

*Hexham Orpheus Choir*

*Conductor*

*Glenn Davis*

*The Music  
OF  
France*

*7<sup>th</sup> December 2002  
St. Mary's RC Church  
Hexham*

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

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*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

***Our Next Performance***

**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](http://www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk)*

# *Programme*

## **THE CHOIR**

Three Motets on Gregorian themes

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

Maurice Duruflé (1902 – 86)

## **THE MOERAN TRIO**

Divertimento in E flat (K.563)

1st movement: Allegro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 91)

## **THE CHOIR**

Deux Choeurs:

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

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921)

## **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 Horne  
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