

# THE LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

## CONDUCTOR: MALCOLM COTTLE

6TH JULY 1995  
ST. CYPRIAN'S CHURCH,  
GLENTWORTH STREET

### JOHANNES BRAHMS                      LIEDER & ROMANZEN Opus 93a (Nos. 1, 3 & 6)

In this group of songs Brahms set a group of Romantic texts in a profoundly economical and formally concentrated musical idiom.

1 - THE HUNCHBACKED BEGGAR, is a robust setting of a lower Rhenish folksong with a daring imitation of open fiddle sonorities. A hunchbacked fiddler plays in the market place of Frankfurt-am-Main. Asked by a group of beautiful women to play at their Walpurgisnacht, he plays so beautifully that the witches remove his hump.

3 - O SWEET MAY, sets a poem by Achim von Arnim, with fluid cross-rhythms. In Sweet May, the stream is free, but I am downcast. I do not see you, I look down to earth. O Sweet May, let me be free like the songs along the hedgerows.

6 - BEHERZIGUNG, is full of strenuous polyphony. It is a superb canonic treatment of Goethe's aphorism which castigates timid vacillation and hesitation and instead urges a call to action.

### JOHANNES BRAHMS                      PARTSONGS Opus 104 (Nos 1, 2, 3 & 5)

Beauty of sound and relaxed mastery of the medium combine with texts of almost uniformly nostalgic import to produce one of Brahms' most exquisitely despondent works. In the first three, Brahms uses the six part choral texture in the kind of male/female polyphonic exchanges that he usually reserved for sacred choruses.

1 - NIGHTWATCH I, 2 - NIGHTWATCH II, are glowing nocturnes setting poems by Rückert with a correlation of mood with musical movement and a wonderful richness of musical colour.

In the first, the gentle tone of the breath of love in the breast breathes out frailty if you open a loving heart. If do not, nightmares arrive.

In the second, the horn of the watchman cries. Do you hear the whispering voice of the Angel, extinguishing the lamp and covering you with peace

3 - LAST HAPPINESS, is a highly concentrated setting of the Max Kalbeck poem with an evocation of autumnal twilight. Leaves glide lifeless from the trees. The heart lives in dreams of spring, yet there remains a last glimpse of the sun in the hedge-rose. Beside a last happiness, a sweet hopelessness

5 - IN THE AUTUMN, is the culmination of the group and of Brahms' secular choral writing. It is a powerfully depressive setting of Klaus Groth's poem, full of gloom shrouded nostalgia in which Autumn and Evening symbolise the end of life. The Autumn is serious, when the leaves fall the heart sinks. The day fades, mist veils the sun and the heart. Night comes early. Man sees the sun setting and likens life to the years.

## KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI     SONG OF THE CHERUBIM

Penderecki is a Polish composer born in 1933. This piece, written as a form of relaxation after his opera *The Black Mask*, was a 60th birthday tribute to Mstislav Rostropovich, the Russian cellist and conductor. The first performance was in March 1987 by the Choral Arts Society of Washington conducted by the composer, it took place whilst Rostropovich was conductor of the symphony orchestra in Washington. The text is a setting of a prayer from the Russian Orthodox Liturgy and is sung in Russian.

### IZE XERUVIMY

### SONG OF THE CHERUBIM

*Ize xeruvimy tayno obrazuyushche,  
i zhivotvoryashshey Troitse trisvyatuyu  
pesn' pripevayushche. vsyakoye nyne,  
zhiteyskoye otlozhim popechenie.  
yako da tsarya vsex pod'imem  
angelskimi nevidimo  
dorinosima chimi  
Alliluia, alliluia, alliluia*

*Let us the cherubim mystically representing,  
and unto the life-giving Trinity  
the thrice holy chant intoning,  
now lay aside all earthly care:  
That we may raise on the King of all,  
by the angelic hosts  
invisibly attended.  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*

## GUISEPPI VERDI

### AVE MARIA - from 4 SACRED PIECES

### LAUDA ALLA VERGINE - from 4 SACRED PIECES

### PATER NOSTER

The FOUR SACRED PIECES were Verdi's last completed compositions following the opera *Falstaff* (1892). They were followed only by sketches for another sacred piece, a Prayer. They thus represent the most mature, highly distilled Verdi, in harmony as in structure and in the melodic invention that no longer prescribes its harmonic support but is conceived together with it, each dependent on the other. This can be heard most obviously in the AVE MARIA. The starting point is a peculiar scale (the *scala enigmatica*, which appeared originally as a musical puzzle in a newspaper.) which is assigned to a different voice in each of the strophes, but is never the 'melody'. The piece arose out of Verdi's correspondence with Boito about the musical puzzle.

The LAUDA ALLA VERGINE (Praise to the Blessed Virgin) has a text from Dante's *Paradiso*. Verdi set it simply and tenderly, with wonderfully smooth and spontaneous passages of imitative counterpoint to contrast with the radiant chordal sections. The setting is for sopranos and altos, each in two parts.

The PATER NOSTER is one of a group of early religious works written by Verdi, also written at the same time was an AVE MARIA which pre-dates that used in the FOUR SACRED PIECES. The text for the prayer is a colloquial version, rather loosely based on the Pater Noster in Dante's *Paradiso*.

### AVE MARIA

*Ave Maria, Gratia plena  
Dominus Tecum,  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus  
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.  
Amen*

### HAIL MARY

*Hail Mary, Full of grace,  
The Lord is with thee  
Blessed art thou among women  
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God  
Pray for us sinners  
Now and in the hour of our death*

### LAUDA ALLA VERGINE

*Vergine madre figlia del tuo figlio  
Umile ed alta più che creatura,  
Termine fisso d'eterno consiglio,  
Tu se' colei che l'umana natura nobilitasti  
Sì, che l'suo fattore non di sdegno  
Di farsi sua fattura.  
Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore,  
Per lo cui caldo nell'eterna pace  
Così è germinato questo fiore  
Qui se' a noi meridiana face di caritate,  
E giusto, intra i mortali,  
Se' disperanza fontana vivace.  
Donna se' tanto grande, e tanto vali  
Che qual vuol grazia  
Ed a te non ricorre  
Sua disanza vuol volar senz'ali  
La tua benignità non pur soccorre a chi dimanda  
Ma molte fiata liberamente al dimandar precorre  
In te misericordia In te pietate  
In te magnificenza, In te s'aduna  
Quantuque in creatura è di contate  
Ave, Ave.*

### PATER NOSTER

*O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,  
Santificato sia sempre is tuo nome  
E laude e grazia di ciò che ci fai  
Avenga il regno tuo, siccome pone  
Questa orazion: tua volontà si faccia,  
Siccome in cielo, in terra in unione  
Padre, Padre, dà oggi a noi pane, eti piaccia  
Che ne perdoni li peccati nostri;  
Nè cosa oi facciam che ti dispiaccia  
E che noi perdoniam, tu ti dimostri  
Esempio a noi per la tua gran virtutue  
Acciò dal rio nemico ognum si schiostri  
Divino Padre, pien d'ogni salute  
Ancor ci guarda dalla tentazione,  
Dell'inferal nemico, e sue ferrute,  
Divino Padre,  
Ancor ci guarda dalla tentazione,  
Dell'inferal nemico, e sue ferrute,  
Sì che a te facciamo orazione  
Che meritiam tua grazia,  
E il regno vostro a posseder  
Vegniam con divozione.  
Preghiamti, Re di Gloria e Signor Nostro  
Che tu ci guardi da dolore:  
E fitto la mente abiamò in te,  
Col volto prostro. Amen*

### PRAISE TO THE VIRGIN

*O virgin mother daughter of Your son  
Humbler and higher than any creature  
Fixed goal of eternal plans.  
You are She whom human nature  
Ennobled so much, that its creator  
Did not disdain to make Himself its creation.  
Within Your womb that love was lit again,  
Whose warmth in the eternal peace  
Has made this flower fully unfold.  
Here to us You are a noonday torch  
Of charity, and down among the mortals  
You are a living spring of hope.  
Lady, You are so great and so much worth  
That he who seeks grace and does not turn to  
You. His longing seeks to fly without wings.  
Your kindness not only helps him  
Who asks, but many a time  
Liberally anticipates the plea.  
In You mercy, in You pity,  
In You magnificence, in You gathers  
Anything of goodness in a creature  
Hail. Hail.*

### OUR FATHER

*Our Father in Heaven  
May your name be Holy for ever  
You grace us and we praise you  
May your kingdom come according to this prayer  
Your will be done  
on earth as in heaven  
Father, give us bread this day  
And forgive us our sins  
And all that we do to displease you  
And so that we may forgive others  
Lead us by your divine example and great virtue,  
That we may be saved from wrongdoing.  
Holy Father, Our Saviour  
Guard us still from temptation  
From the Infernal Enemy and his evil  
Holy Father  
Guard us still from temptation  
From the Infernal Enemy and his evil  
We pray to you  
That we may be worthy of your grace  
And gain your kingdom  
We come with devotion.  
We beseech you, King of Glory, our Lord,  
Deliver us from harm:  
Our deepest thoughts are with you.  
Our heads are bowed. Amen*

## INTERVAL

## HENRY PURCELL

## HEAR MY PRAYER O LORD

Most of Purcell's surviving religious works were written for Westminster Abbey or the Chapel Royal. All but five surviving anthems are of the accompanied verse anthem form where soloists sing verses in contrast to the choral sections. Of the four non-verse anthems, two are of doubtful authenticity and one is a grand anthem written for James II's Coronation. The remaining two (including tonight's HEAR MY PRAYER O LORD ) are apparently verse anthems which have lost their verse movements. Nonetheless HEAR MY PRAYER O LORD in its surviving form is hauntingly beautiful. It forms our contribution to the celebrations for the 300th anniversary of Purcell's death. The anthem is from a manuscript volume of church music in Purcell's own handwriting, preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The date of this volume is supplied by the following sentence on the fly-leaf "God bless Mr. Henry Purcell, September ye 10th, 1682"

The text of this anthem is from Psalm 52, verse 1. *Hear my prayer, O lord, and let my crying come unto Thee.*

## AARON COPLAND

## FOUR MOTETS

These four motets were composed in autumn 1921 whilst the composer was studying with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. These settings were performed by the Paris-American-Gargenville Chorus in November 1924 conducted by Melville Smith. Boulanger conducted them herself shortly after and gave the first Paris performance in February 1937. In 1924 Boulanger wrote to the composer that "after daily rehearsal under Melville Smith the chorus has really done marvellously. Those motets sound in the voices in a stunning manner." The motets were only published in 1979. The texts, in English, are drawn from biblical sources.

1. HELP US, O LORD
2. THOU, O JEHOVAH, ABIDETH FOREVER
3. HAVE MERCY ON US, O MY LORD
4. SING YE PRAISES TO OUR KING AND RULER

## GYÖRGY LIGETI

## NIGHT, MORNING

Ligeti is a composer of Hungarian Jewish birth, who fled Hungary in 1956. In 1953 cultural restrictions in Hungary were relaxed after Stalin's death. As a result Ligeti was able to write a group of works in a free tonal language, the most characteristic of which are these two songs. After he fled from Hungary, his musical language underwent further change and development. The first piece, NIGHT, uses extensive repetitions of the short poem to create a nightmare world. The second describes an incredibly noisy morning in the countryside.

### 1. ÉJSZAKA

*Rengeteg tövis, rengeteg tövis,  
csönd! Csönd!  
Rengeteg, rengeteg csönd!  
Én csöndem szivem dobogása  
csönd  
Éjszaka*

### 2. REGGEL

*Már üti üti már!  
A torony a hajnalban,  
üti már  
Az it döt bemeszeli  
a korai kikerki,  
Reggel van!  
Már üti már*

### 1 NIGHT

*Thorny huge jungles, mysterious forests,  
Still! Still!  
Boundless & endless & still  
Beats of my heart in endless silence  
Still  
Darkness Night*

### 2 MORNING

*Ring, tick tock, tick tock, bell!  
And the clock ticks wishing well  
Tick tock, bell  
In the dawn, cock-a-doodle doo,  
the cock cries and the duck too  
Ring well, bell  
Ring tock-tock bell.*