

St James's Church, Piccadilly, London

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Malcolm Cottle, Conductor

Peter Jones, Organ

THE FINCHLEY CHILDREN'S
MUSIC GROUP

Musical Director, John Andrewes

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# Music for Christmas

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THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER, 1980

7.30pm

In Dulci Jubilo
Rocking

Old German tune arr. R L Pearsall
Czeck carol arr. David Willcocks

We start with two familiar carols. The first is the justly celebrated version of 'In Dulci Jubilo' by Pearsall. The melody of this carol first appears in an old German book of 1570 and even there it is described as 'a very ancient song'. This is followed by David Willcocks' charming arrangement of 'Rocking' in which we are joined by the boys of the Finchley Children's Music Group.

Programme 20p

A Boy was born

Benjamin Britten

Originally written in 1932/3 while Britten was a student, 'A Boy was born' was so full of youthful excesses that it was almost unsingable. However, in 1955 Britten completely revised the work and produced the more approachable, although still extremely difficult, version that we know today.

Consisting of a theme and six so-called variations, the piece is scored for an eight part unaccompanied choir and boy's voices. Each movement is a setting of different poems, mostly ancient carols, and in some cases more than one is used.

Theme — *A Boy was born in Bethlehem* — German, 16th century.
A straightforward statement of the theme by the choir.

Variation I — *Lullay, Jesu* — Anon (before 1536)

This movement opens with a rocking figure to the word 'Lullay' which continues right through, shifting from voice to voice, with the choir singing the text and the boys providing the refrain 'Mine own dear mother, sing Lullay'. Later the boys take over the narrative with the choir restricted to 'Lullay, Jesu'.

Variation II — *Herod* — Anon (15th century)

A wild and brutal movement, mainly sung by the men's voices, describes Herod's slaughter of the innocents.

Variation III — *Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour* — Anon (15th century)

This variation is sung by a semi-chorus, the sopranos staying on the same note for the whole movement with the other three parts providing harmonic interest. Each phrase is punctuated by a boy soloist singing the word 'Jesu'.

Variation IV — *The Three Kings* — Anon (15th century)

An ostinato figure, based on the first three notes of the Theme, runs right through this movement, moving up through the choir and then back down again, the words passing from voice to voice.

Variation V — *In the Bleak Mid-Winter* — Christina Rossetti
Corpus Christi Carol — Anon (15th century)

Sopranos and Altos paint a 'bleak' wintry picture over which the boys intone the *Corpus Christi Carol*.

Variation VI (Finale) —

Good Day, Sir Christemas — Anon (15th century)

Get Ivy and Hull, woman — Thomas Tusser

Welcome be Thou, heaven-king — Anon (15th century)

Glory to God on high — Francis Quarles

The Finale starts with a long, lively introduction of 'Noels' and 'Wassails' leading into the first carol. Tenors and Basses then introduce 'Get Ivy and Hull', later joined by Altos then Sopranos, while the boys preview the final carol. This is followed by more 'Noels' accompanying 'Welcome be Thou' by the choir alone which leads up to the final, slow, section in which the choir sings the first verse of 'Glory to God' with the boys recalling short fragments of previous movements until all join together in the build-up to the final climax.

INTERVAL

Un Soir de Neige

Francis Poulenc

Described as 'A little Chamber Cantata for six mixed voices or unaccompanied choir', 'Un Soir de Neige' is a bleak setting of four rather bleak poems by Paul Elouard, conjuring up a picture of the desolate nature of winter.

In this work, written over Christmas 1944, Poulenc, as he often does in his choral music, gets right away from the light-hearted and witty style of his instrumental writing, and plumbs the depths of despair. One feels that, if this music reflects his mood at the time of composition, Christmas 1944 was not a happy occasion.

1. De grandes cuillers de neige
2. La bonne neige
3. Bois meurtri
4. La nuit le froid la solitude

Noel Etranger

Louis d'Aquin (1694-1772)

Prelude on 'O Jesulein suss, O Jesulein mild'

G F Kauffman (1679-1735)

Noel Angevin

Cesar Franck (1822-1890)

Prelude on 'Muses soeurs de la peinture'

A P F Boely (1785-1858)

Peter Jones (Organ)

Unfortunately, the main organ of the church is out of action at the moment, so Peter Jones is playing some seasonal pieces suitable for the single manual chamber-instrument which has been temporarily installed.

Members of the audience are invited to join with us in singing the two carols marked †.

O come all ye Faithful†

Traditional

Silent Night, Holy Night

Franz Gruber arr. Laurence Howes

Born today is the Child Divine

French Carol arr. Edward T Chapman

The Shepherd's Cradle Song

Karl Leuner arr. Charles Macpherson

Hark the Herald Angels sing†

Mendelssohn

The closing group of carols consists of two 'congregational' favourites, together with a very lovely arrangement of 'Silent Night' by a former member of the choir, a lively setting of the old French carol 'Il est ne, le divin enfant', and Charles Macpherson's moving 'Shepherd's Cradle Song'.

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:

Mrs Penny Greenhalgh, 17 John Spencer Square, London N1

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

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.

FINCHLEY CHILDREN'S MUSIC GROUP

After attending the first performance of Britten's *Noye's Fludde* at Orford Church in 1959 John Andrewes, prompted by his sister Ruth, decided to put on the first 'amateur' production (albeit using professional soloists); a group of some fifty children was assembled by Ruth Andrewes for the occasion. The performance over, the impetus to continue came from the children themselves. Since then as well as performing on their own and in conjunction with other musical organisations, a number of works have been commissioned from contemporary composers, including operas, music theatre pieces and concert works. The Group celebrated its 21st birthday in May of this year with a concert of wholly contemporary works at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which was attended by all the composers represented (except, of course, Benjamin Britten). This year, members of the group also took part in John Tavener's opera *Therese* at Covent Garden. As well as performing in London and the provinces, the Group has toured in Italy, Sweden and Holland.

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 Sadler's 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.
