

ST PAUL'S, BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN, WC2

Thursday 21st June, 1979 at 7.30pm

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS
AND ORCHESTRA

Conductor, MALCOLM COTTLE

THERE IS SWEET MUSIC

There is sweet music (First performance)	Derek Walters
On Craig Ddu	Frederick Delius
Summer (from Folksongs of the Four Seasons)	Vaughan Williams
Organ Concerto Op 4, No 6	G F Handel
Three Part-Songs	Edward Elgar

INTERVAL

Reflections of a summer night	John McCabe
Secular choruses Op 93a	Johannes Brahms
The blue bird	Charles Villiers Stanford
Quatrains Valaisans	Darius Milhaud
Psalm 148	Gustav Holst

Admission only by programme £1.20 (students and OAPs 75p)

THERE IS SWEET MUSIC (*First performance*)

Walters

Derek Walters was born in Droylsden, Manchester. At the age of 16 he left school to work for a firm of industrial chemists, and since then has had a varied career which has included lecturing and publishing. Although without any formal training he has won several prizes for composition, and was a finalist in the BBC composer's competition in 1967. Performances of his works include two operas, a symphony, several choral works and much chamber music, including a serenade for six pianos.

**MIDSUMMER SONG
ON CRAIG DDU**

Delius

Delius wrote only about half a dozen pieces for unaccompanied chorus, and most of these are really miniature tone-poems, indeed some are wordless like the two songs *To be sung of a summer night on the water*. *Midsummer song* is almost wordless, it opens and closes with short verbal sections, but the main bulk of the piece is sung to 'la, la'; *On Craig Ddu* is subtitled 'An impression of Nature' and its sensual drifts of chromatic chords tend to ignore the individual words and phrases of Arthur Symons' poem and provide an overall picture of what the words set out to invoke, a summer day on the mountain top with the sounds drifting up from the valley.

SUMMER (from Folksongs of the Four Seasons)

Vaughan Williams

The Federation of Womens Institutes commissioned Vaughan Williams to write something for their Festival in the Royal Albert Hall in 1950. Knowing that the choir would be roughly divisible into 3 sections – a large body for unison singing, a smaller one for part-singing and a small number for unaccompanied passages – he laid the work out accordingly. There are four movements, each representing one of the four seasons, and each movement is subdivided into shorter sections, each of which presents one or two folk songs. *Summer* is the second of the four movements and contains the following folk songs: –

- 1 Summer is a-coming in and The Cuckoo
- 2 The Sprig of Thyme
- 3 The Sheep Shearing
- 4 The Green Meadow

ORGAN CONCERTO Op 4, No 6 (Organ: Peter Jones)

Handel

Most of Handel's organ concertos were written to be performed during the intervals of oratorio performances at such places as Covent Garden, since there was invariably a small positive organ in the pit orchestra which would have given Handel himself an opportunity to display his virtuosity as a keyboard performer and improviser. It would appear that most of the concertos were not composed to go with any one specific oratorio, but to be used as and when required, but there is strong evidence to suggest that Op 4, No 6 was written as an integral part of *Alexander's Feast* and later published separately in the Opus 4 collection. The concerto consists of three movements: Andante allegro, Larghetto and Allegro moderato.

THREE PART-SONGS

Elgar

- The Shower Op 71, No 1
- The Fountain Op 71, No 2
- There is sweet music Op 53, No 1

In the two part-songs Op 71, composed in 1914, Elgar is writing in the real English choral tradition, harmonically clean and in the main homophonic. 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 of *The Shower* on the words 'make soft the earth'.

The four part-songs Op 53 give the impression that they are not written for choral society, competitive festival or glee club, as most of his unaccompanied choral pieces were, but out of a need to say something

which could be said in no other way. Although written seven years earlier than Op 71 they show a much more adventurous use of texture, colour and interplay of sonorities, the result of a perfect union between words and music. In *There is sweet music* he exploits the contrast of mens' and womens' voices, not only in the timbre of the voices, but also in the keys used, (men sing in G major, women in A flat major). This contrast holds throughout except for a brief harmonic union in the middle section on the words 'music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies'.

INTERVAL

REFLECTIONS OF A SUMMER NIGHT

McCabe

John McCabe was born in Liverpool in 1939. He studied at Manchester University and the Royal Manchester College of Music, continuing his studies at the Hochschule fur Musik, Munich. A brilliant pianist, he was pianist-in-residence at University College, Cardiff from 1965-68. He now divides his time between composition, reviewing and recital work.

Reflections was written for the 1978 Fishguard Festival and consists of settings of Tennyson, Hilda Doolittle, Longfellow, de la Mare and Keats. It is for mixed choir and a chamber orchestra consisting of single woodwind (minus clarinet) and horn, harpsichord, percussion and strings. The five movements run into each other and the outer ones are for the full choir, the second and fourth for women's voices and the third for men's voices.

SECULAR CHORUSES Op 93a

Brahms

- 1 The hunchbacked fiddler
- 2 The maiden
- 3 O sweet May
- 4 The Falcon
- 5 Encouragement

These choruses by Brahms could almost be described as pseudo folk songs, some indeed use folk song words while others are settings of German poets. Musically they have a feel of folk song but are harmonically and melodically rather more adventurous than one would expect to find in that idiom. For instance, the first song is not composed entirely in strophes, and introduces, with shrill 5ths on the word 'Walpurgisnacht', a touch of modern realism, and No 2, which also exists in a version for solo voice and piano, presents a Serbian feature in its alternation of 3/4 and 4/4 time.

THE BLUE BIRD

Stanford

The Blue Bird, described by Derek Hill as 'an example of perfection in choral writing' is, justifiably, Stanford's most popular secular choral composition, with the lower voices providing a picture of the still calm of the lake, while the Sopranos, representing the bird, soar blissfully above them.

QUATRAINS VALAISANS

Milhaud

Perfection could again be used to describe these settings of five brief poems by Rainer Maria Rilke. Each is short and concise, yet an overall picture emerges of the sun-drenched vine slopes of the Valais region of Switzerland.

PSALM 148

Holst

We end with this exuberant setting of a paraphrase of Psalm 148 for choir, strings and organ. The melody comes from the Geistliche Kirchengesange, (1623).

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, at the Royal Albert Hall and at St John's, Smith Square. 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 audiences and the Press and has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra. Recently, in recognition of their continuing support of Contemporary Music, particularly British compositions of the last 25 years, London Concord Singers received a Jubilee Award from the Performing Rights Society.

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

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

The National Federation of Music Societies, to who this society is affiliated, supports these concerts with funds made available by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

London Concord Singers would welcome friends wishing to subscribe to increase the activities of the group. Anyone requiring further details or wishing to be placed on the mailing list 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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