

London Concord Singers  
conductor Malcolm Cottle

Grosvenor Chapel, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2005

**Programme**

Peter Philips – Cecilia Virgo  
Robert Hugill – I Vespri di Santa Cecilia  
Benjamin Britten – Hymn to St. Cecilia  
Gabriel Jackson – Cecilia Virgo

Interval

Morten Lauridsen – Ave Maria  
Orlandus Lassus – Magnificat perpulchrum septimi toni  
Morten Lauridsen – O Magnum Mysterium  
John McCabe – Upon the High Midnight – 3 Nativity Carols

**Peter Philips (c.1560 – c.1633) – Cecilia Virgo**

Philips was born in England to a Roman Catholic family. He spent a period as a singer at St. Paul's Cathedral but chose to leave England to avoid the restraint and persecution suffered by Catholics during the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. He left England in 1582 (and spent the remainder of his life on the Continent). After a few days at the English college at Douai he travelled to the English College in Rome. It was in Rome that Philips first experienced the music of 2 of the great composers of the day, Palestrina and Victoria. Whilst in Rome Philips also studied with Felice Anerio, who was later to become maestro di capella at the English College.

In 1585 Lord Thomas Paget (another refugee English Catholic) arrived at the English College in Rome. Philips entered his service and the pair travelled Europe until Paget's death in Brussels in 1590. In 1591 Philips settled in Antwerp and went on to obtain the position of organist in the chapel of Archduke Albrecht and Isabella of Austria. He married and his daughter Leonora had as her god-father, Cornelius Pruym who was a patron of the arts and employer of the Flemish composer Cornelius Verdonck. Philips did some work for the music publishing house founded by Pierre Phalese and it was Phalese who printed his two sets of *Cantiones Sacrae*.

Philips was a prolific composer of Latin motets, a few hundred survive. Though keeping some elements of English style, his music also owes much to the great continental masters

such as Orlandus Lassus. Philips's first set of *Cantiones Sacrae* (for 5 voices) were published in by Phalese in Antwerp in 1612, followed by a further set for 8 voices in 1613. **Cecilia Virgo** comes from this latter book. In this printed edition, it is notated a tone lower than we are performing it, with all 4 middle voices in the Tenor clef.

*Virgin Cecilia, the entire company of musicians sings your praises, in order that by your merits God may heed their supplications. With united voice and a single heart they call on your name, that you may deign to change the grief of the world into the glory of paradise, and that you may be willing, guardian virgin, to look upon your wards as they call on their merciful lady and ever say: 'Holy Cecilia, pray for us'.*

## Robert Hugill (born 1955) – I Vespri di Santa Cecilia

Robert is a London based composer and singer. For his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday he formed the eight: fifteen vocal ensemble, a group of professional choral singers; conducted by Malcolm Cottle they gave the premiere of Robert's cantata **The Testament of Dr. Cranmer** at St. Giles Cripplegate. They will be giving a repeat performance at the University Church, Oxford, as part of the commemorations of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cranmer's execution there. Robert's **Elegy for Baritone and Orchestra**, a setting of Rilke's 2<sup>nd</sup> Duino Elegy is receiving its first performance on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 at St. James's Church Piccadilly by baritone David Greiner and the Salomon Orchestra under Adrian Brown. Robert's voluntary choir *FifteenB*, conducted by Paul Ayres, will be presenting their programme *Hail Holy Queen – 1000 Years of Music to the Virgin Mary* at the 2006 Chelsea Festival in June.

**I Vespri di Santa Cecilia** was written for the celebrations of London Concord Singers' 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and sung at the anniversary concert in 1997. The piece sets texts from the Antiphons for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vespers on St. Cecilia's Day along with the Collect The motet is written for 6 soloists (or semi-chorus) and 8-part choir, though the piece does exist in an as yet unperformed 30-part version.

The setting of the text is arranged rather like a litany, the soloists sing the text and the chorus responds simply with *Alleluia* or *Beatae Ceciliae*. Initially the chorus and soloists sing in 2 different keys. Each group puts pressure on the other to modulate; gradually the chorus sopranos and altos attempt to modulate causing disturbances to the harmonic structure and eventually leaving the men behind, but ultimately it is the soloists who give in and the conclusion is firmly in the chorus's key.

*This is a wise virgin and one of the number of the prudent. This is a wise virgin, whom the Lord found watching. This is she who knew not the bed of dishonour: she shall have her fruit in the esteem of holy souls. O God, who dost gladden us with the yearly festival of blessed Cecilia, They Virgin and Martyr, grant that we who honour her by this solemn rite, may follow the example of her godly life. The glorious virgin bore Christ's gospel ever in her breast, and ceased neither day nor night from conversing with God in prayer*

## Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976) – Hymn to St. Cecilia

The **Hymn to St. Cecilia** was Britten's final collaboration with the poet W.H. Auden. It brought to an end a period of Britten's life when he was highly influenced by Auden's

literary taste. Auden had written texts for Britten's songs and the pair had collaborated on Britten's first opera **Paul Bunyan**. The music for the **Hymn to St. Cecilia** was written in 1942 on the boat in which Britten and Pears returned to war-torn Britain. They had fled to the USA in 1939, following hot on Auden's heels; at the start of the war the USA was officially neutral and so an attractive destination to pacifists such as Auden and Britten.

Auden had opened the door to new worlds for the young Britten but as he matured he needed to extract himself from Auden's domineering personality. But Britten's art had matured under Auden's influence; Britten had both struggled with and been stimulated by the dazzling pyrotechnics of Auden's language

Auden regretted Britten and Pears decision to return to the UK and in January 1942 wrote to Britten a letter which has subsequently become famous - partly because Auden was one of the few of Britten's collaborators who intimidated him. In later life Britten always took care to retain the upper hand in his collaborations. Donald Mitchell states that Britten found Auden too intellectually 'bossy'. In the letter Auden analyses (and foretells) the mature Britten with remarkable prescience; Auden starts the letter by discussing the artist's necessity to balance Order and Chaos, Bohemianism and Bourgeois Convention. He continues: "*for middle-class Englishmen like you and me, the danger is of course the second*" (i.e. Bourgeois Convention) "*Your attraction to thin-as-a-board juveniles i.e. to the sexless and innocent, is a symptom of this. And I am certain too that it is your denial and evasion of the disorder that is responsible for your attacks of ill-health. i.e. sickness is your substitute for the Bohemian.*"

*Wherever you go you are and probably always will be surrounded by people who adore you, nurse you, and praise everything you do, e.g. Elisabeth, Peter (Please show this to P to whom all this is also addressed). Up to a certain point this is fine for you, but beware. You see, Bengy dear, you are always tempted to make things too easy for yourself in this way, i.e. to build yourself a warm nest of love (of course when you get it, you find it a little stifling) by playing the lovable talented little boy.*

*If you are really to develop to your full stature, you will have, I think, to suffer, and make others suffer, in ways which are totally strange to you at present, and against every conscious value that you have; i.e. you will have to be able to say what you never have had the right to say - God, I'm a shit."*

Britten and Auden had started planning the **Hymn to St. Cecilia** in 1940, along with a number of other projects such as **Paul Bunyan**. Britten started work on the piece before leaving America but had got stuck; it was only on the boat travelling home that he was able to pick up the threads and complete the work. Besides being a hymn to music, Britten's work can also be seen to reflect the composer's relief at finding his own way home.

Britten was born on St. Cecilia's Day so Auden's poem to the patron saint of music can be seen as highly appropriate. The poem is in three sections, each concluding with the invocation 'Blessed Cecilia....' Each time this occurs, Britten sets the words to the same melody, with increasingly elaborate harmonisations. Auden's words are highly elliptical and contain a number of possible *double-entendres*.

1. In a garden shady this holy lady  
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,  
Like a black swan as death came on  
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:  
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin  
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,  
And notes tremendous from her great engine  
Thundered out the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,  
Moved to delight by the melody,  
White as an orchid she rode quite naked  
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;  
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing  
Came out of their trance into time again,  
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses  
The huge flame flickered & eased their pain.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

2. I cannot grow;  
I have no shadow  
To run away from,  
I only play.

I cannot err;  
There is no creature  
Whom I belong to,  
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat  
When it knows it  
Can now do nothing  
By suffering.

All you lived through,  
Dancing because you  
No longer need it  
For any deed.

I shall never be Different. Love me.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

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Crouch End Festival Chorus  
Conductor: David Temple

music about mankind  
in our world:

James MacMillan: Cantos Sagrados  
Britten: Ballad of Heroes  
Philip Glass: Itaipu

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3. O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,  
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,  
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all  
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,  
Where Hope within the altogether strange  
From every outworn image is released,  
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast  
Into a world of truths that never change:  
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear white children casual as birds,  
Playing among the ruined languages,  
So small beside their large confusing words,  
So gay against the greater silences  
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,  
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,  
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,  
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,  
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin is drawn across  
our trembling violin.

O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.  
O law drummed out by hearts against the still  
Long winter of our intellectual will.

That what has been may never be again.

O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath  
Of convalescents on the shores of death.

O bless the freedom that you never chose.

O trumpets that unguarded children blow  
About the fortress of their inner foe.

O wear your tribulation like a rose.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

Gabriel Jackson (born 1962) – Cecilia Virgo

Gabriel Jackson was born in Bermuda. He spent 3 years as a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and went on to study composition at the Royal College of Music. His music has been widely performed and broadcast throughout Europe and the USA. He has a strong involvement with the visual arts and has written pieces based on the works of artists Richard Long, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Robert Mapplethorpe. Jackson won the Liturgical category in the inaugural British Music Awards in 2003.

"I try to write music that is clean and clear in line, texture and structure; my pieces are made of simple melodies, chords, drones and ostinatos. They are not about conflict and resolution; even when animated, they are essentially contemplative. I like repetition and 'ritualised' structures. Many of my pieces reflect an interest in mediaeval techniques and ideas - I am particularly drawn to the ecstatic, panconsonant music of the early Tudor period. I am religious by temperament, though not by belief, and several pieces are an attempt at a spiritual response to the great technological miracle of our time - powered flight." - Gabriel Jackson

Cecilia Virgo, a BBC commission, was written for the BBC Singers and first performed by them in 2000 at Canterbury Cathedral, conducted by Stephen Cleobury. It is an expansive piece, requiring 24 voice parts in all, and was inspired by the motets in the Eton Choir Book. It opens with a bell-like passage for 12-part choir; much of the piece is written for this combination of forces but Jackson varies his textures by including passages for 8-part choir, dividing all the women into 12 parts and dividing all the men into 12 parts. The piece sets the same Latin antiphon as the Peter Philips motet performed tonight.

## Morten Lauridsen (born 1943) – Ave Maria

Morten Lauridsen is the chair of the Composition Department at the University of Southern California School of Music in Los Angeles; he joined the faculty in 1967 after studying with Ingolf Dahl and Halsey Stevens. He was raised in Portland, Oregon by Swedish immigrant parents. He worked as a Forest Service fire-fighter and lookout before travelling south to attend the University of Southern California. He currently divides his time between Los Angeles and a remote island off the northern coast of Washington State. He has emerged as one of the most performed of contemporary American composers; his choral music being very popular with choirs in the USA and the UK. Much of his music is inspired by the poets of the Italian Renaissance and the Latin Liturgy. His solid religious faith, which he learned in his youth, and the beauty of his environment are important inspirations to him.

From 1994 to 2001 Lauridsen was the resident composer of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the Chorale premiered Lauridsen's motet **O Magnum Mysterium** on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1994 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles and premiered **Ave Maria** on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1997, also at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen*

## Orlandus Lassus (1532 - 1594) – Magnificat Perpulchrum Septimi Toni

Lassus was a Franco-Flemish composer and legend holds that as a choirboy with an uncommonly beautiful voice he was thrice kidnapped from his birthplace for service elsewhere. It is not certain, however, that he was ever a chorister in Mons. His first known position was in the service of Ferrante Gonzaga, who passed through the Low Countries in 1544 on his way to Italy. Lassus spent the next decade in Italy, at first with Gonzaga, later in the service of Constantino Castrioto of Naples. By 1553 he was choirmaster at St. John Lateran in Rome, remaining there for a year, then returning to his homeland and settling briefly in Antwerp. His career from 1556 was centred in Munich at the court chapel of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, as *maestro di cappella* from 1563, with duties that included some travel in Germany, Flanders, France, and Italy. While employed at Munich, he came to know both Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, each of whom spent time in the musical establishment he directed. His accomplishments brought formal recognition from Emperor Maximilian II, the French king Charles IX, and Pope Gregory XIII.

Lassus's production of over 2,000 works in nearly every Latin, French, Italian, and German vocal genre known in his time places him among the most prolific and versatile composers of the era. A close connection between text and music, in both small- and large-scale respects, is perhaps the single most prominent characteristic of his output. Note: The word *perpulchrum* in the magnificat's title simply means *very beautiful*.

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them*

*that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

## Morten Lauridsen (born 1943) – O Magnum Mysterium

*O great mystery, and wondrous sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in their manger! Blessed is the Virgin who's womb was worth to bear the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia.*

## John McCabe (born 1939) – Upon the High Midnight

1. A little child there is y-born
2. Dormi Jesu
2. In Bethlehem that fair city

John McCabe was born in Liverpool and trained at Manchester University and the Royal Manchester College of Music. He has composed music in most classical forms (except for large-scale opera); he is a virtuoso pianist in his own right, amongst his achievements being a complete recording of all of Haydn's piano sonata; for seven years he was director of the London College of Music. The work that put him on the musical map was the **Variations on a Theme of Hartmann**, first performed in 1964. Another landmark was **The Chagall Windows**, first performed by the Hallé in 1975. More recently he has had considerable success with his ballet scores, writing the music for David Bintley's Edward II and King Arthur ballets. His style is apt to be eclectic; he has flirted with serialism but his music owes a great deal to other influences such as Bartok, Stravinsky and Nielsen.

*"Upon the High Midnight is a triptych of Christmas carols composed at different times during the 1960s and early 1970s. The first carol is a gentle, rather modal setting of anonymous 15th century words. The second, Dormi, Jesu, was the latest to be composed and is a slightly more chromatic setting of an anonymous Latin text. In Bethlehem, that fair city was originally written for a concert at the Liverpool Institute High School (my old school) in 1960, and was revised for inclusion in this group - it is livelier in mood, with a text derived from anonymous 14th century words. All the carols are unaccompanied, but there is an optional organ accompaniment for the last".* – John McCabe (courtesy of Chester Novello)

1. A little child there is yborn, Eia, susanni, And he sprang out of Jesse's thorn, Alleluia To save us all that were forlorn. Alleluia.

Now Jesus is the child's name, Eia, susanni, And Mary mild she is his dame, Alleluia, And so our sorrow is turned to game. Alleluia.

It fell upon the high midnight, Eia, susanni, The stars they shone both fair and bright, Alleluia, The angels sang with all their might. Alleluia.

Three kings there came with their presents Eia, susanni, Of myrrh and gold and frankincense, Alleluia As clerkes sing in their sequence. Alleluia.

Now sit we down upon our knee, Eia, susanni, And pray we to the Trinity, Alleluia Our help, our succour for to be. Alleluia.

Anonymous 15<sup>th</sup> Century (Note that according to Elizabeth Postern, the refrain *Eia, susanni* comes from German lulling words)

2. *Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguiling: Mother sits beside thee smiling; Sleep, my darling, tenderly! If thou sleep not, mother mourneth, Singing as her wheel she turneth: Come, soft slumber, balmily!* - The Virgin's Cradle Hymn, trans. S. T. Coleridge

3. *In Bethlehem, that fair city, Was born a Child that was so free, Lord and prince of high degree, Now the star of light having risen.*

*Jesus, for the love of Thee, Children were slain great plenty In Bethlehem, that fair city, Arisen from the quarter of the sun.*

*As the sun shineth in the glass, So Jesu of her body was Then him to serve God give us grace, O blessed light of the Trinity.*

*Now is He born our Lord Jesus, He that made merry all of us, Then be all merry in this house Let heaven rejoice with praises.*

Anonymous 14<sup>th</sup> century (Original is in English and Latin)

## LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

conductor Malcolm Cottle

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006, 7.30pm**

St. Michael's Church, Chester Square, Victoria

### **Duarte Lobo – Requiem**

**Henry Purcell / Sven-David Sandström – Hear my Prayer**

**Gabriel Jackson – O Sacrum Convivium**

Vagn Holmboe – Domine Libera Animam Meam

Ralph Roseingrave – Bow Down Thine Ear

Daniel Roseingrave – Lord, Thou Art Become Gracious

Mary Jane Beach – Song of Sorrows

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**Tuesday 4 April 2006**

**Poulenc – Mass in G**

**Duruflé – 4 motets**

**Messiaen – O sacrum convivium  
and music by Vilette and Ravel**

For further details of rehearsal schedule or concert, please contact:  
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