

SONORO

M
MINACK
THEATRE

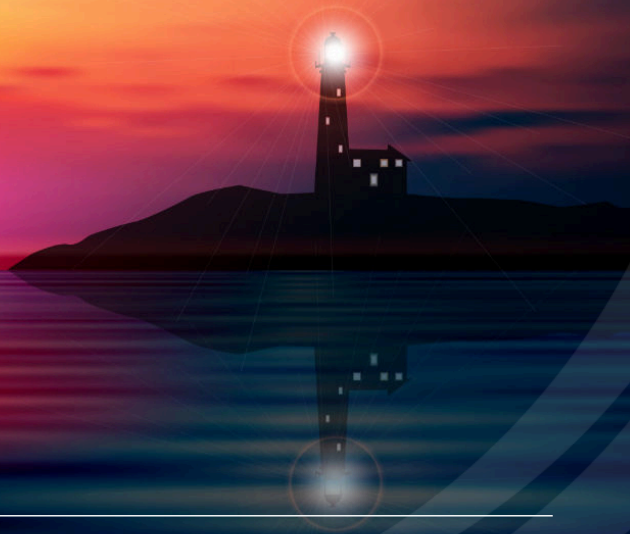
CORNWALL
Youth Choirs

Cheryl Frances-Hoad

Di Sherlock

FIVE BEACONS OF LIGHT

A Cantata for the Sea



Friday 3 July 2026, 7:30–8:45pm

The Minack Theatre, Porthcurno

Penzance, Cornwall TR19 6JU

Welcome

This evening's concert is a celebration of young people, offering them a platform to express important and relevant ideas through music while also reflecting on inspiring moments of human endeavour. *Five Beacons of Light* by Cheryl Frances-Hoad and Di Sherlock, is a cantata based on the stories of four rock lighthouses around the UK, and, shining a light as the 'fifth beacon' are the young people themselves.

I am so grateful for the incredible dedication shown by supporting and participating in this event, and I congratulate the performers on their energy and commitment throughout the project. If young people are given the opportunity they will grab it with both hands, and we must all do what we can to keep music education at the front and centre of their lives.

Participating in events like this teaches commitment, resilience, professionalism, dedication, process, and being part of a team. And also how to have a whole lot of fun and enjoyment while building towards a thrilling outcome!

I wish them all wonderful music experiences for the rest of their lives, and I hope you all enjoy the concert tonight. With very best wishes and grateful thanks to all who have made this project and tonight's concert possible.

Neil Ferris, conductor



Credit: Michael Whitefoot

Programme

Water Fountain

Nathaniel Brenner and Merrill Garbus
arr. Christopher Fulton

Fix You

Coldplay, arr. Jonathan Wikeley

Children, Go Where I Send Thee

Trad., arr. Kevin Phillip Johnson

Where the Light Begins

Susan LaBarr

Five Beacons of Light

Cheryl Frances-Hoad, composer
Di Sherlock, librettist

1. Prelude
2. The Ballad of Bell Rock
3. Huracán
4. The Ballad of Bishop Rock
5. Scream of the Anthropocene
6. The Ballad of Les Casquets
7. Great Wave Comin'
8. The Ballad of Haulbowline
9. One Earth
10. Epilogue

This concert runs without interval.

Please ensure that mobile telephones are switched to silent for the duration of the performance. Photography and recording in any form are not permitted by members of the audience.

Programme Notes

Five Beacons of Light brings to life the vibrant characters and communities associated with four iconic UK lighthouses: Bell Rock, Bishop Rock, Les Casquets, and Haulbowline.

Scored for a unique ensemble of string quintet, piano, percussion, Sonoro, and youth choir, the piece explores a poignant role reversal in our relationship with the natural world. It contrasts the historical purpose of these rock lighthouses – built to safeguard humanity from the peril of the sea – with the modern reality that the sea is now in peril from humanity due to man-made climate change.

At the heart of the work is the 'fifth beacon' – the young people themselves. Through Di Sherlock's imaginative, and beautifully crafted words, the young performers illuminate the work with their own voices and perspectives. The voices of young singers serve as a new 'beacon of light', celebrating the human spirit as a creative force and guiding towards a more responsible relationship with our oceans.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad, composer

My inspiration for the music of *Five Beacons of Light* came from many places: Bach's *Mass in B minor*, sea shanties, French salon music, Japanese traditional modes, rap, Gilbert and Sullivan, big pop ballads, and, of course, the myriad images and scenarios conjured by Di's riveting libretto.

We had been talking about this piece for years – since before the pandemic – so it was utterly thrilling to finally receive the text early in 2025 and to be talked through it in detail by Di. There are so many vivid characters (both human and natural) in this work that ideas flowed thick and fast, and I had a wonderful time exploring the full range of voices available to me in the combination of young voices and Sonoro.

One of the challenges of writing such a long work is ensuring there is enough contrast in the music. In the early stages of writing, a great deal of planning went into working out the relationships between the harmonic centres of each section, as well as creating as much variety as possible in terms of tempo and orchestration. There is also a wide range of textures, from solo voice and piano, through a *cappella* choral writing, to a huge *tutti* replete with thundering piano chords and pealing bells. I had great fun with my selection of percussion, which includes some rather unusual instruments.

Once I had got my head around the scale of the work, ideas flowed thick and fast: at times it felt as though I were composing in real time, occasionally even recording myself improvising – singing Di's text and accompanying myself at the piano – and later dictating what I had come up with.

My music has been described as 'equal parts humour and reverence', and I can't think of a better description of my approach to composing this piece: amidst the despair, there must always be hope. I hope my admiration for the young voices in this work (and in the wider world) is palpable in my music.

Di Sherlock, librettist

I'd long been wanting to voice my concern about the state of our oceans, rivers and lakes in a way that did not deny the reality but, equally, did not feed into the doom and gloom that brings only despair and overwhelm. Ideas floated about but they needed an anchor. Then I fell upon Tom Nancollas' *Seashaken Houses* and read all about rock lighthouses – referred to in past times as 'Beacons of Light'.

The vision, courage, perseverance and sheer grit of the engineers, workmen, keepers, investors and corporations who made these 'impossible houses' possible seemed to echo what is needed today as we face irrefutable climate change – not all of it man-made but our contribution is significant. The rock lighthouses were built to save us from the peril of the sea. Today rising sea levels still threaten lives and livelihoods. But equally, the sea is in peril of us. And of course, the two are connected.

During my research I asked scientists what would be their 'beacon of light' today – if there even was one. They were unanimous: 'Young people!' And so, Cheryl and I received funding from the Genesis Foundation to explore ideas with young people themselves. Working with Cheryl is like handing over a map to a fellow voyager confident not only that she'll know how to read it, but that she will use it to conjure words in a way I never could imagine.

We were awed and heartened by the passion and commitment of young people as we workshopped marine issues of pollution, plastic, and extinction of species, through music, movement, and spoken word. Cleaning up the mess (of their elders but betters), restoration, and care were no-brainers. They were united in recognising our global responsibility to the animals, minerals, trees, plants, and waters with whom we share the Earth.

For the singers who give their amazing voices and the audiences who receive them, I hope the work will inspire a love for our waters and the creatures who live in them, allowing their voices not just to be heard but taken to heart. New ways to clean up our house, aligned with nature's intelligence, are firing up scientists and the school lab. Even in a post-truth world, the true human is a 'beacon of light'.

Five Beacons of Light

1. Prelude

When we are Ghosts
in the Forest of ash
on the shrunken shore
how shall we be shriven?
Animals, Insects, Birds,
Gone
from the Wild Places.
Trees, Plants, Peoples
Gone
from the Wild Places.
Gone
are
the
Wild
Places.

When we are Ghosts
how shall we say
we were good ancestors?

At the ends of the earth
once
you lit Beacons,
the sweep of the beam
like the wing of an arctic owl.
Beacons of Light!
Built by fearless men, ingenious men
who did what had to be done.
Remember?

Light Houses! Impossible Houses!
Wonders of engineering!
Dreams they had to fight for.
Remember!

Ship going down! HMS York,
Pride of the Navy! 74 guns!
Merciful God! 491 men and boys!
All drowned!
Bell Rock! Who will light it?

2. The Ballad of Bell Rock

Stevenson (*addresses Parliament*)
From the going away of evening light
to the coming of the day,
I promise an abiding light
whose magnitude undo
the darkest night!

Parliamentarians
Stevenson? Och no. Too young.
Clever enough
with an eloquent tongue
But a House of Light
on a half-tide rock
needs the nous of an older man.
John Rennie shall supervise!
He knows the mind of Smeaton.

All
Bell Rock will outshine Eddystone
as Gordonstoun does Eton!

Stevenson
So Rennie is Chief Engineer,
mere 'Resident' am I.
Well he may have the final say
but the word on the ground have I!

On the reef, in the yard,
we hold a mighty purpose
and in the quarry hauling stone
Bassey the Shire Horse aids us.

Artificers
In the month of May eighteen o nine
hail and sleet are pelting,
yet seldom a tide's work is lost
on the barrack we're constructing.

The cabin's raised on legs of oak
and to the Rock is chained,
to spare us queasy crossing
time and time and again.

A wicked gale confines us
to 'Hurricane House' we call it,
the timbers shake – for heaven's sake
from our beds we're fallin'!
June's not out, there's worse to come –
a ground swell so surprising,
forty feet of spume engulfs
the crane on the Beacon rising.

And now comes the worst of all
as cruel June is ending,
the hand of fate or careless men
sends the crane a' crashin'!

All

Fly lads! Fly for your life!

(spoken individually)

Wishart's down!

Good God is he crushed?

His feet are trapped in the wheels!

Och it's a nasty mess.

Michael! Michael! Speak man! Speak!

Where's Stevenson?

Aboard The Tender.

Get him to The Tender! Blankets!

Stevenson

Wishart lies pale as death,
his mangled feet all bleeding
and though it is a sorry sight
I thank the Lord he's living.

I thank the Lord for men like him,
brave hearts and ready,
who built this wonder of the world
with purpose firm and steady.

All

What matter now the Engineer?
Stevenson or Rennie?
Together we did stand as one
for the sea would swallow many!

*(Sonoro name notorious hurricanes
and typhoons)*

Katrina! Yagi! Shanshan! Ida! Beryl!

3. Hurakán!

In the South of Mexico
on the Caribbean Sea
there's a Mayan temple
to The God of Wind.
In the roof there is a hole
that whistles when the Wind
is on His way.
Hu Hu Hurakán!
Hu Hu Hurakán!
They knew him then
we know him now
his flood an' his fury's gettin' louder.

In Florida the hurricane's approaching.
Under a leaf a little frog takes shelter.
The clever body knows what's coming
rain and wind horrific that will bend
the trees beyond belief.
Snakes know it too,
they're burrowing underground.
The birds all fly away.

Hu Hu Hurakán!
Hu Hu Hurakán!
The thought of going out there
makes your hair stand on end.
You pray that when it's passed
the little frog is safe
and every living thing has a home.

Hu Hu Hurakán!
Hu Hu Hurakán!

He's breakin' records,
doesn't care for seasons.
Hu Hu Hurakân!
Hu Hu Hurakân!
He's at your back,
whistlin' at your reasons.

Oh! Calamity!

Four ships of the line wrecked
Two thousand souls lost!
Admiral Cloudesely Shovell drowned
Oh! Calamity!

4. The Ballad of Bishop Rock

All

Off the Isles of Scilly
300 million years of rock –
Gorregan, Trenemene, Hellweathers,
Rosevear, Gilstone, Rags!
Oh ruinous rocks that ring the knell
for many who brave this briny hell.

Women

More dismal than these
wicked stones is Bishop Rock,
the dreadful moans
of two poor women left to drown
may still be heard as ships go down.
Thieving did for you
in thirteen hundred and two.

Trinity House

At Trinity House we hear the plight
of mariners and folk alike
who sail the ocean to New York
and ask James Walker in to talk.

Walker

Ah, Bishop Rock – it rises sheer,
most trying for an engineer.
A mere splinter is the ledge
washed by water edge to edge.
For Eddystone it is too small –
granite will not hold at all.

A House on iron legs is best
to guide the sailor this far West.

Trinity House

Yes! Yes! We need a House,
we really must see to it.
Iron's a third the price of stone,
an iron House will do it!

Women

The lamp's not lit, the year's not done
the House is down tho' scarce begun.
Godfrey is the lamp's new home –

Walker

Now we must look to Eddystone!

Trinity House

Seven long years we persevere.
Rising cost is what we fear.
At last in 1858
we all have cause to celebrate.

Walker

The lamp is lit!

Women

The Keepers fit!

Trinity House

Now may this be an end to it!

All Keepers

Even on the calmest day
you're in for a serious chop.
But in 1874 comes
a storm that will not stop.

Keeper 1

I say this Tower won't abide,
the waves will send us crashing.
A hundred and twenty foot of spray
is a mighty powerful lashing.

Keeper 2

What's that noise?

Keeper 3

The lantern's broke!

Keeper 1

What did I say!

All Keepers

We're in for a soak!

Trinity House

Now Douglass is our Engineer,
he shores up Walker's Beacon.
The lantern's raised
to double its height.
The Bishop's King of the
Houses of Light!

Women

When fog horns blast the night
in sorry detonation,
the Ocean sings of Wild Time
when Merfolk were its nation.

Blacksmith

Once when I was in the forge
I heard a music on Rosevear
not of this world, a faery song
to soothe all pain, forgive all wrong.
I stilled my hammer, wild and free
was I, a boy beside the sea.

5. Scream of the Anthropocene

Ships' propellers turnin, churnin'
Military sonar pingin' dingin'
Deep sea mining pumpin,' drillin'
It's an underwater scream.
Scream of the Anthropocene.
Water turns the volume up -
four times louder in the Deep.
Whales using echo location
lose their powers of navigation.
It's an underwater scream.
Scream of the Anthropocene.

Always they are found too late
stranded on a Scottish shore,
too late for science to
prove what's clear -
their clicks and calls,
knocks and whirrs
drowned in oceanic din
are vital as our social networkin'.

Let water carry sound that's clear
not jammin' up a gill or ear.
Even oysters in their shells
freak out in the decibels.
Stop the scream of the machine!
Scream of the Anthropocene!

6. The Ballad of Les Casquets

All

Looking to France is a villainous band
who strike in the dead of night.
Ships on the blank of the sea are blind
for there is no guiding light.

Like Dragon's teeth the Casketts lie
off the coast of Alderney,
sheering up as ships go down -
The Stella and The Victory.

The Rocks are bought, a Tower is built
- one, now two, now three.
Coal fire keeps the lanterns lit -
a sooty trinity.

The writer, wanting high Romance
has a different tale to share.
Victor Hugo in full flow
sees a House with flaming hair.

Adèle

This picture of the House
is pure poetic fancy.
He never saw it thus!
When Victor put his pen to task
a hundred years had passed.

He drew on ruder times
to furnish his romance.

Ann
I tell you, Mrs Hugo –

Adèle
Adèle, je vous en prie!

Ann
That ruder time's not past, Adèle,
living here is heaven and hell!
How many nights I fret and cuss
the toil we share, the ten of us.

Adèle
Your Keeper husband and –

Ann
eight kids!
Since this rock became our home
my Louis has no chance to roam!

Adèle
Ma foi, Madame, it wouldn't suit me.
A woman needs her liberty!

Ann
Oh lord I wish but it can't be –
I'm leagues away from Alderney!

Adèle
And I from France. In exile both
we keep a most unusual troth.

Ann
I don't know what you two have done,
but seems to me you're having fun
in Hauteville House, where you abide
ignorant of storm and tide.

Adèle
There's storm enough
from time to time –
Victor's not entirely mine.

His mistress is a second spouse
and lives with us in Hauteville House.

Ann
Well I'll be darned.
Who'd have thought –

Adèle
A ménage à trois in St Peter Port?
But tell me –

Ann
Ann –

Adèle
What's it like
to be a Lighthouse Keeper's wife?

Ann
And so I shall. It's very clear
the hifalutin' gentry here
haven't a clue.

Adèle
Very true.

Ann
Louis and Robert light the lamps –
oil not coal they're burning.
Then straight to bed they go to sleep
an' Lizzie and Pol with me the
watch do keep.
In thick of night the lamps we trim,
keep company with chat.
But in upsurging spray
that tops the Tower like a crown,
we in silence pray
the gulfs don't wash us down!
On the midnight hour at last
our weary heads we lay.
Now Louis and our boy keep watch
until the break of day.

Adèle
What do you eat? A special dish?

Ann

Catch o' the day - there's always fish!
Hens we keep so eggs are fresh
and veggies from our patch.

Adèle

But nothing grows, no grass, no tree.

Ann

Soil was brought from Alderney.

Adèle

In winter?

Ann

When the season's fair
Trinity House have a care.
Salt beef, biscuit, malt and flour
keep us going in the Tower.

Adèle

Not exactly à la carte
but life is lived from the heart.

Ann

Oh! years fly by on Nature's wing
and really it's a wondrous thing
to feel the salt breeze in your face!
I thank the Lord for His good Grace.
Our duty here is nearly done
and we'll retire to Alderney,
to sit on glittering lawns and watch
a very different sea.

Adèle

Who will keep the Beacon then?

Ann

Three or four stout-hearted men.
So what's he doing now, your Vic?

Adèle

Working on 'Les Misérables.'

Ann

So many of them in a world confused.

Adèle

And like your Vic he's not amused.

All

Long after Victor's gone
the Rocks inspire Algernon:
the strokes of the swords
of the storm are as iron
on the steel of the
wave-worn casques.
Swinburne paints in darker hue,
yet they who keep the lantern lit
know joy, he says,
though they are few,
a loftier joy than me and you.
Caught in the coil
of the troublous world
our lofty wings remain unfurled.
The Beacon now's one Tower
not three,
the optic source is LED.
Oil and coal have had their hour,
sun and wind provide the power.

7. Great Wave Comin'

In old Japan a Master sees
mountain and water,
boats like crescent moons
on the inky blue.
There comes a wave so mighty
the mountain looks tiny,
the crew in the boat could be me
and you.
Now many people thinkin'
'The Wave off Kanagawa'
is Hokusai foretillin'
a Great Wave comin'.

There's a Great Wave comin'.
Which way are you lookin'?
We're in the same boat sailin'.
Some of us are facin'
Some of us look the other way.

River thick as gravy
with a history of wrong
all mashed up in an evil smellin' brew.
No one fessin' up
to the sewage and the spillin'
if you want to swim safe
ask the surfing crew.
Profits all goin' to the takers
not the clearin'
of the waters that are life
for non humans too.

There's a Great Wave comin'.
Which way are you lookin'?
We're in the same boat sailin'.
Some of us are facin'
Some of us look the other way.

All around the world rivers
are becoming
a microplastic highway,
dumping in the sea.
We're watching and we're wanting
a new way of doing,
cos plastic is a killer
and no Being is free.
We're lookin' for solutions,
workin' on the codes,
we're not your algorithm we're
a Great Wave comin'!

So which way are you lookin'?
We're in the same boat sailin'.
All of us are facin' -

Sing to me Rock
of your ghostly hallows..
Ah ee ooo
Haulbowline.

8. The Ballad of Haulbowline

In the Haunt of the Eels
I rise
where the sometime land
meets the sea.
I watch and am watched
from the North and the South,
ghosting the in-between.

When Thor struck his hammer
ice became water
in Kerlingfjodr.
Sheep Rock, Earl Rock,
Little Haul Bowling
show Hag's teeth,
Carlingford Bar
a sunken jaw.

When Man struck his hammer
Newry was rising
and grand in her ways.
That treacherous finger of water
lost fortunes. Dublin agrees,
I am raised.

When War struck its hammer
U boats came calling.
Ach! I am dimmed.
Two sightless ships collide
in my shadow. Again I hold
shimmering souls.

The hammer of War is tireless.
My house is raided,
my keepers gone.
That troubled finger of water's
explosive. But geese return
to nest once more.
In the Haunt of the Eels
I rise
indifferent to nation and station.
My gaze automatic
I cleave to my rock
under the brimming stars.

9. One Earth

In Malawi
there's a village called Gumbi,
strange things are happening there.
Rain in October comes in December,
summers are hotter, winters are hotter.
Strange winds tear the crops.
Strange worms gobble the harvest.
Nobody knows what to do.

In January it's winter here,
but the trees are greening.
Cold winds blow in spring.
Clouds hide summer.
Weather is strange, time to change.
There's still time for change.

The wind doesn't turn
each leaf the same,
some tremble, the rest are still.
But the tree they share is one tree
and the Earth we share is one Earth,
one Earth, we are one Earth,
we are one.

10. Epilogue

Thunder sounds the angelus!
Fire rakes the sky!
In the rubble of Ocean
the charred face of Mars.
Pitiless.

Yet
silently
they return
to the poisoned places
they return
the Almost Extinguished
in seed and spore
on careful hoof
emboldened pa
on the moth wing
they return.

In the dare of the animal heart
we walk,
as in the minds of those who lit
Beacons of Light.
But now the Sea's in peril of her life
from minds who do
not honour Nature's Right.

Technologies of justice and of love
shall dare the genius of greed!
Then all who walk, swim, creep or fly,
sink their roots, or seaward flow,
shall freely be all that they are.
The bitter waters that gave life
shall teem again, the luminous
Unborn
walk in our daring!

The lamp is lit!
The lamp is lit!

We are Light!
We are Rock!
We are Ocean!

Cast (in order of appearance)

The Ballad of Bell Rock (Arbroath, Scotland)

Robert Stevenson (1772–1850)

Grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote *Treasure Island*. He is appointed Deputy Engineer to Chief Engineer John Rennie and is the man on the ground.

Parliamentarians

They decide who is to be Chief Engineer.

Artificers

The men who got the Lighthouse built – masons, carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths. Michael Wishart was Principal Builder. When the crane topples his feet get entangled with the wheels of the crane and are severely injured.

The Ballad of Bishop Rock (west of the Scilly Isles, Cornwall)

Members of The Corporation of Trinity House

In 1836 Trinity House was given powers to build and maintain all lighthouses in England, Wales and the Channel Islands.

James Walker (1781–1862)

Designed and built the first and second lighthouses. The first was blown away in a gale, the second was later encased in a thick granite sheath by James Douglas who replaced him as Chief Engineer.

The Ballad of Les Casquets (Alderney, Channel Islands)

The name may come from 'casque', meaning helmet, or from the French 'cas' (broken) and 'quet' (rock). It is an imaginary meeting!

Adèle Foucher (1803 – 1868)

Wife of Victor Hugo, who wrote *Les Misérables*, and an author in her own right. They lived together with Hugo's mistress Juliette Drouet in Hauteville House, Guernsey.

Ann Hougre

Wife of Lighthouse Keeper Louis Hougre.

The Ballad of Haulbowline (Carlingford Lough, Northern Island)

The lighthouse was built following petitions made by the merchants of Newry in 1817 to the Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port of Dublin. In this ballad the Lighthouse speaks for itself.

Cornwall Youth Choirs

Angela Renshaw, conductor

Matt Douglas, accompanist

Rosemary Adams

Sadie Allen

Barnaby Brook

Grace Cannon

Milly Crowle

Malia Crudgington

Lowenna Dunning

Essie Eggleton

Neeve Friggens

Cameron Friggens

Molly Fry

Elsie Graham

Balen Green

Riley Greer

Kelsey Gunn

Tom Hallam

Molly Harvey

Sevi Harvey

Ava Hayward-Evans

Reuben Hill

Connie Hodgson

Eleanor Jarvis

Miriam Jones

Amelia Jones

Nina Jubb

Ruby Keat

Mary-Ella Kent

Ceci Knight

Jack Knight

Tom Knight

Agata Kopec

Anna Lane

Maddie Lock

Connor McAuley

Elissa McCutcheon

Caydence McCutcheon

Olivia Oram

Rosie Pinch

Jessica Pollitt

Elsie Poulter

Emelia Prater

Hugo Puffer

Ffion Reading

George Roberts

Hayden Roose

Maya Roskilly

Elliot Shorten

Abi Shorten

Sydney (Syd) Stiles

Ollie Tomlinson

Charlie Wallbank

Alishia Watling

Lily Wells

The phrase "Onen hag oll" lies at the heart of the Cornwall Youth Choir, emphasising unity and collective purpose. The Cornwall Youth Choir family (CYC) comprises four graduated choirs that meet regularly across Cornwall. These choirs provide opportunities for children as young as four and young people up to the age of 25, each with varying levels of experience. Within CYC, there exists a framework for musical progression, fostered in a vocally nurturing environment of inclusion, mutual respect and celebrating a sense of place. CYC singers recognise their role in drawing attention to local issues affecting young people. They focus on protecting the local environment (for example, their costumes are made of recycled fabrics!) and promoting positive youth mental health through their choral community and network. Their repertoire is thoughtfully chosen to align with their values while maintaining musical motivation and interest across a wide range of new musical influences and genres.

cornwallyouthchoirs.co.uk

Sonoro

Soprano

Jenny Bacon
Isabelle Haile
Emily Wenman

Tenor

Gareth Edmunds
Niel Joubert
Gareth Treseder

Alto

Sarah Denbee
Carris Jones
Ruth Kiang

Bass

Gavin Cranmer-Moralee
William Gaunt
Geoff Williams

Described as 'outstandingly refreshing' (BBC Music Magazine) and 'abundant in vibrant colour' (The Guardian), Sonoro is one of the UK's foremost vocal ensembles. Under conductor Neil Ferris, Sonoro have performed at internationally renowned festivals and concert halls including St Magnus Festival, Orkney, St Martin-in-the-Fields and King's Place, London, and in St Gallen, Switzerland.

Sonoro's critically acclaimed debut album *Passion and Polyphony* featured works by Sir James MacMillan and Frank Martin, and *Christmas with Sonoro* was BBC Music Magazine's 'Christmas choice'. Recent releases which have gained significant recognition include an album of music by Martin Bussey, and two volumes of *Choral Inspirations* featuring choral classics partnered with newly commissioned works by established and emerging British composers, including Errollyn Wallen, Cecilia McDowall, and Oliver Tanney.

Combining a passion for excellence in choral music and education, Sonoro's outreach programme delivers projects in schools, as well as side-by-side performances and conducting masterclasses. These have reached thousands of children and amateur singers, inspiring either a first love of singing or a renewed engagement with a shared passion in choral music.

'Classical concerts seldom feel so downright uplifting.' The Scotsman

sonorochoir.com

Chapel Street Ensemble

Nat Jones, violin 1
Katy Rowe, violin 2
Emma Stansfield, viola

Danielle Poznansky-Jones, cello
Alex Dunkley, double bass
Ross Hamilton, percussion

Named after one of Penzance's most historic and characterful streets, Chapel Street Music was founded in 2021, bringing together some of Cornwall's leading professional musicians performing in a variety of flexible ensembles.

At the heart of Chapel Street Music is a passion for chamber music and imaginative programming, with a year-round concert series in Penzance alongside performances across Cornwall.

Known for its warm, informal style of presentation, Chapel Street Music is committed to performances of the highest quality, combining engaging introductions and inventive programmes with a welcoming atmosphere that invites audiences of all backgrounds to experience live music in a fresh and accessible way.

chapelstreetmusic.co.uk

Michael Higgins

Michael Higgins is a composer, pianist, and Artistic Director of Sonoro. Michael's music is published exclusively by Oxford University Press, and has been performed internationally by ensembles including the BBC Symphony Chorus, Choralis (Washington DC), the Irish Youth Choir, Rodolfus Choir, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra Youth Chorus, and St Martin's Voices.

Michael's *Christmas for Ten Fingers*, a 'superbly engaging easy collection for younger players' (Pianodao) is published by Oxford University Press, with *Classics for Ten Fingers* due for publication in July 2026.

As a pianist, Michael is in demand with some of the UK's leading choirs, and regularly works with the BBC Singers, London Voices and the National Youth Choir.

Michael studied piano at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He continued his studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, supported by an award from the Joseph Weingarten Memorial Trust. He has also been honoured as an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

michaelhiggins.com

Neil Ferris

Neil Ferris is Chorus Director of the BBC Symphony Chorus, Artistic Director and Conductor of Sonoro, and Festival Conductor of the Leith Hill Music Festival. With Sonoro, Neil has conducted at the St Magnus International Festival, the Wimbledon International Music Festival and King's Place in London, and with the BBC Symphony Chorus at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

In demand as guest conductor at some of the finest choirs in the UK, Neil has worked with the BBC Singers, Choir of the Age of Enlightenment, London Voices, the National Youth Choir, and the National Youth Choir of Wales. He also leads workshops for the Royal Opera House *Sing at ROH* programme, and singing holidays for Helicon Arts and Run By Singers.

Orchestras that Neil has conducted include London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, London Mozart Players, City of London Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Swan. As a teacher, Neil has led masterclasses in the UK at the Royal Academy of Music, Royal Welsh Conservatoire of Music and Drama, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, University of Birmingham, and abroad in the USA, Ireland, Denmark, China, Malaysia and Singapore.

Recordings include the world premiere recording of Cecilia McDowall's *Da Vinci Requiem* and *Seventy Degrees below Zero*, with Wimbledon Choral and City of London Sinfonia, an album of the choral music of Jonathan Dove (Naxos), and a regular programme of recordings with Sonoro. Their album *Christmas with Sonoro* was selected as Christmas album choice in the BBC Music Magazine. In 2024, Sonoro released an album of the choral music of Stephen Dodgson on the SOMM label.

neilferris.com

