



St Giles Cathedral
Edinburgh

Sunday 29 May 2005

St Giles at Six

THE SINGERS
Director Donald Halliday

with

Mark O'Keeffe, trumpet
Peter Backhouse, organ

PROGRAMME

*Tonight's programme is dedicated to the memory of **Sandy MacKay**, a good friend of The Singers, who died suddenly returning to Beaulieu, Inverness-shire after our last concert in St Giles on 19 October 2003*

Praise the Lord, O my soul

Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810 – 1876)
for choir and organ

Soloists

Lindsey Nicholls *soprano*

Jennifer Asquith *soprano*

Ann Hill *alto*

Scott McCall *tenor*

Jerry Young *bass*

SS Wesley was named after his father, Samuel Wesley, and his father's admiration for the music of JS Bach. This anthem dates from 1861 when Wesley was organist at Winchester Cathedral and may have been written to celebrate the inauguration of a new organ in Holy Trinity Church in Winchester. The anthem opens with bold, exuberant, unison singing in D minor and ends with simple, prayerful, four-part singing in D major. The organ figures prominently with virtuoso passage work at the words 'give ear' and 'hearken Thou'.

Praise the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me
praise His Holy Name. I laid me down and slept,
and rose up again: for the Lord sustaineth me.

O hearken unto the voice of my calling, my King
and my God. Early in the morning will I direct my
prayer to Thee, and will look up.

My voice shalt Thou hear betimes, O Lord;
Early in the morning will I direct my prayer to
Thee. Give ear to my words, O Lord.
Hearken thou unto the voice of my cry.

Let all them that trust in Thee rejoice: they shall
ever be giving of thanks. Let all them rejoice
because Thou defendest them:
They that love Thy Name shall be joyful in Thee.

O hearken Thou, my King and my God:
For unto Thee I make my prayer,
O hearken Thou my King and my God.

As for me, I will come into Thy house, in the
midst of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship
toward Thy holy temple.

Lead me, Lord, lead me in Thy righteousness:
Make Thy way plain before my face.
For it is Thou, Lord, only,
That makest me dwell in safety.

Two renaissance motets

Sung in Latin

Victoria and Byrd were contemporaries. The Spanish composer Victoria worked within the security of the Catholic Church in Italy and Spain. His music glows with passion, ecstasy and fervour but within a serene and spiritual framework. Byrd, also a catholic, survived and flourished, but not without risks, in England during a time of considerable religious turmoil. Tonight's motet,

with its divided alto part, is restrained and sonorous.

- **Sancta Maria, succure miseris**
Tomás Luis de Victoria (c.1548 – 1611)

Holy Mary, help the suffering, strengthen the fainthearted, comfort the sorrowing, pray for the people, entreat for the clergy, intercede for all womankind vowed unto God: may all acknowledge the help of thy prayer who celebrate thy holy festival.

- **Audivi vocem de caelo**
William Byrd (1543 – 1623)

I heard a voice from heaven saying: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

Music for trumpet and organ

Movements from **The Water Music**
Georg Friedrich Handel (1685 – 1759)

Two romantic motets by Anton Bruckner (1824 – 1896)
Sung in Latin

Bruckner was born in Austria, the son of a village schoolmaster and organist. Following the death of his father he spent his early teenage years in the monastery at St Florian as a chorister. He was later to return to St Florian becoming organist in 1851. In 1855 he became organist at Linz Cathedral. Bruckner was a deeply devout man, and his music is sublime, aspiring sonically to the visual grandeur of a great cathedral.

- **Locus Iste**
This place was made by God – it cannot be defiled
- **Ave Maria**
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. Holy Mary, pray for us, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Music for trumpet and organ

Prelude to the **Te Deum**
Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1645 – 1704)

Take him, Earth, for cherishing
Herbert Howells (1892 – 1983)

*John F Kennedy was born on 29 May 1917 and assassinated on 22 November 1963. Herbert Howells was commissioned to write this piece for his memorial service in Washington Cathedral in 1964. The words come from the 4th century poet Prudentius but in an English translation by Helen Waddell. As well as mourning the loss of a young president with great promise, the music is overshadowed by the death of Howells' own son, Michael, in 1935 at the age of nine. Howells had prefaced the score of his *Hymnus Paradisi*, written earlier in memory of his son, with these same words. This is a complex piece beginning in B minor, which is sometimes bleak and punctuated by outbursts of anguish, but which ends serenely in B major.*

Take him, Earth, for cherishing,
to thy tender breast receive him.
Body of a man I bring thee,
Noble even in its ruin.

Once was this a spirit's dwelling,
By the breath of God created.
High the heart that here was beating.
Christ the prince of all its living.

Guard him well, the dead I give thee,
Not unmindful of His creature
Shall He ask it: He who made it
Symbol of His mystery.

Comes the hour God hath appointed
To fulfill the hope of men,
Then must thou, in very fashion,
What I give, return again.

Not though ancient time decaying
Wear away these bones to sand,
Ashes that a man might measure
In the hollow of his hand:

Not though wandering winds and idle
Drifting through the empty sky.
Scatter dust was nerve and sinew,
It is given to man to die.

Once again the shining road
Leads to ample Paradise;
Open are the woods again
That the Serpent lost for men.

Take, O take him, mighty Leader.
Take again thy servant's soul.
Grave his name, and pour the fragrant
Balm upon the icy stone.

Take him, earth, for cherishing,
To thy tender breast receive him.
Body of a man I bring thee,
Noble in its ruin.
By the breath of God created.
Christ the prince of all its living.

Take, O take him.
Take him, Earth, for cherishing.

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge

Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

This anthem for double choir was written in 1921. Based on psalm 90 one choir sings in quasi-plainsong while the other gently sings the hymn 'O God, our help in ages past' to William Croft's 1708 tune, St Anne. Both choirs then join together in quasi-anglican chant, and this develops into rich antiphonal singing. Eventually the organ enters with a solo in an unrelated key which builds up in the style of an improvisation. The choir joins in confidently with a recapitulation of the opening plainsong but this time the trumpet plays Croft's tune and the anthem ends in a blaze of glory.

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge, from one
generation to another.

*O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.*

Before the mountains were brought forth, or
ever the earth and the world were made, Thou
art God from everlasting to everlasting, and
world without end.

Thou turnest man to destruction; again Thou
sayest, Come again ye children of men.
For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as
yesterday, seeing that is past as a watch in the
night.

As soon as Thou scatterest them they are even as
a sleep; and fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green and groweth up; but in
the evening it is cut down, dried up, and
withered.

For we consume away in Thy displeasure, and are
afraid at Thy wrathful indignation.
For when Thou art angry all our days are gone:
we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told.
The years of our age are threescore years and
ten, and though men be so strong that they
come to fourscore years, yet is their strength but
labour and sorrow; so passeth it away and we are
gone.

Turn thee again, O Lord, at the last; be gracious
unto Thy servants. O satisfy us with Thy mercy
and that soon: so shall we rejoice and be glad all
the days of our life.

And the glorious majesty of the Lord be upon us;
prosper Thou the work of our hands, O prosper
Thou our handiwork.

Immortal Bach

Knut Nystedt (b. 1915)

a meditation on Bach's Komm susser Tod
Sung in German

*Knut Nystedt is a contemporary Norwegian
composer born in Oslo in 1915. Immortal Bach was
written to commemorate the 250th anniversary of
Bach's death. It is essentially a contemplation on
Bach's harmonisation of the chorale Komm
Susser Tod [Come Sweet Death]. The composer
recommends that the five 4 part choirs stand 'in a
long row round the hall'. The effect is remarkable –
a slow-moving soundscape of shimmering,
dissonant beauty.*

Come, sweet death; come, blessed calm;
Come lead me to peace.

Thank you for supporting this concert. You can
learn more about the work of The Singers at our
web site at www.singers.org.uk.

The Singers are extremely grateful to Mark
O'Keefe and Peter Backhouse for their
contributions to tonight's concert.

There is a retiring collection towards the costs of
running these concerts.

THE SINGERS

Sopranos

Jennifer Asquith
Kate Bredin
Charlotte Clarke
Imogen Lambourn
Rosamund Lee
Suzanne Longley
Rachel Lyons
Lindsey Nicholls
Vicky Tompsett
Val Wilson

Altos

Louise Edwards
Hilary Gordon
Rose Haslam
Ann Hill
Frances Mawer
Alice Metherell
Alison Rudd
Ellen Thomson
Gaby Wright

Tenors

Paul Banks
Scott McCall
Mike Oswald
Nico Tyack
Nick Warner

Basses

Robert Freed
Stephen Locks
Stuart Murray
Paul Reid
Ian Wainwright
Jerry Young

Musical director

Donald Halliday

The Singers is a choir based in Newcastle upon Tyne. Singers come mainly from Newcastle and Northumberland but some singers travel considerable distances to participate in choir events. Currently we have singers who travel from Carlisle, Chester, Bradford, Leeds and Durham.

The choir rehearses one weekend each month. The choir aims to maintain a sweetness and clarity of tone which is particularly appropriate

for the earlier choral repertoire which is one of its specialities.

The choir has sung at numerous venues, has recorded and broadcast, and has been a finalist in the BBC/Sainsbury's Choir of the Year Competition.

Over the next year the choir will be performing in Southwark Cathedral, London, Brancepeth Castle, Beverley Minster, Durham Cathedral, Hexham Abbey and Ripon Cathedral, as well as in concerts in Middlesbrough, Darlington, Carlisle and Newcastle.

You can find out more about The Singers at our web site at www.singers.org.uk.

MARK O'KEEFFE

Creative Scotland Award winner 2003, Mark O'Keeffe has held the post of principal trumpet with the BBC SSO since December 1996. He is a native of County Cork, Ireland, where he began his musical studies at the age of seven. It was only after playing in the local brass band and receiving trumpet lessons from his father that his love of the trumpet developed. After taking formal lessons at the Cork School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music, he was chosen in 1992 as the winner of the RTE 'Musician of the Future' competition. On his return to Ireland that year, he was appointed associate principal trumpet of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, a post he held for four years.

Over the past seven years he has appeared as soloist with the BBC SSO on a number of occasions, including performances of works by Judith Bingham, Mark Anthony Turnage and Thea Musgrave, as well as concertos by Telemann and Hummel. Mark has recently commissioned new solo trumpet works by Scottish composers John Maxwell Geddes, Jennifer Martin and Anthea Haddow. In addition to his career with the BBC SSO he is a committed chamber musician playing in several ensembles that share his passion for performing new music.

Mark O'Keeffe teaches at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow where he is a part time doctoral student in contemporary trumpet performance.