

## The Bach Choir and David Hill give world premiere of Roxanna Panufnik's *Four Choral Seasons*



*“probably the finest independent choir in the world”*  
Evening Standard

**Thursday 17 October, 7:30pm**  
Royal Festival Hall

**Panufnik** *Four Choral Seasons* **WORLD PREMIERE**

- i. *A Summer Wish* (Christina Rossetti)
- ii. *Now is the time for the burning of leaves* (Laurence Binyon)
- iii. *Blow, blow, thou Winter Wind* (William Shakespeare)
- iv. *Spring* (Gerard Manley Hopkins)

**Bloch** *Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody*

**Debussy** *La mer*

**Delius** *Sea Drift*

**The Bach Choir**  
**Philharmonia Orchestra**  
**David Hill** conductor  
**Raphael Wallfisch** cello  
**Duncan Rock** baritone

Celebrating the opening of their 2019-20 season, **The Bach Choir** and conductor **David Hill** present the world premiere of their latest commission: Roxanna Panufnik's *Four Choral Seasons*. Joined by cellist Raphael Wallfisch, baritone Duncan Rock, and the Philharmonia Orchestra, The Bach Choir present an evocative programme that sets the natural cadences of the year against the constant ebbing and flowing of the sea.

Inspired by Vivaldi's eponymous work, **Roxanna Panufnik's** new *Four Choral Seasons* presents a sweeping overture to the natural world, evoking the passing of the year through the four poems it sets. This performance marks the **world premiere** of “Now is the time for the burning of leaves” and “Blow, blow thou Winter Wind”, both commissioned by The Bach

Choir for this performance. The new set compliments her 2012 work *Four World Seasons* for violin, string orchestra and Tibetan singing bowl.

**Roxanna Panufnik** says:

*“For years, I’ve wanted to complete a set of Four Choral Seasons and I’m so incredibly excited and deeply grateful to The Bach Choir for making this happen. I know they will relish the drama and kaleidoscopic musical colours of the journey from Summer to Spring, and I’m hugely looking forward to working with them on it.”*

Panufnik’s *Seasons* begin at the midpoint of the year, with **Christina Rossetti’s** languorous garden setting of “A Summer Wish”, before moving to **Laurence Binyon’s** falling leaves and bonfires of “Now is the time for the burning of leaves”.

Winter is represented by **William Shakespeare’s** “Blow, blow thou Winter Wind”, an excitable, wind-whistling and icy forest scene from *As you Like It*. The *Four Choral Seasons* ends with “Spring”, setting words by **Gerard Manley Hopkins** in a gesture of optimism.

Setting text from Walt Whitman’s *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, The Bach Choir also performs **Delius’s** intensely poignant *Sea Drift*. The touching story of two separated seabirds, the scenes narrated by baritone **Duncan Rock** gradually move from land to water through undulating writing.



Delius’s *Sea Drift* of 1906 is coupled with another striking orchestral seascape: the three symphonic sketches that comprise **Debussy’s** *La mer*, premiered just a year earlier in Paris, October 1905. The programme is completed with **Ernest Bloch’s** grand *Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra* of ten years later. Schelomo was the final work written by the composer before emigrating to America, where he eventually settled by the sea in Agate Beach, Oregon. Marking the closing of his “Jewish cycle”, the work represents King Solomon (whose Jewish name gives the work its title) through its cello line, performed in the Royal Festival Hall with soloist **Raphael Wallfisch**, himself a Bloch expert.



Founded in 1876, **The Bach Choir** is recognised as one of the world’s leading choruses, building upon a tradition that combines musical excellence with creativity and innovation.

The independent chorus has 250 amateur singers from diverse backgrounds who join together to take pride in performing, recording and sharing music at the highest level. The Bach Choir’s conductor **David Hill** was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 2019 New Year Honours for his services to music.

The Bach Choir has recently recorded **Herbert Howells’** 1953 *Missa Sabriensis*, with the **BBC Concert Orchestra** and soloists **Helena Dix**, **Christine Rice**, **Ben Hulett**, and **Roderick Williams**. An extended and complex setting of the Latin Mass for soloists, chorus and orchestra, the *Missa Sabriensis* was named after the River Severn.

## The Bach Choir

Founded in 1876, The Bach Choir is recognised as one of the world's leading choruses, building upon a tradition that combines musical excellence with creativity and innovation.

From the first performance in Britain of Bach's *Mass in B minor* 142 years ago to the soundtrack for Ridley Scott's epic *Prometheus*, the Choir's musical heritage is as rich as it is diverse. Directed by David Hill, one of the country's most eminent conductors and choir trainers, the Choir regularly performs and records across London and the UK in prestigious venues, from the Royal Albert Hall to Abbey Road Studios.

Described by the London Evening Standard as 'probably the finest independent choir in the world', the Bach Choir values the freedom that its independence brings, allowing it to work with the very best orchestras and soloists, and to choose the music it performs. To date the Choir has sung over 400 works in more than 120 venues, and continues to share its work with audiences around the world. Following an invitation from the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choir gave two performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Hong Kong's Cultural Centre just before Easter 2014, and it gave further concerts in Shanghai and Hangzhou. In October 2017, the Choir gave six concerts in the Netherlands of *a cappella* music and works for choir and organ, one of which was broadcast on Dutch radio. Plans are under way for a tour to the US in 2020.

With a strong commitment to new music, the Bach Choir has commissioned works from some of the world's leading composers including Sir John Tavener, Bob Chilcott, Jonathan Dove, Will Todd and Carl Rütli. In June 2017 the Choir gave the world premiere performance of James MacMillan's *Blow the trumpet in the new moon*, and it has commissioned Roxanna Panufnik to write a new work – *Four Choral Seasons* - which the Choir will perform in October this year.

The Bach Choir has always been characterised by the commitment of its members. With over 250 talented singers coming from all walks of life, an international touring schedule, and a pioneering outreach programme, *Vocalise!*, that takes its passion for music into inner-city schools, the Choir takes pride in performing, recording and sharing music for all to enjoy.

[thebachchoir.org.uk](http://thebachchoir.org.uk)

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