

London Concord Singers

ST PAUL'S CHURCH, COVENT GARDEN

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A recital of choral and piano music by

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Conductor: Malcolm Cottle

with Tony McIntee and Malcolm Cottle

piano duets

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 1983 at 7.30pm

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Secular choruses Op 42

Following the death of Schumann in 1856 Brahms took a post in the little court of Detmold, a sleepy, old-fashioned town where he could relax and re-invigorate himself following the traumas of the previous two years. One of his duties was to conduct the choral society. It is probable that this set of three choruses was composed for them. Many of Brahms' small-scale secular choral pieces have a superb quality about them, but this set, written between 1859 and 1861, has a depth of imagination about it that he was not to achieve again until Op 104, composed in 1888.

1 *Abendstandchen* — Evening serenade

2 *Vineta*

3 *Darthula's Grabesgesang* — *Darthula's Burial song*

Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann Op 23

Brahms was a composer who tended to compose several pieces in one idiom before moving on to something else. Three of his first four piano works were solo sonatas, after which six of the next seven publications were variations, including the well known Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel and this set of Schumann variations.

In February 1854, just before he attempted to kill himself by jumping into the Rhine, and subsequently enter the mental institution in which he was to end his life, Schumann was engaged in writing variations on a theme that he believed he had received from the spirits of Schubert and Mendelssohn. This is the theme Brahms used. There are many Schumannisms in the music and the final variation is a funeral march in memory of Brahms's great friend.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) Sept Chansons

The seven 'chansons' are something of a turning point in Poulenc's artistic development. Before 1936 most of his music had been light-weight, witty and urbane, the music of the salon and music hall. It is with this — his first venture into unaccompanied choral writing — that the more serious side of Poulenc's nature emerges, brought out by the somewhat abstract poems of Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard.

- 1 *La blanche neige* (G Apollinaire)
- 2 *A peine defiguree* (P Eluard)
- 3 *Par une nuit nouvelle* (P Eluard)
- 4 *Tous les droits* (P Eluard)
- 5 *Belle et ressemblante* (P Eluard)
- 6 *Marie* (G Apollinaire)
- 7 *Luire* (P Eluard)

INTERVAL

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Warum ist das licht gegeben Op 74 No 1

This motet was written in 1877 and shows the very strong debt Brahms owed to Bach in his sacred choral writing. It consists of 4 movements, the first of which is for four voices and is restless in mood with the frequently recurring question 'Warum, warum?' (Why, why?). The second is a six-part canon, and the third, also in six parts, is divided into two sections, the first slow, with the 1st sopranos singing a chorale-like melody, the second faster, using some of the music from the 2nd movement. The final movement is a Chorale, which brings the work to a close in a mood of quiet resignation.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) Sonata for Piano — four hands

This work, in three movements, was written in 1918 for Mlle Simone Tillraud, but the composer revised it in 1939. The 1st movement — 'Prelude' — starts with a rhythmic ostinato figure, which leads into a tuneful slower section, and the movement ends as it began.

In the second movement the composer instructs the players to play simply and slowly; again Poulenc makes use of an ostinato figure in the accompaniment.

The third movement shows Poulenc at his most brilliant and witty, bringing the work to a charming if somewhat boisterous, end.

William Walton (1902-1983) Duets for children

- 1 *The music lesson*; 2 *The three-legged race*; 3 *The silent lake*;
- 4 *Pony trap*; 5 *Ghosts*; 6 *Hop-scotch*; 7 *Swing-boats*;
- 8 *Song at dusk*; 9 *Puppet's dance*; 10 *Trumpet tune*

The Duets for Children were written in 1940 and dedicated to 'Elisabeth and Michael', the composer's niece and nephew. They are not really too hard for young pianists to play, though some of the pieces are tricky and some require rather more skill in balance of tone than is normally to be expected of young hands — particularly tricky are 'Hop-Scotch' in 5/8 time and the 'Puppet's Dance' with the off-beat chords as the puppet endeavours to keep time.

Some of these charming pieces may be more familiar in the orchestral version made by the composer in 1941.

Cantico del Sole

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 women's and men's voices, and working through most of the available keys, until the choir comes together again at the words '... ca la morte secunda nol fara male', and remains together to the final pianissimo 'humilitate'.

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 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. The Dutch choir will visit the London Concord Singers in September of this year.

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:

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