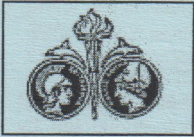


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The Anglo-Hellenic League

presents

A concert of music by Sir John Tavener
in commemoration of John Leatham

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Cadogan Street, Chelsea

London Concord Singers
Conductor – Malcolm Cottle
Solo Cello – Jonathan Cottle

Programme

- Two Hymns to the Mother of God (1985)
- Funeral Ikos (1981)
- Chant (1995)
- The Lamb (1982)
- The Tyger (1987)
- Svyati (1985)
- Song for Athene (1993)
- God is with us (1987)

Sir John Tavener (1944-)

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. His **Celtic Requiem** of 1969 uses techniques of stasis and non-developmental block construction, techniques which are important for their later influence in Tavener's work. **Celtic Requiem** came to the attention of the Beatles and went on to be recorded by their record label, Apple.

A growing interest in the Orthodox Church led Tavener 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. Though this musical development was paralleled by his being received into the Orthodox Church, his change in style was also affected by the problems with his opera **Therese** (1973-1976). The opera had a troubled and protracted gestation period and was first performed at the Royal Opera House in 1979. It was given a cool critical reception which added to Tavener's growing disenchantment with its dense orchestration and taxing vocal lines.

Instead, 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) and **Svyati** (1985). Tavener's **Akathist of Thanksgiving** was given a standing ovation at its world premiere in Westminster Abbey in 1988 and the Proms performance in 1989 of **The Protecting Veil** helped to introduce his music to a new audience.

Recently, Tavener has completed a number of works of large-scale proportions. His **Fall and Resurrection** was premiered at St. Paul's Cathedral in January 2004 and **The Veil of the Temple**, a remarkable 7-hour work, was premiered in 2003 at the Temple Church by the Temple Church Choir and the Holst Singers conducted by Stephen Layton. This work also indicates a shift in Tavener's spiritual interests. Though the work is based on the Orthodox overnight vigil services (for which Rachmaninov 'Vespers' were also written) it belongs to a group of recent works which take their texts from a variety of Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Sufi and Jewish sources. He is currently working on a piece celebrating the 99 names of God according to the Islamic tradition.



Two Hymns to the Mother of God (1985)

A Hymn to the Mother of God Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God

These two hymns were written in memory of Tavener's mother and were first performed in December 1985 by Winchester Cathedral Choir conducted by Martin Neary. The first hymn is a setting for double choir of a text from the Liturgy of St. Basil which describes the almost cosmic power which the Orthodox Church attributes to the Virgin. The text of the second hymn comes from the Vigil Service of the Dormition (or falling asleep) of the Mother of God. In the text she invites the apostles to gather together from the ends of the earth to bury her body in Gethsemane, and asks her son to receive her spirit.

Funeral Ikos (1981)

Funeral Ikos sets 6 verses from the Orthodox Order for the Burial of Dead Priests (in a translation by Isabel Hapgood), each verse concluding with an Alleluia. The words are a simple statement of the rewards in paradise for the righteous ones. Much of the setting is homophonic, often unison, allowing the words to make the maximum impact. It was written in 1981 when Tavener was 37.

Chant (1995)

Cello solo – Jonathan Cottle

Chant, for solo cello, was written in response to the death of Tavener's dear friend, Philip Sherrard, the dedicatee of **The Tyger**.

The music seemed to come from nowhere and is a tribute to an uncompromising, prophetic and brilliant man. (J.T.)

The Lamb (1982)

A setting of the poem by William Blake (1757–1827) from his **Songs of Innocence and Experience**.

The LAMB came to me fully grown and was written in an afternoon and dedicated to my nephew Simon for his 3rd birthday. (J.T.)

The Tyger (1987)

A further poem from Blake's **Songs of Innocence and Experience**.

The Tyger was written for Philip Sherrard for his 65th birthday. It was composed in Katounia, Greece, and at one dramatic point refers back to The Lamb, both in text and in music. (J.T.)



Svyati (1985)

Cello solo – Jonathan Cottle

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 Gombdych at the Cricklade Festival.

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' as the coffin is closed and borne out of the church, followed by the mourners with lighted candles. The cello represents the Priest or Ikona 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 Ikona 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.)

Translation of text - Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us

Song for Athene (1993)

Song for Athene was commissioned by the BBC and first performed in 1994 by the BBC Singers conducted by Simon Joly at a concert in St. Giles in the Barbican, London. Tavener wrote it in memory of Athene Hariades, who died tragically in March 1993 and he attempts to represent both her love of the Orthodox Church and her love of acting, music and poetry (what he describes as 'her inner and outer beauty') by combining a text from the Orthodox Funeral Service with lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet. The piece is perhaps best known from its use at the funeral service of Diana, Princess of Wales in September 1997 when it was sung by Westminster Abbey Choir conducted by Martin Neary. For this occasion, it was performed under the title 'Alleluia, May flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest'.

God is with us (1987)

God is with us was commissioned for Winchester Cathedral to celebrate the work of Martin Neary there from 1972 to 1987. It was first performed in December 1987 by Winchester Cathedral Choir conducted by Martin Neary. The text is taken from the Orthodox Great Compline for Christmas Eve.



The **Anglo-Hellenic League**, established in 1913, is a charity devoted to Anglo-Hellenic friendship. Its membership has grown from a devotion to this ideal and from other causes: the bonds of wartime comradeship; the increasing number of visitors who have fallen under the spell of ancient Greece and the splendours of Byzantium; and awareness of the vigorous culture of contemporary Greece. Throughout its existence the League has benefited from royal patronage, while the Greek and British ambassadors en poste are patrons. The League is primarily concerned with charitable and cultural work. Funds from recent charitable events have been raised for hospitals and charities in the UK and Greece, for student bursaries and academic awards. The Princess Marina Memorial Fund donates gifts of art books to Greek museums and cultural societies. On the cultural side the League, well known for its establishment of the Koraeos Chair of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London, is responsible for the administration of the annual Runciman Award, named in honour of its past Chairman Sir Steven Runciman, for books on Hellenic themes. It also hosts numerous lectures and other cultural events.

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.

Malcolm Cottle was a chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral & sang at the Coronation in 1953. He is currently Organist of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Cadogan Street, Chelsea. For over 35 years he was Musical Director of the North London Progressive Synagogue. Malcolm has been Chorus Master of Hatfield Philharmonic Chorus & has worked with the New Opera Company, Beaufort Opera and Orpheus Opera. He has been conductor of the London Concord Singers since the group's founding in 1966. He has worked in theatre as Musical Director at Sheffield Playhouse, Nottingham Playhouse, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon and the Swan Theatre, Worcester. He currently works at the London Studio Centre for Dance and Drama and he has directed the music for several shows, ranging from *Show Boat* to *West Side Story* and *Hair!* He is also Assistant Musical Director to the Alyth Choral Society.

London Concord Singers was founded by Malcolm Cottle in 1966 and performed regularly in central London since that date, gaining a reputation for adventurous and interesting programming, mixing contemporary music with known and unknown works from past centuries. The choir has given a number of world, UK and London premieres of works by composers such as John Rutter, Andrzej Panufnik, Richard Rodney Bennett, John McCabe, Kenneth Leighton and Michael Ball, as well as works specially written for the choir. The choir has also given performances of major contemporary works such as Alfred Schnittke's *Choral Concerto* and Malcolm Williamson's *Requiem for a Tribe Brother*. Last summer they performed to an audience of over 1200 at a concert in Rheims Cathedral as part of the music festival, *Les Flâneries Musicales d'Été de Reims* and in 2004 performed concerts in Barcelona as well as singing mass in Barcelona cathedral.

Our next concert:

Giovanni Gabrieli – Jubilate Deo

Francis Poulenc – Sept Chansons

Bernhard Lewkovitch – Mass, Opus 10

Nicholas Maw – One foot in Eden still I stand

**London Concord Singers
conductor Malcolm Cottle**

St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street

London NW1

(nearest tube: Baker Street)

Thursday 16th December 2004, 7.30pm

Tickets price £7.50 (concessions £5.00) available on the door or in advance from
Islington Music, telephone 020 7354 3195

For our Christmas concert we will be performing three contrasting works which span the 20th century alongside Giovanni Gabrieli's joyous **Jubilate Deo**.

Bernhard Lewkovitch (1927-) is a Danish composer of Polish extraction who is known mainly for his vocal and choral music, much of it written for the Roman Catholic Church. His **Mass** (opus 10), dates from the early part of his career in the 1950s when he experimented with a variety of styles including serialism and Stravinskian tonality.

English composer Nicholas Maw (1935-) wrote **One foot in Eden still I stand** in 1990. The motet sets a poem by Edwin Muir which speaks of fields planted with crops of love and hate, charity and sin, grief - and then of strange blessings falling from these beclouded skies.

In **Sept Chansons** Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) set surrealist poetry by Apollinaire, Eluard and Legrand, displaying a darker more serious side to his art. The work was written shortly after Poulenc's visit to the shrine of Rocamadour in 1936 in response to the horrific death (he was decapitated in a car accident) of his friend (and almost exact contemporary), the composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud. This event had a profound effect on Poulenc, causing him to re-examine his faith and produce a series deeper, darker works.