

To: Tim Davie, Charlotte Moore, Lorna Clarke, Simon Webb

From: John Adams, Thomas Adès CBE, Sir George Benjamin CBE, Judith Bingham OBE, Chaya Czernowin, Jonathan Dove CBE, Shiva Feshareki, Howard Goodall CBE, Hannah Kendall, Liza Lim, Sir James MacMillan CBE, Elaine Mitchener MBE, John Rutter CBE, Kaija Saariaho, Esa-Pekka Salonen KBE, Rebecca Saunders, Errollyn Wallen CBE, Judith Weir CBE, Eric Whitacre, Roderick Williams CBE, and others

13 March 2023

### **BBC Singers closure: open letter from composers**

We write to express our shock and dismay at the announcement of the closure of the BBC Singers. As composers, we recognise the BBC Singers as one of the world's great advocates for new choral music throughout their 99-year history. The loss of this extraordinary group would be devastating for the future of the art form, for the composers it champions and for the audiences it serves.

As you will know, the BBC Singers' commitment to living composers and new music goes back to their earliest years. They have commissioned and premiered thousands of works, including modern classics such as Webern's *Das Augenlicht*, Poulenc's *Figure Humaine*, Boulez's *Cummings ist der Dichter*, Birtwistle's *The Moth Requiem* and Judith Weir's *All the Ends of the Earth*. Throughout their existence they have been one of the only choral groups capable of tackling the most challenging and idealistic works (Boulez famously describing them as the 'jewel in the BBC's crown') alongside the rest of their enormous repertoire. Their contribution to the last century of music has been incalculable.

This contribution remains vital today. In the UK, as our only full-time professional concert choir, only the BBC Singers can commit to the vast range of commissioning and performing of new choral music they currently undertake. The scope of their present activities is extraordinary and unique: from high-profile retrospective concerts of major international figures (Kaija Saariaho will be their next Total Immersion in May) to studio recordings of young British composers, to collaborations with artists like Laura Mvula, to workshops with the next generation of creative minds, to the much-loved Radio 3 Carol Competition.

You say you are looking for agility and flexibility in your future choral provision: you already have it. No other UK ensemble can match this amount or breadth of activity across the spectrum of choral styles and genres, nor achieve stunning results so quickly in any situation. Most importantly, the security of full-time salaried status has allowed them to lead the way in developing diversity and inclusion in choral music, an agenda they have taken to heart and for which they were deservedly recognised with a nomination in the 2023 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards for their gender-equal programming.

The BBC Singers are revered by composers and their audiences across the world for their excellence in new choral music of all kinds. They are a consistent beacon in the UK's musical life, one which is surely impossible to replicate with a freelance, casualised workforce.

We believe they are irreplaceable in their current form: please reconsider your decision and reinstate the BBC Singers.

Yours sincerely,

Jean-Paul Ryan Abassi  
Hans Abrahamsen  
James Aburn  
Anthony Adams  
John Adams  
Thomas Adès CBE  
Jean-Louis Agobet  
Kalevi Aho  
Ido Akov  
Tom Albans  
Nilo Alcalá  
Barbara Alden  
Jane Alden  
Patricia Alessandrini  
Colin Alexander  
Julian Anderson CBE  
Kerry Andrew  
Deborah Annetts, *Chief Executive, Independent Society of Musicians*  
Pavlos Antoniadis  
Georges Aperghis  
Paul Archbold  
Malcolm Archer  
Lucy Armstrong  
Newton Armstrong  
Jeanne Artemis  
Jim Artmus  
Martin Åsander  
Richard Ascough  
Alyssa Aska  
Conrad Asman  
Ian Assersohn  
Joseph Atkins  
John Aulich  
Antti Auvinen  
Peter Aviss  
Maurizio Azzan  
Bruce Babcock  
Joanna Bailie  
Richard Baker  
Joshua Ballance  
Nicholas Bannan  
Cydonie Banting  
Marcus Barcham Stevens  
Stephen Barchan  
Richard Barnard  
Lester Barnes  
Richard Barrett  
Säde Bartling  
Stephen Barton  
Paul Bateman

Joe Bates  
Simon Beattie  
Amy Bebbington  
Alice Beckwith  
Stefan Bednarczyk  
Franck Bedrossian  
Adam Bell  
Huw Belling  
Jaime Belmonte  
Sir George Benjamin CBE  
Ed Bennett  
Fiona Ann Bennett  
Michael Berkeley, Baron Berkeley of Knighton CBE  
Michael Betteridge  
Oscar Bettison  
Claes Biehl  
Cameron Biles-Liddell  
Judith Bingham OBE  
Eugene Birman  
Aimee Birnbaum  
Dániel Péter Biró  
William Blank  
Natalie Bleicher  
Mark Boden  
Devon Bonelli  
Joël Bons  
Prach Boondiskulchok  
R. Isaac Boulter  
Georgina Bowden  
Mark Bowden  
Laura Bowler  
Rory Boyle  
Paul Brantley  
Andrew Brixley-Williams  
Julian Broadhurst  
Jakob Bragg  
Neil Brand  
Charlotte Bray  
Aaron Breeze  
Emily Anna Bridges  
Jonathan Brigg  
David Briggs  
Kerensa Briggs  
Sheila Bristow  
Brollyman  
Mikala Leigh Bromley  
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Rachel Bruerville  
Amy Bryce  
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Jesse Budel

Alan Bullard  
Tim Burke  
Diana Burrell  
James Burton  
Martin Bussey  
Martin Butler  
Emma Butterworth  
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Uri Caine  
Hilary Campbell  
Alexander Campkin  
Jay Capperault  
Gary Carpenter  
Paul Carr  
Alberto Carretero  
Philip Cashian  
John Casken  
Aaron Cassidy  
Aureliano Cattaneo  
Sarah Cattley  
Richard Causton  
Sam Cave  
Diana Čemerytė  
John Chambers  
Brendan Champeaux  
David Chan  
Alex Chapman  
Daniel Lee Chappell  
Stephen Chase  
Andrew Chen  
Alissa Cheung  
Jason Ching  
Christopher Churcher  
Valentina Ciardelli  
Seán Clancy  
Philip Clark  
Amelia Clarkson  
Siobhán Cleary  
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Richard Coffey-Glover  
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Christopher Cook  
Phillip A. Cooke  
Timothy Cooper  
Ambrož Čopi  
Mathieu Corajod  
Marisa Cornford  
Nuno Costa  
Olivier Costa  
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Laurence Crane  
Tara Crème  
Pascale Criton  
Libby Croad  
Billy Crook  
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Eleanor Cully Boehringer  
Nneka Cummins  
David Curington  
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Chaya Czernowin  
Sarah Dacey  
Henrik Dahlgren  
Rebecca Dale  
Jessica Dannheisser  
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Bastien David  
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Ethan Davies  
Maurice Davies  
Tansy Davies  
Christof R Davis  
Brett Dean  
Nathan James Dearden  
Fleur de Bray  
Rob Deemer  
Thanasis Deligiannis  
Georgia Denham  
Arhynn Descy  
Eoghan Desmond  
Zygmund de Somogyi  
Danyal Dhondy  
Elisabet Dijkstra  
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Mike Dixon  
Emily Doolittle  
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FL Dunkin-Wedd  
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Paul Edlin  
Robert-John Edwards  
Effy Efthymiou

Litha Efthymiou  
Eric Skytterholm Egan  
Einar Torfi Einarsson  
Sivan Eldar  
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Bushra El-Turk  
Joel Thoor Engström  
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Gabriel Erkoreka  
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Ida Fahl  
Iain Farrington  
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David Fennessy  
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Shiva Feshareki  
Magnus Fiennes  
Pedro Laranjeira Finisterra  
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Youshin Gim  
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Alex Groves  
Eloise Gynn  
Antti Haapalainen  
Andrew Hadfield  
Hossein Hadisi  
Robin Haigh  
Kimmo Hakola  
Rose Miranda Hall  
Nicola Hale, on behalf of Lucy Hale†  
Fergus Hall  
Marc-André Hamelin  
Andrew Hamilton  
Geoff Hannan  
Hollie Harding  
Erik Hanspers  
Vivek Haria  
Patrick Harrex  
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Juste Janulyte  
Joel Järventausta  
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Evan Johnson  
Liz Dilnot Johnson  
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Rory Wainwright Johnston  
Nancy Johnstone  
Betsy Jolas  
Carol J Jones  
Patrick John Jones  
Michele Josia  
Rosa Juritz  
Matthew Kaner  
Krõõt-Kärt Kaev  
Elif Karlidag

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Omri Kochavi  
Ville Komppa  
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David Matthews  
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Florence Anna Maunders  
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John Paul Mayse  
Rytis Mažulis  
Piers Maxim  
Egidija Medekšaitė  
Magdalena Meitzner  
Sam Messer  
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Silvina Milstein  
Barbora Mišíková  
Elaine Mitchener MBE  
William Mival  
Idin Samimi Mofakham  
Olli Moilanen  
Simon Mold  
Colm Molloy  
Ryan Molloy  
Jeff Moore  
Lloyd Moore  
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Bethan Morgan-Williams  
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Charlie Morrow  
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Zad Moulta  
Nico Muhly  
Lucy Mulgan  
Ian Murray  
Manuel Hidalgo Navas  
Daniel Nelson  
Peter Nelson  
Edward Nesbit  
Anyssa Neumann, on behalf of Alastair Putt†  
Tapio Nevanlinna  
Eric Neveux  
Paul Newland  
Rodney Newton  
Ed Newton-Rex  
Nhat M. Nguyen  
George Nicholson  
Luke Nickel  
Alasdair Nicolson  
Alex Nikiporenko  
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Taibah Orpin  
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Nigel Osborne  
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Marcello Palazzo  
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Jono Podmore  
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Rachel Portman  
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Andrea Possee  
Francis Pott  
Eleri Angharad Pound  
Ian Power  
Karen Power  
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Emil Råberg  
Osmo Tapio Riihala  
Shruthi Rajasekar  
Katarina Pustinek Rakar  
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Rhiannon Randle  
Eetu Ranta-aho

Leevi Räsänen  
Jakub Rataj  
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Colin Riley  
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Dimitris Skyllas  
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Olivia Sparkhall  
Simon Speare  
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Paul Stanhope  
Steven Stanke  
Ian Stephens  
Alex Stephenson  
Josephine Stephenson  
Pete Stollery  
Elizabeth Stratford  
John Sturt  
Luke Styles  
Martin Suckling  
Amy Summer  
Giles Swayne  
William Sweeney  
Máté Szigeti  
Andrea Szigetvári  
Michael Szpakowski  
Dobrinka Tabakova  
Ricky Taing  
Joby Talbot  
Riikka Talvitie  
Todd Tarantino  
Niilo Tarnanen  
Kevin Tatman  
Kenneth Tay  
Liam Taylor-West  
Alex Temple  
Elliot Teo  
Aidan Teplitzky  
Hans Thomalla

Joel Thompson  
Stuart Thompson  
Jessica Tipton  
Will Todd  
Reuben Tozer-Loft  
Mihailo Trandafilovski  
Christopher Trapani  
Gareth Treseder  
Adrien Trybucki  
Richard Tsang  
Colin Tucker  
Mark-Anthony Turnage CBE  
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Chaz Underriner  
Mikel Urquiza  
Susie Vaughan  
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Juhani T. Vesikkala Wittmacher  
Simon-Mary Vincent  
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Ruta Vitkauskaite  
Črt Sojar Voglar  
Tadeja Vulc  
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Annette "Troisnyx" Walker  
Helen Walker  
Lucy Walker  
Errollyn Wallen CBE  
Rolf Wallin  
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Toby Ward  
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Judith Weir CBE, *Master of the King's Music*  
Andrew Wells  
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Marc Yeats  
Alistair Zaldua  
Mo Zhao