

ST JOHN PASSION

WELCOME TO OUR 2025/26 SEASON AT THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE.

Celebrating 40 fantastic years of making music.

1986. It was the year of the Westland Affair, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the infamous 'Hand of God' goal at the World Cup in Mexico, the premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's opera *The Mask of Orpheus*... and in late June Wham! was at number 1 in the UK charts with *The Edge of Heaven*.

On 26 June, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment first stepped onto a stage.

The first of our two seasons marking this milestone features a kaleidoscope of old favourites and new combinations. It features some of our best-loved partnerships and celebrates our shared history. Handel and Bach, Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms and Dvořák are all composers who have been at the heart of our journey.

The challenges faced by the OAE and all our colleagues are varied, but we remain absolutely focused on the mission of sharing the highest quality music with the widest audience possible. What continues to shine after 40 years is the golden thread of a story of friends united by a profound love of the art of music.

Programme

7.00pm, Sunday 29 March
Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685 – 1750) **St John Passion (Passio Secundum Johannem)**

Texts by Barthold Brockes, Christian Heinrich Postel, Paul Stockmann,
Christian Weise and St John's Gospel

There will be surtitles in English

Part 1

Arrest

1. Chorus: 'Herr, unser Herrscher'
- 2a. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus) – 2b. Chorus – 2c. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus) –
2d. Chorus – 2e. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus)
3. Chorale: 'O große Lieb'
4. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus)
5. Chorale: 'Dein Will gescheh, Herr Gott, zugleich'

Denial

6. Recitative (Evangelist)
7. Aria: 'Von den Stricken meiner Sünden' (Alto)
8. Recitative (Evangelist)
9. Aria: 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls' (Soprano)
10. Recitative (Evangelist, Maidservant, Peter, Christus, Servant)
11. Chorale: 'Wer hat dich so geschlagen'
- 12a. Recitative (Evangelist) – 12b. Chorus – 12c. Recitative (Evangelist, Peter, Servant)
13. Aria: 'Ach, mein Sinn' (Tenor)
14. Chorale: 'Petrus, der nicht denkt zurück'

– Interval (20 minutes) –

Part 2

Court Hearing

15. Chorale: 'Christus, der uns selig macht'
- 16a. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 16b. Chorus – 16c. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 16d. Chorus – 16e. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate, Christus)
17. Chorale: 'Ach großer König'
- 18a. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate, Christus) – 18b. Chorus – 18c. Recitative (Evangelist)
19. Arioso: 'Betrachte, meine Seel' (Bass)
20. Aria: 'Erwäge wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken' (Tenor)
- 21a. Recitative (Evangelist) – 21b. Chorus – 21c. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 21d. Chorus – 21e. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 21f. Chorus – 21g. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate, Christus)
22. Chorale: 'Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn'
- 23a. Recitative (Evangelist) – 23b. Chorus – 23c. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 23d. Chorus – 23e. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate) – 23f. Chorus – 23g. Recitative (Evangelist)
24. Aria: 'Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen' (Bass)
- 25a. Recitative (Evangelist) – 25b. Chorus – 25c. Recitative (Evangelist, Pilate)
26. Chorale: 'In meines Herzens Grunde'

Crucifixion and Death

- 27a. Recitative (Evangelist) – 27b. Chorus – 27c. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus)
28. Chorale: 'Er nahm alles wohl in acht'
29. Recitative (Evangelist, Christus)
30. Aria: 'Es ist vollbracht' (Alto)
31. Recitative (Evangelist)
32. Aria: 'Mein teurer Heiland, laß dich fragen' (Bass)
33. Recitative (Evangelist)
34. Arioso: 'Mein Herz, indem die ganze Welt' (Tenor)
35. Aria: 'Zerfließe, mein Herze' (Soprano)
36. Recitative (Evangelist)
37. Chorale: 'O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn'

Burial

38. Recitative (Evangelist)
39. Chorus: 'Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine'
40. Chorale: 'Ach Herr, laß dein lieb Engelein'

Performers

Hilary Cronin soprano
Helen Charlston alto
Jonathan Hanley tenor
James Way Evangelist (tenor)
Peter Edge Christus (bass)

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment
Emilia Bertolini Maidservant
Richard Dowling Servant
Tristan Hambleton Pilate
Gavin Cranmer-Moralee Peter

ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Huw Daniel leader
Johanna Soller conductor

Surtitles by Damien Kennedy
Translation © Pamela Dellal, courtesy Emmanuel Music Inc
Language coaching by Norbert Meyn
Keyboards and tuning services provided by Andrew Wooderson

The OAE's 40th anniversary seasons in 2025 / 26 and 2026 / 27 are made possible with the support of The Forty Circle.

Free pre-concert talk: Johanna Soller in conversation with Crispin Woodhead at 6.00pm in the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Violins I

Huw Daniel*+
Rodolfo Richter+
Debbie Diamond
Rebecca Livermore
Daniel Edgar

Violins II

Margaret Faultless*
Alice Evans
Andrew Roberts
Claire Holden

Violas

Max Mandel*
Annette Isserlis
Martin Kelly

Cellos

Andrew Skidmore
Kate Conway[Ⓞ]

Double basses

Christine Sticher*
Cecelia Bruggemeyer

Flutes

Lisa Beznosiuk*
Laura Piras

Oboes / Oboes d'amore / Oboes da caccia

Alexandra Bellamy
Oonagh Lee

Bassoon

Sally Jackson

Organ

Steven Devine*

Harpsichord

Robert Howarth*

Theorbo

Sergio Bucheli*

*OAE Principal Players

+ doubling viola d'amore

[Ⓞ] doubling viola da gamba

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

Sopranos

Rachel Ambrose Evans
Emilia Bertolini
Hilary Cronin
Emily Dickens

Altos

Helen Charlston
Lara Rebekah Harvey
Amy Lyddon
Jennifer Statham

Tenors

William Anderson
Richard Dowling
Jonathan Hanley
Sebastian MacLaine

Basses

Jonathan Arnold
Gavin Cranmer-Moralee
Tristan Hambleton
Philip Tebb

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Bach's Metaphysical Passion

Joanna Wyld

To butcher the Oscar Wilde quote: to write one extraordinary Passion may be regarded as a miracle, to write two looks like showing off. In fact, JS Bach probably wrote several, all but two of which are lost. The couple that remain, the *St John* and *St Matthew Passions*, are among the pinnacles of Western music, and while there are dangers in putting composers on pedestals, it remains staggering that one mind could create such beauty (without even mentioning the rest of his output).

In 1723, JS Bach was appointed Director of Music in Leipzig and Cantor of the St Thomas Boys Choir, made up of boys from the city's Thomasschule and affiliated with the Thomaskirche. Bach's duties included teaching Latin (a task he delegated to a deputy); training four choirs of school-boys; giving instrumental lessons to the most promising pupils; and producing music for four of the city's churches – as well as for its civic ceremonies. Bach retained his position in Leipzig until his death in 1750. Throughout this time, Passiontide was the focal point of the Lutheran ecclesiastical year. No music was permitted during Lent, as part of the general abstinence from excess, and this afforded the musical contingent of the church more time in which to prepare Bach's music.

The authorities at another Leipzig church, the Neue Kirche, had introduced an oratorio Passion into their Good Friday vesper liturgy on 26 March 1717, a few years before Bach's arrival in the city. It seems unlikely that any of those involved in this decision could have anticipated quite what this would mean for the history of music. Yet while Bach's name is now inextricably linked with the musical Passion, his contributions to the genre formed part of a wider tradition.

Passion plays dated back to the 13th century; by the 15th century, musical versions were evolving into richly textured settings of Biblical texts, performed by singers representing both the crowd and groups of individuals. By the 16th century, several Passion forms were emerging within the Catholic liturgy. In the Lutheran tradition, Martin Luther's friend Johannes Walter was instrumental in developing the evangelical Passion style, which also included intricate music for groups of singers; three fine examples of this Passion style were written by Heinrich Schütz. What then emerged was the 'oratorio Passion'; in north



St Thomas Church and School in Leipzig, 1723 (engraving) by Krugner, Johann Gottfried. Credit: Bridgeman Images.

Germany, from the middle of the 17th century, Passion narratives were decorated with arias and chorales with instrumental accompaniment. The choice of text evolved from the Passiontide sermons given in Lutheran churches, which included reflections on each scene of Christ's Passion. The oratorio came to be performed in two halves, framing the sermon itself.

This trend for oratorio Passions was eventually accepted in conservative Leipzig just in time for Bach to explore the form. Following the Neue Kirche's lead, the Thomaskirche introduced the custom in 1721. The sexton Johann Christoph Rost noted that 'on Good Friday of the year 1721, in the vesper service, the Passion was performed for the first time in concerted style.' This was just two years before JS Bach took up his position as Cantor, and Johann Kuhnau's *St Mark Passion*, performed there, became an important model for Bach's works. Bach had also made a transcript of Reinhard Keiser's *St Mark Passion* when he was in Weimar, some time before 1714, so his interest in the form preceded his move to Leipzig, while some research suggests that several numbers used in the 1725 version of the *St John Passion* may date from an earlier Passion composed by Bach in 1717, now lost.

Bach's addition of arias, akin to the Italian operatic style, and of larger opening and closing choruses to bookend the work more emphatically, were among the innovative enhancements he made to the oratorio Passion style. The frequency of the chorales, with their deeply expressive four-part writing, was also new. Bach's characteristic mature style is most evident in the arias and opening and closing choruses, and much of the *St John Passion* bears a strong relationship with late 17th-century Lutheran precedents, in particular in the clarity of the choruses, which closely follow the action.

The *St John Passion* details Christ's arrest, trial and crucifixion, with recitatives performed by Christ, Pilate, Peter, and John, the Evangelist. The arias comment upon and pause the action, creating moments of meditation; in Part One there are just three. The chorus represents the crowd (the people, soldiers and priests); in the chorales, it represents us, too.

Bach wrote the *St John Passion* for the Good Friday vespers of 1724, working on the assumption that it would be performed in the Thomaskirche. However, the Leipzig consistory (church council) decreed that the work be performed at the Nikolaikirche, because Passion performances alternated between these two churches each year. Bach only agreed to comply when his requests – that more room be made in the choir loft of the Nikolaikirche, and its harpsichord repaired – were met. He was asserting his authority while ensuring that his music be performed with the best possible forces (he wrote with frustration of Leipzig's 'deficiency of indispensable players').



View of the nave and organ, St Nicholas Church, Leipzig, Germany by JFC Dauthe. Credit: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg / Bridgeman Images.

The unprecedented drama and intensity of the *St John Passion* must have had a profound impact on the Leipzig congregation hearing the work for the first time; the crowd scenes are as theatrical as anything one might find in Baroque opera. Yet this was relatable drama, too; public executions were a grim part of Leipzig life, so the earthier aspects of the Passion story, far from depicting something remotely historical, would have had vivid resonance.

Bach revised the *St John Passion* for performance in 1725, and then made further adjustments (many of them reverting to the original) for performance in the early 1730s, partly reflecting shifting musical tastes (in 1730 he wrote that 'taste has changed astonishingly'). Even so, his ongoing frustration with the Leipzig authorities must have been aggravated by what followed. In 1732, writer Christian Gerber denounced theatrical Passion music in Saxony, arguing that 'if some of those first Christians should rise, visit our assemblies, and hear such roaring organ together with so many instruments, I do not believe that they would recognise us as Christians and their successors.' For modern listeners, Christian and non-Christian alike, objecting to Bach's Passions on spiritual grounds seems unfathomable. Yet the consistory felt compelled to respond, and in 1739 called a halt to Passion performances until special permission was granted. Bach had begun to write out a definitive score to the *St John Passion*, but, following this news, stopped; the remainder was completed by a copyist. The fourth and final version of the *St John Passion* appeared in 1749, omitting some of the more vivid illustrative language.

That language stemmed from several textual sources, on account of the Leipzig consistory requiring that Passions adhere closely to the Biblical text, not solely on poetic interpretations. One such Passion poem was by BH Brockes, 'Der für die Sünde der Welt Gemarterte und Sterbende Jesus', dating from 1712; from this, and the 'St John Passion' libretto by CH Postel (c.1700), as well as words by Christian Weise, the text for Bach's *St John Passion* was formed. What with these various sources in addition to Biblical quotations, the text can feel a little uneven (in contrast with the more unified text of the later *St Matthew Passion* by Bach's regular librettist, Picander) – an attribute made up for by the consistent beauty of the music.

St John's Gospel is distinct from the three 'synoptic' Gospels in its more metaphysical, poetic style, characteristics reflected in the libretto to Bach's work. John presents Christ's life and death in the context of a vast universe ('In the beginning was the Word'), and, in keeping with Western philosophical traditions, seeks to communicate the universal significance of Christ, 'the Word made flesh'. In this context, Christ's death represents a return to his Father, and his human suffering is described less pointedly than in other accounts. The crucifixion is a victory: over death, and of the Gospel narrative itself, which has been aiming towards this moment of reconciliation: 'It is accomplished'.

The text to Bach's *St John Passion* frequently returns to this theme of Christ as the eternal Saviour: beyond our reach, yet made human for our salvation. The opening chorus presents Christ as an eternal ruler; but Bach's music roots the action in human experience, the insistent G minor and plaintive oboes, playing chains of dissonances, creating a compelling sense of foreboding. The oboes are prominent again in the aria 'Von den Stricken meiner Sünden', while in the aria 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls', flowing flute lines intertwine with the elaborate soprano part. 'Ach, mein Sinn' is a passionate tenor solo accompanied by the full ensemble.

Peter's lament and the scourging of Christ are two instances of the *St John Passion's* deeply poignant musical evocations of searing emotion. Peter's weeping after denying Christ is depicted with almost ostentatious pathos, with extended melismas and both rising and falling chromatic lines – which the congregation would have understood as conventional musical means for expressing grief. (Neither of these moments is as intensely scored in the *St Matthew Passion*.)

The pivotal chorale 'Durch dein Gefängnis' encapsulates the paradoxical nature of Christ's Passion: through his captivity, humanity is set free. This comes as part of the trial scene at the heart of the work. Uninterrupted by arias, the emphasis is on action rather than commentary. John's Gospel itself places the trial at the centre of the account, and is a highly organised narrative; Bach reflects this with the organisation of this scene in the Passion, which has a precisely arranged key plan, recurring choruses, and a sense of symmetry.

In the aria 'Es ist vollbracht' ('It is accomplished'), Christ's death is mourned with an alto aria punctuated by a sorrowful viola da gamba solo. There follows one of several instances of Bach combining an older chorale with new poetry in 'Mein teurer Heiland', and the tearing of the Temple curtain is vividly illustrated with trembling instrumentation.

Following this succession of exquisitely constructed arias and intense depictions of the action, Bach's exceptionally long final chorus brings peace and resolution – somehow the more overwhelming for its understated delicacy, expressing a profound sense of hope. The text is a prayer anticipating the eternal rest brought by death, asking that when that time arrives we may, free at last from pain, see God.

3. J. *Passio secūda Joānē.* à 4. Voi. 2 Oboe. 2 Violini Viola e Cont.
di J. S. Bach.

Flauto
Flauto II
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso
Violoncelli e Bassoni
Organo e Violone

We are going to start our own orchestra

Jan Schlapp, a founding player, recalls the OAE's beginning

I find it difficult to untangle the many strands of myth and memory that surround the beginning of the OAE. My personal memory is of my late husband, cellist Timothy Mason, coming home after a day of rehearsals in 1985, fired up with enthusiasm, saying "We are going to start our own orchestra and it is going to be player-led". Busy as I was with two very young children I was initially less than enthusiastic because it seemed an almost impossible idea – where would the money come from? How would we organise it? Who would be involved?

The seed of the idea had been planted by regular conversations between the bassoonist, Felix Warnock, the violinist Marshall Marcus, and Tim, about how to break free from the status quo of London period orchestras. We had little say in any of these orchestras and we felt a bit underappreciated. But more important was the fact that we couldn't tap into what was going on the continent. The BBC were broadcasting several of the continental giants of period performance such as Harnoncourt, Kuijken, Brügggen, Leonhardt, Christie and Koopman, but we couldn't access their knowledge and experience. Their way of exploring baroque music was different from our English directors and fascinating to us, because of their intellectual seriousness and their depth of knowledge about

instruments, phrasing, repertoire and style. They had been involved in period instrument performance much longer than us and we wanted to be free to absorb it all. At that time we had no way of inviting them to come to work with us in the UK.

Gradually, in discussion with all interested parties, the idea of a player-led orchestra took shape. Sponsorship was found. Everyone would be paid the same, there would be at least three leaders, and there would be an artistic committee elected by the players who would lead on concerts and repertoire. And out of this "organised chaos" as Marshall put it, came our first London concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in June 1986 with Sigiswald Kuijken directing a programme moving from Rameau to Haydn. This marked the beginning of OAE's journey. Forty years on, that journey continues today, still with the same ethos and the shared excitement of discovery.

Read Jan's full article about how the OAE was founded on our blog at oae.co.uk/start



Pre-concert at the Sheldonian Theatre. Credit Susan Benn

A seat with a view

Huw Daniel (violin)



The thing that drew me to the baroque violin was playing the organ, funnily enough. I played a lot of Bach on the organ and that really did draw me towards baroque music – although the violin was always my main instrument. And then when I was at the Royal Academy of Music, I got a lot more into that world, being taught by Simon Standage and also Michaela Comberti. I went to their concerts and could see that it was possible to make a living as a baroque violinist.

Sometimes we'd get coaching from OAE players, and there was one project where they got some of us students to come and play in a piano trio before an OAE concert with Bob Levin. I couldn't have asked for a better experience, really. I think my first project with the OAE was around 2003, just after I'd left the Academy – a Brahms Requiem, with Simon Rattle conducting. I was playing first violin, and having been so immersed in baroque repertoire I felt completely out of my depth.

But anyway, I tried my best.

Nowadays I have two violins – a baroque violin, which I use for baroque and classical rep up to about Beethoven, and then another for the later stuff, although I don't lead the later repertoire: I leave that to the other three leaders, who are more expert! I became one of the OAE's leaders in 2017. Pavlo Beznosiuk was meant to be directing and playing the solos in the Brandenburg Concertos, but he'd been unwell and realised on the day of the first concert that he couldn't play. So I took over the solo parts, which luckily I had played before.

It felt good – with the Brandenburgs, it wasn't the huge deal that I could imagine it being with certain other pieces. I also liked the fact that throughout the OAE everybody has an opinion. Nobody's just playing along; everybody cares deeply about what they're doing and is ready to ask questions. Personally, I prefer to lead when someone else is conducting. One recent concert sticks out in my memory, which was Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth symphonies with Adam Fischer. There were imperfections, but the energy was really, really special. I came back from that concert thinking it was the best thing I've ever done with the orchestra!

Huw was talking to Richard Bratby

Biographies



HELEN CHARLSTON Mezzo-soprano

Helen Charlston's ability to make each performance completely her own and her depth of connection with audiences has earned her international acclaim as "one of the most exciting voices in the new generation of British singers" (Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone). She was recently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist (2021 – 23), and was the 2023 Gramophone Award winner for Best Concept Album and also collected the Vocal award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards for her second Delphian album: *Battle Cry*.

This season, Helen makes her debut at Dutch National Opera in the world premiere of Michel van der Aa's *Theory of Flames* in the role of Marianne. On the concert platform she sings Mozart *Requiem* at Casa da Musica under Andreas Sperring and also the Czech Philharmonic under Giovanni Antonini, Bach *B Minor Mass* with De Nederlandse Bachvereniging and Richard Egarr, Bach *St Matthew Passion* with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra under Laurence Cummings, and Dido in *Dido & Aeneas* on tour in Asia and Europe with Les Arts Florissants. In recital she collaborates with the Consone Quartet at the Brighton Early Music Festival and also at Oxford Song, with Sholto Kynoch at the Wimbledon Festival and the National Centre for Early Music amongst other venues, with Roman Rabinovich in Canada, and she performs an ensemble programme at Fundación Juan March in Madrid.

Further appearances on the concert platform include Bach *B Minor Mass* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the BBC Proms, Britten's *Phaedra* live in concert with BBC Philharmonic, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* with the RIAS Kammerchor at the Berlin Philharmonie, and also Bach's *Magnificat* in South Korea, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with WDR Köln.



HILARY CRONIN Soprano

Praised by Classical Voice North America for her "shining, rounded timbre," Hilary Cronin won both First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2021 London Handel International Singing Competition and was selected by BBC Music Magazine as a "Rising Star of 2022." Conductors with whom she has worked include Sofi Jeannin, David Bates, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Harry Bicket, Harry Christophers, Jonathan Cohen, Laurence Cummings, Christian Curnyn, Maxim Emelyanychev, John Eliot Gardiner, Robert King, Stephen Layton, Paul McCreesh, Trevor Pinnock, Christophe Rousset, Andras Schiff, Dinis Sousa and Peter Whelan.

She made her BBC Proms debut in 2025 singing Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, and her current engagements include her debut at MusikTheater an der Wien singing the title role in a new production of Cesti's *L'Oronthea* and Melissa *Amadigi* with The

English Concert at Buxton International Festival. With Polyphony, she sings JS Bach *Christmas Oratorio* and *Messiah*; with Springhead Constellation, she tours JS Bach *Easter Oratorio* and Mendelssohn *Lobgesang*; with Royal Northern Sinfonia, she sings Mahler *Symphony No. 4*; and with Gabrieli ROAR, she appears in *Baroque Masterpieces*. She will also join Arcangelo to sing Handel's Nine German Arias at London Handel Festival; Irish Baroque Orchestra to sing *Messiah*; and The King's Consort to sing *Coronation of King George* and *Messiah*.

Her growing discography now includes JS Bach *Christmas Oratorio* (DGG); Charpentier *A Baroque Christmas* (SDG CD); Handel *Chandos Anthems* (Alpha Classics); Howells *Sine nomine* (Hyperion); *Dido and Aeneas* (Pentatone); and Telemann *Donner-Ode* (cpo). Hilary Cronin is delighted again to be making music with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.



PETER EDGE Christus (baritone)

Shropshire-born baritone Peter Edge is a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (2025 – 27) and Rising Star of Voice at the Edinburgh International Festival (2025). He was a finalist in the 2025 London Handel Festival Singing Competition and runner-up in the London Bach Singers Prize. He has appeared as a principal artist with English National Opera, English Touring Opera, The Grange Festival, Longborough Festival Opera, Opera North, and the Royal Ballet and Opera.

In March 2026, Peter made his Asian debut, performing Bach's B Minor Mass and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Constellation Choir and Orchestra under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, at the Hong Kong Arts Festival and Seoul Arts Centre. Later in the year, Peter returns for

his third season at The Grange Festival, and makes his European operatic debut in the role of Nicandro in Handel's *Atalanta* at the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik.

Alongside his performing career, Peter is also an award-winning triathlete and singing teacher. peteredgebaritone.co.uk



JONATHAN HANLEY Tenor

Jonathan Hanley is a British tenor, at home as both a soloist and ensemble singer. He is a graduate of the University of York, and was a member of the Genesis Sixteen and Monteverdi Choir Apprenticeship Programme.

As a soloist, he has performed around the UK, North America, and Europe. Recent highlights are Bach *Mass in B Minor* (Carnegie Hall, Elbphilharmonie, Hong Kong Arts Festival, Seoul Arts Center), *Christmas Oratorio* (Teatro alla Scala, Palais de Versailles, St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin), Handel *L'Allegro, il penseroso, ed il moderato* (Carnegie Hall, Harris Theater, Chicago), *Acis and Galatea* (London Handel Festival) and Britten *St Nicolas* (York Minster). He has worked as a soloist with the Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists under the batons of Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Dinis Sousa, as well as Concerto Copenhagen, the Gabrieli Consort, the Irish Baroque Orchestra, the English Concert, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. As a soloist, Jonathan has recorded with the English Concert, the Monteverdi Choir and La Grande Chapelle. Jonathan also enjoys performing English song and lieder, often collaborating with pianist Gavin Roberts, most recently performing in Luxembourg at the Salon de Helen Buchholz.

Jonathan is also a member of Stile Antico, and performs regularly with some of the best vocal ensembles in the world such as the Tallis Scholars, Vox Luminis, and the Monteverdi Choir.

Among other things, 2026 sees Jonathan joining the John Eliot Gardiner's Springhead Constellation as a soloist on tours of Bach and Mendelssohn in Asia and Europe, and yet more Bach with Vox Luminis, Freiburger Barockorchester and Lionel Meunier, alongside a busy international schedule with Stile Antico.



JOHANNA SOLLER Conductor

Johanna Soller is a conductor, harpsichordist and organist, and one of the most versatile artists of her generation. Rooted in historical performance practice, her passion for words and musical speech in particular forms the basis of her musical work. In May 2025 she took up her appointment as Artistic Leader of the Netherlands Bach Society, whose tour of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* she conducted in 2024. She has been Artistic Director of the Munich Bach Choir and Orchestra since the 2023 / 24 season and will hold this position until July 2026.

She also established the baroque ensemble *capella sollertia*, consisting of a professional vocal ensemble and an orchestra on period instruments, with whom she organizes the Bach cantata series *Cantate um 1715* in Munich. A focus of the ensemble's work is the rediscovery of forgotten works from Bach's environment. A complete recording of Johann Ludwig Bach's cantatas is published with the label Ricercar in January 2026.

Johanna Soller is a regular guest conductor both with baroque ensembles and modern orchestras, such as the Dunedin Consort, Munich Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta de Córdoba. Future highlights include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the B'Rock Orchestra, the Kammerakademie Potsdam, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra.

As a sought-after choral conductor and specialist for vocal music, she has rehearsed for ensembles such as the MDR Radio Choir Leipzig, as well as for conductors such as Zubin Mehta and Sir Simon Rattle. She was scholarship holder in the Conducting Forum of the German Music Council.

Soller is also in demand in the field of opera, where she has made a name for herself as *Maestra al cembalo*. In 2025 she conducted Handel's *Susanna* at Opera North. She was previously engaged as a *Studienleiter* at the Theater an der Wien. Her debut as an opera conductor she made with Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*. From 2019 to 2023, she was Musical Director of the Munich Chamber Opera, where she conducted productions such as Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. In the current season she leads at Kammerakademie Potsdam.

Soller has been teaching her own oratorio class as well as basso continuo playing and sight reading at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Munich.

An accomplished basso continuo player, both on harpsichord and organ, she has performed with ensembles such as the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and Vox Luminis. Her chamber music partners include artists such as Kristin von der Goltz. Sonatas by Fontana and Castelli have been released on CD with oboist Tamar Inbar. From 2016 to 2025, Soller held the position of main organist at Munich's oldest parish church St. Peter. Solo recitals have taken her to major organ concert series.

Soller is a prizewinner of the Prague Spring International Music Competition and a scholarship holder of the German Music Competition. She was awarded the Bavarian Art Promotion Prize and the Eugen Jochum Prize for Conductors.



JAMES WAY Evangelist (tenor)

Tenor James Way is fast gaining international recognition for the versatility of his voice and commanding stage presence. James is passionate about a career taking in a variety of music as both performer and artistic director. Having followed his initial interest in baroque music through the young artist programmes of Les Arts Florissants and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment he immediately became in demand as a soloist for conductors including William Christie, Rene Jacobs, Harry Bicket and Trevor Pinnock.

He is equally comfortable in later repertoire and has a particular affinity for the music of Britten and Stravinsky. His performances include Flute in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Dalia Stasevska at Glyndebourne Festival and also for Garsington Festival under Douglas Boyd, The Son in Laurent Pelly's production of *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (winner of Best New Opera Production at the 2022 Opera Awards) with Robin Ticciati also for Glyndebourne Festival, Young King George Benjamin *Lessons in Love and Violence* with Orchestre de Paris, Sellem in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with the Munich Philharmonic and Barbara Hannigan and Holy Fool *Boris Godunov* with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Jakub Hrůša. Performances of various Handel roles continue to take him around the world with performances at Carnegie Hall, Tokyo Opera City, Barbican and Paris Philharmonie amongst others.

This coming season's highlights include returning to Glyndebourne for Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Flute with Bertie Baigent, Hans Zender's arrangement of Schubert *Winterreise* with the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, Bach *St Matthew Passion* with Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Laurence Cummings, Bach *St John Passion* with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and l'Opera Royal de Versailles, a tour of Mozart's C Minor Mass with the Orchestra of the 18th Century as well as projects with Les Arts Florissants.

His Britten Canticules recording for Delphian, alongside pianist Natalie Burch, has been nominated for a 2025 Gramophone Award.

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"I really like music now"

Every year, we offer three educational programme strands to our partner schools across London. Each involves teacher training, in-school workshops and a final concert in which children become active participants, joining in with songs, actions and body percussion. In this, our 40th Anniversary Season, we have been revisiting favourite concerts from the Orchestra's archive.



Watercycle: 1, 2, 3, Water Rises from the Sea at Acland Burghley School. Credit Zen Grisdale

"We've had requests to have trumpets and bassoons at our school!"

EARLY YEARS TEACHER

During the first week of March, we performed eight concerts to children in Early Years (Nursery and Reception) and Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). Over three days, 800 Early Years students joined the Orchestra at Cecil Sharp House and Netley Primary School for *Mozart Chased A Cat*.

The concert takes pupils on a journey through Mozart's Symphony No. 40, inspired by a first-hand

account of the young composer jumping down from the harpsichord mid-practice to play with 'a favourite cat'.

At the end of the week, 680 Key Stage 1 students came to see *Watercycle: 1, 2, 3, Water Rises from the Sea* at Cecil Sharp House and Acland Burghley School. The show – written by Hazel Gould and James Redwood and featuring actor-musician-magician extraordinaire, Tom Silburn – is based around Handel's *Water Music* and featured extracts from Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's Trio Sonata No.1 in G minor and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

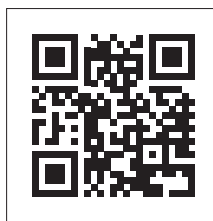
"It was fantastic to be able to have a truly inclusive event, where children weren't just present, but actively engaging with and experiencing live music."

EARLY YEARS TEACHER



The concert encourages children to explore what it means to be a scientist, introducing them to the stages of the water cycle and even featuring a live experiment!

A Key Stage 2 strand, for students in Years 3 – 6, kicks off with a teacher training in April and concerts planned for early July.



Read more on our blog and our latest Education Review on our website at oae.co.uk/discover or scan the QR code.



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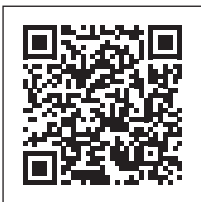
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