days, finishing on 14th September 1741. Yet within a few days, he was hard at work on his next oratorio, *Samson*, completing a first draft by 29th October. Handel then travelled to Dublin to present a series of concerts, including the première of *Messiah*, but he held *Samson* back until his return to London at the end of August 1742.

Samson was originally conceived with four main characters: Samson, his wife Dalila, his father Manoah, and a Philistine giant named Harapha. However, while Handel was in Dublin, he was greatly impressed

with the alto singer-actress, Susannah Cibber¹ (below) and wanted her to have a role in *Samson*. So he thoroughly revised the work, adding the part of Samson's friend, Micah, for alto voice. He also spruced-up the ending by adding the aria, *Let the bright seraphim* and the final triumphant chorus, *Let their celestial concerts*.

Partly as a result of the substantial revision, the sheer quantity of music written for *Samson* is unusually large, but a performance of it all at one time was never intended. Handel was a practical musician-impresario who made the best of the resources available to him on any given occasion and would select, adapt or remove items accordingly. To do this and still deliver a balanced performance, he needed enough material to provide options. His other oratorios are similar, which is why they are rarely, if ever, heard in their entirety or in a definitive form. The items selected for this evening's concert reflect Handel's own practice, together with choices 'sanctioned by long custom'.



¹ Susannah Cibber was the sister of Thomas Arne, the composer of *Rule Britannia*. She made a very bad marriage and was used scandalously by her husband, from whom she eventually ran away. She was renowned as an actress as well as a singer and ended her working life as David Garrick's leading lady at Drury Lane Theatre. She became the highest paid actress in London and is buried in Westminster Abbey.



The première of *Samson* took place at Covent Garden on 18th February 1743 and the work was an immediate success. It was performed seven times in its first season,² the most first-season performances of any Handel oratorio. The work remained popular throughout the composer's lifetime (even more so than *Messiah*) and is still regarded as one of his finest dramatic creations.

The libretto, by Irish author, Newburgh Hamilton, is based on *Samson Agonistes* (1671) a complex dramatic poem by John Milton. This takes as its starting point the Biblical story of Samson, found in Chapter 16 of the Book of Judges. 'Agonistes' means 'champion', but can also refer to 'a person enduring an inner struggle'; both definitions fit the character. By choosing Samson as hero, Milton may have been reflecting upon the blindness and struggles of his later life; he lost his sight at the age of 44 and, after the restoration of Charles II, his republican views were dangerously controversial.

The story covered in the libretto deals with the end of Samson's life, so a brief review of events up to that point will help to set the scene. Samson is a Judge of Israel³ well known for his superhuman strength, as witnessed by exploits such as slaying a lion with his bare hands and defeating the Philistines in battle using the jawbone of an ass (right). He marries Dalila, a Philistine woman, who goads him into revealing that his strength comes from allowing his hair to grow. While he is asleep, Dalila gets a servant to cut off Samson's hair and then betrays him to her people. In his weakened state, he is easily captured, imprisoned and blinded, and set to work grinding grain at a mill in Gaza. The libretto picks up the story towards the end of Samson's captivity, moving away from the Biblical account in favour of Milton's scenario.



² The season for oratorio was over Lent, when opera was not allowed and theatres, such as the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, were available.

³ Judges served as Israel's leaders before the establishment of an hereditary kingship.

Part 1

It is the festival day of the Philistine god, Dagon,⁴ when Samson, blind and in chains, is allowed out of prison to receive visitors. The priests of Dagon praise their god while Samson bewails his fate. His friend Micah and father Manoah are shocked by how low the once invincible hero has fallen. Samson insists it is his own fault for giving away the secret of his strength, but predicts that Dagon will not have victory over the God of Israel. Samson longs to die, but is comforted by the Israelites saying he will ultimately triumph.



Part 2

Micah and the Israelites call upon God to have pity on Samson. Dalila arrives, saying she is sorry for her actions and pleads with Samson to go home with her, but he refuses and there is a scene of mutual recrimination. The Philistine giant, Harapha, comes to insult Samson, who challenges him to a duel. Harapha refuses because of Samson's blindness and is mocked as a coward. Micah proposes to measure the power of Dagon against the God of the Israelites, to see who is supreme. Harapha calls upon Dagon and the Israelites appeal to Jehovah, as both sides offer praise.

Part 3

Harapha comes to take Samson to the feast of the Philistines, but at first Samson refuses to go, not wanting to be present at the worship of Dagon. His friends are worried for his safety and call upon God to help. Samson thinks of a plan and goes to the feast after all, but warns the Israelites to stay away. Manoah tells the Israelites of his hope that Samson may soon be set free. In the distance, the Philistine priests are heard celebrating Dagon's triumph, while Micah and Manoah can only express their sadness at Samson's plight. Suddenly, there is a loud noise and sounds of panic. An Israelite Messenger arrives with news that Samson has pulled down the temple, killing both himself and the Philistines. Micah and the Israelites mourn Samson's death, and a funeral march is heard. Manoah celebrates Samson's heroic life and the Israelites praise God.



⁴ Dagon was a fertility god, represented by a combination of man and fish. 'Dag' means 'fish'.

Handel's skill at character portrayal is much in evidence in *Samson*. For example, the flirtatious Dalila's first aria, *With plaintive notes*, is accompanied by equally flirtatious violins; and the boastful Harapha's aria, *Honour and arms*, has a blustering accompaniment, full of swagger. Even the choruses have their own Israelite and Philistine personalities: the Israelites are intense and serious, whereas the Philistines are carefree and hedonistic. In the character of Samson himself, there is a gradual, psychological rebuilding, from someone who is utterly broken in spirit, through various encounters, towards ultimate fulfilment and redemption.

In Handel's lifetime, *Samson* was performed 55 times in London alone, as well as becoming a favourite at music festivals in English provincial towns. It was also one of the first of Handel's oratorios to become known in Germany, being performed there as early as 1776. The work is sometimes referred to as 'an opera in all but name' and in more recent times has been staged as such, although the majority of performances are still as an oratorio.



The part of Samson was originally created for John Beard (1716-1791), an accomplished 18th century tenor. The contemporary music historian, Charles Burney, wrote:

He knew as much of music as was necessary to sing a single part at sight, and with a voice that was more powerful than sweet, he became the most useful and favourite singer of his time... and in Handel's oratorios he had always a capital part.

It is significant that Beard, a tenor, was chosen for the lead in *Samson*, rather than the usual castrato. This was the first of a number of leading roles Handel created for the singer.

The leading Handel authority, Winton Dean, suggests:

It was probably the growing success of Beard...that suggested the revolutionary notion of a tenor Samson... Samson was Handel's first great tenor part, and one of the earliest in dramatic music outside France.

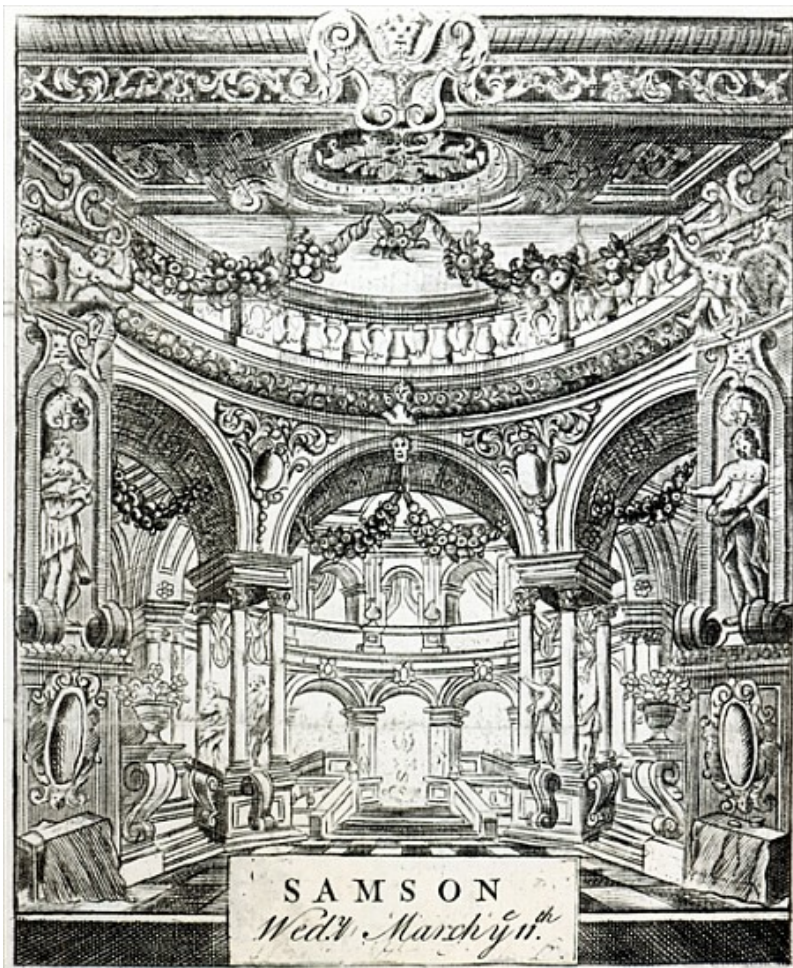
The revival of *Samson* in London on 11th March 1752 was a particularly poignant occasion, for while audiences might notice the parallel between the character of Samson and the blindness of John Milton, Handel was now also blind. John Smith, Handel's assistant, recalled the event:

...during the first year of Handel's blindness, Samson was performed, and Beard sung, with great feeling,

*'Total eclipse - no sun, no moon,
All dark amid the blaze of noon.'*

The recollection that Handel had set this air to music, with a view of the blind composer then sitting by the organ, affected the audience so forcibly, that many persons present were moved even to tears.

Charles Burney, who knew Handel well, wrote that the composer was *always much disturbed and agitated* by this aria.



**Admission ticket
for the revival of
Samson on 11th
March 1752.**

In 1758, Handel underwent an eye operation performed by the English quack surgeon, John Taylor, causing his sight to deteriorate even further. Taylor had previously operated on J. S. Bach, with the same lamentable result.

When Handel died in 1759, he was given a State Funeral at Westminster Abbey attended by over 3000 people. He is buried at Poet's Corner in the south transept of the Abbey.

Solo Roles

Soprano - Philistine Woman, Dalila, Israelite Messenger, Israelite Woman

Alto - Micah Tenor - Samson Baritone - Manoah Bass - Harapha

Chorus Soprano - Israelite Woman (No 93)

Part One

1.	Overture	Orchestra
2.	This day, a solemn feast	Samson
3.	Awake the trumpet's lofty sound	Priests of Dagon
4.	Ye men of Gaza	Philistine Woman
5.	Awake the trumpet's lofty sound	Priests of Dagon
9.	Why by an angel	Samson
13.	Matchless in might	Micah
14.	Total eclipse	Samson
16.	O first-created beam	Chorus of Israelites
17.	Brethren and men of Dan	Manoah & Micah
20.	The good we wish for	Manoah
21.	Thy glorious deeds	Manoah
22.	Justly these evils	Samson
23.	My grief for this	Samson
24.	Why does the God of Israel sleep	Samson
26.	Then shall they know	Chorus of Israelites
27.	For thee, my dearest son	Manoah & Samson
28.	My genial spirits droop	Samson
31.	Then round about the starry throne	Chorus of Israelites

Part Two

34.	My evils hopeless are	Samson & Micah
35.	Return, return, O God of Hosts	Micah
36.	To dust his glory they would tread	Chorus of Israelites & Micah
37.	But who is this?	Micah & Dalila
38.	With plaintive notes	Dalila
43.	My faith and truth	Dalila
44.	Her faith and truth	Chorus of Virgins
50.	Ne'er think of that	Samson
51.	Traitor to love	Dalila & Samson
54.	Favour'd of heaven	Samson
55.	To man God's universal law	Chorus of Israelites
56.	No words of peace	Micah, Harapha & Samson

57. Honour and arms	Harapha
60. Cam'st thou for this	Samson & Harapha
61. Go, baffled coward, go	Samson & Harapha
62. Here lies the proof	Micah, Samson & Harapha
63. Hear, Jacob's God	Chorus of Israelites
64. Dagon, arise	Harapha
66. To song and dance	Chorus of Philistines
67. Fix'd in His everlasting seat	Philistines & Israelites

INTERVAL

Part Three

68. More trouble is behind	Micah, Samson & Harapha
69. Presuming slave	Harapha
70. Consider, Samson	Micah & Samson
71. With thunder armed	Chorus of Israelites
72. Be of good courage	Samson, Micah & Harapha
73. Thus when the sun	Samson
74. With might ensued	Micah
75. The Holy One of Israel	Micah
76. To fame immortal go	Chorus of Israelites
77. Old Manoah, with youthful steps	Micah & Manoah
79. Great Dagon has subdued our foe	Chorus of Philistines
80. What noise of joy was that?	Micah & Manoah
81. How willing my paternal love	Manoah
82. Your hopes of his delivery	Micah & Manoah
83. Sinfonia of horror and confusion	Orchestra
84. Heaven! What noise?	Manoah
85. Hear us, our god	Chorus of Philistines
86. Where shall I run...?	Israelite Messenger, Micah & Manoah
87. Ye sons of Israel	Micah
88. Weep, Israel, weep	Chorus of Israelites
91. Dead March	Orchestra
93. Glorious hero	Manoah, Israelite Woman, Chorus of Israelites
94. Come, come: no time for lamentation	Manoah
95. Let the bright Seraphim	Israelite Woman
96. Let their celestial concerts	Chorus of Israelites

Soloists

Helen Bailey - Soprano

Helen Bailey was born in the North East of England and is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College of Music, initially graduating from Liverpool John Moores University with a First in English Literature and Cultural History.

Helen has a busy concert schedule, performing regularly as a soloist for the Compton and Shawford, Dover, Ember, Folkestone, and Sutton Valence choral societies, Thanet Festival Choir, The Seventy Singers, Maidstone Wind Symphony, and Wrotham Music Festival. On the operatic stage,

Helen has performed numerous principal roles for a variety of opera companies, including the prestigious Buxton International Festival where she was awarded the Young Artist's Bursary for 2016.

Helen lives in Kent with her composer/arranger/singer husband, Jim Clements, and their two small children. She is an ardent bookworm and enjoys trying to improve her personal best at the local Parkrun.



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.

Rebecca 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*, Mad Margaret in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Ruddigore*, and

Friquette in Offenbach's *Belle Lurette*. As a concert soloist, she has performed in numerous major works, including 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 Solonelle*, with a number of choral societies. These include Seaford, Shrewsbury and Norwich, The Royal College of Organists, The Royal Free Singers, Derby Cathedral Choir and the Choir of St John's. Future engagements include Mercedes from Bizet's *Carmen* with South East Opera, and Siebel from Gounod's *Faust* with New Sussex Opera. Rebecca now spends most of her time singing, teaching and giving vocal workshops to choral societies in and around East Sussex.

Ben Hancox-Lachman - Tenor

Ben grew up near Herstmonceux and graduated with a degree in biochemistry from Imperial College, London. In addition to his scientific aspirations, he is pursuing a career as a tenor vocalist, currently focusing on song and oratorio. He has extensive choral 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, Association of English Singers and Speakers, Junior Competition. Previous performances include Handel's *Messiah*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and Bach's *St John Passion*. Recently he performed as a soloist at the Hailsham Mayor's Concert and in a number of song recitals, including a highly successful recital at Herstmonceux Castle late last year.



Jim Clements - Baritone



Jim started writing and performing music at a young age; the choir of Rochester Cathedral, in which he was a chorister, premièred his first choral composition when he was just twelve years old. A decade later, he graduated from Manchester University with a first-class degree in music and decided to pursue a career of singing and composing.

Jim now enjoys a busy career as a singer, performing with many of the world's finest vocal ensembles, including the BBC Singers, Ex Cathedra, Opera Rara, and the choirs of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. He was a member of the GRAMMY-nominated vocal ensemble Stile Antico for seven years, performing extensively around the globe. He has sung on numerous radio and television broadcasts and made over thirty commercial recordings. Jim currently deputises in various professional ensembles and performs regularly as an oratorio soloist.

Jim is also an accomplished composer and arranger, whose music has been performed in venues from the Royal Albert Hall to the Sydney Opera House. He is 'Arranger in Residence' for VOCES8, who have performed and recorded more than seventy of his arrangements over the last fifteen years. Other artists for whom he has written include Paul Simon, Tom Jones & Bryn Terfel.

Andrew Tipple - Bass

Andrew was involved in music from a young age, starting as a chorister at Lichfield Cathedral. In 2005 he was appointed as a Choral Scholar at King's College Cambridge, whilst studying for a BA in History. With subsequent studies at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, he was a member of the Alexander Gibson Opera School, graduating in 2013. Whilst there, he was the recipient of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Scholarship.



Andrew has performed with many eminent operatic companies, including Bayreuther Festspiele, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Garsington and Independent Opera. He has undertaken solo roles in numerous works, ranging from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

Andrew is an experienced oratorio soloist with a broad repertoire. Notable performances include, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, with the Oxford Bach Choir, Haydn's *Creation* in Glasgow University Chapel, Bach's *St John Passion* at Arundel Cathedral & Paisley Abbey, Bach's *Magnificat* at King's Place in London, and Handel's *Messiah* at St Mary Le Tower, Ipswich.

Contemporary Reaction to Early Performances of Samson⁵

In Lent 1743. at Covent Garden [Handel] performed his Oratorio of Sampson, and it was received with uncommon Applause.

The Fourth Earl of Shaftesbury

Handel has set up an Oratorio against the Operas, and succeeds.

Horace Walpole, writer and politician

Last Friday Handel perform'd his Samson, a most exquisite Entertainment. which...I heard with infinite pleasure.

Charles Jennens, *Messiah* librettist

The oratorio [was] filled with all the people of quality in town; and they say Handel has exerted himself to make it the finest piece of music he ever composed, and say he has not failed in the attempt.

Lady Hertford

⁵ All spellings, usage and punctuation are original.

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 returned in 2021 and we are delighted he is back with us.

Will Hancox

Rehearsal and Concert Accompanist



Will Hancox has been our rehearsal and concert accompanist for the past five years. 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, Will 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, he is playing the keyboard continuo as part of the orchestra.

Hailsham Choral Society

Musical Director	Jozik Kotz
Assistant Musical Director	Barbara Edwards
Rehearsal Accompanist	Will Hancox
Chair	Milly Clark
Secretary	Julie Mitchell
Website	www.hailshamchoral.org
Orchestra Leader	Jonathan Truscott



@ Hailsham Choral
Society



Hailsham
Choral

QR Code:



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.

Sopranos

Jane Allen
Christine Baelz
Trish Brown
Janet Butterworth
Kim Charles
Pat Collingwood
Janet Cox
Tilly Crane
Carole Deschamps
Barbara Edwards
Liz Furlong
Nancy Gillio-Terry
Hilary Hartley
Val Hyland
Noa Lachman*
Helen Kotz
Susan Lahache
Penny Livermore
Lynn Petit
Marion Ponting
Sue Simpson

Sopranos cont...

Liz Turner
Caroline van den Berg
Maria Webzell
Sue White
Nicola Williams

Altos

Milly Clark
Pam Cornish
Fiona Dundas
Dot Evans
Liz Fitzpatrick
Barbara Fry
Aruna Green
Jean Hill
Sharon Knights
Julie Mitchell
Sarah Owen
Jane Pendry
Rosalind Taylor-Byrne
Liza Stewart
Anne Walker

Tenors

Nigel Baelz
Paul Carter
Nick Castell
Nick Gosman
Robert Slater
Jonathan Statter

Basses

Adam de Belder
Ian Fry
Peter Gilbert
Ed Griffiths
Robin Hooper
Graham Keeley
Simon Marsden
Tony Pittman

*Soloist in No 93



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Future Events with Hailsham Choral Society

Summer Concert

Saturday 24th June 2023

7.30pm

Hailsham Community Hall

Open Singing Workshop

Saturday 2nd September 2023

10.30am - 12.30pm

Hailsham Community Hall

Free of charge - all welcome

Mayor's Concert, Hailsham Festival

Saturday 16th September 2023

2.00pm

Hailsham Parish Church

Hailsham Choral Society: Registered Charity No. 1100408

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