



Holborn: a London Choral Day

Three choirs and three churches

Wednesday 5 June 2024 (LK 312)

Our London Choral Days are unique and very special events, presenting professional choral ensembles in beautiful and little-visited buildings. They take the form of a sequence of three concerts interspersed with spoken commentary, walks between the venues, and a good lunch.

They are conceived not as three discrete concerts but as an integrated musical experience. The pleasures are architectural as well as musical, the event taking place in three exceptionally fine churches which are all very different from each other.

For the summer 2024 iteration we have selected Holborn, a rural parish adjacent to the City of London which from the 16th century began to be transformed into a desirable suburb for those who could afford large houses and gardens. As country air retreated, taking the grandees with it, the district sucked in many skilled trades and commercial enterprises. The Georgian terraces and Victorian warehouses that remain still characterise the area.

An extraordinary and little-trumpeted feature of London is the presence of a remarkable collection of church, chapel and cathedral choirs. No other city on Earth can boast so many first-rate ensembles. In this vocal ecosystem, professional choirs of all sorts flourish. We have selected three of the best.

Concerts

ST ETHELREDA'S, ELY PLACE

St Etheldreda's Choir

'Hidden gem' may be a cliché but it is hard to resist rolling it out for St Etheldreda's. Located in a lovely Georgian cul-de-sac watched over by beadles, this 13th-century episcopal chapel is all that remains of the palace of the Bishops of Ely. The Spanish Embassy used it in the 17th century but it had become almost ruinous before restoration for Catholic worship in the 1870s. Stained glass added in the later 20th-century created further radiant beauty.

St Etheldreda's Choir is one of only a few fully professional Roman Catholic church choirs in the country. From 1908 there was an outstanding choir of local singers, but from the 1970s professional singers were gradually engaged and the choir evolved into its present form as a professional octet. The choir sings the



Photograph: St Etheldreda's, Ely Place

Latin Mass each Sunday and on major Feast Days and Solemnities, with a wide and eclectic repertoire. The Director of Music is Robert Patterson MA (Cantab) FRCO FRSM.

Their programme today reflects the Catholic tradition of St Etheldreda's and its Spanish associations.

PROGRAMME: **Philippe De Monte** *Miserere mei* — **William Byrd** *Deus venerunt gentes* — **Tomás Luis de Victoria** *Missa O Quam Glorioso* — **Byrd** *Quomodo Cantabimus* — **De Monte** *Super flumina Babylonis*

ST ANDREW'S, HOLBORN

Contrapunctus

A pub-quiz church: St Andrew's is Wren's largest church; it is the only one of the 52 in the City he rebuilt which was not damaged by the Great Fire; the only one unobstructed on all sides; and though located within the City, it served the village of Holborn. Like St James's Piccadilly, which was the church design Wren was most pleased with, internally it consists of three aisles with an arcade resting on high piers which also support the galleries.

Contrapunctus is an early-music vocal ensemble dedicated to passionate interpretations informed by authoritative insight. Founded in 2010, the group presents imaginative programmes which often reveal

previously undiscovered musical treasures and throw new light on familiar works. Repertoire is drawn from England and across Europe, particularly the 16th and 17th centuries. The director, Owen Rees, is Professor in Music at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of The Queen's College, where he directs the choir.

This programme of Italian music traversing the Baroque period contains unknown gems, including some that were admired in 18th-century London.

PROGRAMME: **Claudio Monteverdi** *Cantate Domino* — **Giovanni Legrenzi** *Salve regina* — *Intret in conspectu tuo* — **Antonio Lotti** *Crucifixus (5 voices)* — **Agostino Steffani** *Qui diligit Mariam* — **Claudio Monteverdi** *Christe adoramus te* — **Ercole Bernabei** *Tribulationes cordis mei*

ST ALBAN THE MARTYR

The Carice Singers

The church is a masterpiece of the Gothic Revival – two masterpieces, for it was built in two phases a hundred years apart. William Butterfield created a powerful design, massy, assertive and stridently polychromatic. Soon after opening in 1862 it became notorious as a centre of high-church ritualism. Only the western parts survived bombing in 1941, and the nave and chancel were built to a different

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continued

design by Adrian Scott (grandson of George Gilbert) – lofty, light-hued and serene, the finest post-war Gothic construction in London.

The Carice Singers was founded by George Parris in 2011 and has carved out a unique place in the UK's choral scene, defined by its sound, imagination and sense of adventure. Named after Elgar's daughter, the group mixes a focus on British music with a broader European outlook. The group has recently appeared at the Three Choirs Festival, Cheltenham Festival, Music at Oxford, the Joy & Devotion Festival of Polish Sacred Music and St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

PROGRAMME: **Arvo Pärt** *Virgencita* — **William Byrd** *Miserere mihi, Domine* — **J. S. Bach** *Jesu, meine Freude* — **Arvo Pärt** *O Holy Father Nicholas* — **Benjamin Britten** *Sacred and Profane*

Practicalities

Start: 11.00am, St Ethelreda's, Ely Place, EC1N (7 mins on foot from Farringdon or Chancery Lane stations). Doors open 20 minutes before.

Finish: by 5.15pm, St Alban the Martyr, EC1N (4 mins from Chancery Lane Station).

Walking: there are walks of about 15 minutes at most (waiting at pedestrian crossings included) between churches and restaurants. You are of course welcome to arrange taxis if you wish.

Price: £250. This includes a two-course lunch and afternoon refreshments; exclusive admission to three concerts; programme booklet; the services of members of staff.

Audience size: between 100 and 150.

Booking: you do not need to complete a booking form for this event. Book online at www.martinrandall.com or call us to book over the telephone.