



PRESS RELEASE: 13 January 2025

LLOYD'S CHOIR SPRING 2025 CONCERT WILL FEATURE PREMIERE OF NEW WORK BY JACQUES COHEN, COMMEMORATING THE SINKING OF HMT LANCASTRIA DURING WORLD WAR II

Lloyd's Choir Spring Concert 27 March 2025, 7.00pm

St Giles Cripplegate Church, Fore Street, London, EC2Y 8DA

Lloyd's Choir

Cohen Ensemble

Jacques Cohen (conductor and Music Director)

Mendelssohn Psalm 114

Jacques Cohen 'Lancastria'

Rossini *Stabat Mater*

The City of London-based **Lloyd's Choir** will give their 2025 annual spring concert on 27 March at St Giles Cripplegate Church. It will feature the premiere of a new choral work by the Choir's Music Director **Jacques Cohen**, commemorating the sinking of **HMT Lancastria** in June 1940, which resulted in a huge loss of life. 2025 will mark the 85th anniversary of this terrible event. The concert will also include performances of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and Mendelssohn's Psalm 114.

The Lloyd's Choir takes part in a memorial service for the loss of HMT Lancastria at St Katharine Cree church every year, on or near the anniversary date of 17 June, 1940. The memorial service for this tragic maritime disaster is held at St. Katharine Cree because this church is at the centre of the historic shipping industry in the City.

The 2025 Service will be at 1pm on Thursday 12th June at St Katharine Cree church, and it will feature another performance of Jacques Cohen's 'Lancastria', a shorter 'a cappella' version created specially to be performed at the memorial service.

HMT Lancastria

On the morning of the 17th June 1940, HMT Lancastria was anchored three miles off St. Nazaire on the French Atlantic Coast. She had been ordered to repatriate British Servicemen and Civilians who had been left in France after the evacuation of Dunkirk.

By mid-afternoon almost nine thousand people were packed aboard the Lancastria when she was hit four times by enemy bombs. Within half an hour she had sank with a loss of life at least equal to

the combined losses of the 'Lusitania' and 'Titanic' disasters.

Jacques Cohen's 'Lancastria'

Jacques' new work for choir and orchestra 'Lancastria' is a personal response to this tragic event, a meditation upon the huge loss of life, inviting the listener to engage with the emotions of this complex and terrible situation. Jacques felt it was a piece that had to be written, especially because of the Lloyd's Choir's link to St Katharine Cree church, and the annual service they take part in.

The work features elements of the annual memorial service, and includes a performance by a bagpiper.

Jacques has created another version of this work, an unaccompanied short choral piece called 'Crossing the Bar', a reference to Tennyson's poem which also features in the main work 'Lancastria'.

Jacques Cohen said: "Ever since I have been involved with Lloyd's Choir and became aware of their involvement with the Lancastria, conducting the choir for the annual service at St Katharine Cree, I have felt compelled to help commemorate this in some way. Since I am a composer, writing a piece seemed the obvious thing. Originally I was going to write an orchestral piece but realised it was important to involve the choir as well, and since the bagpipe melody has always been such an important and moving part of the ceremony, I knew that that too had to play a role. Then when I came across the Tennyson text everything came together. I realised that I needed to write a simple a capella version especially to be performed as part of the annual commemorative service at St Katharine Cree in addition to the more elaborate version with orchestra and bagpipes that we will perform in March. The music paints Tennyson's words whilst moving towards the bagpipe melody as its ultimate goal."

Booking Information

Lloyd's Choir Spring Concert 27 March 2025, 7.00pm

St Giles Cripplegate Church, Fore Street, London, EC2Y 8DA

Booking will open in early 2025: details will be available on the Lloyd's Choir website:

<https://www.lloydschoir.com/>

DROPBOX LINK TO PHOTOS OF JACQUES COHEN, LLOYD'S CHOIR & COHEN ENSEMBLE

Jacques Cohen is equally known as conductor and composer. He is Music Director of the Cohen Ensemble (formerly Isis Ensemble) and has conducted concerts and broadcasts with such groups as Kremerata Baltica, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Sofia Soloists, BBC Concert Orchestra, Albania Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra and Bucharest Philharmonic. He has also been Music Director on several opera productions with a variety of companies, and is a passionate communicator, especially renowned for his unique ability to engage audiences in concerts.

His compositions and arrangements, include commissions for choir, orchestra, chamber works and opera. His string orchestra arrangements, particularly that of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, are fast becoming staples of the repertoire.

Frequently heard on radio in the UK and abroad, he has recorded a number of critically acclaimed CDs including the *Music for Strings* and *Transcriptions for Strings* discs (Cohen Ensemble/Meridian)

and *Cohen's Carols* (Oxford Camerata/ICSM).

Jacques read music at Oxford where he conducted the university orchestras and performed his own compositions. He was awarded the Conducting Scholarship at the Royal College of Music where prizes included the August Manns Conducting Prize, Constant Lambert Award, Janet Blacklock Choral Conducting Award and Tagore Gold Medal, the college's award for its most outstanding student. He went on to work with such groups as Bombay Chamber Orchestra and London Symphony Orchestra (Assistant Conductor). In addition to numerous awards for composition, Jacques took First Prize in the NAYO British Reserve Conducting Competition and was also a Prizewinner in the Leeds Conductors' Competition.

Full biography at <https://jacquescohen.co.uk/>

Lloyd's Choir

Besides its annual orchestral concert, the choir gives several concerts each year, usually at St. Katharine Cree. Christmas is always busy; as well as the choir's own carol concert, carols are sung at the Rostrum in the Underwriting Room at Lloyd's, and at other venues in the City.

Members of the choir also sing at a variety of church services during the year, usually at St. Katharine Cree, and occasionally out of London.

Although the choir now attracts singers from the entire City financial community and beyond, membership is still dominated by those working in the insurance market. In some quarters it is said that Lloyd's Choir is a rare example of a situation where underwriters and brokers are always in harmony...or nearly always!

Cohen Ensemble

The Cohen Ensemble (formerly known as the Isis Ensemble) was launched as a fully professional orchestra in 2005. Based in London, our members comprise international soloists, high-profile chamber musicians, and experienced orchestral musicians, with collective experience of virtually every major professional orchestra in the UK.

The Cohen Ensemble performs a very wide range of music from Bach through the classical and romantic repertoire to the present day. We are committed to promoting new music alongside works from the standard repertoire and take pride in the energy and passion of our performances.

For further information, please contact:

Margaret Skeet PR

margaret@margaretskeet.com

07855 707418/ 0208 351 0726

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