



Press release for HAYDN THE SEASONS

For their spring concert this year the Axminster and District Choral Society will perform Josef Haydn's great oratorio *The Seasons*, the second of two masterpiece oratorios, which Haydn wrote in the final years of his working life.

During the time that Haydn was living in London he attended performances of Handel's *Messiah* and was so moved that he determined to write something similar. He composed first *The Creation* and then, at the age of 69, *The Seasons*. He had behind him a lifetime of experience writing symphonies, string quartets and operas and he brought all this, together with deep sympathy for country life, to his composition of *The Seasons*.

Haydn enjoyed jokes of all kinds. His music often demonstrates an inventive, sometimes whimsical sense of humour. He was a brilliant word painter.

Amongst the more rousing choruses are a hunting song with horn calls, a loud thunderstorm, peasant dances and a stirring ode to toil. Haydn remarked that while he had been industrious his whole life, this was the first occasion he had ever been asked to write a chorus in praise of industry!

There are lyrical solos such as the choral prayer for a bountiful harvest, the gentle nightfall that follows the storm. There are delightful touches; the introduction of the famous melody from the "Surprise" Symphony in the Spring section, the hint of Mozart, Haydn's friend, in the final Winter section.

There will be three professional soloists. Harriet Mountford, who has sung with the choir on several occasions, will be welcomed back. A first class honours

graduate from York University, Harriet lives in Berkshire with her husband, John, where she enjoys a varied career of oratorio, recital and consort singing, Charles Cunliffe, baritone, formerly a bass choral-scholar at Peterborough Cathedral is studying as an undergraduate at the Royal Academy of Music. There will also be a tenor soloist. The choir and soloists will be supported by a professional orchestra.

Judy Martin, who has a wealth of experience and is well known as a classical conductor will return to direct on the night.

Having rehearsed since the beginning of January under Music Director, Peter Parshall, members are convinced that the concert will be every bit as successful as recent events. *The Seasons* will be sung in English. It promises to be an evening of serious, joyous fun.

Tickets £12 and £15, from Archway Books, Church Street, Axminster, members of the choir or phone 01297 33595 For further information visit www.axminsterchoral.co.uk or phone 01404 881838