

# Hailsham Choral Society



## Gioachino Rossini

### *Petite Messe*

### *Solennelle*



Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 7:30pm

All Saints Church, Eastbourne

## Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Gioachino Rossini was born in the Italian town of Pesaro to a musical family: his father was a trumpeter (and inspector of slaughterhouses) and his mother an opera singer. He displayed musical ability from an early age and attempted his first opera when he was eight. At fifteen he went to study at Bologna's *Liceo Musicale* (*Music School*) where he aspired to become a composer. By the time he left three years later, he had already written a large quantity of music, including five tuneful and remarkably good string quartets. But his goal was to write opera and it was not long before he received his first commissions.



Rossini's earliest works were moderately successful at a local level, but his big breakthrough came with two operas written either side of his twenty-first birthday. The first, *Tancredi*, is a tragic opera that includes *Di tanti palpiti* (*Many heartbeats*) a popular 'hit' at the time and still worth hearing today. The second, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, is an *opera buffa* (*comic opera*) that is still performed occasionally and whose overture has become a popular concert item in its own right. With these two works, Rossini became one of the most celebrated opera composers in Italy, but an even bigger success was yet to come.

*Il Barbiere di Siviglia* was written in 1816 when Rossini was only twenty-four years old. It is generally agreed that this wonderfully effervescent and enjoyable work was written in less than three weeks - although the composer claimed it only took him 13 days! Whatever the truth, it was an incredible feat, even if the overture had already been used for two earlier operas. No less a person than Beethoven admired the work and when they met, remarked:

*Ah, Rossini. So you are the composer of The Barber of Seville. I congratulate you. It will be played as long as Italian operas exist. Never try to write anything else but opera buffa; any other style would do violence to your nature.*

In performance terms, Beethoven was certainly correct: *Barber* has remained popular to this day. During the 2013/14 opera season, the work received no fewer than 453 performances worldwide. Even as you read this, it is being staged in London by English National Opera.

Rossini continued to flourish, writing between two and four operas a year. He had a natural gift for vocal melody and a seemingly effortless facility for writing music people wanted to hear: witty and lively, theatrical, beautifully orchestrated and above all, tuneful. He was not above re-cycling (as we have already seen) and rarely revised anything. He also made great use of 'shortcuts', which included: composing arias to a formula, using lightweight

accompaniments, writing simple music for the chorus, and employing fast endings with trademark crescendos to whip-up applause (he was nicknamed *Signor Crescendo*). Some critics thought Rossini's 'shortcuts' were merely compositional 'tricks'; but one person's 'trick' is another's 'technique', and since Rossini's music has considerably more wit, life and fire than most, such criticism can be seen as heavy-handed - like taking a spade to a soufflé.

According to contemporary accounts, Rossini's laziness was legendary, although this is curiously at odds with his prodigious output. It seems he would leave things to the last minute, and then compose quickly and exasperatingly close to deadlines.

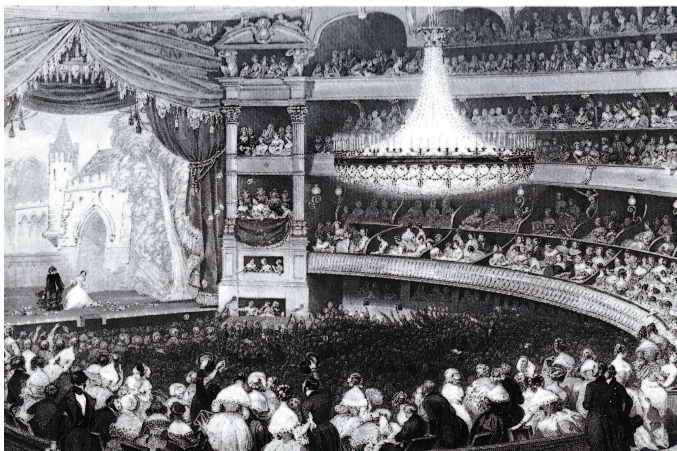
*Nothing primes inspiration more than necessity, whether it be the presence of a copyist waiting for your work or the prodding of an impresario tearing his hair. In my time, all the impresarios in Italy were bald at thirty.*

In 1822, when Rossini was thirty, he became romantically involved with Isabella Colbran, the leading soprano at the *Royal Opera Houses of Naples*, and wrote many roles specifically for her voice. The couple were married the same year.



By now, Rossini was internationally famous and received by the highest ranks of society. When he came to London in 1823/24, he met King George IV and they sang duets together. He stayed in England for five months and *The Spectator* remarked:

*His music was universally popular; he himself was a first-rate comic singer; and his manners and address were calculated to gain the favour of the [fashionable] and courtly.*



In 1824, at the age of 32, Rossini moved to Paris as director of the *Théâtre des Italiens*. It was here in 1828-29 that he wrote his final two operatic masterpieces: the light-hearted *Le Comte Ory*, and the serious *Guillaume Tell*. At four hours long, the latter is rarely performed these days, although Covent Garden mounted a successful (though controversial) production earlier this year. The

overture, meanwhile, has become one of the most popular ever written, and for many of us, the music to which the Lone Ranger and Tonto galloped after outlaws in the Wild West.



Then, at the age of 37, at the height of his fame and having written around 40 operas, Rossini retired from the world he had dominated for so long. There are many theories as to why this happened. Most obviously, he could afford to – he was an *extremely* wealthy man – but for such a creative personality there surely has to be more to it than that? One strong possibility is that he knew the future development of opera would be opposed to both his temperament and the traditions he exemplified. *Guillaume Tell* indicated the way forward to a new grand manner that other composers would follow; but Rossini didn't want to go there, his roots were in the previous century and Mozart was his hero. Writing *Guillaume Tell*, with its many innovations, had taken a lot out of him, and the days of putting together an opera in two or three weeks were long past! Perhaps Beethoven was correct when he said, 'any other style would do violence to your nature'?

Initially, Rossini retired to Italy, moving to Bologna to see his father and advise at his old *Liceo*. Then, for a few years he made a home in Florence, but he was not in good health and suffered badly from depression. When his estranged wife died in 1845, he married Olympe Pélissier, his mistress of 15 years. In 1855 the couple left Italy and returned to Paris for good. Rossini's health improved and he lived in fine style at his house in the city and at his villa in nearby Passy. He entertained on a lavish scale and his home became a focal point for many of the great artistic and literary figures of the day. Only the very best food was served and he was famed for both his generosity and lavish hospitality: an invitation to his dinner table was one of the most sought-after in Paris, and his amiable nature and wit ensured his guests had an enjoyable evening.



Rossini did not stop composing completely, but the nature and quantity of his music changed. He wrote around 150 delightful piano pieces and songs which he called, *Péchés de vieillesse (Sins of my old age)*. These were performed solely for the amusement of his guests and were never published in his lifetime. He also wrote two splendid religious choral works: the *Stabat Mater* (1831-42) and his final composition, the *Petite Messe Solennelle* (1863).

The title, *Petite Messe Solennelle (Small, Solemn Mass)* can hardly be serious, for as Napoleon III is supposed to have said, 'the work is neither small nor solemn'. It is actually a full-length mass, plus a hymn, *O Salutaris*, and an instrumental, *Preludio Religioso*.

Originally conceived and written for four soloists, small chorus, two pianos and harmonium, the *Petite Messe* was first performed on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1864 to a private audience at the town house of the dedicatee, Countess Louise Pillet-Will. The instrumentation may seem odd at first, but for a work specifically designed for performance in a house (albeit a large one), it makes a lot of sense. The *Petite Messe* was a great success and the audience welcomed the 71 year-old composer's return to form as a creative artist. Rossini was encouraged to orchestrate the work, which he did during 1866-67, and in this

arrangement it was first performed at the *Théâtre des Italiens* in 1868, three months after his death. These days, the majority of performances are with piano and harmonium. Most authorities agree that Rossini's original concept works very well and is preferable to the orchestrated version, which adds virtually nothing of significance to the work and was probably only written to attract audiences to future performances. (Many years later, Fauré's *Requiem* suffered a similar fate for the same reason.)

Rossini said he composed the *Petite Messe* so that 'the true art of vocal writing should not be finally lost'. This undoubtedly refers to the vocal style now known as *bel canto* (*beautiful singing*) which is heard in music by the likes of Handel, Mozart and Rossini himself, but which had been in decline since the 1830s. As may be expected, the music of the *Petite Messe* has a strong operatic flavour and tunefulness that is typical of the composer. It also has a lot of charm and elegance, and at times an exuberance that marks it out from the sentimental efforts of contemporaries like Charles Gounod. But the work also has moments of pathos and power, such as in the final *Agnus Dei* when the contralto soloist and chorus come together with the words *Dona nobis pacem* (*Grant us peace*).

There are sections of the *Petite Messe* where it appears that Rossini is 'making a point' about his musical talents and answering some of the criticisms aimed at his previous compositions. This is seen in his use of a number of sophisticated musical techniques that are largely absent from his earlier work; these include masterly use of advanced harmonies and complex choral writing. It is as if he is showing the musical world of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris that his musical credentials are up there with the best. If he took a 'shortcut' in the past it was for a reason, not because he wasn't up to doing otherwise. If he was alive today he might have added, 'Get over it!'

Rossini described the *Petite Messe* as 'this little composition, which is, alas, the last mortal sin of my old age' and inscribed on the score:

*Good God—behold completed this poor little Mass—is it indeed sacred music [la musique sacrée] that I have just written, or merely some damned music [la sacré musique]? You know well, I was born for opera buffa. A little science, a little heart, that is all. So may you be blessed, and grant me Paradise!*  
G. Rossini, Passy 1863.

Rossini died at the age of 76 from pneumonia at his country house in Passy. His funeral was a grand affair, with four military bands, a choir of nearly 400 and an estimated 6000 mourners. One contemporary newspaper described the scene as:

*...more like a festive concert... the crowds were there to hear great singers perform and to pay tribute to a man who had lived beyond his time.*

The burial was at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where his tomb can still be seen. In 1887, at the request of the Italian Government, his remains were moved to be with those of other great Italians at the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, the nearest Italian equivalent to our own Westminster Abbey.

## **Petite Messe Solennelle**

## **Gioachino Rossini**

### **Part 1**

- |      |                               |                                       |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I.   | <i>Kyrie Eleison</i>          | Soloists and chorus                   |
| II.  | <i>Gloria in Excelsis Deo</i> | Soloists and chorus                   |
| III. | <i>Gratias Agimus Tibi</i>    | Trio for contralto,<br>tenor and bass |
| IV.  | <i>Domine Deus</i>            | Tenor solo                            |
| V.   | <i>Qui Tollis</i>             | Duet for soprano<br>and contralto     |
| VI.  | <i>Quoniam Tu Solus</i>       | Bass solo                             |
| VII. | <i>Cum Sancto Spiritu</i>     | Soloists and chorus                   |

### **- INTERVAL -**

### **Part 2**

- |       |                           |                              |
|-------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| VIII. | <i>Credo In Unum Deum</i> | Soloists and chorus          |
| IX.   | <i>Crucifixus</i>         | Soprano solo                 |
| X.    | <i>Et Resurrexit</i>      | Soloists and chorus          |
| XI.   | <i>Preludio Religioso</i> | Piano solo                   |
| XII.  | <i>Sanctus</i>            | Soloists and chorus          |
| XIII. | <i>O Salutaris</i>        | Soprano solo                 |
| XIV.  | <i>Agnus Dei</i>          | Contralto solo<br>and chorus |

## Partial Text and Translation

The text and translation of the whole work is too long to give in full, but a good sense of the meaning may be gathered from the opening words of each section:

I.	Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.	Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.
II.	Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.	Glory to God in the highest, And on earth, peace to men of goodwill.
III.	Gratias agimus tibi Propter magnam gloriam tuam.	We give thanks to You For Your great glory.
IV.	Domine deus, Rex cœlestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine fili unigenite Jesu Christe.	O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. The only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
V.	Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Suscipe deprecationem nostram.	You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Receive our prayer.
VI.	Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.	For You only are holy. You only are the Lord. You only, Jesus Christ, are most high.
VII.	Cum Sancto Spiritu in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen.	Together with the Holy Spirit In the glory of God the Father. Amen.
♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦		
VIII.	Credo in unum Deum; Patrem omnipotentem, factorem cœli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium.	I believe in one God, the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
IX.	Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus et supultus est.	He was crucified for us: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, And was buried.
X.	Et resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturas, Et ascendit in cœlum: sedet ad dexteram Patris.	And on the third day He rose again, in accordance with the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven: He sits at the right hand of the Father.
XII.	Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus, Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cœli et terra Gloria tua.	Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
XIII.	Salutaris Hostia, Quæ cœli pandis ostium.	Saving Victim opening wide The gate of heaven to us below.
XIV.	Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem.	Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Grant us peace.

## Soloists

All four of this evening's soloists have sung with Hailsham Choral Society before and we are delighted to welcome them back.

### Noa Lachman – Soprano

Noa studied music in Tel Aviv and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, before coming to London in 1992. In Israel she performed on TV and radio and sang in prestigious choirs under conductors such as Zubin Mehta, James Levine and Daniel Barenboim.



Noa has performed in concerts and opera, and given recitals throughout Europe. A recital given in Germany commemorating the persecution of Jews during the Third Reich was particularly well received.

Alongside her many musical qualifications, such as BMus from King's College London, Singing Diploma from Trinity College London and MA from Sussex University, Noa is also a qualified RGRM practitioner. The RGRM (Ronnie Gardiner Rhythm Music) method is used to help people suffering from distressing conditions such as brain injuries, autism, Parkinson's disease, and the after-effects of strokes.

### Rebecca Anstey – Mezzo Soprano



Rebecca achieved a Degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Vocal Performance and Opera at Birmingham Conservatoire, under the tuition of Christine Cairns. Whilst at the Conservatoire she won a Kathleen Ferrier Trust award and a Music Sound Fund award.

Rebecca has performed with a number of touring opera companies, including Grange Park Opera, where she played roles such as Romeo from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. As a soloist, she has performed in many major works including Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *St John's Passion*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, with a number of choral societies. These include Seaford, Shrewsbury, Hailsham and Norwich, The Royal College of Organists, The Royal Free Singers, Derby Cathedral Choir and the Choir of St John's.

Rebecca now spends most of her time singing, teaching and giving vocal workshops to choral societies.



## **Stephen Rooke - Tenor**



Stephen Rooke was born in Newport, Gwent, and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, winning several prestigious prizes during his time there.

Stephen has been a member of both Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera Companies, and was awarded the Eric Vietheer Prize by the Festival Opera. He has also performed solo roles with The Royal Opera, English National Opera, Opera North, Welsh National Opera, and others. His work has covered a wide repertoire, ranging from 'early music' for the Buxton and Covent Garden Festivals, to two world premières with Scottish Opera.

On the concert platform, Stephen's experience includes Handel's *Messiah* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Saint-Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio* with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under Sir Neville Marriner, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in St Asaph Cathedral, Elgar's *Coronation Ode* in Canterbury Cathedral, and Verdi's *Requiem*, Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge* and Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

## **Riccardo Simonetti – Baritone**

Riccardo Simonetti was born in Lancashire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, winning the Anne Zeigler award.

He has performed as a soloist for various opera companies, including English National Opera, Glyndebourne, English Touring Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Carl Rosa, and Dublin's Lyric Opera. Stylistically, he has ranged from Purcell, through the likes of Mozart, Rossini and Puccini, to the creation of new roles in modern works, such as Gavin Bryars' *Dr Ox's Experiment* and David Sawyer's *Skin Deep*.



As well as opera, Riccardo is a seasoned concert performer, appearing with (among others) the Huddersfield Choral Society, and orchestras such as the Bournemouth Symphony, London Festival and Royal Philharmonic. He broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 2's *Friday Night is Music Night* and has recorded for EMI and Chandos.



## **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 postgraduate 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, Royal 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.

We are very pleased that Jozik has been musical director of Hailsham Choral Society since 2006.

## **Colin Hughes** **Rehearsal & Concert Accompanist**

Colin trained at Trinity College of Music, London, where he studied Violin and Piano. He has played in venues such as The Royal Albert Hall, The Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Glyndebourne. Whilst living in North London he held positions as Choirmaster and Organist at a number of churches, as well as playing in orchestras and chamber groups, giving solo recitals and drumming for a rock band.



Colin subsequently moved to Eastbourne where he has become well known and respected as a teacher, accompanist and performer. We are delighted that since 2012 he has been Hailsham Choral Society's regular accompanist. He is playing the piano in this evening's performance.



## **John Ross** **Harmonium**

John is a freelance organist based in Eastbourne. He studied for his music degree at the University of East Anglia, receiving organ tuition at both Ely and Norwich Cathedrals. This is John's first concert with Hailsham Choral Society and we are pleased to welcome him as our guest instrumentalist this evening.

# Hailsham Choral Society

## Sopranos

Jane Allen  
Jane Hickling  
June Ashton  
Trish Brown  
Rachel Chilton  
Milly Clark  
Jenny Clay  
Pat Collingwood  
Janet Cox  
Carol Deschamps  
Barbara Edwards  
Liz Furlong  
Fiona Haddow  
Hilary Hartley  
Caroline Hunt  
Val Hyland  
Christina Lynn  
Jennie Mansfield  
Lyn Petit  
Pam Powell  
Lis Turner  
Sally White  
Nicola Williams

## Altos

Jan Boyes  
Jo Bridges  
Jane Bywe  
Helen Campbell  
Shirley Carter  
Fiona Dundas  
Charlotte Foord  
Barbara Fry  
Aruna Green  
Liz Hews  
Doris Jung  
Helen Leeds  
Pam Mayhew  
Wendy Pengelly  
Pam Russell  
Rosalind Taylor-Byrne  
Patsy Webb

## Tenors

Mick Bridges  
Paul Carter  
Nick Gosman  
Marcus Haddow  
Geoff Rowe  
Robert Wicks

## Basses

Alec Boniface  
Shaun Clay  
Ian Fry  
Peter Gilbert  
Robin Hooper  
Graham Keeley  
Simon Marsden  
Brian Maskell  
Ken Mayhew

## Assistant Musical Director

Barbara Edwards

## Piano

Colin Hughes

## Harmonium

John Ross

## Staging

Alec Boniface, Paul Carter & David Semmens

*We also wish to thank All Saints' Church Administrator,  
Andy Anderson, for his help with arrangements for this concert.*

Hailsham Choral Society online: [www.hailshamchoral.org](http://www.hailshamchoral.org)

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Hailsham Choral Society

If you are interested in singing with the choir, or even 'just looking', please contact our Membership Secretary, Jan Boyes: tel. 01323 870515, or email:

[info@hailshamchoral.org](mailto:info@hailshamchoral.org)

We rehearse on Thursday evenings from 7.30 – 9.30pm in the Community Hall, Hailsham.

# CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

*Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015 - 7.30pm*

Community Hall, Hailsham

\* \* \* \* \*

# SPRING CONCERT

Mozart - 'Requiem'

Haydn - 'St Nicolas Mass'

*Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016 - 7.30pm*

All Saints' Church, Eastbourne

Hailsham Choral Society is a  
Registered Charity  
No: 1100408

[www.hailshamchoral.org](http://www.hailshamchoral.org)

The logo for Making Music, featuring a stylized arch above the text 'Making Music' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, in a smaller font, is 'THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSIC SOCIETIES'.

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