



2 November 2015: For immediate release

John Rutter leads sold-out choral workshop at start of Leith Hill Musical Festival season

“There can’t be a choir in the world that hasn’t sung the music of our **Festival President John Rutter**” said **Festival Conductor Brian Kay** welcoming his friend of over 50 years to the sold-out choral workshop at the Dorking Halls on Saturday 31 October.

Four hundred and fifty singers gathered to sing Rutter’s popular *Requiem* and a selection of other shorter pieces under the composer’s tutelage. Kay also led some of the pieces including *Awake, ye heavenly choirs*, which Rutter generously wrote as a gift for Kay’s 20th anniversary at the 2015 Festival.

A day filled with humour and high spirits, Rutter said “I think we all enjoyed ourselves, I certainly did, and we got most of the right notes, in the right order!”

Singer Helen Wade commented “A superb day of music-making where I was instantly made to feel welcome. Even though I attended as an independent singer I never felt out on a limb. It was thrilling to find some of my all-time favourite pieces among the selected repertoire for the day. Watching and listening to John Rutter and Brian Kay, felt like I was learning pearls of wisdom by the minute from two of the very best in the world of choral music.”

The choral workshop was part of the **Arts Alive Festival** and marked the beginning of the Festival’s 2016 season, which will see Kay’s final concerts as Festival Conductor. “The spring competitions and concerts will no doubt be filled with the usual festival BUZZ and nobody enjoys that more than me!” said Kay. “But there will also be an extra emotional undercurrent as this will be the last time I shall have the pleasure of making music with 700 singing friends of twenty one years standing. It’s never easy to find the right moment to hand over to someone else, but I am delighted that such an old friend and distinguished musician as Jonathan Willcocks will take my place. Looking at the programme we’ve selected for this year, it should be clear that I intend to go out with a bang - bring it on!”

The music for 2016, as always, covers a wide variety of periods and styles. The annual March concert, which includes singers who do not belong to Festival Choirs, is Bach’s *St John Passion*. Vaughan Williams, the Festival’s founding conductor is there of course, in his ravishingly beautiful *Serenade to Music* in heady combination with Haydn’s last and finest setting of the Mass. Another lyrically beautiful Mass setting by the teenage Schubert joins forces with Henry Purcell at his most joyous and celebratory in *Come ye Sons of Art Away*. The final night sees the full might and majesty of Verdi’s incomparable *Requiem*.

Booking for the 2016 season opens on **Monday 23rd November**. Full details below.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

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All competitions and concerts take place at Dorking Halls, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1SG.

2016 dates

Sunday 13 March – St John Passion

Saturday 19 March – LHMF Youth Choirs' Competition

Thursday 14 April – Serenade to Music (Vaughan Williams) & Harmionesse (Haydn)

Featuring Division 1 choirs:

Buckland & Betchworth, Capel, Holmbury St Mary & Oxshott

Friday 15 April – Mass in G (Schubert), Come ye sons of art away (Purcell)

Featuring Division 2 choirs:

Beare Green & Newdigate, Bookham, Mickleham & Shalford

Saturday 16 April – Requiem (Verdi)

Featuring Division 3 choirs:

Dorking, Epsom, Horsley & Leatherhead

How to Book:

Via the LHMF Box Office:

Download a booking form for full details at:

<http://www.lhmf.org.uk/>

Email: Boxoffice@lhmf.org.uk

Tel: 01403 240093

Via the Dorking Halls

<http://www.dorkinghalls.org.uk>

Tel: 01306 881717

Tickets £9 - £22. Three and four concert Season tickets are available via the LHMF Box Office only.

The Festival competitions are open to the public from 9 a.m. each day and the entrance fee includes a programme.

The **Leith Hill Musical Festival** is a unique choral event. It enables choirs to both engage in friendly competition and to combine to perform together in a concert with a professional orchestra and soloists.

It was founded in 1905 by **Lady Evangeline Farrer** and **Margaret Vaughan Williams**. **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, Margaret's brother, was the Festival conductor from its founding until retiring in his eighties in 1954. He wrote works specifically for the Festival and most of his major choral works have been performed here. **Brian Kay** has been the inspirational conductor since 1995. Our Festival President is **John Rutter** CBE.

The main Festival is held annually in Dorking over a three-day period around Easter. Each morning is devoted to a competition between choirs who sing set pieces, extracts from major works and a song of their own choice. The afternoon is spent rehearsing together and then in the evening there is a concert performance with a professional orchestra and soloists. There are currently twelve choirs taking part and these are divided into three groups, each competing and performing on one of the Festival days.

In March, Festival members and independent singers are invited to take part in a performance of one of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, the St. John Passion or Handel's

Messiah. A Youth Choirs competition is also held in the Spring Term and is very popular with around thirty school and young people's choirs taking part.

Brian Kay

Brian Kay divides his working life between the broadcasting studio and the concert platform. His many presentations for BBC radio have included 'Brian Kay's Sunday Morning', 'Brian Kay's Light Programme', the weekly listeners' request programme '3 for all' and 'Choirworks' (all Radio 3); on Radio 2 the popular programmes 'Melodies for You' and 'Friday Night is Music Night'; and for Radio 4, 'Comparing Notes' and 'Music in Mind'. His former BBC World Service programme 'Classics with Kay' reached an audience of millions all over the world. Brian's television presentations have included the competitions to find the Cardiff Singer of the World and the Choir of the Year, and for fifteen years the New Year's Day Concert from Vienna. He has twice won a Sony Award as Music Presenter of the Year, including the coveted Gold Award in 1996.

On the concert platform, he presents and narrates concerts with many of the leading orchestras. His narrations include *Peter and the Wolf*, *Paddington Bear's First Concert*, *Tubby the Tuba*, *Babar the Elephant*, *The Snowman*, *The Musicians of Bremen*, *Walton's Façade*, Honegger's *King David* and Bliss's *Morning Heroes*.

As well as conducting the Leith Hill Musical Festival he conducts the Burford Singers, near to his home in the Cotswolds. He is Principal Conductor of [The Really Big Chorus](#), with which he regularly directs massed voices in London's Royal Albert Hall, together with recent concerts in Salzburg, Seville, Prague, Venice, Cape Town and Dubrovnik, and a performance of Handel's *Messiah* in Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall. He was, for ten years, chorus master of the Huddersfield Choral Society, and conductor of the Cheltenham Bach Choir, the Bradford Festival Choral Society, the Cecilian Singers of Leicester, and the Kendal-based Mary Wakefield Westmorland Festival. He frequently guest-conducts choirs and orchestras in many parts of the country. Further afield, in New Zealand he has conducted the Orpheus Choir of Wellington and the Auckland Choral Society, and in Sheffield, Massachusetts, and the Berkshire Choral Festival. He is a Vice President of the Association of British Choral Directors and of the Royal School of Church Music.

Brian has twice appeared at the Royal Variety Show: in 1978, as a member of the King's Singers (he was a founder member and, as the bass voice in the group, performed over 2,000 concerts world-wide); and in 1987, conducting the Huddersfield Choral Society. He sang the voice of Papageno in the Hollywood movie 'Amadeus' (his wife, the soprano Gillian Fisher sang Papagena). He has also been the lowest frog on a Paul McCartney single; one of the six wives to Harry Secombe's Henry VIII, and a member of the backing group for The Pink Floyd!

John Rutter

John Rutter was born in London in 1945 and received his first musical education as a chorister at Highgate School. He went on to study music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he wrote his first published compositions and conducted his first recording while still a student.

His compositional career has embraced both large and small-scale choral works, orchestral and instrumental pieces, a piano concerto, two children's operas, music for television, and specialist writing for such groups as the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble and the King's Singers.

His larger choral works, *Gloria* (1974), *Requiem* (1985), *Magnificat* (1990), *Psalmfest* (1993) and *Mass of the Children* (2003) have been performed many times in Britain, North America, and a growing number of other countries.

He co-edited four volumes in the Carols for Choirs series with Sir David Willcocks, and, more recently, has edited the first two volumes in the new Oxford Choral Classics series, *Opera Choruses* (1995) and *European Sacred Music* (1996).

From 1975 to 1979 he was Director of Music at Clare College, whose choir he directed in a number of broadcasts and recordings.

After giving up the Clare post to allow more time for composition, he formed the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir primarily dedicated to recording, and he now divides his time between composition and conducting.

He has guest-conducted or lectured at many concert halls, universities, churches, music festivals, and conferences in Europe, Africa, North and Central America and Australasia.

In 1980 he was made an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, and in 1988 a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians.

In 1996 the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Lambeth Doctorate of Music upon him in recognition of his contribution to church music.

He was honoured in the 2007 Queen's New Year Honours List, being awarded a CBE for services to music.

John Rutter's music is published by Oxford University Press, Hinshaw Music Inc. and Collegium Music Publications.
