

LONDON
CONCORD
SINGERS

PURCELL ROOM

Wednesday, 11th April, 1973

7.30 pm

Programme 10p

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, including St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the Purcell Room.

The group is also much-travelled, and has won competitive prizes at home and abroad. It has visited Richmond, Walkern in Hertfordshire and Buxton, Derbyshire and last year appeared at Castle Howard near York. Previous years have included Festival appearances at Montreux and Dubrovnik. This year the choir have been asked to give a concert at the Chester Music Festival. 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 USA 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 has appeared also as Musical Director at the Sheffield Playhouse Theatre and the Swan Theatre, Worcester.

THE GEORGIAN QUARTET is acknowledged as one of the leading young quartets in the country. It has toured extensively throughout Great Britain and in addition to frequent London appearances has presented very successful series of recitals on the South Bank, London.

JOHN RUTTER was born in London in 1945 and studied at Cambridge. He first attracted attention with a number of carol settings recorded by the Clare College Singers and Orchestra, and has since then composed for various choral, orchestral and instrumental media.

His 'Five Childhood Lyrics' were written earlier this year at the invitation of the LONDON CONCORD SINGERS, and are tonight receiving their first performance.

The Fountain Op.71 No.2
The Shower Op.71 No.1
Love's Tempest Op.73 No.1

ELGAR

The Fountain

Here we have Elgar writing in the real English tradition, harmonically clean and in the main homophonic, following the style of Henry Smart, many of whose songs the young Elgar must have known through his connections with the Worcester Glee Club.

The Shower

Elgar feared that he sometimes used directions more fitted to the orchestra than to the voice, but his close attention to detail often heightens or points a phrase as, for example, the three staccato quavers near the beginning to the words 'make soft the earth'.

Love's Tempest

The textures constantly change in this song as Elgar contrasts homophonic with contrapuntal writing. The section: 'Till a tempest came to wake' treats the voices rather like orchestral instruments, particularly the basses and the overall picture of a stormy ocean is very effectively portrayed.

String Quartet Op.83 ELGAR
Allegro moderato : Piacevole : Allegro molto

Written in 1918, along with his Piano Quintet and the Violin and Piano Sonata, the Quartet is one of Elgar's last major works. The three movements are refined and precise, the texture almost Mozartian in its purity, producing an intimacy conducive to perfect chamber music.

The first movement opens tentatively in the minor key gradually building with figural development to a grand 'Nobilemente' climax, so typical of Elgar, before subsiding to a relaxed close in the tonic major key.

The central movement has a winsome quality, and quiet minded reflectiveness with an occasional under-current of melancholy, producing that atmosphere peculiarly his own. Again there is the grand climax and the peaceful conclusion.

The opening of the final movement is full of a vitality that brings to mind the Enigma Variations. Notice the constantly changing dynamics and the ponticello and tremolando effects midway through the movement. The work ends with Elgar's typical rousing climax resolving fff in the tonic major key.

There is Sweet Music Op.53 No.1 ELGAR
Deep in my Soul Op.53 No.2
Owls Op.53 No.4
O Wild West Wind Op.53 No.3

These songs give the impression of having been written, not for Elgar's choral societies, not for competitive festivals, not for glee clubs (all of which have been catered for in Elgar's output) but out of the need to say something which could be said in no other way. Each song shows an adventurous use of texture, colour and interplay of sonorities, the result of a perfect union between the words and the music.

There is Sweet Music exploits the contrast of men's and women's voices. Not only is there the contrast of timbre, there is also the contrast of key (tenors and basses sing in G major while sopranos and altos sing in A flat major). This contrast is exploited throughout save for a brief enharmonic union in the middle section: 'Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies'.

In the middle section of Deep in my Soul sopranos and basses move in stark octaves between which altos and tenors add dark soft clusters of notes to the words 'In its centre, a sepulchral lamp, Burns the slow flame, eternal - but unseen'.

The words of Owls are believed to have been written by Elgar himself. It is a song of subtle humour not without a touch of drama. Elgar paints the final word 'nothing' perfectly as he instructs the choir to sing pppp.

O Wild West Wind is a modern application of the madrigal technique where each new thought has a new musical idea, yet with enough repetition to bind the whole together.

I N T E R V A L

Three London Songs BRYAN KELLY
Missing
Dusk
Fruit Machine

The use of rhythms is part and parcel of Kelly's music. Listen for the delightful syncopations in the first song especially to the words 'Tossing in Bed' and 'You played me songs on your piano'. The second song 'Dusk' has a more serious air about it but the overall light tone of the three songs is still there. The opening of 'Fruit Machine' has the rhythm of a common dance step - or has it? Following this we hear the nearest approximation to

the barrel organ, yet achieved by human voices ! The Three London Songs end with a rousing final sweep to the words 'whoops up the Saturday stairs'.

Five Epigrams

NICHOLAS MAW

On a Noisy Polemic
On the Death of Robert Ruisseau
On a Henpecked Country Squire
On a Lady Famed for Her Caprice
Andrew Turner

In his Five Epigrams Maw captures the raw celtic spirit of Burns' poetry magnificently. At the opening we hear the sound of the bagpipes immediately capturing the Scottish flavour. In the middle section of the first epigram Maw uses a suggestion of the madrigal technique, highlighting the words 'O Death, it's my opinion'. The fourth epigram is written completely in this style. The final song of the group recaptures the opening spirit, the opening bar setting the mood for the good old Scottish fling to follow.

Four Madrigals by Sir Thomas Wyatt

THEA MUSGRAVE

The madrigal, a secular vocal composition for two or more voices, often of a polyphonic character, was a very popular art form during the 16th and early 17th centuries. In her Four Madrigals, Thea Musgrave has recaptured the essence of the style using a 20th century framework of harmony and rhythm. She writes explicitly for a small group of voices (madrigals were not written for choirs). The words, a particularly important ingredient, are by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542). There is use of imitation, independence of parts, false relations, word painting, alternations of tempo and constantly varying textures. Particularly pleasing is the way the composer combines standard madrigal conventions, such as the characteristic cadence points, with her own 20th century idiom.

D.J.

Five Childhood Lyrics

JOHN RUTTER

Monday's Child
The Owl and the Pussy Cat
Windy Nights
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Sing a Song of Sixpence

Concert Management : LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL : Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating or to sit in any of the other gangways.

No smoking in the Auditorium.

The taking of photographs in the Auditorium is not permitted.

Members of the public are reminded that no tape recorders or other types of recording apparatus should be brought into the auditorium. It is illegal to record any performance or part thereof unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director and the concert promoter concerned.