

# **'The Music of Gerald Finzi' – Gala Concert**

## **Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Taunton, TA1 3LA**

### **Tuesday July 21<sup>st</sup> 8:00 p.m.**

**D5**

**Host: Chris Davies**

***This is the flagship concert of 'FinziFest' – a major feature of Taunton Live 2015, in which we present four Finzi works (and one by Schubert).***

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) was born in London and studied at Harrogate and York; he taught composition at the Royal Academy of Music in the 1930s. After marriage to the artist Joy Black, Finzi gave up teaching and concentrated on composition. His career was interrupted by the outbreak of war, and the planned première of 'Dies Natalis' at the Three Choirs Festival in 1939 had to be cancelled.

After the war years, Finzi received several important commissions and became increasingly well-known and successful. Sadly, he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease in 1951, with a prognosis of 5-10 years to live. However his output continued, culminating in the 1955 'Cello Concerto commissioned by Sir John Barbirolli. He died in 1956.

Today, his music continues to be much admired and celebrated - not least here in Taunton! It embraces a rich variety of moods, from elegiac lyricism, through spiritual reflection, to radiant joy. The deaths of his father, three brothers and his teacher introduced the theme of fragility and transient existence, explored in many later works. He wrote more than 100 songs for soloist or choir, and is firmly established as one of the most popular 20th century British composers.

*[Biographical information © 2015 Geraldfinzi.com]*



#### **TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS**



##### **Elizabeth Watts – Soprano**

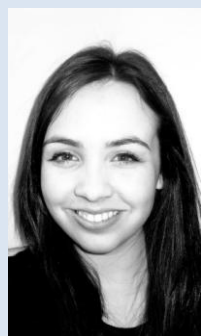
Elizabeth is a world-renowned singer - who lives in Somerset. Winner of the Lieder Prize at the Cardiff Singer of the World competition, she is now forging a successful career in opera, oratorio and recitals at venues across the globe.

She is no stranger to the concert scene here in Taunton, and has given memorable performances in works such as Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*.



##### **Peter Sparks – Clarinet**

Peter was principal clarinet of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and Verbier Festival Orchestra. As a concerto soloist, he has performed all over the UK; he is also a busy chamber musician and has appeared in International Festivals in Hong Kong and Paris. Peter has played with many of the country's leading orchestras, regularly broadcasts, and has recorded several works, including Walton's *Façade*.



##### **Marion Bettsworth – Piano**

Marion was Organ Scholar at Lancaster Priory for three years before she came to Lincoln College, Oxford, to read Music. She sang with the Chapel Choir for one year and in her second year she took up the Hollingsworth Organ Scholarship. Marion is currently in the final year of her degree.

#### **TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME**

Finzi	Prelude, Op. 25, (1920s)
Finzi	Clarinet Concerto, Op.31 (1948-49)
I N T E R V A L	
Finzi	Dies Natalis, for soprano & strings, Op. 8 (1920s, 1938-39)
Finzi	Eclogue, for piano and strings, Op. 10, (1920s, rev. 1940s)
Schubert	'The Shepherd on the Rock' (Specially commissioned arrangement by Chris Cooper)

OrchestraWest, Leader **Barry Haskey**

Concert conducted by **Oliver Gooch**