



Sheen Gate Choir **and** **Coro Ad Libitum**

(from Mérida, Spain)

Haydn - The Creation **“Die Schöpfung”**

+ pieces by Brahms, Mozart, Vila, Penella

Soloists: Louise Fuller, Ben Thapa & Henry Godwin

Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra

Guest Conductor: Stephen Hall

Music Director: Chris Hawkins

Saturday 24th June 2023 at 7:00pm

Christ Church, East Sheen

Themes, Contrasts, Ironies and Tragedies

Brahms was a master of 'irony', including ironic 'self-deprecation'. The text of *Geistliches Lied* is devotional but, as the 'German Requiem' shows, Brahms was agnostic. Haydn was a devout Catholic; but the text of the Creation is partly based on 'Paradise Lost', written by Milton, a Puritan who excoriated the Catholic faith. It is modelled on Handel's oratorios, many of which laud the Protestant state of 18th C England. Mozart's genius was displayed in the secular world, particularly opera; his church music forms a small part of his output. As is well known, he was a member of the Masons, a group which the Catholic church loathed. Zarzuela also inhabits the secular world. Garcia Lorca was killed in 1936. Police reports conclude that Lorca was executed by fascist forces; the writer was described as a "socialist" and "freemason belonging to the Alhambra lodge".

Music heals – let us hold to that aspiration.

1. Brahms (1833 – 1897) - *Geistliches Lied* Op 30

The music was composed by Brahms as part of a series of contrapuntal exercises conducted by correspondence between the great violinist Joseph Joachim (1831 – 1907) and Brahms in 1856. The words are devotional, though Brahms was agnostic.

2. Haydn (1732 – 1809) – *Die Schöpfung / The Creation (Excerpts)* – In German

Haydn was a devout Catholic. He wrote the Creation in 1797-1798. It was inspired by the Oratorios of Handel, which Haydn had heard in England. The English text, by an unknown author, is based on the Scriptures and Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. It was adapted into German by Baron Gottfried van Swieten (1733 – 1803), a patron of Haydn and Mozart. The Creation was enormously popular in Vienna. At the last performance which Haydn attended, the audience broke into spontaneous applause at the coming of "light" and Haydn, in a typical gesture, weakly pointed upwards and said: "Not from me—everything comes from up there!"

Haydn would surely have agreed with Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD) who wrote: "For not only does the authority of the divine Books proclaim that there is a God, but the whole natural universe itself, which surrounds us and to which we belong, cries aloud that it has the most exalted Creator of all, who has given us a mind as well as a natural reason." (De Trinitate, trans. McKenna).

3. Mozart (1756 –1791) – *Laudate Dominum*

This forms part of *Vesperae Solennes de confessore*, K321. The Vespers were composed by Mozart in 1779 at the request of Archbishop Colloredo (1732 – 1812) for liturgical use in Salzburg Cathedral. Mozart famously fell out with Colloredo and left Salzburg for Vienna.

4. Francesc Vila I Ginfrer (1922 – 2011) – *Zorongo de Andaluz*, text: Garcia Lorca (1898 - 1936)

The 'zorongo' is a popular song and dance of Andalusian music; though not flamenco music, its Andalusian style makes it a close relative to flamenco.

Participants

Soloists

| | | |
|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Soprano | Louise Fuller | Gabriel / Eve |
| Tenor | Ben Thapa | Uriel |
| Baritone | Henry Godwin | Raphael / Adam |

Orchestra Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra (leader: Stefan Bown)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Guest Conductor, Sheen Gate Choir | Stephen Hall OBE |
| Conductor, Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida | Marta Garcia Ortiz/Raquel Sánchez Palacios |
| Conductor, Sheen Gate Choir | Chris Hawkins |

Programme

| | | | Conductor |
|-----------|---|---|---------------|
| 1. Brahms | <i>Geistliches Lied Op. 30 arr. C Hawkins</i> | Sheen Gate Choir | Chris Hawkins |
| 2. Haydn | <i>Die Schöpfung</i> | Sheen Gate Choir <ul style="list-style-type: none">Soprano: Louise FullerTenor: Ben ThapaBaritone: Henry Godwin | Stephen Hall |

| Interval | | | |
|-----------------|--|---|-------------------------|
| 3. Mozart | <i>Laudate Dominum</i> | Sheen Gate Choir & Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida <ul style="list-style-type: none">Soprano: Louise Fuller | Stephen Hall |
| 4. Vila & Lorca | <i>Zorongo</i> | Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida & Sheen Gate Choir | Marta Garcia Ortiz |
| 5. Various | <i>5 Zarzuela choruses</i> | Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida | Raquel Sánchez Palacios |
| 6 Penella | <i>Habanera - Don Gil de Alcala arr. C Hawkins</i> | Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida & Sheen Gate Choir | Marta Garcia Ortiz |

Die Schöpfung / The Creation

| Before Creation | Die Vorstellung des Chaos <i>The representation of Chaos</i> | Introduction | Orchestra |
|-----------------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Day 1 | Im Anfange schuf Gott Himmel und Erde <i>In the beginning God made the Earth and the Sky</i> | God creates heaven and the earth out of Chaos, Confusion and Darkness; 'Let there be Light – and there was Light'. | Raphael & Choir |
| | Nun schwanden vor dem heiligen Strahle <i>Now before the sacred ray the dismal shadows of black darkness vanish</i> | The spirits who have inhabited the Darkness flee to the abysses of Eternal Night as they are displaced by the emergence of the New World, God's handiwork. | Uriel & Choir |
| Day 2 | Mit staunen sieht das Wunderwerk <i>Astonished, Heaven's happy host gaze on the wondrous work</i> | God makes the firmament and divides the waters above and below it. The heavenly host praise God for this achievement. | Gabriel & Choir |
| Day 3 | | God directs the Earth to bring forth grass, crops and fruit. The hosts of heaven celebrate the achievements of Day 3. | |
| Day 4 | In vollem Glanze steigt jetzt die Sonne strahlend auf <i>In fullest splendour now the sun arises</i> | God creates Time and divides it into Day and Night and creates the sun and the stars to give light. The hosts of heaven celebrate. | Uriel |
| | Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes <i>The Heavens are telling the glory of God</i> | | Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael & Choir |
| Day 5 | Und Gott schuf große Wallfische <i>And God created great whales and every living creature that moves</i> | God creates the creatures of the sea. | Raphael |
| | Und die Engel rührten ihr' unsterblichen Harpfen <i>And the angels played upon their immortal harps</i> | The angels celebrate the creations of the fifth day. | Raphael |

Die Schöpfung / The Creation

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Day 6 | In holder Anmut stehn mit jungem Grün <i>The hills are adorned with beautiful greenery</i> | The wonders of birds, animals and fish so created are described. The hosts of heaven celebrate. | Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael |
| | Der Herr ist gross <i>The Lord is Great</i> | | Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael & Choir |
| | | God creates the animals, insects & worms. God creates Man and Woman. | |
| | Zu Dir, O Herr, blickt alles auf <i>All things, O Lord, look up to Thee</i> | The work of the Creation is finished. The hosts of heaven celebrate the end of this task | Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael |
| | Vollendet ist das grosse Werk <i>The great work is completed</i> | | Choir |
| Day 7 - A new world of place and time | Aus Rosenwolken bricht <i>Awakened by sweet sounds</i> | Adam and Eve awake in the sunny morn. | Uriel |
| | Von deiner Güte, o Herr und Gott, ist Erd und Himmel voll <i>Heaven and Earth, O Lord our God, are full of thy goodness</i> | Accompanied by a choir of [heavenly] voices, Adam & Eve celebrate the created world | Adam & Eve and Choir |
| | Holde Gattin, dir zur Seite <i>Dear Wife, by your side</i> | Adam & Eve sing of their life together. | Adam & Eve |
| | O glücklich Paar, und glücklich immerfort <i>O happy pair, happy evermore</i> | Uriel comments that their life together is happy, provided they are not led astray. | Uriel |
| | | | |
| Conclusion | Singt dem Herren alle Stimmen <i>Let every voice sing unto the Lord!</i> | A song of thanksgiving for the Creation. | Choir |

Zarzuela

Zarzuela is a Spanish lyric-dramatic genre which alternates between spoken and sung scenes. In the 1850s and 1860s a group of patriotic writers and composers led by Francisco Barbieri and Joaquín Gaztambide revived the zarzuela form, seeing in it a possible release from the influence of French and Italian music. The elements of the work continue to be the same: sung solos and choruses, spiced with spoken scenes, and comedic songs, ensembles and dances.

5. Zarzuela choruses

1. Pájaro Triguero (Triguero Bird). Popular Extremaduran Song. Adaptation: Emilio González Barroso.
2. Seguidillas from the Zarzuela “La Verbena de la Paloma”. Music: Tomás Bretón, Lyrics: D. Ricardo de la Vega.
3. Pasacalle de los nardos (Passacaglia Music of Nards) from the Zarzuela “Las Leandras”. Music: Francisco Alonso, Lyrics: González del Castillo and Muñoz Román.
4. Coro de Románticos (Chorus of Romantics) from the Zarzuela “Doña Francisquita”. Music: A. Vives, Lyrics: F. Romero and G. F. Shaw.
5. Pasacalle de los Chisperos and Guardias de Corps (Passacaglia Music of working class men and Corps Guards) from the Zarzuela “La Calesera”

6. M. Penella (1880 – 1939) - Habanera from the Zarzuela “Don Gil de Alcalá”

Don Gil is an ópera cómica opera by Manuel Penella Moreno. As a genre, it sits between opera and zarzuela. It was first performed in Barcelona in 1932.

Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida

The Ad Libitum Choir of Mérida is a non-profit association that began its journey in September 2003. Led by Marta García Ortiz since its inception, since January 2022 the choir has been guided by Raquel Sánchez Palacios. The Ad Libitum Choir has performed numerous concerts (more than 250) in Extremadura, other regions of Spain, Germany, Portugal, and Romania. The choir's repertoire is diverse, embracing medieval and Renaissance music, zarzuelas, musicals and collaborative recordings with rock groups. This concert in London celebrates the Choir's 20th anniversary, as they join their fellow musicians to commemorate their incredible musical journey.

Louise Fuller, Soprano

Louise is a graduate with Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and has a Masters from the Royal College of Music. She is an alumnus of the Premiere Opera Training Programme in Banff, Canada, British Youth Opera, London Song Festival, a Samling Young Artist, and an Alvarez Young Artist for Garsington Opera 2018, 2019 and 2021. Her operatic roles include Helena in Britten's A Midsummer Night's Dream, the title role in Poulenc's Les Mamelles de Tirésias, Musetta in La Bohème, Miss Jessel in Turn of the Screw, Juliet in Gounod's Romeo and Juliet and Grace in Algirdas Kraunaitis' opera The Two Sisters in RCM's Crime and Punishment. In addition to her many performances of choral works (Carmina Burana, Nelson Mass, Messiah, Elijah and Mozart's Requiem) Louise has performed Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music at Buckingham Palace, conducted by John Wilson with the RCM Symphony Orchestra. She made her solo recital debut at Wigmore Hall in October 2022. Louise is also a singing teacher at Notre Dame School in Cobham and at Watford Grammar School for Girls.

Ben Thapa, Tenor

Ben Thapa started his career as one quarter of the classical opera group G4, runners-up on ITV's The X Factor in 2004. Ben left the group in 2018, and has forged a varied and substantial career on the stage across a range of repertory. Operatic credits include Tito (La Clemenza di Tito, Teatrul Manole), Kudrjash (Katya Kabanova, Scottish Opera on Tour), Melot (Tristan und Isolde, Longborough Festival Opera) and Siegfried (The Quest for the Ring, Royal Festival Hall in association with Opera North). His concert work includes being a featured artist with the Really Big Chorus in 2010-11, and at the Royal Albert Hall, was their soloist for Handel Messiah, Haydn Creation and Mozart Requiem. Further concert highlights include Monteverdi Vespers, the Bach Passions, Beethoven 9 (with the CBSO), Missa Solemnis, Dream of Gerontius, Verdi Requiem, and Tippett A Child of Our Time. In 2020, Ben made his main stage debut at English National Opera as part of their Carmen education project.

Henry Godwin, Baritone

Henry Godwin is a 20 year old Baritone from West Sussex, who fell in love with opera and classical music at the age of 14 after seeing 'Cosi Fan Tutte' at Glyndebourne. He gained a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music under Peter Savidge and is about to finish his second year of his undergraduate studies. This year he has performed the bass solos for 'A Bach Celebration' at RCM and received a special commendation for his performance in The Brooks Van Der Pump English Song Competition. He is thrilled to be joining the Sheen Gate Choir in singing 'Die Schöpfung'.

Stephen Hall OBE – Conductor

Stephen has sung with leading choirs in London for 25 years and has been chair of two of them. He sang alongside Chris Hawkins in the English Baroque Choir and is delighted to have been invited by Chris to be guest conductor.

Stephen co-founded what is now the Civil Service Choir (www.civilservicechoir.org.uk) in 2009 as music director and principal administrator. Now with over 180 members and 160 performances, he has been instrumental in the choir's development and success. He has conducted the choir in almost all its performances, including twelve concerts at St John's Smith Square (including Beethoven's Mass in C, Mozart's Great Mass in C minor, Poulenc's Stabat Mater, Bach's Christmas Oratorio, Dan Forrest's Jubilate Deo, and Dvořák's Mass in D); in the London Jazz Festival; in the London Brandenburg Choral Festival in St Martin-in-the-Fields; and in Westminster Abbey.

Future plans include conducting the Civil Service Choir and a jazz orchestra for a concert celebrating the choral jazz music of Will Todd, including the Mass in Blue. Next spring the choir will perform Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem with the Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2018 Stephen was awarded an OBE for voluntary and charitable service, in the late Queen's Birthday Honours.

Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra

The orchestra was founded in 1966 by keen amateur musicians who had enjoyed making music in various university orchestras and wanted to continue playing after graduation. Whilst some of the players work in music education, the majority of players are from a wide variety of professions working in and around London. The orchestra attracts both experienced professionals and young upcoming conductors and soloists to perform with it. Its repertoire consists of many of the works of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries suitable to its size. It has given concerts and radio broadcasts in the UK, Belgium, Greece, Spain and elsewhere. It has accompanied a number of different choral societies including the Crouch End Festival Chorus, the Cambridgeshire Choral Society and most recently the Islington Choral Society. Former musical directors have included Sir Andrew Davis, Nicholas Collon and Edmon Colomer, now the president of the orchestra.

Violins: Stefan Bown & Catherine Aldren
Viola: Keith Berry
Cello: David Winfield
Double Bass: Gaye Endler
Flute: Mary Ann Kernan

Oboe: Janie Shillito
Clarinet: Ivan Rockey
Bassoon: Brynly Clarke
Horn: Mark Andrews
Continuo: David Terry

Sheen Gate Choir

Sheen Gate Choir is a non-selective amateur choir based in East Sheen, South West London, UK. Formed in 2009, we rehearse every week in the Sheen area, and try to perform a major work every year, as well as other smaller concerts. The choir believes that singing is a cathartic experience. It is uplifting, challenging and rewarding, and is a social part of our members' lives. New members are always welcome.



In recent years, major concerts have included Faure's Requiem, Schubert's Mass in G, Saint-Saëns' Requiem, Puccini's Messa di Gloria, Vivaldi's Gloria, Mozart's Requiem and Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem. We have travelled to perform with other choirs in Salzburg and Vienna, and at the Royal Albert Hall.

A section of the choir is off to Vienna in early July to sing die Schöpfung in Stephansdom (St. Stephen's Cathedral).

Also, please mark your calendars for our Christmas Concert on **Saturday 16th December**, details nearer the date. Visit www.sheengatechoir.co.uk for details about rehearsals and upcoming concerts.

We invite new singers to join!

Please come and try us out! Rehearsals recommence after the summer on **Tuesday 12th September 2023**. Or if you would like to express your interest earlier, please email: info@sheengatechoir.co.uk

Sheen Gate Choir would like to thank all those guest contributors (too numerous to mention), Robert Bridge for his unfailing piano accompaniment during our rehearsals and lastly Christ Church for allowing us to regularly rehearse and perform here.