

RACHMANINOFF'S  
**VESPERS**

**Fortismere Community Choir**

*tenor* **Andrew Woodmansey**

*organ* **John Eady**

*musical director:* **Marvin L. Perrott**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

*at St Andrew's Church, Muswell Hill*

## Tonight's programme

### *All-Night Vigil (Vespers) – Rachmaninoff* sung by Fortismere Community Choir

*There will be one interval during which the bar will be open and the raffle prizes will be drawn.*

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## Dates for your diary

**June: Singing Workshops 10.30am - 3.30pm**

**Come & Sing with Fortismere Community Choir,  
directed by Marvin Perrott**

Singers of all abilities and experience are invited to join our community choir for the day.  
Fortismere Music Centre, Fortismere School, Creighton Road entrance, London N10 1NS  
All dates: £10 for the day (free for current choir members).

All music will be provided on the day.

Saturday, 3rd June 2023 - J S Bach: *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, BWV 80  
Chorus: *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*  
Chorale: *Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn*

Saturday, 10th June 2023 - William Walton: *Belshazzar's Feast*  
Chorus: *Thus In Babylon*

Saturday, 17th June 2023 - Zelenka *Missa dei filii* ZWV 20  
*Gloria*

**15<sup>th</sup> July: Fortismere Community Symphony Orchestra concert**

**9<sup>th</sup> December: Community Choir Christmas Concert by Candlelight**

Information and tickets: [fortismereperformingartscentre.co.uk](http://fortismereperformingartscentre.co.uk)

Fortismere Performing Arts Centre Manager: Mattie Morgan  
Programme design: Anne Hutchings

With thanks to **Fr Andy Coates and St Andrew's Church**

## ***All-Night Vigil* – Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 – 1943)**

Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, also known as the *Vespers*, is a stunning example of Russian sacred music. It was composed in 1915, during a period of great creativity and productivity for Rachmaninoff, who was deeply influenced by the Russian Orthodox Church and its liturgical music.

The *All-Night Vigil* is divided into two main parts: the *Vespers*, which is the evening service, and the *Matins*, which is the morning service. Each part is made up of several movements, or sections, that are based on specific texts from the Russian Orthodox liturgy.

One of the most striking features of the *All-Night Vigil* is its use of traditional Russian chant melodies. These melodies are woven throughout the piece, sometimes serving as the basis for entire movements, and sometimes appearing as brief interludes. Rachmaninoff's use of these ancient melodies gives the piece a sense of timelessness and connection to the rich history of Russian Orthodox music.

Another notable feature of the *All-Night Vigil* is Rachmaninoff's use of harmonies. He employs rich and complex harmonies throughout the piece, often layering different vocal parts to create a sense of depth and texture. This creates a lush and ethereal sound that is both beautiful and otherworldly.

The text of the *All-Night Vigil* is drawn from various sources, including the Psalms, the Gospel of St. John, and various hymns and prayers from the Orthodox liturgy. The text is in Church Slavonic, a liturgical language used by the Russian Orthodox Church. Even for those who do not understand the language, the beauty and power of the music is enough to convey a sense of spiritual contemplation and reverence.

### **Let us attend**

Our performance this evening is accompanied by visuals created by one of our basses, Phil Dunn, who writes:

During the All-night Vigil service, following the chanting of *O Gentle Light* (Gladsome Light in our performance), the clergy conducting the service make three short exclamations including, “*Let us attend*”.

*“In our daily life, to be attentive or heedful is important. Yet the capacity to be attentive or heedful does not always come easily. Our intellect is predisposed to being forgetful and unfocused. It is difficult to force oneself to be attentive. The Church is aware of our weakness, and so it takes it upon itself to remind us with the phrase, “Let us attend!” which tells us: let us be attentive, let us be heedful, let us take note, let us be careful, let us gather our wits, and let us strain to focus our mind and our memory on what we are hearing.”* (From notes on the All-night Vigil, St. George Russian Orthodox Church.)

Phil's work displays live feeds from various national and international news sources reporting on the environment and climate crisis against a backdrop of images from opposite positions on the planet, Iceland and New Zealand. Both countries have only been inhabited by humans relatively recently – 1200 and 800 years – and both also retain signs of geological youth; geothermal activity as a result of straddling fault lines and glaciation because of their proximity to the North, or South Pole.

The images are a contemplative and sometimes abstract view of these youthful signs. But with the text overlaid, is this where we have come from, or is this where we are going? For this All-night Vigil, this period of watchfulness, let us attend.

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## *All-Night Vigil*

### **1. Priidite, poklonimsya - Come Let Us Worship**

The work begins with a fourfold call to prayer, in six and then eight parts.

*Come, let us worship God, our King. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.*

*Come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and our God.*

*Come, let us worship and fall down before him.*

### **2. Blagoslovi, dushe moya, Gospoda - Bless the Lord, O My Soul**

This movement consists of a truncated version of Psalm 103, in which an alto solo sings a melody based on Greek chant against a background of tenor and bass, alternating with soft passages for soprano and alto. During this psalm the whole church is censed.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, blessed art thou, O Lord.*

*O Lord my God, thou art very great.*

*Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.*

*Blessed art thou, O Lord.*

*The waters stand upon the mountains.*

*Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.*

*In wisdom hast thou made all things.*

*Glory to thee, O Lord, who hast created all.*

### **3. Blazhen muzh - Blessed Is the Man**

The text of this movement comes from Psalm 1, the verses alternating with *Alliluya* (alleluia). The verses are mainly sung by middle voices (alto and tenor) and the refrain by the full choir.

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Alleluia.*

*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish. Alleluia.*

*Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in him with trembling. Alleluia.*

*Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! Alleluia.  
Salvation is of the Lord; and thy blessing is upon thy people. Alleluia.*

#### **4. *Svete tikhyi - Gladsome Light***

This is the Evening Hymn of Light (*phos hilaron*), which is one of the most ancient hymns of the Orthodox Church. The text is from Psalm 140. During the singing of this psalm all the lights of the church are gradually illuminated and the priest and deacon enter the Holy of Holies. Here, the melody is a Kyiv chant using only four notes, sung by the tenors.

*Gladsome light of the holy glory of the Immortal One, the Heavenly Father, holy and blessed, O Jesus Christ.*

*Now that we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the light of evening, we praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God.*

*Thou art worthy at every moment to be praised in hymns by reverent voices.*

*O Son of God, thou art the giver of life; therefore all the world glorifies thee.*

#### **5. *Nyne otpushchayeshi - Lord, Now Lettest Thou***

Perhaps the most famous and certainly the most extraordinary of the Vigil movements is this setting of the Song of Simeon (Luke 2: 29–32). Against a gently rocking background, the tenor solo sings a Kyiv chant. At the end of the movement the basses descend step by step to a low B flat in what is one of the most impressive passages in the whole work.

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word.*

*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*

*A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel.*

#### **6. *Bogoroditse Devo - Rejoice, O Virgin***

The last movement of Vespers is a Hymn to the Mother of God: it occurs in many places in Orthodox worship and here the threefold setting is very solemn but full of rejoicing and gladness. After this all the lights are dimmed and the doors to the Holy of Holies are closed.

*Rejoice O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*

*Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.*

#### **7. *Slava v vyshnikh Bogu - The Six Psalms***

The start of Matins is a chorus in praise of God, which precedes the reading of the Six Psalms expressing man's sense of loss and separation from God. This setting is full of the sound of bells as the word Slava ('praise') is reiterated.

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men.*

*O Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall proclaim thy praise.*

### **8. *Khvalite imya Gospodne - Praise the Name of the Lord***

This section, with words from Psalm 135, is called Polyeleos. This term means both ‘much mercy’ and ‘much oil’ – the latter because the lamps are lit once again. This is a moment of reconciliation with God and the priest again censes the whole church. Rachmaninoff uses a Znamenny chant in octaves for altos and basses, marking the music spiritoso.

*Praise the name of the Lord. Alleluia.*

*Praise the Lord, O you his servants. Alleluia.*

*Blessed be the Lord from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem. Alleluia.*

*O give thanks to the Lord for he is good. Alleluia.*

*For his mercy endureth for ever. Alleluia.*

*O give thanks unto the God of heaven. Alleluia.*

*For his mercy endureth for ever. Alleluia.*

~~~ INTERVAL ~~~

The bar will be open during the interval for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

Raffle tickets will also be on sale and prizes will be drawn before the start of the second half.

Thank you to all the individuals and local businesses who have supported our fundraising by donating prizes, including Jeroboams, the Laboratory Spa and the Everyman cinema.

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### **9. *Blagosloven esi, Gospodi - Blessed Art Thou, O Lord***

The Evlogitaria is a series of stanzas in praise of the Resurrection and one of the longest sections of the Vigil. The refrain (Slava otsu i sinu – ‘Blessed art thou O Lord’) was used by Rachmaninoff at the end of his life in his Symphonic Dances.

*Blessed art thou O Lord; teach me thy statutes.*

*The angelic host was filled with awe when it saw thee among the dead. By destroying the power of death, O Saviour, thou didst raise Adam and save all men from hell. Blessed art thou ...*

*‘Why do you mingle myrrh with your tears of compassion, O ye women disciples?’ cried the radiant angel in the tomb to the myrrh-bearers. ‘Behold the tomb and understand: the Saviour is risen from the dead.’ Blessed art thou ...*

*Very early in the morning the myrrh-bearers ran with sorrow to thy tomb, but an angel came to them and said: ‘The time for sorrow has come to an end. Do not weep, but announce the resurrection to the apostles.’ Blessed art thou ...*

*The myrrh-bearers were sorrowful as they neared the tomb but the angel said to them: 'Why do you number the living amongst the dead? Since he is God, He is risen from the tomb.'*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. We worship the Father, and his Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity, one in essence. We cry with the seraphim: 'Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord.' Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

*Since thou didst give birth to the Giver of Life, O Virgin, thou didst deliver Adam from his sin. Thou gavest joy to Eve instead of sadness. The God-man who was born of thee has restored to life those who had fallen from it. Alleluia. Glory to thee, O God.*

#### **10. Voskreseniye Khristovo videvshe - Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ**

There follows a Gospel reading and this movement is sung immediately afterwards as the book is brought out for the people to kiss. This is Rachmaninoff's own chant, using wide contrasts of register and dynamics.

*Having beheld the resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one. We venerate thy cross, O Christ, and we hymn and glorify thy holy resurrection, for thou art our God and we know none other than Thee. We call on thy name. Come, all you faithful, let us venerate Christ's holy resurrection. For behold, through the cross joy has come into all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, let us praise his resurrection, for by enduring the cross for us he has destroyed death by death.*

#### **11. Velichit dusha moya Gospoda - My Soul Magnifies the Lord**

This is the Magnificat, the text from Luke 1 46–55. Mary's words (strangely enough given to the basses at first) alternate with an antiphon 'More honourable than the cherubim...', which begins in various different keys but always cadences in B flat.

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. More honourable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify thee.*

*For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. More honourable ...*

*For he that is mighty hath done great things for me and holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. More honourable ...*

*He has put down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away. More honourable ...*



*He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he promised to our forefathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever. More honourable ...*

## **12. Slava v vyshnikh Bogu - The Great Doxology**

The climax of Matins, and in a true all-night Vigil this would coincide with the sunrise – the priest would start with the exclamation, ‘Glory to Thee who has shown us the light’. Rachmaninoff’s setting of the words of the Gloria begins with a Znamenny chant. There is then a sequence of contrasted sections containing some of the most rhythmically and harmonically complex music of the Vigil.

*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*

*We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory.*

*O Lord, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty,*

*O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.*

*O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

*Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.*

*Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.*

*For thou alone art holy, thou alone art the Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

*Every day I will bless thee and praise thy name for ever and ever. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is thy name forever. Amen.*

*Let thy mercy O Lord, be upon us, as we have set our hope on thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. Lord, thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: ‘Lord have mercy on me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee. Lord I flee to thee, teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God, for with thee is the fountain of life and in thy light we shall see light. Continue thy mercy on those who know thee. Holy God, Holy Might, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.*

## **13. & 14. The Troparions**

These two Resurrection hymns are not both sung in one service: they alternate according to the prevailing tone of the chant for that week. Both are based on znamenny chants, the second slightly longer and richer harmonically.

*13. Tropar: “Dnes spaseniye” – Troparion: “Today salvation has come”*

*Today salvation has come to the world.*

*Let us sing to him who rose from the dead, the author of our life.*

*Having destroyed death by death he has given us the victory and great mercy.*



14. Tropar: “*Voskres iz groba*” – Troparion: “*Thou didst rise from the tomb*”

*Thou didst rise from the tomb and burst the bonds of Hades.*

*Thou didst destroy the condemnation of death, O Lord, releasing all mankind from the snares of the enemy.*

*Thou didst show thyself to thine apostles, and didst send them forth to proclaim thee; and through them thou hast granted thy peace to the world, O thou who art plenteous in mercy.*

### 15. *Vzbrannoy Voyevode - To Thee, the Victorious Leader*

The Vigil ends with another hymn to the Virgin, called the Akathist Hymn because the people stand throughout (*akathistos* means ‘without sitting’). This is part of Prime (the ‘first hour’). The priest chants the liturgy on one note and the choir joins with the *kontakion* – in Rachmaninoff’s setting a brilliantly scored and lively movement which ends the All-Night Vigil in a suitably splendid fashion.

*To thee, the victorious leader of triumphant hosts, we thy servants, delivered from evil, offer hymns of thanksgiving, O Theotokos. Since thou dost possess invincible might, set us free from all calamities, so that we may cry to thee: ‘Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!’*

## Our singers

The alto solo is sung by choir member Lotta Kitchen

**SOPRANOS:** *Laura Fransella, Pip Hardaker, Lotta Kitchen, Rose Lamberty, Buz Loveday, Sarah McMenemy, Sue Morrison, Claire Murdoch, Cyndi Sahleen-Veasey, Penny Sewell, Diane Winters*

**ALTOS:** *Margaret Battley, Mari-Wyn Burley, Florence Dring, Donna Feldman, Helen Finch, Maggie Garner, Sally Holt, Claire Laubier, Catherine Mkhize, Anna Mullen, Sue Pascoe, Nicky Rosen, Penny Seingry, Suad Thrift, Linda Turner, Clare Woodcock*

**TENORS:** *Andy Ballard, Graham Bradley, Annie Coombes, Catrin Dillon, Colette Dockery, Ruth Hogarth, Anne Hutchings, Deborah Rookes, Helen Tackaberry, Catherine Whybourn, Carolyn Woodmason*

**BASSES:** *Bernard Battley, Philip Chandler, Stephen Dunmore, Nigel Fox, Steven Goodlife, Adrian Henriques, Nick Kitchen, Stuart Little, Gavin Lumsden, Rick Morrison, Andrew Wickham*

*(Correct at time of going to press.)*

## Our choir

Fortismere Community Choir started in 2009 and is an unashamedly un auditioned choir. We welcome those with and without musical experience, who have a desire to sing with like-minded people. The choir meets at Fortismere School every Saturday in the music block in North Wing, from 10.30am to 1.00pm during school terms.

Our repertoire in recent years has included Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *The Seasons*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Bach's *Magnificat* and von Suppé's *Requiem*.

The choir has a steering committee and an active social network. Relaxed but supportive home-based sectionals, lunches and parties have all helped to create a friendly atmosphere at rehearsals and events. We are proud to be part of the community that is Fortismere Music Centre, which brings neighbours, teachers and pupils together to create high-calibre music.

We are actively seeking to increase the membership of the choir and anyone who is interested in joining is warmly invited to take part in one or more of our day-long workshops in June. For more information and to book a place, please visit our website:

[www.fortismereperformingartscentre.co.uk](http://www.fortismereperformingartscentre.co.uk).



## Phil Dunn - artist

Phil is a multidisciplinary artist who conceives and executes work that incorporates performance, sound, photography, moving image, computer programming, and writing. He combines digital and analogue technologies to construct or record his work which is presented as durational multi-media installations.

As an artist establishing his practice later in life, his work draws on his former career experience and his ever-present love of nature, music, songs and cooking; occasionally offering a critique of the business world from which he emerged or engaging with current environmental and social issues. While encompassing serious topics, there is always an element of storytelling and an undercurrent of wry humour as he gently pokes fun at himself, or some other subject of his art.

Recent projects:

*Shallow time*: An exploration of the impermanence of working-class infrastructure presented as a three-screen video installation.

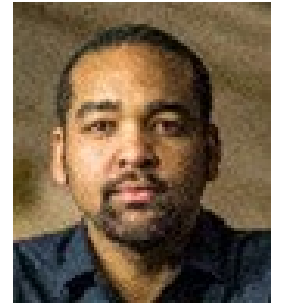
*No Coercion*: A walk, performance and film celebrating William Morris's socialist activism.

*Song of a Sourdough*: A reflective journey of gold prospecting, coal mining and de-industrialisation against a backdrop of bread as a regenerative medium.

Phil has recently completed an MA in Fine Art and has exhibited in group exhibitions in London at: Art Pavilion, Mile End; Filet Space, Hoxton; Coningsby Gallery, Fitzrovia.

### **Marvin L. Perrott – musical director**

Marvin studied Early Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has extensive experience both as a singer and conductor. He has performed in numerous operatic roles both in the United Kingdom and abroad. Equally at home in the concert hall, Marvin has performed as a soloist in the *Messiah*, Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers* and Bach's *H-moll Messe* at the Aldeburgh Music Festival. In 2004 Marvin formed the Clemens non Papa Consort, a group whose aim is to perform lesser known works of the Baroque, Renaissance and Classical periods to a high artistic standard. Marvin has been Musical Director of the Fortismere Community Choir since 2015, seeking to develop their vocal technique and taking on ever more ambitious repertoire including Duruflé's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Great C Minor Mass*, Haydn's oratorio *Die Jahreszeiten* and Beethoven's epic *Missa Solemnis*.



### **John Eady – organist and répétiteur**

John studied music at King's College London, the Royal Academy of Music and cello at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In 2002 he started to learn the organ at the St Giles International Organ School and in 2006 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. He is a freelance cellist and organist, manages his string quartet named Four Strings Attached, and is organist at St Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge.



### **Andrew Woodmansey – tenor**

Andrew Woodmansey is a Tenor studying for a Masters in Vocal Performance at Trinity Laban under Neil Baker, supported by the Elliot Rosenblatt Memorial Scholarship, the Prowdes Trust, and the Williams Trust.

Andrew is a keen exponent of Contemporary music, having played roles in eight world and UK opera premieres, including works by Michael Gordon, Peter Wiegold, Mark Springer, and John Sturt, in venues including The Cockpit Theatre, Wilton Music Hall, OSO Arts, and The Playground Theatre.

Andrew has also performed widely in canon works. Roles have included Tamino and Manostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and Rehearsal Cover for Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amor*). Soloist engagements have included Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, *Carmina Burana* and Bach's *St John Passion* (arias and Evangelist) among several others; in venues such as Christchurch Priory, St John's, Guernsey, The Minack Theatre, Cadogan Hall, and The National Center for Arts, Mumbai.

Later this year Andrew will be playing Spoletta (*Tosca*) at the King's Head Theatre, performing several oratorio solos and will be playing Victor Frankenstein (Libby Larson's *Frankenstein*) at Blackheath Halls.

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