**How Excellent**

*An exploration of Handel’s writing for chorus directed by Justin Doyle, for singers, strings, double reeds and continuo, with limited scope for recorders*

Saturday, 24th September 2016 at Stockenny, New Radnor, LD8 2RE

Handel was the foremost dramatic composer of his age in England. Fêted as a composer of Italian operas, his oratorios are equally theatrical works, full of tension and resolution, passion and stillness, and the full range of emotions from unbounded jubilation to unbearable grief.

In this workshop we will look at a cross-section of his writing for chorus, from celebratory numbers (such as ‘How excellent thy name’ from *Saul*) to meditative movements ('For Sion lamentation make’ from *Judas Maccabeus*) and everything in between. Without the need for any stage action or costumes, Handel uses his oratorio chorus to portray a baying mob one minute, and innocent bystanders the next; the listener is drawn into the plot of these music-dramas in a very personal way, and this is very moving to perform.

If you’re not convinced, take a look at these testimonials…

*‘He is the master of us all!’* (Haydn)

*‘Handel is the unrivalled master of all masters. Go and learn from him how to achieve powerful effects through simple means.’* (Beethoven)

*‘Handel is the greatest composer who ever lived. I would take off my hat and kneel at his grave.’* (Beethoven again…)

*‘Every Englishman believes that Handel now occupies an important position in heaven.*’ (George Bernard Shaw)

Our venue is the ever-popular Stockenny: many thanks to John Wren for kindly inviting us back once more. We will hold our brief AGM just before lunch, and then if the weather is fine we can eat our packed lunches in the garden, enjoying the glorious views. You will find an application form enclosed with this newsletter. Alternatively, you can download a form from our website, [www.bmemf.org.uk](http://www.bmemf.org.uk) .

**Justin Doyle**

Members who came to the September workshop last year at Hellens will know that Justin is an outstanding teacher and conductor. We are incredibly lucky to be able to welcome him back to lead this workshop, as his schedule is now busier than ever following his appointment as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the RIAS Chamber Choir from 2017.

Born in Lancaster, Justin's musical education began as a chorister at Westminster Cathedral and a choral scholar at King’s College, Cambridge. He won second prize in the prestigious Cadaqués Orchestra Conducting Competition and was awarded the first Conductor Fellowship with the BBC Singers, with whom he continues to work frequently.

A regular guest conductor with Opera North, other recent engagements have included concerts with the Orchestra of Opera North, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Hallé Orchestra, RIAS Kammerchor Berlin, King's Camerata, Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, New London Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Sinfonia of Leeds, Haffner Orchestra, Essex Symphony Orchestra, Jersey Chamber Orchestra, regular broadcasts for BBC Radio and a cover CD for BBC Music Magazine.

Justin is currently Musical Director of the Haffner Orchestra (Lancaster), Young Sinfonia (Sage, Gateshead) and University of Manchester Chorus; previous posts have included Artistic Director of Ryedale Festival and Swaledale Festival, Principal Conductor of Manchester Chamber Choir and Director of Music at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge in London. His broad musical tastes have also led him to work with period instrument ensembles such as Retrospect Ensemble, Da Chiesa and the Harmony of Nations, collaborate with musicians from other cultures, arrange folk music from all over the world and conduct live orchestral film scores. He is greatly involved with music education, not least as Music Director of the Opera North Children's Chorus and on the conducting staff at the University of Manchester.

Justin is also in demand as a conductor of opera, in particular the works of Mozart (*'an evening of almost unadulterated Mozartian bliss' Così fan tutte* / Opera magazine), Haydn (*'hard to imagine this fizzing piece ever being better done' L'infedeltà delusa* / The Independent) and Britten (*'Justin Doyle and the Opera North Orchestra work wonders to dispatch Britten's mischievous and miraculous chamber score with pungency and precision' Albert Herring* / The Times). Future engagements include Bellini *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* for Buxton Festival, Humperdinck *Hansel and Gretel* for Opera North and Handel *Theodora* at the Berliner Philharmonie, New Year 2017.