Rossini

Petite Messe Solennelle



The Chiltern Choir

2026 Nov 28
Christ Church, Chorleywood

Conductor: Michael Cayton

A Welcome from the Chair



Welcome to Christ Church and our performance of Rossini's *'Petite Messe Solennelle*'. As you may know, it is neither small nor solemn; we hope you enjoy the evening.

The Chiltern Singers will be holding a short Christmas concert on Saturday 12th December. Do please join us if you can; details on the back cover, and on the website.

Thanks for joining us at this concert, and we hope to see you again soon.



Lyndsay Ward

Chair

Post-concert addendum: our concert was prefaced by a few words in memory of Andy Etchells, a long-serving and much-respected member of the Choir who died suddenly and unexpectedly in early October. The Choir then reprised the performance of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' they had given at Andy's funeral – one of his favourite pieces.

This Evening's Performers

Michael Cayton	*Conductor*
Victoria Mulley	Soprano
Caroline Carragher	Mezzo-soprano
Matthew Pochin	Tenor
Matthew Bernstein	Bass
Simon Howat	Piano
Richard Watson	Harmonium

Sopranos

Caroline Bartlett
Sam Beard
Hilary Broadbent
Gabrielle Fisher
Katherine Hyde
Barbara Johnson
Sue Kesteven
Stefanie Robinson
Lyndsay Ward
Gillian Watson

Altos

Cathy Amos
Sue Canderton
Ana de'Ath
Rita Fryer
Philippa Goss
Clare Hearnshaw
Alix Hunt
Anne Keyworth
Miriam Morgan
Maggie Shrive
Marian Wax

Tenors

Philip Brown
Anju Sharda
Isabel Walker

Basses

Simon Boulcott
Dylan John
Martin Robinson
Robert Thackery

Notes

Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy, on 29 February, 1792. His father was horn player and trumpeter in various small bands and orchestras, and his mother an opera singer. Rossini, too, developed a love for music and the theatre. Although by all accounts academically lazy, he found singing and playing music easy and was a much requested boy soprano. By his teens he could play viola and horn, and had become a first-rate harpsichord player and pianist. At 18, while at the Conservatorio de Bologna, he composed his first opera, a one-act comedy for La Fenice in Venice, and within three years, following the enormous success of *Tancredi* (1812), and *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813), he had won fame throughout Italy and secured an international reputation. In 1823 he moved to Paris where he was appointed director of the Théâtre-Italien.

By age 37 he had written over 40 operas, but in 1829, after completing *William Tell*, he retired, a wealthy man, to live in Italy. With the exception of his other significant religious work, the *Stabat Mater*, he effectively gave up composing. However, following a long depressive illness, he returned to Paris in 1855, where both his health and his inspiration to compose returned. He produced what he called his 'Péchés de Vieillesse' (Sins of Old Age), a collection of light-hearted songs, pieces for piano, and works for small ensembles. These were performed at private occasions, attended by most of the important public and artistic figures in Paris at the time, who were attracted by Rossini's wit, hospitality, and love of good food.

The *Petite Messe Solennelle* is the most substantial of the works written during these later years, and indeed it is one of the most remarkable compositions of Rossini's whole career, demonstrating his ability to write beautiful melodies (often frankly operatic in character), an unfailing sense of colour and drama, and great contrapuntal skill. Its title exemplifies Rossini's characteristic wit, as the work is neither petite nor particularly solemn. The music ranges from hushed intensity to boisterous high spirits, and abounds in the memorable tunes and rhythmic vitality for which Rossini became justly famous.

Initially, the instrumental scoring of the Mass for two pianos and harmonium seemed strange, but given its context as a salon piece (it was first performed at the consecration of a private chapel in March 1864 by a choir of 12 singers, including the four soloists), such instrumentation is not unusual. Although Rossini was later persuaded to orchestrate the Mass, the original version for voices, piano, and harmonium is considered the more effective setting.

Rhythm and modulation play an important part in the opening *Kyrie*, for the central part of which, the *Christe Eleison*, Rossini adopted a deliberately archaic style, echoing the 16th-century church music of Palestrina and his contemporaries. The rhythmic excitement of the *Kyrie* continues into the *Gloria*, which is followed by four extended solo movements, operatic arias in all but name. The magnificent tenor solo *Domine Deus* recalls the *Cujus animam* from his earlier *Stabat Mater*. The final section, *Cum sancto spiritu*, is an extended fugue and a real tour de force of musical craftsmanship, which reflects the thorough classical training in harmony and counterpoint he

received at the Bologna Conservatory. In the *Credo* Rossini ingeniously uses the word 'credo' as a unifying motif to which he repeatedly returns. This section of the Mass concludes with another brilliant fugue for the chorus, to the words '*Et vitam venturi saeculi, Amen*'. The *O salutaris* (a hymn, not part of the Proper of the Mass) provided Rossini with an opportunity to explore the unusual harmonies he was using in the piano pieces among his last 'Sins', modern-sounding even today. The final, luminescent *Agnus Dei* for contralto (Rossini's favourite voice) and choir brings the work to a dramatic close.

Rossini's inscription in the introduction to the first version of his score reads:

"PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE, in four voices with accompaniment of two pianos and harmonium (a small reed organ) composed during my country stay at Passy. Twelve singers of 3 sexes – men, women, and castrati – will be enough for its performance: that is, eight for the chorus, four for the soloists, a total of twelve cherubim. … Lord, rest assured, …that (my cherubim) will sing properly and con amore your praises and this little composition which is, alas, the last mortal sin of my old age."

He ended the manuscript:

"Dear God, here it is finished, this poor little Mass. Have I written sacred music or damned music?" You well know I was born to write comic opera. It contains scant learning, but all my heart. Praise be to you, and grant me entry into Paradise. G Rossini – Passy 1863".

Whatever his intent, he has left us with a unique work in the religious repertoire.

Peter Carey

Petite Messe Solennelle

Part I

1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison;
Christe eleison;
Kyrie eleison.

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

2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.

Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to men
of good will.
We praise You, we bless You,
we adore You, we glorify You.

3. Gratias

Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam

We give thanks to You
for Your great glory.

4. Domine Deus

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe, Domine Deus,
Agnus Dei, Filius Patris

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God the Father.
The Lord's only begotten Son,
Jesus Christ, Lord God,
Lamb of God, Son of the Father

5. Qui tollis

qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis;
qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

who taketh away the sins of
the world, have mercy on us;
who taketh away the sins of the
world, hear our prayers.
Who sits at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy upon us

6. Quoniam

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe

For You are the only Holy One,
the only Lord,
the only Most High,
Jesus Christ

7. Cum Sancto Spiritu

cum Sancto Spiritu
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

with the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father,
Amen

Part II

8. Credo

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem caeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium:
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum,
consubstantialem Patri;
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines
et propter nostram salutem
descendit de caelis.
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria Virgine,
et homo factus est.

I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible:
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all worlds.
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father;
by Whom all things were made.
Who for us men
and for our salvation
came down from Heaven.
And was incarnate by the Holy host of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man

9. Crucifixus

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis
sub Pontio Pilato,
passus et sepultus es

And was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered and was buried:

10. Et resurrexit

Et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum Scripturas,
et ascendit in caelum,
sedet ad dexteram
Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum
gloria,
iudicare vivos
et mortuos,
cuius regni non erit finis;
Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
Dominum, et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque
procedit
Qui cum Patre et Filio
simul adoratur et conglorificatur:
qui locutus est per prophetas.
Et unam sanctam,
catholicam et apostolicam
Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem
mortuorum,
et vitam venturi saeculi.
Amen.

And the third day he rose again,
according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into Heaven,
and sits on the right hand of the
Father.
And he shall come again with
glory,
to judge both the living
and the dead,
whose Kingdom will have no end;
And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the Lord, and Giver of Life,
who proceedeth from the Father
and the Son.
Who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified:
who has spoken through the
Prophets.
And I believe in One Holy,
Catholic, and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
And I look for the Resurrection of
the Dead,
And the Life of the world to come.
Amen.

11. Ritornello

12. Sanctus

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

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

13. O salutaris

O salutaris hostia,
Quae coeli pandis ostium:
Bella premunt hostilia,
Da robur, fer auxilium.
Amen.

O salutary Victim,
Who expands the door of the sky:
Hostile wars press.
Give strength, bear aid.
Amen.

14. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God,
who take away the sins of the
world, grant us peace

Tonight's Performers

Michael Cayton – Conductor



Michael has had a truly varied career and has been Musical Director of the Chiltern Choir since 2003. He began his musical career as a trumpeter in the Grenadier Guards Band. During his time in the military, he played at many state functions, and was pianist for investiture ceremonies at Buckingham Palace. In 1995 he went on to study piano at the Royal College of Music with the late Niel Immelman.

On graduation, he became the first recipient of the Millennium Organ and Choral Scholarship at the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, and continued his studies as a postgraduate repetiteur in the RCM's opera department. He then embarked on a career as a pianist, organist, conductor, and composer. Alongside his position as Musical Director of the Chiltern Choir, he held positions as Musical Director at both St John's Wood Church and Watford Philharmonic Society, assistant organist at St Martin in the Fields, and organist at Belsize Square Synagogue.

In addition to his conducting he is a frequent session musician for the BBC and has accompanied several broadcasts of the Daily

Service, and he is an arranger for Songs of Praise. He has published several choral pieces with Shorterhouse publications, his psalm settings now being a staple in many churches throughout the UK. In 2025 Michael embarked on a new chapter in his musical life, retraining as an educator, and in September 2026 he began a new career as a music teacher in Enfield Grammar School where he hopes to bring his knowledge and experience of music to a new generation.



Victoria Mulley – Soprano

Victoria grew up in Bradford, West Yorkshire; she read Music at King's College London, and later gained a Masters with Distinction in Vocal Performance from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. During her time at Trinity Laban she was awarded the Elliot Rosenblatt Memorial Scholarship and the Eva Malpass Scholarship, as well as winning the Paul Simm Opera Prize, the Linda Hirst Prize for Excellence in Contemporary Vocal Music, and the English Song Duo Prize (alongside pianist Francesca Lauri).

Victoria was a finalist in the inaugural New Voices singing competition at the Northern Aldborough Festival 2023. She has sung in operatic productions for companies including the National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, Barefoot Opera, Opera Loki, About Turn Theatre, and the New London Opera Group, appearing at the Tête à Tête, Grimeborn, and Edinburgh Fringe Festivals, and is equally at home on the concert stage, where she has performed as soprano soloist in oratorios including Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Fauré's *Requiem*, and Handel's *Messiah*, as well as appearing in recital across the UK.

As well as her solo work, Victoria enjoys a busy teaching practice and sings with the professional choir of St John's Wood Parish Church. She is one of the two founders and directors of The Lyra Singers, a chamber choir based in Knightsbridge, as well as a founder and director of Jam Factory Opera, a boutique opera company specialising in hidden gems of the Victorian comic opera repertoire.



Caroline Carragher – Mezzo-soprano

Lyric mezzo Caroline trained with Dennis O'Neill and Nuccia Focile, having achieved her MA with distinction at Wales International Academy of Voice. She made her Wagner debut as *Rossweisse, Die Walküre* in Regents Opera's acclaimed Ring Cycle, later singing the role for New Palace Opera. She also reprised *Rossweisse* for *The Mastersingers'* 25th-anniversary gala, featuring John Tomlinson.

Caroline made her debut with Opera North in *Peter Grimes* in Spring 2026, and also appeared with Grange Park Opera in *Don Carlo* and the world premiere of John Tavener's *Krishna*. Caroline is currently performing with Welsh National Opera (also a company debut) in *La Bohème*.

Recent engagements include alto soloist for Winchester City Festival Choir's *Oratorio de Noël* (Saint-Saëns), Luton Choral Society's Mozart *Requiem* and Martines *Dixit Dominus*, and Beethoven's *9th Symphony* for St John's Chamber Orchestra.

Forthcoming work includes alto soloist in Rossini *Stabat Mater*, Szymanowski *Stabat Mater*, Duruflé *Requiem*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

Past operatic roles include Glaša and Fekluša (*Káťa Kabanová*), New Palace Opera; Ruth (*Ruddigore*), Charles Court Opera/Opera Holland Park; Baba (*The Rake's Progress*),

Aylesbury Opera; Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), various; Third Lady/Third Boy (*The Magic Flute*) and Ragonde (*Count Ory*), Opera Alegría; Anne Boleyn (*Henry VIII*), Guildford Opera; La Badessa (*Suor Angelica*), Random Opera; Marthe Schwerlein (*Faust*), Swansea City Opera; Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*) and the title role *Carmen* for Ormond Opera; and Miss Rose (*Lakmé*), Chelsea Opera Group.

Caroline is also a skilled multi-discipline aerialist, and can often be found upside down on various circus apparatus.

For more information, please see www.carolinecarragher.com.



Matthew Pochin – Tenor

Matthew began his career as a chorister at Hereford Cathedral, where he later became a choral scholar and lay clerk. He currently studies privately with Gavin Carr.

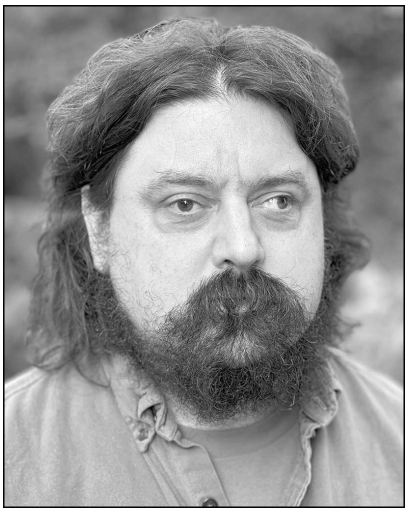
After several years working as a pastry chef, Matthew moved to South London in 2007 to continue his career as a singer. He has held positions at several churches across the city and currently sings with the choirs of St John's Wood Parish Church and West London Synagogue. He also sings regularly with the choirs of HM Chapel Royal, Hampton Court, Temple Church, and St Mary-le-Bow in the City of London.

Matthew is a founder member and Artistic Director of 'Scaramella', specialising in music for men's voices from the renaissance to modern close harmony. He researches and prepares new performance editions and arrangements for the group. Future projects include a new complete edition of Adrian Willaert's *Petrarcha* madrigals and *Musica Nova* motets, as well as works by Lassus, Verdelot, Clemens non Papa, and Andrea Gabrielli.

In collaboration with West London Synagogue, Matthew is spearheading a research project focused on the Jewish liturgical music of Abraham Dunajewski, a 19th-century Ukrainian cantor and composer from Odessa. The project aims to rediscover and showcase the rich Jewish musical heritage from this region.

He is a member of the unique Jewish barbershop group bOYbershop, performing traditional Jewish liturgical music, folksongs as well as close harmony standards and original comedy songs. In early 2020, bOYbershop had the unique honour of singing Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) music under the central dome of the Grand Mosque in Strasbourg as part of Les Sacrées Journées de Strasbourg.

Although he rarely bakes cakes anymore (much to his wife's disappointment), Matthew still enjoys cooking, especially when he can do so outdoors.



Matthew Bernstein – Bass

Matt started singing six months before University, moving from huge choruses to smaller amateur groups, and then, after moving to London, juggling an IT career with singing professionally with cathedral and London church choirs as well as live in concert, and on radio and television.

Matt has appeared in a church choir in an ITV drama; a barbershop quintet at a corporate event in Cannes; a quartet to serenade a West End première; a set of spirituals at a religious festival in Northamptonshire; immersing guests at an art gallery opening; and in the title role in Britten's *Noye's Fludde*.

On the concert stage, Matt's repertoire ranges from Pérotin to Ted Hearne. Personal concert highlights include Tallis *Lamentations*, Poulenc *Figure Humaine*, Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music*, David Lang *The Little Match Girl Passion*, and Caroline Shaw *The Isle*. Solo oratorio work includes Handel *Messiah*; the *Requiems* of Fauré, Duruflé, Mozart, Howells, and Brahms; Mozart *C-Minor Mass*; Haydn *Paukenmesse*, *Nelson Mass*, and *Theresienmesse*; Mendelssohn *Elijah*; Rossini *Petite Messe Solennel*le, and Bach *B-Minor Mass*, *Magnificat, St John* and *St Matthew Passions* and several Cantatas.

Simon Howat – Piano



Simon studied Music at Cambridge University and postgraduate Piano Accompaniment at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Over the last thirty-five years, he has, at different points, been in demand as an accompanist, music examiner for ABRSM, and peripatetic piano instructor. On the concert platform, Simon has appeared as a two-piano/piano-duet pianist, an accompanist for instrumental/vocal recitals, and a concerto performer with several regional orchestras (in *Rhapsody in Blue*, and the Grieg and Beethoven *Emperor* Concertos). Further afield, he has appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Grimeborn Festival in London, accompanying chamber opera.

As pianist for a number of choirs in the Bucks/Herts region (The Chiltern Choir since 2022), Simon has accompanied a wide spectrum of choral repertoire, with particular highlights including Verdi's *Requiem*, Brahms' *German Requiem* and Liebeslieder Waltzes, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, *Carmina Burana, Porgy and Bess, The Rio Grande, Belshazzar's Feast, Symphony of Psalms, The Bells*, Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* and *Songs of Peace*, Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Michael Cayton's *The Way Through the Woods*, and *The Passing of the Year* by Jonathan Dove.

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The Chiltern Singers, a small group drawn from the Chiltern Choir, is available to sing at events – weddings, funerals, social functions, etc. Please direct enquiries to Simon Boulcott at

chilternsingers@chilternchoir.org.uk

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