

# London Concord Singers

Conductor – Malcolm Cottle

St. John's Church, Waterloo

16<sup>th</sup> December 1999

**Johannes Brahms**

**Marienlieder, op. 22 (Nos. 1-3)**

1. Der englische Gruss (The Angel's Greeting)
2. Marias Kirchgang (Mary's Way to Church)
3. Marias Wallfahrt (Mary's Pilgrimage)

Whilst he was working in Hamburg, Brahms founded a small women's choir, for which he composed the first two pieces of the three sacred choruses op 37, the *Marienlieder* op 22 and the *13th Psalm* op 27. Brahms described his *Marienlieder* (*Songs of Mary*) as being "in the style of old German church music and folk song." The anonymous texts are strophic, like most folksongs, and Brahms' settings convey the straightforward simplicity of the folk genre. These are superb examples of Brahms' early compositional style, pious in an earthy way, yet not necessarily religious.

**Benjamin Britten**

**A Boy Was Born, Op 3.**

THEME:	A BOY WAS BORN
VARIATION I	LULLAY, JESU'
VARIATION II	HEROD
VARIATION III	JESU, AS THOU ART OUR SAVIOUR'
VARIATION IV	THE THREE KINGS
VARIATION V	IN THE BLEAK MID-WINTER'
VARIATION VI(FINALE)	NOEL!

*A Boy was Born*, subtitled 'choral variations for men's, women's and boys' voices, unaccompanied', takes as its theme an anonymous sixteenth-century text set in pure, chorale-like homophony. In the following six variations, Britten's achievement lies as much in the transformation of the theme as in the skill with which the eight-part chorus is handled: the textures of the choral accompaniment are clearly informed by recent experience with writing for instruments.

At the time he composed his first major choral work, *A Boy was Born*, Op. 3, Britten was a student at the Royal College of Music, whose staff included John Ireland, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, three stalwart members of the English choral establishment. Yet in many ways the work shows the greater influence of his first teacher, Frank Bridge, who had encouraged him to look beyond his immediate horizon to new music and ideas from the continent.

*A Boy was Born* was first heard on 23 February 1934 as a broadcast by the BBC Wireless Chorus, conducted by Leslie Woodgate. Critical response, as might be expected when dealing with such an accomplished work from a nineteen-year-old, was divided between admiration and the well-worn criticism that while 'clever', the solving of

technical problems had occupied the composer's mind to the exclusion of musical ideas. Grace Williams (1906-1977), a composer friend of Britten's, wrote soon after the first broadcast that she had found *A Boy was Born* 'too reactionary' and 'too typically English' in places; yet Britten was never again to attempt an unaccompanied choral work in such a radical form.

## INTERVAL

**Johannes Brahms**

**Marienlieder, op. 22 (Nos. 4-7)**

4. Der Jäger (The Huntsman)
5. Ruf zur Maria (Call unto Mary)
6. Magdalena (Magdalen)
7. Marias Lob (Praise of Mary)

**Vaughan Williams**

**Mass in G Minor**

1. Kyrie - *Slow*
2. Gloria in Excelsis - *lento* - *allegro* - *andante con moto*
3. Credo - *allegro con moto* - *poco tranquillo*
4. Sanctus - *andante con moto*  
    Osanna I - *moderato maestoso*  
    Benedictus - *moderato tranquillo*  
    Osanna II - *moderato maestoso*
5. Agnus Dei - *moderato*

Vaughan Williams' *Mass in G minor* was written for and dedicated to Gustav Holst and his Whitsuntide Singers. In a letter to Holst, Vaughan Williams said 'There is no reason why an atheist could not write a good mass'.

The first performance of the mass was given by the City of Birmingham Choir, conductor Joseph Lewis on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1922, but even before this Vaughan Williams had sent the score to R.R.Terry, the musical director of Westminster Cathedral. Terry was delighted by it and at once recognised its importance, in a letter to the composer he said 'In your individual and modern idiom you have really captured the old liturgical spirit'. Terry's choir at Westminster Cathedral gave the first liturgical performance on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1923.

As conductor of the Bach choir, Vaughan Williams had experience of the capabilities of choir's like the one to whom it was dedicated and those that gave the first performances. (It is probably worth noting here that the early concert performances of the mass all involved choirs rather bigger than commonly used for the mass today). That Terry's Westminster choir specialised in 'early' music was a major influence on the mass. Like his earlier string *Tallis Fantasia*, the mass is inspired by Elizabethan liturgical music. In fact the disposition of the forces in the mass is very akin to those in the *Tallis Fantasia*. In the mass a solo quartet is contrasted with and merged with a double chorus.

The mass sets the standard 5 sections of the ordinary of the mass.

**Benjamin Britten: A Boy Was Born, Op 3.**

**THEME: 'A BOY WAS BORN'**

A BOY WAS BORN in Bethlehem;  
Rejoice for that, Jerusalem!  
Alleluya.

He let himself a servant be.  
That all mankind he might set free:  
Alleluya.

Then praise the Word of God who came  
To dwell within a human frame:  
Alleluya.

**VARIATION I: 'LULLAY, JESU'**

Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!  
Lullay, Jesu, lullay, lullay!  
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!

So blessed a sight it was to see,  
How Mary rocked her Son so free;  
So fair she rocked and sang 'by-by.'

'Mine own dear Son, why weepst Thou thus?  
Is not Thy father King of bliss?  
Have I not done that in me is?  
Your grievance, tell me what it is.'

'Therefore, mother, weep I nought,  
But for the woe that shall be wrought  
To me, ere I mankind have bought.

'Ah, dear mother! yet shall a spear  
My heart in sunder all to-tear;  
No wonder though I careful were.

'Now, dear mother, sing lullay,  
And put away all heaviness;  
Into this world I took the way,  
Again to (heaven) I shall me dress,  
Where joy is without end ay,  
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!  
Lullay, Jesu, lullay, lullay!  
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!

**VARIATION II: HEROD**

Noel!

Herod that was both wild and wode,  
Full much he shed of Christian blood.  
To slay the Child so meek of mood,  
That Mary bare, that clean may.

Herod slew with pride and sin  
Thousands of two year and within;  
The body of Christ he thought to win  
And to destroy the Christian fay.

Mary with Jesu forth yfraught,  
As the angel her taught,  
To flee the land till it were sought,  
To Egypt she took her way.

Now Jesus that didst die for us on the Rood,  
And didst christen innocents in their blood,  
By the prayer of Thy mother good,  
Bring us to bliss that lasteth ay.

**VARIATION III: 'JESU, AS THOU ART OUR SAVIOUR'**

Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, Jesu,  
Save us all through Thy virtue.

Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour  
That Thou save us fro' dolour!  
Jesu is mine paramour.  
Blessed be Thy name, Jesu.

Jesu was born of a may,  
Upon Christmas Day,  
She was may befor and ay,  
Blessed be Thy name, Jesu.

**VARIATION IV: THE THREE KINGS**

There came three kings fro Galilee  
Into Bethlehem, that fair city,  
To seek Him that should ever be by right-a,  
Lord and king and knight-a.

They took their leave, both old and ying,  
Of Herod, that moody king;  
They went forth with their offering by light-a,  
By the star that shone so bright-a.

Till they came into the place  
Where Jesus and His mother was,  
Offered they up with great solace in fere-a  
Gold, incense, and myrrh-a.

Forth then went these kinges three,  
Till they came home to their country;  
Glad and blithe they were all three  
Of the sight that they had see bydene-a.

**VARIATION V: 'IN THE BLEAK MID-WINTER'**

In the bleak mid-winter  
Frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter  
Long ago.

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley,  
The falcon hath borne my make away.

He bare him up, he bare him down,  
He bare him into an orchard brown.

In that orchard there was an hall  
That was hanged with purple and pall.

And in that hall there was a bed,  
It was hanged with gold so red.

In that bed there lieth a knight,  
His woundes bleeding, day and night.

By that bedside kneeleth a may,  
And she weepeth both night and day.

And by that bedside there standeth a stone,  
Corpus Christi written thereon.

**VARIATION VI (FINALE): NOEL!**

Noel! Wassail!

Good day, good day,  
My Lord Sir Christmas, good day!

Good day, Sir Christmas our King,  
For every man, both old and ying,  
Is glad of your coming.  
Good day.

Godes Son so much of might  
From heaven to earth down is light  
And born is of a maid so bright.  
Good day.

Noel! Our King!  
Hosanna!  
This night a Child is horn

Get ivy and hull, woman, deck up thine house,  
And take this same brawn for to see the and to souse;  
Provide us good cheer, for thou knowest the old guise,  
Old customs that good be, let no man despise.  
At Christmas be merry and thank God of all,  
And feast thy poor neighbours, the great and the small.  
Yea, all the year long have an eye to the poor,  
And God shall send luck to keep open thy door.  
Good fruit and good plenty do well in thy loft,  
Then lay for an orchard and cherish it oft.  
The profit is mickle, the pleasure is much;  
At pleasure with profit few wise men will grutch.  
For plants and for stocks lay aforehand to cast,  
But set or remove them, while Twelve-tide do last.

Welcome be Thou, heaven-king,  
Welcome born in one morning,  
Welcome for whom we shall sing  
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye that are here,  
Welcome all, and make good cheer,  
Welcome all another year!  
Welcome Yule.

Glory to God on high, and jolly mirth  
'Twixt man and man, and peace on earth!

Wassail, Wassail!  
Lully, lullely, lully, lullely,

Noel! Noel! ...  
Herod that was so wild and wode.

Mine own dear mother...  
Jesu, Jesu! ...

This night a Child is born;  
This night a Son is given;  
This Son, this Child  
Hath reconciled  
Poor man that was forlorn,  
And the angry God of heaven.  
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!

Now, now that joyful day,  
That blessed hour is come,  
That was foretold  
In days of old,  
Wherein all nations may  
Bless, bless the virgin's womb.  
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!

Let heaven triumph above,  
Let earth rejoice below;  
Let heaven and earth  
Be filled with mirth,  
For peace and lasting love  
Atones your God and you.  
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!

## Johannes Brahms: Marienlieder, Op.22

### **1. The Angels' Greeting (Der englische Gruss)**

'Hail to thee Mary, Mother of grace!  
So sang the angels to the Virgin Mary  
While she was rapt in prayer.

'Mary, thou shalt conceive a son.  
Heaven and Earth are longing for thee  
To be the Mother of God.

'Angels, how could this befall me?  
I who have given myself to no man -  
Not in this whole wide world.'

'Like the dew falling on a flowery meadow  
The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee  
And unto thee the Saviour shall be born.'

These tidings gladdened Mary's heart;  
'Behold the handmaid of the Lord,' said she.  
'Be it unto me according to thy word.'

The angels then went down on bended knee;  
They sang in unison: 'Mary! Mary!  
And raised a hymn of praise to her.

### **2. Mary goes to Church (Marias Kirchengang)**

As Mary was on her way to church  
She came upon a deep lake.

And as she approached the lake  
She found a young ferryman standing there.

'Ferryman, carry me across the lake  
And I shall give you your heart's desire.'

'I shall carry you across the lake,  
If you will be my wife.'

'Am I then to be your wife?  
I had much rather swim across the lake.'

Now, when she was halfway across  
All the bells began to ring.

The big ones rang; the small ones rang  
All ringing in unison.

Mary knelt down on a stone  
And the ferryman's heart broke asunder.

### **3. Mary's Pilgrimage (Marias Wallfahrt)**

Mary went out wandering  
Far into a far-off land  
In search of the Lord God.

And she found him there  
Outside Herod's house -  
He looked so sad.

He had to bear the cross  
To Jerusalem - outside the city,  
Where he was to be crucified.

What was he wearing on his head?  
A crown of sharp thorns  
As he bore the cross.

Then let men ponder -  
Young and old alike -  
How the kingdom of Heaven can suffer violence.

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# LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Conductor - Malcolm Cottle

Frank Martin

Mass

for

Double Choir

Thea Musgrave

Rorate Coeli

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April,

7.30pm

at

St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth St.

(Nearest Tube: Baker Street)

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