

# BEETHOVEN CHORAL FANTASIA IN C MINOR OP 80 JOHN ADAMS HARMONIUM

**Royal Scottish National Orchestra**  
**Peter Oundjian** conductor

**Rudolf Buchbinder** piano  
**Louise Alder** soprano  
**Ellie Laugharne** soprano  
**Claudia Huckle** contralto  
**Thomas Walker** tenor  
**Andrew Tortise** tenor  
**Ashley Riches** baritone

**Edinburgh Festival Chorus**  
**Christopher Bell** chorus master

**Friday 7 August 9.00pm**  
**Usher Hall**

The performance lasts approximately  
1 hour with no interval



Photo Stuart Armitt

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL CHORUS

The Edinburgh Festival Chorus is one of the world's finest choirs – an achievement all the more remarkable since its 130-strong ranks are drawn from amateur rather than professional singers from Edinburgh and throughout Scotland, who come together for intensive weekly rehearsals throughout the year in the lead-up to summer performances during the Edinburgh International Festival. The Chorus is also the EIF's single permanent performing ensemble, and forms a crucial link between the Festival, the city and Scotland more broadly, making the EIF's activities an integral, year-round part of the lives of EFC singers and their families and friends.

The 2015 Festival is the Chorus's 50th Festival: it was established for the 1965 Festival by conductor Alexander Gibson, along with Festival Director Lord Harewood and the EFC's founding Chorus Master Arthur Oldham. The first work that the Chorus performed, back in 1965, was one of the biggest and most demanding in the repertoire – Mahler's Eighth Symphony, the 'Symphony of a Thousand' – and the EFC has subsequently performed the Symphony on several occasions, alongside a huge collection of other pieces – some well-known, others more obscure – from across the choral repertoire. Under current Chorus Master Christopher Bell, the EFC continues the exceptionally high performance standards established by its founders.

During its history, the Chorus has sung Handel's *Israel in Egypt* perched atop a rock in Eilat, Israel; it has performed Beethoven's 'Choral' Symphony despite unprecedented torrential rain under an improvised tarpaulin in Paris's Place de la Concorde; and it has toured Europe with Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Requiem for a Young Poet*. It has performed at the BBC Proms, Frankfurt's Alte Oper and Paris's Théâtre du Chatelet, made numerous commercial recordings, and tackled repertoire from Baroque masterpieces by Bach, Handel and Vivaldi through to contemporary works by Messiaen, Lutoslawski, James MacMillan and (then Festival Director) Jonathan Mills.

The Chorus plays a pivotal role in the 2015 Festival, which celebrates the EFC's achievements across six concerts. The Chorus launches the 2015 Festival tonight with a special concert for friends, family and supporters bringing together Beethoven's Choral Fantasia and John Adams's *Harmonium*. Tonight's concert inside the Usher Hall is followed by the Festival's official opening event, *The Harmonium Project*, an outdoor event that takes place around the Usher Hall, featuring an audio-recorded performance of Adams's *Harmonium* by the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, together with specially created video projections put together by art and technology design company 59 Productions and the Centre for Design Informatics at the University of Edinburgh. During the rest of the 2015 Festival, the EFC sings some of the choral repertoire's seminal works: choral music by Brahms, Sibelius's *Kullervo*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Berlioz's *Grande messe des morts* and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*.

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