



Newbury Chamber Choir

American Choral Reflections

Featuring music by Aaron Copland, Eric Whitacre,
Amy Beach, Stephen Paulus, and Ola Gjeilo

Saturday, 14 March 2026 at 7.30pm
St John's Church, Newbury RG14 7PY

www.newburychamberchoir.org

The Newbury Chamber Choir was founded as the Newbury Singers by Gerald Finzi in the 1940's. It has become known for reviving works outside the mainstream choral repertory and presenting them in new and accessible ways, as well as for the quality of its performances of more familiar pieces.

Charity no. 280434

www.newburychamberchoir.org



The choir is supported by Greenham Trust. There are no auditions and enquiries from prospective members are welcomed. If you are interested in joining the choir then please contact Jeremy Wright at secretary@newburychamberchoir.co.uk

Newbury Chamber Choir

Sopranos

Gill Careless, Natalie Croxup, Brenda de Souza,
Charlotte Farquharson, Leonora Hill, Caroline Holbrook,
Kate Oppel, Gillian Rule, Sarah South, Viv Toll,
Lynne Valentine, Ann Vodden, Amanda Wheeler

Altos

Ros Bagshaw, Margaret Baker, Karen Coffin, Sarah Ede,
Alison Handy, Clare Heald, Rosemary MacDonald,
Clare Owen, Chris Starkey (Chair), Anouska Wilson

Tenors

Paul Farrington, Richard Foster, Gordon Fry, Chris Gwynn,
David Munns, Jeremy Wright (Secretary), Mike Youdan

Basses

Mike Ananin, John Bagshaw, Alan Butterworth,
Andrew Davis, Grahame Foulkes, Richard Jones

Rehearsal Accompanist: Georgie Robertson

Cover picture The Brooklyn Bridge by Michal Ludwikzak – Pexels.com

Newbury Chamber Choir
Musical Director: Ben de Souza
Piano: Georgina Robertson
Soprano: Elisabeth Cullen

Programme

Four Sacred Motets	Aaron Copland
1. Help us, O Lord	
2. Thou, Jehovah, abideth for ever	
We shall walk through the valley	Undine Smith Moore
Northern Lights	Ola Gjeilo
Ubi Caritas	Ola Gjeilo
Hermit Songs, Op.29	Samuel Barber
5. The Crucifixion	
8. The monk and his cat	
Sleep	Eric Whitacre
Little Birds	Eric Whitacre

Interval

Four Sacred Motets	Aaron Copland
3. Have mercy upon us, O my Lord	
4. Sing ye praises to our King	
The Gift to be simple	Bob Chilcott
The Seal Lullaby	Eric Whitacre
This Marriage	Eric Whitacre
12 Poems of Emily Dickinson	Aaron Copland
No 5. Heart we will forget him	
Eve-song	Jake Heggie
5. Snake	
Someone to watch over me	George Gershwin
Deep River	Roy Ringwald
The Road Home	Stephen Paulus
With prayer and supplication	Amy Beach
Peace I leave with you	Amy Beach

Four Motets

Aaron Copland

Composed in 1921 while Copland was studying with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Nadia Boulanger required her pupils to learn to compose traditional forms, among them the motet. Written under her instruction, Copland's motets make use of biblical texts for an a capella chorus of mixed voices. He wrote, "I think of these as student pieces that show some influence of Moussorgsky, whom I admired. I agreed to their publication with mixed emotions. While they have a certain curiosity value - perhaps people want to know what I was doing as a student - the style is not yet really mine."

1. Help us, O Lord

Help us O Lord. For with Thee is the fount of life.
In Thy light shall we see light. Let us march and try our ways.
Turn to God.
For with Thee is fount of life. In Thy light shall we see light.
It is good that man should wait. It is good that man should hope,
Hope for the salvation of the Lord.
Help us, O Lord.

2. Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever

Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever. God reigneth over all men and nations.
His throne doth last and doth guide all the ages.
Why wilt Thou forsake us ever? When wilt Thou forget us never?
Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever.
And all the length of our days will ever be our Saviour.
When wilt Thou forget us never? Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever.

We shall walk through the valley Traditional Spiritual

Arr. Undine Smith Moore

Lord we shall walk, shall walk in peace.
We shall walk through the valley in peace.
If Jesus himself shall lead us, we shall walk through the valley in peace.
There will be no trials there.
If Jesus himself shall lead us, we shall walk through the valley in peace.

Northern Lights

Ola Gjeilo

Words from Song of Solomon (Song of Songs 6:3)

Pulchra es amica mea, suavis et
decora sicut Jerusalem
Terribilis ut castrorum acies
ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me quia ipsi
me avolare fecerunt.

Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet
and comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army set in array.
Turn away thy eyes from me, for
they have made me flee away.



Ubi Caritas

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi
amor.
Exsultemus et in ipso jucundemur.
Timeamus et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
Amen.

Ola Gjeilo

Where charity and love are, God is
there.
The love of Christ has gathered us
together.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Let us revere and love the living
God.
And from a sincere heart let us love
one another. Amen.

Hermit Songs, Op.29

Samuel Barber

The song cycle was composed in 1953 and published in 1954. The poems are translations of texts by anonymous Irish monks who lived sometime between the 8th and 13th centuries. The premiere was sung by soprano Leontyne Price.

No 5. The Crucifixion

Translation by Howard Mumford Jones

At the cry of the first bird they began to crucify Thee, O Swan!
Never shall lament cease because of that.
It was like the parting of day from night.
Ah, sore was the suffering borne by the body of Mary's Son,
But sorer still to Him was the grief which for His sake
Came upon His Mother.

No 8. The Monk and His Cat

Adapted by W. H. Auden

Pangur, white Pangur,
How happy we are alone together, Scholar and cat.
Each has his own work to do daily; for you it is hunting, for me, study.
Your shining eye watches the wall; my feeble eye is fixed on a book.
You rejoice when your claws entrap a mouse;
I rejoice when my mind fathoms a problem.
Pleased with his own art neither hinders the other;
Thus we live ever without tedium and envy.
Pangur, white Pangur, how happy we are, alone together, Scholar and cat.

Sleep

Eric Whitacre

Words by Charles Anthony Silvestri (b.1965)

The evening hangs beneath the moon, a silver thread on darkened dune.
With closing eyes and resting head I know that sleep is coming soon.
Upon my pillow, safe in bed, a thousand pictures fill my head.
I cannot sleep, my mind's a-flight; and yet my limbs seem made of lead.
If there are noises in the night, a frightening shadow, flickering light,
Then I surrender unto sleep, where clouds of dream give second sight,
What dreams may come, both dark and deep,
Of flying wings and soaring leap
As I surrender unto sleep.

Little Birds

Eric Whitacre

Text Octavio Paz (1914-1998)

Interval

Refreshments are available in the Parish Room

3. Have mercy on us, O my Lord

Have mercy on us, O my Lord. Be not far from us, O my God.
Give ear unto our humble prayer. Attend and judge us in Thy might.
Uphold us with Thy guiding hand. Restore us to Thy kindly light.
Have mercy on us, O my Lord. Be not far from us, O my God.
O my heart is sorely pained and calls on Thee in vain.
Cast me not away from salvation.
Then we shall trust in Thee, then we will bear our place.
Be not far from us, O my Lord.
O my heart is sorely pained and calls on Thee in vain.
Cast me not away from salvation.
Have mercy, O Lord. Be not far off O my God.

4. Sing ye praises to our King

Sing ye praises to our King, sing ye praises to our Ruler.
Sing ye praises to our King and Ruler.
Come and hear all ye men. Come and hear my praises.
He doth bless all the earth and bringeth peace and comfort.
Shout unto God all ye men. Shout unto God all your praises.
Sing ye praises to our King. Come and praise Him all ye men.
Shout and praise Him all ye men.
He doth bless all the earth, bringeth peace to all men.
Sing ye praises to our King and Ruler.

**The gift to be simple
Traditional Shaker Tune**

Arr. Bob Chilcott

The gift to be simple, the gift to be free.
'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where you ought-a be,
And when find ourselves in a place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained, to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
Turn will be our delight till by turning we come round right.
'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where you ought-a be,
And when we find ourselves in a place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free.

The Seal Lullaby

Eric Whitacre

Words by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

Oh hush thee, my baby, the night is behind us,
And black are the waters that sparkled so green.
The moon, o'er the combers, looks downward to find us
At rest in hollows that rustle between.
Where billow meets billow, there soft be thy pillow;
Oh weary wee flipperling, curl at thy ease!
The storm shall not wake thee, nor shark overtake thee,
Asleep in the arms of the slow-swinging seas.

This marriage

Eric Whitacre

Words by Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), tr. Kabir Helminski

May these vows and this marriage be blessed.
May it be sweet milk, this marriage, like wine and halvah.
May this marriage offer fruit and shade like the date palm.
May this marriage be full of laughter, our every day a day in paradise.
May this marriage be a sign of compassion,
a seal of happiness here and hereafter.
May this marriage have a fair face and a good name,
an omen as welcomes the moon in a clear blue sky.
I am out of words to describe how spirit mingles in this marriage.

Heart, We Will Forget Him!

Aaron Copland

Words by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Heart, we will forget him! is the fifth song in Copland's cycle of *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Completed in 1950 it represents Copland's longest work for solo voice. "I had no intention of composing a song cycle," wrote Copland. His interest in the Dickinson poems began with *The Chariot* and he gradually added others. Each poem is dedicated to a composer friend; this one is to Marcelle de Manziarly. Copland himself acknowledged that many have heard the influence of Charles Ives, Gustav Mahler, and Gabriel Fauré in the songs, and *Heart, We Will Forget Him!* has been described as Copland at his most Mahlerian.

Christie Finn

Heart, we will forget him, you and I, tonight!
You must forget the warmth he gave, I will forget the light.
When you have done pray tell me, then I, my thoughts, will dim.
Haste! 'lest while you're lagging I may remember him!

Eve-Song
No 5. Snake

Jake Heggie

Words by Philip Littell (b.1950)

Eve-Song (1996) is a cycle of eight songs setting verse by Philip Littell, a poet, playwright, and librettist based in Los Angeles. It was composed "to give the Biblical Eve a contemporary voice."

Snake represents the full awakening of Eve's imagination in a swinging tune that introduces the freedom of jazz. Eve follows the snake as he leads her through shadow and light, and convinces her to bite the apple.

Someone to watch over me
Lyrics Ira Gershwin (1896-1983)

George Gershwin

Someone to Watch Over Me was composed by George Gershwin with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, assisted by Howard Dietz who wrote the title. It was written for the musical *Oh, Kay!* (1926), with the part originally sung on Broadway by English actress Gertrude Lawrence while holding a rag doll in a sentimental solo scene.

There's a saying old, says that love is blind
Still we're often told, seek and ye shall find
So I'm going to seek a certain lad I've had in mind
Looking everywhere, haven't found him yet
He's the big affair I cannot forget
Only man I ever think of with regret
I'd like to add his initial to my monogram
Tell me, where is the shepherd for this lost lamb?
There's a somebody I'm longin' to see
I hope that he turns out to be someone who'll watch over me

I'm a little lamb who's lost in the wood
I know I could, always be good to one who'll watch over me
Although he may not be the man some girls think of as handsome
To my heart he carries the key
Won't you tell him please, to put on some speed
Follow my lead, oh, how I need someone to watch over me.

Deep River
Traditional Spiritual

Arr. Roy Ringwald

Deep river, my home is over Jordan
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campgroun'
Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast,
That promised land where all is peace?
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campgroun'

The Road Home

Stephen Paulus

Words by permission of Michael Dennis Browne (b.1940)

Tell me, where is the road
I can call my own,
That I left, that I lost,
So long ago?
All these years I have wandered,
Oh, when will I know
There's a way, there's a road
That will lead me home?

After wind, after rain,
When the dark is done.
As I wake from a dream
In the gold of day,
Through the air there's a calling
From far away,
There's a voice I can hear
That will lead me home.

Rise up, follow me,
Come away, is the call,
With the love in your heart
As the only song;
There is no such beauty
As where you belong:
Rise up, follow me,
I will lead you home



With prayer and supplication

Amy Beach

With prayer and supplication, let your requests be known unto God.
And the peace of God which passeth all understanding
Shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Peace I leave with you

Amy Beach

Peace I leave with you, I leave with you my peace.
My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled.



Roy Ringwald (1910-1995) was born in Helena, Montana and grew up in Santa Monica, California. Choir leaders everywhere rated Roy Ringwald as one of the most accomplished arrangers of our time. Ringwald joined Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians as a singer and arranger in 1935, and in the early 1940's, at Fred Waring's request, Ringwald arranged the poem "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which was written by Julia Ward Howe. Roy Ringwald's studies in the field of music were limited to the elementary courses he received in school. Thereafter, he studied on his own and learned "the hard way." He was playing the piano at

paid engagements with a dance group by the age of 12 and while in high school he studied voice, piano, organ, sight-singing, harmony, score reading and history of music. He organized dance bands and pit bands for silent motion pictures; he served as school organist and student director of the glee club; and he played viola with a classical string quartet. Following high school, he went directly into a professional career as performer and arranger, organizing his own professionally successful groups.

His work as an arranger and composer has an individuality of style that has retained its freshness over many years. Battle Hymn of the Republic, Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor, God Bless America and No Man is an Island are but a few of the hundreds of his stirring arrangements.



Undine Eliza Anna Smith Moore (1904-1989), the "Dean of Black Women Composers", was an American composer and professor of music. Moore was originally trained as a classical pianist, but composed mostly vocal music, her preferred genre. Much of her work was inspired by spirituals and folk music. She was a renowned teacher, and once stated that she experienced "teaching itself as an art". Towards the end of her life, she received many awards for her accomplishments as a music educator.

The granddaughter of slaves Undine Eliza Anna Smith was the youngest of three children. She was born in Jarratt, Virginia, which had a large African-American population, and she would later recall memories of the community singing and praying at the Morningstar Baptist Church. Of her childhood, she said that "above all else, music reigned." In 1908, her family moved to Petersburg, Virginia and at age seven Undine Smith began taking piano lessons under Lillian Allen Darden, who later encouraged her to attend Fisk University, where she studied piano, organ, and music theory, earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1926.

Smith turned down a scholarship to Petersburg's Virginia Normal Institute to enrol at Fisk, a historically black college. In 1924, the Juilliard School granted Smith their first ever scholarship to a student at Fisk, allowing her to continue her undergraduate studies where she graduated cum laude in 1926.

She travelled widely as a professor and lectured on black composers and conducted workshops. She continued her teaching career as a distinguished professor at Virginia Union University until 1976.

Many of her compositions were inspired by melodies of spirituals that her mother sang. Although she composed more than 100 pieces between 1925 and 1987, only twenty-six were published during her lifetime. Moore wrote over 50 choral works, 21 compositions for solo voice and accompaniment, and 18 instrumental pieces.



George Gershwin (1898-1937) was one of the most significant and popular American composers of all time. He wrote primarily for the Broadway musical theatre, but important as well are his orchestral and piano compositions in which he blended the techniques and forms of classical music with the stylistic nuances and techniques of popular music and jazz.

He was born Jacob Gershowitz in Brooklyn, New York City into a Russian Jewish immigrant family. Around the age of 10, he took to playing the piano his parents had bought for his older brother Ira.

The acclaimed piano teacher Charles Hambitzer took Gershwin on at the age of 14 and

immediately realized the level of talent he had on his hands.

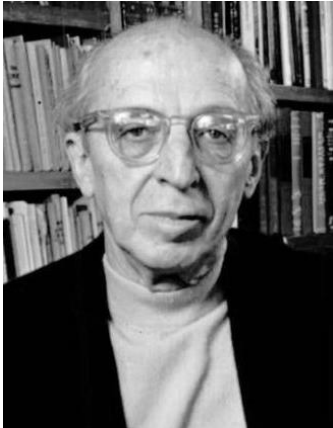
His first big hit was *Swanee*, composed in 1919 in 10 minutes on a bus. The singer Al Jolson heard it and recorded it, leading to the sale of a million sheet music copies, and an estimated two million records.

In his 20's, Gershwin started composing Broadway musical theatre works with his brother Ira writing the lyrics. In January 1924, Gershwin reportedly learned from a newspaper article that he was meant to be writing a "jazz concerto" for a programme of new American music to be given a month later. Writing at a furious pace to meet the deadline, Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue* in just three weeks.

In the mid-1920's, Gershwin stayed in Paris for a short period, during which time he applied to study composition with the noted Nadia Boulanger who rejected him. She was afraid that rigorous classical study would ruin his jazz-influenced style. While in the French capital, Gershwin wrote *An American in Paris*.

Gershwin's most ambitious composition was *Porgy and Bess* (1935) which he called a "folk opera." It was a box office flop at the time but is now it is regarded as one of the most important American operas of the 20th century.

Early in 1937, Gershwin began to complain of blinding headaches and he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. An operation was unsuccessful and Gershwin died on 11 July at the age of 38.



Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was an American composer, critic, writer, teacher, pianist, and conductor of his own and other American music. Copland was referred to by his peers and critics as the "Dean of American Music." The open, slowly changing harmonies in much of his music are typical of what many consider the sound of American music, evoking the vast American landscape and pioneer spirit.

He is best known for the works he wrote in the 1930's and 1940's in a deliberately accessible style often referred to as "populist" and which he called his "vernacular" style. Such works include the ballets *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*, his *Fanfare for the Common Man* and

Third Symphony. In addition to his ballets and orchestral works, he produced music in many other genres, including chamber music, vocal works, opera, and film scores.

Born in Brooklyn, New York he was brought up in the family department store on Washington Avenue. Described by Aaron Copland as "a kind of neighbourhood Macy's," the store was operated by Sarah and Harris Copland, Russian-born, Jewish immigrants. They lived above and to the side of the store with their five children. Everyone in the family worked at the store and "Copland's" was the centre of their lives.

His sister Laurine gave him his first piano lessons and by the time he was 15 he had decided to become a composer. After some initial studies with composer Rubin Goldmark, Copland looked for a way to get to France, "where everything new and exciting was happening."

In the summer of 1921, he applied and was accepted for the first fellowship at the Conservatoire Americain at the Palace of Fontainebleau where he came under the influence of Nadia Boulanger, a brilliant teacher who shaped the outlook of an entire generation of American musicians. He decided to stay on in Paris, where he became Boulanger's first American student in composition. After three years, Copland returned to New York City and was determined to make his way as a full-time composer.

Copland gave lecture-recitals and did some teaching and writing, but he found that composing orchestral music in a modernist style, which he had adopted while studying abroad, was unprofitable. He shifted in the mid-1930's to a more accessible musical style.



Amy Marcy Beach (née Cheney) (1867-1944) was the first female composer to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra, her *Gaelic Symphony*, premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1896. She was also one of the first U.S. composers to have her music recognized in Europe, and the first classical U.S. composer to achieve success without the benefit of European study.

Born in Henniker, New Hampshire, Amy Marcy Cheney demonstrated precocious musical talent from an early age. She began taking piano lessons at age six, although she had been composing simple melodies on the keyboard since age four. In October 1883, at the age of 16, she gave her first public recital

at Boston Music Hall. Several more successful recitals followed, and in March 1885 she played the Chopin *Piano Concerto in F Minor* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In 1885 upon her marriage to the distinguished surgeon, Dr. H.H.A. Beach, who was 24 years her senior, she curtailed her performing in accordance with his wishes, and focused on composition.

In February 1892 the Boston Symphony and the Handel and Haydn Society performed her *Mass in E-flat* (1890), her first major work, written for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, and the first by a woman to be performed by those organizations.

Following the death of her husband in 1910, she spent the years 1911-1914 in Europe, where her performances and compositions were widely acclaimed.

In the 1920's and 1930's, Amy Beach composed steadily, focusing especially on choral music, songs, and smaller-scale works.

Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, as she was known, was by far the preeminent female composer in the United States, and her more than 150 works also included choral works, church music, chamber works, cantatas, and songs.

Beyond composing, Beach was highly active as a lecturer and advocate for American music, particularly the work of women composers.

Adrienne Fried Block, Oxford University Press 1998 and other sources



Photo by Lillian Andersen

Norwegian composer and pianist **Ola Gjeilo** was born near Oslo in 1978, and moved to New York City in 2001 to begin his composition studies at the Juilliard School. He now lives with his wife Irene in Laguna Niguel, California.

Ola Gjeilo is one of the most frequently performed composers in the choral world. An accomplished pianist, improvisations over his own published choral pieces have become a trademark of his collaborations. He grew up in a musically eclectic home listening to classical, jazz, pop and folk, a broad background he later incorporated into his classical composition studies at The Juilliard

School and the Royal College of Music in London.

Ola is an exclusive Decca Classics artist, and his Decca albums include *Ola Gjeilo* and *Winter Songs*, also featuring Tenebrae, Voces8 and the Choir of Royal Holloway, as well as the solo piano albums *Night* and *Dawn*.

His global streams have now surpassed 250 million.

olagjeilo.com



Bob Chilcott (b. 1955) has enjoyed a lifelong association with choral music, as a chorister and choral scholar in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, and as a member of the King's Singers.

He became a full-time composer and conductor in 1997, and has composed a large catalogue of choral music which is published by Oxford University Press. His most often performed pieces include *Can you hear me?*, *A Little Jazz Mass*, *Requiem*, and the *St John Passion*.

Bob has directed choirs in more than 30 countries worldwide and conducts many thousands of amateur singers in a continuing series of *Singing Days*. Since 2002 he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers and since 2019 Principal Conductor of Birmingham University Singers.

His music has been widely recorded by leading British choirs and groups including The King's Singers, King's College, Cambridge, Wells Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, The Sixteen, Tenebrae, The BBC Singers, The Bach Choir, Commotio, and Ora.

bobchilcott.com



Stephen Paulus (1949-2014) was a prolific American composer of classical music. He wrote over 600 works for chorus, opera, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo voice, concert band, piano, and organ, receiving premieres and performances throughout the world as well as a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2015.

He was a recipient of both NEA and Guggenheim Fellowships. Born August 24, 1949 in Summit New Jersey, Paulus lived most of his life in Saint Paul, Minnesota where he earned his doctorate in music composition from the University of

Minnesota in 1978. Paulus was a passionate advocate for the works and careers of his colleagues, co-founding the Minnesota Composers Forum in 1973, now known as the American Composers Forum, the largest composer service organization in the U.S.

Stephen Paulus passed away in 2014 from complications of a stroke, but his music continues to be frequently performed and described by critics as rugged, angular, lyrical, lean, rhythmically aggressive, original, often gorgeous, moving, and uniquely American.

stephenpaulus.com



Eric Whitacre (b.1970) is a Grammy Award-winning composer and conductor, and is among today's most popular musicians. A graduate of The Juilliard School, his works are performed worldwide, and his ground-breaking Virtual Choirs have united well over 100,000 singers from more than 145 countries.

Eric served consecutive terms as Artist in Residence with the Los Angeles Master Chorale and currently holds the position of Visiting Composer at Pembroke College. He is also an Ambassador for the Royal College of Music in London. In the United States he has conducted,

played in, or assisted over 30 musical theatre and operetta productions. A widely respected conductor, Eric has worked with the world's leading choirs and orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Major classical commissions have been written for the BBC Proms, The Tallis Scholars, VOCES8, cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and The King's Singers.

ericwhitacre.com



Samuel Osmond Barber II (1910-1981) was an American composer, pianist, conductor, baritone, and music educator, and one of the most celebrated composers of the mid-20th century. Barber was adept at both instrumental and vocal music. His *Adagio for Strings* (1936) has earned a permanent place in the orchestral concert repertory, as has his adaptation of that work for chorus, *Agnus Dei* (1967). He received the Pulitzer Prize for Music twice: for his opera *Vanessa* (1956-1957), and for the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1962).

While Barber composed a significant body of purely instrumental music, two-thirds of his compositional output were art songs for voice and piano, choral music, and songs for voice and orchestra. Some of his most frequently performed songs include both the solo voice and choral versions of *Sure on this shining night* (1938) and the song cycle *Hermit Songs* (1953), with anonymous texts by Irish monks from the eighth through thirteenth centuries. This emphasis on sung material was rooted in his own brief career as a professional baritone in his 20's which inspired a lifelong love of vocal music.

Barber was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, his father was a physician; his mother was a pianist of English-Scottish-Irish descent and his uncle, Sidney Homer, was a composer of American art songs who mentored Barber for more than 25 years,

A child prodigy, Barber began studying the piano at the age of six and at age seven composed his first work, *Sadness*, a solo piano piece. At the age of 10, Barber wrote his first operetta, *The Rose Tree*, to a libretto by the family's cook and at the age of 12, he became an organist at a local church.

At the age of 14, Barber entered the youth artist program at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he ultimately spent ten years developing his talents as a triple prodigy in composition, voice, and piano.

In 1953 Barber was introduced to soprano Leontyne Price by her voice teacher Florence Kimball, when he was looking for a singer to perform his song cycle *Hermit Songs*. Impressed with her voice, Barber engaged her to premiere the work with Barber accompanying on the piano. Price would become closely associated with performances of his music over the next two decades.



Photo James Niebuhr

Jake Heggie was born in 1961 in West Palm Beach, Florida and raised in Bexley, Ohio. An alumnus of UCLA he was the first Composer-in-Residence at San Francisco Opera, 1998-2000.

He is best known for *Dead Man Walking* (2000), the most widely performed new opera of the last 25 years. Heggie has composed more than 300 art songs, concerti, chamber music, choral, and orchestral works. His compositions have been performed worldwide and he regularly collaborates with some of the world's most beloved artists as both

composer and pianist. Heggie continues to write all his work by hand, believing that a visceral, physical connection to the score is an essential part of composition. Since 1993, he has made his home in San Francisco.

jakeheggie.com



Elisabeth Cullen is currently studying voice with Mary Nelson at the Royal Academy of Music. She is in demand as a soloist and recitalist and has performed with choirs such as Farnham and Bourne Choral Society, Slough Philharmonic Chorus, Marlow Choral Society, Newbury Chamber Choir and South Bucks Choral Society.

Elisabeth has also been invited to sing several vocal recitals including, appearances as part of the Beaconsfield United Reformed Church Lunchtime Concert Series, Hurley Music and Arts Festival and Norderm Farm Centre for the Arts' Summer Concert Series. She currently also holds the positions of 'Solo Cantor' at St Mary's Church, Cadogan Street and

Islington Choral Society Soprano Choral Scholar.

Along side her vocal studies, Elisabeth conducts Taplow Children's and Boys' Choirs and works with the National Youth Choirs on their residential courses. Introducing children to music is something she finds very rewarding as is her work with the Royal Academy of Music Widening Participation department. Elisabeth was honoured to receive the very highly commended award in the Royal Academy of Music Michael Head Song Prize in 2024 and two highly commended awards in the Elena Gerhardt Lieder Prize and the Major Von Someren-Godfrey English Song Prize in 2025.

In her free time, orchestral playing remains close to her heart. Elisabeth has grade 8 violin and grade 8 combined orchestral percussion and still enjoys playing with orchestras such as YMSO.

Away from the concert hall, she continues to coach the next generation of springboard and platform divers; a sport which took her to national and international medals before her commitment to pursue music.



Ben de Souza is a British choral conductor, accordionist and singer.

He is the Founding Director of the choir at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and is currently Musical Director of Farnham & Bourne Choral Society and Newbury Chamber Choir.

He is also Director of Music at Earley St Peter's Church, Reading.

Ben has previously held posts with Taplow Children's and Boys' choirs, John Lewis Music Society and Finchley Children's Music Group. He has commissioned and conducted new works by Lucy Walker, Ben Ponniah, Graham Ross, Ed Nesbit and Diana Owen.

As a choral singer Ben has sung with the award-winning Taplow Youth Choir (Gillian Dibden MBE) and Magdalene College Chapel Choir, Cambridge (Graham Walker), and held a choral scholarship with King's Voices, Cambridge (Ben Parry).

He has recorded with several of the country's finest choirs including the Gabrieli Consort (Paul McCreesh), the Choir of King's College, Cambridge (Sir Stephen Cleobury), and VOCES8. Ben has studied singing with Alexander Ashworth and Richard Edgar-Wilson.

His credits as a bass/baritone soloist include performances of Haydn's *The Creation*, Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, and Faure's *Requiem*.

Ben holds an MMus in Choral Studies from Cambridge University, where he studied conducting with some of the world's leading choral musicians including Stephen Layton, Graham Ross, Andrew Nethsingha and Sarah MacDonald. Ben completed his undergraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music as a classical accordionist, studying with Owen Murray. He continues to have an active accordion playing career, especially with *Duo Fisarco* alongside violinist Chloë Meade. Ben currently holds accordion teaching positions at Salisbury Cathedral School and Eton College.

When not involved in something musical Ben can be found volunteering at Didcot Railway Centre, building finescale model railways, or doing anything football-related.



Georgie Robertson has been Head of Expressive Arts at St Bart's School, Newbury with additional responsibility as Head of Music for 10 years, and thoroughly enjoys helping her students to access music education at all levels, whether through the classroom or via extra-curricular enrichment. Her students have gone on to read music at Oxford, Guildhall Conservatoire, Durham, The Royal Welsh College of Music, and the Royal Northern Conservatoire to name but a few. She has also mentored students in gaining places with the National Youth Orchestra, the National Youth Music Theatre projects, Junior conservatoire

programmes and as finalists in numerous National composition competitions. As a musician in her own right, Georgie has a passion for musicology and 20th century analytical principles, which she developed as a leading area of research for her MMus. Under the tuition of Graham Sadler she developed an additional interest in early music repertoire, having also learned to play the treble viol and harpsichord, alongside developing church organ skills with John Scott Whitely in York Minster.

As a hobby viola player Georgie was fortunate to have lessons with Geoffrey Duggan of the CBSO and David Atkinson of the Halle.

Georgie is currently working on projects with the ABRSM and has recently taken on the role of chair of the Newbury Spring Festival Friends committee. She has extensive experience as a choral accompanist, having worked with numerous choral societies, specialist choirs and programmes with the BBC and is thoroughly enjoying working with Ben and Newbury Chamber Choir.



Newbury Chamber Choir
Next concert
Favourite Choral Anthems
Featuring

The Song School of Earley St Peter's Church, Reading

Saturday, 20 June 2026 at 6.00pm

St George's Church, Wash Common RG14 6NU

www.newburychamberchoir.org

The logo for the Newbury Symphony Orchestra, featuring the text 'NEWBURY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA' in a white serif font. The word 'SYMPHONY' is in a smaller font size and has a stylized 'P'. The text is set against a black rectangular background with a white vertical line to the left of the words.

NEWBURY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Spring Concert

Saturday 21 March 2026 7:30pm

Elgar- Pomp & Circumstance March #4

Sibelius- Violin Concerto
Soloist:-Yume Tomita

Holst- The Planets

Conductor: Jonathan Williams
Leader: Susie Henwood



St. Nicolas Church, Newbury, RG14 5HG

Tickets £18, Students £7.50, Under 18's £5

Available online at www.newburysymphonyorchestra.org and
on the door.

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NEWBURY
Chorai
SOCIETY

Spring Season 2026



Carl Orff:

Carmina Burana

Anton Bruckner: *Te Deum*

Conductor: Joe Tobin

Saturday 28th March 2026, 7:30pm

St Nicolas Church, Newbury

**Tickets £18, 12-18 years & fulltime students
18-22 years £10, under 12s £5, available online
at www.newburychoral.org.uk and from choir
members**



