

London Concord Singers

Malcolm Cottle – conductor
Jonathan Cottle – violoncello
Joanne Nichols - piano

Thursday 11th December 2003 - Grosvenor Chapel

Programme

Johann Gottfried Schicht – Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn

Jean Mouton – Ave Maria, Gratia Plena

Francisco Guerrero – Canite Tuba

Johann Gottfried Schicht - Kommt herzu, lasset uns dem Herrn frohlocken

Lennox Berkeley – Three Latin Motets

John Tavener – Svyati

(solo violoncello: Jonathan Cottle)

Interval

Bohuslav Martinu – Variations on a Slovak Theme

(violoncello: Jonathan Cottle, piano: Joanne Nichols)

Heinrich Schütz – Der Engel Sprach

John Tavener – The Lamb

Peter Warlock – I saw a Fair Maiden

Peter Warlock – As Dew in Aprylle

Peter Warlock – Bethlehem Down

Ralph Vaughan Williams – Fantasia on Christmas Carols

(solo baritone: John Penty, solo violoncello: Jonathan Cottle, piano: Joanne Nichols)

Johann Gottfried Schicht (1753 – 1823) – Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn

Kommt herzu, lasset uns dem Herrn frohlocken

Schicht was born in Reichenau near Zittau, a town in Germany just east of Dresden and currently on the German/Czech border. Schicht studied at the University of Leipzig. In 1781 in Leipzig the Gewandhaus association was formed to give 24 concerts a year on Thursdays from 5pm to 7pm. The concerts took place in the Gewandhaus, which was the headquarters of the cloth and textile merchants; in 1780 an unoccupied floor had been remodelled as a concert hall. Initially the orchestra was directed by Johann Adam Hiller who had led a concert series known as the "Grand Concert" which had taken place in a wing of the tavern, "The Three Swans". In 1785 Schicht became the director of the Gewandhaus concerts in succession to Hiller. These were not great years for the orchestra, Schicht was a fine artisan conductor but lacked the spark of genius and it was not until Mendelssohn took over the Gewandhaus orchestra that it developed into a world famous ensemble.

In 1810 Schicht went on to be Kantor of Leipzig's Thomasschule where J.S. Bach had worked earlier in the previous century. Again Schicht followed on from Johann Adam Hiller who was the previous Kantor. In 1819 Schicht produced the hymnal, 'Allgemeines Choral-buch', setting chorales in his own 4-part settings.

The motet **Kommt herzu, lasset uns dem Herrn frohlocken** sets words from Psalm 95 and the motet **Allles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn** sets verse 6 from Psalm 150

Jean Mouton (c.1459 – 1522) – Ave Maria, gratia plena

Mouton was a Franco-Flemish composer known particularly for his motets. He started singing at Nesle in 1477 and went on to become the maitre de chapelle there in 1483. He was active in Amiens from 1500, Grenoble from 1501. From 1502 he was associated with the French court serving Queen Ann of Brittany and then Francis 1st. Many of his motets are occasional works written for significant events in court life. The Venetian printer Petrucci issued a

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book of his masses in 1515 and Le Roy & Ballard published a posthumous book of motets in 1522. Other works were printed in anthologies or survive in manuscript.

Francisco Guerrero (1528 – 1599) – Canite tuba

Guerrero was the greatest representative of the Andalusian school of composers in the second half of the 16th century. He started out as a child singer at Seville Cathedral and became a pupil of his brother Pedro, going on to study with Christobal Morales. He directed music at Jaén cathedral in 1546-8, and was a singer at Seville cathedral in 1550. In 1554 he succeeded Morales as choirmaster at Malaga cathedral, but he returned to Seville the following year to direct the music there. He travelled to Rome in 1581-4 and made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1588-9. Guerrero achieved great celebrity both inside and outside Spain, and he was able to have many of his works published in France, Italy and Flanders. He wrote some 20 masses and 100 motets. He said that the only thing he sought in his music was to enlighten souls and not to win flattery. His motet **Canite Tuba in Sion** dates from 1570.

Lennox Berkeley (1903 – 1989) – Three Latin Motets

1. Eripe me, Domine (Deliver me, O Lord)
2. Veni sponsa Christi (Come thou Bride of Christ)
3. Regina coeli laetare (Queen of Heaven rejoice)

English composer Lennox Berkeley did not plan a career in music and read Modern Languages at Oxford. There, he wrote his first published work, a song 'The Thresher'. Encouragement from Ravel resulted in his going to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger. Whilst in Paris he met Stravinsky and Poulenc and became a friend of the latter (one of his better known later works would be the orchestration of Poulenc's Flute Sonata which was commissioned by James Galway). Berkeley met Britten at the ISCM Festival in Barcelona in 1936 and they went on to write a joint work, 'Mont Juic' based on the Catalan tunes they heard in Barcelona. Britten, though ten years younger than Berkeley, would be a major influence on the composer.

Berkeley had a strong personal faith and in 1928 converted to Roman Catholicism. His legacy of choral music includes a significant body of work setting sacred texts and the liturgy. He wrote music for both the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches, but arguably his finest sacred music is that setting Latin words. Berkeley responded to Latin with music that has a toughness which is worlds away from the English pastoral school's legacy to Anglicanism. Berkeley's faith does not seem to have been the 'easy chair' variety and he produced music that is questing and questioning. These three motets were commissioned by the North Wales Festival and first performed on 28th September 1972 by Choir of St. John's College Cambridge, directed by George Guest.

In the first motet, the pain of the text is matched by Berkeley's stark and dissonant harmony. And the apparently lyrical, flowing second motet ends by teetering on an unresolved discord. The final motet is a setting of the familiar Marian hymn, but Berkeley's setting manages to avoid being completely comfortably joyful.

John Tavener (1944 –) – Svyati; The Lamb

Tavener took the musical world by storm when the London Sinfonietta gave the first performance of his dramatic cantata 'The Whale' in 1968. The work used the then highly fashionable collage of pre-recorded tape, amplified percussion and a chorus using loudhailers. After this success his music went on to be recorded by The Beatles' record label, Apple.

A growing interest in the Russian Orthodox Church led him to join that church in 1977. Turning his back on his previous iconoclasm, his religious conversion led to a change in his style of composition as he increasingly absorbed ancient Orthodox chant and traditions so that his music eschewed conventional western development in favour of creating an icon of sound. His musical language moved towards a self-abnegating ethereal beauty and such works as 'Funeral Ikos' (1981), 'Ikos of Light' (1984) date from this time, as do **The Lamb** (1982) - a setting of the Poem by William Blake (1757 – 1827) – and **Svyati** (1985), both of which we are performing tonight. His 'Akathist of Thanksgiving' was given a standing ovation at its world premiere in Westminster Abbey in 1988. The Proms performance in 1989 of 'The Protecting Veil' introduced his music to a new audience.

Svyati *O Holy One* was written upon learning of the death of a close friend's father. This personal outpouring sets a solo cello in dialogue with the choir who intone a text drawn from the Trisagion and sung in Church Slavonic, the liturgical language of the Russian Orthodox Church. The hypnotic intensity reaches an impassioned climax before subsiding to a breathtakingly hushed conclusion. The work was first performed by Steven Isserlis and the Kiev Chamber Choir, conducted by Mykola Gobdych at the Cricklade Festival.

Composer's Note: *I began to write Svyati in early 1985; while sketching it, I learned that John Williams, father of Jane, my dear friend and publisher, was dying. I could not refrain from dedicating it to Jane and the memory of her father.*

The text is in Church Slavonic, and it is used at almost every Russian Orthodox service, perhaps most poignantly after the congregation have kissed the body in an open coffin at an Orthodox funeral. The choir sings 'Svyati Bozhe'

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as the coffin is closed and borne out of the church, followed by the mourners with lighted candles. The cello represents the Priest or Ikon of Christ, and should play at a distance from the choir, perhaps at the opposite end of the building. As in Greek drama, choir and priest are in dialogue with each other. Since the cello represents the Ikon of Christ, it must be played without any sentiment of a Western character, but should derive from the chanting of the Eastern Orthodox Church. (J.T.)

Bohuslav Martinu (1890 – 1959) – Variations on a Slovak Theme

Martinu was born in the village of Policka, in the mountains of Bohemia and Moravia, where his father was a bell-ringer. A sickly child, he rarely left the tower in which his parents had their home, so his first 12 years were spent looking down on the village with a birds-eye view. This distinctive view of the world profoundly influenced his compositions; he was to write later in life, it was "not the small interests of people, the cares, the hurts, or the joys" that he saw from that great height, but "space, which I always have in front of me." He learned the violin from a local tailor and made a local reputation for himself, giving his first public concert in 1905.

He entered the Prague conservatoire in 1906 as a violin student but, tiring of the routine, left after two years after failing his examinations. He transferred to the Organ school, but he again failed to settle and was expelled. He started concentrating on composition and teaching, studying on his own and making progress thanks to an intense personal discipline. He eventually joined the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in 1918. He re-entered the conservatoire and became a pupil of Suk (Dvorak's son-in-law). In 1923 he won a scholarship that enabled to study in Paris with Albert Roussel. By 1931, he was established in Paris and able to marry. With the threat of German invasion in 1940 he escaped, with difficulty, to Portugal and eventually ended up in the United States. After the Second World War he became professor of composition at the Prague Conservatoire, returning to America after two years.

A prolific composer, his works span a number of styles. Whilst some works are indebted to the Czech, Slovak and Moravian folk material of his childhood, his music from the 20's and 30's was very influence by the jazz-oriented atmosphere of 1920's Paris and later by neo-classicism. Much of his music from his later periods can be indebted to his profound nostalgia for his homeland. The **Variations on a Slovak Theme** date from 1959 and were written in Switzerland where Martinu, now seriously ill, was a guest of Paul Sacher. The folk-song *Kde bych já vedela* (If I had known) provides the theme, heard from the cello after the short piano introduction. The syncopations of the first variation and the intensity of its central section are followed by a version that makes use of a repeated rhythmic motif and double-stopping. The third variation opens with solemn piano chords, followed by the cello in melancholy intensity, the fourth variation offering a contrast as a scherzo, before its final rhetoric. The set ends with a vigorous finale derivative of the them, now with asymmetric rhythms, in true Slovak style.

Heinrich Schütz (1585 – 1672) – Der Engel sprach

In 1598 the young Schütz so impressed Landgrave Moritz of Hessen with his musical abilities that the Landgrave took him back to his court in Kassel where Schütz served as a choirboy and studied music with the court Kapellmeister. In 1609 Schütz went to the University of Marburg, but encouraged and sponsored by Landgrave Moritz he was able to make a 3 year visit to Venice, at the Landgrave's expense. Whilst in Venice Schütz became a pupil of Giovanni Gabrieli. On returning to Germany he became organist in Kassel and then went on, in 1617, to become the director of the Elector of Saxony's chapel in Dresden. In Dresden he was responsible for providing music for the major court ceremonies, both religious and political. His music sets largely German texts and constitutes the ultimate realisation of Luther's endeavours to establish the vernacular as a literary and liturgical language.

Schütz undertook numerous journeys on business for the Elector of Saxony. In 1628 he made a second journey to Venice, where Claudio Monteverdi was now the leading figure. Schütz remained there for about a year, to escape the 30 year's war and to keep abreast of new musical developments. Whilst in Venice Schütz published the first of his three sets of *Symphoniae Sacrae*, a group of settings of Latin texts which was a tribute to his former teacher Giovanni Gabrieli. To further escape the war he directed the music for the wedding of Crown Prince Christian of Denmark, remaining in Denmark from 1633 to 1635.

Despite numerous pleas to be released from his position in Dresden, he was only able to retire from court on the death of the Elector in 1656. During the remaining years he continued to supply music for Dresden, travelled frequently, wrote his late masterpieces (Christmas Story, three Passions and settings of Psalms 100 and 119),

Der Engel sprach zu den Hirten dates from his 1648 collection sacred choral music, is an arrangement by Schütz of the Concerto 'Angelus ad pastores ait' by Andrea Gabrieli. It is a 7 part work (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Tenor, Tenor, Bass, Bass). Schütz would have expected some parts to be taken by instruments and others by voices but by fully texting all the lines Schütz obviously allowed for the possibility of a purely vocal performance. (In response to the depredations of the 30 year's war, some of Schütz's later works are notable for their reduced instrumental demands).

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Peter Warlock (1894 – 1930) – I saw a fair maiden; As Dew in Aprylle; Bethlehem Down

Born Philip Heseltine, Warlock was born in the Savoy Hotel and came from a well-to-do family of stockbrokers, solicitors and art connoisseurs. Encouraged in his interest in music by a sympathetic master at Eton, a concert of music by Delius in 1911 had a lasting effect. Warlock met Delius at the concert and a friendship developed between them. Delius became Warlock's mentor for the next seven years and they corresponded for the remainder of Warlock's life.

After a number of abortive attempts to study he became the music critic of the Daily Mail in 1915 but lasted only 4 months. It was in 1916 that he published his first musical article using the pseudonym Peter Warlock. In August 1918 he had his first songs published, again under the pseudonym Peter Warlock as he began to fear the London musical establishment was beginning to view the name Heseltine with suspicion and hostility. The war and post-war years were mixed for Warlock. He rarely had a full-time job; periods editing musical magazines either terminated in the magazine losing money or publishers losing confidence in the more contentious material he included. For a time Warlock became interested in the occult. A closeness to DH Lawrence gradually fell apart and turned acrimonious when Lawrence included caricatures of Warlock and his then wife in 'Women in Love'.

For much of the time Warlock was forced by financial embarrassment to live in the family home in Wales. But from 1925 to 1928 he lived in Eynsford and held a sort of open house and it is from this period that most of the legends surrounding him date. But also, this period marks a slow dimming of his creativity. By 1930 he had become depressed, demand for his songs has dwindled even if he still had the creativity to write them. He was found dead from gas poisoning in his Chelsea flat on 17 December 1930. It was never established whether it was suicide or accident. In less than two decades, he had written about 150 songs, two dozen part-songs, a dozen items of vocal chamber music and half a dozen instrumental works as well as 600 transcriptions, some vast undertakings. His journalism - books, articles, prefaces, reviews, and programme notes - amounted to around 300,000 words.

Warlock was essentially a miniaturist and most of his works are songs or short choral pieces. His acknowledged masterpiece is the song cycle 'The Curlew' written in 1922. As the 20's progressed there was a sort of frustration in his work as he felt that he lacked formal musical training and worried that the miniature forms that worked best for his genius had led him into a cul-de-sac.

As Dew in Aprylle sets an anonymous 15th century poem and was written in 1918. **I saw a fair maiden** and **Bethlehem Down** both date from 1927. The former sets an anonymous medieval poem and the latter sets words by the poet Bruce Blunt (1899 – 1957) who became a friend of Warlock's and whose words Warlock set in a number of his later works.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958) – Fantasia on Christmas Carols

Vaughan Williams's **Fantasia on Christmas Carols** was written 1913, the year before the London Symphony, and as such can be regarded as an early work. Very much a late starter, it was only when he reached his 40's that Vaughan Williams crystallised his mature style. The effect of lessons with Ravel (RVW commented that he went to Paris for a little French polishing and Ravel - 3 years Vaughan Williams's junior - said that RVW was the only one of his pupils that did not just try and copy Ravel's musical style) combined with his work on the English Hymnal and his discovery of the music of Thomas Tallis and his contemporaries was to create Vaughan Williams's distinctive voice. This means that few works survive from before 1910.

The **Fantasia on Christmas Carols** derived from his work on the English Hymnal where he edited/arranged a number of folk tunes and carols as hymns. The Fantasia is founded on the traditional English carols; 'The truth sent from above' from Herefordshire, 'Come all you worthy gentlemen' from Somerset, 'On Christmas night' from Sussex and the tune of 'There is a fountain' from Herefordshire along with fragments of other well known carol tunes. RVW wrote the work for solo baritone, choir and orchestra but ever practical he sanctioned it in a number of versions. The one we are using tonight, for solo baritone, solo violoncello, choir and piano has the advantage of practicality whilst preserving the lovely violoncello solo which opens the work.

Jonathan Cottle learned the 'Cello through the Suzuki Method with Carey-Beth Hockett up to the age of 14, when he went to study with William Bruce at the Royal College of Music Junior Department. He spent 4 years at the University of Leeds where he took lessons from Anna Shuttleworth and he spent a year at the Janáček Academy of Music in Brno in the Czech Republic. During his time at Leeds he performed the Elgar Cello Concerto with the University Symphony Orchestra and the Vivaldi Concerto for 2 cellos with the LU Chamber Orchestra. Last year he received the Fitch Bequest award to attend the Royal Academy of Music, where he is currently studying for his Post-Graduate Diploma in Performance with David Smith.

Recently Jonathan has performed with the renowned group *Nightmares On Wax* at the Kentish Town Forum, and has written and recorded string backup for the up-and coming Hip-Hop group *Hippopratives*.