

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 27 June 2025
10.00pm

Queer Cosmos

The Fourth Choir

Jamie Powe conductor
Alison Woodman soprano
Esther Zuke soprano
Hat Orbell soprano²
Hat Tyler soprano
Mary Dawson soprano
Nina Lejderman soprano¹
Philippa Peall soprano
Rachel Bird soprano¹
Rhianon Bone soprano²
Sophia Holt soprano
Theodora Ntoka soprano

Adele Julier alto
Edward Arden alto
Elly Dragonetti alto
Hope Heaven alto
Jeremy Oliver alto
Jill Pett alto
Kathryn Thomson alto
Mikhi Stuurman alto

Andrew Way tenor
Daniel Owers tenor
Ed Long tenor
Francis Letschka tenor
Jack Ferro tenor
James Bridgwood tenor
Julian Mohr tenor
Simon Turpin tenor
Tobin Webb tenor
Tyler Clarke tenor³

David Clasen bass
Finn Schulze-Feldmann bass
Foeke IJntema bass
Harry Grimshaw bass
Imants Auzinš bass
James McEvoy-Stevenson
bass
Jonathan Rippon bass
Kit Burton-Senior bass
Séamus Rea bass
Will Shepherd bass

Dr CN Lester mezzo-soprano¹⁴

Petroc Trelawny presenter

¹²³⁴ denote soloists

Meredith Monk (b.1942)

Dominique Phinot (c.1510-1556)

Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)

Michael Genese (b.1994)

Derri Joseph Lewis (b.1997)

Kit Grahame (b.1985)

Kerry Andrew (b.1978)

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

Mary Offer (b.1999)

Cooper Baldwin (b.1994)

CN Lester (b.1984)

Dawn¹ (1985)

O sacrum convivium (1538)

Komm süßer Tod (1882-4)

O Ignis Spiritus (2016) *based on Hildegard of Bingen*

Something Exciting (2021)

Though you have left me (2020) *world première*

Wild Nights - Wild Nights!² (2023)

and the swallow (2017)

A New Earth (2023)

Libera Me (as embers sing the tide)³ (2022)

Be a Choir⁴ (2017)



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This evening's programme – the opening event of Classical Pride 2025 – presents a constellation of works united around a common theme: the yearning for communion and community, both spiritual and worldly. 'Queer Cosmos' speaks of the relationships between self and other, and self and the world, from the most private of moments to the big questions of what makes a home, a relationship, and a future.

Meredith Monk's *Dawn* – taken from her 1988 film *Book of Days* – speaks as clearly to and from our own moment as it did to Monk's late 1980s milieu, and of the Medieval world of her film's protagonist, a young Jewish girl caught in a time of plague and conflict. Across the six decades of her career Monk has radically redefined the use and understanding of the voice as instrument. *Dawn* blends vocal effects spanning centuries and cultures into a haunting, unresolved whole.

From the neo-Medieval to the Renaissance: few material records of **Dominique Phinot's** life have survived. What remains is his music – over 100 motets, books of French song and Italian madrigals, liturgical settings – and the manner of his death, noted in a throwaway comment: executed for homosexual practices. Phinot's musical talents, at least, were celebrated; a master of polyphony, he was described by music theorist Pietro Cerone as 'one of the finest and best composers of the time.'

Ethel Smyth's *Komm süßer Tod* – from the work of the same name by JS Bach – can be heard as tribute to and triumph of the SATB chorale form, the mastery of which forms an essential component of many composers' training. Smyth produced this piece during her years of study in Leipzig, and the influence of the late German Romantic style is evident. So, too, is the audacious spirit of the young woman who fought for the right to study music – not as a precursor to marriage, but as a career. It is hard to overstate the importance of polymath Hildegard of Bingen's work to the development of music and intellectual discovery. In this work by **Michael Genese**, Hildegard's chant *O ignis spiritus* becomes one half of a dialogue between two composers, bridging a gap of 900 years through the eternal 'now' of live performance. Genese – a musical educator, creator and multi-instrumentalist – interrogates how music 'can reveal new understandings of the self and ... foster intersectionality in our collective thinking' in this shared meditation on the Holy Spirit.

2025 Royal Philharmonic Society Composer **Derri Joseph Lewis's** *Something Exciting* is a work of opposites: minimalist and lyrical, braiding together contrasting techniques to layer driving repetition, susurrations and liquidity of line. *Something Exciting* was sparked by a moment in the composer's own life: 'Coming out as LGBTQ+ to others isn't just a single occasion, rather a never-ending series of small – yet significant – conversations. I scrolled way back on my phone to 2017, when I came out to my Dad via WhatsApp. I was too

scared to tell him in person, so instead I wrote to him over text: ...I have something exciting to tell you.'

Composer and Fourth Choir member **Kit Grahame's** *Though you have left me* receives its first performance tonight. Though this poem by Siegfried Sassoon was penned in 1925, it remained unpublished until its rediscovery in the archives in 2019. Dedicated to its subject, Sassoon's lover Glen Byam Shaw, Grahame's setting is suffused with the tenderness and intimacy Sassoon conjured through eight simple, heartfelt lines.

Commissioned for the Fourth Choir's 10th Anniversary, **Kerry Andrew's** *Wild Nights* – *Wild Nights!* demonstrates Andrew's multi-disciplinary musical range and authorial sensitivity to text. In this setting of one of the most famous expressions of queer eroticism in Western literature, Andrew carries the extraordinary sensuality of Dickinson's text to the listeners through the audible bodies of the singers, highlighting the escape of air, bringing to life both the poet calling out for her love and the roiling sea of her metaphor.

Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow* was written contemplating the Syrian refugee crisis, fixing an understanding of the desperation for home and safety to the words of Psalm 84. This yearning, pulling quality – a thread spooled out from the voices of the choir – creates a humbling effect that speaks both to its particular moment of inspiration and the universal need for refuge. **Mary Offer's** *A New Earth* takes the premonition and promise of Revelation – 'the old order of things has passed away' – and creates a luminous unaccompanied introit. This glowing use of vocal colour makes clear the award-winning composer's passion for choral and vocal music – and highlights the promise of comfort contained within these words of transformation.

Alongside *Wild Nights*, **Cooper Baldwin's** *Libera Me* (as *embers singe the tide*) features on the Fourth Choir's forthcoming album. Baldwin combines an eclectic mix of texts – the *Libera Me* alongside excerpts from the 2022 IPCC Report on Climate Change and Baldwin's own poetry – giving them musical life through the contrast of ethereal chant, mutters and whispers, and soaring full-throated melody. Beneath it all thrums an anxious longing: 'I just want – I want/ a future ripped away.'

The evening closes with a new arrangement of one of my own works. As both a classical and non-classical musician, I was initially surprised when conductor Jamie Powe asked if I could set one of my alternative songs for the Fourth Choir; in the context of 'Queer Cosmos' it makes perfect sense. *Be a Choir* is my love letter to the ballads sung by the singer-songwriters I leant on as an out trans/queer teen under Section 28, written in turn for my listeners at the beginning of what has become a global backlash against all LGBTI people – trans people most of all. It's a simple reminder, from a lifetime of making music with others: we are never alone.

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Meredith Monk (b.1942)

Dawn (1985)

Dominique Phinot (c.1510-1556)

O sacrum convivium O sacred banquet

(1538)
Liturgical text

O sacrum convivium, in quo
Christus sumitur;
Recolitur memoria passionis
ejus;
Mens impletur gratia;
Et futurae gloriae nobis
pignus datur.
Alleluia

O sacred banquet, in which
Christ is received,
the memory of his
Passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future
glory to us is given.
Alleluia

Panem de caelo praestitisti
eis
Omnem delectamentum in
se habentem.

You gave them bread
from heaven
Containing in itself all
sweetness.

Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)

Komm süsser Tod Come, sweet death

(1882-4)
Anonymous

Komm, süsser Tod, komm
sel'ge Ruh!
Komm, führe mich in
Friede,
Weil ich der Welt bin müde,
Ach komm! ich wart auf dich,
Komm bald und führe mich,
Drück mir die Augen zu.
Komm, sel'ge Ruh!

Come, sweet death, come
blessed peace!
Come, lead me to
tranquillity,
For I am weary of the world,
Ah come! I await you,
Come soon to lead me,
Close my eyes.
Come, blessed peace!

Michael Genese (b.1994)

O Ignis Spiritus (2016) O fire of the Spirit

based on Hildegard of
Bingen
Hildegard of Bingen

O ignis spiritus
paracliti,
Vita vite omnis creature,
Sanctus es vivificando
formas.

O fire of the Spirit, the
Comforter,
Life of the life of all creation,
Holy are you, giving life to
the Forms.

Sanctus es
unguendo
Periculose fractos,
Sanctus es tergendos
Fetida vulnera.

Holy are you, anointing
with oil
The dangerously broken;
Holy are you, cleansing
The infected wounds.

O spiraculum sanctitatis, O ignis caritatis, O dulcis gustus in pectoribus Et infusio cordium In bono odore virtutum.	O breath of sanctity, O fire of charity, O sweet savor in the breast And balm flooding hearts With the fragrance of virtues.
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De te nubes fluunt, ether volat, Lapides humorem habent, Aque rivulos educunt, Et terra viriditatem sudat.	From you clouds overflow, winds take wing, Stones store up moisture, Waters well forth in streams And earth swells with living green.
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Derri Joseph Lewis (b.1997)

Something Exciting (2021)

Derri Joseph Lewis

...I have something exciting to tell you.
I didn't know how to say it, but thought I should say...

Kit Grahame (b.1985)

Though you have left me (2020)

Siegfried Sassoon
world première

Though you have left me, I'm not yet alone:
For what you were befriends the firelit room;
And what you said remains and is my own
To make a living gladness of my gloom.
The firelight leaps and shows your empty chair
And all our harmonies of speech are stilled:
But you are with me in this voiceless air
My hands are empty, but my heart is filled.

Kerry Andrew (b.1978)

Wild Nights - Wild Nights! (2023)

Emily Dickinson

Wild nights – Wild nights! Were I with thee Wild nights should be Our luxury!	Rowing in Eden – Ah – the Sea! Might I but moor – tonight – In thee!
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Futile – the winds –
To a Heart in port –
Done with the Compass –
Done with the Chart!

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

and the swallow (2017)

Liturgical text

How beloved is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts,
My soul yearns, faints, my heart and my flesh cry.
The sparrow found a house and the swallow, her nest,
Where she may raise her young.
They pass through the valley of bakka,
They make it a place of springs.
The autumn rains also cover it with pools.

Mary Offer (b.1999)

A New Earth (2023)

Biblical text

I see a new heaven, a new earth,
I see the Holy City, the new Jerusalem
descending resplendent out of Heaven.
Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people.
He will wash every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,
for the old order of things has passed away.

Cooper Baldwin (b.1994)

Libera Me (as embers singe the tide) (2022)

Liturgical text, 2022 IPCC Report on Climate Change, and
Cooper Baldwin

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, In die illa tremenda: Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra; Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem. Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo, Dum discussio venerit, atque ventura ira.	Deliver me, oh Lord, from eternal death, on that terrible day; when heaven and earth are moved: and you come to judge the world by fire. I am made to tremble and fear until the judgment shall come, and the coming wrath.
Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae, Dies illa, dies magna et amara valde. Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, Et lux perpetua luceat eis.	That day, the day of wrath, calamity, and misery, powerful and exceedingly bitter day, when you come to judge the world by fire. Grant them eternal rest, Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them.

Extreme events will significantly increase ill health and
premature deaths from the near-to-long-term.

Additional warming above 1.5 degrees celsius during an
overshoot period this century will result in irreversible
impacts on certain ecosystems with low resilience.

fire etched behind eyelids
as embers singe the tide
and I just want
to laugh
to hold
to love
I just want - I want -
a future ripped away
(future shrouded in smoke)
as embers singe the tide.

CN Lester (b.1984)

Be a Choir (2017)

CN Lester

These times, when you're frightened and tired
Without words without someone to hear –
Just sing – hold your voice through your fears
Not alone, but flame to the fire

Chorus:
I need you to sing it out now,
I want you to sing loud
I need you to sing out
And I want you to sing loud
And when you sing – sing loud

No matter how small
Be a choir, when it rises as one
Just breathe, and it's over and done
Be a choir – be the force of us all

Chorus
These times, when it's hard to be heard
And a voice can fall silent and still
Sing along – we are many, not one
Be a song – be a shaper of words

Chorus

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