

KINGSTON PARISH CHURCH

13th December 2008 7.30pm

Conductor Graham Ross

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

EXCERPTS FROM
HANDEL'S
MESSIAH

CAROLS

KINGSTON
CHORAL
SOCIETY



PROGRAMME £1.00



Since its formation in 1949, Kingston Choral Society has earned a reputation for concerts of a high standard and for performing a wide range of music. The Society enjoys singing the familiar favourites of the choral repertoire, but is not afraid of tackling ambitious projects and has, for example, performed a new commission by Peter Maxwell Davies, Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky in Russian and other pieces in Czech, Hebrew, Finnish and Swedish.

Kingston Choral Society has over 100 members drawn from southwest London and north Surrey. New members are welcome. The choir performs four concerts a year, usually in Kingston Parish Church, and two of the concerts are with a professional orchestra. Rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings (8-10 pm) at The Hollyfield School, Surbiton, in term-time. Kingston Choral Society also holds regular social and fund-raising events and occasional musical workshops.

If you are interested in joining, please talk to any member of the choir during the interval or at the end of the concert. You can also contact the membership secretary on kcs-enquiries@blueyonder.co.uk or Denis Down on 020 8949 4961 for more information and arrange to come to a rehearsal.

WELCOME TO GRAHAM ROSS – Musical Director

We are delighted to welcome Graham Ross to his first concert as Musical Director of Kingston Choral Society following the departure of Robin Page, who directed the choir for 28 years. Graham was a Senior Choral Scholar at Clare College, Cambridge and went on to study Orchestral Conducting at the Royal College of Music. He also holds a Conducting Scholarship with the London Symphony Chorus.

Graham regularly guest conducts numerous ensembles and orchestras, most recently Tallis Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia of Cambridge, and Aalborg Symfoniorkester, Denmark. He has worked as chorus master for Ivor Bolton and the Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, and Sir Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra. In the 2008/2009 season he will assist Sir Colin Davis in Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* and Diego Masson in Stockhausen's *Trans* at the QEII, and will serve as a guest conductor for Europa Cantat in Nevers, France.

He is co-founder and Principal Conductor of The Dmitri Ensemble, an innovative performing group that specialises in unjustly neglected and new works. The Ensemble's debut CD of works by James MacMillan is due to be released Easter 2009, and a CD of works by Vaughan Williams will be recorded early 2009, conducted by Sir David Willcocks.

As a composer Graham has written many works for numerous ensembles, and has had performances and BBC broadcasts given by, amongst others, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Aurora Orchestra, Westminster Choir College (Princeton, USA), the Choir of London, The Place Contemporary Dance School, the Choir of Clare College, Sounds Positive, Aquilo Wind Ensemble, O Duo, The Syred Consort, English Voices, St. Pancras Parish Church, and The Knack Singers.

JAMES McVINNIE - Organist

James McVinnie is the Assistant Organist of Westminster Abbey. He has held Organ Scholarships at St Albans Cathedral, Clare College, Cambridge - where he read music - and St Paul's Cathedral. He is the Organ Tutor at Dulwich College and Director of Music at St Andrew's, Holborn.

As organist to the Choir of Clare College, James performed at venues and music festivals throughout the UK, Europe, the USA, and the Far East. He also features on their recordings of Tarik O'Regan's choral music (Collegium), John Rutter's *Mass of the Children* (Naxos), S S Wesley's choral music (Naxos) and most recently, Tavener's *Ex Maria Virgine* (Naxos). He is organist on recordings made by the St Albans Abbey Girls Choir (Lammas), as well as an album of Richard Allain's choral music with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain and Laudibus (Delphian). His first solo disc was released on the Naxos label of SS Wesley's organ music recorded on the 1873 Willis organ of St Michael's, Tenbury.

MESSIAH - Handel

The libretto to *Messiah* was compiled from both the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible by Charles Jennens (1700 - 1773). Jennens had met Handel in 1725 and had become a staunch supporter, providing librettos for several of Handel's most popular works; *Saul* (1738), *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1740) and *Belshazzar* (1744).

It was Jennens' intention that *Messiah* would be a reflective, thought provoking work for performance at Lent and Easter, but the wide ranging nature of the quotations he selected meant that most of the first part, and some of the second part, are equally appropriate to Christmas, and these days it is more often performed at Christmas.

Handel worked on the score at his usual high speed, taking just 24 days to complete it. His valet related that, during this time, he would often find his master weeping silently at his desk, overcome by the beauty of the music that was flowing from his pen. Jennens himself expressed disappointment with the music; he had hoped that Handel would devote a whole year to its composition.

As with so much of Handel's music, much of *Messiah* has been recycled from previous works, or even from other composers' works. The tunes to at least two of the choruses come from two Italian duets completed early in 1741, and show that in the choruses Handel was more concerned with the dramatic opportunities that the libretto provides than with fitting the words exactly to the music. It is in the arias that Handel shows his characteristic skill at word painting.

The first performance of *Messiah* was given at the Music Hall in Fishamble Street, Dublin on 13th April 1742. Dublin was chosen for the première because ten years earlier Handel had provoked outrage from the Bishop of London when he tried to perform the sacred work *Esther* at the King's Theatre, a very secular and profane venue. Even then, the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dr. Jonathan Swift, erstwhile satirist, pamphleteer and author of *Gulliver's Travels*, at first banned it, only relenting if some of the proceeds went to charity.

Messiah was not an instant success however, and, in its turn, it became a source for other works such as the *Concerto a due cori* Nos. 1 & 2 and the *Occasional Oratorio*. Only in the last decade of his life, when Handel became involved with the Foundling Hospital, and gave annual performances of the work, did *Messiah* establish itself in the concert repertoire.

By 1789, Handel's reputation had extended to Vienna, and Mozart made several arrangements of Handel's choral music, including *Acis and Galatea* and *Messiah*. He was also admired by Haydn and Beethoven and his choral style was much imitated. As Handel's reputation continued to grow, so did size of the performances. The Handel Centenary Commemoration in 1784 at Westminster Abbey saw a vast choir and orchestra of over 500 performers, with extra instruments including six 'Tromboni, or Sacbuts', a double-bassoon (a recent invention) and 'Double-Base Kettle Drums'. This habit continued unabated throughout the Victorian era and it is a further proof of *Messiah*'s quality that it has survived such mutilation, and misinterpretation with its popularity intact.

PRELUDES - JS Bach

The two chorale preludes BWV 662 and 664 for solo organ, both on the chorale tune *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* (Alone to God on high be honour) are part of the collection known as *Die Achtzehn* (The Eighteen), which was compiled by Bach in the last decade of his life when he was in Leipzig, at a time when he collected and revised much of his music. The text of the chorale is an adaptation of the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* from the mass setting, and the tune is adapted from the plainsong of the Gloria for the mass for Easter. It was sung in Leipzig every Sunday, and was associated with Christmas in some hymnbooks. The melody was the most frequently used by Bach for his organ preludes.

Canto in Soprano (BWV 662) is marked *adagio* and has a languid mood. It is 37 bars long, with a repeat at bar 17, and lasts about 15 minutes. It is for two manuals and pedals, with the *cantus firmus* (the tune) in the soprano. The melody is highly decorated and yet more recognisable than many of Bach's other treatments of it. The inner parts are fugal, but are skilfully written to providing much melodic expression and beauty.

Trio (BWV 664) is headed *Trio super Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* and is for two manuals and pedals. It is 96 bars long but lasts about four minutes. The manuals play subjects derived from the chorale melody, whilst the bass provides a continuo bass. There are frequent episodes where material unrelated to the chorale is introduced, and the *cantus firmus* appears in the pedal towards the end of the prelude.

Paul Chambers

Con brio

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PROGRAMME

Choruses from Handel's Messiah
And the Glory of the Lord
For Unto us a Child is Born
Behold the Lamb of God
Surely He Hath Borne our Griefs
And with His Stripes
All We Like Sheep

JS Bach - Two Chorale Preludes on
Allein Gott in der Höh, Sei ehr
Canto in Soprano
Trio

Choruses from Handel's Messiah
Hallelujah!
Worthy is the Lamb

~ ~ ~ INTERVAL ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ INTERVAL ~ ~ ~

Carols

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (All)
(Mendelssohn, arr. D. Willcocks)

Ding Dong! Merrily on High (Choir only)
(Trad., harm. C. Wood)

O Little Town of Bethlehem (All)
(Trad., arr. R. Vaughan Williams, desc. T. Armstrong)

Coventry Carol (Choir only)
(Trad., arr. M. Shaw)

It Came upon the Midnight Clear (All)
(Trad., adapt. Sullivan)

The Truth from Above (Choir only)
(Trad., arr. R. Vaughan Williams)

Silent Night (All)
(F. Gruber)

Adam Lay Ybunden (Choir only)
(B. Ord)

O Come, All Ye Faithful (All)
(J.F. Wade, arr. D. Willcocks)

In the Bleak Midwinter (Choir only)
(H. Darke)

The Twelve Days of Christmas (All)
(Trad., arr. J. Rutter)

We Wish You a Merry Christmas (Choir only)
(Trad., arr. A. Warrell)

HANDEL'S MESSIAH - CHORUSES

4. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
Isaiah XL:5
12. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
Isaiah IX, 6
22. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.
John I, 29
24. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.
Isaiah LIII, 4
- He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him.
Isaiah LIII, 5
25. And with his stripes we are healed.
Isaiah LIII, 5b
26. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
Isaiah LIII, 6
44. Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.
Revelation XIX, 6
- The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.
Revelation XI 15
- King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!
Revelation XIX, 16
53. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men."
Luke II, 14

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~~ NEXT CONCERT ~~

4th April 2009 at 7.30 pm

***Howells - Requiem
Tippett - Negro Spirituals
Britten - Rejoice in the Lamb***

at Kingston Parish Church

***For further details contact the
Box Office on 020 8390 5689***

***If you would like to be notified by email in advance
of future concerts please phone 020 8942 2275***

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Kingston Choral Society needs your support.

It takes lots of resources – talent, volunteers and financial support – to allow the Society to continue to perform and maintain high quality performances. Contributions are used to purchase and hire music, to rent performance facilities and to pay the day-to-day operational expenses of the organisation.

Your gift entitles you to membership of the Friends of Kingston Choral Society.

By becoming a 'Friend' for a minimum yearly fee of £20 you will receive in return priority booking facilities, advance notice of concerts, your name listed as a Friend in all concert programmes and a discount on the purchase of two tickets for each concert.

If you would like to become a Friend, please complete the form below and pass it to any member of the choir with your cheque or post it to:

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