

HALIFAX

Choral Society

**The world's oldest choral society
Making music continuously since 1817**



Why are these children
in a barrel?

Read on to find out!

On 11 March in Halifax Minster, we'll be singing Benjamin Britten's *Saint Nicolas* Cantata, and Fauré's *Requiem*. We'll be joined by Halifax Young Singers and the Minster Choir, and are thrilled that Skipton Camerata, North Yorkshire's only professional orchestra, are able to accompany us.

Who was Saint Nicolas ...?

Benjamin Britten's cantata, *Saint Nicolas*, takes us on a journey through the life of St. Nicolas of Myra, from his birth to his death. Few hard facts are known about him. We know that he was born in Patara in Asia Minor, and was Bishop of Myra for many years until his death in 343. He was imprisoned by Diocletian in the first decade of the 4th century, and is listed as attending the Church Council at Nicaea, but the legends that have built up around his name are much more entertaining than the facts. Britten covers many of these in the nine parts of the cantata, starting with his birth (part 2) and ending with his death (part 9). In between, we learn of his pilgrimage to Palestine (part 4) during which he calmed a storm, his selection as Bishop of Myra (part 5) and imprisonment (part 6) and numerous miracles he performed (part 8) including the one for which he is best remembered – his anonymous gift of three bags of gold as dowries for the daughters of a man whose poverty would otherwise have forced him to sell the girls for prostitution. You might recognise this as the origin of Christmas presents, and St. Nicolas as Santa Claus.



Perhaps his most bizarre and entertaining (at least to us) miracle, comes in part 7. Britten paints a scene of famine and three missing boys. When Nicolas' travelling companions stop at an inn for a meal, and urge him to join them in a 'dish of meat' he balks and reveals that the butcher has pickled the missing lads to use in roasts and stews. Nicolas steps in and revives the boys who 'spring back to life' and 'stand and sing 'Allelula!''.

It is not surprising, then, that St. Nicolas is the patron saint of children and travellers as well as seamen.



Fauré's *Requiem*

Unlike many Requiems, Fauré wanted his version to focus on 'a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest' rather than the painful experience of death and loss - a 'lullaby of death' rather than a shout of anguish. Rather than the agitation and excitement of Mozart's or Verdi's *Dies Irae*, Fauré sets these words within the context of the *Libera me* ('Deliver me') which builds to an intense *Dies illa* before returning to the *piano* 'Requiem aeternam' and ending with the *pianissimo Libera me, Domine*. The ethereal *In Paradisum* which ends the piece, like the text of *Libera me*, is drawn from the Order of Burial rather than the traditional Latin Requiem. It's been suggested that Fauré wrote his *Requiem* in response to the death of his father in 1885 and his mother in 1887, but as he had already started writing it when his mother died, this seems unlikely. In fact, he stated that 'My Requiem wasn't written *for* anything - for pleasure, if I may call it that!', and an early version of the *Libera me* dates from 1877. A first version of the *Requiem* was premiered in 1888 at La Madeleine in Paris, but the full orchestral version had to wait another twelve years to be performed at the Trocadéro, Paris. It was performed at Fauré's own funeral in 1924.

The concert starts at 6.30 p.m. and tickets priced £22 (£16.50 for under-18s) (inc. fee) are available from [wegottickets/halifaxchoral](https://www.wegotickets.com/halifaxchoral) or on the door.

****New****
Flexible subscriptions

Are you interested in joining the choir, but not sure if you can make a regular commitment?

We are keen to welcome people who are returning to singing after having children or other life events and may not be able to commit to a full subscription and be looking for something more flexible.

To that end we offer a shared subscription for couples who want to sing but cannot attend together and an introductory pay-as-you-sing subscription for singers who are not yet able to commit fully.

Contact conductor@halifaxchoral.org if this sounds like something you would be interested in, or just come to a rehearsal and have a chat with the chorus secretary.



Our *Messiah* by Candlelight at Halifax Minster was such a success that we have decided to repeat the formula for 2023 on Friday, 15th December. Tickets go fast for this event, so be sure to book in advance.

Dates for your diary:

Saturday 11 March: Britten's *Saint Nicolas* and Faure's *Requiem*, Halifax Minster

Saturday 24 June: Summer concert, Halifax Minster

Sunday 5th November: Elgar's *Apostles*, Victoria Theatre

Saturday 2 December: Carols and Brass, Victoria Theatre

Friday 15 December: Candlelight *Messiah*, Halifax Minster

If you have any suggestions for what you would like your Newsletter to include, or any queries about HCS, please email

coordinator@halifaxchoral.org.

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