

LONDON  
CONCORD  
SINGERS

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

**Friday, 15th December, 1972**

**7.30 pm**

**Admission by programme 50p**

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

MALCOLM COTTLE Conductor  
GRAHAM BLYTH Organ

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Deutsches Magnificat Heinrich Schütz  
Grande Dialogue in C major Louis Marchand  
Prelude and Fugue in E minor Nikolaus Bruhns  
Motet : Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden J. S. Bach

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Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noël<sup>"</sup> Francis Poulenc  
I O magnum mysterium  
II Quem vidistis, pastores  
III Videntes stellam  
IV Hodie Christus natus est

Chorale No.3 in A minor César Franck  
Toccata on 'placare Christe servules' Marcel Dupré

Born Today is the Child Divine arr. E.T. Chapman  
Lute Book Lullaby W. Ballet  
All men draw near (Hungarian trad.) arr. Kodály  
Shepherds' Cradle Song arr. McPherson  
The Burning Babe ('Virtutes No.6') Alexander Goehr  
(Soloist : Janice Glaister)  
Shepherd's Pipe Carol John Rutter  
Noël Nouvelet (French trad.) arr. John Rutter  
Ding, Dong ! merrily on high arr. Malcolm Williamson  
Silent Night arr. Laurence Howes  
Nowell John Joubert

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The 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. Its members come from a great variety of backgrounds, though few of them are full-time musicians. The choir's range of activities is equally varied: it has accepted cabaret engagements at many functions, 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 nineteenth and 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 in Hertfordshire and Castle Howard, near York, 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 the 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.

GRAHAM BLYTH began his organ studies at Trinity College, London, where for five years he was a junior exhibitor. During his subsequent time at Bristol University, where he read electrical engineering, he was president of the University Music Society and musical director of the Arts Festival. Since returning to London, he has studied with Martin Neary, and been assistant organist at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street. At present he is a partner in a company designing and building audio equipment, and makes, regular concert appearances as organist, conductor or continuo-player.

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HEINRICH SCHÜTZ spent most of his mature creative years at Dresden, in the service of the Elector of Saxony, where he had charge of some thirty singers. His extremely long life began in 1585. In that same year, Thomas Tallis died, while Monteverdi (or, indeed, Shakespeare) was still a young unknown. Schütz went twice to Venice: first in 1609, aged 23, to study under Giovanni Gabrieli, and again some twenty years later, on a hard-won sabbatical leave, to visit Monteverdi - a meeting, this time, of two established masters. The upheavals of the Thirty Years' War obliged him to spend years away in Copenhagen, where he was welcomed as Court Composer. Though nearly all his secular music is lost, his surviving church works are ample evidence of astonishing genius. He blended the new Italian tricks into his German heritage, forging a style that was fresh and vivid. He died in 1672, more than a decade before Bach was born.

The German Magnificat is one of his very last works (indeed, the Grimma manuscript entitles it 'his swansong'): a startling example of his mature antiphonal style, set for two four-part choirs, "to be placed opposite each other above the altar". Schütz responds to Luther's text with great warmth and tenderness, alternating imitative counterpoint with sections of vertical harmony. Note the introspective setting of 'Meine Seele' at the opening, and the gentle emphasis of such phrases as 'des Name heilig ist' and 'die Niedrigen'. In contrast, 'Er Übet Gewalt' is urgent and aggressive. With the gloria, the opening harmonies return, and the work closes in the ebb and flow of the words 'von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit' ('from eternity to eternity').

It is the aged composer's very personal hymn of praise and thanksgiving at his life's end. Well might he say 'Denn er hat grosse Ding an mir getan'.

The music of this developing Protestant era saw its final flowering in the works of J.S. BACH (1685-1750). The six surviving German motets are all late works, composed for the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, and are the only works of Bach which have enjoyed an unbroken tradition of performance: succeeding Cantors valued them highly, and they were regularly brought out for use.

Bach's vocal writing derives in essence from an instrumental, or organ, style. In such music, the limited scope for cantabile phrasing leads naturally to a prominence of purely harmonic effects, and flowing melodic movement. This goes some way to explain the taxing nature of Bach's vocal parts, and it may encourage the modern performer to learn that his own choristers found such works as 'Singet dem Herrn' and 'Der Geist hilft' notoriously difficult! They were undoubtedly helped by some instrumental underlay, or at least a continuo part - a practice which was usual by this time, when the motet had begun to borrow from other forms. True a cappella music was little heard in Bach's day.

The motet 'Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden' consists of words from Ps. 117 and an attached 'alleluia'. It is the only one of the six composed throughout in a simple four parts, and lacking Bach's much-loved chorale - both possible indications of an earlier (pre-Leipzig) date. It has a single movement, which falls naturally into three sections: two powerful fugal pillars, framing a gentler central episode.

One would not expect the music of a secular age to reflect the same qualities as that of Schütz or Bach, particularly the works of a man such as FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963). An heir of Dukas, Chabrier and Satie, he exemplifies the "esprit frondeur", and shares their brand of whimsical duality - by turns sophisticated or simple, playful or grave.

Francis Poulenc and Georges Auric, dubbed 'les sportifs de la musique', were little more than boys when, in 1917, they became associated with the group afterwards known as 'Les Six' (also including Durey, Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre and Milhaud). Their subsequent careers have shown that much of the belligerent, anti-romantic aesthetic of this group belonged naturally and intimately to the two youngest members only. Poulenc alone has continued to write in a style which is still recognisably the same as that which startled Paris in the twenties.

His response to religious texts, as with Schütz, is personal and genuine, in a mood of simple prayer. This immediacy and humility has made his church music deservedly popular. The 'Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noël' (1952) complement the earlier 'Motets pour un temps de Pénitence'. They are firmly diatonic in nature and make use of familiar Latin texts; (the superb coro spezzati versions by Gabrieli are a widely-known earlier setting). Motets I and III, marked 'calme et doux', are largely in a mood of quiet devotion, and display Poulenc's gift for a gently undulating melodic line - a gift learnt, perhaps, from Schubert, for whom he always retained a special regard. (Of his discovery, at the age of eleven, of Schubert's 'Winterreise', he later wrote: "Tout à coup, quelque chose de très profond dans ma vie fut changé; j'allais d'émerveillement en émerveillement".) Note also, in motets II and IV, another Schubertian touch: the interplay of major and minor modes. There is much contrast, too, of piano and forte effects - shades of Gabrieli again!

Indeed the whole mood of these pieces, their simplicity and clarity, is much closer to Gabrieli and Schütz than might seem possible in the music of such conflicting ages, at a distance of three centuries.

To some extent, this gulf is bridged by the organ pieces in tonight's programme. LOUIS MARCHAND (1669-1732), a Parisian organist-composer, is said to have fled from Dresden rather than engage in an organ-playing competition with Bach. The story is probably apocryphal, but he was certainly a flamboyant, emotional man, who wrote music to match. His Grande Dialogue in C is a good example, with typically embellished themes alternating between the hands, but a routine harmonic structure. Contrast the intricate counterpoint of the German NIKOLAUS BRUHNS (c. 1665-1697), a pupil of Buxtehude, whose early death prevented the development of a remarkable talent. Of his few completed organ works, the Prelude and Fugue in E minor is one of the finest, in which declamatory fantasia-sections alternate with fugal passages.

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890) met with scant recognition until late in life. The Trois Chorales for organ are his last works, a skillful development of the kind of large variation form favoured by Beethoven. The third of these, in A minor, was finally completed only on his death-bed. A brilliant introduction precedes the statement of the chorale theme; then comes an eloquent, slow central section, building to a recapitulation of the initial passage-work. Finally, this combines with the chorale in a grand climax.

The modern French organ school, fathered by Franck, is typified in the writing of MARCEL DUPRÉ (b. 1886), who became Director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1954. The present Toccata is very characteristic : a plainsong theme in the pedals is overlaid with a virtuoso manual part of great brilliance.

Laurence Howes

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LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

PURCELL ROOM

Wednesday, April 11th 1973 at 7.30 pm

Programme to be announced

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