

SURBITON ORATORIO SOCIETY

PRESENTS

GABRIELI : 'IN ECCLESIIIS'
CHARPENTIER : 'MESSE DE MINUIT'
HANDEL : 'ZADOK THE PRIEST'
PUCCINI : 'MESSA DI GLORIA'

CONDUCTOR : ROBIN PAGE

ORGANIST : KENNETH LAWRENCE

S O L O I S T S

JUDITH ELLIS - Soprano
HANIA PRAWDZIC-GOKMBERSKA - Soprano
RACHEL COOPER - Alto
PHILIP BALL - Tenor
PHILIP JONES - Bass

on

1984

SATURDAY 10th MARCH at 7.30pm in
ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, MAPLE ROAD, SURBITON
TICKETS £3, SENIOR CITIZENS & STUDENTS £2
AVAILABLE FROM MEMBERS OR AT THE DOOR

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GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1555(?) - 1612) : IN ECCLESIIIS

Giovanni was fortunate enough to be born in Venice which, at the end of the 16th century, was a centre of European music-making and enjoyed great prosperity. Apart from a stay in Munich, Giovanni lived all his life there, succeeding his famous composer uncle, Adrea, as organist at St Mark's around 1584.

This motet was probably written for one of the Venetians' beloved ceremonial feast days and would have been performed in St Mark's, although the text is 'cori spezzati', where groups of players or singers were placed some distance from each other, often in galleries. The first group, or 'choir', is of solo voices (St Mark's choir was understrength at the time); the second group is the chorus; the third is made up of instruments, cornetti and trombones in Gabrieli's day, when they had a much softer tone than today's instruments.

The piece is a tapestry of styles and textures: more florid solo and duet sections, with their simple organ accompaniment, are interspersed with 'alleluias' from the chorus in block chords, and there is a short, bouncy sinfonia. At the prayer, 'Deus adiutor', the sonorous vocal lines and chromatic harmonies build the tension towards the final affirmatory 'alleluia'.

In ecclesiis benedicite Domino, Alleluia.
In omni loco dominationis benedic anima mea Dominum, Alleluia.
In Deo salutari meo et gloria mea,
Deus auxilium meum et spes mea in Deo est, Alleluia.
Deus noster, te invocamus, te laudamus, te adoramus;
libera nos, salva nos, vivifica nos, Alleluia.
Deus adiutor noster in aeternum, Alleluia.

MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER (1634-1704) : MESSE DE MINUIT

Though relatively unknown today, Charpentier was an influential figure in French music which, in his day, was still dominated by the work of Lully. He was a versatile composer - each of his twelve masses is in a different style, though all show the influence of his Italian sympathies and his experience in writing music for the theatre.

The Messe de Minuit is probably the first mass to be based on 'noels', or simple popular tunes. The vocal lines of the chorus are deceptively simple; though not melodically far-ranging, as Puccini's are, they combine to form bold shifts of harmony. Again, though the rhythms used are simple in themselves, the music runs the whole gamut of expressive tempi, from the gravity of 'Et incarnatus est' the jaunty and wholly French dance-like rhythms of 'Deum de Deo'.

- 1 KYRIE: Note the subtle difference in mood between Charpentier's setting of 'Kyrie eleison' and 'Christe eleison'.
- 2 GLORIA: Charpentier's dramatic sense is evident here in the many sudden changes of tempo, as at the splendid canonic entries on the words 'Laudamus te' and in the alternation of soloists and chorus.
- 3 CREDO: The Credo is characterised by long suspensions, that is, notes held over while the harmony changes. Charpentier achieves much pathos by this means at the words 'Et incarnatus est'. There is some characteristic Italian word-painting too: note the falling melodic line at the word 'descendit'.
- 4 SANCTUS: The alternation of block chords and flowing melodies in the chorus provides rhythmic variety.
- 5 AGNUS DEI: A charming and appropriately simple end to the work.

HANDEL (1685-1759) : ZADOK THE PRIEST

Handel was quite at home in England by 1727, when he wrote 'Zadok the Priest' as one of four anthems performed at the Coronation of George II. He was also at home with the English language (although his personal utterances continued to be an alarming mixture of English, French, Italian and German to the end of his life), and he was greatly affronted when the bishops sent him texts to set, preferring to make his own choice from the Bible. He was a devout Lutheran and an unusually charitable and honest man for the age in which he lived.

The simplicity and humour of the man is apparent in 'Zadok', from the pulsating opening chorus (Zadok the Priest) through the joyful middle section (And All the People Rejoiced), to the triumphant shouts of God Save the King and the final emphatic amens. Handel's genius is in achieving immense grandeur by such simple melodic and harmonic means.

- 1 CHORUS : Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon King.
- 2 CHORUS : And all the people rejoiced and said:
- 3 CHORUS : God save the King! Long live the King! God save the King!
May the King live for ever, Amen, Allelujah, Amen.

PUCCINI (1858-1924) : MESSA DI GLORIA

You could be forgiven for thinking Puccini wrote nothing but operas: after hearing his first opera he composed little else. But he trained first as an organist and much of his early work (he was already composing at 16) was church music.

Puccini called this mass simply 'Mass for four voices and orchestra': the 'Gloria' of the title was added by the publishers in 1951. He wrote it as a leaving exercise on completing his studies at the Pacini Conservatory in his home town of Lucca. But this is no piece of student homework. The harmonies are more advanced than those of Verdi's Requiem, written a few years earlier, but the style is still distinctly operatic, in keeping with most Italian church music of the 19th century (Verdi's Requiem is sometimes unkindly dubbed 'his greatest opera'). The quick-march tune of the 'Gloria' is reminiscent of a comic-opera drinking song. But, shining through the work is the simple faith of a man who, at the end of a phenomenally successful career, could say "Just think of it, if I hadn't hit on music I should never have been able to do anything in the world!".

- 1 KYRIE: (Larghetto) An early example of Puccini's typical lyricism and free-flowing melody.
- 2 GLORIA: (Allegro ma non troppo) Like Verdi, Puccini loved the flourish of a trumpet fanfare. His use of fugue already shows technical assurance.
- 3 CREDO: (Andante) An intensely dramatic movement, with tenor and bass solo sections.
- 4 SANCTUS: (Andante) A prayer-like baritone solo is flanked by choral 'hosannas'.
- 5 AGNUS DEI: (Andantino) Probably written hastily to complete the work in time for a saint's feast day, Puccini later used this section as a madrigal in 'Manon Lescaut'. It is nonetheless a moving finale.

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We hope you have enjoyed this concert and thank you for your support. Our next concert will be on SATURDAY JUNE 23rd ¹⁹⁸⁴ ~~at~~ ^{at} 7.30 pm in KINGSTON PARISH CHURCH, when we shall be performing MOZART'S REQUIEM MASS..

Rehearsals of this Society are held on Thursdays at 7.45 pm in Surbiton Library Hall. Please speak to any member of the Society during the interval if you would like to find out more about us, or telephone our Membership Secretary, Mrs Gene Butt, on 546 9226, for more information.

The National Federation of Music Societies, to which this Society is affiliated, gives support towards the cost of our concerts with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

We are also grateful for the financial support we receive from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.