

Prague Sounds *presents*



Benjamin Britten

**WAR
RE
QUIEM**

War Requiem, Op. 66
Vladislav Hall, Prague Castle, September 3rd 2023, 8pm

Programme of the Evening

-
- 6–6¹⁰ pm** Ringing of the bells for the victims of war
- The bells of Prague's churches will resound in memory of those killed in war; the bells of Týn and St. Nicholas churches, and of the Cathedral of St Vitus, St Wenceslas and St Adalbert will be among them.
-
- 8 pm** Ringing of the bell – Jan Křtitel – St Vitus Cathedral
-
- 8⁰⁵ pm** Benjamin Britten: War Requiem, Op. 66
Vladislav Hall
-
- 9³⁰ pm** Closing ring of the cathedral bell

The concert is being recorded by Czech Television and the European cultural platform TV Arte Concert.

The concert takes place under the auspices of the President of the Czech Republic **Petr Pavel**, the Prime Minister **Petr Fiala**, Minister of Culture **Martin Baxa**, Mayor of Prague **Bohuslav Svoboda**, and Chief Councillor of Prague 1 **Terezie Radoměřská**.

Greetings



Petr Pavel
President of the Czech Republic

Ladies and gentlemen,

I consider it only right and proper that the Vladislav Hall of Prague Castle is the venue for such a rare and important cultural event as this performance of War Requiem. The concert is exceptional not only because the work itself is so monumental and demanding, but also because this performance brings together members of the Czech Philharmonic, Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, and other Czech ensembles and international soloists. Britten's War Requiem was first performed at Coventry Cathedral, which had just been rebuilt following its bombing during the second world war. Its anti-war appeal is sadly still relevant today. War has returned to Europe, and for a second year is destroying buildings, towns, and, most of all, human lives. It seems that learning from the past is not automatic, but something we must constantly work on by remembering the darkest moments of the past. Let's remember, then, the victims of the second world war and those who are suffering today, and remind ourselves of our duty to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in the fight for the future of all Europe.

I wish you a pleasant musical evening.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'P. Pavel'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Greetings



Marek Vrabec
Director and Founder
Prague Sounds

It's an honour for our festival to present Benjamin Britten's War Requiem here at Prague Castle – where Strings of Autumn (now Prague Sounds) was born during the presidency of Vaclav Havel – and in the finest ceremonial hall, the Vladislav Hall.

As, since time immemorial, bells have rung in praise of God, to call the living and to mourn the dead, so on the eve on this concert the voices of hundreds of the bells of Prague will come together for a symbolic mass ringing. And in the evening, in the unique atmosphere and acoustics of the Vladislav Hall, Benjamin Britten's monumental War Requiem will resound, in a symbolic performance bringing together PKF – Prague Philharmonia, the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra (currently based in exile in Germany), the Czech Philharmonic, and international soloists. At a time when we hear daily of hundreds of victims of a senselessly aggressive war, this evening is a chance to think about and pray for those victims.

I would like to thank President Petr Pavel for making it possible for us to present this concert at Prague Castle. I thank all the artists under the baton of conductor Lukáš Vasilek for all the collaborative work they have undertaken in the study of this monumental work. I also thank all those who have made a financial contribution to the concert, primarily the City of Prague, the Czech Ministry of Culture, and the PPF Foundation.



Some Words on the Concert

The Prague Sounds festival has in recent years combined the unique atmosphere of Prague with new and original music projects. Britten's War Requiem, which will resound in the Vladislav Hall of Prague Castle, offers us something more: it's an exceptional work, often considered among the greatest vocal-instrumental pieces of the 20th century. As well as its passionate anti-war appeal, it brings us hope: evil will not win in the end, and that which was destroyed can be built up again.



Petr Fiala
Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Vladislav Hall is the most treasured space in the Prague Castle complex, and is used only in exceptional circumstances, primarily for ceremonial state occasions. This year, however, it opens its doors for this exceptional cultural event. The performance of War Requiem in this space is for us a symbol of the hope that music can help overcome all difficulties and lift people's eyes up beyond the horizon.



Jana Vohralíková,
Head of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic

The breathtaking music of Benjamin Britten will resound in the iconic spaces of Prague Castle's Vladislav Hall. This iconic work, performed by the combined forces of the the Czech Philharmonic, PKF - Prague Philharmonia, and Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, with the Prague Philharmonic Choir and international soloists, will make its insistent appeal in a place imbued with history, at a time when events around us are tempestuous. Britten's War Requiem is a memorial to the victims of war, and - today as much as ever before - a passionate appeal against war.



Martin Baxa
Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic

The Prague Sounds festival has long enriched the cultural life of the capital. War Requiem, which it presents this year, is a symbol of post-war renewal. Its performance at Prague Castle will be an expression of international cooperation and solidarity, and a musical expression of the hope that peace and renewal will one day come to Ukraine.



Bohuslav Svoboda,
Mayor of the City of Prague

It's an honour for us to be involved in the performance of this great and iconic 20th-century work, even more so in the spaces of Vladislav Hall at Prague Castle, which has for centuries been so closely associated with Czech nationhood. I'm sure that the combination of powerful music performed by several exclusive ensembles including our colleagues from the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, and this monumental space, will guarantee an unforgettable musical - and, in the current circumstances, emotional - experience.



Kateřina Kalistová,
Director, PKF — Prague Philharmonia

War Requiem is not just an exceptionally symbolic work, but also a real artistic challenge. It requires a huge number of well-prepared performers. We managed to put this together in cooperation with PKF - Prague Philharmonia, members of the Czech Philharmonic, artists from the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, and three great soloists. It's not easy to realise a project as artistically and logistically demanding as this, and we're grateful to have found a partner for it in Prague Sounds.



David Mareček
Director, Prague Philharmonic Choir

As one of the voices representing Ukraine, we're very honoured that we can take part in this prestigious event in Prague, one of the greatest cultural centres in Europe. We're particularly excited to have the chance once again to work with the great Prague Philharmonic Choir under the exceptional leadership of the brilliant conductor Lukáš Vasilek in performing Benjamin Britten's monumental War Requiem.



Oleksander Zaitsev,
CEO, Kyiv Symphony Orchestra

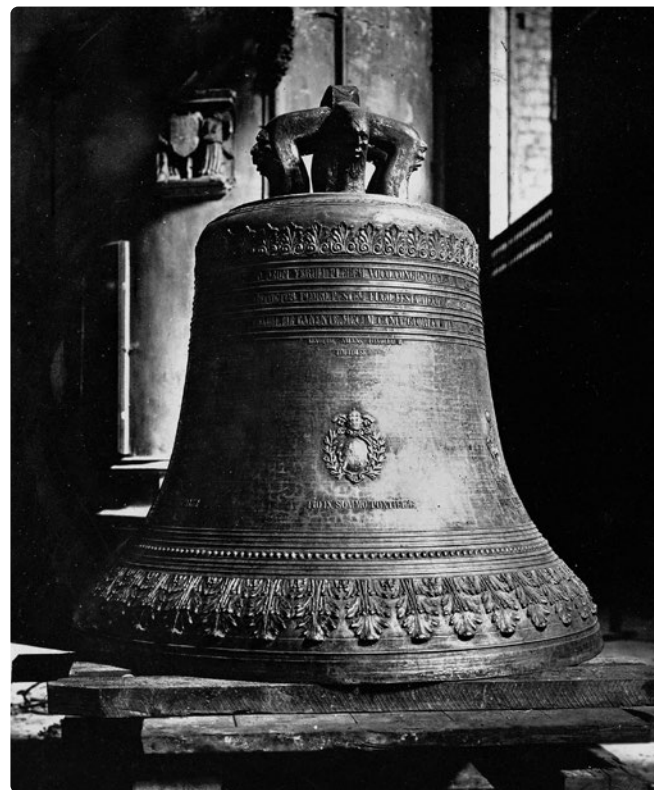
This performance of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem at Vladislav Hall will no doubt be exceptional, not only in terms of artistic quality, but also for its symbolic meaning. I see it as a clear expression of an anti-war stance, one which in the current world situation has particular resonance and power. And the significance of this unique evening is further supported by the fact that it's happening in a place so strongly associated with Czech nationhood.



Jana Tomas Sedláčková
Board member, PPF Foundation

'I praise God, call the living, and mourn the dead...'

The ringing of bells has long been associated with significant events: bells have announced the end of war, but also rung in remembrance of, and in mourning for, the fallen. On many bells, we find the Czech or Latin inscription 'I praise God, call the living, and mourn the dead...'. That's why, on the eve of this exceptional performance of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem at Prague Castle, the bells of the Cathedral of St Vitus, St Wenceslas and St Adalbert will resound. They will be joined by the great bells of Týn church, S. Nicholas's church, and dozens of other bells around the centre of the Czech capital.



Programme

Benjamin Britten

War Requiem, Op. 66

-
- | | |
|------|------------------|
| I. | Requiem aeternam |
| II. | Dies irae |
| III. | Offertorium |
| IV. | Sanctus |
| V. | Agnus Dei |
| VI. | Libera me |

English composer, conductor and pianist Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) is one of the most prominent figures of 20th century music. For his approach to composing, he is rightfully considered the second greatest English composer after Henry Purcell and just like the 17th century author, he excelled in the field of vocal music. His operas, beginning with *Peter Grimes* from 1945, renewed interest in this genre in England and listeners today still praise Britten's art of setting words in music with sensitivity, passing on strong messages, while remaining inclusive. As a composer, he neither joined the post-war avantgarde, nor remained a die-hard traditionalist. Among others, he was inspired by Mozart, Schubert, Mahler, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, was charmed by Asian music, but never became eclectic. He created his own

fresh style full of poetic character, tenderness, empathy and intense emotions. Britten was born on the feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians, in Lowestoft on the east coast of England and spent most of his life in a small fishing village Aldeburgh only a few dozen kilometres down the coast. Composing became his main source of income at the age of nineteen and he wrote almost one hundred opus numbers, including sixteen operas and sixteen song cycles, three ballets, many solo concertos, chamber and symphonic music as well as vocal-instrumental works, one of the most serious and famous ones being the *War Requiem, Op. 66*. Britten wrote the Requiem between 1961 and 1962 for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral. This important centre of arms industry situated about thirty kilometres from Birmingham was repeatedly bombarded during the Second World War. The most devastating attack took place on the night of 14–15 November 1940 and was part of the "Moonlight Sonata" operation planned by the German Luftwaffe. In eleven hours, Coventry was almost totally destroyed, some 500 people lost their lives and only a fraction of the outer wall remained from medieval St. Michael's Cathedral. The works on a new church started right next to the ruins in 1956 and on 30 May 1962, its walls witnessed the world premiere of the *War Requiem*. The monumental 90-minute composition conveys Britten's trust in pacifism: the Latin liturgical text of the mass for the dead is interspersed with poems by English poet Wilfred Owen, who served as an officer in the British infantry during the First World War and fell in France in 1918, just couple of days before armistice. He was only twenty-five years old. He wrote his poems directly in the trenches and in them, he put all pain and destruction he experienced as well as rough memories from the battlefield. The title page of the musical score quotes Owen's words: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity... All a poet can do today is warn." With his Requiem, Britten also paid tribute to other heroes and dedicated it to the memory of four friends, three of whom fell during the Second World War, the fourth took part in the landing operation in Normandy and later took his own life.

The large ensemble of the *War Requiem* consists of solo soprano, mixed choir, boys' choir, organ and a big symphony orchestra. Owen's poems are sung by two male soloists – two soldiers – accompanied by a chamber orchestra. These parts are very powerful and in a rather free style, which is typical for Britten. We also notice inspiration by Verdi and a distinctive musical motif, tritone between C and F#, which symbolises tension. In the opening, we hear the Anthem for Doomed Youth, the longest part, *Dies irae*, reminds of the Old Testament story about Abram and Isaac, but unlike in the Bible, the father in the poem "slew his

son, – And half the seed of Europe, one by one.” The part Agnus Dei brings more light: “But they who love the greater love / Lay down their life; they do not hate.” The soloist sings about a soldier, who mourns the death of an enemy he had killed the day before. The end of the composition is soothing – Requiescant in pace (Let them rest in peace), but the disturbing tritone reappears. The premiere of the War Requiem took place on 30 May 1962 in a concert broadcast live by the BBC. The choice of soloists was to reflect the unity of Europe: Britten chose German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the tenor was the composer’s partner Peter Pears and Galina Vishnevskaya was supposed to sing the soprano, but she did not get travel permission from the Soviet government and had to be replaced by excellent English singer Heather Harper. Vishnevskaya later appeared in the recording, which became a great success with some 200 000 sold in the first five months. The audience of the first concert most often remembered the powerful atmosphere: “At the end there was a deathly silence... people were in tears... it was so moving,” said a member of the orchestra, Mary Cotton, and likewise, novelist Susan Hill commented: “I have never heard a silence like it again. It was a silence that was part of the whole Requiem it was as though Britten had written that silence into the score.”

Dina Šnejdarová, translated by Kateřina Tichá



Performers

Lukáš Vasilek — *conductor*

Susanne Bernhard — *soprano (Germany)*

Kyle van Schoonhoven — *tenor (USA)*

Arvid Fagerfjäll — *baritone (Sweden)*

Prague Philharmonic Choir

PKF — **Prague Philharmonia**

Kyiv Symphony Orchestra

Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra

Children’s Choir Radost Praha

Linda Sítková — *organ*



Lukáš Vasilek

conductor

Lukáš Vasilek studied conducting and musicology. Since 2007, he has been the principal conductor of the Prague Philharmonic Choir, with his work entailing exploration and performance of a cappella repertoire, as well as the ensemble's preparation for singing in great cantata, oratorio and opera projects.

He has guided the PPC in the majority of its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad, cooperating with world-renowned conductors (over the past few years, they have included Semyon Bychkov, Manfred Honeck, Jakub Hrůša) and orchestras (among others, Berliner Philharmoniker, the Czech Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic, Wiener Symphoniker). Besides leading the PPC, Lukáš Vasilek has pursued other artistic activities. In addition to occasional returns to orchestral conducting, he has regularly worked with Martinů Voices, a vocal ensemble he founded in 2010.

As a conductor or choirmaster, he has participated in numerous recordings the PPC has made for prestigious labels, including Decca Classics and Supraphon. In recent years, he has systematically devoted to recording Bohuslav Martinů's choral music. His albums met with great international critical response and received awards from Gramophone, BBC Music Magazine and Diapason.

Since 2021, Lukáš Vasilek has been a professor of choir conducting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In 2022, he was a guest conductor of the French choir Accentus.



Susanne Bernhard

soprano

German soprano Susanne Bernhard studied at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich. Since the beginning of her studies, she took part in numerous productions of the Bayerische Theaterakademie and in 1997, she made her debut as Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Munich's Prinzregententheater.

In 2000, she became member of the Opera House Kiel ensemble and appeared in numerous roles there, including Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*. She guest performed in opera houses in Frankfurt and Dresden. Besides her artistic activities as opera singer, Susanne focuses on songs, oratorios and concert repertoire. Her manifold engagements in this field led her to cooperation with the Hamburg and Munich Symphonic, Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra and NHK Tokyo Orchestra among others.

Numerous TV and radio as well as CD recordings document her artistic work. These include sacred songs and arias and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* under the baton of Enoch zu Guttenberg (Farao), a complete opera recording of J. Mysliveček's *Medonte* (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi/Sony) as well as Britten's *Folksongs* (Rondeau).



Kyle van Schoonhoven

tenor

American tenor Kyle van Schoonhoven, a Metropolitan Opera National Council Grand Finals winner, is a Wagnerian star on the rise. He studied at the Westminster Choir College and the Fredonia School of Music. Critics praise his gleaming voice with a steady, burnished sound.

His recent engagements include appearances in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Bizet's *Carmen* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera and Hawaii Opera Theatre. He has already collaborated with many world-renowned opera houses but is still waiting for his Metropolitan Opera debut as the performance he was to appear in fell victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. In spring 2022, he made his European debut with Opera de Rouen as Laca in *Jenůfa*.

Kyle is the recipient of a 2019 George London award, has received the Nicolai Gedda Memorial Award and was a finalist in the 2016 Jensen Foundation Voice Competition.



Arvid Fagerfjäll

baritone

Swedish baritone Arvid Fagerfjäll is a diverse singer with both lyrical and dramatic qualities, extensive experience in opera, songs and musical theatre. He got his education in Sweden, Italy and Germany and is currently finishing his diploma degree in the class of Professor Peter Ling in Hannover. Defining artistic influences were received through his studies and numerous masterclasses.

On stage, Arvid has performed at the Oper Leipzig, Theater Aachen and Theater für Niedersachsen. He is a member of the ensemble at Theater Plauen-Zwickau, where he has appeared as Lescaut in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and Heger in Dvořák's *Rusalka*.

Arvid is an experienced song singer, taking part in international song competitions and at music festivals. In 2021, he was awarded the first prize in the Hertogenbosch Lied-Duo Competition and in 2022, he received the second price in the Wigmore Hall Competition.



Prague Philharmonic Choir

The Prague Philharmonic Choir (PPC) is one of the top and oldest professional singing choirs in the Czech Republic with undisturbed tradition of 88 years. It is also one of the foremost European vocal ensembles. The choir was established in 1935 by choirmaster and professor Jan Kühn and prominent Czech conductors have led it over its long history. Since 2007, the choir's Principal Conductor has been Lukáš Vasilek, while Lukáš Kozubík is currently the choir's Choirmaster.

The PPC's repertoire is centred primarily around oratorios and cantatas. The choir has worked with eminent international orchestras Berliner Philharmoniker, the Czech Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic or Wiener Symphoniker, and conductors, including Simon Rattle, Semyon Bychkov, Manfred Honeck and Jakub Hrůša. As the choir in residence at the opera festival in Bregenz, Austria, the PPC is likewise active in the domain of opera.

Apart from these commitments, the PPC engages in a number of its own projects. Since 2011 it has organised its own concert series in Prague with programme focused on technically demanding and/ or lesser known choral works, either a cappella or with chamber instrumental accompaniment. The choir regards as an inseparable part of its efforts educational activities targeting the young. In this field, it has been involved in organising a Choral Academy for voice students for 10 years, a project aimed at enabling young artists to acquire practical skills through work

with a professional vocal ensemble; and with focus on young children, running a series of educational concerts.

The PPC has to its credit an extensive discography, with many titles released by major international labels (e.g. Decca Classics, Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical and Supraphon). In recent years, the choir has taken part in several unique recording projects, two of them in association with the Czech Philharmonic. The first of these, a recording of Antonín Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* (Decca, 2017), with Jiří Bělohávek conducting, received the prestigious Diapason d'Or de l'Année Award for the year's best album in the sacred music category. The second, a recording of Bohuslav Martinů's *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Supraphon, 2017), under the baton of Manfred Honeck, won several awards in the United Kingdom in 2017, plus another Diapason d'Or. Its album featuring chamber cantatas of Bohuslav Martinů's (Supraphon, 2016), received top accolades of the prestigious British magazines *Gramophone* (Editor's Choice) and *BBC Music Magazine* (Choral and Song Choice). In the latter, it was also nominated for its annual award in the choral music category. In 2020, Decca Classic released an album of Antonín Dvořák's music (*Te Deum, Requiem*), in which the Prague Philharmonic Choir participated significantly.

The PPC is a frequent guest of renowned Czech classical music festivals, including Dvořák Prague, Smetana's Litomyšl and the Prague Spring. Outside of the Czech Republic, the choir performs at the festival in Bregenz.

In the 2022/2023 season, the Prague Philharmonic Choir's many activities in the Czech Republic include concerts at several festivals such as the Dvořák Prague Festival, Smetana's Litomyšl, and the Prague Spring. The choir will also appear in performances together with the Czech Philharmonic, the Prague Symphony Orchestra, or the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and will perform under the renowned conductors amongst which we can name Semyon Bychkov or Daniel Harding or Christoph Eschenbach. Its international activities include a performance at the Bruckner National Festival in Linz and the choir will also return to the opera festival in Bregenz.

The Prague Philharmonic Choir is the laureate of the 2018 Classic Prague Award for Best Vocal Concert, and Czech Television's Classical Music of the Year Award. In the autumn 2022, PPC became the laureate of the Antonín Dvořák Prize for its extraordinary artistic merits, promotion and popularization of Czech music in the Czech Republic and abroad.



PKF — Prague Philharmonia

The PKF — Prague Philharmonia was founded in 1994 on the initiative of the conductor Jiří Bělohlávek (1946–2017) under the name Prague Chamber Philharmonic. Since 2015–2016 season the orchestra has been led by the French conductor Emmanuel Villaume.

PKF — Prague Philharmonia is a frequent partner of renowned conductors and soloists, including Harry Bicket, Jakub Hrůša, David Newman, Paul McCreech, Milan Turković, Julian Rachlin, Gil Shaham, Maxim Vengerov, Daniel Müller-Schott, Mischa Maisky, Sarah Chang, Gábor Boldoczki, Jonas Kaufmann, Diana Damrau, Ailyn Pérez and many others. The orchestra had the privilege of cooperating also with Christopher Hogwood, Martha Argerich, Yefim Bronfman, András Schiff, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Angela Gheorghiu, Elina Garanča, Juan Diego Flórez, Thomas Hampson, Magdalena Kožená, Rolando Villazón and others. The orchestra is regularly invited to international music festivals and gives concerts at top world venues (BBC Proms, Dresdner Musikfestspiele, MITO Settembre Musica, Prague Spring, Berliner Philharmonie, Festspiel Baden-Baden, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Gasteig Munich, Tokyo Suntory Hall and Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman, among others).

The ensemble has recorded over 90 CDs, released by leading Czech and world music publishers, such as Deutsche Grammophon, Warner Classics, Decca, Supraphon, EMI, Sony Classical and Harmonia Mundi. Among the numerous prizes the recordings have garnered are: the Gold Record RAC Canada in 2000, Harmony Award 2001 and Diapason d'Or in 2007. The CD *Héroïque* with Bryan Hymel was in 2016 nominated for the 'International Opera Award' and in 2017 the recording of *Bohemian Rhapsody* with Gábor Boldoczki was nominated at the 'International Classical Music Award (ICMA)'. Their showcase Ravel–Debussy–Bizet CD for Warner Classics from 2018 received excellent reviews from the London Sunday Times, Gramophone and the BBC Music Magazine, which included it in its TOP 10 recordings of the week. In 2019 Deutsche Grammophon released a recording with the PKF, Benjamin Bernheim and Emmanuel Villaume, who also conducted the newest PKF CD with works by Antonín Dvořák and Bohuslav Martinů.



Kyiv Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1979, the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra (KSO) has become in recent years one of the most interesting cultural actors in its Country. From the Orchestra's union with the Italian conductor Luigi Gaggero was born a rare fusion of sensual Ukrainian musicality and Western analytical attitude. Each concert is constructed as an exciting journey through works from different periods and styles, threaded together by common themes and influences. KSO performed in some of the most important European concert halls, such as Berliner Philharmonie, as well as in front of NATO leaders at the Madrid Summit on 29 June 2022.

The repertoire of KSO spans from the 16th century to the younger generation of today's composers, and precisely for the quality of their interpretations of contemporary music, in 2022 KSO and Luigi Gaggero have been awarded the prestigious Musical Contest Prize of the Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco. In its hometown KSO is often invited to play also at major national holidays; in 2021 the Orchestra played for the 25th anniversary of the Constitution of Ukraine in front of the Verkhovna Rada (the Ukrainian Parliament) and at the Olympic Stadium for the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

On the operatic side, KSO performed Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine on the stage of the National Opera in Kyiv, as well as at the German Musikfestspiele Königswinkel 2021 with a cast of international stars under the baton of Lothar Zagrosek.



Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra

'This is the fulfilment of the dream we shared with Jiří Bělohlávek: following two years of preparations, we present the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. This name covers not one particular ensemble, but a project, within which the Philharmonic will play in various chamber groupings,' announced David Mareček, general director of the Czech Philharmonic, in Spring of 2018. Playing in chamber-sized groups was something Jiří Bělohlávek saw as an important way to keep up orchestral 'health.' In a smaller ensemble, with a repertoire ranging from baroque to contemporary music, the players refine their intonation, phrasing, and ability to work as individuals within a collective. This chamber orchestra with an ever-changing line-up – always, of course, made up of members of the Czech Philharmonic – was officially introduced for the orchestra's 123rd season. Since then it has worked on fifteen projects, both within the Rudolfinum season and for external festivals.



Children's Choir Radost Praha

The Children's Choir Radost Praha was established by choir-master Vladislav Souček in 1961. Since 1994, the choir has had its home at the Art School in the Šimáček Street, Prague 7.

The repertoire of the choir stretches across all periods and musical genres. The Radost children have already sung in many European countries as well as in Canada (1994 and 1997). The choir regularly takes part in international competitions, having won prestigious awards (Bratislava, Cantonigròs, Celje, Kaunas, Llangollen, Montreux, Neerpelt, Preveza, Tours and others). The ensemble collaborates with the Czech Radio, Czech TV and the State Opera Prague. Recently, they have appeared at the Dvořák Prague Festival, Prague Spring, Prague Autumn as well as the Bohuslav Martinů Days and have worked with the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK and the Prague Philharmonic Choir.

Their concert choir is led by choirmasters Jan Pirner, Cecilie Pirnerová and Vladislav Souček, the pianists are Vladimír Kopáček and Jitka Nešverová and the vocal consultant is Hana Blachutová.



Linda Sítková *organ*

Linda Sítková is a Czech organist from Rožnov pod Radhoštěm and is one of the country's leading contemporary organists. She performs in the Czech Republic and abroad, and has appeared at international organ festivals in Chartres, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Naumberg, Stuttgart, Nuremberg, Bonn, Karlsruhe, Vienna, and more. She works with the Janáček Philharmonic in Ostrava, the South Bohemian Chamber Orchestra, the Pilsen Philharmonic, the Prague Philharmonic Choir, Bach-Collegium Praha, and other symphonic and chamber ensembles. In addition, she is a teacher and musical accompanist to liturgy. She is the organist of the parish of St. John in Prague's New Town and at the Church of St. Salvator in Prague 1.

Benjamin Britten

War Requiem, Op. 66

I. REQUIEM AETERNAM

Chorus

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Children's Choir

Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion;
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem;
exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis caro vemet.

Tenor Solo

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Chorus

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.

II. DIES IRAE

Chorus

Dies irae, dies illia,
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit et natura,
Cum resurget creatura,
Judicanti responsura.

Baritone Solo

Bugles sang, saddening the evening air,
And bugles answered, sorrowful to hear.

Voices of boys were by the river-side.
Sleep mothered them; and left the twilight sad.
The shadow of the morrow weighed on men.

Voices of old despondency resigned,
Bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.

Soprano Solo and Chorus

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus judicetur.
Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet, apparebit:
Nil inultum remanebit.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quern patronum rogaturus
Cum vix justus sit securus?
Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Tenor and Baritone Solos

Out there. we've walked quite friendly up to Death;
Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland.–
Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath.–
Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.
He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed
Shrapnel. We chorussed when he sang aloft;
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.
Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!
We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.
No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.
We laughed, knowing that better men would come,
And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags
He wars on Death-for Life; not men- for flags.

Chorus

Recordare Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae:
Ne me perdas ilia die.

Quaerens me, sedisti lassus:
Redemisti crucem pass us:
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Ingemisco, tamquam reus:
Culpa rubet vultus meus:
Supplicanti parce Deus.

Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

Inter oves locum praesta,
Et ab haedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis.

Oro supplex et acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis:
Gere curam mei finis.

Baritone Solo

Be slowly lifted up, thou long black arm,
Great gun towering toward Heaven, about to curse;

Reach at that arrogance which needs thy harm,
And beat it down before its sins grow worse;

But when thy spell be cast complete and whole,
May God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!

Chorus and Soprano Solo

Dies irae, dies ilia,
Solvat saeculum in Favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!
Lacrimosa dies ilia,
Qua resurget ex Favilla,
Judicandus homo reus,
Huic ergo parce Deus.

Tenor Solo

Move him into the sun –
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,–
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved-still warm-too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
– O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

Chorus

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem. Amen.

III. OFFERTORIUM

Children's Choir

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.

Chorus

Sed signifer sanctus Michael repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam: quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et semini ejus.

Baritone and Tenor Solos

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the Lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son, –
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

Children's Choir

Hostias et preces tibi Domine laudis offerimus:
tu suscipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie memoriam facimus:
fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam.

IV. SANCTUS

Soprano Solo and Chorus

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.

Baritone Solo

After the blast of lightning from the East,
The flourish of loud clouds, the Chariot Throne;
After the drums of Time have rolled and ceased,
And by the bronze west long retreat is blown,

Shall life renew these bodies? Of a truth
All death will he annul, all tears assuage? –
Fill the void vems of Life again with youth,
And wash, with an immortal water, Age?

When I do ask white Age he saith not so:
“My head hangs weighed with snow.”
And when I hearken to the Earth, she saith:
“My fiery heart shrinks, aching. It is death.
Mine ancient scars shall not be glorified,
Nor my titanic tears, the sea, be dried.

V. AGNUS DEI

Tenor Solo

One ever hangs where shelled roads part.
In this war He too lost a limb,
But His disciples hide apart;
And now the Soldiers bear with Him.

Chorus

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

Tenor Solo

Near Golgotha strolls many a priest,
And in their faces there is pride
That they were flesh-marked by the Beast
By whom the gentle Christ's denied.

Chorus

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

Tenor Solo

The scribes on all the people shove
And bawl allegiance to the state,
But they who love the greater love

Chorus

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

VI. LIBERA ME

Chorus and Soprano Solo

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.
Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra. Dies ilia, dies irae,
calamitatis et miseriae,
dies magna et amara valde. Libera me, Domine ...

Tenor Solo

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."

Baritone Solo

"None," said the other, save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world.

For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Miss we the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,

Even from wells we sunk too deep for war,
Even the sweetest wells that ever were.

I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold."

Tenor and Baritone Solos

"Let us sleep now..."

Children's Choir, Chorus and Soprano Solo

In paradisum deducant te Angeli: in tuo adventu suscipiant
te Martyres, et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat, et cum Lazaro quondam
paupere aeternam habeas requiem.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine;
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Requiescant in pace. Amen.

Partners

With support



Main Partner



Partner



General Media Partner



Media Partners



With thanks to



Prague Sounds *The Festival.*
1 — 18 11 2023

