

Waverley Singers

Sunday 26 October 2025, 6pm

Farnham Maltings, GU9 7QR

Opera Gala

Soprano - Nina Bennet

Tenor - Robin Bailey

Piano - Jakob Rothoff

Conductor - Richard Pearce



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Waverley Singers

Platinum Celebrations

2025 - 2026

Opera Gala

Sunday 26 October 2025, 6:00pm
Farnham Maltings

Britten - *St Nicolas*

Saturday 6 December 2025, 6:00pm
St Thomas-on-The Bourne, Farnham

Choral Workshop

Dvorak *Stabat Mater*
Saturday 17 January 2026, 10:30 - 16:30
St Thomas-on-The Bourne

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Verdi - *Anvil chorus* (Il trovatore)

Rossini - *Villagers' Chorus* (Guillaume Tell)

Donizetti - *Chorus of Wedding Guests* (Lucia di Lammermor)

Tchaikovsky - *Kuda, kuda*
Eugene Onegin (Tenor solo)

Borodin - *Polovtsian Dances* (Prince Igor)

Verdi - *Pace, pace, mio Dio*
La Forza del Destino (Soprano Solo)

Verdi - *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves* (Nabucco)

Verdi - *Triumphal Scene* (Aida)

-----Interval-----

Handel - *Chorus of enchanted islanders* (Alcina)

Purcell - *Dido's Lament, and final chorus* (Dido and Aeneas)

Chaminade - *Automne op. 35 no. 2*
(Piano Solo)

Leoncavallo - *Bell Chorus* (Pagliacci)

Mascagni - *Easter Hymn* (Cavalleria Rusticana)

Puccini - *Humming Chorus* (Madama Butterfly)

Puccini - *Che Gelida Manina*
La Bohème (Tenor Solo)

Mozart - *Voyagers' Chorus* (Idomeneo)

Verdi - *Mercè dilette amiche*
I Vespri Siciliani (Soprano Solo)

Verdi - *Brindisi* (La traviata)

Programme Notes

Giuseppe Verdi 1813-1901

The Anvil Chorus from Il Trovatore

The romantic tragedy of this opera revolves round the fate of a high-born child kidnapped by gypsies. Act II opens with this chorus of the gypsies who earn their living as tinkers working at their anvils. As they await the dawn of a new day they celebrate pleasure in their work, in a pretty woman – la zingarella – and a good glass of wine.

Gioachino Rossini 1797-1868

Villagers' Chorus from William Tell

Written in 1829, William Tell was Rossini's 39th and last opera. The Villagers' Chorus sets an apparently happy rural scene as they welcome a bright May morning. It follows immediately after the famous overture of galloping horsemen (used for The Lone Ranger TV series). The opera tells of William Tell leading the Swiss people in their 13th century struggle for freedom from their Austrian oppressors by shooting the Austrian governor with a second arrow after his first had transfixed the apple on his son's head.

Gaetano Donizetti 1797-1848

Chorus of wedding guests from Lucia di Lammermoor

Donizetti's famous opera is based on Sir Walter Scott's novel, The Bride of Lammermoor, in which Lucia is forced to abandon her beloved Edgar (whose household had long feuded with her own) and marry someone who will restore the financial fortunes of her family. This chorus at the wedding suggests that this day brings joy, hope and love. But in reality, it is just a last moment of happiness before Lucia's descent into madness and the tragic ending of the whole work. First performed in 1835 this opera is widely held to be Donizetti's finest and was one of the most popular of its time.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky 1840-1893

Kuda, kuda, from Eugene Onegin

Eugene Onegin is based on Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse form with the same name. Tchaikovsky created the scenarios for the opera himself (in one night), following the original very closely and using Pushkin's own words.

"Kuda, kuda" (Where, oh where) is a soulful tenor aria in which the poet Lensky laments the loss of his youthful ideals and forebodes his imminent death in a duel with his friend, Eugene Onegin. The aria, set in the mournful key of E minor, begins as a gentle reflection on his lost dreams and builds to a passionate climax before returning to a quiet, introspective mood of resignation as Lensky accepts his fate.

Prince Igor is Borodin's only opera and was left unfinished on his death in 1887. It was completed by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov and premiered in 1890 in St Petersburg. Borodin was an amateur musician and composed in between his professional commitments as a research chemist and teacher. He was part of the group of composers called "The Five", along with Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui, whose aim, inspired by Glinka, was to make art music which was specifically Russian in its use of themes and subjects.

The libretto of Prince Igor was adapted from the East Slavic epic of The Lay of Igor's Host, which recounts the campaign of Russian prince Igor Svyatoslavich against the invading Polovtsian tribes in 1185. The Polovtsian Dances come at the end of Act 2 of the opera. Prince Igor has been captured by the Khan, Konchak, who has offered Igor his freedom if he would join forces with him. The opening section sung by the Khan's slave women recalls their lost freedom; then the whole chorus of Polovtsian men acclaim the glory of their merciless Khan. At the end of the opera Igor escapes and returns home, having refused to cooperate with Konchak. The music from Prince Igor and Borodin's string quartets was later adapted for the Broadway musical Kismet.

Giuseppe Verdi*Pace pace mio Dio from La Forza del Destino*

La forza del destino (The Power of Fate) premiered in 1862. Over the years the work has acquired a reputation for being cursed, following some unfortunate incidents. In 1960 at the Metropolitan Opera, the noted baritone Leonard Warren collapsed and died during a performance. The supposed curse reportedly kept Luciano Pavarotti from ever performing it, and the tenor Franco Corelli used to follow small rituals during performances to avoid bad luck.

Pace, pace, mio Dio! (Peace, O mighty Father, give me peace!) is an aria from Act IV, sung by the heroine Leonora, in which she longs for death to end her suffering and separation from her beloved Alvaro, imploring God for peace. She expresses that her love is true, but fate has cruelly separated them. The aria is famous for its dramatic expression of grief and is considered a technical challenge for sopranos.

Giuseppe Verdi*The Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from Nabucco*

Nabucco (1842) was Verdi's first really successful opera, and this chorus, with its powerful yearning for the homeland, touched the Italian people's political longing for liberty and self-government at the time of its early performances. Within the opera, it expresses the longing of the Hebrew slaves, living in exile in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco), for their distant home by the river Jordan. It was sung spontaneously by the crowds at Verdi's funeral in 1901.

Verdi was commissioned to write *Aida* for a new theatre in Cairo, and produced what has become one of the most popular operas of all time. This chorus in Act II provides the grandest of spectacles, as the King of Egypt celebrates his triumph over the Ethiopians and is honoured with appropriate pomp and majesty. *Aida*, the King of Ethiopia's daughter, but now slave to Pharaoh's daughter, has fallen in love with the commander of the Egyptian army, but he is betrothed to her mistress. The inevitable tragedy arising from the rivalry of *Aida* and her mistress forms the rest of the opera.

George Frideric Handel 1685-1759*Chorus of enchanted islanders from Alcina*

Alcina was among the most popular of Handel's later works, and was first performed in 1735. It is set on a magic island, where the eponymous enchantress lures heroes to become her lovers and then transforms them into rocks, streams, trees or wild animals. The work is a vehicle for brilliant arias covering a wide range of human emotions. In this chorus at the start of the work, *Alcina*'s captives sing of their life of endless delight.

Henry Purcell 1658-1695*Dido's Lament & the Final Chorus from Dido and Aeneas*

Dido and Aeneas is Purcell's only true opera and was first performed in 1689. He was supreme in composing for the voice and his feeling for dramatic expression. In Roman mythology, Aeneas, who had escaped his birthplace, Troy, destroyed by the Greeks, was destined to found a new city at Rome. On his way there, he visited Carthage where he and its Queen Dido fell in love. But fate demanded that he move on, and Dido was inconsolable at his departure. This incomparable lament conveys extraordinary emotional expression with such economy. Dido sings her dying wishes to her companion Belinda: "remember me!" The chorus keep watch at her tomb, and there scatter soft roses in perpetual memory.

Cécile Chaminade 1857-1944*Automne (Six Études de Concert)*

Cécile Louise Stéphanie Chaminade was born in Batignolles (then a village just outside Paris), and raised in a musical family, having her first piano lessons from her mother. Chaminade affiliated herself with nationalist composers such as Camille Saint-Saëns and Charles Gounod. Her musical style was rooted in both Romantic and French tradition and her music has been described as tuneful, highly accessible and mildly chromatic. In describing her own style, Chaminade wrote, "I am essentially of the Romantic school, as all my work shows." She was awarded the Légion d'Honneur, a first for a female composer.

Automne (Autumn), the second of her Six Études de Concert, Op. 35 (1886), features a tender, flowing opening melody over a rocking accompaniment, followed by a passionate and fiery middle section, and concludes with a peaceful return to the main theme, creating a nostalgic and expressive Romantic-era piece, and showcases Chaminade's ability to combine technical virtuosity with emotional depth.

Ruggiero Leoncavallo 1857-1919

The Bell Chorus from Pagliacci

Leoncavallo is best known for his two-act opera Pagliacci first performed in 1892, and now often performed as a double bill with Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana. The title means Clowns or Strolling Players. It takes the form of a play within a play, about the jealous rivalry over a girl in the play, acted out in real life between one of the players, her husband, and a member of the village audience, her true lover. This chorus in Act I marks the church bells ringing for the evening service, with the villagers singing of love.

Pietro Mascagni 1863-1945

Easter Hymn from Cavalleria rusticana

This one-act opera took the world by storm in 1890, and was soon being performed all over the world, from Russia to Argentina, as well as in Mascagni's native Italy. It tells a story of love, betrayal and death, in a Sicilian village where the fervour of traditional Catholic faith is matched by the intensity of passion in relationships in the close-knit community. This chorus comes at the heart of the opera and illustrates the religious devotion of the hot-blooded people. It opens with a traditional Easter hymn in Latin and develops into a call in Italian to sing praise to the risen Christ.

Giacomo Puccini 1858-1924

Humming Chorus from Madama Butterfly

The opera is based on a true story and is set in Nagasaki in Japan. It tells of an American naval officer, Pinkerton, who takes a young Japanese girl – Madam Butterfly - as his wife, but then leaves her to return to his own country. She cannot doubt that he will come back, believing faithfully that he still loves her; after three years he returns but with a new American wife, and she ends her life in despair. The Humming chorus is sung as the moon shines through the window of her bedroom.

Giacomo Puccini 1858-1924

Che gelida manina from La Bohème

La Bohème was composed between 1893 and 1895 and is set in Paris around 1830. It shows the bohemian lifestyle of a poor seamstress and her artist friends. The premiere was at Teatro Regio in Turin on 1 February 1896 conducted by the 28-year-old Arturo Toscanini. 50 years after that premiere, Toscanini conducted a

commemorative performance on radio which was later released on vinyl record. It is the only recording ever made of a Puccini opera by its original conductor.

Che gelida manina (How cold your little hand is!) is sung by the tenor Rodolfo, as he tells his life story to Mimi after her candle goes out in his cold apartment. The aria is a romantic expression of love at first sight, where Rodolfo describes himself as a poet living in happy poverty and asks Mimi about her life. Its musical structure has three distinct sections: a tender opening, a bolder middle part, and a third section that introduces the opera's "love" motif.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756-1791

Voyagers' Chorus from Idomeneo

Idomeneo, delayed by storms on his return from the Trojan War, vows to sacrifice to Neptune, in return for his safe home-coming, the first living being he meets on his arrival, who turns out to be his own son Idamante. Idomeneo attempts to avoid fulfilling his vow by sending his son away, and the chorus urges him to make haste while the weather is fine. Eventually Idomeneo wins a reprieve from Neptune on condition he abdicates in favour of his son.

Giuseppe Verdi

Mercè dilette amiche from I vespri siciliani

I vespri siciliani (The Sicilian Vespers) was originally written to a French libretto for the Paris Opéra but shortly after its premiere in June 1855 it was translated into Italian. Although the story is loosely based on a historical event, the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, (an uprising by the Sicilians against their unpopular French rulers) in contrast the opera has a happy ending.

"*Merce dilette amiche*" (Thank you, beloved friends) is sung by the soprano protagonist, Elena, at the end of the opera. The aria expresses her initial gratitude for her friends' well wishes before her wedding ceremony, using the metaphor of blooming flowers to express her joyful feelings for her Sicilian homeland. However, the joyous mood is soon overshadowed by the discovery that her wedding bells will signal an uprising by the Sicilians and a massacre of the ruling French, making a tragic counterpoint to the opera's unfolding events. The aria is notable for requiring a singer with impressive vocal agility and command of coloratura.

Giuseppe Verdi

Brindisi from La Traviata

This opera opens at a party where Alfredo woos the courtesan Violetta with this toast, a tribute to youth, beauty and pleasure, which is taken up by the chorus and Violetta herself. Later in the opera, though their love has been deepening, Alfredo's father persuades Violetta to give him up so as not to spoil his family's prospects. Eventually Violetta and Alfredo are reunited, but it is too late as she dies from consumption.

A Brief History of Opera

In Florence in 1589, Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici and the French princess Christine of Lorraine were married. The celebrations were a landmark in Renaissance art, theatre, music and political ceremony. An essential part of the celebrations was a set of intermezzi, performed between the acts of the play *La pellegrina* (The Pilgrim). Intermezzi were short musical items, often incorporating dancing, setting little scenes from mythology and antiquity. They were often more interesting than the commedia they complemented.

The predominant musical form of the time was the madrigal, which had reached its zenith at this period. A madrigal is a highly contrapuntal musical form, with much imitation between the vocal parts. Generally each line, or thought, in the poem is represented by a new musical phrase, taken up by the other voices.

At the same time, the close of the 16th century, a group of aristocratic Florentine intelligentsia were trying to recreate Greek drama. They believed that the 'chorus' parts of a drama would have been sung, and possibly the other parts were sung too. The first fruit of this movement was the opera *Dafne* written by Jacopo Peri, performed in the carnival festivities before Lent in 1597. Most of the music has been lost, but his next opera, *Euridice*, from 1600, is the first to survive in score. It falls to *Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi performed before Lent in 1607, to be the first opera that has made its way into the repertoire.

Early opera was concerned with mythological subjects. It contained a mixture of broad humour and tragedy, which upset many of the educated listeners and prompted the first round of opera reforms, in which it became divided into two styles: opera seria and opera buffa.

Opera has undergone many reforms since its invention. The next major reform arose from the fact that opera had rapidly become a vehicle for the singers to show off their skills and for spectacular stage effects, whilst the dramatic elements were pushed into the background. Christoph Willibald Gluck and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were the chief agents in making the music, ballet and staging subservient to the music and the drama. This had lasting effects that are felt in the operas of Carl Maria von Weber and Richard Wagner.

In the 19th century, a movement known as *Bel Canto* (literally beautiful singing) began in Italy in which the vocal lines became intricate and florid, requiring very agile singing and superb pitch control from the singers. It can be heard in the operas of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. The operas of Giuseppe Verdi had a more direct and forceful style that captured the patriotic feelings of the time as Italy threw off the yoke of Napoleon. The next great

movement was verismo, characterized by a sentimental realism, evident in the works of Ruggero Leoncavallo, Pietro Mascagni and Giacomo Puccini in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Opera in the rest of Europe had trouble shaking off the hold of Italian opera. German composers started off by writing in Italian, and it was not until Mozart that German started to be recognized as a legitimate language to set. The most revolutionary, and controversial, composer of German opera was Wagner, whose concept of fusing music, poetry and painting to produce Gesamtkunstwerk (complete work of art) still affects composers.

In France a separate tradition of opera was established by Jean Baptiste Lully in which dance was prominent. The French Revolution in 1789 swept away the traditions of Lully and Rameau, and Italian and German opera became the models. The French followed many of the movements of Italian opera, but also contributed its own – grand opera, characterized by heroic, dramatic plot subjects, spectacular sets, large numbers of performers, and lots of ballet music. By the late 19th century there was a move to produce opera in French, led by Hector Berlioz, and Georges Bizet.

Other countries also produced their own national styles. Opera reached Russia in the 1730s and it soon became an important entertainment for the Imperial Court and aristocracy. Initially foreign composers were invited to write the opera, but in the 1830s the first Russian opera was written by Mikhail Glinka and was followed with important works from Modest Mussorgsky, Alexander Borodin and Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Spain followed a similar pattern to France, having its own national opera during the 1650s to 1750s, which was supplanted by Italian opera until the 1850s when native opera revived. During the 19th century Czech composers developed their own style of national opera, starting with Bedrich Smetana and succeeded by Antonin Dvorak and Leos Janacek. Hungary and Poland also produced native opera during the 19th century.

English opera has had a chequered history. The French masque came to England in the 18th century and gained much ground. It set allegorical stories and contained mime, dance and music, much like a pantomime. John Blow and Henry Purcell each wrote an opera in English, but the influx of foreign musicians, particularly George Frideric Handel who brought Italian opera with them, effectively killed any further development of native English opera. In the 20th century, English opera was revived with works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, and more recently, Harrison Birtwistle. American Opera also started to flourish in the 20th century with works by Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti, and, lately, Philip Glass.

The Waverley Singers: A Brief History

In 1955 a group of former pupils of Farnham Girls' Grammar School, who had already performed several concerts locally under the direction of a musically precocious sixth-former of the Boys' Grammar School, John Cotterill, became the Waverley Singers. The first meeting and practice, at 19, Waverley Lane, the home of one of the choir members, was on 13 March, and the first concert, a fundraiser for St Andrew's Church in Church House, was on 24 September. 19 Waverley Lane also provided the choir with its name (the Borough of Waverley did not yet exist!)



The choir outside 19, Waverley Lane, March 1957

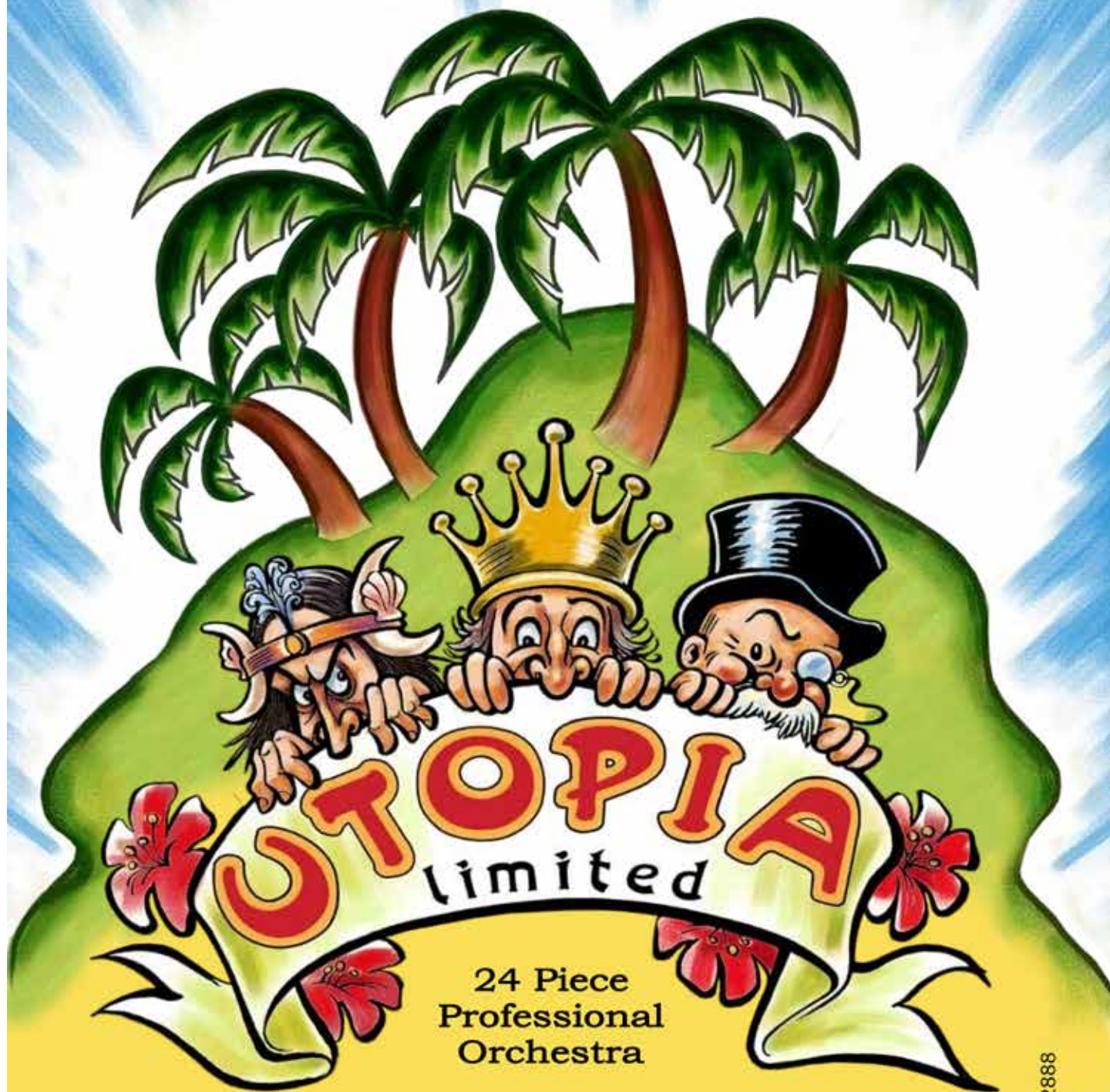
A further nine concerts followed over the next four years, some notably ambitious, despite John Cotterill's being called up in March 1958 for National Service with the RAF. Derek Bowtell, the only male member of the Choir, took over as assistant conductor, and the determination of the founder Secretary, Molly Goddard, and others ensured the show was kept on the road.

In late 1958 the choir started recruiting male members (an article in the local paper was headed: "Farnham's All-Girl Choir is Looking for Men Now"!). Then, on 30 April 1960, three days after John Cotterill completed his National Service, it was able to put on a major concert in St Andrew's Parish Church, which included the "little-known Requiem Mass by Fauré", according to one review!

From then on, the choir went from strength to strength, settling into a routine of two, three, or sometimes four concerts a year, with highly innovative and imaginative programmes: new works alongside major items from the classical repertoire. Several famous names performed with the choir including, in November 1961, the young and as yet unknown bass John Shirley-Quirk, who wrote to the Secretary to ask if a fee of ten guineas, including expenses, to sing in Purcell's 'King Arthur' would be considered acceptable!

/contd

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Amazingly, John Cotterill was not a professional musician and was self-taught as a conductor. It was a measure of his achievement with the choir that, when he stepped down in 1981 after 25 years at the helm – and following a highly successful Silver Jubilee concert in the Princes Hall, Aldershot in March 1980 – the choir was able to recruit a distinguished professional, Malcolm Hicks, to replace him.

In his turn Malcolm, whose first concert as the new permanent conductor was in December 1982, took the choir to new heights, bringing in a wider range of professional singers and orchestral players, making recordings for sale on CD, taking the choir to sing in services at cathedrals throughout the UK, and initiating a series of highly successful and enjoyable concert tours to continental Europe. During this time the choir also regularly joined forces with others at Christmas to perform in charity carol concerts at the Royal Albert Hall.



French tour: Chartres Cathedral, June 2004

When Malcolm left in 2009, we were again extremely fortunate to be able to appoint in his place Richard Pearce, who had earlier been our regular accompanist. Richard has brought his engaging manner, talent for devising imaginative programmes, and comforting faith that however challenging the repertoire, we will deliver on the night! Under his leadership we have maintained a schedule of four concerts a year, hosted annual 'Come and Sing' workshops, and commissioned two works from leading composers: from Will Todd in 2013 and from Owain Park in 2025. We have continued the tradition of tours, both in the UK and on the continent, with the next one scheduled for summer 2027.



Mass in B Minor Workshop at South Farnham Middle School, February 2020

The project to upload our events archive to our new website continues, and we are still unearthing hitherto undocumented concerts! At the latest count, since 1955 we have taken part in just under 300 events. Of these, sixteen have been in the Farnham Maltings, including major fundraisers for the venue in the early years while it was still becoming what it is today. Please take a look at our site waverleysingers.com/events-archive – if you can help us fill in any gaps in our records, please contact socialmedia@waverleysingers.com: we'd be very grateful!

Waverley Singers

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Contact our Patrons Secretary Gillian for details
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Nina Bennet - Soprano

ninabennet.com

The dramatic soprano Nina Bennet spent the first 20 years of her career performing around the world with choral groups such as the Academy of Ancient Music, Britten Sinfonia Voices, and the BBC Singers, before developing a much larger voice.

Her recent concert work includes Verdi's Requiem in Eberbach Abbey, Germany, Mendelssohn's Elijah in Romsey Abbey, Britten's War Requiem in Haileybury College, Tippett's Child of Our Time in Cadogan Hall, London, Britten's Spring Symphony in Canterbury Cathedral, and Howell's Hymnus Paradisi in Bristol Beacon. In 2024, she made her Strauss Four Last Songs debut in Germany with the Deutsche Philharmonie Merck, and returned two months later for three performances of Mahler's epic 8th Symphony.

Nina has made her first forays into the more dramatic opera works with the parts of Helmwig, Ortlinde and Gerhilde in Wagner's Die Walküre for the London Opera Company, Lia in an adaptation of Debussy's L'enfant Prodigue for the Grimeborn Festival, Kathy in Her Day for Coventry's City of Culture Festival, and Donna Anna in Mozart's Don Giovanni for Surrey Opera at the Minack Theatre. When not singing, Nina is responsible for raising two teenagers and a cat called Billie Holiday.



Robin Bailey - Tenor

robinbaileytenor.com

Robin trained at the Royal Academy of Music and on the Opera Course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

His operatic roles include Sellem/Rake's Progress (English Touring Opera & Barbara Hannigan's EQ artist scheme), Fox/Vixen (English National Opera/Silent opera), Mayor/1st cover Anatoly/Chess & Graf Albert (cover)/Die Tote Stadt (English National Opera), Analyst/A Quiet Place (Royal Opera House), Fenton/Falstaff, Alfred/Die Fledermaus & Pluto/Orpheus in the Underworld (Iford/IF Opera),

Gastone & cover Alfredo/La Traviata (Nevill Holt Opera), Bearded Wild Thing/Where the Wild Things are (Shadwell Opera), Quint/Prologue/Turn of the Screw, The One/Janacek's Diary of One Who Disappeared and Henry Crawford/Mansfield Park (Waterperry Opera festival), Candide/Candide, Alfred/Die Fledermaus, Pirelli/Sweeney Todd (West Green House Opera), Valjean/Les Misérables & Tony/West Side Story (Pimlico/Grange Park Opera), Alexis/The Sorcerer, Nanki-Poo/The Mikado & Tamino/The Magic Flute (Charles Court Opera).

Robin's solo oratorio work includes B Minor Mass/Bach, Mozart Requiem & Le Grand Messe de Morts/Berlioz (Canterbury Cathedral), St. Matthew Passion/Bach (Bristol Beacon), The Bells/Rachmaninov (Winchester Cathedral), Israel in Egypt/Handel (Southwark Cathedral), The Crucifixion/Stainer (St. Martin's in the Fields). Robin was a founding member of the A Capella group Voces8. He was also awarded 2nd prize in the International Lotte Lenya competition in New York, and the Young artists' prize at the Les Azuriales competition in Nice, France. Robin is looking forward to playing Marco in The Gondoliers with English Touring Opera next year, and before that his first Christmas with two children under two (Zach and Miriam).



Jakob Rothoff - Pianist

Jakob was born in Sweden and studied piano, piano teaching and conducting at The Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm before coming to London for further studies at the Royal College of Music.

At the College Jakob earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Accompaniment, winning all the prizes for lieder accompaniment.

Since graduating, Jakob has performed all over the UK, with singers, instrumentalists and choirs.

The podcast interview, below, gives an absorbing insight into Jakob's family and musical background. We are very lucky that he is willing to brave the vagaries of the train service to come and rehearse with us every Thursday night during termtime!



Scan the QR code to watch Jakob's podcast interview.



Richard Pearce - Conductor

Photo - Ian Skelly

Richard has been musical director of the Waverley Singers for over 15 years. Particular highlights have been concerts in Guildford Cathedral of Monteverdi Vespers, Verdi Requiem, Beethoven Mass in C, Brahms Schicksalslied, Mozart Requiem and Bach Magnificat in D.

In 2022 he conducted the Bach Mass in B minor, postponed by the pandemic, and Elgar Dream of Gerontius in a combined performance with the Romsey Choral Society. Alongside these major works he has introduced new and varied repertoire to the choir, including commissions by composer Will Todd, and a new commission from Owain Park for 2025.

Richard Pearce was organ scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. After graduating with first class honours in music, he studied piano accompaniment for two years at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London where he developed his work with solo singers. He is now a professor at the GSMD, coaching singers and instrumentalists for careers in opera and the concert platform, and is a trustee of the Josephine Baker Trust, which supports young soloists at the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Richard is busy as a conductor, pianist and organist with professional choirs, and is also Musical Director of the Romsey Choral Society. He records and broadcasts regularly with the BBC Singers, and particularly enjoys the challenge of preparing an extremely wide variety of repertoire, including much contemporary and new music. With them, he has conducted works by James MacMillan, Judith Bingham, Britten and Roxanna Panufnik for broadcast on BBC Radio 3. As organist and pianist, he has performed with many of the UK's best-known choral conductors, including David Hill, Stephen Cleobury, Paul Spicer, Bob Chilcott and Sofi Jeannin. Richard has a long-standing association with the Royal Choral Society and performs with them several times a year at the Royal Albert Hall in London. In addition, he makes twice-yearly trips to Sweden to work with groups in the Stockholm and Malmö areas.

Richard is regular organist with the Philharmonia and BBC Symphony Orchestras in London; with them he has performed with many inspirational conductors including

Lorin Maazel, Pierre Boulez, Oliver Knussen, Andrew Davis, Sakari Oramo, Marin Alsop and Ed Gardner, as well as Santtu-Matias Rouvali and Jakub Hrůša. He also performs regularly in Promenade concerts and recordings, including at the Last Night of the Proms to a worldwide television audience.

Richard frequently conducts and plays for services at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster and at the Houses of Parliament.

Tenor Choral Scholar

Waverley Singers £2000 PA - start asap

Applications are invited for a Tenor Choral Scholar to join the Waverley Singers for their current 2025-2026 season. Would suit an advanced vocal student or former university choral scholar based in London/Southeast.

Remuneration: £2000.00

To sing with and support the tenor section of this choral society of nearly 100 members. Subject to suitability, you may be offered solo opportunities and coaching or conducting experience working with our Conductor Richard Pearce.

Our expectations: once accepted, you must attend all performances and at least 80% of rehearsals.

The 2025-6 concert dates are:

Sunday 26 October 2025

Saturday 6 December 2025

Saturday 21 March 2026

Saturday 27 June 2026

Rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings 7.30pm - 9.45pm at the Spire Church, Farnham, GU9 7QU, walking distance from Farnham train station.

Please apply via email to Co-Chairs Sylvia & Sara:
co-chairs@waverleysingers.com

The Waverley Singers

We are a vibrant and exciting choir of about 100 members. We perform four or five concerts a year in the Farnham area, covering a wide range of repertoire from Josquin to jazz. We have the pleasure of performing with professional orchestras and ensembles, soloists, and accompanists, and above all working with our conductor Richard Pearce and our accompanist Jakob Rothoff.

Platinum Celebrations

2025 is our 70th anniversary, and we have been enjoying some exciting Platinum Celebrations starting with a Choral Workshop and performance of Mendelssohn's Elijah in the Spring term. For this concert at St Andrew's Garrison Church, Aldershot, we were joined by the Chameleon Arts Orchestra, baritone Andrew Rupp and vocal soloists supported by the Josephine Baker Trust.

Our summer concert Midsummer Nocturnes - Echoes of Nature at St Mary's Church, Frensham included the world premiere of "Five Nocturnes" by Owain Park. This commission was made possible by the generous legacy left to us by choir member Jo Reader, to whom the work is dedicated. The summer term ended with our very first Waverley Sing event, generously supported by Farnham Town Council. This was a free singing day aiming to share the joy of singing some lighter repertoire.

After our Opera Gala today we look forward to Saturday 6th December when we will join Jordan Theis and the Bourne Parish Choir to perform Britten's St Nicolas on St Nicolas Day!

Plans for 2026 include Exultation – the Lark Ascending, a programme of music by Vaughan Williams at Guildford Cathedral next spring, where we will be joined by distinguished violinist Elizabeth Cooney. Our summer concert in Alton will feature music for Coronations. The final event of the season is a collaboration with our sister-choir Romsey Choral Society performing Brahms Requiem in Romsey Abbey.

It is a fabulous time to join the choir and we are always delighted to welcome new singers. We rehearse every Thursday during term time, from 7.30pm to 9.45pm in The Spire Church, South Street, Farnham GU9 7QU.

If you are interested in joining or simply wish to find out more, please contact:

Carolyn Heathcote

01420 475418

membership@waverleysingers.com

waverleysingers.com

Sopranos

Nicola Anderegg
Claire Bacon
Sara Burnie
Janet Carne
Joy Cartwright
Johanna Clift
Rosie Collinson
Elaine Cook
Philippa Cullen
Diane Drewett
Elizabeth Flitcroft
Janet Gunn
Anneliese Handley
Caroline Hardy
Rosemary Heasman
Carolyn Heathcote
Sue Hubbard
Pat Martin
Sally Maxfield
Catherine May
Alyson Paterson
Carolyn Patey
Eleanor Platt-Williams
Eleanor Raynsford
Margaret Reeder
Vivien Rieden
Niloofar Rose
Miranda Sargent
Susan Sharpe
Tracy Smith
Emily Thomas
Joanne Watson
Maggie Weaver
Sally Wooding

Altos

Juliana Baxter
Sarah Church
Sue Crosfield
Jill Denbigh
Fiona Dick
Sheena Ewen
Catherine Hadfield
Jane Kenney
Margaret Mackenzie
Anne Mason
Anna Milburn
Liz Milburn
Faye Mylward
Gillian Pickering
Pamela Poust
Allison Price
Tegwen Robb
Judith Stradling
Rachel Sturt
Sylvia Turner
Esther van Rooyen
Joan Warren
Catherine White
Chris Wilmshurst
Teresa Wishart
Liz Witham

Tenors

Nick Bailes
Vernon Burford
Tim Devis
David Edwards
Robert Gussman
Luke Horner
Rosie Jeffery
David Martin
Alan Mort
Simon Paterson

Basses

Mike Aaronson
Simon Austin
Andrew Baxter
David Budd
Paul Chambers
David Corran
Sam Coulter
Rod Eckles
Hugh Gammell
Bill Griffin
Max Hadfield
Graham Hey
John Holden
John Hubbard
Jeremy Keep
Michael Manzi
Mark Penfold
Glen Plant
John Rowland
Philip Sharpe
Martin Simpson
Simon Stoodley
Alan Thompson

Accompanist: Jakob Rothoff



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Waverley Singers would like to thank their advertisers and Patrons for their continuing support.

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Mr & Mrs M Hadfield	Mr R Mackenzie	Mr N Wilmshurst
Mrs S Hard	Mr D Martin	Mr D Wilson
Mr and Mrs R Heathcote	Mr D Patey	Mrs E Witham

Anyone who is interested in becoming a patron of the choir is invited to contact **Gillian Pickering on 07730 478445 or email patrons@waverleysingers.com**.

All Patrons receive advance notice of concerts and priority booking forms and are entitled to reserved seats in the position of their choice. Their names are listed in concert programmes, and they are also invited to the choir's social events. Donations made under Gift Aid are particularly valuable to the choir.

The Waverley Singers would like to thank the Farnham Maltings for making them so welcome this evening. Our thanks also to Paul Chambers, Robert Gussman, Mike Aaronson and Sylvia Turner for programme content, to Sara Burnie and Jonathan Pickering for programme editing and graphic design and to Simon Claiden for photography.

At each of our concerts, we invite a local charity to receive the proceeds of a retiring collection. Last season, we raised £870 for The Simon Trust, £857 for Step by Step, £877 for Cardiac Rehab and £812 for Farnham Food Bank.

We are very grateful to all who have given so generously.

Please visit our website for further information: **waverleysingers.com**

The Waverley Singers is a registered charity no. 284123



TBS Concerts

3-00pm Sunday 9 November

Max Mostovetski - piano

"Music from Leipzig"

Bach, Schumann, Mendelssohn

3-00 pm Sunday 23 November

Chameleon Wind Ensemble

125 years of British Wind Quintet Music

7-30 pm Tuesday 16 December

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The Bourne Parish Choir & Waverley Singers
Sat 6 December 2025, 6pm



St Thomas-on-The Bourne, GU9 8HA

St Nicolas Britten

TENOR - PETER DAVOREN ORGAN - PHILIP SCRIVEN

CHAMELEON ARTS ENSEMBLE

CONDUCTORS - RICHARD PEARCE AND JORDAN THEIS

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