

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH SURBITON

24th March 2007 7.30pm

Conductor Robin Page

**KINGSTON
CHORAL
SOCIETY**

Organist Mark Uglow

**A CHORAL
CELEBRATION**

including pieces by

**HANDEL, HAYDN
MOZART, PURCELL
AND TIPPETT**



PROGRAMME £1.50

The plot comes from Book XIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and is inspired by a Sicilian myth personifying the activities of Mount Etna. The shepherd Acis is in love with the nymph Galatea, but unfortunately, so is the giant Polyphemus. Despite being warned by Galatea, his fellow shepherd Daman, and a chorus of nymphs, Acis defies Polyphemus, and whilst he plights his undying love to Galatea, Polyphemus, in a furious rage, throws a massive rock at Acis, killing him. The chorus exhort Galatea to use her divine powers to make Acis immortal, which she does by turning him into a fountain.

Mour, all ye muses and *Galatea dry thy tears* are the last two choruses and occur after the death of Acis by the hand of Polyphemus and show Handel's complete mastery of the dramatic chorus. The libretto is a collaboration between John Gay (who would become better known for his libretto for *The Beggar's Opera*), Alexander Pope, and Hughes.

Mour, all ye muses announces the death of Acis and achieves its poignancy through the use of suspensions, homophonic block chords, and unexpected placing of stresses and rests. *Galatea, dry thy tears* is the last chorus, and brings the work to an optimistic ending in the major mode. It is in a dancing triple time, and has typically Handelian word painting on 'murmuring still thy gentle love'.

Mozart – Confutatis & Lacrimosa (from Requiem)

More has been written about the Mozart Requiem than about any other work. The circumstances surrounding its commission, Mozart's premature death, and the work's subsequent completion, have spawned a plethora of legends and it is only now that we are able to extricate the truth from the lies.

The standard legend has it that in July 1791, just after the birth of his second son, Mozart was visited by a shadowy figure who passed on a commission for a requiem. Mozart was very struck by the figure and is supposed to have believed it to be a portent of his own doom.

Mozart started work on the Requiem, but soon had to break off to write *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito*. It was not until November that he was able to return to the Requiem and by this time his health had started to deteriorate. Mozart was convinced that he was being poisoned. Constanze was worried that he was working himself to death on the Requiem and managed to get him to put the score away and concentrate on other things.

~ ~ ~ DATE FOR YOUR DIARY ~ ~ ~

16th June 2007 at 7.30 pm

Handel Laudate Pueri and Mozart Requiem

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at Kingston Parish Church, Market Place, Kingston

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Mozart wrote a Masonic cantata *Eine kleine Freymaurer-Kantate* which was so well received that it seemed to lift Mozart's spirits. He returned to the Requiem and again his health began to fail. At fifty-five minutes past midnight on 5th December 1791 Mozart was dead.

The *Confutatis* in A minor is very effective; the juxtaposition of low voices, trombones and double-basses evoking the torments of Hell, against the imploring high voices and violins is particularly striking. The *Lacrimosa* opens quietly on violins and builds gradually to a climax on the words *Homo reus*. According to tradition this is the last part of the score that Mozart wrote. Sussmayr's completion is not of the same standard and is too short. The Amen in D major is convincing and sits well.

Mozart - Ave Verum Corpus

In 1789, Mozart's wife's health deteriorated. She started to take the cure at the spa town of Baden-an-Wien, 25 kilometres from Vienna. During the frequent visits that Wolfgang made to visit his wife there, he befriended the choirmaster, Anton Stoll. In June 1791, the final year of Mozart's life, Stoll asked Mozart to compose a piece for him. The result was the motet *Ave Verum Corpus*, one of the last works he wrote, and certainly one of the most popular. The masterly use of modulation allows it to be both serene and very expressive.

Haydn - Insanae et vanae

Haydn's first oratorio, *Il ritorno di Tobia*, (*The Return of Tobias*) was written in 1774-5 when he was Kapellmeister at Esterházy. It is written to an Italian text by Giovanni Gastone Boccherini taken from the apocryphal book of Tobit. As Haydn's reputation in Europe started to grow, and he was even becoming recognised in his home town, Vienna, there were moves to revive the oratorio in 1784. To improve its dramatic structure, Haydn removed several arias and added two choruses. Despite this, the oratorio and its content were considered to be old fashioned and it fell into oblivion.

However, Haydn obviously considered that one of the newly composed choruses, the storm chorus *Svanisce in un momento*, was too good to waste, so in 1795, after his return from London, he adapted it as the motet *Insanae et vanae*. It has two sections; the stormy opening section in D minor to *Insanae et vanae* is full of clashes with agonised string figures. The second section, at *Quid prodest* in F major, is calmer. The first section is repeated in a shortened form, before the calm section returns, now in D major, with the rewritten vocal parts.

~ ~ ~ INTERVAL ~ ~ ~

Samuel Johnson observed that England was a nation without music. Perhaps a nation which boasts one of the greatest, if not the greatest authors is too much in love with its language to be seduced by the charms of music. But although the English have never produced a Bach or Brahms, there is still plenty of English music which bears a close investigation, as I hope the second half of this concert will show.

William Byrd - If ye love me

Byrd (c1540 – 4 July 1623) was one of the finest composers of the renaissance. Little is known of his early life, his birthplace or parentage. He began his musical career during the reign of the staunch Catholic Queen Mary (reigned 1553-1558). Mary had brought the best musicians in the country to the Chapel Royal. Byrd studied with Thomas Tallis (1505 - 1585) and thrived in the creative atmosphere. On her death, Mary was succeeded by her protestant sister, Queen Elizabeth I. Byrd remained a Catholic, and decided it was prudent to leave court, but he kept his position *in absentia*. For a while he became organist at Lincoln Cathedral, before returning to the Chapel Royal in 1572.

PROGRAMME

Handel - Zadok the priest

Handel - Mourn ye muses (from Acis and Galatea)

Handel - Galatea, dry thy tears (from Acis and Galatea)

Mozart - Confutatis maledictus (from Requiem)

Mozart - Lacrimosa (from Requiem)

Mozart - Ave verum corpus

Haydn - Insanae et vanae curae

~ ~ ~ INTERVAL ~ ~ ~

Byrd - If ye love me

Batten - Oh praise the Lord, all ye heathen

Purcell - If music be the food of love

Bennet - Weep, O mine eyes

Morley - Now is the month of maying

Traditional - Swing low, sweet chariot

Tippett - Steal away (from A child of our time)

Tippett - Nobody knows (from A child of our time)

Tippett - Go down Moses (from A child of our time)

Tippett - O by and by (from A child of our time)

Shield - The Arethusa

Byrd must have had powerful friends at court, because despite being a Catholic in Protestant England, he led a charmed life. He and Tallis were jointly granted a Royal Charter to print music, which in those days amounted to a monopoly, and Byrd used it to publish three books of Latin motets, as well as English church music, songs and sonnets, madrigals and much keyboard music. The last thirty years of his life he moved to Essex, where he published his three mass settings, and his magnum opus, *Gradualia*. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Standon Massey, Essex.

The short anthem *If ye love me* is less well known than the Tallis setting. The Byrd is much more polyphonic, with plenty of imitation between the vocal lines.

Adrian Batten - Oh praise the Lord, all ye heathen

Batten (c1591 – c1637) is not as well known as many other musicians of the time. He was born in Salisbury, and was a chorister at nearby Winchester Cathedral. He went on to sing and work at Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral. He also worked as a copyist and published a book containing many popular works of the time, which he scored for organ. Unfortunately he did not include many of his own works, and most of his own works remain unpublished, existing only in manuscript form in libraries and cathedrals.

Oh praise the Lord, all ye heathen is a fine example of the Elizabethan anthem. It changes mode from major to minor very rapidly, sometimes within the same bar; uses false relations and suspensions to telling effect.

Henry Purcell - If music be the food of love

Purcell (1659 – 1695) is considered to be the greatest native English composer. The music publisher John Playford wrote, in his foreword to Purcell's collected works *Orpheus Britannicus* (1706), "The Author's extraordinary Talent in all sorts of music, is sufficiently known; but he was particularly known for his Vocal, having a peculiar Genius to express the Energy of English Words, whereby he mov'd the passions as well as caused Admiration in all his Auditors."

Purcell was born in Westminster where his father was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and the young Henry followed him. He studied with John Blow, organist at Westminster Abbey, and tradition has it that he was so impressed by Purcell's abilities that he stood down as organist and recommended Purcell instead.

This is the first of three settings Purcell made of the text, and is the least often performed. The text by Henry Heveningham, takes its first line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, but, unlike the Shakespeare, goes on to incite love.

John Bennet - Weep, O mine eyes

Bennet (c1575 – after 1614) was probably born in northwest England, but very little is known about him. He published a book of madrigals for four voices in 1599, and contributed to the collection of madrigals in praise of Queen Elizabeth I, *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601). His music shows an awareness of other earlier composers.

Weep, O mine eyes is a melancholy madrigal; melancholy was a fashionable trait among Elizabethan men. It pays homage to John Dowland (1563 – 1626) by quoting a theme from Dowland's *Flow my Tears*, a work that was extremely popular and well known in both Britain and Europe at the time.

Thomas Morley - Now is the month of maying

Morley (c1557 – 1602) was composer, theorist, editor and organist, and one of the foremost members of the school of Elizabethan Madrigal composers. He sang at Norwich Cathedral, where he became Master of the Choristers in 1583. He studied with Byrd, and lived in the same parish as Shakespeare. He wrote several songs to Shakespeare's texts, but it has not been shown that they met, or that the songs were written for or performed in the plays.

Now is the Month of Maying is, strictly speaking, a Ballett, a song that repeats the verses, with a dance-like lilt and a 'Fa-la' refrain. At first sight it is a jolly song about playing and dancing in the fields, however it is not as innocent as that, and it begs the question, what game were they playing that would cause the barley to break?

Traditional - Swing low, sweet chariot

One story says that this spiritual was composed by Wallis Willis, a slave of the Choctaw Indians. It was not until after the American Civil War that Alexander Reid, a minister at a Choctaw boarding school, heard Willis singing the song and transcribed the words and melody. Reid sent music to a university choir in Nashville, who made it popular during their tours of the US and Europe.

Michael Tippett - Negro Spirituals

Tippett (1905 – 1998) was always concerned by the social injustices that he saw occurring around him. He worked with unemployed miners in the North of England, and with cinema musicians made unemployed by the introduction of the talkies. With the onset of the second world war, and in particular the events of 9 November 1938, *Kristallnacht*, Tippett felt he must make some statement.

Tippett was friendly with TS Eliot, and asked him if he would provide a libretto. Eliot asked for a scenario before he would write anything. Tippett's response was based on the Passions of Bach, and Handel's *Messiah*. The result was a three-part oratorio, with narration provided in recitative, and the action carried by arias and ensemble pieces. In place of chorales, Tippett would use negro spirituals, which he felt were the best twentieth century equivalent; the tunes being well known to the audience, and the text expressing matters of universal significance. When Eliot saw the scenario, he advised Tippett to write the words himself, because he was worried that his words would overwhelm the music.

William Shield - The Arethusa

Shield (1748-1849) was born in Durham and learnt music from his father, a singing teacher. William was apprenticed to a boat builder, but he continued composing and in 1779 a piece written for the consecration of a church allowed him to give up boat building, and travel to London where he joined the orchestra of the King's band and became composer for Covent Garden Theatre. He has been described as the most English composer since Purcell and songs, pantomimes, operas and musical plays reflect that lyricism and skill in word-setting with which Purcell is so much associated.

The words were written by Prince Hoare (1755 – 1834) a portrait painter who successfully turned to literature. The sentiments expressed in the song are not entirely accurate. The *Arethusa* did indeed chase the French vessel *La Belle Poule* in June 1778. The French ship suffered the worst casualties, but escaped by directing all its firepower at the *Arethusa's* rigging, immobilizing her so she had to be towed back to the fleet. Sadly, eight months later the *Arethusa* was wrecked at sea.

The melody is attributed to the blind Irish harpist and composer Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738). Shield used it in his musical play *The Lock and Key* produced at Covent Garden Theatre in 1796, when it achieved immediate success. It is familiar these days chiefly as one of the pieces arranged by Henry Wood (1869 - 1944) in his *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, which is performed every year at the last night of the Proms.

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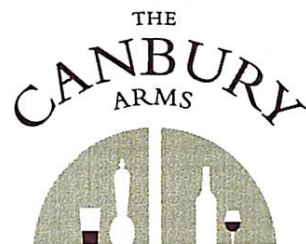
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