

BACH CHRISTMAS ORATORIO THIS ADVENT AT ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS

The London Bach Singers and Feinstein Ensemble perform Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio' at St Martin-in-the-Fields on Saturday 27 November, 7.30pm in the final concert of the Feinstein Ensemble's annual Bach Cantata Series.

The Christmas Oratorio has been a popular favourite for concert audiences and church-goers for centuries. Bach's great masterpiece, composed during the Leipzig period toward the end of his life, which also produced the B Minor Mass and some 300 cantatas, tells the story of Christ's birth using traditional passages from the Gospels interspersed with arias and choruses which brilliantly illuminate the narrative. From the opening Chorus, featuring trumpets and timpani, to the exquisite Pastoral Sinfonia, with four solo oboes and flutes, the unusually rich orchestrations provide a colourful canvas for the telling of the nativity story.

The Feinstein Ensemble, who specialise in historically accurate performances of music from the 18th century, is joined by tenor Nicholas Hurndall Smith singing the narrative role of the Evangelist with Faye Newton (soprano) and William Purefoy (alto) in the roles of angels and Ben Davies (bass) as the shepherd in a performance of parts 1, 2, 3 and 6.

St Martin-in-the-Fields' Baroque architecture and superb acoustic, provide the ideal venue in which to hear this historically accurate performance featuring some of this country's greatest Baroque musicians.

Tickets priced at £28, £24, £20, £14 and £7 are available from St Martin-in-the-Fields Box Office 020 7766 1100, www.smitf.org

Notes to editors:

St Martin-in-the-Fields, with over 350 concerts a year, is one of the busiest music venues in the country. Concerts draw visitors from all over the world attracted by St Martin's superb acoustics, intimate yet impressive surroundings and outstanding musical standards. Concerts take place on some Tuesdays and every Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7.30pm and include Early and Baroque Music, chamber music, song and piano recitals. St Martin-in-the-Fields is also a working parish church with a calendar of services, which on Sundays and Wednesdays are choral. The full programme of services and concert information can be found at www.smitf.org.

Nicholas Hurndall Smith read Music at Oxford, and went on to study with David Pollard on the Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Opera Course, supported by The Leverhulme Trust, The Worshipful Company of Salters and The Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipemakers and Tobacco Blenders.

He began his career with a Rodney Milnes review in Opera Magazine: tenor Nicholas Smith shone especially brightly, a most accomplished actor as well as an inventive singer and he has since been described as 'Wonderfully manic' in London's Metro and the Times wrote of 'delightful' cameo of Nicholas Smith's servant Arv.

Of his concert work the Daily Telegraph wrote 'A refreshingly mellow tenor' and the Financial Times of his 'Rapt and devout delivery', and he has sung the arias in Bach's St John Passion at the London Handel Festival, Bach Cantatas 63 and 65 with the Academy of Ancient Music, Schubert's Winterreise at St Marien Spandau, Berlin, the title role in Carissimi's Jonah in the BBC Proms, Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Kristiansund, and the Evangelist in Bach's St John Passion in Jever. He recently sang the role of Coridon in Handel's Acis and Galatea with Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort & Players in Vienna, Strasbourg and at the Wigmore Hall. He is in demand

as a Britten soloist and has sung St Nicolas with the London Mozart Players, the Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings with the Haffner Orchestra, the Spring Symphony at the Mary Wakefield Festival and the War Requiem with the combined choral societies of Cumbria.

He is a member of the highly acclaimed solo–voice ensemble I Fagiolini, with whom he has appeared throughout Europe, America, South Africa and the Far East as well as regularly on BBC Radio 3. He also sang the role of Coridon with the Dunedin Consort in their recording of *Acis and Galatea* which was recently selected as First Choice Recommendation by Radio 3's Building a Library.

Faye Newton's repertoire ranges from the 12th to the 18th centuries. She is a member of Philip Pickett's New London Consort, with whom she has performed as a soloist in the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall. She has recently participated in the NLC's world tour of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (directed by Jonathan Miller), and featured as soprano soloist in Vivaldi's *Gloria* at the 2008 Perth International Arts Festival (Western Australia). In January 2009 she made her solo debut at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in Handel's *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, with Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra.

Faye's other projects include singing in a production of *The Tempest* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, a series of Bach cantatas with the Feinstein Ensemble in St Martin-in-the-Fields, London and a number of concerts and recordings with His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts, including a newly–released CD of works by Giovanni Battista Grillo. Faye also teaches Early Music vocal techniques at the University of Birmingham.

With an established reputation in the UK, including performances with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Hanover Band, English Concert and The Sixteen, William Purefoy is also frequently to be seen internationally with concerts, recitals and operatic appearances in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, and his debut at Carnegie Hall in New York in 2008.

A graduate of Magdalen College Oxford and Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, he was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Awards and a winner of the NFMS Young Concert Artists Award.

His international operatic engagements have included *Ottone* (L'Incoronazione di Poppea) for Theater Basel, *Ptolemy* (Guilio Cesare) and *Dr Nice* (Evening Hymn) for Staatsoper Hannover, while highlights in the UK include Sir Philip Sydney in *Harle's Angel* *Magick* (directed by David Pountney at the Royal Albert Hall for the BBC Proms), *Apollo* in Mozart's *Apollo and Hyacinth* for Opera Theatre Company and Classical Opera Company, *Ascanio* Mozart's *Ascanio* in *Alba*, and the Handel roles *Athamas* (*Semele*), *Lychas* (*Hercules*) and *Arsace* (*Partenope*) for Buxton Festival. In addition he appeared as *Ernesto* in *Il Mondo Della Luna* for Garsington Opera, while for Scottish Opera he sang *Andronico* (*Tamerlano*) and *Antonio* (*Gesualdo*) and he has appeared frequently at Shakespeare's Globe.

His recordings include Vaughan–Williams *Mass in G Minor* (Hickox/Chandos), Boyce's *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day* and David's *Lamentation Over Saul and Jonathan* (Hanover Band/ASV Gaudeamus), *Rosie Blood* (John Harle Terror and Magnificence/Decca Argo) and the role of *Spirit* in *Dido and Aeneas* (Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Chandos). He was featured in the television series *In Search of Shakespeare* and the film *Young Victoria* and has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall, Barbican and Purcell Room as well as in Innsbruck and Graz.

Ben Davies was born in London in 1976 and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. His roles include *Sailor* (*Dido and Aeneas*) for William Christie and Deborah Warner at the Vienna Festival, *Opera Comique Paris* and *Netherlands Opera* at the Holland Festival; *Ubalde* (Gluck *Armide*) for the Buxton Festival; *Aeneas* (*Dido and Aeneas*) under Sir John Eliot Gardiner at the Opera de Lyon; *Judge* (Korngold *Das Wunder der Heliane*) under Vladimir Jurowski; *Guglielmo* (*Così fan Tutte*); *Bartolo* and *Antonio* (*The Marriage of Figaro*); *Polyphemus* (*Acis and Galatea*); *Bass* (*The Fairy*

Queen); Amis (Milhaud Le Pauvre Matelot); Private Willis (Iolanthe); Marcello (La Bohème) in scenes for The Lesley Garrett Show, BBC and the covers of Achilla (Giulio Cesare), Bass (St Matthew Passion), Betto di Signa (Gianni Schicchi), Sprecher (Die Zauberflöte) and Kruaina (The Bartered Bride) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Recent concert performances include Handel's Messiah, Bach's Christmas Oratorio, the Fauré Requiem and both the St Matthew and St John passions for Harry Christophers and The Sixteen; Mozart's C Minor Mass and Purcell's Ode on St Cecilia's Day for Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort, Bach's St John Passion with the Milano Orchestra Verdi for Robert King and Mozart's Solemn Vespers, C Minor Mass and Requiem with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists. He recently made his Wigmore Hall debut with Bach's Italian Cantata Amore traditore. Other notable performances include Mozart's concert aria Così dunque tradisci for Harry Christophers and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Rutter's Mass of the Children in the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, the Verdi Requiem in Leeds Town Hall and Bach's solo cantata Ich habe genug in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford.

Specialising in the historically accurate performance of music from the 18th century, the Feinstein Ensemble's concerts and recordings of the Baroque repertoire have been acclaimed internationally. The Ensemble performs often in London, including a series of Bach performances at Southbank Centre and a season of Cantata concerts at St Martin-in-the-fields. International tours have included the Far East, Germany, the Gulf and Egypt, Israel, Belgium and Holland. They can be heard on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM and they recently broadcast a groundbreaking recording of Bach's six Brandenburg Concerti for BBC Television. They have also recorded CDs for NAXOS, BLACK BOX MUSIC and SANCTUARY and recently completed a CD of Vivaldi concerti.

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