

SATURDAY 1 JUNE

SONGS OF COMMUNION

THE WORLD PREMIERE

FEATURING

FESTIVAL VOICES

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD CHOIR

LONDON GAY MEN'S CHORUS

LONDON YOUTH CHOIRS

LONDON INTERNATIONAL GOSPEL CHOIR

THE BOLD CHORUS

MOZART REQUIEM IN D MINOR

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SATURDAY 1 JUNE at 7.30PM

SONGS OF COMMUNION

**Kristina Arakelyan: Songs of Communion
(World Premiere)**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Requiem in D
minor**

Festival Voices

Citizens of the World Choir

London International Gospel Choir

London Gay Men's Chorus

London Youth Choirs South East

The Bold Chorus

“Love, love, love,
that is the soul of genius.”

— W. A. Mozart

“Return to love to reclaim, rediscover,
remake, and rejoice.”

— bell hooks

BOLD TENDENCIES

More than 190 voices join forces with award-winning Festival Voices, opening our 2024 live programme in communion.

In expression of protest against the status quo, Festival Voices are joined by the Citizens of the World Choir, the London International Gospel Choir, the London Gay Men's Chorus, and London Youth Choirs South East. The heavenly voices of our four guest choirs are complemented and augmented by The Bold Chorus: a citizens' choir specially formed for this occasion – and for the future – via open call to our network of 46 local partner organisations; conducted and led by Oli Kitching.

A monumental celebration of song, the programme features two world premieres. A multi-part new commission by Kristina Arakelyan, *Songs of Communion*, features the works *True Love*, *Freedom*, *Circle of People* and *Song of Communion*; setting texts by bell hooks and Langston Hughes to music.

Arakelyan's commission draws from bell hooks' seminal text *Communion: The Female Search for Love*. The culmination of hooks "love trilogy" (following *All About Love: New Visions* and *Salvation: Black People and Love*), *Communion* explores the ways in which the feminist movement altered ideas about women and love; full participation in the workforce; and the culture of self-help. Framing love as an "an action informed by care, respect, knowledge and responsibility", the text challenges us all to bravely embrace the search for love – an epic journey it is necessary to make, in order to achieve true freedom.

Proposing that true love can only be found in relationships upheld by freedom and equality, hooks' *Communion* finds kinship with Langston Hughes' ode to liberation, and most renowned and powerful poem, "Freedom". Published in 1949, the poem finds context in an America plagued by extreme racism, disenfranchisement and segregation; circumstances that still sadly proliferate to this day. Arguing that neither compromise nor fear will bring the nation closer to democracy, Hughes speaks truth to power in claiming his – as symbolic of the plight of African Americans – right to independence. Underlining the socioeconomic disparity inherent to American society, Hughes illuminates freedom and justice as everybody's due, regardless of creed or colour, race or religion.

As calls to arms for love, equality and unity for all marginalised communities across the globe, *Communion* and *Freedom* are perfect companions to songs of revolution, ritual and collectivity. Bold Tendencies stands in solidarity against the exploitation and abuse of any and all peoples, and finds affinity with hooks and Hughes lucid, intimate and thought provoking words – an invitation to think through ways of mitigating oppression, and coming together in mutual joy and respect.

The evening's second debut performance comprises a bold, electronic reworking of Mozart's choral masterpiece: his *Requiem in D minor* (1791). The Requiem is like no other in Mozart's entire catalogue; it is shrouded in mystery and has captivated musicians and audiences alike since its first performance in the

late 18th century. One of the world's greatest and most frequently performed works, the Requiem confronts spiritual depths seldom heard by any composer of the time. The work functions as a deeply personal account of Mozart's own coming to terms with his approaching death – passing away at the age of 35 in December 1791, he is recorded as becoming increasingly despondent and alarmed about his health across the autumn of his final year. Asking universal questions that have riddled mankind for as long as we have been in existence, the Requiem speaks to all – regardless of belief, background or creed. Encouraging us to look at our fears and to find the strength to overcome them, the music raises questions of meaning, redemption, and salvation.

Festival Voices' brave new interpretation of Mozart's Requiem – *Requiem Remixed* – intricately fuses together the sounds and rhythms of contemporary electronic dance music with Mozart's dark and mysterious score. The work written by Mozart is performed in its entirety with the exact forces outlined by the composer; woven live amongst these exact forces is a new electronic sound world, bringing out the subconscious meanings in the piece. Enabling the work to speak in new ways to those who hear it, *Requiem Remixed* furthers Festival Voices and Bold Tendencies' mutual endeavour to seek new understandings and provide our audiences with new portals into great works from past and present.

Festival Voices was formed in 2017 by creative producer Oskar McCarthy and conductor Gregory Batsleer. With a belief in the power of choral music to change lives, their mission is simple: to create transformative choral experiences. At Festival Voices' core is a professional vocal ensemble dedicated to advancing and redefining the choral tradition; with a particular focus on presenting large-scale choral works reimagined live with electronic music, in collaboration with producer Nico Bentley.

Gregory Batsleer is acknowledged as one of the leading choral conductors of his generation, winning widespread recognition for his creativity and vision. He has been the Chorus Director of Huddersfield Choral Society since 2017, of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus since 2009, and was Chorus Director with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2015 - 2021. In 2021 he was appointed Festival Director for the London Handel Festival. His outstanding work as a choral director was recognised with the 2015 Arts Foundation's first-ever Fellowship in Choral Conducting.

Oskar McCarthy is a London-based singer, actor-musician and producer based in London. As a performer, he works with many of the UK's leading opera companies, including Scottish Opera, The Grange Festival and Longborough Festival Opera, as well as choirs such as the Philharmonia Chorus, in stage, concert and session work. He is Chorus Manager at Wexford Festival Opera, Producer at the London Handel Festival, and Senior Arts and Culture Programmer at Nozstock Festival. He has previously made work for the Waterloo Vaults, Latitude, Wilderness, Holt and Grimeborn festivals.

Nico Bentley is a composer, producer and DJ from London. He takes a deep interest in all forms of music, but especially jazz, classical, African and electronic music; and holds a BA

and MA in Jazz and Classical Music from Leeds Conservatoire. As well as a variety of studio and live credits, Nico is the producer and musical director of the live African dance music collective Afriquoi, fusing traditional African music with western electronic music.

Citizens of the World Choir is a professional organisation & musical family that celebrates the artistry, heritage and humanity of people seeking sanctuary, and their allies. Advocating for understanding, dignity and kindness through the transformative impact of music and song, the choir was formed by Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno in 2017. Dreaming of a project that would open its arms to the refugee community in the UK following the closure of the so-called Calais Jungle, the choir has integration at its heart. Highlighting the resilience of the human spirit, the choir's fresh, extensive and unique repertoire celebrates the rich ethnic and cultural diversity that it homes: from Indian ragas, American spirituals and protest songs from across the ages, to folk music in English, Xhosa, Zulu, Kurdish, Welsh and so much more.

The **London International Gospel Choir (LIGC)** name represents the fantastic mixing pot of people that London is. Completely non-auditioned, the choir celebrates this diversity in a welcoming and fun environment, providing members with ongoing opportunities to train their vocal, theoretical and performance skills. Having created a reputation for quality and energetic performances – with soaring solos, powerful harmonies, and mesmerising soundscapes – the choir's various high-profile appearances include for the Mayor of London; stadium tours with Take That, Hugh Jackman, the Rugby World Cup, and more! In 2024 the choir will perform in the finals of the Gospel Competition "How Sweet Is The Sound", at London's Royal Albert Hall.

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The **London Gay Men's Chorus** was formed in 1991, when nine friends came together to sing a few Christmas carols at Angel Underground Station, hoping to raise a few pounds for the Terrence Higgins Trust – the UK's leading HIV and sexual health charity. Singing together to find a place of support, friendship and brotherhood in the midst of the AIDS crisis, some 25 years later the Chorus is now the largest gay choir in Europe; and regularly plays to sell-out crowds – from London's Southbank Centre, to Cadogan Hall and The Roundhouse. The Chorus has worked with a diverse range of artists, including Mark Ronson, Elton John, Dolly Parton and Hannah Waddingham; and appeared on Children in Need, Comic Relief, The Graham Norton Show, and The One Show.

London Youth Choirs (LYC) is a family of 10 choirs for young people from school year 3, to age 23. Since its foundation in 2012, its citywide vision has always promised two things: musical excellence and social change. Working constantly to remove barriers to access and participation, in addition to rehearsals and performances LYC runs regular workshops in schools in order to bring singing to as many young people as possible. **LYC South East** is a Bermondsey-based choir for children in school years 3-6. Rehearsing weekly on Thursdays, the choir is led by conductor Rachel Staunton and accompanied by pianist Jonathan Liebeck. Launched in January 2020 it was the first LYC regional choir to be created, as part of LYC's 10th anniversary plan to bring brilliant musical education closer to home for more young people across London. LYC South East is made possible through the generous support of United St Saviour's Charity and Southwark Council Neighbourhood Fund.

The Bold Chorus is Bold Tendencies newly inaugurated community choir – composed of all abilities, ranging from 7 years to 70 years of age. In celebration of singing together

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as one of the great joys in life, the Chorus brings together local residents and members from our community partners; with participants from PECAN, Copleston Church and Community Centre, Harris Academy Peckham, Coin Street and more gathered together in true communion.

Oli Kitching is a dynamic conductor, singer and facilitator; driven by social values and a love of thought-provoking performance. Their work with varied ensembles, groups, and individuals across the UK encompasses large scale choral ensembles and orchestras; elite chamber groups and open access choirs. Possessed of an inclusive, flexible and dynamic leadership style, Oli has also facilitated projects with people in prisons (Irene Taylor Trust); those who have experienced homelessness (Streetwise Opera); refugees (Olympias Music Foundation), LGBTQIA+ groups (the Sunday Boys); children's groups (Hallé Youth Choir) and those with learning differences (Starling); and more.

Kristina Arakelyan is a composer, performer and educator; guided by a clear vision of music's intrinsic power. Studying piano and composition at London's Purcell School, the Royal Academy of Music, the University of Oxford and King's College, London, the Armenian British musician began writing for professional ensembles in her mid-teens. Having reached audiences worldwide with works such as *Star Fantasy*, *Dreamland*, *Ave Maris Stella* and *Meditation*, Kristina made her breakthrough with a series of significant commissions; including works for Alison Balsom, BBC Radio 3, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, St Paul's Cathedral, Anna Lapwood, the BBC Proms, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain and the BBC Singers. *Dreamland*, her solo debut album, is set for release by Platoon in autumn 2024.

bell hooks (1952–2021) was an American scholar and activist, specialising in the examination of the connections between race, gender and class. Born Gloria Jean Watkins, hooks assumed her pseudonym – her great grandmother's name – in honour of female legacies; preferring to spell it all in lowercase, the choice signifies her intention to focus on her message, rather than herself. Often exploring the varied perceptions of Black women and Black women writers alongside the development of feminist identities, hooks published her first full length book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981), aged just 19.

Texts from bell hooks *Communion: The Female Search for Love*.

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Langston Hughes (1901–1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright and columnist. Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance – an intellectual and cultural revival of African-American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, theatre politics and scholarship centred in the Manhattan locale, spanning the 1920s and 30s. One of the earliest innovators of jazz poetry as a literary art form, Hughes became a prolific writer from a young age, publishing his first poetry collection *The Weary Blues* in 1926. From 1942–1962, as the American Civil Rights Movement gained traction, Hughes wrote the weekly in depth column for leading Black newspaper *The Chicago Defender*.

“Freedom” by Langston Hughes from *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

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Bold Tendencies is a not-for-profit arts organisation established in the rooftop spaces of Peckham's Multi-Storey Car Park in 2007. It has transformed a disused building in the heart of South London into an iconic, much-loved place of culture and assembly with spectacular views out over the city and pioneering architecture project Frank's Cafe. Supporting a new generation of creative voices alongside acclaimed international artists, it delivers an ambitious annual programme of experimental Visual Arts, Creative Learning and Live Events open to the public, offering access, participation and enjoyment of the arts for everyone.

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