

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Directed by Michael Harris

40th Anniversary Concert

8.00pm

Saturday 22nd November 2008

St Giles' Cathedral, High Street, Edinburgh

The Scottish Chamber Choir

Director: Michael Harris

Organist: Peter Backhouse

J S BACH
(1685–1750)

SINGET DEM HERRN EIN NEUES LIED BWV 225

DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE
(1637–1707)

PRAELUDIUM IN C BuxWV 137

HEINRICH SCHÜTZ
(1585–1672)

DEUTSCHES MAGNIFICAT SWV 494

HEINRICH SCHÜTZ

SINGET DEM HERRN EIN NEUES LIED SWV 35

I N T E R V A L of 15 minutes

KENNETH DEMPSTER
(b. 1962)

FATHER AND SON
SCC ANNIVERSARY COMMISSION

MICHAEL TIPPETT
(1905–1998)

FIVE NEGRO SPIRITUALS FROM *A CHILD OF OUR TIME*

STEAL AWAY

NOBODY KNOWS

GO DOWN, MOSES

BY AND BY

DEEP RIVER

LEADERS

ADRIANA SKARAAS ANNE BARKER

ANDREW POLSON MIKE ARTHUR

Programme notes

J S Bach: *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*

During Bach's time at Leipzig the word "motet" signified a composition for chorus, generally in contrapuntal style, without obbligato instrumental parts and with a biblical or chorale text. Bach's six surviving motets were written either for particular occasions or perhaps for special church services; four are for double chorus. The voice parts are always complete in themselves, but undoubtedly in Bach's time they were sung with instrumental doubling. *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* was probably written in celebration of the birthday of the Elector of Saxony in 1727. The work, in four movements, takes its title from Psalm 149 and includes a selection of verses from this, from Psalm 150, and from other sources.

The majestic first movement, whose opening phrases are worked out over a long B flat pedal, distributes equally the rich musical material between the two choirs, bringing them together at last in an extended, dancing fugue, a perfect musical match for the text. In the second section a chorale alternates antiphonally with freely imitative passages. Most of the material here comes from Johann Graumann's hymn *Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herrn*, sung to the melody usually associated with it. Bach used the same chorale tune elsewhere, for example in the cantata *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*. A brisk two-in-a-bar chorus breaks the reflective mood of the chorale section, and the two choirs toss back and forth the same basic musical ideas. An exuberant and virtuosic triple time fugue follows without a break and brings the work to a joyous close.

Dietrich Buxtehude: *Praeludium in C*

Buxtehude, born in Schleswig-Holstein, an area ruled alternately by Germans and Danes, began his musical career in Denmark before moving to Lübeck in 1668. The idiom of the North German Praeludium is of a multi-sectioned composition, not necessarily thematically connected, consisting of a prelude followed by one or more fugues and freer, fantasia-like sections. In this C major *Praeludium*, one of his most popular works (sometimes referred to as the Prelude, Fugue and Ciacona), the work opens with a demonstrative pedal solo figure. The first fugal section, based on a dotted-note motif, is relatively short-lived; a return to the fantasia material eventually leads to the main fugal section. The concluding section is a rhythmically incisive chaconne whose three-bar theme is played in the pedals.

Schütz: *Deutsches Magnificat* and *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*

Heinrich Schütz was responsible for the development of a new style of German choral music during the early years of the seventeenth century. Having spent two periods of time in Venice, between 1609 and 1612, when he studied with Giovanni Gabrieli, and in 1628 when he visited Claudio Monteverdi, he was instrumental in introducing new Italian idioms to musicians north of the Alps.

Whilst the setting of the *Magnificat* was not written until 1671, when he was in his eighty-sixth year, here he revisits the Gabrielian idiom of two four-part choirs used antiphonally, in the cori spezzati manner used in St Mark's Venice. In the majority of his choral works from the middle period of his life he had used the newer techniques of the vocal concerto, combining voices and instruments. In returning to the older idiom, where the use of instruments was optional, for his last work he creates some colourful effects that were typical of the early baroque idiom.

Much of the writing in the *Magnificat* setting relies on antiphonal effects between two four-part choirs; there are some dramatic moments such as "*und zerstreuet die hoffärtig sind*", "he hath scattered the proud", where a distinct feeling of agitation is created.

Schütz was appointed Kapellmeister to the Saxon court in Dresden in 1617, and held the post for the remainder of his life, though for his final years he returned to Weissenfels, the town of his birth. One of the first publications following his appointment was the *Psalmen Davids* of 1619, the first works that he composed in the Gabrielian idiom. His setting of Psalm 98 *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*, is, like the *Magnificat*, written for two four-part choirs. Again the text allows Schütz considerable word painting possibilities, and much is made of the interplay between the two groups of voices.

Kenneth Dempster: *Father and Son*

Kenneth Dempster writes:

Father and Son combines two of my favourite poems by Dylan Thomas and Norman MacCaig. Both poems deal with the subject of closure (the diminishing of light at the close of day, death and the onset of autumn), and so the prevailing mood of the music is one of reflection.

Thomas wrote the poem about his blind and dying father, whose loud, passionate manner was beginning to mellow in his old age; Thomas hadn't wanted him to change. The poem is in the French poetic structure of a villanelle (a 19-line poem comprising five three-line stanzas with a final quatrain), and this influences the form of the music considerably. The poem uses only two rhymes throughout, and the first and third lines of the first stanza are alternately repeated as a refrain that closes the subsequent stanzas; both lines then coming together to form the final couplet of the quatrain.

MacCaig's poem is freer in structure and simpler in its mode of expression; in *Father and Son* I have incorporated it to follow and resolve the *angst* of Thomas's poem, and to help move the work towards a resolution. The work is dedicated to my parents in their eightieth year.

Michael Tippett Five Negro Spirituals from *A Child of Our Time*

In *A Child of Our Time*, as in a number of his works, Tippett integrated his own style with earlier idioms. In this case, he used Handel's *Messiah* as a model, as well as turning to the Bach Passions, substituting spirituals for the original Lutheran Chorales. The work was a reaction to the anti-Semitic Kristallnacht destruction of 1938; the incident on which Tippett based his work was the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew protesting against the persecution of Polish Jews. The oratorio was an attempt to confront the issue of man's inhumanity to man.

In this version, the five settings are for unaccompanied chorus, with the voices being treated in often colourful fashion. Tippett makes use of four solo or leader voices, used in a number of different ways. In "Steal away", for instance, the soprano leader has a descant line, whilst in the third spiritual, "Go down, Moses", the bass has a narrator's role. Only in the last, "Deep river", are all four solo voices used at once, in a response pattern against the main chorus. The settings are continually contrasted, with the rhythmic vitality of "Nobody knows" being followed by the more imposing characteristics of "Go down, Moses".

Programme notes by Michael Harris

(except that for Bach *Singet*, by Andrew Phillips, supplied through the NFMS Programme Note Bank)

Acknowledgements

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



The Scottish Chamber Choir has been supported in commissioning *Father and Son* by Kenneth Dempster by an award of a £5,000 lottery grant from the Scottish Arts Council via Awards for All.

In addition to the premiere this evening, the choir has taken part in two school workshops at Kingsland Primary School in Peebles and Linlithgow Primary School in Linlithgow earlier this month. We appreciated being given the opportunity by both schools to bring music making to young people and having the opportunity to work with the children and Kenneth Dempster in creating a new musical experience around the commission. Many thanks to the staff and pupils at both schools for making us so welcome and for their enthusiastic involvement during the workshops.

We would like to thank Awards for All for their support in awarding the grant, without which none of this would have been possible.



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/>)

Texts and translations

BACH: *SINGET DEM HERRN*

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied;
die Gemeinde der Heiligen
sollen ihn loben.
Israel freue sich des
der ihn gemacht hat.
Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich
über ihrem Könige,
sie sollen loben seinen Namen
im Reihen;
mit Pauken und mit Harfen
sollen sie ihm spielen.*

Psalm 149: 1–3

Sing to the Lord a new song!
The congregation of saints
shall praise him.
Let Israel rejoice in him
that made him.
Let the children of Zion be joyful
in their king.
Let them praise his name
in the dance;
Let them sing praises to him
with the timbrel and harp.

Chorale

*Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
über seine junge Kinderlein,
so tut der Herr uns allen,
so wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
Er kennt das arm Gemächte,
Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub,
gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen,
ein Blum und fallend Laub.
Der Wind nur Drüber wehet,
so ist es nicht mehr da,
also der Mensch vergehet,
sein End das ist ihm nah.*

Johann Graumann, 1530

Just as a father pities
his own children,
so does the Lord act toward us all:
so, like children, we meekly fear him.
He knows well our poor handiwork.
God knows we are no more than dust,
like grass in time of reaping,
like a flower or falling leaf.
The wind simply blows over it,
and it is no longer there.
Thus does mankind pass away,
For him the end is nigh.

Aria

*Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an,
denn ohne dich ist nichts getan
mit allen unsern Sachen.
Drum sei du unser Schirm and Licht,
und trügt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,
so wirst du's ferner machen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest
auf dich und deine Huld verläßt.*

Anon

O God, continue in thy care of us,
For without thee all our efforts
achieve nothing.
Be thou therefore our shield and light
and let not our hopes prove false
that thou wilt continue to act for us.
Blessed is he that steadfastly
trusteth in thee and thy grace.

*Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten,
lobet ihn in seiner großen Herrlichkeit!
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn,
Halleluja!*

Psalm 150: 2,6

Praise the Lord in his mighty acts,
praise him according to his excellent greatness.
Let everything that hath life and breath
praise the Lord. Alleluia!

SCHÜTZ: DEUTSCHES MAGNIFICAT

Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, und mein Geist freuet sich Gottes, meines Heilandes. Denn er hat die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd angesehen.

Siehe, von nun an werden mich selig preisen alle Kindeskind. Denn er hat große Ding an mir getan, der da mächtig ist und des Name heilig ist.

Er übet Gewalt mit seinem Arm und zerstreuet die hoffärtig sind in ihres Herzens Sinn. Er stöbet die Gewaltigen vom Stuhl und erhöhet die Niedrigen. Die Hungerigen füllet er mit Gütern und lässt die Reichen leer.

Er denket der Barmherzigkeit und hilft seinem Diener Israel auf, wie er geredt hat unsern Vätern, Abraham und seinem Samen ewiglich. Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn und auch dem Heiligen Geiste, wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar, und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit, Amen.

Luke 1:46–49, 50–55

SCHÜTZ: SINGET DEM HERRN

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied; denn er tut Wunder. Er sieget mit seiner Rechten und mit seinem heiligen Arm.

Der Herr läßt sein Heil verkündigen, vor den Völkern läßt er seine Gerechtigkeit offenbaren.

Er gedenket an seine Gnade und Wahrheit dem Hause Israel. Aller Welt Enden sehen das Heil unsers Gottes.

Jauchzet dem Herrn, alle Welt; singet, rühmet und lobet! Lobet den Herrn mit Harfen, mit Harfen und mit Psalmen; mit Trompeten und Posaunen jauchzet vor dem Herrn, dem Könige!

Das Meer brause, und was drinnen ist, der Erdboden, und die drauf wohnen. Die Wasserströme frohlocken, und alle Berge seien fröhlich vor dem Herrn; denn er kommt, das Erdreich zu richten. Er wird den Erdboden richten mit Gerechtigkeit und die Völker mit Rech.

Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn und auch dem Heiligen Geiste, wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar, und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit, Amen.

Psalm 98

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his hand maiden.

For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his name.

[And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.]

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 seat and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

O sing unto the Lord a new song : for he hath done marvellous things. With his own right hand, and with his holy arm : hath he gotten himself the victory.

The Lord declared his salvation : his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

He hath remembered his mercy and truth toward the house of Israel : and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God.

Shew yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands : sing, rejoice, and give thanks. Praise the Lord upon the harp : sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving. With trumpets also and shawms : O shew yourselves joyful before the Lord the King.

Let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is : the round world, and they that dwell therein.

Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord : for he is come to judge the earth. With righteousness shall he judge the world : and the people with equity.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

KENNETH DEMPSTER FATHER AND SON

Do not go gentle into that good night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953)

Autumn

Wanting to go,
all the leaves want to go
though they have achieved
their kingly robes.

Weary of colours,
they think of black earth,
they think of
white snow.

Stealthily, delicately
as a safebreaker
they unlock themselves
from branches.

And from their royal towers
they sift silently down
to become part of
the proletariat of mud.

Norman MacCaig (1910–1996)

Kenneth Dempster and the Scottish Chamber Choir would like to acknowledge the publishers of the poets, Dylan Thomas (J M Dent & Sons Ltd) and Norman MacCaig (Chatto & Windus Ltd)

The Scottish Chamber Choir

TIPPETT FIVE NEGRO SPIRITUALS

1 Steal away

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;
O steal away, steal away home,
I han't got long to stay here.
My Lord, he calls me,
He calls me by the thunder,
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,
I han't got long to stay here.

3 Go down, Moses

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land;
Tell old Pharoah to let my people go.
When Israel was in Egypt land,
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
"Thus spake the Lord" bold Moses said,
"If not, I'll smite your first-born dead".
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land;
Tell old Pharoah to let my people go.

5 Deep river

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Lord, I want to cross over into camp-ground.
O chillun!
O don't you want to go to that gospel feast,
That promised land,
That land where all is peace.
Walk into heaven, and take my seat
And cast my crown at Jesus' feet.
Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Lord, I want to cross over into camp-ground.

2 Nobody knows

Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows like Jesus.
O brothers, pray for me, and
help me to drive old Satan away, Lord.
O mothers, pray for me, and
help me to drive old Satan away, Lord.
Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows like Jesus.

4 By and by

O by and by, by and by,
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.
I know my robe's going to fit me well,
I've tried it on at the gates of Hell.
Hell is deep and dark despair,
O stop poor sinner and don't go there.
O by and by, by and by,
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.

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 Michael Harris, our Musical Director, by phone on 0131 556 1759 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 gave 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 signaller 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.

Kenneth Dempster was born and educated in Edinburgh. He began his musical training at Napier University, Edinburgh on piano and viola, before going on to study composition, conducting and piano at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Whilst at the RAM he was awarded many prizes for his compositions, as well as a variety of scholarships which enabled him to travel to the United States to study at Yale University. During his time at Yale he studied with many eminent composers such as Jacob Druckman, Martin Bresnick, Louis Andriessen, Earle Brown and Frederic Rzewski.

On returning to Britain, he studied with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and James MacMillan on the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's Course for Young Composers. Since then, he has received commissions from a wide variety of ensembles and music promoters such as the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Emperor Quartet, St Magnus Festival, Scottish Chamber Choir, Edinburgh Contemporary Arts Trust, Mr McFall's Chamber, Scottish Flute Trio, and the Edinburgh Quartet and soloists Peter Evans, Ursula Smith, Owen Murray and Simon Thacker. His music has also attracted awards, winning the Cornelius Cardew Composition Prize and one of the first Creative Scotland Awards.

Kenneth is Composer-in-Residence at the Ian Tomlin School of Music at Napier University, Edinburgh, where he teaches composition and orchestration, as well as conducting the Napier Chamber Orchestra and the Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Sopranos	Harriet Atkinson	Kate Rigg
	Rachel Bucknall	Sasha Salinasova
	Lorraine Fraser	Sue Shoosmith
	Jenny Mackenzie	Adriana Skaraas
	Pauline McClellan	Milda Zinkus
Contraltos	Anne Barker	Guen Innes
	Bridget Beagan	Marjory Lobban
	Jean Brodie	Alison McCleery
	Myra Brown	Susan White
Tenors	Segun Akintola	James Verge
	Stuart Mitchell	Ross Wilson
	Andrew Polson	
Basses	Mike Arthur	Wilf Krause
	Frank Lucas	James McDonald
	Peter Innes	Martin Tarr

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.