

18 November 2023

Verdi *Requiem* (new Richard Blackford edition)

An electrifying performance of my new arrangement of the Verdi Requiem. Luminous singing and enormous dramatic impact.

Richard Blackford, Composer/Arranger

What a magnificent Verdi *Requiem* you gave us. Your audience were as one in their praise and appreciation.

Sandie & Charlie Pye-Smith

7 April 2023

CD release of Cecilia McDowall *Da Vinci Requiem* (see also 7 May 2019)

Wimbledon Choral were determined to show their commission in the best possible light and they did so with excellent, disciplined and highly committed singing.

John Quinn, Reviewer – MusicWeb International

The musicianship on show from the Wimbledon Choral, an outstanding amateur choir with a long history, ... is of the highest standard.

Steve Whitehead, Reviewer – Cross Rhythms

18 March 2023 Southwark Cathedral

Bach *St John Passion*

Absolute commitment to every word – fantastic stuff that stirs the soul.

Ben Durrant, Soloist

It was an absolute pleasure to perform with you - the choir was sounding magnificent.

Jamie W Hall, Soloist

5 November 2022 Cadogan Hall

Goodall *Unconditional Love*, Willis *Salve Deus, Rex Judaeorum*

What a great evening! Absolutely thrilled with the Wimbledon Choral performance of my 'Salve Deus' last night. Very happy composer!

Alison Willis, Composer

11 June 2022 Holy Trinity, Sloane Square

Rachmaninov *All-Night Vigil*

A great joy to sing Rachmaninov with @WimbledonChoral [and] @neilcpferris tonight! What a gigantic sound, with such heart and commitment. My heart is full.

Carris Jones, Soloist

27 November 2021 Cadogan Hall

Mozart *'Great' Mass in C minor*

The Wimbledon Choral Society's phenomenal performance, expertly led by the brilliant conducting of Neil Ferris, was an evening to remember. We were newcomers, both to the choir and to Cadogan Hall, and were blown away by the wonderful rendition of the Mozart.

Simon & Virginia Robertson

I have to say the choir was on exceptional form in the Mozart - everyone was fully engaged and there was a real sense of purpose. The joy in people's faces was lovely to see. The power of the grand tutti moments was exhilarating. Bravo!!

Helen Wills

2 November 2019 Cadogan Hall

Orff *Carmina Burana*

Brilliant performance of #CarminaBurana last night by @WimbledonChoral @cadoganhall. Great energy, fantastic accuracy – and everyone clearly enjoying it so much!

Martin Hatfull

7 May 2019 Royal Festival Hall

McDowall *Da Vinci Requiem* (world premiere) Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs*

The Wimbledon Choral Society were magnificent. Nothing seemed out of place - the women angelic, the men monastic - the intonation and timing exquisite. Neil Ferris controlled the chorus, soloists and Philharmonia impeccably.

Marc Bridle, Opera Today

Wimbledon Choral Society make a lovely sound - clean, clear and bright. The uninhibited expressivity of those who sing for pleasure with no payment is distinct from the polished virtuosity of the professional choir. Scan the faces of the singers, here more than 200, and all you see is pride and excitement, a sense of investment and ownership [that] was justified in this concert.

Anna Picard, The Times

... one of the most substantial and formidable choirs in London ... a vigorous and sophisticated choral ensemble ...

Roderic Dunnett, Church Times

It was an absolute joy to be in the audience at the concert last night and I congratulate you all on a fabulous delivery of this amazing new Requiem. Such a masterclass!

Peter Cunliffe

3 November 2018 Cadogan Hall

Bach *Mass in B Minor*

The choir looked fantastic and sounded bright and confident. The contrast between light and dark, piano and fortissimo were felt and it had a strong, satisfying pulse throughout. ... You should all be delighted for staging a mammoth and fabulous concert that looked absolutely effortless.

Andrew Oliver

Your performance was incredibly clear and good from such a big choir – just splendid, great dynamics, not too loud, good pianissimo, and excellent articulation!

Julian & Annette Armstrong

What a concert! Enthralling, exhilarating and magnificent.

Audience member

9 June 2018 Cadogan Hall

Ellington *Sacred Music*, Perrin *Brazilian Songs of Nature*

It was a fabulous concert on so many levels [...] and was most beautifully interpreted by you all. I'm a long-term Ellington fan ... and you did his music full justice - brilliantly done!

Colin McCarthy

7 April 2018 Guildford Cathedral

Elgar *Music Makers*, Dvorak *Te Deum*

It was a fantastic concert and a wonderful experience. The choir was immaculate, the orchestra full of enthusiasm as well as expertise, and all three soloists were amazing. The sound, balance and articulation were really clear, with some beautifully nuanced moments. Oh, and that bloke waving his arms about at the front looked quite good too!

Kate McGuire

18 November 2017 Southwark Cathedral

Handel Israel in Egypt

I am running out of superlatives for your choir. Be assured the volume and intensity of the Oratorio came down to us magnificently. The audience's shrieks and hurrahs at the end of the performance confirmed that all had had a splendid and hugely enjoyable evening.

Rod Jenkins

25 March 2017 Cadogan Hall

Monteverdi Vespers

What an embracing and life-affirming choral sound you extracted from the WCS. Please thank them all for the very many beautifully-shaped phrases, exquisite pianissimos, raging fortissimos and also for making us feel so welcome.

Kah-Ming Ng, Director, Charivari Agréable

5 November 2016 Southwark Cathedral

French Gothic

Congratulations on a wonderful concert - great to hear a whole programme of superb French choral music without the Faure! I loved the way you sequenced the first half keeping the programme going - really exciting & effective and I thought WCS sang magnificently.

Jonathan Haskell, Recording Engineer, Astounding Sounds

15 September 2016 St Martin in the Fields

IKONS – Part of the Brandenburg Autumn Choral Festival 2016

It was absolutely superb like shimmering angels. Huge congratulations to you all.

Maggie Ellis

11 June 2016 St John's Church, Waterloo

IKONS

I was deeply moved by Rachmaninov's *Vespers* sung by the choir: perfect, strong yet sensitive a tingling of the senses.

Noni Holland

20 March 2016 Cadogan Hall

Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle

Rossinian good humour abounds and, in a spirited rendition by Wimbledon Choral Society, that good humour spilled across the platform of Cadogan Hall and into the audience.

Where some amateur choruses can give the impression of dutiful performers, how heartening it was to see singers of all ages who clearly adore singing.

Mark Pullinger, www.bachtrack.com

28 November 2015 Southwark Cathedral

Bach Christmas Oratorio

... a superb, vibrant and invigorating experience, thoroughly enjoyable from start to finish.

Complimented by the fine surroundings of the venue in Southwark Cathedral and also accompanied by the excellent and acclaimed [Florilegium Ensemble](#) who also gave a magnificent performance. Thank you to all for the fantastic experience.

Colin Mills

My congratulations to the Wimbledon Choral Society on their performance. We always really enjoy working with you ... and a special delight to play to a completely sold-out Southwark Cathedral.

Ashley Solomon, Director, Florilegium

The standard of Saturday's concert would have matched any of the symphonic choruses that perform with the professional orchestras in London.

Audience member

You guys were utterly brilliant!

Edward Grint, bass soloist

6 June 2015

A New Dawn

The blend of 'cello and voice in [John Tavener's] *Svyati* was something really unique and special. A particular highlight for me was *A quoi bon dire* [James McCarthy] - it came across so expressively and with such clarity of diction and tone.

Shanika Anzsar

30 March 2015 Royal Festival Hall

Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem

We so enjoyed hearing Wimbledon Choral Society's superb singing of the Brahms *German Requiem*. I'm not exaggerating when I say that the singing could not have been better. One thing amongst many that stood out was how distinctly the words could be heard from such a large choir.

Alan Fraser

Completely blown away – such an enjoyable evening. Please let me know of future events – quite fancy becoming a groupie!

Alan Price

What a fabulous concert last night. Not only was the singing terrific - choir and soloists - but the diction and clarity were superb - we could hear every word. Having the choir sitting and singing quietly with Elizabeth Watts in Part V was very effective and moving.

Wendy Saville

I thought the concert was a real triumph and that the choir sang beautifully and with very convincing German diction. It is such a huge and significant work and not an easy linguistic venture. I was so impressed by the focus and hard work in rehearsals, ... very happy indeed to have been able to help you all with this.

Catrin Johnsson, mezzo soprano but working with WCS as German language coach

20 December 2014 Southwark Cathedral

Christmas Fanfare : Jongen Mass, Matthias Ave Rex and carols for choir, organ, audience & Resounding Brass

It was everything a Christmas concert should be. Beautiful cathedral, terrific programme and, of course, a superlative choir and brass ensemble.

Mary Pyke

May 2014 Chiesa di San Paolo entro le mura [St Paul's Within the Walls], Rome

Choir Tour to Rome including Vivaldi Gloria, Vasks Pater Noster, Rheinberger Cantus Missae

Difficilmente sono riuscito a sentire un coro amatoriale così bravo e attento alle dinamiche, alla fusione della voce e alla intonazione. Molti cori "blasonati" non riescono a raggiungere il loro livello di qualità e quanto ti dico è frutto di una mia certezza musicale e diretta testimonianza.

[Approx trans] I have rarely heard an amateur choir so good and attentive to the dynamics, to the blending of the voices and to the tuning. Many renowned choirs cannot reach their level of quality and I'm saying that based on my musical certainty and direct witness.

Stefano Sovrani, Maestro, Nova Amadeus Chamber Orchestra, Rome

A quick note of appreciation for a fine concert this evening. All pieces worked for me – the *Gloria* using the church dynamic to best effect – but the Tallis was sublime.

Andrew Saunders

It has been an incredibly rewarding experience, singing in a choir that has such warmth and enthusiasm in making music together. It's more than making good music; it's about learning to make and enjoy music together; like food for the soul.

Weihao Fu, Tenor Bursary Recipient 2013-14

8 March 2014 Guildford Cathedral

Walton *Belshazzar's Feast*, Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs*, Elgar *Enigma Variations*

I thought the performance of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* was thrilling in every way and demonstrated the highest standards of execution, requiring no allowance for the 'amateur' status of choir and orchestra. The harmonies and rhythms of Walton's unique dramatic cantata came over with great precision and power in a fantastically integrated tonal picture. The challenging vocal writing seemed to hold no terrors for the chorus with fearless attack on high notes and the famous shout of '*Slain!*' projected with memorable force into the cathedral.

Tom Brown

With such a demanding work we thought your [choir] was on great form. From fairly near the back the diction throughout was very clear with excellent well focused singing.

Barry Sterndale-Bennett

What a bonus [as a steward] to then sit and enjoy the concert.

Pat Reed

16 March 2013 Guildford Cathedral

Mozart *Requiem*, Pärt *Beatitudes*, Vasks *Pater Noster*

Awesome and hugely enjoyable. Very moving and beautiful sound from the choir. The first half of the concert equally enjoyable as the wonderful Mozart *Requiem* [in the second half].

Phil Bennett

17 November 2012 Southwark Cathedral

Britten *St Nicolas*, McDowall *Ave Maris Stella*

[McDowall] They sang with a passion and sensitivity that made me want to close my eyes and just soak up the beautiful harmonies.

[Britten] The WCS, under Neil's amazing direction, went from movement to movement with ease, leaving the audience wanting more, much more You took it, shook it and laid it out in front of a packed house, who lapped it up greedily and like me, loved every moment.

Laurence Grace

24 March 2012 Guildford Cathedral

Bach *St Matthew Passion*

It was a real privilege to work with you towards a performance of such integrity and musicality, the like of which I have not experienced before ... I am not surprised you have had such fantastic feedback - [it] was the best I have ever heard of that work and I have twice done it with Farnham Youth Choir ... Neither had the depth and sincerity of Saturday's performance.

David Victor-Smith, Music Director, Farnham Youth Choir

I thought the *St Matthew Passion* was the best performance I have been to ... The choir was excellent throughout and the dramatic moments created were both moving and spiritual - for example the choir's cry of "*Barabbas!*" was blood curdling and the moment of silence after Christ's death was very moving.

Glynis Johnston

An amazing concert ... choir seemed really well rehearsed, completely on top of everything, and with Neil [Ferris] all the way. Some beautifully crafted moments, including the chorale just after Jesus dies which had a lump in my throat ... You all deserve enormous credit for a marvellous performance.

Kate McGuire

We thought the choir was magnificent - the last chorus particularly was so poignant with strong sound from all parts and beautiful diction.

Ian Partridge, President, Wimbledon Choral Society

27 March 2010 Guildford Cathedral

Elgar *The Kingdom*

When the voices sang unaccompanied, and there is a great deal of *a cappella* music in the work, the sound was full and rounded and beautiful to hear.

Bob Briggs

The very best concerts leave me thinking about them for days. *The Kingdom* has been one such. Everything about it was 'live' music at its very best. I congratulate WCS for being ambitious and bringing it off!

Richard Redmile, Chairman of the Trustees, New Queen's Hall Orchestra

28 March 2009 Guildford Cathedral

Mendelssohn *Elijah*

I chatted to the choir who were all very friendly ... The Cathedral was full to bursting including the gallery ... Singing with the WCS was a great and daunting experience but I would love to have the chance to do it all over again.

Henry Jenkins, Head Chorister, Guildford Cathedral Choir

We come to most of the concerts at the Cathedral, especially the choral ones, but this was one of the best in recent months by a long way. The choir was excellent. Very enjoyable indeed Your *Elijah* soloist [*James Rutherford*] in particular was very good.

Guildford resident

No-one was more thrilled than me at Saturday's performance. I have to agree that the Orchestra was magnificent but I wonder if the players' contribution would have been quite as splendid had the choir not matched them at every point. Every time we give one of these big shows with the WCS, your singers seem to excel all previous efforts. What stamina they showed!

John Boyden, Artistic Director, New Queen's Hall Orchestra

8 June 2008 St Pauls, Southfields

Vivaldi *Gloria* & Rachmaninov *All-Night Vigil (Vespers)*

What a moving experience it was to hear the concert last night, particularly the Rachmaninov *Vespers* ... The singing, I thought, was matchless ... This was concentrated choral sound ... All of it was impeccably done and the most intense moments truly unforgettable.

Valerie Quinn

I wanted to say how much we enjoyed every aspect of the concert. We were made to feel most welcome (judging from the warm comments before and after), and we particularly appreciated the masterly handling of the rehearsal, the tight choral ensemble, the focused sound of the choir, and the smooth logistical running of the whole enterprise.

Kah-Ming Ng, Director, Charivari Agréable

24 November 2007 Fairfield Halls, Croydon

Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony* & Elgar *Cello Concerto in E minor*

I must say that I applaud WCS for having the guts to put on concerts such as this as many choirs take the safer route and think 'smaller'.

Richard Redmile, Chairman of the Trustees, New Queen's Hall Orchestra

10 November 2007 Royal Albert Hall

Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance

Please pass on my sincere thanks and congratulations to all the members of the Wimbledon Choral Society for their work. They were professional and committed and they can be rightfully proud of their contribution to what was a most successful and enjoyable Festival.

David Cole, Director of Music, Royal British Legion

17 March 2007 St John's Church, Waterloo
Faure *Requiem* and works by Finzi and Howells

I thought the concert would be good, but never realised how good!! both the Faure and the Howells were divine and moved me to tears. this standard does not come without lots of real musicianship It is a bit unusual for me to be quite so impressed, but this is a concert that I shall remember for a very long time to come. There were no egos, just lovely musicians listening to each other.

Jennifer Bate

1 April 2006 Guildford Cathedral
Berlioz *Te Deum* & Saint-Saens '*Organ*' *Symphony No.3*

I thought your Verdi *Requiem* concert two years ago was magnificent but the Berlioz *Te Deum* was even better – it was outstanding. A huge, stunningly powerful and exciting performance.

Philip MacIntyre