

Truro Choral Society & Three Spires Singers
Elgar *The Kingdom*, 29th March 2014, Truro Cathedral

At the end of this month, Truro Cathedral's roof will be raised a few inches higher than usual as Three Spires Singers and Truro Choral Society combine voices and resources to present Elgar's *The Kingdom*, conducted by Christopher Gray. "This will be the first time that the two choirs have joined forces," says Lora Wicks, Chair of Three Spires. "In preparation, we also jointly arranged a successful seminar in February, for which 130 attendees battled the squalls battering the county to enjoy talks by Elgar experts and singing workshops."

In order to incorporate the 250 singers, as well as the large combined orchestra – which will include two harpists – special permission was sought from the Chapter to change the seating in the cathedral completely around. This means that for the evening of March 29th the choir will be positioned at the west door, with the audience facing them and their seating heading right back to the altar. This has not been done for many years, but long-serving choir members who have sung in this layout before talk of the wonderful acoustics it affords.

The Kingdom may not be as well known as Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* but many Elgar conductors consider it to be equal in quality. "The impassioned melodies and harmonies that you might hope to hear in a big Elgar work are all there," says Gray, "and there is a variety of orchestration and colourful use of voices throughout." Rehearsals have been led by both Gray and Truro Choral Society's Music Director, Martin Palmer, and the choirs' first fully joint practice a few weeks ago gave a real indication of the powerful performance that is in store for our audience.

Naturally, the first-rate soloists possess the huge voices necessary to carry over the assembled mass of musicians. Soprano will be sung by Tessa Spong, a Guildhall School of Music and Drama graduate and Cornish native. Tessa has enjoyed great international acclaim throughout her career and still has strong local connections; her solo "The sun goeth down" is a high point of the oratorio and will be well worth waiting for. The tenor, David Butt Philip, has performed at Glyndebourne, the Royal Opera House, Royal Festival Hall and Wigmore Hall, while Louise Mott, the mezzo-soprano, and David Stout, bass, have both sung for English National Opera, Welsh National Opera and Opera North, to name just a few.

With such a large-scale event coming together and fast approaching, everyone involved is of course really looking forward to the experience. "Truro Choral Society performed *The Kingdom* exactly 30 years ago," says their Chair, Susanne Deneke. "The conductor then was Martin Hall, and he will be in the audience on the 29th, so it will be interesting to hear how it compares." Indeed, the choirs hope all in attendance will find it a performance truly fit for a *Kingdom*.