

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

CHORAL SOCIETY

71st Season 1975 - 1976

9 November 1975

Carmina
Burana - Orff - In Windsor Forest -
Bach -
Assembly Hall Tunbridge Wells -
Bach -
Mass in B Minor -
Bach -
-Carol Concert -
Vaughan Williams -

PROGRAMME

In Windsor Forest

Vaughan Williams

- 1 The Conspiracy
- 2 Drinking Song
- 3 Falstaff & the Fairies
- 4 Wedding Chorus
- 5 Epilogue

String Orchestra

Anthony Smith-Masters - Piano

I N T E R V A L 15 minutes

Carmina Burana

Carl Orff

Nicolette Savage

Soprano

Robin Morrish

Counter-Tenor

Patrick McCarthy

Baritone

Boys Chorus from Crowborough Beacon School

Elsie Jennings and Anthony Smith-Masters - Pianos

THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

CONDUCTOR - DEREK WATMOUGH

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PATRICK MCCARTHY was born in London but brought up and educated in Bognor Regis. In 1965 he went to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as a part-time student taking violin and singing. In 1968 he became a full time singing student and sang many operatic roles as a student. In 1972 he sang a principal baritone role in Wagners Das Liebesverbot at Bayreuth. He is currently touring with Opera for All. He will, of course, for ever be remembered for his dramatic appearance in Carmina Burana at a Prom, when he stepped out of the audience to replace the soloist who had fainted.

(continued on last but one page)

CARMINA BURANA

Carl Orff (b.1895)

Gramophone catalogues these days are a good index to the popularity of any piece of music, and in the case of Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana' you will find no fewer than seven versions currently available. Indeed, the way in which the work has established itself in the popular repertoire is one of the most remarkable success stories in post-war music.

In earlier years, some of the success of 'Carmina Burana' stemmed from the mistaken belief that the composer had taken highly scurrilous medieval poems as his text. In fact, scarcely an eyebrow need be raised in today's permissive society, and it is limitations of space alone (not delicacy of feeling for a Tunbridge Wells audience) that prevent us from reprinting the lengthy text in full. We hope, however, that the notes given below will be of some help to those without a working knowledge of dog Latin, medieval French and low German.

The provenance of the text is well known. It is drawn from a collection of about 200 poems, gathered together by a monk in the Benedictine monastery of Beuren (now Benediktbeuern) in Bavaria. They were written by wandering scholars and vagrant monks during the latter part of the 13th century and, in a sense, are a revolt against the rigid conventions of the time. This is not to say that the authors were irreligious: they were simply Christians who were by no means unaware of the delights of the flesh. In the poems we find joyful celebrations of Spring, of love, of eating and drinking: strong meat indeed for the Middle Ages establishment. So it is not surprising that the manuscripts were kept hidden until the monastery was dissolved in 1803. Thereafter, they found their way to Munich where they were eventually discovered and published in 1847. A full account is given in 'Medieval Latin Lyrics', an anthology compiled by Helen Waddell.

Carl Orff, a native of Munich, has pioneered new methods in musical education and his Schulwerke, published in the 1930s, has had a far-reaching effect on music teaching both in this country and abroad. He wrote 'Carmina Burana' in 1936, and later added two other works – 'Catulli carmina' and 'Il Trionfo d'Afrodite' – to form a trilogy under the general title 'Il Trionfo'.

'Carmina Burana' is scored for soprano, baritone, counter tenor, six other male soloists, semi-chorus, full chorus and boys' choir. The original version also calls for a huge orchestra, although a later version (which we shall hear today) depends on two pianos and a formidable array of percussion. William Mann, on whose translation of the text I have freely drawn, has described the music as 'physical, immediate and stunning in its impact'. It is also deceptively simple, and demands a high degree of precision and attack in performance to make its full effect.

The order of events is as follows:

FORTUNA IMPERATRIX MUNDI
(Fortune, Empress of the World)

- 1 O Fortuna, velut luna
- 2 Fortune plango vulnèra

PRIMO VERE (In Springtime)

- 3 Veris leta facies
- 4 Omnia sol temperat
- 5 Ecce gratum

UF DEM ANGER (On the Lawn)

- 6 Dance
- 7 Floret silva nobilis
- 8 Chramer gip die varwe mir
- 9 Swaz hie gat umbe
- 10 Were diu werlt alle min

IN TABERNA (In the Tavern)

- 11 Estuans interius
- 12 Olim Lacus colueram
- 13 Ego sum abbas
- 14 In taberna quando sumus

COUR D'AMOURS (The Court of Love)

- 15 Amor volat undique
- 16 Dies, nox et omnia
- 17 Stetit puella
- 18 Circa mea pectora
- 19 Si puer cum puellula
- 20 Veni, veni, venias
- 21 In Trutina mentis dubia
- 22 Tempus est iocundum
- 23 Dulcissime

BLANZIFLOR ET HELENA

- 24 Ave formosissima

FORTUNA IMPERATRIX MUNDI
(Fortune, Empress of the World)

- 25 O Fortuna, velut luna

It will be seen that the work is cyclical in form: it begins and ends with a lament for chorus which bewails the fickleness of Fortune (1 and 25). 'O Fortune, like the moon, changeable in state', complains the poet, 'weep with me, all of you!' The next chorus (2) elaborates the idea: 'The wheel of Fortune spins. One man is abased by its descent, the other carried aloft'.

With PRIMO VERE the mood abruptly changes. We hear the cracking of ice as a small chorus welcomes the 'gay face of Spring, set before the world' (3). A baritone solo follows (4) with a salute to the sun, and a reflection on steadfast love. 'Whoever loves as I do, is turned on the wheel'. The full chorus then adds its tribute to the burgeoning sun (5): 'He is a miserable soul who does not enjoy life, nor lusts under the reign of summer'.

A rural dance introduces the next section, UF DEM ANGER. This is followed by a strophic passage (7), in which the main chorus sings of the noble forest in full bloom, while the semi-chorus laments the absence of a lover. They continue (8) with a plea to the shopkeeper for colour to redden their cheeks so that they can catch the young men. A round dance follows (9), and the section ends with a kind of loyal toast (10).

IN TABERNA opens with a famous passage from the Archipoeta (11) which is set for solo baritone, and is the confession of a dissolute young man 'greedy for pleasure, more than for health'. A counter tenor follows (12) who, in his cups, imagines himself to be a roast swan on the table ready for carving. 'I lie on a salver and I cannot fly away: I see champing teeth'. The abbot of Cucaniensis (Cockaigne) then appears (13) and in a wicked parody of the Credo declares that he finds his main consolation among drinkers. This idea is taken up by the male chorus in a rousing drinking song (14).

COUR D'AMOURS deals with the joys and sorrows of love. With boys chorus, the soprano sings of the sadness of a girl without a lover (15). The baritone describes the pangs of unrequited love (16), and there follows a short, exquisite poem (17) about a girl who stood 'like a rosebud: her face was radiant, her mouth in flower'.

The baritone and chorus introduce a more robust note with a song in praise of his beloved (18), in which he invokes the help of the gods in his wooing. A male chorus tells us that 'as love rises, weariness is driven away' (19); a double chorus offers encouragement to the hesitant lover (20) and the soprano eventually succumbs – 'to so sweet a yoke, I submit' (21). The full chorus blazes out a song of praise to love (22), 'This is a joyful time, o you maidens; rejoice now, you young men'. A brief link for soprano (23) leads to a further chorus dedicated to Blanche fleur (mother of Tristan) and Helen (24). The work closes with a repetition of the opening chorus: the Wheel of Fortune has turned full circle.

IN WINDSOR FOREST

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Two years after the first performance of his opera 'Sir John in Love', which was given at the Royal College of Music in 1929, Vaughan Williams adapted some of the music and published this cantata, scored for soprano, chorus and orchestra. Much of the text of the opera was taken from 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' which has as its central figure Sir John Falstaff. Some lyrics from Elizabethan poets are also found in the libretto.

The work has five movements:

- 1 THE CONSPIRACY – a setting for three-part women's voices of Shakespeare's song 'Sigh no more, ladies'. As one critic has remarked: 'the composer's inimitable freedom of rhythm and tonality makes itself felt at once in the orchestral opening, and a delicious freshness comes with a key change to E major at the words "Hey, hey, nonny, nonny"'

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- 2 DRINKING SONG: This is the famous drinking song which first appeared in 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' by John Still. In the opera it is sung by Falstaff's hangers-on Bardolph, Nym and Pistol, joined by the Host of the Garter Inn.

'Back and sides go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold.
But belly, God send thee good ale enough
Whether it be new or old.'

- 3 FALSTAFF AND THE FAIRIES: ('Round about in a fair ring-a'), words by Shakespeare, Ravenscroft and Lyly. The scene is set in Windsor forest, by the great oak of Herne the Hunter. Falstaff enters, wearing horns, surrounded by the chorus disguised as fairies. The Queen of the fairies urges her companions to torment Sir John:

'You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your offices and your quality,
About him, fairies, sing a scornful rhyme,
And as you sing, pinch him to your time.'

The fairies reply presto:

'Pinch him and burn him and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out'

— a passage which ends on a descending glissando which Elgar would almost certainly have marked 'con derisione'.

- 4 WEDDING CHORUS: A setting of Ben Johnson's beautiful poem

'See the chariot at hand here of Love
Wherein my Lady rideth!'

This movement, arranged for four-part chorus and marked 'andante moderato' shows Vaughan Williams in his most pastoral mood, with the marriage of words and music achieved with great sensitivity.

- 5 EPILOGUE: Here the words are taken from the 'Book of Ayres' by Campion and Rossetter:

'Whether men do laugh or weep,
Whether they do wake or sleep,
Whether they die young or old,
Whether they feel heat or cold,
There is nothing underneath the sun,
Nothing in true earnest done.'

A rather superficial sentiment, one might think, for the splendid Parry-like tune featured in this movement. However, Vaughan Williams knew a good melody when he wrote one, and uses it as a rousing finale to both the opera and the cantata, lifting to a great climax on the words —

'And the world is but a play'.

A point of view shared, as we know, by Shakespeare himself.

NICOLETTE SAVAGE studied singing from the age of 15. After qualifying as an Art teacher she studied opera at the Guildhall School of Music at the same time as Patrick McCarthy. She recently sang in Carmina Burana at Hastings and is developing her career in opera and oratorio.

ROBIN MORRISH was a counter-tenor choral scholar at Kings College Cambridge from 1956-59. He has been a member of the Monteverdi Choir of London since 1970. Currently teaching Music and English at Tonbridge School, he also leads the Tonbridge Philharmonic Orchestra.

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Concerts at the Assembly Hall

Sunday 16 November at 3 pm

Green Room Club of Tunbridge Wells

YITKIN SEOW - Piano

works by Schubert, Chopin, Brahms & Prokofiev

Sunday 7 December at 3 pm

Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra

Conductor - ELGAR HOWARTH

A programme of English music by Vaughan Williams, Delius, Malcolm Arnold & Elgar. Soloist -

Susan Milan - Flute

Sunday 14 December at 3 pm

CAROLS FOR CHOIR & AUDIENCE

Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society

Holmewood House School Choir (musical director -
Anthony Pape)

The Mayfield Band (Bandmaster - Ken Rich)

Conductor - DEREK WATMOUGH

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The following names should be added to the list of Vice Presidents overleaf - Cyril Wood, Joyce Sime and Mrs H C Romney.

