

LONDON  
CONCORD  
SINGERS

**St Martin-in-the-Fields**

**Thursday, 8th June, 1972**

**7.30 pm**

**Admission by programme 50p**



LONDON CONCORD SINGERS was started in its present form in 1966. It seeks to maintain a small, well-knit group of some 30 voices, practising and performing a wide range of choral music. It draws its members from a great variety of backgrounds, although none of them is a full-time musician. The choir's range of activities is equally varied: it has accepted cabaret engagements at functions and conferences, as well as promoting very successful concerts in and around London, most recently at St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the Purcell Room, where the choir presented programmes of twentieth-century music.

The group is also much-travelled, and has won competitive prizes at home and abroad. During last season it visited Richmond, Walkern, Hertfordshire, and Buxton, Derbyshire, while previous years have included Festival appearances at Montreux and Dubrovnik. The choir has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception both by audiences and by the Press.

The conductor of the choir, MALCOLM COTTLE, sang for many years as a boy with the choir of St. Pauls Cathedral, during which time he sang at the Coronation of the Queen, and also toured with U.S.A. with them.

More recently, as well as conducting the LONDON CONCORD SINGERS, he has worked as repetiteur with the New Opera Company at Sadlers Wells Theatre, and also toured as Musical Director with the show 'Close the Coalhouse Door'. He was also Musical Director for the 1970 Christmas Season at Sheffield Playhouse Theatre.

BARBARA LARGE studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Joyce Newton, and before graduating with distinction last year, received both the School's Singing Prize and the Merchant Taylors Company's Bursary for Further Study. She has appeared in many places in London and the provinces, including St. James', Piccadilly, St. Paul's, Covent Garden, Fairfield Halls, Croydon, and Reading and Sussex Universities.

DAVID JOHNSTON began his musical life as a cathedral chorister. On leaving school he sang in Salisbury Cathedral choir and taught in the choir school. During this time he decided on a singing career and he received his training from the late Eric Greene. Then followed two seasons with the Glyndebourne Festival Chorus and more intensive study with Alexander Young. In the past few years David Johnston has appeared in all the major cities in this country and many countries abroad.

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Mass for Mixed Chorus and Wind Instruments      STRAVINSKY  
Kyrie ; Gloria ; Credo ;  
Sanctus - Benedictus ; Agnus Dei

Stravinsky composed his Mass in 1948 specifically for church use, and not as a concert piece: it is, however, all too infrequently used liturgically. The writing is intentionally devoid of emotion as he felt that for the music to be emotional was to detract from the solemnity of the church service. Stravinsky felt the function of sacred music to be 'to reveal itself as a form of communion - with our fellow man and with the Supreme Being'.

The Kyrie is in sections - blocks of tonalities. In only 52 bars there are cadences in no less than seven keys. Most of the sections are written homophonically but the central 'Christe' has the four voices entering one after the other canonically. The Gloria is written in a Concertante-Ripieno style, Soprano and Alto solos, with their feeling of plainsong, alternating with the short chanted passages for full choir.

Robert Croft feels the Credo to be 'redolent of plainsong', but I can't help feeling that it has something of Greek Orthodox music about it, with its constant repetition of the musical phrases. Of the Credo Stravinsky said '.. I wished only to preserve the text in a special way. One composes a march to facilitate marching men, so with my Credo I hope to provide an aid to the text. The Credo is the longest movement. There is much to believe'. After continuous chanting of the Credo the 'Amen' comes as rather a shock, being pure polyphony which could almost have been written by Byrd or Gibbons.

At the opening of the Sanctus, two tenors intone the word, followed by the full choir proclaiming it more firmly. 'Pleni sunt coeli' is in the form of a fugue, basically in the Phrygian Mode followed by a lively 'Hosanna'. Concertante-Ripieno is again a feature of the Agnus Dei with orchestra alternating with choir singing a capella. The oboes and bassoons literally round off the work with a little musical palindrome.

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Cantata on Anonymous XVth and XVIth Century English Lyrics STRAVINSKY

	Soprano Solo	Barbara Large	
	Tenor Solo	David Johnston	
Prelude	A Lyke-Wake Dirge - Versus I		Female Chorus
Ricercar I	'The Maidens Came'		Soprano
1st Interlude	A Lyke-Wake Dirge - Versus II		Chorus
Ricercar II	'Tomorrow shall by my dancing day' (Sacred History)		Tenor
2nd Interlude	A Lyke-Wake Dirge - Versus III		Chorus
Aria	'Westron Wind'		Soprano & Tenor
Postlude	A Lyke-Wake Dirge - Versus IV		Chorus

Between the wars Stravinsky had been the personification of neo-classicism, and it was not until he was over 75 years old that he eventually embraced serialism and the 12 note scale with 'Threni'. The Cantata composed in 1952 is an important landmark in this remarkable conversion. In his programme note for the first performance in Los Angeles Stravinsky wrote that he 'selected .... verses which attracted me not only for their great beauty and syllabification, but for their construction, which suggested musical construction. Three of the poems are sacred. The fourth, 'Westron Wind', is a love lyric ; the Cantata is, therefore, secular'.

The four verses of the Lyke-Wake Dirge are in a free strophic form, using the same musical phrases each time with only slight modifications. In the first Ricercar a girl sings nostalgically of the earthly things she has left behind, and of the joy she finds in Christ, at the same time including praise for "Right mighty and famous Elizabeth, our quen".

The second Ricercar is the longest movement and the centre-piece of the work. It contains a number of musical devices used by the great Flemish composers and revised by Schoenberg in the form of serial devices. The text is in the form of a scriptural episode, the first three verses using the device of Cantus Cancrizans consisting of a sequence of notes alternately sung forwards and then reversed. The remaining verses are all Canons of greater or lesser (usually greater) complexity and obscurity. Between each verse is a Ritornello ("To call my true love to my dance"). The sequence of notes on which the movement is built is E-C-D-E-F-D sharp-D-E-C-D-B.

'Westron Wind' is a secular love song, which is essentially homophonic in structure and is the only fast movement.

As in the Mass, use is made of the Modes, to give an archaic flavour to the music to fit the words, particularly the use of Phrygian in the Prelude and its repetitions.

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I N T E R V A L

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Mass in E minor

BRUCKNER

Kyrie ; Gloria ; Credo ; Sanctus ;  
Benedictus ; Agnus Dei

At first sight it may not appear that this Mass, with its wealth of emotion, has anything in common with that of Stravinsky's except that both have wind accompaniment. However, apart from this, both are firmly rooted in the past, while, at the same time, being very much products of their own times. In addition, both were written to be performed liturgically and both spring from a very deeply held faith.

Just as Stravinsky goes back to Gregorian Plainchant (and possibly Orthodox music) so Bruckner's great inspiration was Palestrina, particularly in the double choir Kyrie, Sanctus and Agnus Dei, where he uses Palestrinian imitative polyphony. Because of this the Mass was much praised by the 'Cecilianists' who's aim was the reinstatement of a capella polyphonic music in place of the rather worldly compositions for choir and orchestra of the 18th century.

The E minor Mass (usually known as No.2 although it is in fact the sixth or seventh that Bruckner wrote) was composed for the Dedication of the Votive Chapel of the new cathedral at Linz. The first performance was in the open air which has prompted some people to think that this was the reason for the wind orchestra. Bruckner himself refuted this when he wrote to a friend 'Unfortunately there is not sufficient space in the choir, but after all we can always perform it in the open'.

The Kyrie, which is virtually a capella with only occasional support from horns and trombones, opens with women alone, the men then take over. They combine in the 'Christe Eleison' section and build to an impassioned climax built on descending scales. The quiet opening theme then returns with all voices now together.

The Gloria opens in C major with the bassoons playing an arpeggio-like figure which provides the momentum for the whole movement except the beautiful Qui Tollis section. The movement ends with a great fugal 'Amen'.

The Credo, also in C major is built on a one bar phrase, which the woodwind and choir alternate, later joining together in unison with the brass providing harmony. There is a beautiful Adagio 'Et incarnatus est' which is followed by the declamation of 'Et resurrexit'. This, in turn, is followed by a return to the opening theme at 'Et in spiritum sanctum'.

The centrepiece of the Mass is the Sanctus which Bruckner opens with a quotation from Palestrina's Missa Brevis, sung by the first altos. The first half of the movement is built on a perpetual chain of two part canons evolved from this fragment.

Another quotation opens the Benedictus. This time it is, more predictably, from Bruckner's great hero, Wagner, from the Prelude to Tristan. It is a short chromatic five note phrase on which the whole movement is based.

The Agnus Dei is an impassioned plea for mercy, with a tremendous growth of tension on the word 'Miserere', with voices entering on successively higher notes. The work ends more calmly with a gesture to the classical tradition by introducing a figure from the Kyrie.

M.C.

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Final quote from Stravinsky :

'One hopes to worship God with a little art if one has any, and if one hasn't, and cannot recognise it in others, then one can at least burn a little incense.'

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Saturday, 15th July 1972 at 7.30 pm  
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, SUNBURY-ON-THAMES

A concert of sacred and secular works

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The National Federation of Music Societies  
to which this Society is affiliated, gives  
support towards the cost of this concert  
with the funds provided by the Arts Council  
of Great Britain.