

St Martin-in-the-Fields, London

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

MALCOLM COTTLE, Conductor

LESLEY REID, Mezzo-Soprano

IN A PROGRAMME OF

AMERICAN  
CHORAL MUSIC

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with a central scroll-like element and small circles on either side.

THURSDAY 3 JULY, 1980

7.30pm

**Modern Music**  
**Peace be on Earth**

**William Billings (1746 - 1800)**

Because of the nature of the country and its comparative youth, it is only in the 20th Century that music with a recognisable American character and flavour has come into being. Until this time most of the so-called American composers were either European born or they imitated European models. As a result of this no notable composers emerged (apart from Gottschalk and MacDowell — both of whom were firmly in the European mould) with the exception of William Billings.

**PROGRAMME 20p**

Billings, originally a tanner, issued a number of books with tunes of a lively "fuguig" type (fuguig tunes were originally rounds but later the expression came to mean any song or chant of a lively nature. His life spanned the time of American Independence, and many of his more serious pieces reflect this. He also ran a singing school, and one of his classes developed into the Stoughton Musical Society, the oldest existing choral society in the United States.

Billings' musical education was slight, his reliance on inspiration great. As he wrote in 'The New England Psalm Singer (1770)'. 'Nature must lay the Foundation, Nature must inspire the thought. For my own part I don't think myself confined to any Rules of Composition laid down by any that went before me. Art is subservient to genius'. He relished octaves and consecutive fifths and combinations of dissonance that were ahead of his time. In common with other composers of the time, Billings placed the melody in the Tenor voice, but with instructions that some Sopranos should sing with the Tenors and some Tenors with the Sopranos, for 'a tune so sung (although it has but four parts) is in effect the same as six. Such a conjunction of masculine and feminine voices is beyond expression sweet and ravishing'.

Billings' harmonic idiosyncrasies were to prove his downfall; although his music was very popular for a time, interest in it soon waned and he died in poverty and was buried in a common grave, and it is only recently that he has been 'rediscovered' musically.

*Modern Music* is a light-hearted curtain-raiser, while *Peace on Earth* expresses weariness of war (The War of Independence) and joy at the arrival of peace; it is described as An Anthem from Sundry Scriptures, but as in many of his pieces those Scriptures are adapted by Billings to suit the occasion.

### Three Spirituals

Deep River

arr Parker & Shaw

I got a Key

arr Parker & Shaw

Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass

arr West

### In the Beginning

Aaron Copland (1900-

*Mezzo-Soprano solo* — Lesley Reid

Copland, born of a Jewish immigrant family, one of the leading composers to have emerged in America so far studied first in America with Goldmark, and later in Paris with Paul Vidal and Nadia Boulanger. In his early days he was strongly influenced by jazz, folk and Negro Spiritual music. More recently, however he has tended not to use these, although their influence is still very much in evidence.

'In the beginning' is a setting of the opening verses of the book of Genesis. It was commissioned by the committee of the 1947 Howard Symposium of Music and Criticism, and was first performed by Robert Shaw and the Collegiate Chorale of Cambridge, Mass.

At the end of each day's achievement there is a choral chant to establish the creation of the evening and the morning, each time being a tone higher than the last. Each separate day of the creation unfolds according to the composer's inner conception of the Biblical text.

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

Lamentation over Boston  
Jargon

William Billings

During the siege of Boston, Billings was living in Watertown, nine miles away. He wrote the Lamentation to express his sorrow for the inhabitants of Boston during this time. It is the most moving of his compositions, and is another of his Biblical adaptations — this time on the Psalm which begins 'By the waters of Babylon'.

Some time later, Billings took some of the words from the Lamentation — 'Let horrid jargon split the air . . .' — and, completely divorcing them from the sentiments of the Lamentation wrote what surely must be one of the most incredible pieces to emerge from the 18th century. A mere fourteen bars long, the only chord which is not a discord is the first — and this 200 years before Charles Ives.

Psalm 67

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Ives was the first truly original and independent American composer. He lived and worked entirely apart from the musical world of his time, yet, by 1916, he had composed works containing bi-tonal, polytonal, atonal, polyrhythmic and aleatory passages — long before the likes of Schoenberg and Webern, of whom he knew nothing anyway. Relying on his own imagination he arrived at innovations which, to his teachers and contemporaries, seemed utter madness. He wrote in his Essays before a Sonata: 'Beauty in music is too often confused with something that lets the ears lie back in an easy chair'. But when conventional writing served his expressive purpose, he used it.

Psalm 67 is perfectly straightforward in its composition, what gives it its impact (and must have raised more than a few eyebrows in 1898 when it was written) is the fact that the ladies sing firmly in c major, while the men are in G minor.

Alleluia

Randall Thompson (1899-

Randall Thompson was born in New York and was educated at Harvard University. After holding various academic positions he became Director of the Curtis Institute and Professor in turn at the Universities of Virginia, Princeton and Harvard. His compositions include symphonies and other orchestral and choral works. Alleluia was written for Serge Koussevitsky and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus.

Reincarnations

Samuel Barber (1910-

- 1 Mary Hynes
- 2 Anthony O'Daly
- 3 The Coolin'

Barber's natural form of expression stems from Romanticism, his style is unashamedly lyrical and expressive. His best known work is the *Adagio for Strings* and his opera *Anthony & Cleopatra* was the first production at the new Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

These three very effective choral songs are settings of poems by James Stephens after the Irish of Raftery.

Two Folk Songs

Shenandoah

She'll be comin' round the mountain

arr Erb

arr de Cormier

## THE 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 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 in and around London and 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.

### LESLEY REID

Studied at the Royal College of Music with Gordon Clinton. From the time of leaving college until 1973 she was a member of the BBC Singers, and since then has sung all over Britain and Europe, including four tours in France singing contemporary music with Pierre Boulez. Her frequent record appearances include that of Charpentier's opera *Louise*.

### MALCOLM COTTLE

The conductor sang for many years as a boy with the choir of St Paul's Cathedral, London, 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 Sadlers Wells and conducted for Orpheus Opera. He has appeared as Musical Director at the Sheffield Playhouse; the Swan Theatre, Worcester; Nottingham Playhouse and the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon.

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The National Federation of Music Societies, to whom 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 the Secretary, who is herself an American.

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

We would like to remind members of the public that unauthorised recording of the Concert is not allowed.