

Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor
Glenn Davis

DVORAK

Mass in D

VICTORIA

O magnum mysterium

Friday 10th December 2004
West End Methodist Church



Affiliated to Making Music and funded by
Arts Council England North East

TONIGHT'S SOLOISTS

Alyson Hodgson – Soprano Joan Kelsall – Contralto
Geoffrey Hughes – Tenor John Kirk – Bass

The Quartet of singers for tonight's performance are all singers of note in this area. Alyson, who teaches music in North Shields is a Soprano with Musica Johannis, an eight-voice group originating from St John's Church in Newcastle. Geoffrey and Joan (and formerly, John) sing together in Vivace, who like Musica Johannis, perform all over the North East. All three are members of the Sinfonia Chorus in Newcastle, and soloists in their own right.

Organist : Michael Haynes – Hexham Abbey

The Hexham Orpheus Choir would like to thank

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Rehearsal accompanist ~ Margaret Huntington

PROGRAMME

Motet: O Magnum Mysterium

Tomas Luis de Victoria

Mass: O Magnum Mysterium

Tomas Luis de Victoria

Organ Sonata

Pescetti

Madrigals:

- (a) April is in my mistress' face
- (b) Weep, O mine eyes
- (c) Adieu, sweet Amaryllis
- (d) Amyntas, with his Phyllis fair

Thomas Morley
John Bennett
John Wilbye
Francis Pilkington

Two part-songs:

- (a) Nepovim (I will not say)
- (b) Misto Klekani (Twilight blessings)

Antonin Dvorak

Interval

Mass in D major

Antonin Dvorak

PROGRAMME NOTES

Tonight we feature two composers who wrote for the Roman Catholic Mass in very different circumstances. Victoria was Spanish, born in Avila in 1548, and educated by the recently-formed Jesuit order. His life coincides with what historians call the "Counter Reformation" – a period when the Catholic Church began to recover its confidence, after the initial shock of Luther and his Protestant successors. It reasserted its dogma, tried to win back "lost areas" and began to flourish artistically. Orphaned at the age of 11, Victoria was sent to the Jesuit "German College" in Rome, where his musical talent soon shone through as organist, singer and composer. His first book of motets was published in 1572, and includes *O magnum mysterium*, with a text suitable for the Feast of the Circumcision. Victoria then held a number of Roman posts without ever settling permanently, but was lucky enough to obtain the patronage of his King, Philip. He resettled the composer as chaplain to his sister, the Dowager Empress Maria, who had "retired" to a convent in Madrid. (Victoria had by now been ordained as a priest). Here he was well paid, allowed a personal servant, dined in private, was given a month's holiday each year and the use of a trained choir of 12 men and 4 boys, (later increased to 6). The nuns heard mass each day, and it must have been for them that Victoria produced his "parody" mass based on the motet written 20 years earlier. Victoria may also have been one of the first musicians to make a profit from the new art of publishing.

Nearly all of his music went into print and was sung all over the Spanish Empire – copies exist in Bogotà and Mexico City (where original copies of his masses were worn out from heavy use within the first 20 years). Victoria died in 1611 and is buried in an unmarked grave in the convent.

Dvorak was also a convinced Catholic, but in a country (the future Czechoslovakia) where the Counter-Reformation was a foreign import, introduced in the 17th Century by the ruling Austrian Habsburgs. At a time of rising Czech nationalism, the "patriotic" religion for Dvorak's 19th century was that of the Hussites, followers of the "Czech Luther" Jan Hus, (martyred in the early 15th century). Dvorak in fact wrote a Hussite Overture and a hymn dedicated to Czechs beaten by the Austrians in the 30 years' war. (The part-songs in tonight's programme also reflect this nationalism in a much more gentle way). Even though the mass was therefore something of a "foreign" form, he was invited to write one, nevertheless, by Josef Hlavka, the President of the new Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences. Hlavka wished to dedicate a new chapel near his private castle and invited Dvorak to provide the music. It was first performed on September 11, 1887 by the Plzen Choral Society, to whose conductor Dvorak wrote: "I have the honour to inform you that I have finished the work and that it gives me real joy...It could be summed up as: faith, hope and love to Almighty God and thanks for the rare gift of it being granted me to finish successfully the work to the glory of the Highest and to the honour of our art". The first performance was conducted by Dvorak himself with Hlavka's and the composer's wives as the two female soloists. Dvorak later orchestrated the work (otherwise Novello refused to publish it), but the original form was for chorus, four soloists and organ, as in tonight's performance.

The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Sopranos

Catherine Allen
Jean Aris
Sarah Barker
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Dorothy Booker
Ruth Brownlee
Elspeth Christie
Janet Davies
Pip Emmer

Anne Firth
Rosemarie Herdman
Frances Hughes
Ann Reed
Nuala Rose
Elaine Rigg
Roberta Waugh
Carrie Winger

Altos

Sheila Adams
Margaret Bainbridge
Marie Bridges
Pat Crompton
Sheila Dance
Elizabeth Dixon
Davina Dwyer
Elizabeth Fish
Mary Gibson
Val Hooker
Mary Illingworth

Anita Jeffries
Janette Kirton-Darling
Judith Murray
Patricia Phillips
Sara Jane Palmer
Bronya Read
Pat Rose
Jean Southwell
Janet Storrie
Jean Wilks
Rachel Ward

Tenors

John Barker
John Brewster
Keith Brunton
Malcolm Chainey
Tom Frost

Tim Grew
Susan Kent
Dorothy Peters
Peter Vasey

Basses

Paul Berry
Robert Firth
John Kent

Keith Mallinson
Tony May
Owen McArdle

OUR NEXT PERFORMANCE

50th Anniversary Concert

Saturday 23rd April 2005

Queen Elizabeth High School

Mozart – Coronation Mass K317

Bach – Jesu, meine Freude

Haydn – Te Deum

plus

Bach – Double Violin Concerto

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www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk