

London Concord Singers

Conductor – Malcolm Cottle

July 8th 1999 – St. Mary's Church, Cadogan Street, Chelsea

Programme

LOUIS SPOHR - MASS FOR DOUBLE CHOIR OPUS 54

ROBERT WYLKYNSON – APOSTLES' CREED

INTERVAL

ALFRED SCHNITTKKE – CHOIR CONCERTO

LOUIS SPOHR - Mass for Double Choir Opus 54

Spohr won an enormous reputation during the Nineteenth Century as a composer, violin virtuoso, conductor and teacher as well as being renowned for his upright, noble character, a man of convinced liberal and democratic beliefs who was not afraid of speaking out against the repression and autocracy which abounded during his lifetime in the small German principalities. (His contemporaries also saw this 'upright character' translated into physical terms. He was nearly 6ft 7in tall.)

Spohr was born in the North German city of Braunschweig (Brunswick) on 5 April 1784 and as a boy showed talent for the violin. When he was fifteen he joined the ducal orchestra and at age of eighteen the Duke of Brunswick sent him on a year-long study tour, taking in various centres on the way to the then Russian capital, St Petersburg. After his return home, the Duke granted him leave to make a concert tour of North Germany and Spohr shot to overnight fame in the German lands after a concert in Leipzig in December 1804 received a rave review from the influential critic Friedrich Rochlitz. He became famous not only for his violin playing but also for his concertos, especially No 2 in D minor, Op 2.

Spohr now set out on the path of a successful career, which took in time as concertmeister to the court of Gotha, orchestra leader at Vienna's Theater an der Wien where he became friendly with Beethoven, opera director at Frankfurt and finally, Hofkapellmeister at Kassel where he died on 22 October, 1859. In between, he found time for numerous concert tours, most notably to Italy, England and Paris, with his wife, the harp virtuoso Dorette Scheidler (1787-1834).

From the start of his career, Spohr aspired to be something more than just a violinist who wrote concertos (such as Viotti, Kreutzer, Rode, Paganini, de Bériot, Vieuxtemps, Ernst or Wieniawski) and expanded his compositional scope to include opera, oratorio, cantata, lieder, symphony, chamber music and, especially in the first years of his marriage, works involving the harp. Gradually he took a place among the leading composers of his day, particularly for his fine concertos, overtures and first two symphonies.

Spohr's Mass (his only a capella work) shows what his contemporaries may have found new in him. Written for five soloists and two choirs, it is intricate, highly chromatic and harmonically challenging.

For many 19th century composers of sacred music, old music served as an object for the study of strict counterpoint, it became the model for the ecclesiastical style. Spohr's mass shows an independent style resulting from his period of study of polyphonic a capella church music combined with the musical idiom of his time. Spohr stated that in principle, he did not want to limit himself to the old masters' simple progressions in triads, but to extend his harmonic structure, meaning that he intended to compose an entirely contemporary work.

The first choral group Spohr presented it to found it incomprehensible. Bright, almost modern-sounding, it is written with a wonderful sense of freedom and fluidity. The highly original Agnus Dei could come from 1921 rather than 1821. Despite its intricacy, it has great clarity and transparency of texture.

ROBERT WYLKYNSON – Apostles' Creed

Since the middle of the Sixteenth Century the Eton College choirbook, from which Robert Wylkynson's setting of The Apostles' Creed was transcribed, has reposed virtually undisturbed on the shelves of the College Library. Unique among English musical manuscripts of pre-Reformation times both in the beauty of its execution and in the artistic and historical

interest of the music, it is still, in spite of having lost about half of its original contents, by far the largest extant collection of antiphons of the early Tudor period.

In medieval times it was the regular practice that all the singers of polyphonic music, a group perhaps of three to six persons, sang from one copy, the parts being disposed on two facing pages. The same arrangement was followed in the successively larger choirs of the fifteenth century; consequently choirbooks increased steadily in size until, in about 1510, separate part books were adopted.

The Eton College choirbook was designed for use by the college choir. Their chief duty was the singing of the evening antiphon: "Every day at a suitable time in the evening ... all sixteen choristers of our Royal College if they be present, and in place of those who are absent we desire that some of the scholars shall be added so that there may always be sixteen, walking two by two in surplices shall reverently go into chapel accompanied by the master of choristers ... They shall kneel before the crucifix and say *Pater Noster*; then they shall rise and sing before the image of the Blessed Virgin in the time of Lent the antiphon *Salve Regina* with its verses; outside Lent and also on feast days during Lent the sixteen choristers shall likewise sing in the best manner of which they have knowledge some other antiphon of the Blessed Virgin..."

The index at the beginning of the choirbook contains the names of twenty-five composers, many of whom had hitherto been quite unknown to musical historians.

Robert Wylkynson first appears in the Bursar's Rolls of Eton as parish clerk from 1496 to 1498. At Christmas 1499, his payment was increased from eight shillings and four pence a term to twelve shillings and six pence a term; from Michaelmas 1500, he is listed as master of the choristers with a "portion" of two pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence a year, which was increased to three pounds, six shillings and eight pence from Michaelmas 1509. The last list of clerks to contain his name is that for 1514-1515. There is no evidence that he had any direct part in compiling the manuscript, though his nine-part *Salve Regina* and this thirteen-part setting of the Apostles' Creed are signed with his name and are probably in his hand.

In the *Salve Regina* each of the nine parts is inscribed with the name of one of the ranks of angels (Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Powers etc.). This setting of the Apostles' Creed is a canon for thirteen equal male voices representing Christ and the Twelve Apostles. Each voice sings the text once only and so the texture of the piece builds from one voice at the opening to all thirteen voices in the middle and dies down to one voice at the end.

INTERVAL

ALFRED SCHNITTKE – Choir Concerto

Alfred Schnittke was born on 24 November 1934 in Engels, on the Volga River, in the Soviet Union. His father was born in Frankfurt to a Jewish family of Russian origin who had moved to the USSR in 1926, and his mother was a Volga-German born in Russia. Schnittke began his musical education in 1946 in Vienna where his father, a journalist and translator, had been posted. In 1948 the family moved to Moscow, where Schnittke studied piano and received a diploma in choral conducting.

From 1953 to 1958 he studied counterpoint and composition with Yevgeny Golubev and instrumentation with Nikolai Rakov at the Moscow Conservatory. Schnittke completed the postgraduate course in composition there in 1961 and joined the Union of Composers the same year. He was particularly encouraged by Phillip Herschkowitz, a Webern disciple, who resided in the Soviet capital.

In 1962, Schnittke was appointed instructor in instrumentation at the Moscow Conservatory, a post which he held until 1972. After Shostakovich's death in 1973 he became the Soviet establishment's main target among musicians. Under Brezhnev, his symphonies were virtually banned. To support himself during this time, Schnittke composed music for 60 films and 8 plays. Schnittke has written in a wide range of genres and styles and is noted, above all, for his hallmark "polystylistic" idiom. This idiom, with its technique of mixing direct quotation, original invention, historical cross-references and pastiche, could be seen as protective covering, developed during this period.

His Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1977) was one of the first works to bring his name to prominence. It was popularised by Gidon Kremer, a tireless proponent of his music. Schnittke composed 9 symphonies, 6 concerti grossi, 4 violin concertos, 2 cello concertos, concertos for piano and a triple concerto for violin, viola and cello, as well as 4 string quartets and much other chamber music, ballet scores, choral and vocal works. His first opera, *Life with an Idiot*, was premiered in Amsterdam and his two subsequent operas, *Gesualdo* and *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* were unveiled in Vienna and Hamburg respectively.

The Concerto for mixed chorus was written in 1984-85 and is Schnittke's major choral work and sets the third chapter of "The Book of Mournful Songs" by the great Armenian medieval poet Gregory of Narek (951 – 1003). "The Book of Lamentation" is the poet's major work and was written by him at the end of his life. The book, which focuses on man's inner life, is coloured with humanistic individualism typical of Armenian poetry and philosophy of the time.

In his concerto Schnittke sought to reflect the poet's world, diverse and full of contrasts. "Gregory of Narek's text", says the composer, "is but the preparation for the understanding of actual meaning which is revealed in the process of reading but cannot be conveyed in words".

The Concerto for Choir was completed in the summer of 1985 and dedicated to Valeri Polyanski and the USSR Ministry of Culture Chamber Choir.

MUSIC FOR THE MILLENNIUM

1999/2000 season

Autumn 1999 sees London Concord Singers launching the third season in their three year survey of 20th Century unaccompanied choral music. As with our previous concerts in the Music for The Millennium project, each concert will contain 20th Century masterpieces alongside a wide range of music from other periods.

Audiences frequently find contemporary music puzzling and alienating, sometimes showing reluctance to accept the more challenging 20th century works. In order to make the programmes more accessible, each concert includes a mixture of 20th Century pieces alongside music from the 16th to the 19th century, chosen to provide a sympathetic context for the contemporary pieces and to give audiences a stimulating mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The new season's concerts will start with a Christmas concert at St. Cyprian's Church where we will be performing Britten's **A Boy was Born** and Vaughan Williams' **Mass in G Minor** alongside music by Brahms and Eisler and seasonal motets.

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Conductor – Malcolm Cottle

St. Cyprian's Church,
Clarence Gate, NW1

7.30pm

Thursday 16th December 1999

Britten A Boy was Born

Brahms Marienlieder

Eisler Woodbury –

Liederbüchlein

Vaughan Williams Mass in G Minor

Seasonal Motets

MUSIC FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Spohr – Mass for Double Choir

1 Kyrie

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Christ, have
mercy.
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

2 Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men
of good will. We praise thee. We bless thee. We adore
thee. We glorify thee. We give thee thanks for thy great
glory, O Lord God, heavenly King. God the Father
almighty. O Lord, the only begotten son Jesus Christ.
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. Who
takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Who takest away the sins of the world, receive our
prayers. Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have
mercy on us. for thou only art holy. Thou only art
Lord. Thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high. With
the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

3 Credo

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of
heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. n
in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages; God of God, light of
light, true God of true God; begotten not made; being of
one substance with the Father; by whom all things were
made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came
down from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy
Ghost, of the Virgin Mary; and was made man. He was
crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and
was buried. And the third day he rose again according to
the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven. He sitteth at
the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again
with glory to judge the living and the dead; and his
kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy
Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from
the Father and the Son, who together with the Father
and the Son is adored and glorified; who spoke by the
Prophets. And in one holy catholic and apostolic
Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.
And I await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of
the world to come. Amen.

4 Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth
are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is
he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the
highest

5 Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the
sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who
takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace

Wylkynson – Apostles Creed

Jesus autem transiens

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven
and earth:

I believe in Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, our
Lord,

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin
Mary,

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and
buried; He descended into hell;

On the third day He arose from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of
God the Father almighty;

From there He will come to judge the living and the
dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of
saints,

The forgiveness of sins

The resurrection of the body,

And the life everlasting.

AMEN

I O Master of all living

O Master of all living,
Bestowing priceless gifts upon us,
God creating all out of nothing,
Mysterious, omniscient, frightening,
Merciful and implacable,
Ineffable and inscrutable,
Invisible, eternal, boundless,
Terrifying and beneficent,
You are unfathomable, intangible,
Without beginning and without end,
You are the only one who is measureless,
Who is true and real in the world,
It is You who give us blessing,
You are a noon without nightfall, light without shadow,
Our only fountain of peace
That lightens our temporal existence.
You are limitless and omnipresent,
Our sweetest honey and our daily bread,
An inexhaustible treasure, purest rain,
Forever plentiful might,
You are a guardian and guide to us,
A healer knowing our ills,
Support to all, an all-seeing eye,
A hand of abundant giving,
Radiant with greatness, welcome to all,
Our tireless shepherd, benevolent tsar,
All-seeing, vigilant day and night,
A judge dispensing fair judgement,
A non-oppressive gaze, a voice of comfort,
You are a message bringing peace.
Your forbidding hand and all-seeing eye
Warn mortals against vice,
A judge of what is right and wrong,
A glory that inspires no envy,
You are a light to us, a greatness without limit,
A path, invisible but straight.
Your imprint is invisible, we can only see Your favour,
It descends to us on earth from heaven,
The words that I pronounce glorifying You
Are poorer than those You should have heard,
O God, by right,
Had I not been so poor in speech.

God blessed, praised,
Glorified by all living in the universe,
All we are destined to achieve
Is born by Your wise inspiration.

O God, show me in my doubts
The path of purity
And, guiding me to the gates of salvation,
Be content and rejoice.
The purpose of Your slave's paean
Is not glorification or eulogy,
My worthless words are a supplication
By which I long to obtain salvation.

II I, an expert in human passions

I, an expert in human passions,
Composed this collection of songs, where every verse

Is full to the brim with black sorrow,
For I detest these passions in myself.
I wrote so that my words could reach
Christians in all corners of the earth,
I wrote for those who only enter life
As well as for those who have lived and matured,
For those completing their earthly journey
And stepping over the fateful limit.
I wrote for the righteous and for the sinner,
For the comforting and the inconsolable,
For the judging and the convicted,
For the penitent and those enslaved by sin,
For do-gooders and villains,
For virgins and adulterers,
For all: the high-born and the godless,
Downtrodden slaves and grand princes.
I wrote equally for husbands and wives,
For the degraded and those risen high,
For rulers and for the oppressed,
For abusers and for the abused,
For those who give comfort and those who are
comforted,
I wrote equally for those on horseback and those on
foot,
For the insignificant and for the great,
For city-dwellers and for half-savage highlanders,
And for him who is the supreme ruler,
Whose judge is God alone,
For people who are vain and those who are pious,
For monks and holy hermits.
May these verses, full of my suffering,
Become a guidance to someone.

May he who repents a black transgression
Find comfort in my writings.
May someone turn to his good
My work, my zeal.
May my verse, turning into a prayer and a supplication,
Elicit God's mercy.

III God grant deliverance from sin

God, grant deliverance from sin
To all who grasp the meaning of these mournful words,
All who comprehend the essence of this work.
Free them from the baneful fetters
Of doubt, which is the same as crime.
Give them the absolution they long for,
Let their abundant tears flow.
May their supplication, raised in my voice,
Please You.
May they also raise a prayer
For me, Your slave,
God, may Your light and grace descend
Upon Your obedient slaves,
All the repentant who read
with sympathy this book of mournful songs!
If you receive all those who in my wake
Come to You with my zealous prayer,
Open the gates of Your holy abode
To me too, O merciful God.
And if my tearful prayer
Falls, like rain, washing away my sins,
May this water of life

Also wash me, Your base slave.

O God, if you save all those
Agreeing with the thoughts that I express,
Forgive my grave sins
And save me too, O blessed God.
If my song inspires in some soul
Thoughts pleasing to You,
My heavenly Father,
Do not deprive me of Your grace.
If those who comprehend my verse
Raise their trembling hands –
May the pain of my sorrowful moans
Join their pure prayer,
And if the thoughts expressed in this book
Are pleasing to You,
Be merciful to my ancestors
If Your generous grace,
If someone poor in spirit
Wavers in the holy faith in a moment of grief,
May he find support in this book
And, taking heart, put his trust in You.

If someone weak in faith begins to fear
That the temple of his hope will not hold out,
May your hand strengthen that unstable temple
With the lines of this mournful book.
When someone cruelly tormented by an illness
Almost loses his bond with life,
May he find strength in these lines
And rise again, praying for You.

If deadly fear or doubt
Suddenly seizes someone,
May he find solace in this book,
May he find peace by Your grace.

And if the burden of unredeemed sins
Pulls a sinner into the abyss, may he,
By the power of the words that You inspired in me,
Be saved and pardoned forever.

If somewhere there is a sinner
Who does not escape the Devil's trap
Allow my work to be his support
And set the madman right with Your own light.

And if someone in fatal pride
Is ready to forget the words of holy prayers –
Allow me to bring him back to the sacred faith
By the power of the words that You inspired.

Allow my book of sorrowful songs
To bring back to the Eucharist and the Cross
Those who persist in their contemptible vanity
In satanic blindness.
And let my song,
Inspired by your divine mercy,
Calm the storm of unbelief
That rages, as over the water, over people's souls.

IV Complete this work

Complete this work
Which I began in hope
And with Your name,
So that my singing may become healing,
Curing the wounds of body and soul.

If my humble work is finished
With Your holy blessing –
May the divine spirit in it
Join with my meagre inspiration.
Do not extinguish
The revelation You have granted,
Do not abandon my reason,
But, again and again, receive praise
From Your servant.
Amen.

Words taken from the 'Book of Lamentation'
By Gregory of Narek.