

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BLOOMSBURY

Thursday 1st. April 1993

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Conductor : MALCOLM COTTLE

Peccavi super numerum

Giaches de Wert
(1535-1596)

Giaches de Wert was born in Antwerp but lived most of his life in Italy, beginning as a choirboy in Naples and Novellara, and then studying under Cipriano de Rore at Modena. He held several posts, notably at the courts of Parma and Mantua, where he was Maestro di Capella for many years. He is best known for his writing of madrigals, of which he published 13 volumes. His sacred output was much smaller but it is all of a high quality. This motet is typical of his style and is full of dramatic word painting, especially at the words 'quoniam irritavi iram tuam' where God's anger is depicted by quick, syncopated figures.

My sins are vaster than the seas, and my transgressions multiply.
I am not worthy to gaze on the height of the heavens because of the
depth of my wrongdoing: for I have aroused your anger and done evil
in your sight.

Two Blake Songs

John Thomas
(1961-)

As a boy John sang as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral. He studied piano and composition at Trinity College and subsequently at Goldsmiths College. He now divides his time between composition, teaching and performing in all musical fields.

In this setting of two contrasting poems by William Blake, from his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, the two poems are combined in one movement. The first, 'The Shepherd', depicts an Arcadian scene, expressing the relationship of the ewes and their lambs with their guardian, the shepherd. The second, 'London', shows Blake writing of a mental state symbolized by the social injustices seen every day in the city, brought about by industrialisation and the effects of the business world upon the individual.

The Shepherd

London

How sweet is the shepherds sweet lot,
From morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

I wander through each charter'd street
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

For he hears the lambs innocent call,
And he hears the ewes tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

In every cry of every man
In every infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear

How the chimney sweepers cry
Every blackening church appalls
And the hapless soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infants fear
And blasts with plagues the marriage hearse.

Tristitia et anxietas

William Byrd
(1542-1623)

It is probable that Byrd's Cantiones Sacrae of 1589 were not written for liturgical use, but were intended for domestic performance, alongside the secular repertory. Most of the motets in this collection are fairly sombre in character and were written as prayers, exhortations and protests on behalf of the oppressed Catholic community in England at that time. This motet is in two parts and is written for five lower voices (ATTBB).

- 1) Sorrow and anxiety have taken hold of my inmost being. My heart is made sorrowful in grief, and my eyes are darkened. Woe is me for I have sinned.
- 2) But thou, O Lord, who forsakest not those who hope in thee, comfort and help me for thy holy name's sake, and have mercy upon me.

Mass Op.10

Bernhard Lewkovitch
(1927-)

Lewkovitch was born in Copenhagen where he was a choirboy in the Roman Catholic church of St. Ansgar. He studied at the Royal Danish Conservatory and later, for a time, in France. He became organist at St. Ansgar from 1947 to 1963 and he founded and directed two choirs which, besides singing his own works, did much to make the music of the middle ages and renaissance better known in Denmark. As a composer, Lewkovitch is strongly attached to the liturgy and music of the Catholic church, and was initially influenced by Gregorian chant. In about 1955 he abandoned modality and experimented with bi- and poly-tonality, eventually using 12-note serial methods, but, more recently he has returned to his earlier style, although developing it in new directions under the influence of the intervening work.

The opus 10 Mass dates from the early 1950s and sets the usual sections of the liturgy.

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

INTERVAL

Ave verum corpus

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Liszt settled in Rome in his later years, where he turned away from the glamour of his earlier life. He turned to religion and took minor orders in the church and became known as the Abbe Liszt. From this time his compositions also took a religious trend and he wrote many liturgical pieces, Masses, Motets and a Requiem. Their style is very far removed from his old style, being much more inward looking and contemplative, although, for the time, very forward looking and innovative harmonically.

Hail true body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary; truly suffering
hung on the cross for mankind. Blood and water flowed from your
wounded side. Be to us a consolation at the time of our death. Amen.

Missa pro Defunctis

Orlandus Lassus
(1532-1594)

By the time he was 24 years old, Lassus had held positions in Sicily, Milan, Naples, Florence, Rome, and, after a period at home in Mons with his ailing parents, Antwerp. Then, in 1556, he was summoned to Munich to become principal tenor in the choir of Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria. He was to remain in Munich for the rest of his life, becoming Kapellmeister in 1564. He was, perhaps the most prolific composer of all time, writing over 1500 religious compositions (including 53 known masses) and some 800 secular works. In spite of this his work is justly renowned for its quality rather than its quantity.

Lassus wrote several settings of the Requiem Mass, this one is for five voices and sets the usual movements but omits the Sequence (Dies irae).

1. **Introit : Requiem aeternam**....Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
Thou, O God, art praised in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem
Hear my prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.
Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.
2. **Tract : Absolve Domine**....Absolve, O Lord, the souls of the faithful departed from from every bond of sin. And by thy grace, help them to escape the last judgement: and enjoy the blessing of everlasting light.
3. **Offertory : Domine Jesu Christe**....O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory free the souls of the departed from the pains of hell, and from the deep pit: deliver them from the jaws of the lion, lest they are swallowed up and disappear into darkness. But let thy standard-bearer, blessed Michael, bring them to that holy light, which thou promised to Abraham and his seed.
We offer you, Lord, this sacrifice of prayer and praise: receive it on behalf of the souls we recall this day. Make them, Lord, to pass from death to life, as you promised to Abraham and his seed.
4. **Sanctus** : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

- Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest.
5. **Agnus Dei** : Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest eternal.
6. **Communion : Lux aeterna**....Let light eternal shine on them, O Lord: with thy saints for ever, for thou art gracious.
Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them: with thy saints for ever, for thou art gracious.

Sonnet

John Joubert

This setting, by the South African born composer, Joubert, of a poem by Swinburne, was written as a 70th. birthday tribute to Stephen Wilkinson, conductor of the BBC Northern Singers (now the Britten Singers) and the William Byrd Choir of Manchester.

O heart of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom:
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in deaths room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir:
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

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