



Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor
Glenn Davis

The Music OF France

7th December 2002
St. Mary's RC Church
Hexham

RF

Soloists for this evenings performance

Pip Emler ~ Soprano

Val Hooker ~ Alto

Ayleen Weatherspoon ~ Soprano

Andrew Clarence ~ Tenor

Bill Weatherspoon ~ Bass

with an invited orchestra led by

Julia Boulton

Choir rehearsal accompanist ~ Margaret Huntingdon

The Hexham Orpheus Choir would like to thank

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We would also like to extend a warm welcome and thanks to

THE HEXHAM TWINNING ASSOCIATION

who have produced the exhibition for tonight's concert

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Saturday 18th May 2003

Hexham Abbey

"20th Century Music for the Church"

Rutter – Requiem

Bernstein – Chichester psalms

Jonathan Dove – Into thy hands

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www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk

Programme

THE CHOIR

Three Motets on Gregorian themes

Maurice Duruflé (1902 – 86)

1. Ubi caritas
2. Tota pulchra es
3. Tu es Petrus

THE MOERAN TRIO

Divertimento in E flat (K.563)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 91)

1st movement: Allegro

THE CHOIR

Deux Choeurs:

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921)

1. Calme des nuits
2. Les fleurs et les arbres

THE MOERAN TRIO

Intermezzo

Zoltan Kodaly (1882 – 1967)

THE CHOIR

Cantique de Jean Racine

Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924)

(Accompaniment arranged by John Rutter)

— Interval —

MESSE DE MINUIT (Midnight Mass) Marc-Antoine Charpentier
(1643? – 1704)

1. Kyrie (including organ voluntaries)
2. Gloria
3. Credo
4. Offertoire (orchestra)
5. Sanctus – Benedictus
6. Agnus Dei

Three traditional French carols will be sung between sections of the Mass: Noel nouvelet after the Gloria, Un Flambeau Jeanette, Isabelle, and Dans cette étable after the Offertoire.

Programme Notes

Tonight's concert takes in a span of French Choral music (with non-French string items!) from the 1690's to the 1960's. The earliest item (probably first performed for Midnight Mass in 1694) is the last on the programme, Charpentier's popular "Messe de Minuit". It is "popular" in two senses: it is easily the best-known of his eleven masses, and much of the music deliberately adopts a popular style. It was common for French composers of the time to use well-known Noels (i.e. carols) for Christmas works (anticipating the nineteenth and early twentieth-century use of folk material by nationalists), and Charpentier uses eleven in all (one is instrumental – the tune for the Offertoire). Though the tunes are not familiar to us now, the light and dance-like character of the music is immediately apparent from the Kyrie onwards. Such a "crowd-pleasing" use of folk material in a "serious" context fitted into the proselytising aims of the Paris Jesuits, for whose church Charpentier worked. Theatrical sermons, ballets in the Jesuit College, a sort of seventeenth-century Son et Lumière in services were all acceptable to bring the faithful to God. Noblemen used to send their servants on Saturdays to book seats for mass the next day!

Nevertheless you will hear serious moments too. The *Christe* has an expressive chromatic bass (dropping by a fourth in semitones, just like Dido's Lament) and other sections of the mass are set by the composer in a more "ecclesiastical" style at moments of special importance in the liturgy.

In one sense, the opening three items contain both the earliest and the latest music. Duruflé spent most of his life, like Charpentier, working in the great Paris churches. Early medieval plainchant had been revived in the nineteenth century and successive generations of Paris organists from Saint-Saëns onwards were used to harmonising it at the keyboard. Duruflé followed in this established tradition in 1960 when he produced his *Four Motets on Gregorian Themes* – original plainsong melodies harmonised in his own very individual style. We are singing the first three tonight, (in the composer's centenary year).

Saint-Saëns and Fauré were teacher and pupil, the former introducing the latter to the works of Wagner and Schumann. Saint-Saëns composed very little for unaccompanied voices, perhaps because amateur choral singing never took off in France compared to the growth of choral societies in Britain and Germany. His two choruses, for which he wrote the text also, show what riches may otherwise have developed. The words, in each case, celebrate the role of nature in stimulating the true artist.

Fauré set Racine's hymn, an evening prayer, at the age of twenty. It won him first prize at the Ecole Niedermeyer, where Saint-Saëns was among his teachers. After being semi-unknown for years, an orchestral arrangement of the original keyboard accompaniment (in the 1980's) seems to have gained it real popularity in the last twenty years.

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Conductor
Glenn Davis

Sopranos

Sarah Barker
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Dorothy Booker
Ruth Brownlee
Elspeth Christie
Janet Davies
Pip Emler
Anne Firth
Dot Gibson
Frances Hughes
Adele Kinsella
Jo Kirman
Ann Reed
Elaine Rigg
Nuala Rose
Jean Thompson
Lindsey Tweed
Brenda Waton

Tenors

John Barker
Malcolm Chainey
Tim Grew
Susan Kent
Peter Nevin
Peter Stenhouse

Altos

Sheila Adams
Margaret Bainbridge
Pat Crompton
Sheila Dance
Elizabeth Dixon
Davina Dwyer
Val Hooker
Anita Jeffries
Janette Kirton-Darling
Bronya Read
Jean Southwell
Catherine Stott
Jean Wilks
Roz Woodward
Elizabeth young
Janet Storrie

Basses

Paul Berry
Robert Firth
David Home
John Kent
Tony May
Owen Mc Ardle
Simon Partridge
Peter Stott

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Violins: Pauline Aitchison and Karen Wigham.

Recorders: Harriet Gilfillan and Karen Martin.

Viola: Julia Boulton.

Cello: Peter Richardson.

Bassoon: Philip Noble

Chamber Organ: Margaret Huntingdon