

Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor - Glenn Davis

A Christmas Magnificat

SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER 2010
7.30pm



The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conducted by
Glenn Davis



Choir rehearsal pianist
Margaret Huntington



Glenn Davis - Conductor

Glenn has been involved with choral music all his life, directing the Tynemouth Consort and then, from 1979 to 2007, the Priory Singers. Under Glenn's leadership over the past 10 years the Hexham Orpheus Choir has gone from strength to strength. Concerts have included Brahms' Requiem, Mendelssohn's Elijah and Handel's Messiah in Hexham Abbey. In 2006 the choir gave what is thought to be the first performance in the North of England of the Missa Aedis Christi by Howard Goodall. In a departure from their usual repertoire last year the choir gave a rapturously received performance of Carmina Burana by Carl Orff.

The Choir

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Sarah Barker	Lou Baxter	Peter Arnold	John Crawford
Marion Bates	Wendy Busby	John Barker	Robert Firth
Carolyn Below	Sheila Dance	John Below	
Evelyn Blenkinsop	Liz Dixon		Tom Kelsey
Janet Davies	Davina Dwyer	John Brewster	Don Macleod
Jill Dexter	Alice Emmerson	Keith Brunton	Keith Mallinson
Pip Emler	Linda Hassall	Malcolm Chainey	Tony May
Nancy Gash	Val Hooker	Tom Frost	Owen McArdle
Rosemarie Herdman	Anita Jeffries	Tim Grew	Esme Ryder
Annette Marlowe	Janette Kirton Darling	Barry Kadleck	John Rose
Tanya Pless-Mulloli	Judith Murray	Susan Kent	Jack Shiel
Claire Pritchard	Liz Nisbet	Peter Vasey	Peter Stott
Bronya Read	Rachel Ogilvie		
Ann Reed	Pat Rose		
Nuala Rose	Audrey Shiel		
Jay Thacker	Janet Storrie		
Carolyn Vasey	Catherine Stott		
Brenda Waton	Gill Thompson		
Caroline Watson	Jean Wilks		
	Jill Williamson		

The Orchestra

Violins
Julia Boulton (leader)
Jane Cuggy
Karen Wigham
Ann-Britt Hedley

Viola
Jill Blakey

Organ
Paul Berry

Cello
Julia Watson

Piano
Margaret Huntington

Bass
Hannah Booth

The Programme

Magnificat on the fifth tone, with two carols

Hieronymus Praetorius (1560-1629)

There were two related composers with this name (the Latinised form of Schultz) in late sixteenth-century Germany, Hieronymus (i.e. Jerome) and Michael. The former, a citizen of Hamburg which was already a rich North Sea port, but clearly musically aware of Italian, more specifically Venetian ideas. This is evident in the chances for vocal display which are scattered among the eight parts and in the two-choir format of the setting, where the text is tossed back and forth between them. Hieronymus acquired this technique apparently after meeting his namesake. He makes it clear that Christmas performances of the Magnificat in Hamburg were decked out with carols, associated (in this case) with 'cradle-rocking' where the priest or pastor rocked a crib on the altar while the choir sang appropriate music. These are *Josef lieber*, *Josef mein*, and *In dulci jubilo*. Each section of the Magnificat itself opens with plainsong, the so-called fifth tone 2 or chant. (There were eight altogether considered appropriate for Magnificats).

Intonations sung by Nancy Gash and Tim Grew

When Christ, the son of Mary

Trad. Italian

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd

Georg Frederic Handel (1685 - 1759)

Sung by Val Hooker

Strings: Air (from Concerto Grosso Op.6, No 12)

Georg Frederic Handel

Nulla in mundo pax sincera (first movement)

Antonio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741)

Sung by Pip Emler

Hail Blessed Virgin Mary

Italian carol arr. Charles Wood (1866 - 1926)

Magnificat in B flat

Francesco Durante (1684 - 1755)

- (a) Magnificat anima mea
- (b) Et misericordia
- (c) Deposuit potentes
- (d) Suscepit Israel
- (e) Sicut locustus est
- (f) Sicut erat in principio

Durante was part of a school of composers associated with the Kingdom of Naples (which in the eighteenth century meant the whole of southern Italy). Its founder was Alessandro Scarlatti and its most famous member was Pergolesi, Durante's pupil, to whom this Magnificat setting was wrongly attributed for a long time. In this setting Durante uses traditional plainsong like Praetorius, but less obviously so. The particular tone for 'Magnificat anima mea' and 'Sicut erat in principio' at the opening of the first and sixth numbers are sung in strict metrical rhythm, not in 'free' (i.e. word-shaped) chanting. Repeating the opening music is a musical pun, of course, as the latter text means 'as it was in the beginning'.

Even though Durante wrote no operas, he was aware of the dramatic possibilities of the text. At 'fecit potentiam' ('He hath put down the mighty from their seat') the text is set forcefully, particularly when the basses scatter the proud ('dispersit'), then the reference to 'mercy' ('et misericordia') has a tender, yearning quality, while the apparently more academic setting of 'deposuit' ('he hath put down the mighty') has an appropriately descending phrase, as does 'et divites dimisit inanes' as the rich are 'sent empty away'. All in all Durante's setting has a lively, fresh quality reminiscent of the famous *Gloria* by Vivaldi and praised, perhaps extravagantly, by the nineteenth century music critic Hanslick as 'the beauty of religion praising the religion of beauty!'

Solos sung by Caroline Watson, Val Hooker, Peter Vasey and Keith Mallinson

Interval

Magnificat in C

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924)

Stanford was an Irish Protestant who settled in England, established a formidable reputation as a teacher (Vaughan Williams being the most famous pupil), and, together with Parry, put Britain back on the map as a serious musical force. By his death the famous Dutch Concergebouw Orchestra had programmed Stanford's music more than any other contemporary figure, while he had been one of the five leading men that Wagner thought it appropriate to invite to the opening of his theatre at Bayreuth. This setting of the Magnificat dates from 1909 and listeners may be able to detect the Wagnerian quality which the late Arthur Hutchings praises in Stanford's music, that of composing a piece as a whole and then giving the voices a part in it, rather than writing the voice parts and adding on an accompaniment. With the exception of references to the hungry and the rich, the choir sings the text in four-part harmony, with one of the most striking opening to all Magnificats.

Strings: The Holy Boy

John Ireland (1879 - 1962)

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Trad. English arr. R Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958)

Choir and Audience (please see programme insert)

O Queen of Heaven

Timothy Rogers (b. 1961)

Soloists Carolyn Below and Nancy Gash

Adam lay y-bounden

Peter Warlock (1894 - 1930)

Out of your sleep

Richard Rodney Bennett (b. 1936)

A maiden most gentle

arr. Andrew Carter (b. 1939)

Joy to the World

Lowell Mason (1792 - 1872)

Choir and Audience (please see programme insert)

Mock Morris

Percy Grainger (1882 - 1961)

Deck the Halls

Trad. Welsh arr. David Willcocks (b. 1919)

Nativity Carol

John Rutter (b.1945)

See, amid the winter's snow

John Goss (1800 - 1880) *arr Willcocks*

Choir and Audience (please see programme insert)

Special thanks to

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Hexham Rotary Club

Who kindly sponsored the cost of one of the orchestral players for this concert

Core Music

For their professional support

Jill Dexter

For designing and making the ladies' scarves worn for the first time at tonight's performance