

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BLOOMSBURY

Thursday 14th. March, 1991

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS
Conductor : Malcolm Cottle

Sea Change

Richard Rodney Bennett

Richard Rodney Bennett is one of the most successful and versatile of contemporary British composers. As well as being highly regarded as a composer of serious music, he has written many film scores and is much in demand as a jazz composer and pianist. Last summer we featured one of his lighter pieces (*Nonsense*, with words by Mervyn Peake) - tonight we perform something a little more serious.

Sea change consists of settings of four poems about the sea and its inhabitants, opening and closing with extracts from Shakespeares *The Tempest*. In the third movement the singers are instructed that the pitches are only very approximately suggested and that unisons of pitch should be avoided, also any suggestion of diatonic 'melody'.

The work was written for the Three Choirs Festival and was first performed in Worcester Cathedral in August 1984 by the Donald Hunt Singers.

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9

Heitor Villa-Lobos

There have been several fine composers from Brasil, but without doubt the finest is Villa-Lobos (1887-1959): Among his best compositions are the nine *Bachianas Brasileiras*. These are written for various different combinations, some being for full orchestra while the two best known (Nos.2 and 5) are for 8 cellos and 8 cellos with Soprano soloist respectively.

No. 9 is for 'orchestra of voices' although there is also a version for strings. The 'orchestra' consists of six parts, Sopranos and Basses being divided. There are no words, each voice, for the most part, singing on different syllables, each with a different vowel sound.

The work is in the form of a prelude and fugue, the prelude being quite short and slow and is in a rather sultry mood. The fugue is much livelier and longer has the time-signature of 11/8!!

I N T E R V A L

20 Minutes

Euntes ibant et flebant

Henryk Mikotai Gorecki

Gorecki is one of the leading contemporary Polish composers, writing, for the most part, in a minimalist style. *Euntes*, written in 1977, consists mostly of just three notes, D, E and F, with the musical phrase repeated over and over again very slowly and quietly. The music becomes loud and A, B flat and C are added to the texture at '*he will come again rejoicing*'. We then return to the opening mood leading to a slightly surprising chordal ending.

Komm, Jesu, komm

J.S. Bach

Bach spent most of the last thirty years of his life at Leipzig as Kantor of St. Thomas's Church, one of the most responsible and important appointments for a musician in Protestant Germany. It was during this time that he composed his finest church music, including the two Passions, the B Minor Mass and the six German Motets.

After his death, most of Bach's music was neglected and forgotten until Mendelssohn led the revival nearly a hundred years later. It seems, however, that the motets were performed during that time. Indeed, '*Singet dem Herrn*' was sung especially for Mozart by the choir of St. Thomas's. An onlooker said of Mozart, who did not know Bach's music, that, as he listened "his whole soul seemed to be in his ears".

It seems that in Leipzig in Bach's time, the more prosperous citizens were married or buried with musical honours appropriate to their social and financial standing; the more wealthy having the full choir and 'figured music' while the less well-off had to make do with half-choir and chorales. *Komm, Jesu, komm* was evidently written for the funeral of someone belonging to the former category. It is in four sections, the first of which is slow and majestic with the two choirs answering one another. The second is a lively fugue-like section which leads directly into the third in a gentle 6/8 rhythm. The final section is a chorale-like Aria.