

Thursday 16th December 2004

St. Cyprian's Church

Programme

Giovanni Gabrieli – Jubilate Deo
Nicholas Maw – One foot in Eden still I stand
Bernhard Lewkovitch – Mass, opus 10

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach – Der Geist hilft
Francis Poulenc – Sept Chansons

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1553/1556 – 1612) Jubilate Deo

The main trading post between the East and West, Venice was a rich, prosperous city, guarded by a powerful fleet. Its citizens enjoyed political stability and a high standard of living with a corresponding ability to impress foreign dignitaries. This was reflected in the ceremonial aspects of public life in which all classes mixed and where the religious and the temporal co-existed. Processions were held on important civil and religious occasions, usually beginning in the Piazza and proceeding into the Basilica of St. Mark, the private chapel of the Doges. They were governed by protocol dating back to the fifteenth century. One of the most important customs was that at least six silver trumpets should play at such events, ensuring the necessity of instrumental music to accompany all great celebrations. St. Mark's had a tradition of formal music making dating back to the 13th century, but the appointment, as maestro di capella, of the Flemish musician Adrien Willaert (c.1490–1562) significantly raised the profile of the musical establishment.

In 1566 Andrea Gabrieli (c. 1510 – 1586) was appointed organist at St. Mark's where he quickly became recognised as a significant composer, particularly of ceremonial music. He had studied in Munich with Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594) and worked there at the court of Duke Albrecht V. Andrea Gabrieli died at the then extremely ripe age of 76. Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1553/1556 – 1612) almost certainly had lessons with his uncle Andrea. He also worked at the Munich Court and studied with Orlando di Lasso. Giovanni probably left Munich in 1579 on the death of Duke Albrecht. He deputised as organist at St. Mark's in 1584 and was then appointed second organist and composer following the resignation of the previous incumbent, Claudio Merulo (1533 – 1604). He also became organist at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, a part-time appointment, retaining both positions until his death in 1612.

Giovanni Gabrieli's time spent as a colleague of his uncle was short as his uncle died a year after his appointment. The need for a successor to continue the grand style of composition must have led the authorities to offer Giovanni the position. He immediately began to edit and publish his uncle's *Concerti*, often written for divided choirs (*cori spezzati*) of voices and instruments, which greatly influenced his own compositional style. But Giovanni's genius was to fully realise the potential of this spatial technique and to carry it even further. Granted permission to hire free-lance singers and players, he enlarged the virtuoso ensemble which had already been permanently established in 1567. He was followed at St. Mark's by Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643) who ushered in a new era of music making.

Tonight we are performing one of Gabrieli's *Jubilate Deo* settings, for 8-part choir. This one comes from *Symphoniae Sacrae* published in 1597 and does not set the familiar text from Psalm 99 (100). Instead its text seems to have been specially arranged, perhaps for a particular occasion. The opening phrase, *Jubilate Deo*, appears four times as a refrain, with identical music. The work is not written for double choir; instead Gabrieli uses his 8 voices with great flexibility, combining them into groups of unequal and varying weight. Though we are performing it unaccompanied, it should be borne in mind that in 16th century Venice the definition of a choir would have been very flexible. At St. Mark's, the piece would probably have been performed by a mixture of voices and instruments; contemporary descriptions speak of singers and instrumentalists crammed willy-nilly into the balconies at St. Marks; the full title page of the publication from which it comes, *Symphoniae Sacrae tam voicibus quam instrumentis* indicates an interchangeable use of voices and instruments.

Translation of the text:-

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, for the man shall be blessed who fears the Lord.

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, The God of Israel, may He join you, and may He be with you, may He send you help from his Holy place and from Zion. O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, May the Lord bless you out of Zion, (the Lord) Who made heaven and earth. O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, Serve ye the Lord with gladness

Nicholas Maw (1935 –)

One foot in Eden still I stand

Born in Grantham, Lincolnshire, Maw studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Paul Steinitz and Lennox Berkeley; and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Schoenberg's pupil, Max Deutsch. He went on to teach at Trinity College Cambridge, Exeter University and Yale University and is currently Professor of Composition at the Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore.

Maw established his reputation when, at the age of 26, he produced *Scenes and Arias* for a BBC Prom, which immediately put him right at the forefront of the British musical scene. This BBC commission is now recognised as one of the most outstanding British works of its decade. His extensive and varied catalogue includes much chamber music, vocal and choral music, solo instrumental works, and opera – the chamber opera *One Man Show*, 1964, the three-act *The Rising of the Moon*, 1967–70, which was premiered at Glyndebourne and most recently *Sophie's Choice* which was premiered at Covent Garden in December 2002. From 1973 to 1987 Maw composed *Odyssey* for orchestra: the single, unbroken 96-minute span of symphonic music which has been unanimously lauded since its initial performance in 1987 at a BBC Prom in London.

Since 1984 Maw has divided his time between Europe and the United States. His motets, *One foot in Eden still I stand*, sets a text by the Scots poet Edwin Muir. The motet is written for 8 part choir and 4 soloists. It was commissioned by King's College, Cambridge, to celebrate the 550th anniversary of the founding of the college (1441 – 1991). The motet was first performed by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge conducted by Stephen Cleobury, in September 1990.

Edwin Muir (1887 – 1959) was in Orkney; in childhood he experienced his own "Eden" before, aged fourteen, encountering the "fallen" world when circumstances forced his family to move to Glasgow. Within four years both his parents and two of his five siblings had died, leaving him with a profound sense of the gulf between the Orkneys and the city and causing a nervous perturbation which shadowed his life and shaped his work.

By 1919, Muir had married and moved to London where persisting psychological distress led him to Jungian analysis. A vision in which he was witness to the Creation inspired him fully to engage in his own "creation" as a poet. His world is full of paradox, good coexisting with evil, living with dying, love with hate, leading to images of journeys, of roads, of labyrinths:

In addition to seven collections of poems, Muir wrote three novels and in 1935 he produced his controversial assessment of Scottish culture *Scott and Scotland*. In this work he attacked the "synthetic Scots" as used by Hugh MacDiarmid, something of which he had once approved. Muir's thesis was that while Scotland was torn between Lallans and English, she would fail to produce great literature.

Bernhard Lewkovitch (1927 –)

Mass, opus 10

Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei

Danish composer Lewkovitch is something of an outsider on the Danish musical scene. This is because, though he was born in Denmark, his family is of Polish extraction; he was raised as a Roman Catholic and remains a devout Catholic amid the preponderantly Lutheran Danes. This Catholicism is reflected in his work and sacred music for the Catholic Mass forms a large part of his output.

As a boy, Lewkovitch sang at the Roman Catholic St. Ansgars Kirche. He studied at the Copenhagen conservatoire and then for a short time he studied in France. He went to work as a choral conductor and organist. He made his appearance on the musical scene in the 1950's with a series of works in which he experimented with a variety of techniques, moving from modality to serialism.

In his earliest works he was influenced by Gregorian chant as well as using the church modes in a very free manner. This manner was developed in such works as the *Mass, opus 10* which was written in 1952.

Some of his works from the 1960's use avant-garde effects and brought him international renown. After a break from composition, he resumed writing music in the 1970's; writing in a more archaic style influenced by old Catholic sacred music. But another influence was also the serialist music of Stravinsky.

For many years, Lewkovitch was the precentor at the Catholic Cathedral in Copenhagen and he founded the Copenhagen based choirs, the mixed voice Schola Cantorum and the male voice Schola Gregoriana.

Translation of the text:–

Kyrie: Lord have mercy, Christ 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.

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

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750) Der Geist hilft

By 1700, the motet had ceased to be important in Lutheran worship; originally sung during the offertory, by Bach's time at Leipzig they were relegated to the beginning of the service, after the organ prelude, or sung at vespers. Instead, motets were replaced by cantatas. During Bach's regime at St. Thomas's Church, Leipzig, the motets were simple and brief and were sung by the 'motet choir', which Bach considered to be his second best choir. The motets were selected from existing collection, Bach was not expected to provide them and in fact the motet choir was directed by the student prefect. This, of course, helps to explain why none of Bach's surviving motets seem to have been written for a liturgical purpose; there seems to be little evidence of any of the motets being used to replace the cantatas in the body of the service.

Instead, they were written for special occasions – for weddings, funerals and special services. The majority of Bach's surviving motets have connotations which would be suitable for funeral or memorial services. The occasional nature of these pieces helps explain their musical complexity and interest. On Sunday mornings, Bach's choral resources were spread rather thinly and it was only on special occasions, such as at the performance of one of the motets, that he would be able to assemble all of his best singers in one place. *Der Geist Hilft* was written in 1729 for the funeral of the Thomasschule headmaster, Ernesti.

Like most of the other motets, *Der Geist hilft*, consists of a setting of Biblical verses (from *Romans*) plus a Lutheran chorale text. The piece opens with a dazzling double-choir setting of the opening words of the *Romans* verse (*The Spirit helps us in our weakness*), this movement concludes with a 8-part fugal setting of the words *then the Spirit personally makes our petition for us in sighs that cannot be put into words*. The second Biblical verse receives a sober, 4-part fugal setting and the piece closes with a simple chorale.

It is likely that all of the motets were written to be performed with continuo; continuo parts survive for some motets and we also have the testimony of one of Bach's pupils. Performing parts exist for *Der Geist hilft*, with the string parts surviving for the first movement and wind parts for the second movement; but the exceptional nature of the first performance should not lead us to speculate that all of the motets were performed with large instrumental accompaniment.

Translation of the text:-

The Spirit helps us in our weakness, since, when we do not know what we should pray for then the Spirit personally makes our petition for us in sighs that cannot be put into words.

But He who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means, because the prayers the Spirit makes for God's holy people are in accordance with the mind of God. (Romans 8.)

Holy Fire, Sweet Trust, now help us, so that joyously and confidently we can remain in your service and not be driven away by misery. Lord, through your power prepare us, and strengthen our stupid human nature so that we can valiantly battle and force our way through death and life to You. (Martin Luther, 1524)

Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963)

Sept Chansons

- 1 - *La blanche neige*
- 2 - *A peine defiguree*
- 3 - *Par une nuit nouvelle*
- 4 - *Tous le droits*
- 5 - *Belle et ressemblante*
- 6 - *Maire*
- 7 - *Luire*

Poulenc was a largely self taught composer; in 1917 he had failed to get into the Paris Conservatoire and in his early years was dogged by the idea that he was an amateur. In 1921, feeling that his technique needed sharpening he took lessons from Charles Koechlin; someone whose musical gifts were never fully recognised in his lifetime but who was known as a fine teacher. Much of their lessons were spent harmonising Bach chorales.

Poulenc fell under the influence of Stravinsky and Satie and in the 1920's was one of *Les Six*, a rather informal confederation of disparate composers who were brought together by Jean Cocteau. In reality, the 6 had little in common apart from a dislike of Wagnerism. But members of the group allied themselves to movements such as Cubism and Surrealism.

Poulenc wrote *Sept Chansons* in 1936, setting two Surrealist texts by Guillaume Apollinaire and five by Paul Eluard. This was a period when Poulenc's style was changing and developing more serious elements. The death of a close friend had caused him to return to his Roman Catholic faith. From henceforth, his secular works would be paralleled by sacred music so that 1936 saw the production of not only *Sept Chansons* but also the *Mass in G*.

Both poets were writers whose works Poulenc set frequently. In many ways, *Sept Chansons* contain some of the finest examples of his choral writing. When writing choral music, Poulenc treated the text in a rather freer manner than he did in his songs; so that in *La blanche neige* for example, he repeats lines of text in order to get the balance of phrases that he wants.

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880 – 1918) was the pseudonym of Guillelmus Apollinaris de Kostrowitzky. He was probably born in Rome, the illegitimate son of a Polish adventurer Angelica de Kostrowitzky and Swiss Italian Aristocrat Flugi d'Aspermont. His father disappeared very early and Apollinaire was raised by his gambling mother in Italy, Monaco and the French Riviera. Apollinaire settled in Paris at the age of 20 becoming friends with Picasso, Albert Jarry and Maire Laurencin (who also became his lover) and founding a pair of influential magazines. Though known for his poetry he was also an influential writer on contemporary art.

Paul Eluard (1895 – 1952) came from a middle-class background, being born in Saint Denis the son of a book-keeper. He became interested in poetry after being sent to a Swiss Sanatorium at the age of 16 for the treatment of TB. He was in the French army during the 1st World War and was badly gassed.

He was briefly involved with the Tristan Tzara, Andre Breton and Dada movement. Like other intellectuals, he had emerged from the war disgusted, and he rejected common laws and morality. His *Les necessities de la vie et la consequences des reves* appeared in 1921 and was a statement of verse of Surrealist theories. He disappeared in 1924 and was thought dead; though, in fact, he had simply undertaken a long journey to Tahiti, Indonesia and Ceylon as a way of dealing with his grief at losing his wife Gala to Salvador Dali.

Translation of the text:-

1. La blanche neige - The White Snow

Angels, angels in the sky
One is dressed as an officer
One is dressed as a cook
And the others sing.

Beautiful officer, colour of sky
A long time after Christmas the sweet spring
Will decorate you with a beautiful sun,
With a beautiful sun.

The cook plucks geese
Ah, the snow is falling,
Falling, if only I had
my beloved in my arms.

Guillaume Apollinaire

2. A peine disfiguree - Barely Disfigured

Farewell Sadness
Hello Sadness
You are inscribed in the lines on the ceiling
You are inscribed in the eyes that I love
You are not poverty absolutely
Since the poorest of lips denounce you
Ah with a smile
Bonjour Tristesse
Love of kind bodies
Power of love
From which kindness rises
Like a bodiless monster
Unattached head
Sadness beautiful face.

Paul Eluard

3. Par une nuit nouvelle - In A New Night

Woman I've lived with
Woman I live with
Woman I'll live with
Always the same
You need a red cloak
Red gloves, a red mask
And black stockings
Motives, proof
To see you quite naked
Pure nakedness, O ready finery

Breasts, O my heart

Paul Eluard

4. Tous le droits

Simulate
The flowery shadow of hanging flowers in spring.
The shortest day of the year and the night of daylight
The agony of autumn dreamers
The scent of roses, the clever nettle's sting
Hang out transparent linen
In the clearing of your eyes
Show the devastation of fire that inspired its work
And the paradise in its ashes
The abstract phenomenon fighting with the hands of the clock
The wounds of truth, the unbending oaths
Show yourself
You can come out in a glass dress
Your beauty is everlasting
Your eyes shed tears, caresses, smiles
Your eyes have no secrets
Are limitless

Paul Eluard

5. Belle et ressemblante – Lovely And Lifelike

A face at the end of the day
A cradle in day's dead leaves
A bouquet of naked rain
Every ray of sun hidden
Every fountain of fountains in the depths of the water
Every mirror of mirrors broken
A face in the scales of silence
A pebble among other pebbles
For the leaves last glimmers of day
A face like all the forgotten faces.

Paul Eluard

6. Marie

When you were a little girl you danced
Will you be still dancing as a grandmother
Fish are jumping
All the bells will ring
When will you return, Marie?

The masques are silent
And the music so far off
That it seems to come from the sky
Yes, I want to love you but only a little
The heartache will be a pleasure

Sheep go by in the snow
Specks of wool and silver
Soldiers pass by, if only I had
A heart, this fickle hear
But then, how do I know

Know where you hair will go
Frizzy as the foam-flecked sea
Know where you hair will go?
And your hands, like autumn leaves
Also scattered by our promises

I was walking by the Seine
An old book under my arm
The river is like my heartache
It flows and never runs dry
Oh when will the week end?

Oh when will you return Marie?

Paul Eluard

7. Luire - To Dawn

Faultlessly cultivated Earth
Honey of dawn, sun in bloom
Runner still holding by a thread onto the sleeper
(Bond of understanding)
And throwing him over his shoulder says
"He has never been so new
He has never been so heavy"
Erosion, he will become lighter
Useful.
Bright summer sun with
Its warmth, its softness, its stillness
And quickly

The flower-carriers of the air touch the ground

Guillaume Apollinaire

Our next concert:-

Thursday 17th March 2005, 7.30pm
St. Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London NW1