

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

MALCOLM COTTLE, Conductor

PETER JONES, Piano

DAVID TOSH, Percussion

CONTEMPORARY CONCORD

ST JOHNS, SMITH SQUARE, SW1

Thursday 6 April 1979 at 7.30pm

O Tristia Secla Plora

Symphony for Voices

Cantico del Sole

JOHN JOUBERT

MALCOLM WILLIAMSON

WILLIAM WALTON

INTERVAL

Five Negro Spirituals

De Profundis (*First Performance*)

Ceremony after a Fire Raid

MICHAEL TIPPETT

MICHAEL PHILPOT

WILLIAM MATHIAS

Smoking is permitted  
only in The Crypt

The Interval is 30 minutes

Licensed refreshments available in The Crypt

Programme 15p

In 1977 the Performing Rights Society made a Jubilee Award to choirs from different parts of the country who had, in their opinion, consistently included in their programmes modern works, particularly works written by British composers over the previous 25 years. The London Concord Singers was privileged to be one of the four choirs selected. Tonight's concert is a celebration of this honour. It must be admitted that two of the composers and one of the compositions do not come quite within the limits of the award, John Joubert being from South Africa and Malcolm Williamson from Australia, but both have lived and worked in this country for many years, and although Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* dates from 1940, the arrangement of the 5 Spirituals as a separate entity was made in 1958.

### O TRISTIA SECLA PRIORA

John Joubert

This is the second of a set of 3 motets collectively entitled *Pro Pace*, although it was in fact the last of the three to be written (in 1959). The mediaeval Latin texts are all taken from Helen Waddell's collection, and each has some bearing on the problem of peace.

O Tristia Secla Priora, a setting of a poem by Eugenius Vulgarius, dates from the 10th century and deals more specifically with the subject of war than do the other two. The composer describes it as 'a lament for man's propensity to forge weapons for the destruction of his own kind'.

The motet is in three sections, a slow opening which is repeated at the end with thickened harmonic textures, framing a fast central fugal section which attempts to describe the trajectory of the arrows referred to in the text.

### SYMPHONY FOR VOICES

Malcolm Williamson

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Invocation      | 4. Envoi      |
| 2. Terra Australis | 5. New Guinea |
| 3. Jesus           |               |

The Symphony for voices was written in 1960 for John Alldis, and consists of settings of five poems by Williamson's fellow Australian, James McAuley. The first movement is a solo for mezzo-soprano. In the second, the melody shifts between the top three voices with the rest of the choir providing wordless accompaniment, the whole choir coming together only for two short phrases.

The third movement is in unison throughout, while in the fourth, which takes its rhythmic cue from the opening line '... a wild precision, a strict disorder', the sopranos and altos sing in parallel, either a 5th or a 4th apart, and the tenors and basses do likewise, for most of the time in strict inversion to the upper parts, although with different rhythms. The final movement describes the island of New Guinea, with its outer illusion of beauty and the inner reality of harshness and cruelty.

### CANTICO DEL SOLE

William Walton

This exuberant setting of one of the great prayers of St Francis of Assisi was commissioned by the late Lady Dorothy Mayer for the 1974 Cork International Choral Festival where it was given its first performance by the BBC Northern Singers. After a gentle opening using the full choir most of the piece consists of short phrases, alternating between the womens' and mens' voices, and working through most of the available keys, until the full choir comes together again at the words '... ca la morte secunda nol fara male', and remains together to the final *piu mosso* 'humilitate'.

## FIVE NEGRO SPIRITUALS

Michael Tippett

1. Steal away
2. Nobody knows
3. Go down Moses
4. By and by
5. Deep River

Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time* was written in 1940 and is an impassioned protest against oppression and persecution. It is interspersed with Spirituals somewhat in the way that Bach included Chorales in his Passions. In 1958 Tippett's publishers asked him to arrange the Spirituals into a version for unaccompanied chorus. It was not until Tippett first heard them sung in this new form that he realised that they now sounded quite different from their original settings in the oratorio and that they need not, indeed should not, be referred back to their strict function within *A Child of Our Time*.

## DE PROFUNDIS

Michael Philpot

Michael Philpot manages to combine composition with the busy life of a hospital doctor. He was born in Bournemouth in 1954 and began learning the piano at the age of 5, eventually studying with Margaret Stiles and Geoffrey Tristram for harmony and counterpoint. He has degrees in Psychology and Medicine and is currently working at St Pancras Hospital. In 1977 he won first prize in the Greater London Arts Association Young Composers Competition and this year a work for brass quintet has been selected for the BBC's Young Composers Forum.

De Profundis is a setting of the Latin version of Psalm 130 as used in the Roman Mass for the Dead. It was originally written for 3 parts in 1974 and completely revised for 4 parts in 1977. It is in three sections; slow, quick and slow.

We are delighted that Michael has been able to find the time to sing with us in this concert.

## CEREMONY AFTER A FIRE RAID

William Mathias

This setting of the moving poem by Dylan Thomas is for mixed choir, piano and percussion. It was commissioned by The Scholars who gave the first performance in 1973. The composer says:

'This work may be performed by a group of five solo voices, or by a chamber choir — in either case singers, percussionist and pianist are equal partners. The percussion part is designed for one player and is functional rather than merely colouristic, in part symbolising the act of violence which gave rise to the poem (but which, nevertheless, is not the poem's most important aspect). Nowhere is this perhaps more apparent than in the percussion cadenza (rather like a controlled 'jazz break') which ushers in the work's final section. The concept of 'ceremony' or 'ritual' is basic to the work's nature, as is the poet's division of his text into three clearly defined sections. Although inspired by the second world war the poem's meaning (for me) is reflected in events closer to our time. Essentially a religious statement in its symbolic transformation of grief into triumph, it is a poem I have for some time contemplated setting'.

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## LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

The choir was started in its present form in 1966. It seeks to maintain a small, well-knit group of some thirty to thirty-five voices, practising and performing a wide range of choral music. Its members come from a great variety of backgrounds, none of them being full-time musicians. The choir's range of activities is equally varied; it has accepted cabaret engagements at many functions, as well as promoting many successful concerts in and around London. It has sung in all three South Bank concert halls and many times here at St John's. The group has travelled widely and has won competitive prizes at home and abroad. Festival appearances include Montreux and Dubrovnik. The choir has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception from both audiences and Press and has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra.

## MALCOLM COTTLE

The conductor sang for many years as a boy with the choir of St Paul's Cathedral, during which time he sang at the Coronation of the Queen and toured the United States of America. More recently, as well as conducting the London Concord Singers he has worked as repetiteur with the New Opera Company at Sadler's Wells Theatre and conducted for Orpheus Opera. He has appeared as Musical Director at the Sheffield Playhouse, Swan Theatre, Worcester, Nottingham Playhouse, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon and for the Southern Exchange Theatre Company. He is currently working towards the first performance of a new opera based on the life of King Charles I.

## FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

June 21st 1979 St Paul's, Covent Garden — 'Summer Serenade'

November 21st 1979 Purcell Room — programme to be announced.

From time to time, the London Concord Singers hold auditions in all voices. We also welcome friends wishing to subscribe to increase the activities of the group. Anyone interested in further details please contact:

Mrs M C Woodward, The Old Forge, Smith's Lane,  
Crockham Hill, nr Edenbridge, Kent.  
Telephone Crockham Hill 308

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St John's, Smith Square, London, SW1

Director: Joanna Brendon. Telephone 01-222 2168

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