



Summer Music in City Churches

Saturday 26th June 2021, 6.30pm
St Giles Cripplegate EC2Y 8DA

SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN

City of London Choir
Njabulo Madlala, baritone
Hilary Davan Wetton, conductor

Andrew Vinter, piano
Andrew Pask, double bass | Mike Smith, drums

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)
words: Henry Longfellow

As Torrents in Summer

George Shearing (1919-2011)

Songs and Sonnets of Shakespeare

*Live with me and be my love | When daffodils begin to peer
It was a lover and his lass | Spring | Who is Silvia?
Fie on sinful fantasy | Hey, ho, the wind and the rain*

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)
words: Robert Bridges

My Spirit Sang All Day

C.V. Stanford (1852-1924)
words: Mary Coleridge

The Blue Bird

Edward Elgar
words: Henry Vaughan

The Shower

Joseph Horowitz (b.1926)
lyrics: Michael Flanders

Captain Noah & His Floating Zoo

Sunshine after Rain

Before we knew anything about Covid-19, the City of London Choir had been hatching a plan to perform *Captain Noah* as part of a mid-year family concert specifically designed to appeal to the audiences that enthusiastically fill our Christmas concerts year after year, whose ages range from 5 to 105. Then suddenly the singing stopped, and no concerts at all happened. When at last it looked as if it might be possible to perform in June 2021, we devised a programme to celebrate the return of live music. The rainbow has of course been an emblem of hope throughout the pandemic, and although we are not yet celebrating the lifting of restrictions as we had hoped, the re-emergence of live music and singing certainly feels like SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN.

Those are in fact the closing words of Elgar's *The Shower* which, along with the other part-songs you will hear tonight, thirty members of the choir recorded here in St Giles Cripplegate with Hilary Davan Wetton in September 2020 – when we were permitted to sing socially distanced (as today), though not to an audience. The choir had also recorded *As Torrents in Summer* during the first lockdown (May 2020) from our own homes – individual contributions recorded on phones and skilfully collated and edited together by Ben Morales Frost. The choir's experience of the last fifteen months has been permeated by the twin themes of water rising unexpectedly in a drought and the sun appearing after a long period of rain, movingly captured by different poets and then set by Elgar, the master song-writer.

Finzi's setting of *My Spirit Sang All Day* has long been a choir favourite. The words speak for themselves and, again, feel particularly apposite for the rare chances we have had to sing together recently. Also greatly beloved of the choir, Stanford's *The Blue Bird* magically captures in harmony and soaring soprano solo line (today a trio) a moment of still beauty and intense colour.

Shakespeare's *Songs & Sonnets* neatly cover a lot of the same thematic ground – nature, the seasons and the weather (“the rain it raineth every day!”). George Shearing's upbeat settings with jazz accompaniment provide the perfect foil to Elgar, Stanford and Finzi, showcasing the composer's English musical background and his American jazz influences. The songs were first performed in 1999 with John Rutter conducting and the composer at the piano.

Captain Noah & His Floating Zoo was published in 1973 and premiered by the King's Singers. Michael Flanders (of Flanders & Swann fame) wrote the lyrics with characteristic wit and humour, and quite specific musical styles and tempi in mind, brilliantly realised by Joseph Horowitz (who recently celebrated his 95th birthday). It tells the extraordinary Old Testament story of Noah and his mission to save life on earth, ably assisted by his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth – and their four wives, who each have a cameo role. The rainbow represents God's pledge never to send another flood.

Njabulo Madlala last performed with the City of London Choir in the role of the great Old Testament prophet Elijah (who had his own battles with floods and drought, and an alliance with ravens) and we are particularly delighted to welcome him back as our Narrator/the Voice of God today.

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City of London Choir

Described by the Sunday Telegraph as “perhaps our finest amateur singers”, the City of London Choir was founded in 1963. Under the inspirational leadership of Hilary Davan Wetton, the CLC has earned an enviable reputation, both in the national media and with audiences, for its distinctive youthful sound and the quality of its performances. It undertakes a busy annual programme, performing regularly at the Royal Albert Hall (including the choir’s BBC Proms debut in 2018), Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican, Cadogan Hall and St John’s Smith Square, with leading professional orchestras, instrumentalists and soloists.

The choir’s repertoire is broad but, thanks to its association with Hilary Davan Wetton, it has a particular reputation for English music of the twentieth century, and has also recently revived a number of “lost” works. The CLC has made several highly acclaimed recordings under Hilary Davan Wetton, including *The Nation’s Favourite Carols* with the RPO (Decca); *In Terra Pax: A Christmas Anthology* with baritone Roderick Williams and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (Naxos); *Flowers of the Field* with the London Mozart Players, featuring Jeremy Irons in Vaughan Williams’s *An Oxford Elegy*, and Roderick Williams in Finzi’s *Requiem da Camera*; and Beethoven’s *Der glorreiche Augenblick* and Haydn’s *Nelson Mass*, both with the RPO (Naxos).

The choir’s last live performance was Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* in February 2020; a Verdi Requiem planned for April had to be cancelled at short notice. Since the arrival of Covid-19, singing has been permitted intermittently, and then only in carefully controlled conditions. In between times, the choir has kept singing from home with regular Zoom rehearsals led by Hilary Davan Wetton and the choir’s vocal coach, soprano Rachel Nicholls, to whom we are indebted for helping us learn new music for tonight’s concert in spite of all the technical impossibilities of singing together online.

The choir has been grateful to have had a warm welcome and a temporary home at St Giles Cripplegate between lockdowns. Although we have managed to record in that time for online viewing and streaming, we are particularly delighted to be singing here tonight to a real audience.

www.cityoflondonchoir.org

Njabulo Madlala, baritone

Njabulo Madlala was born in Durban, South Africa. In 2002 he won a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama for graduate and postgraduate studies and went on to study for a further year at the Cardiff International Academy of Voice. Njabulo has been a Britten-Pears Young Artist, a Samling Artist and a young artist at the Ravinia International Festival in the USA. Among other accolades Njabulo was the winner of the 2010 Kathleen Ferrier Award, 2012 Singers Section Final of the Royal Overseas League Competition, the 2012 Lorna Viol Memorial Prize, the Royal Overseas League Trophy for the most outstanding musician from overseas and Standard Bank Young Artist Award for 2014.

Highlights in recent seasons include Prince Yamadori (*Madam Butterfly*), Jim (*Porgy and Bess*) for ENO and Dutch National Opera; Aeneas (*Dido*) for ENO; Various roles in Shostakovich's *The Nose* for The Royal Opera; Aswini Twin 2 (*Sukanya*) for The Royal Opera / LPO. In recital Njabulo has performed with Roger Vignoles, Julius Drake, William Vann, Simon Lepper, Llŷr Williams and James Baillieu. Concert highlights include Mozart Requiem (English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra); Mahler *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (LPO/Jurowski); Beethoven's 9th (RPO and Minnesota Orchestra); *Belshazzar's Feast* (Philharmonia Orchestra and RPO); *Messiah* (Philharmonia) and *Elijah* (RPO and Snape Maltings).

Hilary Davan Wetton, conductor

Music Director of the City of London Choir since 1989, Hilary was conductor of the Guildford Choral Society from 1968-2008, Artistic Director of the Leicester Philharmonic Choir 2008-2018 and Founder Conductor of the Holst Singers. He is also Associate Conductor of the London Mozart Players and Artistic Director of the Military Wives Choirs.

Hilary's extensive discography includes award-winning recordings of Holst's *Planets* with the LPO, Holst's *Evening Watch* with the Holst Singers, and highly acclaimed discs with the CLC.

2020 was a year of frustration for Hilary, as for so many other artists. He was engaged to conduct *Elijah* in Budapest with the Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra, the Verdi Requiem with the City of London Choir and a national tour with the Military Wives Choirs to celebrate the release of the film starring Kristin Scott-Thomas. Fortunately, he was able to conduct two streamed concerts last Christmas; one with the CLC in aid of the Carers' Trust and *A Dickensian Christmas* from the Barbican with Kevin Whately. He has also been commissioned to write a book, *Reflections on Conducting*, by Kings Temple Publications, which has kept him out of mischief! It will be published in the autumn.

Hilary has broadcast frequently for the BBC and Classic FM. For six years, he was presenter/conductor for Classic FM's Masterclass, and he was Jo Brand's organ teacher for the BBC1 series *Play It Again*. He has been awarded honorary degrees by the Open University and De Montfort University and is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

www.hilarydavanwetton.co.uk

This is the closing concert of Summer Music in City Churches 2021.

**For more details about the festival, please visit our website,
www.SummerMusicCityChurches.com and join our mailing list there.**

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