A CONCERT OF MUSIC FOR EASTER

Exultate Singers conducted by David Ogden

WEDNESDAY 19th MARCH 2008 at 8pm
ST JAMES’ PRIORY, BRISTOL
A CONCERT OF MUSIC FOR EASTER

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O bone Jesu  Robert Carver
The Reproaches  John Sanders
Take him, earth, for cherishing  Herbert Howells
O bone Jesu  James MacMillan

Interval

Salvator mundi  Thomas Tallis
Why fumeth in sight?  Thomas Tallis
Mass in G minor
  i. Kyrie
  ii. Gloria in excelsis
  iii. Credo
  iv. Sanctus & Benedictus
  v. Agnus Dei  Ralph Vaughan Williams

O bone Jesu  Robert Carver (1487-1546)
The text of O bone Jesu is an extended version of a thirteenth century sequence, attributed to Pope Innocent V. There are many variants of this text, which was also set in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Josquin, Palestrina, Lassus and Fayrfax.

The setting by the Scottish composer Robert Carver is of a particularly extended and deeply contrite version of the text, written for the large and unusual number of 19 voice parts. Such a monumental setting must surely have been composed for a specific purpose. It has been suggested that his motet served as a private prayer for James IV, who felt responsible for, and was afflicted with remorse at the death of his father, James III, at the battle of Sauchieburn in 1488. The text has been transferred to the first person singular, and the music, compared with Carver’s other works, is sombre and restrained, and stark in the simplicity of its harmony. The motet is an example of a gloriously rich culture which came to such an abrupt and violent end because of the political and religious upheavals of the 16th century.

O good Jesus, O most holy Jesus, O most sweet Jesus,
O Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary, full of piety,
O sweet Jesus, according to your great mercy have mercy upon me.
O most compassionate Jesus
I beseech you by that precious blood
which you willingly shed for sinners
that you might wash away my wickedness
and look upon me miserable and unworthy sinner
imploring this name of Jesus.
O name of Jesus, sweet name, name of Jesus,
beloved name, name of Jesus, sweet name,
for what is Jesus if not our saviour?
Therefore good Jesus through your name
save me that I shall not perish
and suffer me not to be damned
whom you created out of nothing.
O good Jesus, let not my sin destroy me.
I beg you, most holy Jesus,
forsake not me whom your love has made.
O sweet Jesus, accept what is yours
and reject that which offends you.
O most beloved Jesus, O most longed for Jesus,
O most gentle Jesus, O Jesus,
permit me to enter into your kingdom, sweet Jesus.

The Reproaches  John Sanders (1933-1994)
The text of The Reproaches is an ancient part of the liturgy for Good Friday. It comprises three parts: the cry of Jesus on the cross (‘O my people, what have I done to you?’), the recollection of God’s love for his people, and the Trisagion (‘Holy is God, Holy and strong’), a prayer praising God’s greatness and asking for his mercy. This setting was written by John Sanders, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Gloucester Cathedral between 1967-94.
O my people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!
Holy is God! Holy and strong! Holy immortal One, have mercy on us.
i. I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom, but you led your Saviour to the cross.
ii. For forty years I led you safely through the desert. I fed you with manna from heaven, and brought you to a land of plenty. But you led your Saviour to the cross.
iii. What more could I have done for you? I planted you as my fairest vine, but you yielded only bitterness. When I was thirsty you gave me vinegar to drink, and you pierced your Saviour's side with a lance.
iv. I opened the sea before you, but you opened my side with a spear. I led you on your way in a pillar of cloud, but you led me to Pilate's court.
v. I bore you up with manna in the desert, but you struck me down and scourgéd me. I gave you saving water from the rock, but you gave me gall and vinegar to drink.
vi. I gave you a royal sceptre, but you gave me a crown of thorns. I fed you with manna from heaven, and brought you to a land of plenty:
For his setting of O bone Jesu, MacMillan looked back 500 years to his Scottish compatriot Robert Carver. Like Carver's setting, MacMillan uses the repeated word 'Jesu' to act as musical pillars that define the structure of the piece. Each time the 'Jesu' chords are harmonised slightly differently. In between, MacMillan writes passages with contrasting textures and different combination of singers, showcasing different aspects of the choir rather like a concerto. Like much of his choral music it uses the vocal inflections of the Scottish lament. The result is a sensual and spiritual web of sound which, in the composer's words, is designed to be "gorgeous rather than austere".

The piece was commissioned by The Sixteen to celebrate their 20th anniversary. It received its world premiere on 10 October 2002 in Southwark Cathedral, London.

O bone Jesu James MacMillan (b. 1959)
Born in Ayrshire, Scotland in 1959, James MacMillan is one of today's most successful living composers and his works are performed throughout the world. His music is notable for its extraordinary directness, energy and emotional power. References to Scottish folk music imbue MacMillan's work with a strong sense of the vernacular, while strongly-held religious and political beliefs coupled with community concerns inform both the spirit and subject matter of his music.

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Salvator Mundi Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)
Tallis' setting of Salvator mundi is one fifteen Latin motets written early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. It was first published in Cantiones Sacrae, a collection of 34 motets in part book form which Elizabeth commissioned from her two senior Chapel Royal musicians, Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. Cantiones Sacrae demonstrated Elizabeth's determination that England should be put on the musical map and the intention was almost certainly that sets of part books would be purchased by domestic households as well as finding their way into churches and chapels on the continent.

Using a text from the Liturgy for Good Friday, the vocal parts imitate each other entering in sequence from the sopranos down to the basses with arresting rising intervals of fifths and fourths. All parts come together at the words words 'auxiliare nobis' (help us) followed by a
repeated imitative section, ‘te deprecamur’. Although he restricts himself to an economic use of rhythmic and melodic motifs, Tallis creates a continuous musical unfoldings across the entire length of the piece.

Saviour of the world, save us,
who through thy cross and blood didst redeem us:
help us, we beseech thee, our God.
Good Friday, Antiphon at the Adoration of the Cross

Why fumeth in sight? Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

This piece is an example of one of Tallis’ sacred pieces in English which are much simpler and more direct than his Latin motets. The words are taken from Psalm 2. This hymn-like tune was made famous by Vaughan Williams in his Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis for string orchestra.

God’s words decreed: I (Christ) will spread
for God thus said to me:
“My son I say: thou art, this day,
I have begotten thee”.
Ask thou of me: I will give thee,
to rule all Gentiles’ lands:
Thou shalt possess: in sureness,
the world how wide it stands.
With iron rod: as mighty God,
all rebels shalt thou bruise:
And break them all: in pieces small,
as shards the potters use.
Be wise therefore: ye kings the more,
Receive ye wisdoms law:
Ye judges strong: of right and wrong,
advise you now before.
Ye iudges strong: of right and wrong,
we will renounce: that they pronounce,
their laws as stately lords.
But God of might: in heaven so bright,
Shall laugh them all to scorn:
Why taketh in hond: the people fond,
In fury raging stout?
Why fumeth in sight: the Gentiles’ spite,
Who takes away the sins of the world,
and was told: “It is the work one has all along been waiting for”.
In the event the first performance was given in December 1922 by the City of Birmingham Choir under Joseph Lewis. The first London performance was in Westminster Cathedral in March 1923.

English church music in the early twentieth century was not exempt from the urge towards greater freedom of expression, in reaction to the cut-and-dried tonal scales of the previous century. A powerful stimulus towards this liberation was the rediscovery and republication of the large treasury of Tudor church music. Vaughan Williams was in the forefront of this movement and this, along with his love of folksong and modal harmony, provided the inspiration for the compositional style of the Mass in G minor.

The work is in some respects a companion piece to the instrumental Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis of 1910, not only in the way it looks back to the Tudor age while still employing a twentieth century vocabulary, but in its design, being for four soloists and double choir, as the Fantasia was for string quartet and double string orchestra. Vaughan Williams also employed some of the features of Elizabetian fantasy, notably the device of a motif, always slightly varied, that lends unity to the work as a whole.

Each movement is concise in structure but generates considerable power on a large scale, with the two choirs often singing in dialogue, most notably in the Gloria and Credo. The Sanctus, where the music seems to pay deliberate compliment to Holst, is especially imaginative in its deployment of simple chords to powerful effect. The Agnus Dei is perhaps the most personal movement in the work, and after a reflective opening builds up to a forthright choral outcry - Dona nobis pacem (Give us peace) - a cry for peace in an unsettled and insecure post-war land.

Mass in G minor Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

In 1916 Gustav Holst organised a four-day music festival at Thaxted, Essex, over the Whitsun weekend. He augmented the church choir with his students from Morley College and called the result the Whistunsides. When Vaughan Williams returned from the war, he was thrilled by this choir and dedicated his Mass in G minor to them. Another inspiration for the work was the singing of Westminster Cathedral Choir under R. R. Terry, who had not only revived many of the choral works of Taverner, Tye, Tallis and Byrd, but commissioned or performed works by contemporary composers, among them Stanford, Howells, Holst and Bax. Vaughan Williams sent the score of the Mass to Terry for comment,
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est.

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis; sub Pontio Pilato passus, et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturas.

He was also crucified for us: suffered under Pontius Pilate and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures.

Et ascendit in caelum; sedet ad dexteram Patris; et iterum venturus est cum gloria.

And ascended into heaven; and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.

His Kingdom shall have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life: who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Who with the Father and Son is adored and glorified.

Cujus regni non est finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum, et vivificantem: qui ex Patre, Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filiis simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per Prophetas.

His Kingdom has no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son: who is adored and glorified. Who has spoken through the Prophets. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

Confiteor unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum.

I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. And I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.
EXULTE SINGERS

Exultate Singers was founded in order to sing Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4 for a live broadcast on Sunday, 15th September 2002. It has gone on to give over 70 concerts, broadcasts and other appearances in locations varying from concert venues in Bristol such as the Colston Hall, St George's, St James' Priory, St Mary Redcliffe Church and St Alban's Church; appearances in other venues around the South West in Dulverton, Amberley, Bath, Lacock, Weston-Super-Mare, Brompton Regis, Alveston, the National Trust Victorian house of Tyntesfield, Berkeley Castle and Salisbury Cathedral to venues further afield as diverse as Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey, St Mary's Church in Swansea and St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. In October 2007 the choir toured Germany, singing in Bach's Church in Leipzig and in Berlin, Potsdam and Brandenburg, and giving an impromptu a capella performance at Colditz Castle.

Plans for 2008 include recording a new CD with John Rutter and singing weekend services at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and in Salisbury Cathedral. In 2009 the choir has been invited to sing at St Paul’s Cathedral in London.

With a repertoire of over 300 separate pieces - ranging from two-minute anthems to whole works such as Bach's St Matthew Passion and Duke Ellington's Sacred Concert - the choir has sung music from plainsong and Renaissance masterpieces to contemporary music, jazz and spirituals. It has appeared on BBC Radios 2, 3 and 4, the BBC World Service and BBC television, and has performed pieces in an array of different languages including Russian, Latin, Aztec, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Quechua, Tagalog, Welsh and Icelandic.

Soprano Liz Bagshaw; Ursula Bowlt; Susan Green; Elena Hazelgrove-Planel; Rachel Irwin; Jennie Morris; Joanna Osborn; Rebecca Nieboer; Nicola Pocock; Pippa Ramsay; Eleanor Roylance; Emmeline Smith; Beth Williamson.

Alto Felicity Ball; Jenna Cooper; Alison Harris; Jessica May; Judith Ogden; Susan Pontin; Barbara Rusbridge; Emily West.

Tenor David Ball; David Brown; Ian Carpenter; Oliver Condy; Andrew Kirk.

Bass Nick Abbott; Richard Bacon; Chris Gray; Chris Lambert; Martin Le Poidevin; Mike Osborn; Nic Pillow.

THE EXULTE SINGERS CALENDAR 2008

2nd-4th May - CD recording sessions
Following the success of the debut CD Visions of Peace, we are delighted that John Rutter will work with Exultate Singers to record and produce their second CD in 2008. The CD will include a selection of pieces that have been heard at the choir’s concerts including Pearsall’s Lay a garland, Ian Carpenter’s setting of Christ whose glory fills the skies, Britten’s Hymn to the Virgin and Billy Joel’s song, And so it goes.

31st May - 1st June - Services at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin
Exultate Singers sing Saturday Evensong, Sunday morning Eucharist and Sunday Evensong.

Sunday 15th June at 3pm - Concert at the New Room, Broadmead
A Sunday afternoon recital at John Wesley’s Chapel, the New Room in Broadmead. For tickets, contact the New Room on 0117 9264740.

Friday 4th July - Concert for St Mary Redcliffe Music Festival
An English theme for this year’s appearance at the annual Music Festival in the magnificent setting of St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol. Music will include Vaughan Williams’ Vision of Aeroplanes, marking the 50th anniversary of the composer’s death. The choir will also perform The voice out of the whirlwind, Walton’s The Twelve, Set me as a seal and Where does the uttered music go? Tickets will be available from the St Mary Redcliffe Parish Office on 0117 929 1487.

6th-7th September - Services at Salisbury Cathedral
Exultate Singers return to Salisbury Cathedral to sing weekend services - Saturday Evensong at 5.30pm; Sunday Eucharist at 10.30am and Sunday Evensong at 3pm.

Saturday 27th September - A concert of French music at St Mary Redcliffe Church
This year’s Autumn St Mary Recliffe appearance has a French theme with music by Debussy, Ravel, Villette, Hakim, Langlais and Boulanger.

Thursday 18th December - Carols by Candlelight at St James’ Priory

Saturday 20th December - Christmas Oratorio by JS Bach
With Emerald Ensemble at St Mary Redcliffe Church

Monday 22nd December - Christmas Spectacular
Exultate Singers with Emerald Ensemble at St George's, Bristol

Friends of Exultate Singers is a scheme that helps to support the choir. For more information about becoming a Friend, visit the website or speak to a member of the choir.

If you would like to be kept up to date with information about Exultate Singers’ concerts and events, you can join our free mailing list. Just email your contact details to info@exultatesingers.org, fill in the form online at exultatesingers.org, or write to 13 Oak Grove, Easton in Gordano, Bristol BS20 0LN.
Organ Recitals

A monthly organ recital series in aid of Westbury-on-Trym Parish Church’s Organ Appeal

Coffee, cakes & organ music from 10.30am
Holy Trinity Church, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol
Suggested donation £5 in aid of the Organ Appeal.

19 April Huw Morgan | 31 May John Bradley
5 July Nigel Nash | 13 September Nic Pillow
18 October Oliver Condy | 8 November David Bednall
6 December John Davenport

For more details, visit www.organappeal.co.uk or phone 0117 950 8644.