

THE CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Sunday April 24th 8.30pm

Director: Owen Rees

Organ: Stephen Farr

Percussion: Philip Woodrow

Tavener: Funeral Ikos  
Maxwell-Davies: Four Carols from *O Magnum Mysterium*  
Arvo Pärt: De Profundis  
Tavener: The Lamb

INTERVAL OF TEN MINUTES

Britten: Hymn to the Virgin  
Messiaen: Combat de la Mort et de la Vie from *Les Corps Glorieux*  
Messiaen: O Sacrum Convivium  
Arvo Pärt: An den Wassern zu Babel  
Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb

JOHN TAVERNER is an appropriate composer to begin the Taverner Choir's first concert of twentieth-century music. He claims the sixteenth-century John Taverner as an ancestor, and his music has affinities such as startling use of widely-spaced parts. In this Tavener has also been crucially influenced by the music of the Russian Orthodox Church, to which he converted in 1976, and for which most of his music has since been written. One fruit of this conversion is the Funeral Ikos, which sets an English translation of the Greek funeral sentences used for the burial of a priest. Each of the six sections is set to the same music with a different scoring, and each section ends with an 'Alleluia'. In contrast, The Lamb sets Blake's innocent counterpart to the more famous 'Tyger, Tyger, burning bright'.

PETER MAXWELL DAVIES's *O Magnum Mysterium* can claim an ancient inheritance, like much of the music in this concert, as it sets medieval carols in English and Latin in a series of meditations upon the mystery of the incarnation. The Latin text is repeated three times, first as a soprano solo, then as a duet for soprano and alto, and the piece ends with it in a full four-part version. Between are placed the carol 'Haylle, comly end clene', 'Alleluia, pro Virgine Maria' and 'The fader of heaven, God omnipotent'. The simplicity of the scoring shows the work's origin as a

piece for children, while its alternations of vibrancy and reflectiveness testify to the continuing vitality of the musical traditions which it draws upon.

ARVO PÄRT is an Estonian, now living in West Germany, of Russian Orthodox faith (like John Tavener), who came late to composing after a career as a radio engineer. His music is fired both by his faith and by his discovery of plain-chant. Major works, such as his Stabat Mater and the St John Passion, are complemented by many orchestral pieces, sonatas, and small-scale religious works, particularly psalm-settings in Latin and Russian. The setting of Psalm 137, 'By the waters of Babylon', for four voices and organ, is rapt, still and melismatic; that of Psalm 130 ('Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee') is scored for the same forces, with added percussion, but is more bold and terrifying in its extremities of range and accumulating pain built over an organ ostinato.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN's death was commemorated by an intense Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten by Pärt, who counts him as a major inspiration. Britten was a lifelong Anglican, and music for the church formed a major part of his work. His first sacred choral piece was the Hymn to the Virgin written in 1930 when he was 17, which sets a fourteenth-century carol to a repetitive pattern punctuated by Latin interjections. More ambitious is Rejoice in the Lamb, another oblique reflection on the Lamb of God like Blake's poem set by Tavener, which uses a text from Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, written while in an asylum, and including sections addressed variously to God and Smart's cat, Jeoffrey.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN, in his vast range of works with religious inspirations has written little strictly for liturgical purposes, save for an organ work, the *Messe de la Pentecôte* and the brief communion motet, *O Sacrum Convivium*, performed tonight. His major works are those for organ, and from one of them, *Les Corps Glorieux*, comes the *Combat de la Mort et de La Vie*, which meditates upon the words of the Easter Sequence and Introit: 'Life and Death are engaged in a stupefying combat; the Author of Life, after being dead, lives and reigns; and He saith, My Father, I am raised again, I am again with thee'. Messiaen demands that the end of the piece be 'Extremely slow, tender, serene, in the sun-drenched Peace of Divine Love' - an apt epigraph for many of the works performed tonight.

## 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 Ishamar 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.

TRIPLE SOLO

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.

For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.

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.

But stands threating 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.

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 music 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 music 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 fear more and the like.

For the TRUMPET of God is a blessed intelligence and so are all the instruments in HEAVEN.

## FUNERAL IKOS

Why these bitter words of the dying, O brethren, which they utter as they go hence? I am parted from my brethren. All my friends do abandon, and go hence. But whither I go, that understand I not, neither what shall become of me yonder; only God, who hath summoned me knoweth. But make commemoration of me with the song: *Alleluia*.

But whither now go the souls? How dwell they now together there? This mystery have I desired to learn, but none can impart aright. Do they call to mind their own people, as we do them? Or have they forgotten all those who mourn them and make the song: *Alleluia*!

We go forth on the path eternal, and as condemned, with downcast faces, present ourselves before the only God eternal. Where then is comeliness? Where then is wealth? Where then is the glory of this world? There shall none of these things aid us, but only to say of the psalm: *Alleluia*.

If thou hast shown mercy unto man, O man, that same mercy shall be shown thee there; and if on an orphan thou hast shown compassion, the same shall there deliver thee from want. If in this life the naked thou hast clothed, the same shall give thee shelter there, and sing the psalm: *Alleluia*.

Youth and the beauty of the body fade at the hour of death, and the tongue then burneth fiercely, and the parched throat is inflamed. The beauty of the eyes is quenched then, the comeliness of the face all altered, the shapeliness of the neck destroyed; and the other parts have become numb, nor often say: *Alleluia*.

With ecstasy are we inflamed if we but hear that there is light eternal yonder; that there is Paradise, wherein every soul of Righteous Ones rejoiceth. Let us all, also, enter into Christ, that all we may cry aloud thus unto God: *Alleluia*.

*From The Order for the Burial of Dead Priests translated from the Greek by Isabel Heagood.*

### O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Oh, great mystery, and marvellous sacrament, that the beasts should have seen our Lord lying in a manger!

### HAYLLE, COMLY AND CLENE

Hail, comely and pure; hail, young child!  
Hail, creator, as I believe, of a maiden so mild!  
Thou hast, I believe, warded off the fiend so wild;  
The false worker of evil, now he is defeated.  
Lo, he is merry!  
Lo, he laughs, my sweetheart,  
A welcome meeting!  
I have given my greeting.

I have a bunch of cherries?  
Hail, sovereign saviour, for thou hast sought us!

All hail, leaf and flower, who hast created all things!  
Hail, full of grace, who createdst every thing out of nothing!  
Hail! I kneel and I cower. A bird have I brought  
To my basin!

Hail, little tiny pair,  
Of our creed thou art the crop!  
I would drink of thy cup,  
Little day-star.

Hail, darling dear, full of divinity!  
I pray thee, be near when I have need.  
Hail! sweet is thy air: my heart would bleed  
To see thee sit here in such poor clothes,  
With no pennies.  
Hail! put forth thy hand!  
I bring thee only a bail.  
Take it and play with it,  
And have a game of tennis.

### ALLELUIA, PRO VIRGINE MARIA

Alleluia, alleluia for the Virgin Mary.  
The holy birth purges our sins  
Lest we be given to torment.

The kings give triple offerings to the babe  
After the reproaches of Herod.

On the third day the power of the risen Christ  
Loosed the grim bonds of death.

### THE FADER OF HEVEN

The Father of Heaven, God omnipotent,  
Who set all things in order, His son has He sent.  
My name he could tell, and he laughed as if he knew all about it.  
I conceived him, through God's power, just as He intended,  
And he is just new-born.

May he keep you from woe:  
I shall pray him so;  
Make his birth known,  
And remember this morning.

De profundis clamavi ad te Domine: Domine exaudi vocem meam.  
Plaut aures tuas intendentes in vocem deprecationes mee.  
Si iniquitates observaveris Domine: Domine quis sustinebit.  
Quia apud te propitatio est: et propter legem tuam sustinuit te Domine.  
Sustinuit anima mea in verbo ejus: speravit anima mea in Domino.  
A custodia matutina usque ad noctem, speret Israel in Domino.  
Quia apud Dominum misericordia: et copiosa apud eum redemptio.  
Et Ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.

#### A Hymn to the Virgin

Of one that is so fair and bright *velut maris stella*  
Brighter than the day is light, *Parens et puella*:  
I cry to thee, thou see to me, Lady, pray thy Son for me, *Tam pia,*  
That I may come to thee. *Maria!*

All this world was forlorn *Eva peccatrix*,  
Till our Lord was y-born *De te genitrice*.  
With eve it went away *Darkest night*, and comes the day *Salutis*:  
The well springeth out of thee. *Virtutis*.

Lady, flow'r of ev'rything, *Rosa sine spina*,  
Thou bare Jezu, Heaven's King, *Gratia divina*:  
Of all thou bears't the prize, Lady, queen of paradise *Electa*:  
Maid mild, mother *es Effecta*.

O sacrum convivium! in quo Christus sumitur: recolitur memoria passionis  
ejus: mens impletur gratia: et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur, alleluia.

#### THE CHOIR

##### Sopranos

Caroline Perkins

Allcia Carroll

Virginia Knight

Veronica Herderson

Karen Kerlake

Allison Smart

##### Altos

Mel Taylor

Mike Entwistle

Jan Brown

Rupert Preston Bell

##### Tenors

Aidan Cruttenden

Mark Jeroocq

Tom Salmon

Phillip Mills

##### Basses

James Durran

Jeremy Hayter

Keith Bryant

Frank Salmon

Garry Snapper

Steven Farr - Organ

Phil Woodrow - Percussion