

# **DARTFORD CHORAL SOCIETY**



**SEASONS - a song cycle by JONATHAN WHITING**  
(performed by Richard Decker)  
and a selection of choruses from **THE SEASONS** by HAYDN

**Conductor:** Richard Decker  
**Organist:** Philip Berg

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2025**  
**at 7.30pm**

**St Michael's Church, Wilmington, DA2 7EH**

**Tickets: £12**  
**(£10 for Patrons, £5 for students)**

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# PROGRAMME

## **THE SEASONS.....*Joseph Haydn***

Come gentle spring..... Chorus  
Ah, the thunderstorm comes near ..... Chorus  
The shining grapes are fully ripe.....Recitative  
Joho, joho, the wine is here..... Chorus

## **SEASONS.....*Jonathan Whiting*** (soloist: Richard Decker)

# INTERVAL

## **A SEASON TO SING .....*Joanna Forbes L'Estrange***

1. A Time to Dance

### **SPRING**

2. Welcome Spring
3. Music, Sweet Music
4. To the Bagpipe's Sound

### **SUMMER**

5. Sing Cuccu!
6. Trees Lending Shelter
7. Summer Storm

### **AUTUMN**

8. Song of Harvest
9. Falling Autumn Leaves
10. Make a Joyful Noise

### **WINTER**

11. Winter Freeze
12. Cosy Indoors (while outside it pours)
13. While Earth Remaineth

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14. A Time of Peace

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### **A SEASON TO SING – Joanna Forbes L’Estrange**

Re-imagining an instrumental work for voices has precedence, of course. Some thirty years after composing ‘Adagio for Strings’ Samuel Barber added the words of the Agnus Dei to his music, creating from the original strings piece an entirely new one for choir. Perhaps more common is for an adaptation to be made by someone other than the composer of the original work, for instance with the pop song ‘All By Myself’ which is based on the slow movement of Rachmaninov’s ‘Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor’. So too with the hymn ‘I vow to thee, my country’ which started life as a wordless melody within the Jupiter movement of ‘The Planets’ by Holst. ‘Jazz Sébastien Bach’, the debut album by the 1960s Swingle Singers, comprised instrumental music by J.S. Bach ingeniously arranged for eight jazz-scattering vocalists with double bass and drums.

In all of these examples, the re-imagining in no way diminishes our respect for the original composition. On the contrary it offers a new perspective, for performer and listener alike, akin to a novel being turned into a play or film. So it was that I found myself pondering how Vivaldi’s four violin concertos, published in 1725 as ‘The Four Seasons’, might fare as choral pieces. Having loved this music since I was young girl, I’d often had the thought that melodies as good as these deserve to be sung. With 2025 marking the 300th anniversary of this most famous of the so-called red priest’s compositions, it seemed the perfect time to put pencil to manuscript paper and give it a go. Nine months later, ‘A Season to Sing’ was born.

Sourcing the poems, hymn texts and Bible passages for each movement was an integral part of the process. It mattered to me that the words might sound as if they could have inspired the music, even

though it was the other way round. This meant matching their rhythms, rhyme schemes, phrase lengths and cadences to Vivaldi's melodies whilst simultaneously enhancing the all-important programmatic depictions within the different seasons. Vivaldi's manuscript helpfully contains the Italian sonnets he wrote as the basis for his music. For the opening movement of Winter, I chose to adapt one of these sonnets, *Agghiacciato tremar*, to create a soundscape. This is followed by the only wordless movement of the piece which I arranged in homage to Ward Swingle, the founder of The Swingle Singers, who became a close friend during my tenure as the group's Musical Director. The remaining texts are from the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Song of Solomon and Zechariah), poems by two 19th-century English poets Emily Brontë and Eliza Cook, a hymn by Henry Alford and a Thomas Morley madrigal. It's an eclectic mix into which I added the words of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (beginning 'To every thing there is a season') and set them to my own music which serve as bookends to the twelve Vivaldi movements. My settings were written very much with a nod to Baroque style with its pleasing circles of 5ths and melodic sequences.

As a performer of contemporary and avant-garde music, I relish opportunities to create sounds in ways beyond conventional singing. 'A Season to Sing' contains several non-singing passages for the choir, including the evocation of a storm with the use of body percussion, a bagpipe's drone and the call of the cuckoo, as well as *sotto voce*, staccato syllables to portray a freezing cold winter. It is my hope that choirs will have plenty of fun when rehearsing and performing this work and that audiences will enjoy hearing familiar music presented in a new way.

I am indebted to the fifty-five choirs around the world who co-commissioned 'A Season to Sing' and grateful to the Royal School of

Church Music for inviting me to compose this my first full-scale choral work. Finally, I offer a deep bow to Antonio Vivaldi whose extraordinary music, which sounds as fresh today as it must have done 300 years ago, captured my imagination and inspired me to compose this piece. Grazie!

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

*The cover image is part of a painting by Marco Ricci called 'Landscape with cattle and woman speaking to a seated man'. Ricci, a contemporary of Vivaldi, was living in Venice at the same time as the composer. Vivaldi is known to have loved his series of Italian landscapes which served as inspiration for The Four Seasons.*

## **THE SEASONS – Joseph Haydn**

Following the success of *The Creation*, its librettist Baron Gottfried van Swieten wanted to collaborate with Haydn on a second work of similar nature: *The Seasons* (*Die Jahreszeiten*), which received almost as much praise as its predecessor. Haydn started work on *The Seasons* in 1799, and it was first performed on the 24th, 27th April and 1st May, 1801, in the Fürstlicher Schwarzenberg'scher Saal in Vienna: it was to be his last major work. That said, *The Seasons* had very limited success in England, perhaps thanks to its less than ideal original English translation, by Scottish poet James Thomson. Today's translation by Michael Pilkington seeks to improve and embellish Thomson's original writing.

The original German libretto depicts life in an Austrian countryside, as opposed to an English one. This is perhaps best exemplified in the final chorus which we will sing today: 'Joho, the wine is here' (while a British countryside drinker might well opt for beer or cider instead). Indeed, this chorus features in the autumn section of Haydn's work,

as the villagers return from a hunt and celebrate with wine. For us Brits, it might perhaps fit better in winter, when the Christmas parties, New Year celebrations and Valentine's Day all give cause for lots of wine drinking!

The other two choruses heard this evening are perhaps more relatable to a British audience. 'Come gentle spring' is a lilting pastorello, with a middle section warning that the coldness of winter is not always out of the way once March rolls around. The summer chorus warns of the dangers of summer thunderstorms, drawing similarities to the Vivaldi/Forbes-L'Estrange interpretation of summer which we will hear in the second half, yet very different to the hazy Romanian summer's day depicted in Jonathan Whiting's Seasons. Some very contrasting approaches to the portrayal of the seasons, though perhaps this should not come as a surprise, given the unpredictable nature of our seasons and climate in the 21st century...

### **SEASONS – Jonathan Whiting**

The idea for a song cycle using four different Romance languages came in late 2020, when Jonathan and I were both students at the University of Cambridge. We had talked often of collaborating on some work, and at this point, I was studying Italian and French for my degree, with an AS-level in Spanish, and was also taking weekly Romanian classes as part of a module comparing the Romance languages and their linguistic features. It seemed the ideal way of celebrating my passion for language, poetry and linguistics, and combining these with the discovery of new music.

Jonathan's compositional style has many musical theatre influences, which have been interesting to explore and combine with the countertenor voice. These are particularly prevalent in Primavera, with repeated syncopated rhythms alongside the occasional 5/8

passage. The theatrical style also allows for a lot of freedom for me as a singer, with quasi recitative sections in Primavera and Vară. The imagery of the texts shines through in each of the four pieces, with constant dance-like rhythms in Primavera reminiscent of the ladies dancing on the balconies, the jumping piano part at the end of Vară as a locust jumps on the narrator's nose, the relentless metre of Otoño like the birds migrating, as we make haste to enjoy all we can of autumn before winter freezes us over, and then the soft, high pianistic writing in Hiver, like angels in the sky, to match Apollinaire's surrealist poem.

Richard Decker – June 2025

**THE SEASONS - Haydn**

**1. Spring: Come gentle spring ..... *Chorus***

Come, gentle Spring!  
The gift of heaven, come!  
From deathly winter sleep  
bid Nature now awake!

And now she nears, the gentle Spring,  
her soft and balmy breath we feel,  
and soon will life to all return.

But yet do not too soon rejoice,  
for oft, enwrapp'd in mist and fog,  
the Winter will return and spread  
o'er bud and flow'r his chilling frost.

Come, gentle Spring!  
The gift of heaven, come!  
Upon our meadows now descend!  
O come, gentle Spring O come,  
return, delay no more!

**2. Summer: Ah! The thunderstorm comes near ..... *Chorus***

Ah, the thunderstorm comes near!  
Help us, heaven!

O how the thunder rolls!  
Now rage the winds about us!  
Where shall we fly?

Flashes of lightning now streak through the air,  
the bolts from the sky now burst the clouds open,

to pour down torrents of rain.  
Where is safety? Heaven help us!  
Dreadful roars the storm.

The open sky is aflame.  
Save us wretches!  
Crashing, smashing, crack on crack  
the thunder rolls with awful noise.  
Save us! Save us!  
The whole world shakes and trembles  
e'en to the ocean floor.

**3. Autumn: The shining grapes are fully ripe.....*Recitative***  
(Rachel Miles, Barbara Toft & Andrew Dey)

The shining grapes are fully ripe upon the branches of the vine  
They call the happy vintner out to gather them without delay.

Already tubs and vats below the hill are set  
and from their houses villagers stream and gather ready  
the welcome work to do.

See how the mountainside with swarming folk is covered!  
and hear how joyful sounds from every quarter echo.

The work is eased by humorous talk from morn until the evening  
comes and then the sparkling juice of the grape  
will raise the mirth to shouts of joy.

**4. Autumn: Joho, joho, the wine is here .....Chorus**

Joho, joho, the wine is here  
The barrels now are filled so let us merry be  
and joho, joho, jo! from open throats we shout!

Let us drink then! drink up, brothers, let us merry be!

Let us sing then! all must sing now, let us merry be!

Joho, joho jo! All hail to the wine!

All hail to the land that brings it forth!  
All hail to the vat that gives it strength!  
All hail to the bowl from whence it flows!

Joho, joho, jo! All hail to the wine!

Brothers, come and fill the tankards, drain the mugs  
and let us merry be!

Ho there, ho there, let us merry be  
and joho, joho, jo! From open throats we shout!

Joho, joho jo! All hail to the wine!

The pipes are now playing, the tabor is beating.  
The fiddle is screeching and buzzing the zither,  
the bagpipes now drone

All hail to the wine, the noble wine, that trouble and grief removes  
His praises sing we loud and high exalting him a thousand fold  
Ho there, let us merry be  
and joho, joho, jo! from open throats we shout!

Joho!

## SEASONS – Jonathan Whiting

**Soloist: Richard Decker, Countertenor**

### **1. Primavera (Spring)**

Il sole batte, con le dita d'oro,  
alle finestre.

*The sun beats down on the  
window, with its golden  
fingers.*

Uno squittìo sottile è sui tetti.

*A light chirping is heard on the  
rooftops.*

Nell'orto la fontana  
ricomincia a cantare.  
È primavera.

*In the garden, the fountain  
begins to sing again.  
It is spring.*

La chiesa, in alto, con le croci  
accese  
i monti immensi con le cime  
rosa,  
le strade bianche con gli sfondi  
blù.  
È primavera. È primavera.

*The church, high above, with  
its crosses lit,  
The great mountains with pink  
peaks,  
The white streets, backed with  
the blue sky.  
It is spring!*

Il cielo spiega gli arazzi delle  
nubi al vento.  
L'albero gemma. Verzica la  
terra.  
Nel cortile la pergola è fiorita.

*The sky unfolds the tapestries  
of clouds in the wind.  
The tree buds, the earth grows  
green.  
In the courtyard, the arbour is  
covered with flowers.*

Ai balconi: le donne in vesti  
chiare.  
È primavera. È primavera.

*On the balconies, the women  
are in white linen.  
It is spring!*

*Text from 'È primavera' by Giuseppe Villaroèl  
Translation by Richard Decker*

## 2. Vară (Summer)

Liniște. Căldură. Soare.  
Sălciile plângătoare  
Stau în aer, dormitând.  
Un vițel în râu s-adapă  
Și-o femeie, lângă apă,  
Spală rufe, cântând.

Și din vale abia vine  
Murmur slab, ca de albine,  
Somnoros și uniform:  
Râul, strălucind în soare,  
Ceartă sălciile, care  
Toată ziua dorm.

Cântec, murmur, adiere  
De zefir în frunze pier  
Și rămâne doar un glas  
Care umple valea-ngustă.

Ia te uită, o lăcustă  
Mi-a sărit tocmai pe nas!

*Silence. Warmth. The sun.  
Weeping willows  
Sit calmly in the air, sleeping.  
A calf is drinking by the river,  
And the women, by the water,  
Wash their clothes, singing.*

*And from the valley, comes  
A gentle murmur, like the  
humming of bees  
Sleepy, and uniform:  
The river, shining in the sun  
Quarrels with the willows,  
which All day long, do sleep.*

*The song, murmur, and breeze  
Of zephyrs in the leaves fades  
away  
And only a voice remains  
Which fills the narrow valley.*

*Look there, a locust  
Has jumped on my nose!*

*Text from 'Zi de vară' by George Topârceanu  
Translation by Richard Decker*

### 3. Otoño (Autumn)

Aprovechemos el otoño  
antes de que el invierno nos  
escombre;  
entremos a codazos en la franja  
del sol,  
y admiremos a los pájaros que  
emigran.

Ahora que calienta el corazón,  
aunque sea de a ratos y de a  
poco,

pensemos y sintamos todavía  
con el viejo cariño que nos  
queda.

Aprovechemos el otoño,  
antes de que el futuro se  
congele,  
y no haya sitio para la belleza,  
porque el futuro se nos vuelve  
escarcha.

*Let us make the most of the  
autumn, before the winter  
casts us in shadow;  
Let us elbow our way into the  
sun's fringes,  
and admire the emigrating  
birds.*

*Now that it warms our hearts,  
even if just from time to time  
and little by little,*

*Let us nevertheless think and  
feel with the old affection that  
we have left.*

*Let us make the most of the  
autumn, before the future  
freezes over,  
and there is no room for  
beauty, because the future  
turns to frost.*

*Text: 'Otoño' by Mario Benedetti  
Translation by Richard Decker*

#### 4. Hiver (Winter)

Les anges, les anges dans le ciel

*The angels, the angels in the sky*

L'un est vêtu en officier

*One is dressed as an officer,*

L'un est vêtu en cuisinier

*One is dressed as a chef*

Et les autres chantent

*And all the others are singing.*

Bel officier couleur du ciel

*Beautiful officer, whose garbs match the colour of the sky,*

Le doux printemps longtemps  
après Noël

*The sweet spring, a long time  
after Christmas, will adorn you  
with the medal of a beautiful  
sun.*

Te médaillera d'un beau soleil  
D'un beau soleil

Le cuisinier plume les oies

*The chef plucks feathers,*

Ah ! tombe neige

*Ah! How the snow falls!*

Tombe et que n'ai-je

*It falls, and I no longer have*

Ma bien-aimée entre mes bras

*My beloved in my arms*

*Text: 'La Blanche Neige' by Guillaume Apollinaire  
Translation by Richard Decker*

**I N T E R V A L**

## A SEASON TO SING - Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

### **1. A Time to Dance**

To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time  
to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build  
up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a  
time to dance!

*Text: Ecclesiastes 3:1-4*

## SPRING

### **2. Welcome Spring**

The spring, clad all in gladness,  
Doth laugh at winter's sadness,  
Fa la la...

The flowers from earth are springing  
And now the birds are singing,  
They're singing to welcome spring.

We welcome spring and so we sing:

Ask the Lord for rain, for the springtime rain,  
Thunderstorms and rain, Showers of rain swell the grain,  
Ask the Lord for springtime rain.

Arise, my love, my fair one, come away,  
For lo the winter is past  
And spring is come at last,  
Fa la la...

*Text: Thomas Morley 'Now is the month of Maying', (1595)  
Zechariah 10:1, Song of Solomon 2:11-13*

### 3. Music, sweet music

Music, sweet music, Sounds over all the earth;  
One glad choral song greets the primrose's birth;  
The lark soars above, with its shrill matin strain;  
The shepherd boy tunes His reed pipe on the plain.  
Music, sweet music, Cheers meadow and lea;-  
In the song of the blackbird, the hum of the bee;  
The loud happy laughter of children at play  
Proclaim how they worship Spring's beautiful day.

*Text: Eliza Cook "Spring" poem vv2-3 (1861)*

### 4. To the Bagpipe's Sound

To the bagpipe's sound  
The nymphs tread out their ground,  
Fa la la...  
Fie then, why sit we musing,  
Youth's delight refusing?  
Fa la la...

*Text: Thomas Morley 'Now is the month of Maying' madrigal*

## SUMMER

### 5. Sing Cuccu!

Summer moonlight, all soft and still and fair.  
Lhude sing cuccu! Well sings thu, cuccu!  
Ne swik thu naver nu!  
Summer moonlight, all soft and still and fair.  
Thunder, lightning, Very frightening,  
Shepherd, you should run and find shelter from the storm!

*Text: Emily Brontë "Moonlight, Summer Moonlight" v1 poem (1840)  
Sumer is icumen in (13<sup>th</sup> century)*

## 6. Trees Lending Shelter

The solemn hour of midnight  
Breathes sweet thoughts everywhere,  
But most where trees are sending  
Their breezy boughs on high,  
Or stooping low are lending  
A shelter from the sky.

*Text: Emily Brontë "Moonlight, Summer Moonlight" poem  
vv1-2 (1840)*

## 7. Summer Storm

The clouds poured out water;  
The sky sent out sound;  
The voice of thunder was in Heav'n;  
The lightening lightened all the world;  
Earth trembled and shook!

*Text: Psalm 77:17-18*

## AUTUMN

## 8. Song of Harvest

Come, ye thankful people, come  
Raise the song of harvest,  
All safely gathered in.  
Come, ye thankful people, come  
Raise the song of harvest home,  
'Ere the winter storms begin.  
On the seventh day you shall rest,  
Even during ploughing season,  
Even during harvest season.

Come, ye thankful people, come  
Raise the song of harvest,  
All safely gathered in.  
Come, ye thankful people, come  
Raise the song of harvest home.

*Text: Henry Alford "Come, ye thankful people, come" hymn,  
Exodus 34:21*

### **9. Falling Autumn Leaves**

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;  
Lengthen night and shorten day;  
Every leaf speaks bliss to me,  
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

*Text: Emily Brontë "Fall, Leaves, Fall" poem v1*

### **10. Make a Joyful Noise**

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands,  
Praise Him upon the trumpet,  
Praise Him upon the timbrel,  
Praise Him upon the organ,  
Praise Him upon the cymbal.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.  
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands,  
Praise ye the Lord, Praise and serve the Lord with gladness,  
Come before His presence with song.  
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands.

*Text: Psalm 100:1-2, Psalm 150:3-6*

## WINTER

### **11. Winter Freeze**

Aggiacciato tremar tra nevi  
algenti

Al Severo spira d'orrido Vento,

Correr battendo i piedi ogni  
momento;

E pel Soverchio gel batter i denti;

Correr battendo i piedi ogni  
momento.

*Chilled, trembling among the  
freezing snows*

*At the severe blow of a horrid  
wind,*

*Running stamping my feet  
every moment;*

*And at the excessive frost, my  
teeth chattering;*

*Running stamping my feet  
every moment.*

*Text: Antonio Vivaldi sonnet "Agghiacciato Tremar"*

### **12. Cosy Indoors (while outside it pours)**

*Text: scat in the style of the original Swingle Singers*

### **13. While Earth Remaineth**

While the Earth remaineth  
Seed time and harvest shall not cease.  
Seed time and harvest and cold and heat,  
While Earth remaineth they shall not cease.  
Seed time and harvest and cold and heat  
And summer, winter, day, night, all shall not cease.  
Music, sweet music, Cuccu! Cuccu!  
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.  
Spring, summer, autumn, winter  
Shall never cease.

*Text: Genesis 8:22*

#### 14. A Time of Peace

To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to cast away stones,  
and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace,  
and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time of war, no more;

and a time (*Dona nobis pacem*),  
A time of peace.

*Text: Ecclesiastes 3: 5-8, Requiem Mass*

## Richard Decker – Conductor



Richard is a countertenor and conductor from Sidcup, who trained at the Royal College of Music and previously St John's College, Cambridge, where he read Italian and French with linguistics.

As a singer, Richard was a finalist in the 2024 Kathleen Ferrier Awards at the Wigmore Hall, and has been hailed as a 'countertenor star of the future' (OperaNow) with an 'exquisite tone' (SpyintheStalls). Operatic highlights range from Arsamene (*Serse*) and The Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*), to more modern roles including Lucifer (*The Fall of Lucifer* – Burgon) and Nicholas Lear (*The Anthem* – Jasper Eaglesfield), and he has worked with leading opera companies including HGO and Tête à Tête. His recent concert work includes Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, as well as giving song recitals across the UK and Italy, ranging from English lute song to world premières of new song cycles.

As a conductor, Richard has held Choir Director positions at St Mark's English Church, Florence and All Saints' Church, Orpington. He is currently Director of Music at St Augustine's, Tooting, where he runs a Community Choir. He also works with choristers at the King's Chapel of the Savoy, where he was himself a boy treble. As an orchestral conductor, last year he worked as Assistant Conductor with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Orchestra for their concert at the Cambridge Summer Music Festival, and has conducted three operas, most recently a production of Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2023. He is delighted to conduct this programme of seasonal delights this evening.

## Philip Berg - Organist



Having been an Assistant Organist since a teenager, Philip Berg MVO, FRCO, ARCM studied the organ at the Royal College of Music under Richard Popplewell, and the piano under Millicent Silver and Joyce Rathbone.

In addition to a busy teaching career, he has performed as organist at many different venues, including the cathedrals of St Paul's, Worcester, Inverness, Westminster Abbey, Chartres, and Brandenburg Dom. He has been Master of the Music at The King's Chapel of the Savoy since January 1995 and has performed the complete works of Bach there, and much else besides. The fine choir of professional men and boys (including, formerly, Richard Decker) has broadcast on Radio 3, Radio 2, and Classic FM, and recently performed with Adrian Butterfield and the London Handel Festival Orchestra.

He taught at Colet Court Preparatory School for over 30 years, becoming Director of Music in 2002, and during this time was responsible for a large proportion of the many accompaniments that were required. In addition to his school work, as a piano accompanist he has played with many chamber groups and soloists, and particularly enjoys working with singers.

## **Joanna Forbes L'Estrange – composer *A Season to Sing***



Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b. 1971) is a British vocalist, choral composer and choir director. Born in North Wales she grew up in Surrey, singing as a chorister in the parish church choir of Bisley and West End and studying the piano and cello. Having graduated with a Master of Arts music degree from Oxford University she began her career with seven years at the helm of the five-time Grammy® award-winning vocal group The Swingle Singers. This experience led to a busy diary as a session singer and as a classical/jazz crossover soloist. Joanna regularly performs works such as Duke Ellington's Sacred Concert and Mass in Blue by Will Todd (which she recorded for the Convivium record label). Her distinctive, high soprano vocals can also be heard on over 300 film soundtracks, most notably a duet with Jarvis Cocker for The French Dispatch.

The international popularity of Joanna's choral compositions has been attributed to the composer's personal mission to create a body of tuneful, singable, well-crafted music which any choir can sing. "It's an integrity of purpose which infuses every musical phrase that Forbes L'Estrange writes", says BBC Music Magazine. As a professional singer Joanna specialises in contemporary and avant-garde music by such composers as Berio, Adams, Reich and Stockhausen but it is her early chorister years which inform both her accessible composing style and her belief that "new music doesn't have to be difficult to be effective." To mark the coronation of King Charles III the Royal School of Church Music commissioned Joanna to compose an anthem for its Sing for the King project; The mountains shall bring peace, a Psalm setting for choir and organ, was sung by over 600 choirs across five continents and established Forbes L'Estrange as one of the RSCM's best-selling composers.

This and many more of her sacred and secular pieces have been recorded by London Voices on two albums, Heaven to Earth and Winter Light, both released on the Signum record label. Her largest, most ambitious work to date is A Season to Sing, a choral re-imagining of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, composed in celebration of its 300th anniversary in 2025.

Joanna is an ambassador for Harmony Across Borders, a choir competition which champions music by women composers. She founded and for five years directed the Cambridge-based, women's choir AQUILA and has composed many songs for upper voice choirs in support of gender equality, including A Woman (Wearing Bloomers) on a Wheel (made into a film by the National Youth Girls' Choir), A Place For Us Maids (commissioned to mark the 40th anniversary of female undergraduates at Cambridge University), Suffragette March and The Three Wise Women. With her charity single Twenty-first-century Woman Joanna made history by organising and conducting the first all-female recording session ever to have taken place at London's iconic Abbey Road Studios. Television credits include writing You Are, a 1940s-style song heard in the opening scene of series 2 of Fleabag.

She lives in Hertfordshire with her composer/jazz musician husband, Alexander L'Estrange, with whom she collaborates as a composer, performs as the aptly named jazz duo L'Estranges in the Night and co-presents their popular choral jazz workshop You can sing...but can you swing?.

Further information [www.joannaforbeslestrange.com](http://www.joannaforbeslestrange.com)

Sheet music [www.lestrangemusic.com](http://www.lestrangemusic.com)

Enquiries/bookings [info@lestrangemusic.com](mailto:info@lestrangemusic.com)

## **DARTFORD CHORAL SOCIETY**

**Musical Director: Richard Decker**

### **Sopranos**

Radhika Ananthan  
Elaine Clark  
Pat Everington (Chairman)  
Pamela Hunt  
Margaret Martin  
Rachel Miles  
Felicity Monteith  
Julia Noakes  
Janet Plank  
Barbara Toft

### **Altos**

Marilyn Davey  
Jane Foong  
Nicky Garland  
Louise Peterken  
Gwen Rumble  
Chris Settle  
Kate Stock  
Mary Webb

### **Tenors**

Paul Grimmer (Secretary)  
Mike Michele

### **Basses**

Andrew Dey  
Tunde Dipita-Williams  
Alan Hunt  
Steve Jones  
Michael Sears (Treasurer)

The Dartford Choral Society rehearses on Monday evenings, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, (except July & August) at the Mick Jagger Centre, Shepherds Lane, Dartford. New members are always welcome.

Please contact the Hon. Secretary, Paul Grimmer  
01342 833911 (Daytime) 01322 227994 (Evenings).  
Email: [secretary@dartfordchoral.org.uk](mailto:secretary@dartfordchoral.org.uk)

## **President**

**The Mayor of Dartford - Councillor Peter Whapshott**

## **Vice Presidents**

Mrs Audrey Ash  
Mrs Ruth M Fricker  
Mr and Mrs Bill Collier  
(in memory of David Collier)

## **Patrons**

Mrs Brenda Boffin	Mr Stephen Jones
Mr Andrew Dey	Ms Alison Leggatt
Mr and Mrs J Dey	Mrs Felicity Monteith
Mr Tunde Dipita-Williams	Mr Dennis O'Keefe
Mrs Romaine Ford	Ms Jennifer Quigley
Mr Chris Hall	Mrs Chris Settle
Mr Richard Hamilton	Mr John E White

The Dartford Choral Society is dependent upon financial assistance to continue giving public concerts.

The Dartford Choral Society greatly appreciates the financial assistance kindly given to us by our Patrons.

## **Dartford Choral Society Patrons**

The support and encouragement Dartford Choral Society receives from Patrons is invaluable in enabling the choir to expand its repertoire and make choral music more widely available to the people of Dartford and the surrounding areas. Over the years many members, past members, and friends of the Society have felt able to support us in this way.

For an annual subscription of £30, or £50 per couple, Patrons receive advance notification of the concert dates and programme for the season, have their name listed in each programme, and receive a reduction of £2 on the price of admission to each concert.

**If you would like to support us by becoming a Patron please complete the form on the back of this programme.** Alternatively, contact the Patrons Secretary, Andrew Dey – Tel.01322 555406  
Email - [andrew.dey@live.co.uk](mailto:andrew.dey@live.co.uk).

**For your diaries please note:-**

**Next concert:**



**A CONCERT FOR PEACE**

featuring

**The Armed Man – Karl Jenkins**

**Hear my Prayer - Mendelssohn**

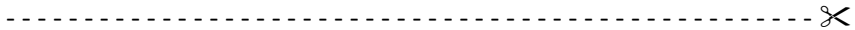
**15<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

**St Michaels, Wilmington**

Tickets available at:

[www.ticketsource.co.uk/dartford-choral-society/t-jzomvdz](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/dartford-choral-society/t-jzomvdz)

or by scanning the QR code



**Dartford Choral Society Patrons**

To: Andrew Dey, DCS, 18 Sandringham Drive, Dartford, Kent DA2 7WB

I would like to become a Patron of DCS / purchase a subscription for a friend *[delete as appropriate]*.

I enclose a cheque for £30 / £50 payable to "Dartford Choral Society" / confirm I will transfer the subscription amount to Sort code 40-52-40; A/c No. 00007000, A/c Name: Dartford Choral Society with a reference of "NP-" and my surname.

Please complete the details below:

Request from: \_\_\_\_\_ *full name*

Subscription for: \_\_\_\_\_ *full name(s)*

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_