



Press Release  
February 2016

## **Scratch® Youth Messiah announces Ben Parry as new conductor**

**Ben Parry** has been appointed to conduct this year's performance of **The Scratch® Youth Messiah** at the **Royal Albert Hall**. Parry will direct a choir of over a thousand young singers in the fourth of these award-winning events, which takes place on **Sunday 27 November 2016**.

Director of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain and Co-director of London Voices, Parry said, 'Handel's Messiah is one of the greatest choral works ever written. To perform it with a huge choir and orchestra, and in a building as iconic as the Royal Albert Hall, is truly awe-inspiring. I am thrilled to be conducting this year's **Scratch® Youth Messiah** in November and can't wait to get started! I am so excited that so many young people will get to experience this amazing piece.'

**The Scratch® Youth Messiah** won the **2015 Best Classical Music Education Initiative** voted for by Classic FM listeners with around 1,400 young singers taking part last year. Scratch Concerts' Director Trevor Ford said 'It is always wonderful to see the excitement among the young people as they first enter the Royal Albert Hall, and their heart-felt singing of the Hallelujah Chorus makes the hairs rise on the back of your neck. Ben Parry, with his experience of directing the National Youth Choirs, is just the person to take **The Scratch® Youth Messiah** from strength to strength, and we are delighted that he has agreed to conduct this year's performance.'

All young choirs, however inexperienced, are invited to take part, choosing their own level of involvement with up to **1,500 free places** for singers up to the age of 25. Each choir pays a modest registration fee, and registration runs from the third week in February until the end of July, with final numbers required by October.

**The Scratch® Youth Messiah** includes all Handel's best-known choruses and arias, from which choirs can choose to sing everything, or to dip a toe in the water by joining in with the opening chorus ('And the glory of the Lord'), the famous 'Hallelujah Chorus' and the final 'Amen'.

Once again, the charity partner for the event is [Water Aid UK](#) and schools are invited to raise money for the charity through WaterAid's **Bottle It** scheme, by filling empty water bottles with coins.

Information packs for school/youth choir leaders are available from the third week of February, either via our website [www.youthmessiah.co.uk](http://www.youthmessiah.co.uk) by post from PO Box 4211, Bath BA1 0HJ or by e-mail to [youthmessiah@trbc.co.uk](mailto:youthmessiah@trbc.co.uk). Initial registration to take part must be completed by 31 July 2016.

**ENDS**

*See overleaf for notes for Editors*

Notes for editors

[www.youthmessiah.co.uk](http://www.youthmessiah.co.uk)

<http://www.trbc.co.uk>

Twitter: @Youth\_Messiah

Twitter: @ReallyBigChorus

1. **The Scratch® Youth Messiah** starts at 14:00 on Sunday 27 November at the Royal Albert Hall. Youth choirs will rehearse in the Hall from 11:15.
2. **The Scratch® Youth Messiah** is presented by Scratch Concerts Ltd, which promotes *Messiah from Scratch®* each year at the Royal Albert Hall with The Really Big Chorus. The annual performance of *Messiah from Scratch®* will be as usual at 19:00, following **The Scratch® Youth Messiah**.
3. **Ben Parry** studied Music and History of Art at Cambridge, singing in King's College Choir, whilst also performing in musicals, G&S and jazz cabaret. In the late 1980s he joined The Swingle Singers, toured globally and performed with great musicians including Pierre Boulez, Stephane Grapelli and Dizzy Gillespie, also writing many of the group's arrangements.

Moving to Edinburgh in 1995, Parry took up posts with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Haddo House Opera. He also co-founded the Dunedin Consort, which has gone on to establish itself as Scotland's premiere baroque ensemble. Returning south in 2003, he was appointed Director of Music at St Paul's School, London, then of Junior Academy at the Royal Academy of Music, and subsequently his current position of Director of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain.

As co-director of London Voices he has conducted many major film soundtracks (*The Hobbit*, *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*) and performed in major concert houses around the world. He also conducted London Voices in the epic production of Stockhausen's 6-hour *Mittwoch* – Birmingham Opera Company's grand finale to the Cultural Olympiad in 2012. Ben is Assistant Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge, where he is responsible for the mixed choir, King's Voices, as well as assisting Stephen Cleobury and mentoring the choral and organ scholars. He is also Music Director of Aldeburgh Voices.

As a composer, Ben has been commissioned by the BBC Singers, Ely, Norwich and Worcester cathedrals, and his music has been heard at the BBC Proms and on the TV hit series, *Glee*.

[www.benparry.net](http://www.benparry.net)

4. **The Really Big Chorus** is the UK's largest choral society with around 12,000 singing members. It began life in 1974 when Canadian **Don Monro**, then a young lecturer at Imperial College, joined with fellow scientists to hire the Royal Albert Hall and fill it with amateur singers for the very first *Messiah from Scratch®*: no rehearsal at all for the chorus, just an electrifying, adrenaline-filled performance. Other RAH concerts in May and July ('the last night before the Proms') have rehearsals on the day, and TRBC also organizes singing breaks to prestige overseas venues, and relaxing choral cruises.

[www.trbc.co.uk](http://www.trbc.co.uk)

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## 5. Water Aid

WaterAid's vision is of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. The international organization works in 26 countries across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Pacific Region to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in some of the world's poorest communities. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 19.2 million people with safe water and, since 2004, 15.1 million people with sanitation. For more information, visit [www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org), follow @wateraidUK on Twitter or visit them on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wateraid](http://www.facebook.com/wateraid)

*More information on Scratch Youth Messiah from:*

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