



BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY

Conductor - **Steven Cowperthwaite**

with

Organist - **Keith Hearnshaw**

And Brass Ensemble

present

Angels and Trumpets



Music by

**Purcell, Rachmaninov,
Rutter and Tavener**

Saturday, 16th November 2002

7:30 p.m.

St. Andrew's Church, Barnt Green

PROGRAMME

Our Organist

Keith was born in West Bromwich. He began learning the organ at thirteen. He spent four years at the Birmingham Conservatoire studying with Donald Saint, and under Mark Shepherd at Lichfield Cathedral. While a student Keith was Organ Scholar at St Chad's RC Cathedral. In 1991 he was a prize winner at the Oundle International Organ Festival; in 1993 he received the Leonard Gibbons Memorial Prize from the Birmingham Organists Association. During 1994-5 he was Organ Scholar at Lincoln Cathedral.

Keith gives recitals throughout this country, including Westminster Abbey and Liverpool Cathedral, and abroad, including St Hedwig's Cathedral, Berlin. In 1997 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. In 1997-8 he was Organ Scholar at Liverpool Cathedral. In December 2001, he played duets with the American virtuoso, Carlo Curley. Keith's recent concert venues have included Westminster Abbey, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, and Saffron Walden parish church.

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY

Members performing in tonight's concert -

Sopranos:

Valerie Adams, Gill Bradshaw, Gillian Cloke, Margot Davies, Sue Fox, Norma Hazell, Lesley Henley, June Lawton, Janet Lee, Betty Lucas, June Luckcock, Ann McKay, Kathy McNaughton, Joanne Main, Frances Morris, Lesley Penfold, Joan Prescott, Mysie Raine, Elizabeth Richmond, Margaret Sadler, Shirley Sharp, Julie Ward, Vi Thomas.

Contraltos:

Elisabeth Berreen, Fiona Brown, Sylvia Cartwright, Cherry Goodwin, Julie Johnson, Pam Jones, Helen Maybee, Rosemary Parker, Margaret Parry, Margaret Pascoe, Wendy Pepper, Diane Scrivens, Liesbeth Trompenaars, Elizabeth Whitehorn, Andrea Wilkie.

Tenors:

Harold Crisp, Michael Davenport, Paul Goldsmith, Andrew Hodge, David Marsh, Peter Mobley, John Russell, Kevin Ward, Albert Whurr.

Basses:

Bill Bailey, Alun Davies, Chris Hackney, Brian Jones, Peter Main, David Richmond, Len Smith, Brian Williams, John Whitehorn, Ron Wills.

Barnt Green Choral Society

Saturday November 16th, 2002

PROGRAMME

Rutter - *Te Deum*

Rachmaninov - *Vespers (selection)*

O Come Let us Worship

Ave Maria

Organ work - Keith Hearnshaw

Tavener - *The Lamb*

Purcell - *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary*

March

Anthem

Canzona

Interval

(Refreshments available)

Tavener - *Song for Athene*

Rutter - *Gloria*

Programme Notes

The lives of tonight's four composers span nearly five hundred years. At first glance it might appear that the contents of the programme are somewhat diverse but, on closer examination, links between the works begin to reveal themselves. For example, they all have religious texts or associations and, as will be explained in the notes for each of the compositions, there are similarities between the compositional techniques.

'Vespers'(All-Night Vigil). Op.37. Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 - 1943).

As readers will know, it is normal for conventional pieces of music to have bar lines which organise material so that it conforms to a regular number of beats per bar (three, four etc). Rachmaninov dispenses with this convention in some of the 'Vespers' in order to provide the words with natural speech rhythms. Editors in fact print in dotted bar lines to help the singers cope with long phrases and unusual rhythms. Although the fifteen movements of the 'Vespers' form a beautifully balanced and constructed whole and can be enjoyed as pure sound, it is only when the sense of the words is grasped that the unity and purpose of the work can be fully understood. The title 'Vespers' is somewhat misleading, for the All-Night Vigil service comprises two parts: the true Vespers, begun in the evening and continued towards midnight and, as dawn approaches, Matins. A link between this work and the works of John Tavener in particular, is the Russian Orthodox Church with its tradition of humming to long-held notes, a kind of ethereal drone, common to both e.g. Rachmaninov (No. 2. 'Bless the Lord, O my Soul') and Tavener ('Song for Athene'). On this occasion the choir is performing movements 1 ('O Come, Let Us Worship'), 3 ('Blessed is the Man') and 6 ('Ave Maria'), thus providing the opportunity for us to enjoy a taste of this great work.

'Gloria'

John Rutter (b. 1943 -).

This work was commissioned by the Voices of Mel Olson, Omaha, Nebraska, and John Rutter directed the first performance on the occasion

of his first visit to the United States in May, 1974. The Latin text, drawn from the Ordinary of the Mass, is a centuries-old challenge to the composer, exalted, devotional and jubilant in turns. In John Rutter's own words, "My setting, which is based mainly on one of the Gregorian chants associated with the text, divides into three movements roughly corresponding with traditional symphonic structure. The accompaniment is for brass ensemble with tympani, percussion and organ - a combination which in the outer movements makes quite a joyful noise unto the Lord, but which is used more softly and introspectively in the middle movement".

The 'Gloria' opens typically, with Rutter building up a chord from the bottom, but letting the notes overlap and sustain to give what to my ears is a bell like sound, and repeating the pattern with subtle, harmonic changes. The work "buzzes" rhythmically in the outer movements, where again Rutter sets the words to challenging patterns, for the singers, frequently changing the time signature in every bar. He seems to delight in using the interval of the major second, and skilfully introduces the techniques of unison and imitative writing for the voices, with diatonic harmony tinged with chromaticism. The work ends with a mighty "Amen", with the voices dividing into six parts and the instruments recalling the opening material.

'Gloria' was written for concert performance and is a glorious work with which to end the first half, leaving everyone on a "high".

INTERVAL

(Refreshments available in the Parish Hall)

Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary Henry Purcell (1659 - 1695).
(‘Thou knowest, Lord, the Secrets of our Hearts’).

Queen Mary's death was a devastating blow which deeply affected the country as a whole. Mary had been a much loved monarch and the public demanded a funeral which reflected this devotion and which took place in Westminster Abbey on 5th. March 1695. Purcell's mesmerising choral music was prefaced by a procession which, one can imagine, was

Profoundly moving. No expense was spared. How perfectly the occasion lent itself to Purcell's evocative and bitter sweet music

Purcell made more than one setting of these words, some more imaginative than others, tonight's version being almost completely homophonic (the four vocal parts - SATB - moving in parallel) as opposed to polyphonic (the four parts moving with rhythmic independence and interest). No-one could have foreseen that in November of that same year, the identical music would be performed at Purcell's own funeral, also in Westminster Abbey.

'Song for Athene'

John Tavener (b. 1945 -).

'The Lamb'

John Tavener (not to be confused with John Taverner c. 1495 - 1545) studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Sir Lennox Berkeley and David Lumsdaine. In 1968 his dramatic cantata 'The Whale' (I was at the 'Prom' in the Albert Hall at its premiere!) took the audience by storm and led to his music being recorded on The Beatles' 'Apple' label! Tavener has continued to show originality of concepts and an immense personal idiom, making his voice quite separate from those of his contemporaries. Over the years the contemplative side of his nature has led him in more spiritual directions and his commitment to the Russian Orthodox Church, which he joined in 1977, is now evident in his work. 'Song for Athene', which has become one of his best known pieces since it was sung at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, takes as its text a mixture of Shakespeare (specifically 'Hamlet') and the Orthodox Funeral Service. The work, originally written in 1993, is typical of Tavener's rich choral sound, with the Bass drone, mentioned earlier, continuing for the whole piece. 'Song for Athene' was commissioned by the BBC. It was first performed on 22nd. January, 1994 at St. Giles in the Barbican, London, by the BBC Singers, conducted by Simon Joly. Composer's note: It was written in memory of Athene Hariades, who died tragically in March 1993. Her inner and outer beauty was reflected in her love of acting, poetry and music and of the Orthodox Church. The texture of the work varies, growing from a single line melody and various groupings of the choir to the full choir, the end sung *molto forte*

(very loud) with all the voices singing similar, mainly step-wise melodies at different pitches, except for the drone.

Tavener's marking is "With resplendent joy in the Resurrection".

'The Lamb' contrasts with the 'Song for Athene' in that it has some violent discords, starting with a simple soprano, single line melody, to be joined by an alto, inverted version of the same melody, thus creating the discord. I would use the phrase used in the notes for the Purcell, the work has a bitter-sweet feeling about it. Nevertheless, Tavener's music evokes feelings of peace and tranquillity, his compositions embracing long, slow melodies and simple harmonies, often created from parallel melodic lines, frequent repetition, sometimes using the same harmonised melody in more than one work; his works are sometimes disturbed by loud passages such as the penultimate section of the 'Song for Athene'. No doubt members of the audience have been aware of the use of part of 'The Lamb' by the mobile telephone company 'Orange'? 'Classical' music has been linked to TV adverts for many years.

'Te Deum'

John Rutter.

This is a typical Rutter piece, in which there is clever word setting using different time signatures, sometimes in consecutive bars (difficult for the singers!) but allowing for natural speech rhythms, chromaticisms, sometimes modulating to remote keys, and the technique of syncopation (tying notes over bar lines etc.) which starts from bar one. Imaginative orchestration is another of Rutter's skills. The work ends with a flourish with very loud chromatic instrumental chords, a perfect way to end the concert!

Peter Ward

October 2002.



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Future dates for your diary

Family Christmas Concert - Saturday December 21st, 2002. 7.00 p.m.
South Bromsgrove High School.

Spring Concert - Saturday March 22nd, 2003. 7.30 p.m. St. John's
Church, Bromsgrove.

Summer Concert - Saturday June 7th, 2003, 7.30 p.m. The Parish
Centre, Barnt Green.

Tuneful new members in all voices are welcome to join the Society.

Details from: Brian Jones (Chairman) 01527 - 873164.

Details of the Society are also available on its website at:

www.barntgreenchoralsociety.org.uk

