

London Concord Singers

CHRIST CHURCH MAYFAIR

Down Street, London W1

A programme of music from France and Switzerland
conducted by Malcolm Cottle

WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 1983 at 7.30pm

TROIS CHANSONS

MAURICE RAVEL

1. Nicolette
2. Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis
3. Ronde

Like Debussy, Ravel wrote only one work for unaccompanied chorus, and like Debussy, that one is an exquisite set of three chansons, leaving us wishing that they had devoted more time to the medium.

Ravel wrote his own words for the chansons and they display wit and a certain folk-like naivety. In the first, a young girl - Nicolette - strolls in the fields one evening, she is pursued firstly by a wolf from whom she runs in horror, then by a young page boy, who she leaves slowly and sadly, and finally by an ugly old man, who also happens to be very rich; naturally she runs swiftly into his arms. All three pursuers are characterised in the music, even to the extent of having the tenors sing the page-boy's words falsetto!

The second song is that of a girl whose lover has gone to the war. She is visited by three lovely birds of Paradise. The first, blue as the sky, brings a glance from the lover's blue eyes, the second, white as snow, brings a kiss, but the third, bright red, brings a crimson heart to which the girl replies 'Ah! I feel my heart grow cold, take it with you also! In the third song the old women tell the young girls not to go into the woods of Ormonde as it is full of (male) devils and hobgoblins etc. The old men then tell the same thing to the boys (but in this case all the nasties are female). Finally the young ones wistfully regret that there is no longer any point in going to the woods, since the old folk have driven everything away.

MADRIGALE**GABRIEL FAURÉ**

This charming piece, with piano accompaniment, is a setting of lines by Armand Silvestre urging us to love when we are loved, since true love comes only once. Our folly is to love that which flees from us, and to flee from that which loves us.

QUATRAINS VALAISONS**DARIUS MILHAUD**

1. Countryside, halted halfway between the earth and the skies
2. Rose of light
3. The year turns . . .
4. Roads
5. Pretty butterfly

A member of the group of composers known as 'Les Six', whose main purpose was to steer French music away from Wagnerianism and Impressionism, Milhaud's output was immense, ranging from miniatures to vast scores. This charming set of five songs are settings of pastoral poems by Rilke describing the sun-drenched, vine-covered slopes of the Valais region of Switzerland.

FOUR MOTETS FOR A TIME OF PENITENCE**FRANCIS POULENC**

1. Timor et tremor
2. Vinea mea electa
3. Tenebrae factae sunt
4. Tristis est anima mea

Poulenc was, like Milhaud, a member of 'Les Six' and although much of his early work follows the dictate of the group's initiator, writer Jean Cocteau, that their music should derive its inspiration from the witty and worldly art of the music hall and circus, later works show a much more profound feeling and are devoid of the facile mannerisms which earned him popular success. The penitential motets were written in 1938 and 1939 and are typical of the composer's style of choral writing, with short phrases and constantly fluctuating harmonies.

1. *Fear and trembling have come upon me, and darkness spreads over me. Have mercy on me Lord, for in you I confide my soul, Lord hear my prayer, for you are my refuge and my strong help. O Lord I cry to thee, do not confound me.*
2. *My chosen vine, I planted you: why have you turned bitter, that I should be crucified and Barrabas released. I surrounded you with a hedge and took away stones that might harm you, and built a tower to defend you.*
3. *Darkness fell when Jesus was crucified. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice 'My God, why have you forsaken me', and, inclining his head he gave up the ghost. Jesus cried with a loud voice and said 'Father, into Thy hand I commend my spirit'. And, inclining his head, he gave up the ghost.*

4. *My soul is sad, even unto death: stay here, and watch with me: Now you will see a multitude who will surround and take me. You will flee and I will go to die for you. Behold the hour approaches when the Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. You will flee and I will go to die for you.*

SUITE GOTHIQUE**LÉON BÖELLMAN**

One of the features of Parisian musical life over the last 150 years or so has been the very many fine organist-composers who have held posts in the churches of the city, from Cesar Franck to Messiaen. Boellman was born in Alsace in 1862 and died in Paris in 1897, aged 35. He studied under Gigout and became organist of the church of St Vincent de Paul. The Suite Gothique is his best-known work and has four movements.

1. Introduction - Chorale
2. Menuet Gothique
3. Priere a l'autre dame
4. Toccatta

INTERVAL

FOUR MOTETS**MAURICE DURUFLÉ**

1. Ubi caritas
2. Tota pulchra es
3. Tu es Petrus
4. Tantum Ergo

Duruflé is another of the great organist-composers, indeed he was a teacher of Messiaen. His best known work is undoubtedly his Requiem, a work which is similar in many respects to that of Faure but which is very firmly based on Gregorian plainchant. These four motets are simple but effective harmonisations of Gregorian themes for various times of the year.

MASS FOR TWO FOUR-PART CHOIRS**FRANK MARTIN**

Martin was born in Geneva in 1890, the tenth and last child of a Calvinist pastor. His first teacher of composition was Joseph Lauber, a truly Swiss product of two civilisations: German as a pupil of Hegar and Rheinberger and French through Massenet. As a result of this, Martin has always been receptive to different influences, initially Franck, Faure and Ravel, he later embraced serialism as propounded by the Viennese school of Schoenberg and Webern, eventually combining this with tonality to create his own individual style.

Although written in 1922 when the composer was 32 years old, the Mass must be regarded as an early work and displays those early French and

German influences, combining typical French melodic fluidity with German richness of harmonic texture. Martin sets the usual five sections of the Mass:

1. Kyrie
2. Gloria
3. Credo
4. Sanctus/Benedictus
5. Agnus Dei

The London Concord Singers started in 1966 and 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 and none of them are full-time musicians. The choir's range of activities is equally varied, it has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, accepted cabaret engagements in and around London and has sung at 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 prizes at home and abroad. Appearances include Montreux and Dubrovnik and in October of last year they were invited by the Noord Hollands Kamerkoor to perform in Bergen, North Holland. In 1977, in recognition of their continuing support of Contemporary Music, particularly British compositions of the previous 25 years, the choir 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, London, singing at the Coronation of the Queen and touring the USA. As well as conducting the London Concord he has worked as repetiteur with the New Opera at Sadlers Wells and conducted for Orpheus Opera. His appearances as Musical Director include Sheffield Playhouse, Swan Theatre, Worcester, Nottingham Playhouse and Wyvern Theatre, Swindon.

The NFMS, to whom this society is affiliated, supports these concerts with funds made available by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

London Concord Singers welcome friends wishing to subscribe to increase the activities of their group.

Anyone requiring further details please contact:

S. Walden, 12 Ronald's Road, London N5. Telephone 01-607 0616.

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