

# 50th Anniversary Concert



**Keele Bach Choir and Neil Taylor  
with Brayside Orchestra and soloists**



**Saturday 22 March 2025, 7.30pm  
Keele University Chapel**

# Programme

Handel *Zadok the Priest*

Bach *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht*

Bach *Magnificat in D*

Interval (drinks available)

Handel *Dixit Dominus*

50th Anniversary Concert, celebrating the founding of  
Keele Bach Choir by John Sloboda in 1975

*"I am delighted that the choir I founded in 1975 is celebrating its 50th  
Anniversary this year in such good health. Long may the choir prosper!"*

John Sloboda



# Keele Bach Choir's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Welcome from our Music Director, Neil Taylor

Welcome to this evening's performance, the musical highlight of Keele Bach Choir's 50th Anniversary celebrations.

The programme celebrates the two compositional giants of the Baroque era, JS Bach and GF Handel, with one major work from each: the wonderful, celebratory, and expressive *Magnificat* from JS Bach, and the dazzling and dramatic *Dixit Dominus* from a 22-year-old Handel. Both pieces are breathtaking on so many levels; the programme begins with Handel's iconic Coronation Anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, sung at every Coronation in this country since 1727.

## Neil Taylor, Music Director

Neil is a sought after and renowned choral director, organist, piano accompanist, teacher and coach, based in the northwest of England.

After winning a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, Neil held cathedral appointments in St Albans, Norwich, and Sheffield. During his time in Sheffield, the cathedral choir toured both at home

and abroad (including Germany, Holland, France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the USA) and broadcast frequently on BBC Radios 2, 3 & 4. His recordings include *Music for a Millennium*, a Classic FM Magazine Disc of the Year Award Winner, and numerous releases as organist and conductor, all to high critical acclaim.

As solo organist, he has played at many of the major venues in the UK, and has worked with the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera, Sir John Rutter, Huddersfield Choral, and the Exon Singers.

He is Music Director of St George's Singers in Manchester, the Keele Bach Choir, and organist & keyboard studies teacher at Rossall School; he works regularly with the BBC as Music Director and accompanist on Songs of Praise and the Young Chorister of the Year Competition.

In his spare time he enjoys reading, walking, and cookery.



## **Charlotte Baker *soprano I***

Charlotte Baker is a soprano from Berkshire, studying for an advanced PGDip at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) under the tutelage of Mary Plazas. Her studies this year are generously supported by the Dame Eva Turner Award, the Riga Heesom Award and the Hargreaves and Ball Scholarship.

Charlotte was the 2024 winner of The Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the singing of Strauss, and was a 2024 Young Artist for Buxton International Festival, appearing as chorus in Verdi's *Ernani* and Carlos Acosta's *On Before*. Roles at RNCM include Princesse Laoula (Chabrier's *L'étoile* 2024), Lucilla (Rossini's *La Scala di Seta* 2024), and Kupava (Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* 2023). Charlotte is excited to be performing the role of Mrs Julian in RNCM's upcoming production of Britten's *Owen Wingrave*.

Charlotte passionately believes that music should be accessible to all - she currently balances her studies with teaching singing and flute for a portfolio of private pupils.



## **Lizzy Humphries *soprano II***

Lizzy Humphries graduated from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance with a Distinction in a Postgraduate Diploma in Vocal Studies. Prior to this she graduated with First Class Honours in Music from The University of Manchester, where she was awarded a place on The Sixteen's young artist programme, Genesis Sixteen. She has since performed with The Sixteen, Britten Sinfonia Voices and The King's Consort. She has extensive experience in solo and oratorio singing, performing arias at the London Handel Festival, Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa* in Mumbai and as a regular soloist at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

Lizzy has recorded many live services for BBC Radio, returning to Manchester to perform as part of the BBC Daily Service Singers. She was also a member of both the Fellowship Octet programme of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain and the VOCES8 Scholars programme, which has led to her leading workshops and rehearsals with children from schools and choirs in the UK and abroad.



## **Joyce Tindsley *alto***

Lancashire-born Joyce Tindsley studied for her BMus at UCNW, Bangor and continued her vocal training at the RNCM, and later with Opera North. As a soloist and choral singer Joyce worked for the BBC for over 30 years, including as a member of the BBC Northern Singers and the Daily Service Singers.

As a soloist Joyce has sung in most of the major concert halls and cathedrals around Britain, working with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Martin-in-the-Fields amongst others. Notable solo performances include Elgar's *The Apostles* at King's College, Cambridge, Handel's *Messiah* with the Worcester Festival Choral Society, Mahler's Second Symphony in organ transcription at Blackburn Cathedral, and Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* at the Bridgewater Hall.

Joyce has always enjoyed teaching; she has led masterclasses at Chetham's School of Music, provided vocal tuition for the Association of British Choral Directors, and works regularly with many British choirs. During lockdown she created Voice Fitness, a twice-weekly vocal exercise class on Zoom which has now entered its fourth year. Joyce was recently awarded an MA with Distinction in Vocal Pedagogy from the Voice Study Centre, specialising in maintaining the vocal health of amateur singers.



## **Dominic Morgan *tenor***

A versatile young tenor from Sussex, Dominic has recently finished his studies at the Royal Northern College of Music being awarded a distinction in his postgraduate diploma. Recent career highlights include chorus with Danish National Opera for their *Madama Butterfly* and *The Greek Passion*, working with Sir Mark Elder for the Hallé's *Simon Boccanegra* and *Madama Butterfly* and with Edward Gardner for Bergen Philharmonic's world premiere of Wigglesworth's *Magnificat*, and performing a range of scenes in Clonter's 2023 Spring Opera Showcase.



Dominic is a regular concert soloist with choirs throughout the North. His operatic roles include First Herald in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden* and Dr. Blind in Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'eisir d'amore*, and Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.



Shortly he will be performing chorus and arias in Liverpool Bach Collective's *Johannes-Passion* and joining Glyndebourne Festival Chorus for their productions of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Parsifal*.

### **Terence Ayebare** *bass*

Terence Ayebare stepped aside from a career in electrical engineering to study voice and piano at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

The opera roles in his repertoire include Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Pangloss (*Candide*), Belcore (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Zurga (*Pearl Fishers*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) and Silvio (*I Pagliacci*).

Among the works he has sung as a soloist with orchestra and choral societies stand Mahler's *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* and *Rückert Lieder*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and R. V. Williams' *Songs of Travel*, *Sea Symphony*, *Serenade to Music* and a wide range of the oratorio repertoire.

Alongside his music-making, Terence teaches mathematics at a Grammar school in Trafford. *Terence Ayebare appears by kind permission of the RNCM.*

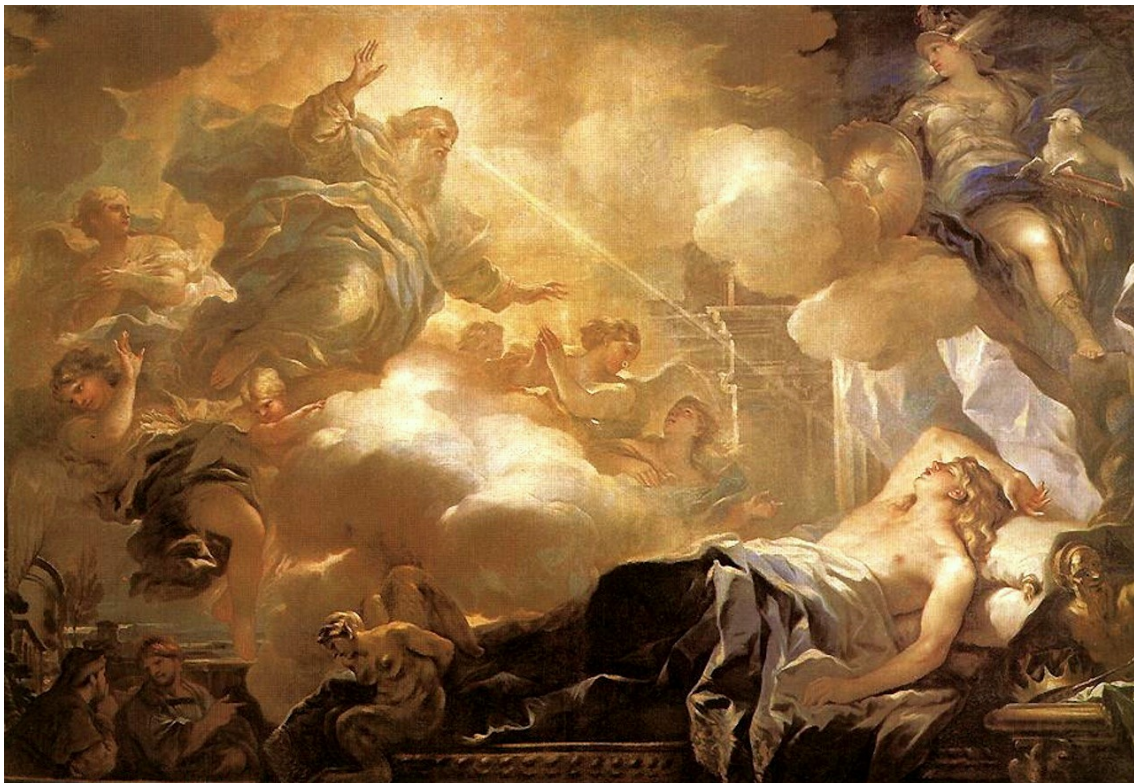
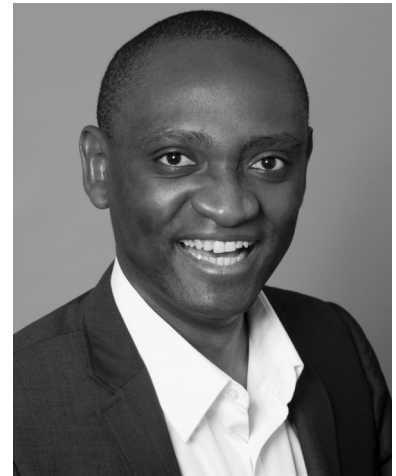


Figure 1: Luca Giordano: *The Dream of Solomon*: God promises Solomon wisdom

## The Keele Bach Choir

**Soprano:** Val Bambrick, Robyn Bowie, Lyn Bright, Becky Daniels, Charlie Bedwell, Madelaine Griggs, Fran Hughes, Sue Maddison, Jane Riddle, Lily Taylor, Nicola Urion, Pam Upchurch

**Alto:** Nike Baechle, Glynis Brewer, Chris Brown, Raya Cotton, Sue Frost, Alison Hendriken, Helen Lane, Gilly Liebeck, Carolyn Russell, Marjorie Seddon, Nancy Stewart, Helen Wadkin, Kay Williams

**Tenor:** Michele Bourne, Paul Brown, Terry Gower, Sarah Graham, Margaret Grieveson, Neil Robinson, Paul Stringer, John Yate

**Bass:** Peter Allen, Steve Brewer, Mark Brown, David Burrowes, Joe Daniels, Peter De Cruz, Jim Howell, David Law, David Walker, David Winter



## **Keele Singers** (joining the choir for *Zadok the Priest*)

Joe Capstick, Alastair Cornock, David Durojaiye, Vanshi Jain, Billy Johnstone, Marley Knight, Jessica Morgenstern, Anu Resmi.

## Brayside Orchestra

The Brayside Orchestra, based in Manchester, was formed in 2007 by a group of young professional musicians graduating from the Royal Northern College of Music. The players enjoy varied careers of orchestral playing and chamber music, and also freelance with orchestras including Hallé, Manchester Camerata, Northern Chamber Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Brayside has performed with many choral societies and musical institutions in the northwest of England and the Midlands.



## George Frideric Handel

(1685-1759)

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, a very late child to Georg, barber-surgeon to the court of Weissenfels, and his second wife Dorothea. Although young George's extraordinary facility with music was soon obvious, his father intended him for the law and refused to give any musical instrument houseroom.

Dorothea, with some independence of spirit, reputedly secreted a clavichord in the attic, and one day the seven-year-old Handel was heard by the Duke and his Kapellmeister playing the court organ. Happily, their

enthusiasm secured him training in composition, keyboard, oboe and violin with F.W. Zachow, contemporaneously described as 'benevolent as he was talented'.

Although Handel did enrol to study law in 1702, within a year he'd followed his musical ambitions to Hamburg, producing his first operas aged 20. In 1706 he moved on to Italy, soaking up compositional inspiration from the courts and academies, and earning a considerable reputation as a keyboard virtuoso. While in Italy, at the height of his fascination with Italian music, he completed the composition of *Dixit Dominus*, his earliest surviving autograph.

It was as Kapellmeister to the future King George I that he came to London, his eventual home, in 1710 and found success most notably for his Italian style operas, choral anthems, and oratorios. Challenges came, especially the public ridicule of the Italian style unleashed by Gay-Pepush's *Beggar's Opera* of 1728 which dented both his dignity and his purse but other works, particularly his oratorios, remained celebrated.

George Frideric Handel, naturalised British subject (1727), lost his sight and stopped composing in 1752 but performed until the last week of his life in 1759, and is buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.



George Frider Handel by Balthasar Denner



## ***Zadok the Priest***

## **George Frideric Handel**

In 1720 a society of wealthy amateurs founded a Royal Academy of Music for the performance of Italian opera at the Haymarket Theatre. The intrigues and rivalries between actors and actresses ended in the dispersal of the troupe after the season of 1728. In the midst of worries and fatigue, however, Handel found time to write four anthems for the coronation of George II in 1727. They include *The King shall Rejoice*, *My Heart is Inviting*, *Let thy Hand be Strengthened*, and the most popular *Zadok the Priest* which has been performed at every English coronation since.

Though settled in Britain for many years, Handel was naturalised as a British subject just in time for his first commission as a British composer to be the composition of the music for the upcoming coronation.

The words are a distillation of 1 Kings 1:34 - 40 and a translation of a traditional antiphon *Unxerunt Salomonem*, first used at the coronation of King Edgar in Bath Abbey in 973.

*Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king.  
And all the people rejoiced and said:*

*God save the King! Long live the King! God save the King!  
May the King live for ever. Amen. Hallelujah.*



*The Anointing of Solomon by Cornelis de Vos (c. 1630)*

## **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

### **Two sides of Bach**

The two Bach works we sing tonight have some similarities yet in other ways could not be more different, reflecting the extraordinary diversity of Bach's choral output.

Both are eminently singable, both employ complex instrumental lines, both were clearly written to order – each existing in two editions suggesting they were written and then revised for separate special occasions - and both demonstrate Bach's deep Lutheran faith.

The two works, however, perhaps reflect different kinds of joy. The *Magnificat* (in Latin) is a celebration of the beginning of life, while the motet *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht* (in German) celebrates its ending. To reflect this, the one is divided into unusually short, snappy, often ecstatic movements whereas the other is in a single serene span.

### ***O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht***

**J S Bach**

*O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht* (BWV 118) is a sacred motet composed by Bach during his time in Leipzig. While a single movement, and with instruments playing a key role, the piece is accepted by modern scholarship as a motet and it increasingly appears on recordings of the complete motets, such as that by Bach Collegium Japan.

Its structure is simple, with the sopranos taking the chorale melody as they sing of 'Jesus, the light of my life' above the dense polyphony of the lower voices and instruments. In this it mirrors the opening movements of many of Bach's church cantatas and the opening and closing movements of his Passions. It is a work of consolation and joy over the life to come, rather than grief or desolation.

So why do we have this stand-alone movement? It was probably written in 1736-7, with its first known performance being at the grave-side ceremony for Count Joachim Friedrich von Flemming, Governor of Leipzig, in October 1740. It seems to have been revived and re-scored ten years later, and was possibly a generic work, brought out for state funerals.

The original scoring for trumpets or horns (known as litui), trombones and cornet with continuo suggests outside use at lavish ceremonies, with the opportunity for repetitions of the whole piece to different verses of Martin Behm's original chorale for as long as the procession is needed. John Eliot Gardiner took this to heart on his Bach Cantata Pilgrimage, celebrating the



Millennium and Bach's 250th anniversary, when the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra performed it outside Iona Abbey.

*O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht  
Mein Hort, mein Trost, mein  
Zuversicht,  
Auf Erden bin ich nur ein Gast  
Und drückt mich sehr der Sünden  
Last.*

O Jesus Christ, the light of my life  
My refuge, my comfort, my  
confidence,  
I am just a guest on earth  
And the burden of sin weighs heavily  
on me.



*Baptism of Jesus Christ Maître de Rheinfelden*

## ***Magnificat in D Major***

## **Johann Sebastian Bach**

It's June 1722 and the council of Leipzig are embarking upon their quest to fill the position of cantor, or director of church music. Picture their delight when Georg Phillip Telemann applies, already a cantor for five important churches in Hamburg. Imagine their annoyance therefore when they realise that Telemann has only used the application to exact a higher wage from his current employer. After another candidate also declines the position, the council finally decide to offer the job to Johann Sebastian Bach, the director of music at the court of Prince Leopold in Köthen. He starts his duties on 30th May 1723, staying there for the rest of his life. Little do they realise that they have just appointed a musical genius.

Bach wrote his first version of the *Magnificat* for the upcoming Christmas Vespers of 1723. This version was in E-flat and included several additional texts inserted at various points. Some years later, he deleted the Christmas additions and transposed it into D, a more suitable key for baroque brass instruments.

The text is taken from Luke 1:46-55, when Mary visits her relative Elizabeth who is miraculously pregnant in old age. Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice. The *Magnificat* is Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting.

The first movement opens with a sparkling orchestral introduction in the style of an Italian Aria, with the chorus then reiterating and developing the main themes before passing them back to the orchestra. In the following movements, a range of moods and textures in musical conversations between soloists and instruments are interspersed with choral passages which are testament to Bach's genius.

'Omnes Generationes' features the different voices of the chorus jostling for supremacy in this superb example of fugal writing. Listen to how the words 'omnes, omnes' are bounced between each part.

'Fecit Potentiam' demonstrates Bach's brilliant word-setting, with strength and power portrayed by four choral parts singing in rhythmic unity, accompanied by a separate vocal semiquaver line passing between each part. The word 'dispersit' is then scattered between the voices before a slow, homophonic, hymn-like, conclusion.

'Sicut Locutus Est' brings another choral fugue where the theme weaves up through the voice parts and then back down again, followed by a more homophonic passage emphasising the importance of Abraham and his descendants.

The final movement, 'Gloria Patri', starts with a choral cadenza-like introduction; the orchestra and chorus then reiterate the style and motifs from the opening movement.



<b>Magnificat anima mea Dominum</b> (Chorus)	<i>My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord</i>
<b>Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo</b> (Soprano II solo)	<i>and my spirit has exulted in God my saviour</i>
<b>Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent</b> (Soprano I solo)	<i>because he has regarded the lowly state of his handmaid; for look! from now on [they] will say that I am blessed</i>
<b>Omnes generationes</b> (Chorus)	<i>every generation.</i>
<b>Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est et sanctum nomen ejus.</b> (Bass solo)	<i>because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.</i>
<b>Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.</b> (Alto solo, Tenor solo)	<i>and his mercy [continues] from generation to generation for those who fear him.</i>
<b>Fecit potentiam in brachio suo dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.</b> (Chorus)	<i>He has made known the power of his arm, scattered those who are arrogant in the thoughts of their heart.</i>
<b>Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.</b> (Tenor solo)	<i>He has put down the mighty from their seats [of power] and raised up those who are lowly.</i>
<b>Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.</b> (Alto solo)	<i>The hungry he has filled with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.</i>
<b>Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus misericordiae suae.</b> (Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto)	<i>He has taken under his protection Israel his boy, and remembered his mercy.</i>
<b>Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.</b> (Chorus)	<i>in accordance with what he said to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.</i>
<b>Gloria Patri, et Filio et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.</b> (Chorus)	<i>Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, glory also to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning and [is] now and always and throughout ages of ages.</i> <b>Amen.</b>

## ***Dixit Dominus***

## **George Frideric Handel**

It is hard to imagine that *Dixit Dominus* could fall out of favour, but apparently it did at the end of the 18th century, only being revived after 1952. What a gem the modern world would have missed had it not come back into popularity. There is so much to applaud in this intense, emotionally dramatic, and at times contemplative work; it is a virtuosic tour de force of baroque choral writing and is considered one of Handel's finest compositions.

Handel's ability to convey the text's meaning through music creates a deeply moving and spiritually uplifting experience, irrespective of religious conviction. With complex vocal lines and equally impressive orchestration, *Dixit Dominus* challenges singers and orchestral players alike. For the listener, whether a seasoned devotee or new to baroque music, Handel's writing brings gloriously exhilarating pleasure.

Derived from Psalm 110, *Dixit Dominus* features harmonic relationships favoured by Vivaldi and Corelli. Each of the nine movements brings a unique intensity of character and emotional depth to the text. From the brilliance of the opening orchestral bars, the momentum continues with a powerful chorus affirming 'The Lord Said', grabbing attention with its vigorous rhythms and contrapuntal style where each vocal line is of equal importance.

Two arias follow: first an elegant alto solo with vibrant cello and organ continuo, followed by the sublime 'Tecum principium in die virtutis' for soprano. Here the lyrical, repeated triplets lend emotional fragility, while breathtaking lines of virtuosic vocal agility are on full display.

Chromatic harmonies in the fourth movement 'Juravit Dominus' combine with tonal disharmony to build tension and textual drama. Movement five launches quickfire exchanges between the vocal parts, interspersed with a linear arrangement across all voices and reflected in the orchestral interaction.

A frenzied, heady mix follows, as strings and voices overlap in 'Dominus a dextris tuis'. The interweaving of the 'confregit' section, grounded by a robust bass continuo underlay, drives relentlessly forward to a powerful, intentionally discordant chorus and fully resonant orchestra, intensifying to thrilling effect. While 'Judicabit in nationibus' begins in stately fashion, it accelerates with athletic energy to 'implebit ruinas'. The atmosphere changes further with dramatic word painting of the repeated and percussive 'conquassabit': The Last Judgement.

In stark contrast, the haunting beauty of 'De torrente in via bibet' employs dissonant suspensions in the soprano duet, brimming with serenely reflective passages accompanied by a gentle tenor and bass chorus. In the final movement, Handel delivers a majestic proclamation. Tightly controlled with decorative notes and extended lines throughout, it provides a spectacularly fitting end to this masterpiece.



<b>Dixit Dominus</b> <i>Chorus</i>	Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.	<i>The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool.</i>
<b>Virgam virtutis tuae</b> <i>Alto solo</i>	Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion: dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.	<i>The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion: be thou ruler, even in the midst among thine enemies.</i>
<b>Tecum principium in die virtutis</b> <i>Soprano solo</i>	Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae splendoribus sanctorum. Ex utero ante luciferum genui te.	<i>In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship. From the womb before the morning star have I begotten thee.</i>
<b>Juravit Dominus</b> <i>Chorus</i>	Juravit Dominus et non poenitebit eum:	<i>The Lord swore, and will not repent:</i>
<b>Tu es Sacerdos in aeternum</b> <i>Chorus</i>	Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.	<i>Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech.</i>
<b>Dominus a dextris tuis</b> <i>Soloists and chorus</i>	Dominus a dextris tuis, confregit in die irae suae reges.	<i>The Lord upon thy right hand, shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.</i>
<b>Judicabit in nationibus</b> <i>Chorus</i>	Judicabit in nationibus, Implebit ruinas, conquassabit capita in terra multorum.	<i>He shall judge the nations, fill the places with destruction, and shatter the skulls in the land of the many.</i>
<b>De torrente in via bibet</b> <i>Soprano duet and chorus</i>	De torrente in via bibet, propterea exaltabit caput.	<i>He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up his head.</i>
<b>Gloria Patri et Filio</b> <i>Chorus</i>	Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum Amen.	<i>Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now; and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.</i>

Keele Bach Choir – Next Concert

## Summer Concert

17:00 Sunday 22 June 2025

(time to be confirmed)

Keele University Chapel

Puccini	<i>Missa di Gloria</i>
Dove	<i>The Passing of the Year</i>
Todd	<i>Jazz Missa Brevis</i>
McDowall	<i>Shipping Forecast</i>

Join us for this afternoon of lively and eclectic music.  
Reserve your tickets from <https://keelebachchoir.sumupstore.com>  
on sale one month before the concert.

### Programme notes and production

Nike Baechle, Michèle Bourne, Steve Brewer, Chris Brown, Paul Brown,  
Alison Hendriken, Valerie Martin, Neil Robinson, Nancy Stewart

Keele Bach Choir is a registered charity (No 1070390).



Jan van Eyck - The Ghent Altarpiece - Singing Angels  
(detail)