

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Conductor - Malcolm Cottle

Thursday 10th July, 7.30pm

St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street

STANFORD

THREE LATIN MOTETS

BRAHMS

WARUM IST DAS LICHT GEGEBEN

WALTON

CANTICO DEL SOLE

MENDELSSOHN

MEIN GOTT, WARUM HAST DU MICH VERLASSEN

INTERVAL

BARBER

REINCARNATIONS

J.S.BACH

JESU MEIN FREUDE

STANFORD: THREE LATIN MOTETS

**Justorum animae
Coelos ascendit hodie
Beati quorum via**

Stanford wrote 9 operas, 5 symphonies, 3 piano concertos and many songs and was highly regarded as a teacher by such pupils as Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells. He received great acclaim during his lifetime, but the years from 1911 to his death in 1924 were the days of his increasing neglect, a neglect he continually felt. Styles and techniques of composition were changing rapidly and Stanford could not accept these developments other than as 'ephemeral', after which sanity would prevail. It is only recently that such works as his symphonies have come to be re-evaluated. During his centenary year, Vaughan Williams commented that if Stanford had been born German or Italian, his operas would have been highly valued (Vaughan Williams also went on to comment that he noticed that Covent Garden were celebrating the Centenary not with performances of **Seamus O'Brien**, his most successful opera, but with Bellini's **Norma**).

But it is in the area of church music where his music has had its most enduring success. He swept away the empty conventions and complacencies which had debased English music since Purcell. He enriched cathedral music with a whole series of works - Anthems, Motets, Services - many of which have remained in the repertory. His **Three Latin Motets** date from 1913, and were written for the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge.

BRAHMS: WARUM IST DAS LICHT GEGEBEN

Johannes Brahms was inspired by his studies of Bach and other Baroque composers and he wrote motets for unaccompanied choir throughout his creative life. In **Warum ist das Licht gegeben** the free use of archaic elements, the bold melodies and powerful harmonies have resulted in a perfectly complete new creation. It progresses from a despairing lament at the beginning to a quiet resignation at the close. The text was selected by the composer from the Old and New Testaments.

The first movement has a peculiar rondo-like structure, reminiscent of a piece by Johann Hermann Schein from 1623. The ever recurring question, Warum? Portrays the doubt which gnaws at the heart of the grief-stricken. The second movement is a canon for 4 voices and the third movement is the final chorale.

WALTON: CANTICO DEL SOLE

William Walton's **Cantico del Sole** was written in 1974 and was one of his last choral works. A setting of St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun written for the Cork Festival, it came as a welcome relief from his abortive efforts to write a 3rd Symphony.

In August 1973 he had written to Malcolm Arnold, '*We are coming to Ireland at the end of April next year. Cork Univ. desires to doctor me (I'm not sure I've anything left!) and I have to write a little piece for it. Being, I presume, a Catholic Univ. I thought of setting "Cantico del Sole" by St. Francis of Assisi*'.

Cork's invitation was for an unaccompanied choral piece for the 25th Anniversary of the Cork International Festival. The first performance was given in Cork by the BBC Northern Singers conducted by Stephen Wilkinson. Walton wrote to Malcolm Arnold '*The "Cantico" has worked out as a deplorably dull and unexciting piece*', yet to another correspondent he wrote '*The "Cantico" is good but needs I think the addition of a small orchestra.*' A critic at the time singled out '*a new, almost Latin sensuousness about the harmony, particularly at the work's radiant climax.*'

MENDELSSOHN:

MEIN GOTT, WARUM HAST DU MICH VERLASSEN

Mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen (My God why hast thou forsaken me) is the third of Mendelssohn's Three Psalms, Opus 78 for unaccompanied choir. All the settings are in a severely restrained idiom which have great beauty and dignity. They were written in 1843-1844 whilst Mendelssohn was living in Berlin as musical director of the new Academy of Arts founded by Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia. Both Opus 78 and Opus 91 were written for the Berlin Cathedral Choir. The restrictions that this placed on the forces that could be used caused Mendelssohn some trouble. (In Opus 91 the Cathedral authorities objected to the inclusion of a harp as this was a profane instrument.) Setting words from Psalm 22, the piece uses eight soloists and a double choir.

Interval

BARBER:

REINCARNATIONS

Mary Hynes
Anthony O Daly
The Coolin

In 1938, Toscanini gave the premier of Barber's most famous work, his **Adagio for Strings**. In 1939 Barber went to teach at the Curtis Institute, in Philadelphia, where he formed the Madrigal Chorus. For them he wrote a number of works including the last two movements of **Reincarnations**. Originally he wrote 5 pieces, setting poems by James Stephens based on verses (in Gaelic) by earlier Irish poets. The surviving three are all based on poems by Antoine O Reachtaire (c1784-1831) better known as Raftery.

The poetry of Stephens had long held an attraction for Barber. Stephens's verses follow the Gaelic poetic tradition of richness in description, wit, moods of exuberance and melancholy; and lyricism which suggests music in words. The title alludes to Stephens's technique of writing new forms of the original words. The legendary **Mary Hynes** was reportedly the handsomest maiden born for 100 years in the West of Ireland. In the poem, the phrase *She is a rune* might puzzle, unless one knows that rune means literally *a secret* and is here used as *sweetheart*. **Anthony O Daly** is based on the true story of a captain of the rebel Whiteboys who was unfairly condemned and sentenced to be hanged but who went to his death submissively and heroically without betraying other rebels. There are many versions of **The Coolin**, a song from Connacht. It has been said that 'there is no song in Erin more famous than the Cooleen'. In Gaelic the song is called *Cúl Fhionn* or *Fair Haired Cool*.

J.S.BACH: JESU MEIN FREUDE

In the Lutheran liturgy, the motet was far less important than the cantata. Latin motets were sung at Vespers on Sunday afternoons, at the beginning of the main morning service and sometimes during communion. The ordinary repertory of the Leipzig choir consisted of simpler sixteenth and early seventeenth century motets and Bach used his less able singers for these motets, reserving the best singers for the cantatas.

Bach's six or seven surviving motets are of considerably greater difficulty than the Leipzig choir's regular repertoire. They were mainly written for funeral or memorial services. For these services Bach could call upon a greater number of singers, so a number of the motets are for eight part chorus.

Jesu, meine Freude is one of his best known motets, a solemn piece, probably for a funeral, written for 5 part choir. The 6 verses of Johann Franck's hymn are separated by verses from Romans 8 forming a kind of ritornello structure of particularly striking symmetry with 11 movements. The first and last movements are identical plain harmonisations of the chorale melody, while the other odd numbered movements treat the same melody more freely. No. 6 forms the fugal centrepiece, nos. 4 and 8 are for the three highest and the three lowest voices respectively, their symmetry enhanced by thematic cross-reference. Nos. 2 and 10 are even closer, no. 10 being a parody of no. 2.

MUSIC FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Great 20th Century Unaccompanied Choral Music

MUSIC FOR THE MILLENNIUM is London Concord Singers' dramatic three year exploration of the great unaccompanied choral works from the 20th Century. The 20th century works will be presented in three concerts per year from September 1997 to July 2000. Each concert will present an attractive mixture of old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, thus giving the more challenging 20th Century works a sympathetic context.

During the first season, 1997/98, we will be presenting music by Britten, Rachmaninov, Poulenc, Ravel, Villa Lobos, Shostakovitch and Michael Ball. The concerts will be as follows:-

18th December 1997, St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street

Stanford	Magnificat for Double Choir
Schütz	Singet dem Herren
Poulenc	Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël

3rd April 1998, St. Mary's Church, Cadogan Street

Lassus	Stabat Mater
Rachmaninov	Vespers

16th July 1998, St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street

Britten	Hymn to St. Cecilia
Shostakovich	Choruses Opus 88 (selection)
Villa Lobos	Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9 (Choral Version)
Gesualdo	Madrigals
Ravel	Trois Chansons

If you would like us to keep you informed about the Choir's activities then please join our mailing list by filling in one of the questionnaires.

If you would like to join the choir as we embark on this challenging three year programme, then please contact Malcolm Cottle, our Musical Director.

0171 354 3195 (day)
0171 226 1392 (eve)