

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

20th Anniversary Season

St George's Church,  
Bloomsbury

16th July 1987

Vision and Prayer Op. 111

John Joubert  
(1927 - )

Tenor Solo: Barry Hughes

Piano Duet: Graham Owen and Anthony McIntee

John Joubert, celebrating his 60th birthday this year, was born in South Africa. He came to this country on a Performing Rights Society scholarship in 1946. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music where his teachers included Howard Ferguson. He became Lecturer in Music at the University of Hull in 1960 and since 1962 has lived in Birmingham where he is Reader in Music at the Barber Institute.

Vision and Prayer is for Tenor Soloist, Mixed Choir and Piano Duet. It was written for the 40th Anniversary of the Cheltenham Bach Choir, the first performance being given in the Pittville Pump Room on 8th November 1986. It sets the famous vision of peace contained in the opening verses of Chapter 4 of the book of Micah together with two verses from the hymn "Pray that Jerusalem may have Peace and felicity."

2 Chansons Op. 68

Camille Saint-Saëns  
(1835-1921)

It is amazing to think that Saint Saëns' life covered the musical period between Berlioz and Les Six, although it has to be said that his musical style lies somewhere in between and is not as inspired as either. He composed a great deal, indeed, he once said that his facility for composition was such that he "produces music as apple trees produce apples". If these two charming pieces are anything to go by, it is a pity that his smaller scale choral works are not better known.

1. Calme des nuits - Calm of night, evening freshness,  
vastness of the sparkling stars, great silence of  
other dark worlds, you charm profound souls. The  
blazing sun, gaiety and noise please the most inane.  
Only the poet is shamed by the love of tranquil things.
2. Les fleurs et les arbres - Flowers and trees, bronze  
and marble, gold, enamels, the sea, fountains, hills  
and plains console our ills.

Eternal nature, you seem more beautiful in the heart  
of sorrow! And art reigns over us, its flame  
illuminates laughter and tears.

Mass in G major

Francis Poulenc  
(1899-1963)

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

Poulenc's Mass is typical of his choral writing, consisting of short homophonic phrases, with little development of musical ideas, rather introducing new melodic material or (particularly in the Sanctus) repeating the same ideas over and over again. Like all his music it has elegance, depth of feeling and a bitter-sweetness that reflects the mixture of gaiety and melancholy in the composer's own personality.

The scoring is for 4 part chorus with divisions interspersed with short passages for groups of soloists, a Soprano being particularly prominent in the Agnus Dei. Poulenc sets the usual movements of the mass with the exception of the Credo.

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INTERVAL 20 minutes

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Der Geist hilft

J S Bach  
(1685-1750)

Bach's six motets were all written for special occasions such as funerals. After his death, as musical tastes changed, his music was largely neglected until revived by Mendelssohn and Wesley, and the only pieces to remain in regular performance were the motets.

'Der Geist hilft' is a setting of Romans Chapter 8 vv 26 and 27 with the Chorale 'Der heilige Brunst'. Musically the piece falls into 4 sections - the first, and longest, being for double choir in a fairly gentle 3/8; the second, also in 8 parts, is a faster 4 in a bar. The third section, which is in four parts, is an alla breve fugue, and the chorale 'Der heilige Brunst' closes the work.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of man knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Chorale Holy Spirit, sweet consolation, help us now to stay faithful, joyous and steadfast in your Service. Help us in our affliction. O Lord, prepare us through your power, and strengthen the weakness of the flesh, so that we may continue to struggle here, and press on through death and life to you. Halleluyah.

Matrai Kepek (Matra pictures)

Zoltan Kodaly  
(1882-1967)

Kodaly was born in Galanta in Western Hungary (now in Czechoslovakia). As a student in Budapest he became increasingly aware of the idea that Hungarian motifs should be dominant in Hungarian music.

In 1905 began the collaboration with his friend, Bartok, which was to revolutionise Hungarian music. The two travelled through the villages with a phonograph recording over 16,000 performances by peasant musicians. The result of this was to remove the idea that the so-called Hungarian folk compositions of the likes of Liszt and Lehar were genuine, being based in fact on imported gypsy music.

Throughout his life the folk music of his native land had a very strong influence on all his composition, and this suite of folk songs from the Matra region is typical of his arrangements.

The suite consists of settings of 6 songs, the last two being combined in the closing section.

1. Vidrocki (A shepherd and a thief)

Vidrocki's famous flock wanders through the Matra because it cannot find him. The flock wanders through the undergrowth. "Where can I make a stand in the middle of the forest?"

Bring my sweetheart, cloak and axe, so that I can seek my flock, because they are going to kill my ram. Night falls and there is no-one to ask for lodging. Thick forest is my lodging, a bush my home.

Already Vidrocki steals the money, and in the small hours leads away the foal. He leads it where the sun sets, there it's owner never goes.

Have you heard the great news? How Pinter Pista has cut off Vidrocki's head with one stroke. Who will wash off Vidrocki's blood? Whoever does it, let the Good Lord's blessing fall on him as a drenching rain from heaven.

In Vidrocki's grave pearls fall on his coffin. Hey, Vidrocki, come out, six counties are waiting to deal with you. "What good are six counties? It will take twelve!"

2. The Farewell (El megyek, el megyek)

I will go away - I must go away. I have no desire to stay in this wretched hamlet.

If you go away, be true only to me, your true love; do not be unfaithful.

If you are true, God bless you. If you are false, my love, God punish you.

3. The Message (Madarka, madarka)

Little bird, little singing bird, carry my letter to my homeland. If they ask who sent it, say it was sent by one who in exiled anguish breaks his heart.

4. Summertime (Reten, reten)

Look, in a meadow outside Tar, a brown-haired lass. A brown-haired lad passes that way. He takes off his hat.

"What are you doing, pretty brown haired lass?"

"You can see that I am gathering hay".

"That's not for you, my brown haired lass. You should have a pretty room in which to sit and sew.

5. Stealing chickens (Ket tyukom tavali)

I got two hens last year and three I have had for three years, drive them home my Juliska and I will feed them oats.

Yellow pie, well filled pie, all three pies, my husband is at home and I have lost nothing.

"If you knew it was mine, why did you feed it?"

"Well, my kinswoman, we fed it for we could not see it die!"

Can you hear, servant girl, may the crow claw you! The gray one has died, what shall I do with it?

6. The drunkard (Hallode, te szolgalo)

Who has gone for wine? God punish them for taking so long! I hav'nt had a drop to drink and I'm dying of thirst.

As the willow has no root, this guest has no eyes. If he had, he would not have been here so long.

I live in Apcz, look for me. I have two daughters, love them. I'll give you one of them, take whichever!

He who marries off a daughter, he shall have a feather bed. He who marries off a son, let him have wine and spirits.

Go, guest, out of my house, or I shall pick up this stick under my chair. I shall whirl it and twirl it and flatten it on your back!