

NICHOLAS HOUGHTON (organ) Conductor and organist Nicholas Houghton is a full-time freelance player, accompanist and choral director. Having begun his musical career at the age of seven as a chorister at Coventry Cathedral, Nick studied organ with David Lepine, Robert Weddle and Nicolas Kynaston, and music at Bristol University. He went on to hold a variety of teaching roles in both the independent and state education sector, including five years as Head of the East Sussex Academy of Music (ESAM) in Lewes.

Nick has been conducting choirs and running choral workshops for over forty years. He is currently Music Director of Lewes Singers, East Sussex Community Choir, Lewes Chamber Choir and Brighton Singers. He has recently become Chorus Master for New Sussex Opera and will also be conducting Brighton Orpheus Choir for their 2021-2 season. Since 2012, Nick has been the Director of Music and Organist at St Michael's in Lewes, founding the Sunday Recitals series. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists.

RUTH KERR (conductor) has been the Director of Brighton Chamber Choir since January 2019. She studied music at Cambridge University and singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and then began her career as a chorister with several of the UK's leading professional choirs and with Glyndebourne Festival Opera. She went on to perform many lead operatic roles throughout the UK and Europe, specialising in romantic tragic heroines such as Mimi (*La Boheme*), Violetta (*La Traviata*) and Madame Butterfly: she has died on stage in many and various ways! In recent years, Ruth has turned her attention towards choral conducting, music examining for the ABRSM and teaching singing and piano. Future plans include song recitals with tonight's organist, Nick Houghton, an array of Christmas performances with the Paddock Singers and a performance of Richard Strauss' iconic work for soprano and orchestra, the *Four Last Songs*, with Lewes Chamber Orchestra.

BRIGHTON CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANO: Louise Andrews, Linda Bennett, Brenda Bishop, Anna Bourne, Susie Chandler, Lisa-Marie Clements, Synne Dvik, Shirley Greenwood, Ruth Hughes, Carol Noble, Anna Orchard, Kate Osborne, Helen Randall, Sarah Shergill, Zoe Punyer

ALTO: Caroline Boles, Tracey Cresswell, Bibi Lees, Jennie Maddocks, Sheila Mason, Jill Munday, Jo Oldham, Sue Shaw, Elizabeth Smith, Anna Stavrianakis, Helen Walker, Wietske Wynniatt-Husey

TENOR: John Bishop, Tim Cullen, Tony Hawgood, Andy Munday, Tony Rutherford, John Whilde

BASS: Neil Fraser-Smith, Philippe Guyard, Edward Mundy, Spencer Nash, David Owers, Chris Parke

www.brightonchamberchoir.org



Brighton Chamber Choir

Conductor: Ruth Kerr

REQUIEM

by Gabriel Fauré
with other works by

Fauré,
Camille Saint-Saëns
and
Lili Boulanger

Helen Randall

Soprano

Elizabeth Smith

Mezzo-Soprano

Chris Parke

Baritone

Nicholas Houghton

Organ

Saturday, 13th November at 6pm

St Nicholas' Church, Dyke Road

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE: 28th November; 5.30 pm at St Nicholas, Dyke Road

SPRING CONCERT: 2nd April; 6.00 pm at St Paul, West Street, Brighton

Tonight's three French composers are all closely connected through more than just their profession and nationality. Their lifetimes bridged the 19th and 20th centuries, and they were familiar with each other's work. From 1861 until 1865, Fauré was a student of Saint-Saëns, and they formed a friendship that lasted for the rest of the latter's life. Fauré became the teacher of Nadia, Lili Boulanger's, older sister, who was also an acclaimed composer. Nadia later changed her focus from composition to teaching and held regular receptions at her home where her students were able to meet her many composer friends – including Gabriel Fauré, who had taught her at the Paris Conservatoire. However, it was her sister Lili who, following in their father's footsteps, won the coveted *Prix de Rome* for composition in 1913, becoming the first woman to do so.

Calme des Nuits by **Camille Saint-Saëns** is in two parts: the eponymous first movement reflects the title in its intimate, contemplative musical language; whilst the second, *Les Fleurs et les Arbres*, celebrates the uplifting effect of the natural world and the arts on our wellbeing – long before the NHS started prescribing them. In the *Ave Maria*, the composer takes us back to the reverential tone of the first piece we heard, but this time in a religious setting. Nick Houghton will finish with Saint-Saëns' *Two Improvisations for Organ*.

Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine* predates the Requiem by 28 years. Written in his final year as a student at the *École Niedermeyer*, it was awarded that year's composition prize. The words are taken from a poem by Racine and the music contains both the long, soaring melodic lines typical of the late Romantic period and, at times, the complex harmonic progressions that became part of the musical language of composers after him.

One such composer was **Lili Boulanger**, who grew up in a very musical family, and was often present when her older sister Nadia was taught music at home. She soon started having her own lessons in music theory, singing, organ, piano, violin, cello and harp! Boulanger composed *Hymne au Soleil* in 1912 aged 18, a year before winning the extremely prestigious *Prix de Rome*. It is a very striking piece, much more modern-sounding than the other pieces performed tonight, but still clearly rooted in the late Romantic style. The words are by Casimir Delavigne and, like Saint-Saëns' songs earlier in the programme, celebrate nature – albeit with a much more pagan sentiment, praising the life-giving sun-god who awakens the earth.

Fauré's *Requiem* did not spring from a source of deep religious feeling; instead, Fauré commented that "Everything I managed to entertain by way of religious illusion I put into my Requiem, which moreover is dominated from beginning to end by a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest." There does not seem to

have been a direct reason for Fauré to write the piece, although he started the work not long after both his parents had died in the mid-1880s. According to the composer, he wrote the piece simply "for pleasure".

Camille Saint-Saëns

Calme des Nuits: Les Fleurs et les Arbres

Ave Maria

Two Improvisations for organ

Gabriel Fauré

Cantique de Jean Racine

Lili Boulanger

Hymne au Soleil

INTERVAL: refreshments will be served

Gabriel Fauré

Requiem Opus 48

Introit – Kyrie

Offertorium

Sanctus

Pie Jesu

Agnus Dei

Libera me

In Paradisum

HELEN RANDALL (Soprano) is a software engineering manager, as well as a being a mum of two. She has been an amateur musician for over 40 years, playing flute, piano and recorder. Choral singing is something Helen came to later in life, joining Brighton Chamber Choir just six years ago. Unlike most of the choir, this is the first time that Helen has ever performed Fauré's Requiem.

ELIZABETH SMITH (Mezzo-Soprano) works in education. She joined her primary-school and church choirs at the age of seven and has been in a variety of small choirs over the years. This is the first large choir that she has sung in and she, too, has never performed the Requiem!

CHRIS PARKE (Baritone) For the Brighton Chamber Choir, Chris has sung solos in Requiems by Brahms and Goodall. Years ago, he sang in the Glyndebourne and Royal Opera House choruses. He lives in Lewes and teaches History.