

Musik für Berlin

A programme of music written for the German capital

London Concord Singers

Conductor - Malcolm Cottle

Organist – Robert Langston

Wednesday 4th April 2001

Hinde Street Methodist Church

This concert is being supported by the German Embassy, London

Otto Nicolai - Psalm 97, Der Herr ist König (eight-part mixed chorus)

The Lord reigneth

Johannes Brahms - Ave Maria, Opus 12 (female chorus)

Johannes Brahms - Geistliches Lied, Opus 30 (mixed chorus and organ)

Sacred Song

Arvo Pärt - Berliner Messe (mixed chorus and organ)

Interval

Otto Nicolai - Psalm 31, Herr, auf dich traue ich (mixed chorus)

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.

Kurt Weill - Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen (male chorus)

To Potsdam under the Oak Trees

Kurt Weill - Ballade vom Ertrunkenen Mädchen (male chorus)

Ballad of the Drowned Girl from the Berlin Requiem

Kurt Weill - Legende vom toten Soldaten (mixed chorus)

Legend of the Dead Soldier

Felix Mendelssohn - Three Motets, Opus 78 (eight-part mixed chorus)

No 1) Psalm 2 – *Warum toben die heiden - Why do the heathen rage.*

No. 3) Psalm 22 – *Mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen – My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

No. 2) Psalm 43 – *Richte mich Gott – Judge me, O God.*

Introduction

Though Berlin was the residence of the Electors of Brandenburg from 1448, cultural life assumed greater importance only after 1701, when Elector Friedrich III became King of Prussia. Following German unification, from 1871 the city was the capital of the German Empire.

During the 18th Century, sacred music declined as musicians were increasingly attracted to secular organisations and to opera. The accession of King Friedrich Wilhem IV in 1840 led to an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to revitalise the arts in Berlin. An approach was made to Mendelssohn and in 1843 the Lutheran cathedral choir was revitalised and assumed a more important role in the city's life. Mendelssohn directed the Cathedral choir from 1843 to 1844 and Otto Nicolai from 1847 to 1849, whilst he was also the Kapellmeister at the Königliches Opernhaus.

After the end of World War I, Emperor Wilhelm abdicated and in 1919 a democratic and centralised federal constitution was adopted at Weimar and Germany became known as the Weimar Republic. By 1929 the country had recovered economically but the world economic depression brought about mass unemployment, business failure and social and political tensions which ultimately led to Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

The Weimar Republic generated a remarkable cultural life, its varied artistic and intellectual achievements included the Frankfurt School, political theatre, twelve-tone music, cultural criticism, photomontage, urban planning, Expressionist Cinema and the Bauhaus. But for most people, the Berlin of the Weimar Republic is the Berlin of 'Cabaret'. Imortalised in the stories of Christopher Isherwood, this Berlin became mythologised by the Kander and Ebb musical based on Isherwood's books.

In 1946 Karl Ristenpart formed the RIAS Kammerchor, a Radio chorus which has been a permanent ensemble since 1948, going on to acquire an international reputation for the performance of contemporary music. Arvo Pärt's **Seven Magnificat Antiphons** were written for them, as was his **Berliner Messe**.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

A most gifted and versatile prodigy, Mendelssohn stood at the forefront of German music during the 1830's and 1840's as conductor, pianist, organist and composer. He was most associated with the city of Leipzig and his short period in Berlin was not happy. He referred to the Prussian capital as 'one of the most sour apples into which a man can bite'. Ironically, it was during this period that his incidental music to 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' received its first performances as part of a production of Shakespeare's play. First performed for the court at Potsdam, the production was received with great acclaim at the Schauspielhaus.

As part of a revision to the liturgy at the Cathedral, the King encouraged a return to a cappella singing in the style of Palestrina. The **Motets Opus 78** are part of a small group of late sacred works, all written for Berlin Cathedral. Nos 2 and 3 were written for Passion Sunday and Good Friday in 1844. By the end of September 1844, Mendelssohn had persuaded the King to release him from his post and he left Berlin for good.

Psalm 2 – Warum tobten die Heiden (*Why do the heathen rage*), is set for 8-part chorus and soli. The opening section, sung by full choir, is followed by an *Andante* which contrasts an 8-part semi-chorus with the full choir. The following, *Con Moto*, movement is sung by full choir, and is followed by an *Andante* which opens with recitative-like statements sung by the full choir followed by a section in which a semi-chorus of 4 soloists is contrasted with the full choir, singing mainly in unison. The concluding movement is a short canon, sung by the full choir in 4-parts.

Psalm 43 – Richte mich Gott (*Judge me, O God*) is set for 8-part chorus. The opening *Con Moto* movement is followed by an *Andante* in which recitative, sung by the men, contrasts with more lyrical passages sung by the women. This is followed by the concluding *Allegro Moderato*.

Psalm 22 – Mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen? (*My God, why hast thou forsaken me*), is set for 8-part chorus and soli. It opens with a recitative, sung by Tenor solo, alternating with *Andante* sections sung by full choir. This section concludes with a short *Allegro* sung by the full choir. The following *Andante con moto* contrasts a semi-chorus of 4 soli with the full choir. This is followed by a section in which recitative, sung by soli, alternates with full choir.

Otto Nicolai (1810 - 1849)

Nicolai was born in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) and died in Berlin. This German composer and conductor is most well known for his opera **Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor** (The Merry Wives of Windsor) which was the most successful comic opera composed in the first half of the 19th century. He was an exemplary orchestral trainer and conductor and also founded the Vienna Philharmonic concerts.

His childhood was dogged by his composer father's attempts to exploit him as a child prodigy. At the age of 16 he ran away and found a protector, a civil servant, who sent the boy to study in Berlin armed with high recommendations. After study in Berlin, he earned his living there as a Music Teacher and sang with the Berlin Singakademie. With them, in 1831, he sang the part of Jesus in Bach's 'St Matthew Passion'. He gave his first public concert in Berlin in 1833, introducing himself as composer singer and pianist. To escape his poverty in Berlin, he accepted a post as chapel organist in the Prussian Embassy in Rome. There followed a period in which Nicolai divided his time between appointments in Italy and Vienna. He became a celebrated opera composer in Italy. In 1840 Nicolai refused to set the libretto of 'Nabucco' which was then offered to Verdi.

In 1844, on a journey to Königsberg for the 300th Anniversary of the Albertus University, Nicolai also visited Berlin and was commissioned by Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia to compose a new liturgy and perform it with the cathedral choir. In October 1844 he was offered the position of cathedral Kapellmeister, as a result of Mendelssohn's desire to leave. Nicolai was unable to come to agreement with the Berlin authorities and returned to Vienna. It was only in 1847 that he became artistic director of the Berlin Cathedral choir. Nicolai wished to reform the church services and to this end he composed a series of large-scale religious works. Two months before he died, **Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor** had its première in Berlin, the opera being received with surprisingly little enthusiasm.

Nicolai's later sacred works, composed in Berlin, are stylistically similar to Mendelssohn. The two Psalm settings that we are performing tonight show a pleasing (if unoriginal) synthesis of the a cappella style of the 17th and 18th centuries and romantic Liedertafel songs.

Psalm 31 – Herr, auf Dich traue ich (*In Thee Lord, do I put my trust*), is set for 8-part chorus. The opening *Andante* uses the contrast between the main choir and a semi-chorus and concludes with a *piu mosso* section sung by the full choir. The second movement, *Allegro moderato* is sung by the full choir and again concludes with a *piu mosso* section. The central *Andantino*

movement is sung by the semi-chorus. The fourth movement, *Vivace* is sung by the whole choir, but this is not the end as it is followed by a short *Adagio* sung by the semi-chorus and full choir.

Psalm 97 – Der Herr ist König (*The Lord reigneth*), is set throughout for 4-part choir. The opening *Andante* is followed by an Aria, marked *Andante* which sets the words 'Zion höret es und ist froh' for semi-chorus; the final Coro is also marked *Andante*.

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

If it is true that the reputation of almost every composer fluctuates in the decades following their death, it is also true that in a few instances their renown is such that they were not only widely regarded as great composers during their lifetime, but also they have been thus considered ever since.

It is into this latter category that Johannes Brahms belongs, yet an important part of his output remains little known, even amongst enthusiasts for his art. This is his choral music, which comprises a significant proportion of his work, and which is mainly known through three works - Ein deutsches Requiem, the Alto Rhapsody and the first set of Liebeslieder Walzer. In many ways, this is a surprising state of affairs, for Brahms was enamoured of the voice throughout his life, and he wrote an imposing body of choral music.

The Ave Maria opus 12 was written for the amateur female choir that Brahms had founded in Hamburg. It was first performed in December 1859 in Hamburg (some two years before it was first published), conducted by Brahms. According to several of those present, Brahms left something to be desired with regard to his conducting technique. It is scored for four-part female choir with organ or orchestra (Brahms also did versions for string orchestra or piano accompaniment). Karl Geiringer found it to be "an experimental study" - rather more Italian than North German perhaps - yet in its flowing thirds it is undoubtedly echt-Brahms. This may have been inspired by hearing Schubert's famous setting.

An example of Brahms's skill in canonic writing is found in his opus 30 - Geistliches Lied to words by Paul Flemming (1609-1640), for four-part mixed choir and organ (or piano) accompaniment. Composed in 1856 or 1860 this was published in 1864. It is written in double canon at the ninth below, but listeners unconcerned with the techniques of musical composition will have no difficulty in following this superb piece. The text's original title is 'Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren' and it has also been set by Mendelssohn (op. 8 n° 5, under the title 'Pilgerspruch', published in 1828) and Max Reger.

Kurt Weill (1900 – 1950)

Weill displayed musical talent early on. By the time he was twelve, he was composing and mounting concerts and dramatic works in the hall above his family's quarters in the Gemeindehaus. During the First World War, the teenage Weill was conscripted as a substitute accompanist at the Dessau Court Theater.

A commission from the Baden-Baden Music Festival in 1927 led to the creation of **Mahagonny (Ein Songspiel)**, Weill's first collaboration with Bertolt Brecht, whose 'Mann ist Mann' and whose poetry collection, 'Die Hauspostille', had captured Weill's imagination and suggested a compatible literary and dramatic sensibility

Exploiting their aggressive popular song-style, Weill and Brecht also created several works for singing actors in the commercial theatre, including **Die Dreigroschenoper** and **Happy End**. They explored other alternatives to the opera establishment in the school-opera **Der Jasager** and the radio cantatas **Das Berliner Requiem** and **Der Lindberghflug**. Increasingly uncomfortable with Brecht's restriction of the role of music in his political theatre, Weill then turned to other collaborators, the famous stage designer Caspar Neher and the distinguished playwright Georg Kaiser.

His later works outraged the Nazis. Riots broke out at several performances and carefully orchestrated propaganda campaigns discouraged productions of his works. In March 1933, Weill fled Germany.

All three pieces being performed tonight are settings of texts by Bertolt Brecht and all are associated with Kurt Weill's cantata **Das Berliner Requiem**, which was composed in late 1928. The cantata commemorates the tenth anniversary of the end of the First World War and of the murder of the Spartakist Rosa Luxembourg. The composer described it as a secular requiem, expressing the thoughts and feelings of modern city-dwellers about death. It was commissioned by the German Broadcasting Authority and first performed on Frankfurt Radio in May 1929. Weill revised the cantata several times between 1928 and 1931, and of the three pieces in this concert, only the **Ballade vom ertrunkenen Mädchen** appears in all versions. The other two pieces were planned to be included in one revision or another, but were also published separately in the settings for unaccompanied chorus that will be performed tonight.

The poem **Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen** was written in 1927 in response to a newspaper report of a protest organised by the Roter Frontkämpferbund, a communist ex-servicemen's association. Politicians had promised returning First World War veterans 'a home for every soldier', but in the procession this text was painted on a coffin, in memory of those who had not returned. Weill's setting for male voice choir begins as a funeral march, but undergoes an ironic change of mood for the final chorus in which the police break up the demonstration.

Ballade vom ertrunkenen Mädchen is a gentle setting for male voices in close harmony of Brecht's 1920 poem about a drowned girl whose body gradually decomposes as it floats downstream towards the sea. The poem originally appeared in Brecht's play Baal, but in the cantata Weill links it to Rosa Luxemburg, whose corpse was found floating in the Landwehr canal in Berlin.

The poem **Legende vom toten Soldaten** was written in 1918 and frequently performed by Brecht as a cabaret piece. A soldier who has been killed inconveniently soon is exhumed, declared fit for service, revived with schnapps, and marched back to war to die a hero's death. The poem was dedicated to Christian Grumbeis, who was born in 1897 in Aichach (near Augsburg) and died in Passion Week 1918 on the Russian front. Weill's setting is a brisk march in 6/8 time for mixed chorus.

Arvo Pärt (1935 -

Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia in 1935. Living in the old Soviet Union, Pärt had little access to what was happening in contemporary Western music but, despite such isolation, the early 1960s in Estonia saw many new methods of composition being brought into use and Pärt was at the fore-front; his *Nekrolog* of 1960 was the first Estonian composition to employ serial technique. He continued with serialism through to the mid 60s but ultimately tired of its rigours.

In the late 1960's, after abandoning serialism, Part suffered a severe creative crisis, as the stylistic problems which he had been experiencing came to a head. Forced into a drastic re-examination of his work, he almost completely withdrew from composition for several years. During this time he studied Gregorian chant and the music of medieval composers including Josquin, Machaut and Ockeghem. When he finally began to compose fluently once again it was as though he had been purged, or had cast off an old skin. His new style marked a radical change from his previous work, Part called his new style 'tintinnabuli'.

The basic 'tintinnabuli' technique involves a melodic voice moving mostly by step around a central pitch and the tintinnabuli voice which sounds the notes of the tonic triad. In spite of its apparent simplicity this technique has proved to be a remarkably fertile source, from which Part has created numerous works of purity, clarity, precision and immediacy, each composition having its own quite distinctive character. Clearly, in developing the tintinnabuli style Part has also discovered his most personal and eloquent form of expression. The austerity and disarming simplicity of Pärt's tintinnabulist works have led to a common criticism that this music is naïve and washed-out; "it's all the same, just a sea of A minor triads and precious silence", one hears; or, as *The New Yorker* wrote, "Aural pillows that you can sink into". In later works, this technique has been subject to various technical refinements and a tendency to divide the text and music more equally amongst vocal parts to create a more fluid texture.

The **Berliner Messe** for choir and organ was written for the RIAS Berlin Chamber choir to be performed at the 90th Deutschen Katholikentages Berlin in 1990. Pärt had earlier written the **Seven Magnificat Antiphons** for the choir. The mass, setting the Latin words, has 8 movements (Kyrie, Gloria, Alleluia 1, Alleluia 2, Veni Sancte Spiritus, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei). The text of the Alleluias and the Tract (Veni Sancte Spiritus) all relate to Whitsuntide. (In the revised version of the Mass, Pärt has added an alternative pair of Alleluias for Christmastide. These are not being sung tonight).

Our next concert:-

400 years of Jewish Music

Salomone Rossi – Motets from the Song of Songs

Ernst Bloch – Sacred Service (excerpts)

Kurt Weill - Kiddush

Leonard Bernstein – Chichester Psalms (excerpts)

Music by Emmanuel Fisker

7.30pm Wednesday 18th July, 2001

Hinde Street Methodist Church

Hinde Street, London, WC1

Otto Nicolai - Psalm 97

The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.
Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne.
A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.
His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.
The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.
Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.
Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgements, O LORD.
For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.
Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.
Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Johannes Brahms - Ave Maria

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord be with thee,
And blessed be the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, be with us sinners now and unto the hour of our death.

Johannes Brahms - Geistliches Lied (Sacred Song), Opus 30

Let no sad thought oppress thee, distress thee;
Fear nothing, trust God's own will, and be thou still my spirit.

Heed not with care and sorrow the morrow:
Our Father who all doth see, shall give to thee thy portion.

From righteous paths then range not, and change not;
Be steadfast, for Go is just; give him thy trust for ever.

Arvo Pärt – Berliner Messe

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.

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.

First Alleluia for Whitsun

Alleluia. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Alleluia.

Second Alleluia for Whitsun

Alleluia. Come, O holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful: and kindle in them the fire of Thy Love. Alleluia.

Sequence - Veni Sancte Spiritus

Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come, And from Thy celestial home Shed a ray of light divine.
Come, Thou Father of the poor, Come, Thou source of all our store, Come, within our bosoms shine.
Thou of Comforters the best, Thou the soul's delightful guest, Sweet refreshment here below.
In our labour rest most sweet, Pleasant coolness in the heat, Solace in the midst of woe.
O most blessed Light divine, Shine within these hearts of Thine, And our inmost being fill.
Where Thou art not, man hath nought, Nothing good in deed of thought, Nothing free from taint of ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew, On our dryness pour Thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away.
Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray.
On Thy faithful who adore, And confess Thee evermore, In Thy sevenfold gifts descend.
Give them virtue's sure reward, Give them Thy salvation, Lord, Give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia

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.

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

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

Otto Nicolai - Psalm 31

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

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or

fill in one of the forms at the back of the church.

Kurt Weill - At Potsdam 'Unter den Eichen'

At Potsdam *Unter den Eichen*

One noon a procession was seen
With a drum in front and a flag behind
And a coffin in between.

At Potsdam 'Under the Oak Trees'

In the ancient dusty street
Six men were carrying a coffin
With helmet and oak leaves complete.

And on its sides in red lead paint
An inscription had been written
Whose ugly letters spelled the phrase:
'Fit for heroes to live in'.

This had been done in memory
Of any and every one
Born in the home country
Fallen before Verdun.

Once heart and soul caught by the tricks
Of the Fatherland, now given
A coffin by the Fatherland:
Fit for heroes to live in.

And so they marched through Potsdam
For the man who at Verdun fell.
Whereat the green police arrived
And beat them all to hell.

Kurt Weill - The Drowned Girl

Once she had drowned and started her slow descent
From streams to where the great rivers broaden
The opal sky shone most magnificent
As if it had to be her body's guardian.

Wrack and duckweed cling to her as she swims
Slowly their burden adds to her weight.
Cool the fishes play about her limbs
Creatures and growths encumber her in her final state.

And in the evening the sky grew dark as smoke
And at night the stars kept the light from falling.
But soon it cleared as dawn again broke
To maintain her sequence of evening and morning.

As her pallid body decayed in the water there
It happened (very slowly) that it gently slid from God's thoughts:
First her face, then her hands, and right at the end her hair.
Leaving those corpse-choked rivers just one more corpse.

Kurt Weill - Legend Of The Dead Soldier

And when the war reached its final spring
With no hint of a pause for breath
The soldier did the logical thing
And died a hero's death.
The war however was far from done
And the Kaiser thought it a crime
That his soldier should be dead and gone
Before the proper time.
The summer spread over the makeshift graves
And the soldier lay ignored
Until one night there came an official army medical board.
The board went out to the cemetery
With consecrated spade
And dug up what was left of him
For next day's sick parade.
Their doctor inspected what they'd found
Or as much as he thought would serve
And gave his report: 'He's medically sound
He's merely lost his nerve.'
Straightway they took the soldier off.
The night was soft and warm.
If you hadn't a helmet you could see
The stars you saw at home.
They filled him up with a fiery schnapps
To spark his sluggish heart
And shoved two nurses into his arms
And a half-naked tart.
He's stinking so strongly of decay
That a priest limps on before
Swinging a censer on his way
That he may stink no more.
In front the band with oompah-pah
Intones a rousing march.
The soldier does like the manual says
And flicks his legs from his arse.
Their arms about him, keeping pace
Two kind first-aid men go
Or else he might fall in the shit on his face

And that would never do.
They daubed his shroud with the black-white-red
Of the old imperial flag
Whose garish colours obscured the mud
On that blood-bespattered rag.
Up front a gent in a morning suit
And stuffed-out shirt marched too:
A German determined to do his duty
As Germans always do.
So see them now as, oompah-pah
Along the roads they go
And the soldier goes whirling along with them
Like a flake in the driving snow.
The dogs cry out and the horses prance
The rats squeal on the land:
They're damned if they're going to belong to France
It's more than flesh can stand.
And when they pass through a village all
The women are moved to tears.
The trees bow low, the moon shines full
And the whole lot gives three cheers.
With oompah-pah and cheerio
And tart and dog and priest
And right in the middle the soldier himself
Like some poor drunken beast.
And when they pass through a village perhaps
It happens he disappears
For such a crowd's come to join the chaps
With oompah and three cheers.
In all that dancing, yelling crowd
He disappeared from view.
You could only see him from overhead
Which only stars can do.
The stars won't always be up there
The dawn is turning red.
But the soldier goes off to a hero's death
Just like the manual said.

Felix Mendelssohn - Psalm 2, Opus 78 No.1

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,
Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.
Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Felix Mendelssohn - Psalm 22, Opus 78 No. 3

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.
Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.
Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.
I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.
My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.
All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.
All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.
A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

Felix Mendelssohn - Psalm 43, Opus 78 No. 2

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.