

 OXFORD  
BACH CHOIR  
125th Season

# Durufié. Requiem

Fauré: *Cantique de Jean Racine*

**Sunday 19 September 2021, 7pm**

*Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford*

**Benjamin Nicholas** *Conductor*

**Robert Quinney** *Organ*

**Rebecca McNaught** *Cello*

**Lila Chrisp** *Mezzo soprano*

**Ben Davies** *Bass*

*Programme*

**Fauré** *Cantique de Jean Racine*

**John Donne** *Holy Sonnet VII* read by **Alice Oswald**

**Durufié** *Requiem*



# OXFORD BACH CHOIR

Registered Charity No. 233688

## Chair's welcome

Oxford Bach Choir is delighted to be able to welcome you to its first live concert since December 2019 and is thrilled to present tonight's programme. We are also extremely happy to be back at the Sheldonian Theatre again.

It has been a challenging time for everyone through the pandemic. Thanks to the hard work of so many people in the choir and the wonderful support of our conductor Benjamin Nicholas, we have continued to meet virtually and rehearse. There was a brief time last December, however, when a number of us were able to meet to record carols for BBC Radio Oxford's Christmas morning broadcast.

Tonight's live streaming is with a smaller choir than usual and follows four intensive in-person rehearsals. This concert is both to celebrate our return, and to pay tribute to all those who have supported us throughout the pandemic

The performance is dedicated to the memory of all who have died and those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic. It is also a celebration of the work of Oxford's scientists and healthcare professionals, who have made such exceptional advances against Covid-19.

You are invited to make donations to the Oxford Hospitals Charity as a statement of gratitude to the selfless hard work of all of those who have made tonight's performance possible: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/oxford-bach-choir](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/oxford-bach-choir)

Liz Stock  
Acting Chair

## Historical note

The Oxford Bach Choir was slow to explore the choral music of Gabriel Fauré, not performing any of it until we performed his *Requiem* in May 1982. It was not until June 2003, however, that we performed his *Cantique de Jean Racine* for the first time. We next performed it in an official choir concert in June 2013, although some choir members did sing it in April 2009 in a joint concert with members of the Belgian choir iLLucia.

If the OBC had to wait almost 90 years before exploring any of Fauré's choral music, we had to wait a little longer before exploring that of Maurice Duruflé: it was only in February 1995 that we first performed his *Requiem*, on that occasion in its orchestral version. We next sang the *Requiem* in June 2003, in the same concert when we first performed the *Cantique de Jean Racine*. This time we used Duruflé's organ version of the piece, as we will be performing it this evening. The OBC as a whole has not sung the Duruflé since that date, but some two dozen members sang it again in September 2014 in Antwerp and Ieper (Ypres) at special concerts held to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

Robin Darwall-Smith

## Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) *Cantique de Jean Racine, Op. 11*

Fauré displayed a talent for music at an early age; in 1854, when he was only nine, he was sent to study at the École Niedermeyer in Paris, an ‘École de musique religieuse et classique’, where he studied organ, plainsong, and Renaissance polyphony. The *Cantique de Jean Racine*, written in 1864–5, was awarded the premier prix for composition in his final year at the École Niedermeyer. It was Fauré’s first piece of sacred music; he would go on to produce a significant body of work for mixed choir – most notably the beautiful *Requiem* – but the *Cantique* is justifiably the most well-loved among his shorter sacred pieces. The words are a paraphrase of the Latin hymn ‘*Consors paterni luminis*’ by the poet and playwright Jean Racine; Fauré’s exquisitely gentle setting, which combines restrained serenity with moments of rapt intensity, has been described as an ‘emotionally pitch-perfect’ response to Racine’s meditative text.

### **Jean Racine (1639–99), *Hymnes traduites du bréviaire romain***

Verbe égal au Très-Haut, notre unique  
espérance,  
Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux,  
De la paisible nuit nous rompons le  
silence:  
Divin Sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux.

Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce  
puissante,  
Que tout l’enfer fuie au son de ta  
voix;  
Dissipe le sommeil d’une âme  
languissante  
Qui la conduit à l’oubli de tes lois.

Ô Christ, sois favorable à ce peuple  
fidèle,  
Pour te bénir maintenant rassemblé;  
Reçois les chants qu’il offre à ta gloire  
immortelle,  
Et de tes dons qu’il retourne comblé.

Word equal to the Most High, our  
sole hope, Eternal Dayspring of earth  
and heaven,  
We break the silence of the peaceful  
night: Saviour divine, cast your eyes  
upon us.

Pour over us the fire of thy powerful  
grace,  
So that all hell flees at the sound of  
your voice;  
Dispel the sleep of a languishing soul  
Which leads it to forget thy laws.

O Christ, be gracious to this faithful  
people,  
Now gathered to praise thee;  
Receive their hymns, offered to thine  
immortal glory,  
And may they return laden with thy  
gifts.

## At the round earth's imagin'd corners (Holy Sonnet VII)

John Donne (1572-1631)

At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow  
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise  
From death, you numberless infinities  
Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go;  
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,  
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,  
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes  
Shall behold God and never taste death's woe.  
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,  
For if above all these my sins abound,  
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace  
When we are there; here on this lowly ground  
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good  
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood.

## Maurice Duruflé (1902–86)

### Requiem, Op. 9

Maurice Duruflé was born in Louviers in Normandy, the son of an architect, and attended the cathedral choir school at Rouen from the age of ten. At 17, he went to Paris to study the organ with Charles Tournemire; in 1920 he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he won a string of prizes and later became Professor of Harmony, with many distinguished pupils. He became assistant to the organist of Notre-Dame, Louis Vierne, and also titulaire (primary organist) at St-Étienne-du-Mont; he had a highly distinguished career as a church organist, recitalist and teacher until all his professional activities were cut short by a car accident in 1975, which left him crippled and in pain for the rest of his life.

As a composer, Duruflé was highly self-critical, and his official list of works is very short, only reaching opus 11. The *Requiem* was the result of a commission he received from the French government in 1941, during the collaborationist Vichy regime; he was still working on the commission (which was originally for a symphonic poem) in 1944 when the regime collapsed, and eventually completed it in 1947.

In view of his upbringing, it is perhaps not surprising to find that Duruflé's compositional style owes so much to the plainsong that he loved so dearly. Plainsong melodies from the Gregorian Mass for the Dead provide the majority of the melodic material for the work; the chant does not always appear in the vocal parts but is sometimes played in the accompaniment while the voices weave polyphony around it. The plainsong is treated lovingly and with fidelity, but also with flexibility; Duruflé succeeds absolutely in integrating the sinuous melodies of the chant into his own personal style, clothing them with impressionist-modal harmonies and shimmering textures, and creating a work of great beauty and profound spirituality.

The *Requiem* is dedicated to the memory of Duruflé's father, who had died in 1945; it was first performed in a radio broadcast on All Souls' Day (2 November) 1947, in its original scoring for organ and large orchestra. Duruflé subsequently made two other arrangements of the accompaniment, one for a reduced orchestra with organ, and one for organ alone, with an important part for obbligato cello.

The similarities between this work and Fauré's *Requiem* have often been noted and indeed it was obviously Duruflé's chief model. He chooses to set the same version of the text as Fauré, and the two works share a generally restrained and contemplative character. Even the allocation of certain sections of the text to solo baritone and soprano (or mezzo-soprano) are the same, although Duruflé includes the option of using chorus baritones, and the 'Pie Jesu' takes the form of a dialogue between mezzo-soprano and solo cello. However, Duruflé's work, for all its restraint, has an intense sense of involvement and passion. It takes the listener – and the singer – on a profound spiritual journey: from the smoothly flowing 'Introit' and 'Kyrie', through the urgent entreaties of the 'Domine Jesu Christe', the joyful surgings of the 'Sanctus', the poignant beauty of the 'Pie Jesu', the calm momentum of the 'Agnus Dei' and 'Lux Aeterna', and the dramatic mood changes of the 'Libera Me', to the transcendent peace of the 'In Paradisum', which seems to tremble on the edge of eternity ... or does that final, unresolved harmony take us over the threshold? No wonder Duruflé's *Requiem* is so widely recognised as one of the great choral masterpieces of the 20th century.

Peter Gilliver (adapted, with kind permission, from notes by Martin Holmes)

## MISSA PRO DEFUNCTIS

### 1. Introitus

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine:  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,  
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem.  
Exaudi orationem meam:  
ad te omnis caro veniet.

### 2. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

## REQUIEM MASS

### 1.

Grant them eternal rest, Lord, and let  
perpetual light shine upon them.  
A hymn becometh Thee, O God, in  
Zion, and a vow shall be paid to Thee  
in Jerusalem. Hear my prayer: to Thee  
shall all flesh come.

### 2.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

3. Domine Jesu Christe  
Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae,  
libera animas omnium fidelium  
defunctorum  
de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu.  
Libera eas de ore leonis,  
ne absorbeat eas Tartarus,  
ne cadant in obscurum:  
Sed significet sanctus Michael  
repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam,  
quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et  
semini eius.  
Hostias et preces tibi Domine laudis  
offerimus:  
tu suscipe pro animabus illis,  
quarum hodie memoriam facimus;  
fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad  
vitam;  
quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et  
semini eius.

4. Sanctus  
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:  
pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.  
Hosanna in excelsis.  
Benedictus qui venit in nomine  
Domini.  
Hosanna in excelsis.

5. Pie Jesu  
Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.  
Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem  
sempiternam.

3.  
O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory,  
deliver the souls of all the faithful  
departed from the pains of Hell, from  
the deep lake.  
Deliver them from the mouth of the  
lion, let not Tartarus swallow them,  
nor let them fall into the place of  
darkness:  
But let the standard-bearer Michael  
bring them into holy light which Thou  
didst promise of old to Abraham and  
his seed.  
Prayers and sacrifices to Thee, Lord,  
we offer.  
Do Thou receive them on behalf of  
those souls  
whom we this day commemorate.  
Grant, Lord, that they pass from  
death to life; as Thou didst promise of  
old to Abraham and his seed.

4.  
Holy, holy, holy  
Lord God of Hosts.  
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name  
of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

5.  
Blessed Jesu, O Lord, grant them rest.  
Blessed Jesu, O Lord, grant them  
eternal rest.



6. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

7. Lux Aeterna

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine, cum  
sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius es.  
Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis, quia pius  
es.

8. Libera Me

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,  
in die illa tremenda:

Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra:  
Dum veneris judicare saeculum per  
ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo,  
dum discussio venerit, atque ventura  
ira.

Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et  
miseriae, dies magna et amara valde.  
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

9. In Paradisum

In Paradisum deducant te angeli:  
in tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres,  
et perducant te in civitatem sanctam  
Jerusalem.

Chorus angelum te suscipiat,  
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere,  
aeternam habeas requiem.

6.

Lamb of God, who takest away the  
sins of the world, grant them eternal  
rest.

7.

Let everlasting light shine upon them,  
Lord, with Thy saints for ever, for Thou  
art good.

Grant them eternal rest, Lord, and let  
perpetual light shine upon them, for  
Thou art good.

8.

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal  
death on that awful day  
when the heavens and the earth shall  
quake, when Thou shalt come to  
judge the world by fire.

Full of terror am I, and trembling,  
and I fear the trial and the wrath to  
come. That day shall be a day of  
wrath, calamity, and misery, a mighty  
day and exceedingly bitter.

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon  
them.

9.

May the angels lead thee into  
Paradise: at thy coming may the  
martyrs receive thee,  
and lead thee into the Holy City,  
Jerusalem.

There may the choir of angels receive  
thee, and with Lazarus, once a beggar,  
may'st thou have eternal rest.

## Lila Chrisp, Mezzo



Lila is a mezzo-soprano in her second year of a master's degree at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she is studying with Louise Winter. Her studies are kindly supported by the Annie Ridyard Scholarship for Mezzo Sopranos. At the RNCM, Lila has performed the role of Forester's Wife/Owl in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and was cast as Older Woman in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, before the production was cancelled due to Covid-19. She will play Mrs Nolan in the RNCM production of Menotti's *The Medium* in autumn 2021. Outside college, Lila is a Barefoot Opera Young Artist 2021, covering the roles of Zanetto (Mascagni) and Orfeo (Gluck). She is also involved in the development of a new opera, *Draught*, by Anna Appleby, due to be performed with the BBC Philharmonic in 2022.

Lila graduated in 2017 with a degree in Music from Merton College, Oxford, where she was a choral and academic scholar. While at Oxford, she took lead roles in several university opera productions, including Nancy, *Albert Herring*; Dido, *Dido & Aeneas*; Dorabella, *Così fan Tutte*; Annio, *La Clemenza di Tito*; Ottavia, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Martha in the première of Marco Galvani's chamber opera *Rothschild's Violin*.

Her solo concert and oratorio experience includes: Mozart's *Requiem* (Wokingham Choral Society), Handel's *Messiah* (OU Chorus/Sheldonian), Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* (Oxford University Philharmonia/Sheldonian), Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (Consortium Novum/SJE Oxford & Bliss Sinfonia/Rugby School), Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* (Consortium Novum/Sheldonian), and Bach's *Magnificat in D* (Choir of Merton College, Oxford & Oxford Philharmonic).

Lila has given numerous solo song recitals in London, Oxford and Rugby. She won the AESS Courtney Kenny competition for English Song and Poetry 2018 and has performed as part of the London Song Festival.

## Ben Davies, Bass



Ben Davies studied at the Royal Academy of Music. His roles include Sailor (*Dido & Aeneas*) for William Christie and Deborah Warner at the Vienna Festival, Netherlands Opera and the Opera Comique, Paris; Bass (*St Matthew Passion*) for Streetwise Opera/The Sixteen under Harry Christophers; Ubalde (*Armide* – Gluck) for the Buxton Festival; Aeneas (*Dido & Aeneas*) under Sir John Eliot Gardiner at the Opera de Lyon; Judge (*Das Wunder der Heliane* – Korngold) under Vladimir Jurowski; Guglielmo (*Così fan Tutte*); Bartolo and Antonio (*The Marriage of Figaro*); Polyphemus (*Acis & Galatea*); Bass (*The Fairy Queen*); Amis (*Le pauvre matelot* – Milhaud); Marcello (*La bohème*) in scenes for *The Lesley Garrett Show*, BBC and covers of Achilla (*Giulio Cesare*), Bass (*St Matthew Passion*), Mr Flint (*Billy Budd*), Betto di Signa (*Gianni Schicchi*), Sprecher (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Krušina (*The Bartered Bride*) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Recent concert performances include the Monteverdi *Vespers*, *King Arthur*, the Brahms *Requiem*, *The Fairy Queen*, *Messiah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, the Fauré *Requiem* and both the *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion* for Harry Christophers and The Sixteen; Adonis (*Venus & Adonis* – Blow) at the Wigmore Hall for Matthew Halls and Retrospect Ensemble; Mozart's *C Minor Mass* and Purcell's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* for Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort; and Mozart's *Solemn Vespers*, *C Minor Mass* and *Requiem* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir. Other notable concert performances include the British premiere of Hermann Suter's *Le Laudi*, the Verdi *Requiem* in Leeds Town Hall and Bach's solo cantata *Ich habe genug* in the Purcell Room.

## Rebecca McNaught, Cello



Rebecca McNaught is a dynamic young British cellist who has performed internationally as a soloist and orchestral musician.

Born into a home alive with classical music, Rebecca began learning the piano at a very young age, and, although the piano remained a big part of her upbringing, it was the cello that became her focus and she has been playing now for 17 years. Drawn to both academic and practical music, Rebecca studied for a BA in Music at Merton College, Oxford. Alongside her studies, she explored a wide variety of chamber music, and performed the Mozart and Brahms Clarinet Quintets with the Holywell Quintet at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and the Holywell Music Rooms, Oxford.

During her Master's at the Royal Academy of Music, Rebecca performed as principal cello of the Academy Symphony Orchestra. In June 2018 she toured Japan with the orchestra under Trevor Pinnock, taking Beethoven and Mozart to locations in Tokyo and Koriyama. Earlier that month, she took part in the Kyoto International Music Student's Festival.

Rebecca has also enjoyed expanding her outreach work as an Open Academy Fellow, and has created accessible concerts for people living with dementia in Wigmore Hall and Leighton House, providing varied programmes of short works and providing spoken information for the audience.

## Robert Quinney, Organist



Robert Quinney is Organist of New College, Oxford. In addition to the daily direction of New College's choir, his work comprises teaching, lecturing and examining, as a Tutorial Fellow of New College and an Associate Professor in the University's Faculty of Music. He has conducted New College Choir in concert at home and abroad: in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, on tours of the USA, and at Wigmore Hall and Cadogan Hall in London. The choir's 'consistently radiant sound' was praised in a Gramophone review of its 2019 release of music by the 16th-century English composer John Sheppard.

Robert maintains a parallel career as a solo organist, and is a prolific recording artist: his discs of organ music by J. S. Bach, Elgar, Dupré, Wagner and Brahms (and several CDs with Westminster Abbey Choir and The Sixteen) have been widely acclaimed. In February 2017 he made his debut at the Royal Festival Hall with an all-Bach recital, and in August 2017 appeared for the first time as a soloist in the BBC Proms.

## Benjamin Nicholas, Conductor



Benjamin Nicholas is Music Director of the Oxford Bach Choir and Director of Music at Merton College, Oxford. At Merton he directs the College Choirs and holds a College Lectureship in Music. As a conductor, he has appeared with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players, the BBC Singers and the Holst Singers.

Benjamin was a chorister at Norwich Cathedral before holding organ scholarships at Chichester Cathedral, Lincoln College, Oxford and St Paul's Cathedral. After a period as Director of Music of St Luke's Church, Chelsea, he was Director of Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum and Director of Choral Music at Dean Close School. From 2011 to 2016 he served the Edington Music Festival, first as conductor of the Schola and then as Festival Director.

Benjamin has been involved in commissioning a great many choral works, and has premiered works by Chilcott, Birtwistle, Dove, MacMillan, Weir, Tabakova, Jackson and Kidane with Merton College Choir. Recently he conducted the premiere of Charlotte Bray's *Bach Re-imagined* in Southwark Cathedral with the City of London Sinfonia.

As an organist, Benjamin has given recitals across the UK, in the USA and in Europe. Recent engagements include Munich Dom and Bath Abbey, and in 2022 he will give a recital in St Paul's Cathedral. Benjamin's recording of Elgar's organ music was an *Organists' Review* Editor's Choice and his debut disc received five stars in *Choir & Organ*.

## Alice Oswald



*Photo: Kate Mount*

Alice Oswald is a British poet who has been the Oxford University Professor of Poetry since October 2019.

Alice read Classics at Oxford and trained as a gardener, working in Chelsea Physic Garden, Wisley and Clovelly Court Gardens. Her second collection of poetry and prose, *Dart*, won the T. S. Eliot Prize in 2002. In 2017, her seventh collection of poems, *Falling Awake*, was awarded the Griffin Poetry Prize. *Nobody*, a book-length single poem was published by Jonathan Cape in 2019.

Alice Oswald lives on the Dartington Estate in Devon, with her husband, the playwright Peter Oswald, and their three children.

## The singers

### Soprano 1

Arezou Azad, Myfanwy Brown, Robyn Elton, Becky Faull, Deborah Hayter, Jane Lambert, Alice May, Emily Meredith, Diana Reynolds, Diana Smith, Liz Stock, Siobhan Templeton, Jennifer Thompson, Janet Trebilcock

### Soprano 2

Gillian Beattie, Christine Booth, Emma Dunlop, Sarah Jinks, Margaret Jones, Jane Mason, Hannah Rabey, Sarah Walton, Cyd Waters

### Alto 1

Julie Drew, Penny Dwyer, Sue Jones, Patricia Lee, Mariana Schüster, Elizabeth Stratford, Andrea Windridge

### Alto 2

Ann Hancock, Clare Jarvis, Pia Key, Shannon Miller, Charlotte Pascoe

### Tenor 1

Mike Fooks, Peter Gilliver, Marco Mazzorana

### Tenor 2

Paul Cann, Robin Darwall-Smith, David Floyd, Alan Marsh, Andrew Pritchard, Richard Stone, Paul Wyman

### Bass 1

Robert Aitken, David Barrington, Chris Cullen, Edward David, Richard Disney, Andrew Frawley, Alex Tinguely, Ian Wylie

### Bass 2

Sven Herrmann, Alan Lane



## Next concerts

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December**, 7.30pm (Sheldonian): Bach *Christmas Oratorio*

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December**, 7.30pm (Sheldonian): Carols for All

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022**, 5pm (Sheldonian): Rossini *Stabat Mater* and Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music*

**Sunday 19 June 2022**, 5pm (Oxford Town Hall): Firsova (new commission); Poulenc *Gloria*; Beethoven *Ninth Symphony*

Please do join us. More information on [www.oxfordbachchoir.org/](http://www.oxfordbachchoir.org/)

The poster features a central illustration of the Nativity scene, showing Mary holding the infant Jesus, with Joseph and the three wise men. The background is dark with faint musical notes. In the top right corner, the logo for the Oxford Bach Choir (OBC) is displayed. The title 'BACH Christmas Oratorio' is prominently featured in the center, with 'BACH' in red and 'Christmas Oratorio' in white. Below the title, the performance date and time are listed, along with the orchestra and venue. The website URL and registered charity number are at the bottom.

**OBC** OXFORD BACH CHOIR

**BACH**  
**Christmas**  
*Oratorio*

**Saturday 4 December 2021, 7.30pm**  
Orchestra: Florilegium  
Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford

[www.oxfordbachchoir.org](http://www.oxfordbachchoir.org) Registered charity no. 233688

## Acknowledgements

The Choir extends sincere thanks to all our friends, followers and contributors for their continued support.

We would like to thank the staff of the Sheldonian for their help with this event, and also St John the Evangelist Church for allowing us to use the church for our rehearsals.