

Joyful Company of Singers

Peter Broadbent - Conductor

Summer Schemes

**Choral motets, part-songs
and folksong arrangements
by:**

C V Stanford

Gustav Holst

Zoe Dixon

W G Whittaker

Derek Hobbs

Friday 21st June 2024 at 7pm

St Gabriel's Pimlico, London, SW1V 2AD



JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS

Vice Presidents

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The Friends of JCS



Friends support us both with donations and as audience members. Friends also support our Youth Fund which has provided bursaries for young conductors to work with us and be coached by our founder-director, Peter Broadbent, one of Britain's leading choral conductors, and Friends' donations have enabled us to engage our Composer-in-Association, Zoe Dixon.

We warmly invite new Friends to enjoy the Scheme's benefits for all who donate regularly a minimum £5 monthly/£60 annually – larger amounts are most welcome!

Friends' benefits include:

- 10% discount on unlimited advance tickets to JCS own-promotion events
- Pre-concert 'Meet the Musicians' talks and complimentary Friends' receptions at all JCS own-promotion concerts
- Participation in JCS 'Come and Sing' days at discounted rates
- A password-protected Friends page on the JCS website offering choir news and free downloads of JCS copyright audio recordings
- A free copy of our 'Sing Joyfully' CD
- Discounts on new JCS recordings and archive CDs from our stocks

Join the Friends via the contact form on www.jcos.co.uk or email friends@jcos.co.uk.

Our current Friends

Amanda Abbitt, Kevin Bailey, Hannah Bale, Jenny Ball, Celia Bangham, Carrie Beaumont, Anne Broadbent, Christine Broadbent, Francesca Caine, Philip Caine, Cathryn Caunt, Alicia Copley, Carolynne Cox, Peter da Costa, Andrew Davison, Jonathan Earl, Philippa Gardner, Elaine Gould, Neville Hargreaves, Dawn Herbert, Sally Irvine, Nick Janmohamed, Debbie Johnstone, Mark Johnstone, Rachael Jones, Jonathan Lane, Alexandra Loewe, David Lowe, Andy Mackinder, Yvette Miller, Helen Morton, Peter Murphy, Isabel Nisbet, Bruce O'Brien, Robin Osterley, Tom Pike, Nigel Richards, Louisa Roberts, Steve Sanders, Howard Simmons, Janet Stephen, Margery Thomas, Joanna Thompson, Christopher Williams, Sally Zimmermann and others who prefer to remain anonymous.

PROGRAMME

O Come let us sing unto the Lord (Psalm 95) Zoe Dixon (b.1999)

Three Latin Motets C V Stanford (1852-1924)

Coelos Ascendit Deo; Justorum Animae; Beati Quorum Via

Earth Grown Old (Christina Rossetti) Zoe Dixon

Choral Folksongs Op. 38b Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

*I sowed the seeds of love; The song of the Blacksmith;
I love my love: Swansea Town*

In Early Spring (Wordsworth) Zoe Dixon

INTERVAL

Two Thomas Hardy Songs (First performance) Zoe Dixon

Summer Schemes; Weathers

Part Songs Op.119 (Mary Coleridge) C V Stanford

The Blue Bird; The Swallow; Chillingham

To Autumn (Keats) Zoe Dixon

Northumberland Folk Songs Arr. W G Whittaker

The water of Tyne; Dollie-a; Bobby Shaftoe

Arr. Derek Hobbs

Maa bonny lad; Dance to thy Daddy

PROGRAMME NOTES

Our Summer concert celebrates two anniversaries, marks the end of a superb collaboration and reminds us of a wonderful weekend's music-making in Northumberland early in May.

The title of the concert is that of one of the two Thomas Hardy poems set by the JCS composer-in-association **Zoe Dixon**, whose skilful and subtle word-setting has provided the choir with several fine choral works marking the different seasons as portrayed in the words of Christina Rossetti, Wordsworth and Keats as well as Hardy. We shall perform all of these alongside the first performance of the two Hardy Songs and the anthem she wrote for our 2022 Gala Concert. Zoe has added her own commentary on her pieces below. Over the years, the JCS has given over forty 'first performances', but it has been particularly pleasing to have had a young composer writing regularly and specifically for the choir and giving her the opportunity to hear her work come to life. We are very grateful for the financial support of an anonymous Friend of the JCS that enabled this fruitful association to take place.

Two notable composers who have significant anniversaries this year also feature in our programme – marking the 150th of the birth of **Gustav Holst** and the centenary of the death of **Charles Villiers Stanford**, both huge figures in the British musical world at the transition from the 19th to the 20th Centuries. The Irish-born Stanford is represented by some familiar motets and partsongs, and Holst by some of his folksong settings – all superbly crafted miniatures by composers whose output was extraordinarily wide-ranging.

We also mark the close friendship that Holst had with a remarkable figure in the musical world of both Northumberland and Scotland, **W G Whittaker**. The two corresponded regularly from 1913, when they shared a walking holiday in the Cheviots with Vaughan Williams, until Holst's death in 1934. The JCS visit to North Northumberland earlier this year persuaded us to explore some of the folksong arrangements Whittaker made, adding two by a contemporary Northumbrian composer, **Derek Hobbs**.

Peter Broadbent

Zoe Dixon introduces her compositions being performed this evening ...

The setting of selected lines of **Psalm 95** was the first product of my association with JCS. It was commissioned to mark the occasion of Peter Broadbent's 75th birthday and his receipt of an MBE in 2022. It celebrates the act of singing together, a joyous pastime that was sorely missed during the Coronavirus pandemic. Originating shortly after the end of the final lockdown, the piece heartily acclaim the return of communal singing.

My other five pieces on the programme make up the **Seasons Suite**, a selection of settings of classic poems inspired by the changing seasons. The pieces can be performed together as a set (in any combination) or as stand-alone works.

Weathers (Thomas Hardy) describes an English landscape in two contrasting climates, and the impact of changes in the weather on the landscape's inhabitants. The author devotes one stanza to each description. The similarities in the stanzas' metres and rhyming schemes accentuate the contrast between the two descriptions. This is echoed musically by setting the two stanzas to similar rhythm and melody, but altering the harmony and tonality to match the descriptive tones in the text.

Lines written in early spring (William Wordsworth) laments the disconnect between the beautiful natural environment and the ill-will inflicted by humans on one another. The poem (first published in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798) was authored against the backdrop of the French Revolution and its chilling aftermath, and uncertainty and despair are vividly conveyed. These sentiments continue to resonate on various levels in 2024, particularly in light of the unfolding conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle-East.

Summer Schemes (Thomas Hardy) is penned in strikingly simple language, almost resembling a folk song. The poem's narrator cheerfully describes what they expect to do when Summer returns, though they acknowledge at the end of each verse that future events are by definition uncertain to unfold as planned. While the musical setting responds to the uncomplicated song-like feel of the text, it remains alert to the narrator's gnawing underlying uncertainty about the future, that feels as relevant now as it would have done when the poem was composed.

To Autumn (John Keats) is arguably the quintessential representation of the harvest season in text. The poem is a deserved classic, full of richly sensory descriptions of the season's progress. Keats does not suggest a perspective on the text from within via a narrator. In this respect, the musical setting aims to leave all responses open for exploration. However it does suggest a degree of ambivalence reflective of the season itself: a season encompassing both the fulfilment of Summer's labour, and the year's maturity deepening into decline as the natural world prepares to survive the Winter. This is achieved by subtle variations in tonality and texture, partly inspired by shifts between low Autumn sunlight, gathering clouds and ever-earlier nightfall.

Earth Grown Old (Christina Rossetti) is an advent poem, which laments the cold of winter and anticipates the return of Spring. 'Spring' in this context can also be read as a metaphor for the Resurrection in the Christian tradition. Rossetti approaches her subject matter with startling directness, distilling equal measures of regret, reverence, and yearning into just enough well-chosen words to express them. The choral setting responds to this with similar concision, in a musical language sensitive to the poem's mournful tone.

Peter Broadbent

Peter is one of Britain's leading choral conductors and whose experience ranges from brass bands to large-scale choral works, opera and musicals. In addition to his work with the Joyful Company of Singers since our creation, he has conducted the London Mozart Players, Divertimenti Chamber Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Southern Sinfonia, the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, Apollo Voices and the BBC Singers, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.

Engagements outside the UK include concerts with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra & Kodály Chorus in Hungary, a broadcast with the National Chamber Choir in Dublin and a European tour with the World Youth Choir in 2006. He gives workshops and master classes throughout Europe, and as the first Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors he helped to instigate and develop choral conducting courses.

In 2007 he was presented with the Pro Cultura Hungarica Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Education & Culture for his services to Anglo-Hungarian relations and in 2017 was presented with the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.

Peter was awarded an MBE in the 2022 New Year's Honours for his service to music.

Photo – Carol Hartfree



Zoe Dixon

In our Gala Concert at Cadogan Hall in 2022, we celebrated not only some masterworks of 20th century choral composition but also some 'firsts': the world première performance of our first commission to Zoe Dixon as our first-ever Composer-in-Association.

Zoe Dixon has shown a life-long interest in music and has been rapidly developing as a composer and pianist since early childhood. She had her first formal composition tuition at the Royal Birmingham Junior Conservatoire from 2015-2018, during which she was exposed to a wide range of contemporary styles of music and sound art, and was privileged to continue her composition studies under Robert Saxton and Thomas Hyde at Oxford University, graduating with a first-class degree in Music in 2021.

Zoe is influenced by a diverse collection of musical styles, especially certain strands of European art music that co-existed uneasily in the first half of the 20th century. Her work is also shaped by her experience as a choral scholar in the choir of Worcester College Chapel.

Joyful Company Of Singers



One of the UK's leading amateur chamber choirs, the Joyful Company of Singers is known for its virtuosity and intensity of spirit, as well as for an astoundingly wide repertoire, ranging from the 16th Century to the present day, including many first performances.

Formed in 1988 by conductor Peter Broadbent, the choir first came to prominence when it won the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition in 1990. Since then, it has maintained its profile in the music world, winning an impressive list of national and international competitions leading to many invitations to perform. Concert appearances include most of the leading UK festivals and regular concert tours in Europe, broadcasting in many countries as well as on BBC and Classic FM. A discography of over 25 CDs includes Rachmaninov's *All-night Vigil* on Nimbus: 'beautifully characterized and shaped by Peter Broadbent' (International Record Review). Our recording of the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* under Richard Hickox was listed in April 2024 by 'Gramophone' magazine as one of the top 20 recordings of the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

The JCS has also instituted a Youth Fund to encourage the development of young choral conductors, singers and composers and this season we have continued to support our first-ever Composer-in-Association, Zoe Dixon.

Photo – Maurice Green

SOPRANOS

Jennifer Ball, Cathryn Caunt, Jane Metcalfe, Clare Vincent-Silk,
Carrie Beaumont, Jessica Blake, Amy Finegan, Margaret Green, Catharine Jessop

ALTOS

Francesca Caine, Alicia Cropley, Debbie Johnstone,
Alexandra Loewe, Joanna Thompson

TENORS

Geoff Blyth, Mark Johnstone, Nick King

BASSES

Kevin Bailey, Andy Mackinder
Peter da Costa, Jonathan Lane, David Lowe, Robin Osterley, Christopher Williams



Our next performance

**Friday 22 November at 7 pm – St Cecilia’s Day Concert
St Gabriel’s Church, Pimlico, London SW1V 2AD**



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Front cover photo – Christopher Williams
Rear cover photo – Eleanor Caine

The Joyful Company of Singers, regd. charity no. 105725