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**Press release (Timing – Immediate)**

**18 February 2013**

**Rachmaninov's All Night Vigil on Friday 8 March – will Sheffield  
Philharmonic Chorus members be reaching for the vodka?**

Are the Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus's second basses equal to the challenge of negotiating a scale descending to a low B-flat (the third B-flat below middle C) without the aid of large neat double vodkas to extend their lower range? They will face this on 8 March at the Chorus's concert in St Marie's Roman Catholic Cathedral on Norfolk Row, as part of the current concert series in the beautifully refurbished Cathedral.

Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* is an *a cappella* choral composition, with texts from the Russian Orthodox All-Night Vigil ceremony, also known as the *Vespers*. When Rachmaninov first played this testing passage to a colleague, he recorded that: "Danilin shook his head, saying, 'Now where on earth are we to find such basses? They are as rare as asparagus at Christmas!' Nevertheless, he did find them."

Although the *All-Night Vigil* differs from many of Rachmaninov's best known pieces, it has been praised as his finest achievement. You will have to wait for the end of its fifth movement (*Nunc dimittis*) to hear the Chorus second basses try their strength.

The Chorus has dedicated the concert to the late Stephen Knight, who died last November. He was a well-loved member of the Chorus from 1978 to 2011, and its Administrator from 1999 to 2007.

The Chorus is also singing Kodály's *Missa Brevis*. It was written during World War II, with its first performance in the Budapest Opera House cloakrooms during the siege of

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Budapest in 1944/45. It reflects Kodály's interest in Hungarian folk music but lies firmly within the framework of the mass setting.

The conductor will be the Chorus's Music Director, Darius Battiwalla. The *Missa Brevis* organ part will be played by Neil Taylor, Director of Music at Sheffield (Anglican) Cathedral. The soloists will be Cari Searle (alto) and Stewart Campbell (tenor). Cari Searle was born in Yorkshire and read music at Sheffield University before studying at the Royal Northern College of Music with Glenville Hargreaves. Stewart Campbell manages and directs the concert series for the University of Sheffield and is also a lay clerk in Sheffield Cathedral Choir where he contributes to the daily pattern of services in addition to regular concert engagements, national radio broadcasts, recordings, and international tours.

Interested in joining Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus to sing Vaughan Williams 'Sea Symphony' in June and Britten's 'War Requiem' in December? The Chorus is always pleased to invite new members in all voice parts. For men interested in joining the Chorus, a six-week series of free singing workshops will commence on Tuesday 12 March. To find out more, visit [www.SheffieldPhil.org](http://www.SheffieldPhil.org) or call our New Members' Officer on 01433 630970 or 0777 157 8233.

**- ENDS -**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

A photograph of Stephen Knight is a separate attachment to the email.

### **Contact**

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### **Useful Links**

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus website —  
[www.SheffieldPhil.org](http://www.SheffieldPhil.org)

Cari Searle's resumé —  
[www.DoncasterChoralSociety.org.uk/Pages/Soloists.htm](http://www.DoncasterChoralSociety.org.uk/Pages/Soloists.htm)

Neil Taylor's resumé —  
[www.SheffieldCathedral.org/Music/Staff-Sheffield-Cathedral-Music-Department.php](http://www.SheffieldCathedral.org/Music/Staff-Sheffield-Cathedral-Music-Department.php)

Darius Battiwalla's web site —

[www.DariusBattiwalla.com/Darius\\_Battiwalla/Personal.html](http://www.DariusBattiwalla.com/Darius_Battiwalla/Personal.html)

## **ABOUT SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS**

The Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus was founded in 1935 as the resident chorus for the new Philharmonic Society's series of concerts in Sheffield City Hall. It was formed from two Sheffield choirs whose origins date back to the 1860s.

Chorus membership now stands at nearly 200-strong which reflects the increasing profile and quality of this highly successful symphony chorus. 2012 was both busy and exciting for the Chorus. It performed Fauré's *Requiem* in the City Hall on 11 February and led the *Alight* festival, part of Music Nation, a Countdown event for the London 2012 Festival, the finale of the Cultural Olympiad, on 3 March. *Alight* comprised over 30 performances by over 1500 local amateur musicians and dancers. It commissioned 2 new musical works; one by Chorus member Yaron Hollander.

In September the Chorus partnered with the BBC to celebrate the Coventry Cathedral Golden Jubilee festival; performing Sir Arthur Bliss's *The Beatitudes*. This piece was composed for the opening of the Cathedral, but for complex reasons was never actually performed there, until the Cathedral premiere 50 years on. December saw two popular Christmas concerts presented by the BBC's Peter White, and a welcome return of Handel's *Messiah* to the City Hall, after a gap of 5 years.