

NEWBURY  
**Choral**  
SOCIETY

Spring Concert 2025



# Edward Elgar

## *The Dream of Gerontius*

Conductor: Joe Tobin

Mezzo-Soprano/Angel: Emily Hodkinson

Tenor/Gerontius: Michael Bell

Bass/Priest/Angel of Agony: Alexander Bower-Brown

Saturday 12th April 2025, 7:30pm, St Nicolas Church, Newbury

EDWARD ELGAR

# Newbury Choral Society



Chair: Liz Wallace  
Treasurer: Nat Smith  
Secretary: Tracy Smith  
Concert Manager: Mike Barthorpe

Rehearsal accompanist: Steve Bowey

Newbury Choral Society is a non-auditioned choir with a history of over 130 years of bringing a high standard of music to the area. The establishment of a permanent group of singers must have met an urgent need in the town as the Society attracted more than one hundred members for the first concert in 1885. Conducted by the choirmaster and organist of Newbury's St Nicolas Church, John Shepherd Liddle, the choir made a good impression on the *Newbury Weekly News* critic who wrote that 'the execution of the choruses reflected great credit upon the members of the Society and their conductor'.

Since that first concert we have continued to perform a wide and varied repertoire, from the great choral works of Bach, Handel and Vaughan Williams to pieces by more recent composers Tavener, Britten and Karl Jenkins. In its second century the choir's conductors have included Jonathan Finney, Robert Barsby, Leo Hussain and its first female Musical Director Janet Lincé. Cathal Garvey held the position from December 2009 until September 2022. From January 2023 NCS's music director has been Joe Tobin.

You can find out more about Newbury Choral Society, its history and forthcoming events, at [www.newburychoral.org.uk](http://www.newburychoral.org.uk).

If you are interested in joining us, please contact our secretary through the website. We rehearse on Monday evenings at the Methodist Church Hall, Newbury, from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. We ask that you are able to read music but not necessarily to sight-read. You will receive a warm welcome.

# The Programme

## Part 1

1. Prelude
2. Jesu, Maria – I am near to death
3. Rouse thee, my fainting soul
4. Sanctus fortis, sanctus Deus
5. Proficiscere, anima Christiana

## Interval

## Part 2

1. I went to sleep
2. It is a member of that family
3. But hark! upon my sense comes a fierce  
    hubbub
4. I see not those false spirits
5. But hark! a grand mysterious harmony
6. Thy judgment now is near
7. I go before my judge
8. Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul

Please visit [www.newburychoral.org.uk/Feedback](http://www.newburychoral.org.uk/Feedback) to tell us about your experience of our performance.

## Programme Notes

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934) was invited to write a work for the Birmingham Music Festival of 1900, in recognition of his burgeoning reputation as a composer of large-scale choral works. He had long been familiar with the poem by Cardinal John Henry Newman, describing a devout old man's passage from death to judgement and rebirth in the next world. He produced a work for voices and orchestra in two parts, which was a disaster at its first performance in Birmingham, owing to numerous factors, from limited time for preparation by the conductor, to the death of the choral trainer. The amateur performers found the music difficult to master.

Although Elgar was mostly self-taught, he adopted elements of style from many sources and became a masterly orchestrator, perhaps as a result of his early experience as a freelance musician. Commentators have pointed to the "pervasive element of chromaticism in his music, that adds colour and unexpected, yet innovative, turns of phrase". (DK Complete Classical Music Guide)

Not unlike the mediaeval play *Everyman*, Newman's poem tells the story of a soul's journey through death. Gerontius (a name derived from the Greek word *geron*, "old man") is a pious man dying in the faith, sometimes afraid and sometimes hopeful, but strong in his belief. A group of friends (also called "assistants" in the text) joins him in prayer and meditation. The first part ends with the death of Gerontius, as he receives the blessing of the priest.

In part two, Gerontius (The Soul) meets his guardian angel, who helps him journey towards God's throne of judgement, with a parting benediction and the vision of glory before him. At first, and for some time, many Anglican clerics were concerned about the prominence of Roman Catholic doctrine, such as the concept of purgatory, and insisted that Elgar modify the Catholic references before sanctioning the work's performance in English cathedrals.

Despite the problems that beset the first performance in Birmingham Town Hall in 1900, the work fared better in its performances in Europe, prompting The Cologne Gazette to record, "In both parts we meet with beauties of imperishable value. ... Elgar stands on the shoulders of Berlioz, Wagner, and Liszt, from whose influences he has freed himself until he has become an important individuality. He is one of the leaders of musical art of modern times." Much later, The

Record Guide, writing in 1956 when Elgar's music was comparatively neglected, said, "Anyone who doubts the fact of Elgar's genius should take the first opportunity of hearing *The Dream of Gerontius*, which remains his masterpiece, as it is his largest and perhaps most deeply felt work." (Quotations from Wikipedia)

## Libretto

### *Part One*

#### **Prelude**

#### **Gerontius**

Jesu, Maria – I am near to death,  
And Thou art calling me; I know it now,  
Not by the token of this faltering  
breath,  
This chill at heart, this dampness on  
my brow –  
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)  
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,  
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)  
That I am going, that I am no more.  
'Tis this strange innermost  
abandonment,  
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to  
Thee.)  
This emptying out of each constituent  
And natural force, by which I come to  
be.  
Pray for me, O my friends: a visitant  
is knocking his dire summons at my  
door,  
The like of whom, to scare me and to  
daunt  
Has never, never come to me before;  
So pray for me, my friends, who have  
not strength to pray

#### **Assistants**

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie  
eleison.

Holy Mary, pray for him.

All holy Angels, pray for him.

Choirs of the righteous, pray for him.

All Apostles, all Evangelists, pray for  
him,

All holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for  
him.

All holy Innocents, pray for him.

All holy Martyrs, all holy Confessors,

All holy Hermits, all holy Virgins,

All ye Saints of God, pray for him.

#### **Gerontius**

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play  
the man;

And through such waning span  
Of life and thought as still has to be  
trod,

Prepare to meet thy God.

And while the storm of that  
bewilderment

Is for a season spent

And, ere afresh the ruin on me fall,  
Use well the interval.

#### **Assistants**

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him,  
Lord,

Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver  
him.

From the sins that are past;

From Thy frown and Thine ire;

From the perils of dying;  
From any complying  
With sin, or denying  
His God or relying  
On self, at the Last;  
From the nethermost fire;  
From all that is evil;  
From power of the devil;  
Thy servant deliver,  
For once and for ever.  
By Thy birth, and by Thy Cross  
Rescue him from endless loss;  
By Thy death and burial,  
Save him from a final fall;  
By Thy rising from the tomb,  
By Thy mounting up above,  
By the Spirit's gracious love  
Save him in the day of doom.

### **Gerontius**

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Parce mihi, Domine.  
Firmly I believe and truly  
God is Three, and God is One;  
And I next acknowledge duly  
Manhood taken by the Son.  
And I trust and hope most fully  
In that Manhood crucified:  
And each thought and deed unruly  
Do to death, as He has died.  
Simply to His Grace and wholly  
Light and life and strength belong.  
And I love, supremely, solely,  
Him the holy, Him the strong.  
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Parce mihi, Domine,  
And I hold in veneration,

For the love of Him alone,  
Holy Church, as His creation,  
And her teachings, as His own.  
And I take with joy whatever  
Now besets me, pain or fear,  
And with a strong will I sever  
All the ties which bind me here.  
Adoration aye be given,  
With and through the angelic host,  
To the God of earth and heaven,  
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,  
De profundis oro te,  
Miserere, Judex meus,  
Mortis in discrimine.  
I can no more; for now it comes again,  
That sense of ruin, which is worse than  
pain,  
That masterful negation and collapse  
Of all that makes me man.  
... And, crueller still,  
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill  
The mansion of my soul.  
And, worse and worse,  
Some bodily form of ill floats on the  
wind,  
with many a loathsome curse  
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs,  
and flaps its hideous wings,  
And makes me wild with horror and  
dismay.  
O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary, pray!  
Some Angel, Jesu! such as came to  
Thee  
In Thine own agony ...  
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for  
me.  
Mary, pray for me

**Assistants**

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour,  
 As of old so many by Thy gracious power: –  
 Noe from the waters in a saving home;  
 (Amen).  
 Job from all his multiform and fell distress; (Amen).  
 Moses from the land of bondage and despair; (Amen).  
 David from Golia and the wrath of Saul; (Amen).  
 – So, to show Thy power,  
 Rescue this Thy servant in his evil hour.

**Gerontius**

Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep,  
 The pain has wearied me ... Into Thy hands,  
 O Lord, into Thy hands ...

**Priest and Assistants**

Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo!  
 Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!  
 Go from this world! Go, in the Name of God

The Omnipotent Father, Who created thee!  
 Go, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 Son of the living God, Who bled for Thee!  
 Go, in the Name of the Holy Spirit, Who Hath been poured out on thee!  
 Go in the name  
 Of Angels and Archangels; in the name  
 Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name  
 Of Princedoms and of Powers;  
 and in the name  
 Of Cherubim and Seraphim; go forth!  
 Go, in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets;  
 And of Apostles and Evangelists,  
 Of Martyrs and Confessors, in the name  
 Of holy Monks and Hermits; in the name  
 Of holy Virgins; and all Saints of God.  
 Both men and women, go! Go on thy course;  
 And may thy place today be found in peace,  
 And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount  
 Of Sion: through the Same, through Christ  
 Our Lord.

## Interval

## Part 2

### **Soul of Gerontius**

I went to sleep; and now I am  
refreshed.

A strange refreshment for I feel in me  
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense  
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,  
And ne'er had been before. How still it  
is!

I hear no more the busy beat of time,  
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor  
struggling pulse;  
Nor does one moment differ from the  
next.

This silence pours a solitariness  
Into the very essence of my soul;  
And the deep rest so soothing and so  
sweet  
Hath something too of sternness and  
of pain.

Another marvel: someone has me fast  
Within his ample palm; ... A uniform  
And gentle pressure tells me I am not  
Self-moving, but borne forward on my  
way,

And hark! I hear a singing; yet in sooth  
I cannot of that music rightly say  
Whether I hear, or touch, or taste the  
tones.

Oh, what a heart-subduing melody!

### **Angel**

My work is done,  
My task is o'er,  
And so I come,  
Taking it home,  
For the crown is won,  
Alleluia.  
For evermore.  
My Father gave  
In charge to me

This child of earth  
E'en from its birth,  
To serve and save,  
Alleluia,  
And saved is he.  
This child of clay  
To me was given,  
To rear and train  
By sorrow and pain  
In the narrow way,  
Alleluia.  
From earth to heaven.

### **Soul**

It is a member of that family  
Of wondrous beings, who,  
Ere the world were made,  
Millions of ages back, have stood  
around  
The throne of God.  
I will address him,  
Mighty One, my Lord,  
My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

### **Angel**

All hail!  
My child and brother, hail!  
What wouldest thou?

### **Soul**

I would have nothing but to speak with  
thee  
For speaking's sake. I wish to hold with  
thee  
Conscious communion; though I fain  
would know  
A maze of things, were it but meet to  
ask,  
And not a curiousness.

**Angel**

You cannot now  
Cherish a wish which ought not to be  
wished.

**Soul**

Then I will speak.  
I ever had believed  
That on the moment when the  
struggling soul  
Quitted its mortal case, forthwith it fell  
Under the awful Presence of its God,  
There to be judged and sent to its own  
place.  
What lets me now from going to my  
Lord?

**Angel**

Thou art not let but with extremest  
speed  
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy  
Judge.

**Soul**

Dear Angel, say,  
Why have I now no fear of meeting  
Him!  
Along my earthly life, the thought of  
death  
And judgement was to me most  
terrible.

**Angel**

It is because  
Then thou didst fear, that now thou  
dost not fear,  
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and  
so  
For thee the bitterness of death is  
passed.  
Also, because already in thy soul

The judgement is begun.

A presage falls upon thee, as a ray  
Straight from the Judge, expressive of  
thy lot.

That calm and joy uprising in thy soul  
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,  
And heaven begun.

**Soul**

Now that the hour is come, my fear is  
fled;  
And at this balance of my destiny,  
Now close upon me, I can forward look  
With a serenest joy.  
But hark! upon my senses  
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would  
make me fear  
Could I be frightened.

**Angel**

We are now arrived  
Close on the judgement-court; that  
sullen howl  
Is from the demons who assemble  
there  
Hungry and wild, to claim their  
property,  
And gather souls for hell. Hark to their  
cry.

**Soul**

How sour and how uncouth a  
dissonance!

**Demons**

Low-born clods  
Of brute earth,  
They aspire  
To become gods,  
By a new birth,  
And an extra grace,

And a score of merits,  
As if aught  
Could stand in place  
Of the high thought  
And the glance of fire  
Of the great spirits,  
The powers blest,  
The lords by right,  
The primal owners,  
Of the proud dwelling  
And realm of light –  
Dispossessed,  
Aside thrust,  
Chucked down,  
By the sheer might  
Of a despot's will,  
Of a tyrant's frown,  
Who after expelling  
Their hosts, gave,  
Triumphant still,  
And still unjust  
Each forfeit crown  
To psalm-droners,  
And canting groaners  
To every slave,  
And pious cheat  
And crawling knave,  
Who licked the dust  
Under his feet.

### **Angel**

It is the restless panting of their being;  
Like beasts of prey, who, caged within  
their bars,  
In a deep hideous purring have their  
life,  
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

### **Demons**

The mind bold

And independent,  
The purpose free,  
So we are told,  
Must not think  
To have the ascendant.  
What's a saint?  
One whose breath  
Doth the air taint  
Before his death;  
A bundle of bones,  
Which fools adore,  
Ha! Ha!  
When life is o'er.  
Virtue and vice,  
A knave's pretence.  
'Tis all the same;  
Ha! ha!  
Dread of hell-fire,  
Of the venomous flame,  
A coward's plea.  
Give him his price,  
Saint though he be,  
Ha! ha!  
From shrewd good sense  
He'll slave for hire;  
Ha! Ha!  
And does but aspire  
To the heaven above  
With sordid aim,  
And not from love.  
Ha! ha!

### **Soul**

I see not those false spirits; shall I see  
My dearest Master, when I reach His  
throne!

### **Angel**

Yes – for one moment thou shalt see  
thy Lord.

One moment but thou knowest not my child,  
What thou dost ask: that sight of the Most Fair  
Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee, too.

**Soul**

Thou speakest darkly, Angel! and an awe  
Falls on me, and a fear lest I be rash.

**Angel**

There was a mortal, who is now above  
In the mid glory: he, when near to die,  
Was given communion with the Crucified –  
Such, that the Master's very wounds  
were stamped  
Upon his flesh; and, from the agony  
Which thrilled through body and soul  
in that embrace,  
Learn that the flame of the Everlasting  
Love  
Doth burn ere it transform ...

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height  
And in the depth be praise:

**Angel**

Hark to those sounds!  
They come of tender beings angelical,  
Least and most childlike of the sons of God.

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
And in the depth be praise:  
In all His words most wonderful;  
Most sure in all His ways!

To us His elder race He gave  
To battle and to win,  
Without the chastisement of pain,  
Without the soil of sin.  
The younger son He willed to be  
A marvel in His birth:  
Spirit and flesh His parents were;  
His home was heaven and earth.  
The Eternal blessed His child, and  
armed,  
And sent Him hence afar,  
To serve as champion in the field  
Of elemental war.  
To be His Viceroy in the world  
Of matter, and of sense;  
Upon the frontier, towards the foe,  
A resolute defence.

**Angel**

We now have passed the gate, and are  
within  
The House of Judgement ...

**Soul**

The sound is like the rushing of the  
wind –  
The summer wind – among the lofty  
pines.  
Choir of Angelicals  
Glory to Him, Who evermore  
By truth and justice reigns;  
Who tears the soul from out its case,  
And burns away its stains!

**Angel**

They sing of thy approaching agony,  
Which thou so eagerly didst question  
of.

**Soul**

My soul is in my hand: I have no fear –  
 But hark! a grand mysterious harmony:  
 It floods me, like the deep and solemn  
 sound  
 Of many waters.

**Angel**

And now the threshold, as we traverse  
 it  
 Utters aloud its glad responsive chant.

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest in the height  
 And in the depth be praise;  
 In all His words most wonderful;  
 Most sure in all His ways!  
 O loving wisdom of our God!  
 When all was sin and shame,  
 A second Adam to the fight  
 And to the rescue came.  
 O wisest love! that flesh and blood  
 Which did in Adam fail,  
 Should strive afresh against the foe,  
 Should strive and should prevail;  
 And that a higher gift than grace  
 Should flesh and blood refine,  
 God's Presence and His very Self,  
 And Essence all divine.  
 O gen'rous love! that He who smote  
 In man for man the foe,  
 The double agony in man  
 For man should undergo;  
 And in the garden secretly,  
 And on the cross on high,  
 Should teach His brethren and inspire  
 To suffer and to die.  
 Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
 And in the depth be praise:  
 In all His words most wonderful;  
 Most sure in all His ways!

**Angel**

Thy judgement now is near, for we are  
 come  
 Into the veiled presence of our God.

**Soul**

I hear the voices that I left on earth.

**Angel**

It is the voice of friends around thy  
 bed,  
 Who say the 'Subvenite' with the  
 priest.  
 Hither the echoes come; before the  
 Throne  
 Stands the great Angel of the Agony,  
 The same who strengthened Him,  
 what time He knelt  
 Lone in the garden shade, bedewed  
 with blood.  
 That Angel best can plead with Him for  
 all  
 Tormented souls, the dying and the  
 dead.

**Angel of the Agony**

Jesu! by that shuddering dread which  
 fell on Thee;  
 Jesu! by that cold dismay which  
 sickened Thee;  
 Jesu! by that pang of heart which  
 thrilled in Thee;  
 Jesu! by that mount of sins which  
 crippled Thee;  
 Jesu! by that sense of guilt which  
 stifled Thee;  
 Jesu! by that innocence which girdled  
 Thee;  
 Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in  
 Thee;

Jesu! by that Godhead which was one  
with Thee;  
Jesu! spare these souls which are so  
dear to Thee;  
Souls, who in prison, calm and patient,  
wait for Thee,  
Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them  
come to Thee,  
To that glorious Home, where they  
shall ever gaze on  
Thee.

### **Soul**

I go before my Judge ...

### **Voices on earth**

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him,  
Lord.  
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver  
him.

### **Angel**

Praise to His Name!  
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,  
Consumed, yet quickened, by the  
glance of God.  
Alleluia! Praise to His Name!

### **Soul**

Take me away, and in the lowest deep  
There let me be,  
And there in hope the lone night-  
watches keep,

Told out for me.  
There, motionless, and happy in my  
pain,  
Lone, not forlorn –  
There will I sing my sad perpetual  
strain,  
Until the morn,  
There will I sing, and soothe my  
stricken breast,  
Which ne'er can cease  
To throb, and pine, and languish, till  
possest  
Of its Sole Peace.  
There will I sing my absent Lord and  
Love: –  
Take me away,  
That sooner I may rise, and go above,  
And see Him in the truth of everlasting  
day.

### **Souls in Purgatory**

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge: in  
every generation,  
Before the hills were born, and the  
world was,  
from age to age Thou art God.  
Bring us not Lord, very low; for Thou  
hast said,  
Come back again, ye sons of Adam.  
Come back, O Lord! how long: and be  
entreated for  
Thy servants.

**Angel**

Softly and gently, dearly ransomed  
soul,  
In my most loving arms I now enfold  
thee,  
And o'er the penal waters, as they roll,  
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold  
thee.  
And carefully I dip thee in the lake,  
And thou, without a sob or a  
resistance,  
Dost through the flood thy rapid  
passage take,  
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim  
distance.  
Angels, to whom the willing task is  
given,  
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as  
thou liest;

And Masses on the earth, and prayers  
in heaven,  
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the  
Most Highest.  
Farewell, but not for ever brother  
dear,  
Be brave and patient on thy bed of  
sorrow;  
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,  
And I will come and wake thee on the  
morrow.

**Souls**

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, etc.  
Amen.

**Choir of Angelicals**

Praise to the Holiest, etc. Amen.

Text by Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–90)



**NEWBURY**  
**Choral**  
**SOCIETY**  
Winter Season 2025

**NCS Advent Concert**  
**Bach: *Christmas Oratorio***

Saturday 29th November 2025, 7:30pm St Nicolas Church, Newbury

## Joe Tobin – Musical Director



Joe joined us as our Musical Director at the beginning of 2023. He is an accomplished conductor, composer, singer and musical scholar based in central London, who has performed alongside ensembles such as I Fagiolini, the Royal Academy of Music Chamber Choir, and the Cambridge Fundraising Choir. He is currently the

Director of Music of Newbury Choral Society, Conductor of Penshurst Choral Society, Director of Music at St Thomas of Canterbury church, Brentwood, and Founder and Musical Director of the professional choir, the Lerion Consort.

He graduated with a first class honours degree from the University of York. Continuing into postgraduate education, Joe studied Choral Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music under the tutelage of Patrick Russill. He graduated in 2021 and was awarded a master's degree with distinction, additionally receiving the Sir Thomas Armstrong Choral Leadership Prize and Irene Burcher Prize from the Academy.

In London Joe has worked professionally as a conductor with many choirs including Ingatestone, Brentwood and Woking choral societies, Royal Academy of Music Chamber Choir, Choir of the London Oratory, Cambridge Fundraising Choir, Herts County Youth Choir, The Harborough Singers, Hanover Choir, Imperial College Chamber Choir, The Birkbeck University Choir, North Herts Guild of Singers, and St John of Jerusalem Festival Chorus, as well conducting the BBC Singers in masterclass and concert. He was previously conductor of the Children's International Voices of Enfield and Interim Director of Music at St Laurence church, Catford.

## Steve Bowey – Organ and Accompanist



Steve studied organ and piano from an early age, playing the organ regularly at St Francis and St Andrew's churches in Coulsdon. After gaining an engineering degree from Salford University he moved to Newbury to work for Vodafone.

In 1991 Steve was appointed accompanist of the Cromwell Singers and later became their Musical Director. From 1992, he was Director of Music at St Mary's Church, Shaw-cum-Donnington and regularly worked with other local choirs, including the Douai Choral Society, the Downland Chorale, the RSCM Southern Cathedral Singers, Berkshire Maestros youth choirs and Worcester College Oxford.

In 2006 Steve joined the Royal College of Organists and in July the following year took the examination for Associate (ARCO) for which he was awarded the Limpus prize for performance, as well as the Sowerbutts and Samuel Baker prizes. After further study, he was awarded the Fellowship Diploma (FRCO) in January 2011.

His current musical commitments include teaching organ, piano, and music theory. He is Director of Music at St Mary's Shaw-cum-Donnington, organist at Cheam School and regularly gives solo organ recitals including one at Worcester Cathedral in 2018.

Steve is currently the regular accompanist for Newbury Choral Society and The Cecilia Consort and also enjoys working with many other choirs in Newbury and the surrounding area.

## Mezzo-Soprano/Angel: Emily Hodkinson



Nottingham-born mezzo-soprano Emily Hodkinson is a recent graduate of the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she studied with Clare Shearer, and was the recipient of a Sybil Tutton Opera Award, the Ena Mitchell Scholarship and the Ulrike Wilson Scholarship. She graduated with a First-class honours degree in Music from the

University of York, and completed a year of postgraduate study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland before joining the opera school. She was the winner of the Rodney Gibson Early Music Prize at the 2021 Patricia Routledge National English Song Competition; the Liz Chant Bursary Competition; the John & Barbara Beaumont Bursary Competition and was a Selected Artist for Making Music UK.

Emily was an Opera Holland Park Young Artist for 2022, singing Madame Larina in the Young Artist performances of *Eugene Onegin*. Recent and future engagements include *Nobody/Somebody* (Northern Ireland Opera), Sylviane *The Merry Widow* (Glyndebourne Festival), Olga *Eugene Onegin* (Wild Arts with performances at Opera Holland Park), mezzo soloist *What Dreams May Come*, cover Romeo *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*, Nerone and Ottavia *The Coronation of Poppea* (English Touring Opera) and cover Octavian *Der Rosenkavalier* (Saffron Opera Group).

Emily is a keen concert soloist and recitalist, with recent engagements including Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham), Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* (York Musical Society); Manor Opera's *Gala in the Garden*, Beethoven's *Mass in C* (London Oriana Choir), Bach's Cantatas with Glasgow Bach Cantata Project, Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (Watford Youth Sinfonia) and Elgar's *The Music Makers* with Nottingham Festival Chorus.

## Tenor/Gerontius: Michael Bell



Northern Irish tenor **Michael Bell** recently graduated from the Royal College of Music, having previously held a choral scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge.

His many recent appearances include his full debut at the prestigious Verbier Festival as **Basilio** *Le nozze di Figaro*, his debut at English National Opera as **1<sup>st</sup> Priest/1<sup>st</sup> Armed Man** *The Magic Flute*, the world premiere of Conor Mitchell's *Riot Symphony* with the Ulster Orchestra, and his role debut as **Count Almaviva** *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Diva Opera.

His current and future plans include his debut with The Mozartists as **Il Podestà** *La finta giardiniera*, and a return to Diva Opera as **Ernesto** *Don Pasquale* and **Don Curzio** *Le nozze di Figaro*.

A regular on the concert stage, Michael has performed across the UK. This summer, he makes his debut at the Three Choirs Festival for Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi*; other recent debuts include concerts with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Royal Northern Sinfonia and the Philharmonia.

His diverse repertoire includes the Bach *Passions* as both Evangelist and arias soloist, Beethoven *Symphony No. 9* and Britten *St Nicolas*. Most recently, he sang *Messiah* with the Ulster Orchestra for their Christmas 2024 performances, *The Dream of Gerontius* at Truro Cathedral, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle* at Southwell Minster, and Evangelist for the Bach *St John Passion* with the Royal Swedish Orchestra in Stockholm.

## Bass/Priest/Angel of Agony: Alexander Bower-Brown

Due to circumstances beyond our control Daniel Vening has had to withdraw.

We are delighted that the baritone for tonight's performance will be Alexander Bower-Brown who last sang with us in November for Brahms *Requiem*

To read his biography scan



## NCS members singing in tonight's performance

SOPRANOS		ALTOS	
Rebecca Berger	Caroline Imi	Katharine Andrews	Judith Hobdell
Helen Bomgardner	Murrie Jackson	Gayle Ashby	Gwenda Hutchinson
Rachel Bowey	Fran Jeffery	Margaret Baker	Ceinwen Lally
Teresa Brown	Lauraine Klugman	Denise Barthorpe	Mary Lawler
Ella Buckroyd	Dorothy Lawrence	Susie Bowell	Rebecca Mathis
Rebecca Couzans	Chris Letham	Julia Bowsher	Emma Moffatt
Marion Croxford	Beverley Lewis	Jane Brown	Emma Moscow
Charmaine Dennis	Laura Martin	Helen Cook	Jess Norton Raybould
Judith Fowler	Lynne Moore	Liz Coughlan	Sarah Palmer
Helen Franklin	Claire Powell	Judith Denny	Sally Sinclair
Janet Freer	Mary Stagg	Alison Dewar	Harriet Smailes
Jill Hitchcock	Fenisia Stopher	Helen Douglass	Nicola Small
Monica Huddie	Martha Vickers	Nicola Foster	Nat Smith
		Suzanne Graves	Tracy Smith
		Sinead Hall	Jenny Stewart
		Elizabeth Hanning	Ann Turner
		Lynette Harper	Liz Wallace
		Jenny Hayward	Rachel Winchester
TENORS		BASSES	
Mike Barthorpe	Neil Rendall	Geoff Anderson	Stephen Jeffery
Catie Colston	Tom Moffatt	Philip Bann	John Karperien
Matthew Evans	Andrew Salisbury	David Bomgardner	Richard Moore
Derek Harwood	Geoff Sowden	David Craig	Barrie Seaman
Nick Hobdell	Tony Vickers	Peter Dann	Robert Seath
	Jeremy Wright	Jonathan Edwards	Simon Stagg
		John Garbutt	John Stewart
		Paul High	Andrew Swainston

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## Orchestra Players

<b>Violins</b> Elena Abad Julia Chertverhova Nicky Enderby Claudia Dehnke Jane Kane John Kane Marissa Miller Raffaele Pagano Elizaveta Tyun Sophie Simpson Katie Sharp	<b>Double Bass</b> Ben Daniel-Greep Manuel dell'Oglio	<b>Harp</b> Anneke Hodnett
	<b>Clarinet</b> Jasper Perry	<b>Trumpet</b> Louis Barclay
	<b>Oboe/Cor Anglais</b> Joe Harper	<b>Trombone</b> Gemma Riley
<b>Violas</b> Nazli Erdogan Zami Jalil Catarina Silva	<b>Bassoon</b> Sarah Sesu	<b>Horns</b> Emily Burley Helen Kubly
<b>Cellos</b> Kieran Carter Victoria Groves Will Clark Maxwell	<b>Percussion</b> Christopher King Andy Spiceley	<b>Organ</b> Steve Bowey
	<b>Flute/Piccolo</b> Samantha Moore	

## Semi Chorus

<b>Sopranos</b> Ella Rainbird-Earley Louisa Goodfellow Barbara Gunter Laura Martin	<b>Altos</b> Rowan Kitchen Amélie Mack Jess Norton Raybould
<b>Tenors</b> Cameron Galvin James Warbis	<b>Bases</b> Tom Rayner

# Dates for the diary

**Saturday 28th June 2025, 7:30pm, St Nicolas Church**

Bob Chilcott: *The Voyage*  
Cecilia McDowall: *The Girl from Aleppo*  
Stephen Paulus: *The Road Home*

**Saturday 29th November 2025, 7:30pm, St Nicolas Church**

Advent Concert  
Bach: *Christmas Oratorio*

**Saturday 29th March 2026, 7:30pm, St Nicolas Church**

NCS Spring Season Concert

**Saturday 27th June 2026, 7:30pm, Douai Abbey**

NCS Summer Season Concert

**Saturday 19th December 2026, 7:30pm, St Nicolas Church**

NCS Winter Season Concert

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Summer Season 2025

# Journeys & Belonging

Bob Chilcott: *The Voyage*

Cecilia McDowall: *The Girl  
From Aleppo*

Stephen Paulus: *The Road Home*

Conductor: Joe Tobin

Organ: Steve Bowey

Saturday 28th June 2025, 7:30pm

St Nicolas Church, Newbury

**Tickets £15, under 16s £5, available online  
at [www.newburychoral.org.uk](http://www.newburychoral.org.uk) and from  
choir members**

