

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Directed by Michael Harris

British Choral Classics

Music by
Bax, Britten and
Vaughan Williams

Saturday 8th March 2008 8.00pm

St Giles' Cathedral, High Street, Edinburgh

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Director: Michael Harris

Organist: Peter Backhouse

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
(1872–1958)

MASS IN G MINOR

Soprano Harriet Atkinson
Contralto Anne Barker
Tenor James Verge
Bass George Burgess

TWO PRELUDES ON WELSH HYMN TUNES (ORGAN)

RHOSYMEDRE
HYFRYDOL

ARNOLD BAX
(1883–1953)

MATER ORA FILIUM

INTERVAL of 15 minutes

BENJAMIN BRITTEN
(1913–1976)

FESTIVAL TE DEUM

Soprano Adriana Skaraas

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

VALIANT-FOR-TRUTH

HERBERT HOWELLS
(1892–1983)

RHAPSODY IN D FLAT Op 17 No 1 (ORGAN)

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

REJOICE IN THE LAMB

Soprano Kate Rigg
Contralto Marjory Lobban
Tenor John Wilson
Bass George Burgess

Programme notes

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Mass in G Minor

The early years of the twentieth century saw a revival of interest in English Tudor music which was led in no small way by R R Terry, who had been appointed in 1901 to direct the newly founded choir of Westminster Cathedral. He had spent much of his career to that point in the study of the English polyphonic tradition, and his new post allowed him to air this music in public. Vaughan Williams sent a copy of his completed Mass, which he had written in 1921, to Terry; he was delighted by it, and was to give the work its first liturgical performance in March 1923 (the premiere had been in Birmingham Town Hall in December 1922). He wrote to Vaughan Williams: "I'm quite sincere when I say that it is the work one has all along been waiting for. In your individual and modern idiom you have really captured the old liturgical spirit and atmosphere."

The Mass was written for Gustav Holst and his Whitsuntide Singers, and in its musical language is very close to other works of the English pastoral movement such as *The Lark Ascending* and *Sir John in Love*. However, it is also very much in the mould of earlier English polyphony with its plainchant inspired melodies, modal harmony and use of imitation.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Two hymn-tune preludes

The early years of the twentieth century were a time of great interest in hymnody; Vaughan Williams himself had been the moving force behind the publication of *The English Hymnal* in 1906. English composers such as Wood and Parry had recognised this and had built on the organ chorale prelude heritage with their hymn-tune preludes. Vaughan Williams' *Three Preludes founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes*, of which *Rhosymedre* was the second and *Hyfrydol* the third, were very much part of this fashion. *Rhosymedre* has become a well-loved miniature, partly perhaps because of the simplicity and directness of its language. *Hyfrydol* is written as an elaborate harmonisation of the well-known hymn tune, with the melody at the top of the texture throughout.

Arnold Bax: Mater ora filium

Whilst Vaughan Williams had connections to the English Cathedral tradition, Arnold Bax was some way removed from the world of Cathedral choirs. *Mater ora filium*, for unaccompanied double choir, was written in 1921, and is said to have been inspired by hearing Byrd's *Mass for Five Voices*. Bax produced a work which is unique in twentieth century choral literature, and one that makes considerable demands on the singers. The text is that of a medieval carol from a Balliol College manuscript; Bax combines rhapsodic writing with a homage to polyphony, with writing that reaches elaborate climaxes. Each section is interspersed with a return to the first prayer, the setting becoming more intense on each occasion. This is sung in Latin, except for the last occasion before the final ecstatic section, where it appears in English.

Benjamin Britten: Festival Te Deum

The *Festival Te Deum in E* was completed in 1944, for the centenary of St Mark's Church, Swindon, in 1945. It was the only substantial work that he completed in 1944, much of his attention that year being devoted to *Peter Grimes*, the opera that would establish his reputation. The *Te Deum* has a celebratory central section, built around an incisive rhythmic idea. The opening and closing passages are more chant-like in character and rhythmically fluid, the final section beginning and concluding in haunting fashion, with a soprano solo.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Valiant-for-truth

Vaughan Williams' motet *Valiant-for-truth*, written in the darkest days of World War II in 1940, is an evocative setting of words by John Bunyan. The a *cappella* setting is built around a recitative-like narration, with Vaughan Williams' characteristically modal writing very much in evidence. The final blaze of trumpets which "sounded for him on the other side" is a choral tour-de-force.

Herbert Howells: Rhapsody in D flat

Herbert Howells took up his composition studies with Stanford and Charles Wood at the Royal College of Music in 1912, having spent two years as an articled pupil (effectively the assistant organist) to Herbert Brewer, Organist of Gloucester Cathedral, a building whose architecture made a tremendous impression on him. The first of his three Rhapsodies for Organ was written in 1915, whilst he was still a student at the RCM; it is typical of his improvisatory early style, full of evocative, almost impressionist, harmonies, which create a picture of great architectural space.

Benjamin Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb

Benjamin Britten's Festival Cantata, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, is the product of a prolific period of choral writing for the composer. It was composed in 1943, not long after Britten's return from self-imposed exile in the United States at the beginning of World War II. The commission for the work came from Walter Hussey, at that time Vicar of St Matthew's Church Northampton, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the consecration of that church. Walter Hussey, later to become Dean of Chichester Cathedral, was to become one of the most influential arts patrons of the mid-twentieth century, commissioning not only famous composers such as Britten and Bernstein, but also art and sculpture from Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore among others.

For the text of his cantata, Britten selected words from the eccentric eighteenth-century poet Christopher Smart, using ten sections of Smart's poem, *Jubilate Agno*. In Walter Hussey's words, the message of the poem "is the worship of God by all created beings and things, each in its own way". The musical structure of the work is governed by the text, the central sections being given over to soloists, followed by a dramatic choral recitative. There are two vibrant choral sections, the first of which, *Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter*, is based on an asymmetrical rhythmic motif, and the second, towards the end of the piece, is a celebration of the instruments of music. Britten has often been referred to as the greatest English composer since Henry Purcell, and was himself interested in and studied Purcell's idiom – there is a hint of it in the two *Hallelujah* sections that appear in the work, with their poised dotted rhythms providing a sense of quiet joy.

Programme notes by Michael Harris

Texts and translations

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *MASS IN G MINOR*

Kyrie

*Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.*

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.

Gloria

*[Gloria in excelsis Deo] et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.*

*Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te,
glorificamus te.*

*Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam
tuam, Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater
omnipotens.*

*Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.*

*Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem
nostram.*

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.

*Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu
solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe,
cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.*

Glory be to God in the highest and in 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,
that takest away the sins of the world, have
mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.

Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord,
thou only art the Most High, O Christ,
with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the
Father. Amen.

Credo

*[Credo in unum Deum], Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem coeli et terrae, visibilibus omnium et
invisibilibus, et in unum Dominum Jesum
Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre
natum ante omnia saecula:*

*Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de
Deo vero, genitum non factum,
consubstantialem Patri, per quem omnia facta
sunt.*

*Qui propter nos homines et nostram salutem,
descendit de coelis; et incarnatus est de Spiritu
Sancto, ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.*

*Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio Pilato
passus et sepultus est.*

*Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas;
et ascendit in coelum; sedet ad dexteram Patris;*

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker
of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and
invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His
Father before all worlds:

God of God, Light of Light, very God of very
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: He suffered under
Pontius Pilate, and was buried,
and the third day He rose again according to the
scriptures, and ascended into heaven and sitteth
at the right hand of the Father.

*et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos
et mortuos; cujus regni non erit finis.*

*Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et vivificantem,
qui ex Patri Filioque procedit, qui cum Patre et
Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus
est per Prophetas.*

*Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam
Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in
remissionem peccatorum et expecto
resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi
saeculi. Amen.*

Sanctus – Osanna I – Benedictus – Osanna II

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus
Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.*

*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna
in excelsis.*

Agnus Dei

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere
nobis.*

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.*

And He shall come again with glory to judge the
quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have
no end.

And (I believe) in the Holy Ghost, the Lord the
Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and
the Son, who with the Father and the Son
together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke
through the prophets.

And (I believe) in one holy, catholic and apostolic
Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the
remission of sins and I look for the resurrection
of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

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.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, grant us peace.

ARNOLD BAX *MATER ORA FILIUM*

*Mater ora filium
Ut post hoc exilium
Nobis donet gaudium
Beatorum omnium. Amen.*

Fair maiden, who is this bairn
That thou bearest in thine arm?
Sir it is a kinges son
That in Heaven above doth wone.

Mater ora filium...

Man to father He had none
But Himself God alone
Of a maiden He would be born
To save mankind that was forlorn.

Mater ora filium...

Mother, pray to your Son
That, after this exile,
He will give us the joy
Of every blessing. Amen.

The kings brought Him presents [Alleluja]
Gold, myrrh and frankincense.
To my son full of might.
King of kings and Lord of Right. [Alleluja]

Mater ora filium...

Fair maiden,
Pray for us unto thy Son, sweet Jesus,
That He may send us of His grace.
In heav'n on high to have a place. [Allelujah]

Mater ora filium...

BENJAMIN BRITTEN FESTIVAL TE DEUM

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud; the heavens and all the powers therein. To thee cherubin and seraphin do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.

The glorious company of the apostles praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee. The noble army of martyrs praise thee. The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee. The Father of an infinite majesty; thine honourable, true and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the comforter.

Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage. Govern them and lift them up for ever. Day by day we magnify thee, and we worship thy name, ever world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee.

O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS VALIANT-FOR-TRUTH

After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a summons . . . ; and had this for a token that the summons was true, "That his pitcher was broken at the fountain". When he understood it, he called for his friends, and told them of it.

Then said he, "I am going to my Father's, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword, I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill, to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought his battles, who now will be my rewarder.

When the day that he must go hence, was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which, as he went, he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?"

So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN REJOICE IN THE LAMB

Chorus

Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb. Nations, and languages and every Creature, in which is the breath of Life. Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together. Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter, bind a Leopard to the altar, and consecrate his spear to the Lord. Let Ishmael dedicate a Tyger, and give praise for the liberty in which the Lord has let him at large. Let Balaam appear with an Ass, and bless the Lord his people and his creatures for a reward eternal. Let Daniel come forth with a Lion, and praise God with all his might through faith in Christ Jesus. Let Ithamar minister with a Chamois, and bless the name of Him that cloatheth the naked. Let Jakim with the Satyr bless God in the dance. Let David bless with the Bear – The beginning of victory to the Lord – to the Lord the perfection of excellence – Hallelujah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the artist inimitable, and from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness magnificent and mighty.

Soprano solo

For I will consider my Cat Jeffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
For I am possessed of a cat, surpassing in beauty, from whom I take occasion to bless Almighty God.

Alto solo

For the Mouse is a creature of great personal valour.
For – this a true case – Cat takes female mouse – male mouse will not depart, but stands threat'ning and daring . . . If you will let her go, I will engage you, as prodigious a creature as you are.
For the Mouse is a creature of great personal valour.
For the Mouse is of an hospitable disposition.

Tenor solo

For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers have their angels even the words of God's Creation.
For the flower glorifies God and the root parries the adversary.
For there is a language of flowers.
For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ.

Chorus

For I am under the same accusation with my Saviour –
For they said, he is besides himself.
For the officers of the peace are at variance with me, and the watchman smites me with his staff.
For Silly fellow! Silly fellow! is against me and belongeth neither to me nor to my family.
For I am in twelve HARDSHIPS, but he that was born of a virgin shall deliver me out of all.

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Recitative (Bass solo) and Chorus

For H is a spirit and therefore he is God.
For K is king and therefore he is God.
For L is love and therefore he is God.
For M is musick and therefore he is God.
For the instruments are by their rhimes.
For the Shawm rhimes are lawn fawn moon boon and the like.
For the harp rhimes are sing ring string and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are bell well toll soul and the like.
For the flute rhimes are tooth youth suit mute and the like.
For the Bassoon rhimes are pass class and the like.
For the dulcimer rhimes are grace place beat heat and the like.
For the Clarinet rhimes are clean seen and the like.
For the trumpet rhimes are sound bound soar more and the like.
For the TRUMPET of God is a blessed intelligence and so are all the instruments in HEAVEN.
For GOD the father Almighty plays upon the HARP of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases and the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man by a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.

Chorus

Hallelujah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the artist inimitable, and from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness magnifical and mighty.

Text from *Jubilate Agno* by Christopher Smart

Acknowledgement

This concert is subsidised by Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies, with funds provided by the Scottish Arts Council.



Since its formation in 1968, the **Scottish Chamber Choir** has performed throughout Scotland and Northern England to great acclaim. Each season the choir presents four concerts in Edinburgh, climaxing with an appearance at the Festival Fringe. These are usually supplemented by a Christmas concert and guest appearances at local Music Societies and Festivals throughout the year, keeping members quite busy!

The choir sings both shorter items from the chamber choir repertoire and more extended works, such as the Bach *St John Passion* at our Festival Fringe concert in 2004. Whilst some concerts are given a *cappella*, at others we are joined by a variety of instrumental forces, making possible an exceptional freedom of programming and great interest for both participants and audience.

The choir's hallmark has always been its breadth of repertoire, encompassing a wide range of music from the 16th century to the present day, with music by living composers featuring in programmes during most seasons. Often there is a thread linking a series of concerts, encouraging regular attendance. The highly successful and critically praised Silver Jubilee season, for example, concentrated on 20th century British music, and was recognised by an Enterprise Award from the Performing Rights Society – one of only three such awards in Scotland.

From time to time, vacancies occur in all sections of the choir. Any singer interested in obtaining further details should contact Bill Wood, the President, by phone on 0131 339 7663 or by email at info@scottishchamberchoir.org.uk. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings in the Ian Tomlin School of Music at Napier University's Craighouse campus.

Michael Harris received his earliest musical education as a chorister of Gloucester Cathedral. He was Organ Scholar of St Peter's College, Oxford, and continued his studies at the Royal College of Music.

Michael has been Organist and Master of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, since November 1996; he is also a Lecturer at the Ian Tomlin School of Music in Napier University, Edinburgh. Prior to moving to Edinburgh he held posts as Sub-Organist of Leeds Parish Church and Assistant Organist of Canterbury Cathedral.

As Organist of St Giles' Cathedral he hosts many organ concerts on the famous Rieger organ (built in 1992) and his work has involved him in numerous recordings and broadcasts, both for Television and Radio. Under his direction the Cathedral Choir has visited the USA and Greece, and most recently, in October 2006, they undertook a short tour of southern France.

His solo recordings include *The Organ at St Giles'*, and he has directed the Cathedral Choir in a number of CD recordings, including *An Edinburgh Celebration* to mark their first tour of the USA in Autumn 2004. A recording for the Priory label, of a 1724 organ in Thüringen by Johann Schröter, is due for release in Summer 2008.

Elsewhere Michael has given recitals at many venues in Germany, Belgium, Italy and the USA, as well as in the UK, where he has played in many of the major venues. In August and September 2008 he will be giving concerts in Australia and New Zealand. Since 1998 he has been Musical Director of the Scottish Chamber Choir.

He is also much involved in organ and choral education. He has led a number of study tours to Germany, with a special interest in the organs of Thüringen and Saxony, and is Director of the Edinburgh Organ Academy, an international annual Spring-time organ course founded in 1998. His Napier University duties include supervision of final year performance students, and directing the University Chamber Choir.

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Peter Backhouse began his musical training as a chorister in the choir of York Minster. Later he studied music at Edinburgh University where he graduated BMus (Hons), having won the 3rd Year Class Medal as well as the Tovey Memorial Prize for his organ playing. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and holder of their Choir Training Diploma, as well as an Associate of the Royal College of Music. In 1977 he was appointed Assistant Organist at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral. This post, with its daily accompaniment of services, as well as many concerts, recitals, broadcasts and recordings, kept him busy for over 20 years.

In 2000 he was appointed Assistant Organist at St Giles' Cathedral, and combines this post with teaching music at The Edinburgh Academy. He has served on the Council of The Edinburgh Society of Organists for many years, including two as President. He supports the work of the Royal School of Church Music and was for a number of years an organ adviser in the Edinburgh area for the Scottish Federation of Organists.

He has played for services and given recitals in many cathedrals, including Westminster Abbey, Canterbury, Durham, Ripon and St Albans Cathedrals, St George's Chapel Windsor, King's College Cambridge, the Temple Church London and recently at York Minster. As a continuo player he has played with all the major professional ensembles in Scotland.

Railways have interested him all his life, and he is a qualified signalman on the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway. His photographs, principally of organs, churches and walking holidays, continue to be published, and he tries to find time to enjoy cricket and walking.

Awards for All – Lottery grant

The Scottish Chamber Choir has been successful in being awarded a Lottery grant of £5,000 from the Scottish Arts Council via Awards for All to support the commission of a new work to celebrate our 40th anniversary during the 2008–2009 season.

The new work is being composed by Kenneth Dempster, a Scottish composer who, in addition to being Composer in Residence at Napier University, has also recently composed works for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Edinburgh Quartet, Mr McFall's Chamber and the St Magnus Festival. The piece, for choir and organ, will be premiered in our concert on 22nd November 2008 at St Giles' Cathedral.

In addition to the premiere of the work, the choir will also be involved in two workshops with primary schools in Linlithgow and Peebles, led by Kenneth Dempster. This will involve the children creating music around the new work, and then participating in a short performance alongside the Scottish Chamber Choir for the rest of the school.

We are delighted to be given this opportunity to create new music and look forward to our rehearsals, the schools' workshops and the premiere of the work in November.

The Scottish Chamber Choir is registered with OSCR,
the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator,
as Scottish Charity No. SC013058
(details at <http://www.oscr.org.uk/>)

Sopranos	Harriet Atkinson	Julie Morrice
	Adrienne Burgess	Kate Rigg
	Rebecca Caskie	Sasha Salinasova
	Lorraine Fraser	Sue Shoosmith
	Jenny Mackenzie	Adriana Skaraas
Contraltos	Pauline McClellan	Milda Zinkus
	Anne Barker	Guen Innes
	Bridget Beagan	Marjory Lobban
	Jean Brodie	Alison McCleery
	Myra Brown	Susan White
Tenors	George McNeil	James Verge
	Mark McLeod	John Wilson
	Andrew Polson	Bill Wood
Basses	George Burgess	James McDonald
	Peter Innes	Jonathan Wright
	Wilf Krause	

Keep in touch with the Scottish Chamber Choir – visit our web site at:

www.scottishchamberchoir.org.uk

You will find there our plans for the season, details of forthcoming concerts and useful links, plus an archive of our programmes back to 1993.