

## Press Release

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*Britten Sinfonia @ 25  
2017-2018 season*

**Britten Sinfonia and King's College Choir:  
Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Vaughan Williams's *Dona nobis  
pacem***

**World premiere of Emma Ruth Richards's *Sciamachy***

**Saturday 2 December at 7.30pm, Barbican Hall, London**

**Friday 16 February 2018 at 7.30pm, Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden**

The **Choir of King's College Cambridge** joins **Britten Sinfonia** for a performance of two 20th century choral greats. Leonard Bernstein's 1965 *Chichester Psalms*, with its brass, harps and exquisite solo for boy treble, provides an exhilarating invocation of the composer's hopes for brotherhood and peace. These sentiments are mirrored in Vaughan Williams's impassioned 1936 *Dona nobis pacem*. **Stephen Cleobury** conducts, with soloists (in *Dona nobis pacem*) soprano **Ailish Tynan** and baritone **Neal Davies**. A new recording of both works, by Britten Sinfonia and Kings College Choir will be released on the King's College Label on 2 November (KGS00021)

The concert opens with the world premiere of **Emma-Ruth Richards's *Sciamachy*** for chamber orchestra, directed by Britten Sinfonia Leader **Jacqueline Shave**. Commissioned by the William Alwyn Foundation with support from individual donors to Britten Sinfonia's Musically Gifted crowd-funding scheme, *Sciamachy* (taken from the Greek 'skiamakhia' meaning 'fighting your shadow') draws on the themes of Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and "*Bernstein's motivic repetition which creates a sense of hallowed rite*" to journey through various fields of peace, conflict and resolution. [www.emmaruthrichards.com](http://www.emmaruthrichards.com)

*Chichester Psalms* is being performed as part of the Barbican's **Bernstein 100**, a season marking the centenary of Leonard Bernstein's birth. The work was commissioned by the Very Rev. Walter Hussey, the arts loving Dean of Chichester Cathedral for the 1965 Chichester Festival; Hussey also commissioned work for the Cathedral from artists Graham Sutherland, Marc Chagall, Henry Moore, a litany and anthem from WH Auden, and Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. Bernstein characterised his work as "*popular in feeling*" with "*an old-fashioned sweetness along with its more violent moments*".\*

Vaughan Williams's *Dona nobis pacem* was first performed by the Huddersfield Choral Society in 1936. Taking texts from the Bible and the poetry of Walt Whitman, it offers an impassioned (though ultimately unheeded) plea for peace written in the midst of the growing turbulence of the 1930s.

This is the third seasonal collaboration between Britten Sinfonia and King's College Cambridge at the Barbican; previous performances have included Britten's *Saint Nicholas* (also recorded), and JS Bach's *Magnificat*.

In a free pre-concert Barbican foyer event at 6.15pm, **Britten Sinfonia Academy**, the orchestra's ensemble for talented teenage musicians from the East of England, gets in the mood for Christmas with a performance of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Christmas Carol*, and a selection of dances from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*.

[www.brittensinfonia.com](http://www.brittensinfonia.com)

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/choir>

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\* [www.leonardbernstein.com](http://www.leonardbernstein.com)

**Website links for venues**

[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

Tickets priced £15-£45

[www.saffronhall.com](http://www.saffronhall.com)

Tickets priced £10-50

Pre-concert talk with Emma-Ruth Richards at 6.30pm

**Britten Sinfonia is an Associate Ensemble at the Barbican, and Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall**