

Harlequin
Chamber Choir

VWS

Vaughan
Williams
Singers

I Heard a Voice From Heaven

Saturday 15th November 2025, 7.30pm

£2

INTRODUCTION

Requiem

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

1. Salvator Mundi (O Saviour of the world)
2. Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd)
3. Requiem aeternam (1)
4. Psalm 121 (I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills)
5. Requiem aeternam (2)
6. I heard a voice from heaven

God and the Universe (Songs of Faith No.2)

C.V. Stanford (1852-1924)

Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep

Ian Assersohn (b. 1958)

Angelis Suis Deus

Vytautas Miškinis (b. 1954)

Agnus Dei

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

INTERVAL

Songs of Farewell

Hubert Parry (1848-1918)

1. My soul, there is a country
2. I know my soul hath power to know all things
3. Never, weather-beaten sail
4. There is an old belief
5. At the round earth's imagined corners

Pavane

Ian Assersohn (b. 1958)

In Peace Eternal

Alison Willis (b. 1971)

I Saw Eternity

Lucy Walker (b. 1998)

Amazing Grace

Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)

Herbert Howells (1892-1983) Requiem

1. Salvator Mundi (O Saviour of the world)
2. Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd)
3. Requiem aeternam (1)
4. Psalm 121 (I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills)
5. Requiem aeternam (2)
6. I heard a voice from heaven

English composer Herbert Howells is considered one of the greatest composers of Anglican church music. Requiem, scored for two unaccompanied choirs, was written in 1932 or 1933 but its existence remained unknown until its eventual publication in 1980, three years before the composer's death. Inevitably it became associated in Howells' mind with the tragic death of his 9-year old son Michael in 1935 and he reworked substantial parts of the music into his majestic Hymnus Paradisi, a work specifically intended as Michael's memorial, re-scored for soloists, large chorus and orchestra.

Although the work is entitled Requiem, Howells does not adhere to the standard liturgy. Instead, following the model of Brahms, Fauré and Duruflé, he makes a very personal choice of devotional psalms and scriptural passages from both the Catholic and Anglican liturgies for the dead. Uniquely, the work contains two distinct settings of the Requiem aeternam text.

Musically the work is built from free-flowing melodies woven into often dissonant, ambiguous harmony, and this, together with the expertly crafted counterpoint helps to give the music its timeless, visionary quality. The mood is ultimately optimistic; the main climax occurs at the words 'et lux perpetua luceat eis' – 'let light perpetual shine upon them' – a symbol of hope and comfort.

C. V. Stanford (1852-1924) God and the Universe (Songs of Faith No 2)

This setting, by the Anglo-irish composer Charles Stanford, of a Tennyson poem about the Greek mythological character Oenone was first published in 1906. It is usually said to be an arrangement of a solo song but it has also been suggested that the choral version came first.

Ian Assersohn (b. 1958) Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep

This is Ian's own setting from 2017 of the sonnet 'Do not stand at my grave and weep'. The poem's authorship is disputed; it is often attributed to Mary Elizabeth Frye, but it is also claimed to be by Clare Harner.

Vytautas Miškinis (b. 1954) Angelis Suis Deus

This exquisite miniature by the Lithuanian minimalist composer Miškinis was written as a fortieth birthday present for the English conductor Stephen Layton. The meaning of the text is "God shall give his angels charge over thee".

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) *Agnus Dei*

This is American composer Samuel Barber's own choral arrangements of his most famous work, the *Adagio For Strings*. It retains all the beauty of Barber's sustained lines and slow-moving melodies in the original work.

Hubert Parry (1848-1918) *Songs of Farewell*

1. My soul, there is a country
2. I know my soul hath power to know all things
3. Never, weather-beaten sail
4. There is an old belief
5. At the round earth's imagined corners

Sir Hubert Parry is considered to have been one of the leaders (alongside Stanford) of the English musical renaissance in the 1880s. Director of the Royal College of Music for twenty-four years, he was a prolific composer, scholar and teacher.

The *Songs of Farewell* were originally conceived immediately before the First World War and offer numerous biographical interpretations of the last years of Parry's life. Though begun in earnest at least five years before his death, it has always been tempting to hear the motets as a valedictory statement of a man haunted by war and by the fall from grace of Germany, the nation whose musicians he had worshipped all his life. And yet one must also understand them from the perspective of Parry the Darwinist, the utilitarian rationalist and the agnostic.

The *Songs of Farewell* are a set of six motets (both choirs will perform all but the last of them tonight), which increase in complexity as they unfold, and demonstrate some of the finest and most moving pages in Romantic a cappella music. They leave the listener with a profound sense of mystery and alienation, of life's transitoriness, and of passing into the unknown.

The first motet is undoubtedly the most famous of the set, and ends with a sense of elation, unlike all the others. The second contemplates the miracle of man's existence, yet confronts his ignorance and struggle through the finite span of life. "Never weather-beaten sail" is poignantly lyrical and the wonderful refrain "O come quickly, sweetest Lord" must stand as one of the composer's most yearning utterances.

Listen out for the plainchant intonation of "that creed I fain would keep" in "There is an old belief", which subsides into introspective meditation on the eternity of man's final sleep.

And finally, demonstrating Parry's skill in writing richly sonorous vocal textures, "At the round earth's imagined corners" reaches new transcendental heights in the early climax of "and arise", culminating in its final hushed expression of personal humility: "teach me how to repent".

Ian Assersohn (b. 1958) Pavane

This is the first performance of a setting of the composer's own text. Ian writes: "This is a very personal autobiographical piece. In 1989 my wife and I had a baby son who was born very prematurely and died after ten days in the intensive care ward. There were no windows in that room. The piece was written thirty-five years later. The title Pavane indicates the musical character mood of the piece, referring as it does to a slow, processional couples' dance."

Alison Willis (b. 1971) In Peace Eternal

Willis is an internationally acclaimed composer based in the North of England. She is also a pianist, organist, Folk Musician, Musical Director and supporter of young composers. Her setting of this text is purposefully simple and incredibly poignant. The words are by Reverend Sharon Grenham-Thompson, whose son Leo took his own life, and this is a prayer for him.

Lucy Walker (b. 1998) I Saw Eternity

One of the UK's most exciting emerging composers, Lucy Walker's music is deeply rooted in the choral tradition, yet distinctly contemporary - her harmonic language radiant and text-driven, her textures luminous and finely woven. I Saw Eternity was her first commission as Composer-in-Residence with St Martin's Voices, sets the revered opening lines from Henry Vaughan's The World, and shimmers with emotional resonance and expansiveness.

Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977) Amazing Grace

Ešenvalds' arrangement of Amazing Grace was written for Riga Youth Choir Kamēr in 2004. It is a kind of chorale-variation, but the famous tune is never exactly the same each time it is heard. After its initial statement by upper voice soloists, the melody becomes gradually more embedded in a rich eight-part texture, with modulations building in intensity and culminating in an ecstatically satisfying return to the home key.

Vaughan Williams Singers

Vaughan Williams Singers is a mixed-voice chamber choir founded in January 2018. The choir sings a wide range of music, with a leaning towards contemporary unaccompanied works.

Based in Bookham and named after Surrey's most illustrious musical resident, composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, the choir has performed in many of the venues associated with him, including All Saints Church in Down Ampney, Charterhouse School and Leith Hill Place in Dorking, as well as many other places.

Our next concerts are with Surrey Brass at their annual Carols by Candlelight concert at the Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington on Saturday 13th December followed by Scones and Songs, an afternoon tea concert on the theme of Flight on Sunday 1st March at Mickleham Village Hall. (More information on the choir's website.)

Web: vwsingers.org

Facebook: [@vwsingers](https://www.facebook.com/vwsingers)

Harlequin Chamber Choir

Harlequin is an adult mixed voice (SATB) chamber choir founded in 2013, based in Guildford and directed by Amy Bebbington.

The choir is small but ambitious, and aims for the highest possible standards.

All choir members are experienced choral singers: many are music teachers or instrumentalists, while others are ex-choral scholars. In the main, we aim to strike a balance between having fun and achieving choral excellence!

The choir also regularly hosts Come & Sing events that encourage local singers to join us in music-making, and also choral conducting masterclasses for choral leaders who wish to work with a responsive and capable choir. We welcome singers in all voiceparts, particularly tenors and basses!

Web: harlequinchamberchoir.org.uk

Facebook: [@harlequinchamberchoir](https://www.facebook.com/harlequinchamberchoir)

Instagram: [@harlequinch](https://www.instagram.com/harlequinch)

Ian Assersohn

Web: appletreemusic.net

Facebook: [@ianassersohn.music](https://www.facebook.com/ianassersohn.music)



Ian is a composer, choral director and novelist, a graduate of the Royal College of Music in London and also attended the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague.

He has been musical director of VWS since its beginnings in 2018, and has led Leatherhead Choral Society since 2001, as well as working with many other choirs and ensembles.

Amy Bebbington

Web: XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Facebook: XXXXXXXXXXXXX



Amy is a passionate advocate for conductor training, choral leadership and composition, and holds Degrees in Piano Performance (UK) and a Doctorate in Choral Conducting (USA). She is the Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors and co-founder of the London International Choral Conducting Competition. Amy leads choral conducting masterclasses, teaches at international summer schools, and is a regular guest clinician and adjudicator at major European choral festivals.

Known for her advocacy for female composers and conductors, Amy champions marginalised musicians through choral programming, Discovery Days and private mentoring. She has choral works published by Banks Music Publications, Multitude of Voyces and Choral Music Publishing, is part of the visiting music staff at Charterhouse, and Musical Director for Corra Sound, Nota Bene and Sempre Fidelis Singers, alongside Harlequin.

Need poster

Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 14th December, 4pm

**Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road,
Teddington TW11 9NN**

Tickets: £8-£20

Landmarkartscentre.org/shows/carols-by-candlelight

Join Harlequin and Surrey Brass for stirring seasonal music, captivating readings by storyteller Giles Abbott, and a rousing carol singalong...this concert is Christmas at its most joyful!

"Sing Alleluia!"

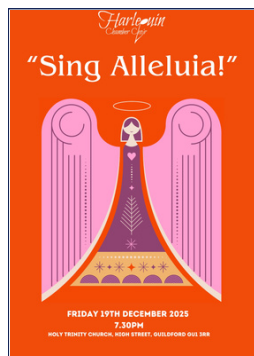
Friday 19th December, 7.30pm

Holy Trinity Church, High Street, Guildford GU1 3RR

Tickets: Adult £18 (Early Bird offer £16 before 5th December)
12-18s £5, under 12s free

Ticketsource.co.uk/harlequin-chamber-choir

Join Harlequin and special guests for a joyously festive concert featuring carols for all, well-known seasonal favourites and spellbinding choral music to welcome in the magic of Christmas!



Reflect & Inspire

Friday 30th January 2026, 7.30pm

Holy Trinity Church, High Street, Guildford GU1 3RR

Tickets: Adult £18 (Early Bird offer £16 before 16th January)
12-18s £5, under 12s free

Ticketsource.co.uk/harlequin-chamber-choir

This promises to be an illuminating concert featuring a diverse array of choral classics from composers such as Brahms and Rachmaninov, directly contrasting with contemporary reflections by composers Gareth Treseder, Lucy Walker and Oli Tarney, producing dramatically distinctive pairings.



Tickets for our "Sing Alleluia!" and Reflect & Inspire concerts can be purchased by going to:

Ticketsource.co.uk/harlequin-chamber-choir

Or scanning this QR code





Future Concerts



Carols by Candlelight

Saturday 13th December, 7.30pm

**Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road,
Teddington TW11 9NN**

Tickets: £8-£20

[Landmarkartscentre.org/shows/carols-by-candlelight](https://landmarkartscentre.org/shows/carols-by-candlelight)

Join VW Singers and Surrey Brass for stirring seasonal music, captivating readings by storyteller Giles Abbott, and a rousing carol singalong...this concert is Christmas at its most joyful!



Songs of Flight

A 'Scones and Songs' Afternoon Tea Concert

Sunday 1st March 2026, 3pm

Mickleham Village Hall, Dell Close, Mickleham RH5 6EE

Tickets: £20 (£18 Early Bird)

VWSingers.org



British Choral Gems

A celebration of the nation's greatest choral treasures

Saturday 27th June 2026, 7.30pm

Pippbrook House, Reigate Road, Dorking RH4 1SH

Tickets: £20 from Dorking Halls

DorkingHalls.co.uk

PHOTOS OF VW SINGERS



