

London Concord Singers

20th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

(Accompanist – Tony McIntee)
and Orchestra

Janice Watson, Soprano
Janet Shell, Alto
Graeme Stewart, Tenor
Simon Hannigan, Bass

(All soloists appear by kind permission of the
Principal of Guildhall School of Music and Drama)

HORA EST – MENDELSSOHN
MISSA TIBURTINA – GILES SWAYNE
REQUIEM MASS – MOZART

**St Paul's Church,
Covent Garden, London**
Saturday 22 November, 1986 at 6.30pm

*All profits from this evening's concert will be given to help
Famine Relief through the offices of Band Aid*

Hora Est

One of our most successful concerts in recent times consisted of an increasingly polychoral programme, namely Britten's "Hymn to St Cecilia" for one choir, Bach's "Singet den Herrn" for two, a Mass by Spohr for 2 five-part choirs and 5 soloists, and of course the Tallis 40-part motet for 8 choirs. So I think it is appropriate to start our Anniversary Concert with this magnificent piece for 4 choirs.

Although Mendelssohn presented the score to his sister Fanny for her 23rd birthday, the piece was actually written for Carl Friedrich Zelter's 'Sing-Akademie' in 1828 when the composer was 19. It is interesting to note that, in 1829, the choir comprised 121 sopranos, 72 altos, 75 tenors and 86 basses, what a sound that must have been!

Mendelssohn had sung in the Sing-Akademie since 1819, and had been greatly influenced by the type of works performed by them and he had received much guidance in composition from Zelter who encouraged him to look to the past for his inspiration.

"The hour has now come for us to rise from sleep and lift ourselves with open eyes to Christ, who is the true light that shines in the heavens. Behold, the Lord will appear over a white cloud, and with him a thousand saints".

Missa Tiburtina

Giles Swayne is one of the leading composers in this country today, whose magnificent piece for 28 solo voices, "Cry" written for the BBC Singers made a great impact a few years back. The Missa Tiburtina was first performed by the International Kodaly Symposium Youth Choir in July 1985 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It was later slightly revised and a Gloria added.

The inspiration for writing this Mass was the starving millions all over the world, and one can perhaps detect in the somewhat sparse choral writing, the musical influence of traditional African chanting. Much use is made of syllabic repetition, used to particularly startling effect in the 'Hosanna' following the Sanctus, where the first syllable of the word 'Hosanna' is used as a somewhat derisory laugh at the thought of the whole world being full of the glory of God. I can do no better than to quote the composer's own preface to the work. *"The earth does not belong to man: man belongs to the earth. All things are connected, like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself".* (Chief Seattle).

- Every year, the world spends 750 billion dollars on weapons.
- Every year, forty million people die of hunger.
- Every year, the UK alone spends over £200 million on slimming foods.
- Every sixty seconds, thirty children die of hunger.
- One quarter of all food in the USA is thrown away uneaten.
- 10% of all living species (including plants) is under threat of extinction by the year 2000.

The rich nations of the world, out of a mixture of greed, insecurity and muddle-headedness, are starving the poor nations to death, destroying the genetic heritage which is the living foundation of our planet's future, and wasting its resources at a rate which is scarcely credible. Living in an age of unbelief, we look to man to solve our problems. But this problem (man-made, like most) is too vast and too intractable, and man seems not to have the wit or the will to tackle it.

That's how this piece came about. It is a prayer for sanity, an appeal to a higher authority. While you listen to it (or while you sing it) remember that in the course of its 15 minutes, 450 children will have died of starvation.

Mendelssohn

The Missa Tiburtina is dedicated to my wife, Naaotwa, who is from one of the poor countries of the world, and knows what it means to be hungry. The music was begun in Tivoli, near Rome; hence the title.

Giles Swayne (Reprinted by permission of Novello & Company Ltd)

INTERVAL – 20 minutes

Requiem K626

Mozart

I Introitus: 1. Requiem; 2. Kyrie eleison.

II Sequenz: 1. Dies irae; 2. Tuba mirum. 3. Rex tremendae; 4. Recordare; 5. Confutatis; 6. Lacrimosa.

III Offertorium: 1. Domine Jesu Christe; 2. Hostias et preces tibi.

IV Sanctus: 1. Sanctus; 2. Benedictus.

V Agnus Dei: 1. Agnus Dei; 2. Lux aeterna/Cum sanctus tuis.

There is so much legend and fantasy surrounding the commissioning and composition of Mozart's Requiem that it is not easy to separate fact from fiction. The facts, as far as they are known, are that the Requiem was commissioned by a certain Count Walsegg, to be sung on the anniversaries of his wife's death, although Mozart never knew this. Count Walsegg was well known for commissioning works from many composers, and then inviting his guests to name the composers, not correcting them if, in order to flatter him, they declared the works to be so good that they must be his own. In the case of the Requiem, the commission was placed by one of the Count's servants, who was instructed not to reveal the source of the commission. Although it is fairly certain that, during the course of composition, Mozart became obsessed with the idea of his own impending death, it is doubtful whether, as some 19th century writers claim, he came to look upon the messenger in grey as his own 'Angel of Death', and that he had been called upon to write his own Requiem.

As far as the composition is concerned, argument over how much was written by Mozart, and how much by his pupil Sussmayer, continues to this day. Sussmayer was entrusted with the task of completing the Requiem by Mozart's widow, Constanza, so that she should not lose the remainder of the fee (or indeed all of it).

Certainly we know that Mozart completed the composition and orchestration of the first section – 'Requiem' and 'Kyrie'. The vocal parts and figured bass of the Sequence, except for 'Lacrymosa', as well as for the offertorium are entirely by Mozart, the orchestration being finished by Sussmayer, ostensibly from Mozart's detailed sketches. Whilst tradition has it that the eighth bar of 'Lacrymosa' is the last music that Mozart wrote before he died, this is unlikely. What seems more probable is that he started work on it, and then put it aside for the time being while he worked on the Offertorium. Another reason to think that he probably got further than the eighth bar anyway, is Constanza's claim that the movement was sung at his bedside.

Sussmayer claimed to have been entirely responsible for the 'Sanctus', 'Benedictus' and 'Agnus Dei' sections of the work, but modern stylistic research shows this to be unlikely, and although certain sections almost certainly are by him, much of it, including all of the 'Agnus Dei' up to the return of material from the opening at 'Lux Aeterna' is by Mozart himself, although there is no trace of any of it in Mozart's hand, apart from a few bars at the beginning of the 'Benedictus'.

Having said all this, does it really matter? Whether by Mozart or Sussmayer, what we have is one of the most sublime pieces of music, a masterpiece.

In the programme for our tenth Anniversary Concert in November 1976 I said *"In the course of our quite short but very enjoyable existence, the choir, hopefully, has communicated its own enjoyment to its many audiences. This, we trust, we will continue to do for many more years to come"*.

Well, here we are ten years later, still going strong, in spite of increasing competition in music-making in Central London.

I think it is true to say that, in the past ten years, we have travelled less, perhaps because our nucleus of singers has acquired greater family commitments, although we did manage a very enjoyable long weekend in Holland as guests of the NoordHolland KammerChor and of two of our former members Moira and Rick Fordham; and we were delighted to welcome them all to London the following year.

We have however maintained our policy of performing challenging but enjoyable modern works having given early performances of pieces by Michael Ball, John McCabe and many others, including of course, tonight, Giles Swayne.

What has been particularly encouraging is the recent influx of several younger singers, who seem to enjoy what we do and how we do it. This gives great hope for the future, and who knows, maybe in ten years time, we will all be getting together again. I hope so!

Malcolm Cottle

The London Concord Singers is affiliated to the Central Adult Education Institute of the ILEA and is grateful for the assistance it receives from them.

We would like to thank the soloists and members of the Orchestra for giving their services tonight and David Tosh for lending us his Tympani.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the following for their gifts and donations:

Bentalls – Kingston Upon Thames;
The Cabaret Mechanical Theatre;
Kharrods;
Puffin Book Shop;
S. Fisher;
Strangeways;
The World of Lace;
The Doll's House;
Sue Spear – The Candle Shop;
The Dairy Shop.