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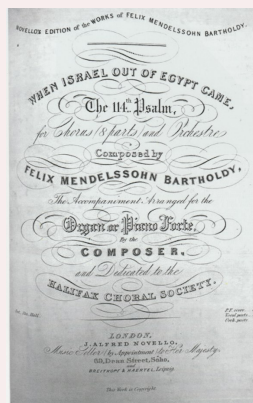
Choral Society

The world's oldest choral society
Making music continuously since 1817



On 5th November we will be performing Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. This will be a brand new collaboration with [Leeds Philharmonic Chorus](#), who join us at the Victoria Theatre. The concert will feature [Skipton Camerata](#), and soloists [Sofia Livotov](#), [Kate Symonds-Joy](#), [Joseph Doody](#) and [Dean Robinson](#)

Halifax Choral Society first performed *Elijah* in 1892 and has given 22 performances of the oratorio since then, the most recent being a collaboration with Ipswich Choral Society at Snape Maltings as part of our 200th anniversary celebrations.



Mendelssohn had a very special connection with Halifax Choral Society, who were one of the first choirs in England to perform this new Oratorio. As a mark of his gratitude, Mendelssohn dedicated a setting of Psalm 114, *When Israel Out of Egypt Came* to Halifax Choral Society. In fact, HCS was responsible for

introducing much of Mendelssohn's work to an English audience.

Mendelssohn's oratorio presents episodes from Elijah's life with suitably dramatic music. The story is set in the 9th century BCE. Israel is ruled by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Under Ahab and Jezebel, the Jewish people have deserted God (Jehovah) and turned to Baal. Elijah is sent by God to return them to the right path. First Elijah gets everyone's attention by stopping the rain from falling. After three years of drought he proceeds to challenge Baal and to demonstrate the superiority of Jehovah. First he raises the son of a widow from the dead, and then he wins a sacrifice contest with the priests of Baal (after which he sends them to their deaths) and finally ends the drought in a mighty torrent. Fire is a recurrent theme throughout the oratorio and Elijah departs this world in a 'fiery chariot with fiery, fiery horses'.



Elijah was hugely successful when first performed in 1846 to an ecstatic audience of 2,000. It had taken him some ten years to prepare, including penning most of the libretto himself. It was very much the *Messiah* of its day and its mixture of rousing choruses, melodic appeal and melodrama was enormously popular with Victorian audiences. Prince Albert inscribed a libretto for the oratorio in 1847 'To the noble artist who, surrounded by the Baal-worship of false art, has been able, like a second Elijah, through genius and study, to remain true to the service of true art'. Queen Victoria considered him to be 'the greatest musical genius since Mozart' and 'the most amiable man'.

Did you know ...?

Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was a child prodigy, who made his public debut as a pianist aged 9. By the age of 15 he had composed at least 12 string symphonies, a piano quartet (his first published work) and a symphony for full orchestra. He apparently excelled as a poet, athlete and linguist as well as being a talented painter! Despite a hectic life composing, performing (he was a brilliant pianist) and conducting around Europe, he found the time to father five children before his early death at age 38. None of his children seem to have inherited his musical talent, but his sister, Fanny, was also an accomplished composer.

**Guest Conductor
Darius Battiwalla**



Darius took up the post of Leeds City Organist in 2017, programming the very successful Town Hall recital series and giving regular solo concerts. Recent performances include recitals at the Cathedrals of Coventry, Lincoln, Ripon, and Lichfield, and this year sees appearances with Collegium Vocale Gent in Ghent and Amsterdam, and the annual recital for the Royal College of Organists' conferment of diplomas. He is currently overseeing the renewal of the Leeds Town Hall organ.

He has appeared as soloist with the London Philharmonic and Hallé Orchestras, most recently in a live broadcast of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* with Sir Mark Elder, and is a regular orchestral organist and pianist for the BBC Philharmonic and Hallé orchestras. As a pianist, he gives regular chamber concerts with members of the Manchester orchestras, and on the harpsichord he has played continuo with many UK orchestras, and performed and broadcast harpsichord concertos, most recently as the soloist in Frank Martin's *Harpsichord Concerto* for the Northern Ballet Theatre.

Darius taught organ and improvisation for many years at the Royal Northern College of Music, and is taught on this year's Royal College of Organists' summer course.

Leeds Philharmonic Chorus



We are delighted to be sharing the platform for the performance of *Elijah* with Leeds Philharmonic Chorus.

The LPC began life as the Leeds Amateur Vocal Society, a male voice choir of approximately 60 formed in the early 1860s. In 1870 it was decided to admit women to the choir and to formally rename it. Leeds Philharmonic Chorus now comprises over 130 singing members regularly performing at Leeds Town Hall. Performances are often jointly promoted with the Leeds International Concert Season and the BBC. Repertoire is extensive, combining both tradition and innovation involving a constant quest for excellence as well as enterprise.

Dates for your diary:

2023

5 November: *Elijah* with Leeds Philharmonic Chorus at the Victoria Theatre. [Tickets](#) available here.

2 December: *Carols and Brass* with the legendary Black Dyke Band at the Victoria Theatre. [Tickets](#) are available now!

15 December: Handel's *Messiah* by Candlelight at Halifax Minster. [Tickets](#) (£20) are available now!

17 December: Carols in the Piece Hall Spiegeltent, with the Black Dyke Trombones, tickets from [the Piece Hall](#).

2024

16 March: Spring Concert in Halifax Minster

20 April: *The Creation* with Ipswich Choral Society at Snape Maltings, Suffolk

If you have any suggestions for what you would like your Newsletter to include, or any queries about HCS, please email

coordinator@halifaxchoral.org.

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