

**ST GEORGE'S,  
HANOVER SQUARE**

**LONDON CONCORD SINGERS**

**ORGAN - GRAHAM OWEN  
CONDUCTOR - MALCOLM COTTLE**

**THURSDAY 24 MARCH, 1988**

**7.30pm**

**IN SPIRITU HUMILITATIS**

**CROCE**

**STABAT MATER**

**PALESTRINA**

**HEI MIHI! DOMINE**

**DONATO**

**RORATE COELI**

**MUSGRAVE**

**ST MATTHEW PASSION**

**OBRECHT**

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**IN DIE TRIBULATIS**

**GUAMI**

**MISSA CHORALIS**

**LISZT**

IN SPIRITU HUMILITATIS

GIOVANNI CROCE  
(1557-1609)

Groce was born near Venice in 1557, and was recruited into the choir of St Mark's while still a boy, eventually becoming assistant Maestro, and finally succeeding Donato as Maestro in 1603. He not only wrote church music, but was also a fine madrigalist, influencing amongst others, the English composer Thomas Morley. This motet achieves its depth of feeling through some intense harmonies arrived at by unusual combinations of passing notes, especially towards the end.

*"May we, humble in spirit and penitent in heart, be accepted by Thee, O Lord: and may our sacrifice be so offered in Thy sight this day that it may be pleasing unto Thee, O God."*

STABAT MATER

GIOVANNI PALESTRINA  
(c. 1525-1594)

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina is generally considered to be the greatest writer of church music of the 16th century. He stood at a crossroads of composition. In one direction he looked back to the development of contrapuntal composition from all over Europe, particularly that of the Flemish Masters, whilst looking forward to the more elaborate music of Bach.

Although he wrote a quantity of madrigals, it is for his sacred compositions that he is best known. He assimilated the current styles but he refined them. Much of his writing is contrapuntal, but it always has a great clarity and simplicity. He was closely connected with putting into practice the demands of the Council of Trent; which stated that 'the music of the service must be purged of all secular, lascivious or impure matter and must be devoted not only to the delight of the ears but, above all, to the worship of God and the encouragement of faith'. To this end; the music was to be clear and lucid and nothing was to interfere with the easy intelligibility of the text. Palestrina's music was considered to be the perfect model of the style demanded by the Council.

Stabat Mater is an ancient poem written in the 13th century by Jacopone de Benedictus. It is an intensely emotional poem describing the Crucifixion with special focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus. Palestrina's setting is for double choir and was originally written for the Papal Choir, by whom it was treasured as an exclusive possession for nearly two hundred years, until Dr Burney, when visiting Rome, in 1770, managed to get hold of a copy, probably by bribing one of the singers.

The work, although continuous, falls into five distinct sections, the opening 'Stabat Mater' is mostly antiphonal with the two choirs only joining together on two occasions. The second starting at 'Eia, Mater', is in triple time, returning to common time for the third section, 'Sancta Mater'. In the fourth section, 'Juxta Crucem', the texture becomes much lighter with only the two Soprano lines, the first Altos and second Tenors, this section would almost certainly have been sung by soloists. The work concludes with a section, starting at 'Inflamatus et accensus', which looks forward to the glory that is to come.

HEI MIHI! DOMINE

BALDASSARE DONATO  
(c. 1525-1603)

Donato was singing in the choir of St Mark's, Venice by the time he was 25 and remained there until his death in 1603, being Maestro di Capella for the last 13 years of his life.

"Alas for me, Lord,  
Why have I sinned so in my life,  
What shall I do in my misery?  
Where shall I flee, unless to you  
My Lord God?  
Take pity on me, save me."

RORATO COELI

THEA MUSGRAVE  
(1928-)

Thea Musgrave was born in Edinburgh in 1928. After 3 years at University there, she went to Paris in 1950 to study with Nadia Boulanger. Her style gradually changed towards chromaticism and her forms became more abstract. With her opera "The Decision" (in the first performance of which tonight's conductor was involved) a greater extroversion of expression and technical means was introduced into her music.

'Rorate coeli' was commissioned by the National Federation of Music Societies and is a setting of two poems by the 16th century Scottish poet William Dunbar. The first 'Rorate coeli desuper!' is a Christmas poem with its refrain 'Et nobis Puer natus est' (and for us a son is born). The other pertains to Easter and Ascension - the refrain in this instance being 'Surrexit Dominus de Sepulchro' (God raised him from the tomb).

The piece contains many unusual effects such as spoken passages, with pitch and timing left to the discretion of the individual singer.

ST MATTHEW PASSION

JAKOB OBRECHT  
(c. 1450-1505)

Obrecht was born in Bergen-op-Zoom in Holland, and apart from a few brief periods of service at the Court of Ferrara in Italy, he spent most of his career in the Low Countries and Northern France, holding posts at Antwerp, Cambrai, Bruges, Bergen itself and Utrecht. He was a supreme master of the Flemish style of composition whilst breaking fairly radically from the pure polyphony of Ocheghem, achieving a new sonority based on well-founded harmonies.

His St Matthew Passion is something of a landmark, being the earliest known example of a Motet-Passion, although it is firmly based on, and uses as its cantus firmus the traditional plainsong Passion. Despite its title, the Passion uses texts from all four gospels in order to carry the narrative up to, and to include, the seven last words on the Cross.

THERE WILL NOW BE AN INTERVAL  
AND WINE WILL BE SERVED IN THE PORCH

IN DIE TRIBULATIONIS

GIUSEPPE GUAMI

(c. 1535-1611)

Guami, who succeeded Andrea Gabrieli as one of the two organists in St Marks, came originally from Lucca in Tuscany. He worked for some time in Munich and it is quite possible that most of his church music was written there although published in Venice. He only stayed at St Marks for 3 years before returning to his native land.

This motet is notable for its use of the chromatic scale – rising at first and later descending.

*“In the day of my trouble, my soul refused to be comforted; and my weeping eyes were unable to watch. I was troubled, and I spoke not. And I meditated in the night with my own heart; and I was exercised and I swept my spirit”.*

MISSA CHORALIS

FRANZ LISZT

(1811-1886)

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

‘For want of a better term we may well call the new music Humanitarian. It must be devotional, strong and drastic, uniting – on a colossal scale – the theatre and the Church, dramatic and sacred, superb and simple, fiery and free, strong and calm, translucent and emotional’. This was Liszt’s idea of how church music should be in a letter he wrote to the Gazette Musicale in 1834. He certainly lived up to his ideals in his earlier work, taking over 4 hours to perform, using enormous forces, but rarely all at the same time, there are movements for orchestra alone, and others for unaccompanied chorus and various other combinations.

Missa Choralis is a relatively austere work, having little of the chromaticism and romantic rhetoric of most of his other church music, indeed, at times, particularly in the Kyrie, it is as though Liszt was trying to return to the language of the 16th Century. This may be explained by the fact that it was composed in the same year (1865) that he took minor orders in the Roman Church and became Abbé Liszt.