

13 November 1977

Royal
Tunbridge
Wells
CHORAL
SOCIETY

ASSEMBLY HALL
ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Cantata Academica

Britten

Nelson Mass

Haydn

Song of Destiny

Brahms

Orchestral Overture — "DIE MEISTERSINGERS"

Helen Walker
Soprano
Grace Dives
Mezzo Soprano

Graham Gough
Tenor
John Hancorn
Bass

Full Orchestra
Leader: Jane Pamment

Conductor:
DEREK WATMOUGH

SUNDAY, 13th NOVEMBER, 1977 at 3 p.m.

CANTATA ACADEMICA — Benjamin Britten
Vocal Score by Imogen Holst

The Cantata Academica was written to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Basle University. The latin text was taken from the Charter of the University and from older texts praising the City of Basle.

Part One

- 1 **CHORALE**
—Solos & Chorus
- 2 **ALLA ROVESCIO**
—Chorus
- 3 **RECITATIVO**
—Tenor Solo
- 4 **ARIOSO**
—Bass Solo
- 5 **DUETTINO**
—Sop. & Mezzo Sop. Solos
- 6 **RECITATIVO**
—Tenor Solo
- 7 **SCHERZO**
—Solos & Chorus

Part Two

- 8 **TEMA SERIALE CONFUGA**
—Chorus
- 9 **SOLI E DUETTO**
—Mezzo Sop. & Bass Solos
- 10 **ARIOSO CON CANTO
POPOLARE**
—Sop. Solo & Male Chorus
- 11 **RECITATIVO**
—Tenor Solo
- 12 **CANONE ED OSTINATO**
—Solos & Chorus
- 13 **CORALE CON CANTO**
—Solos & Chorus

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'NELSON' MASS — Haydn

In 1795 Haydn ended his second triumphant English tour and returned to Austria and to his employment with the Esterhazy family, the head of which was now Prince Nicholas II, a charmless despot to whom music was not important. (He continued to address Haydn in the third person as if he were an ordinary servant until his wife pointed out that this was hardly appropriate to an honorary Doctor of Music of Oxford University.) But at least Haydn's duties were less onerous than they had previously been. In fact all he was required to do was to compose a yearly mass for the Princess's name-day. The result was the six magnificent 'late' masses, of which the 'Nelson', composed in 1798, is the third and, incidentally, the only one in a minor key. (Another distinguishing feature is the lack of any woodwind parts; it is scored only for strings, brass and timpani.) Whilst Haydn was working on the mass the very welcome news arrived of Nelson's great victory over Napoleon's fleet at Aboukir—hence the title.

Detailed analysis of this luminous and lovely music hardly seems necessary, but the following are a few salient points. The 'Nelson' is possibly the most dramatic of Haydn's masses—a quality strikingly apparent in the urgent, almost frenzied, pleading of the opening **Kyrie**. Also, the constant interweaving and contrasting of the solo voices and the choir gives an effect of dramatic movement and tension which tends to be lacking in 'cantata' masses where the text is divided rigidly into solos and choruses.

It is interesting to note how Haydn tackles the **Credo**, some parts of which have always posed a tough problem. Instead of the basic Christian affirmations of sorrow, praise, thanksgiving and supplication, the composer is asked, as Tovey put it, 'to find music for the controversial points that were settled at Nicaea by the theologians'. Haydn starts with a vigorous canon at the fifth, which takes him as far as 'descendit de coelis'. Then, after the beautiful setting of 'Et incarnatus', the musical interest shifts to rapid and brilliant orchestral 'business' while the choir mutters away in unison; until at the very last phrase—'et vitam venturi saeculi'—the soprano soloist enters with a series of most lovely falling cadences.

Haydn was accused of making his church music too cheerful; as exemplified, perhaps, by the setting in this mass of the final prayer for peace—'Dona nobis pacem'—which goes bouncing along **allegro vivace** in D major. The composer's reply: When I think of God, my heart leaps for joy', is famous. Less well known are some words spoken towards the end of his life by this humble and deeply religious man:

'There are so few happy and contented people here below, sorrow and anxiety pursue them everywhere; perhaps my work may, some day, become a spring from which the careworn may draw a few moments' rest and refreshment.'

K.M.

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The Artists

GRACE DIVES

Grace Dives began her singing career early in her university days and served a full and varied apprenticeship in many facets of theatre and professional choral and opera engagements. She enjoys the challenge of both the extended vocal range required of a mezzo-soprano and the variety of the repertoire in oratorio and opera for this voice.

Grace Dives sings in many languages, including Russian and has sung with the Kent Opera; at Leighton House, London, and at the Wigmore Hall. Miss Dives has a wide repertoire of operatic and oratorio roles and has been widely applauded for her performances.



HELEN WALKER was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1952, and attended the Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls until entering the Guildhall School of Music, London, to continue her musical education.

She has appeared as soloist in the Festival Hall, Fairfield Hall, Wigmore Hall and St Paul's Cathedral and has broadcast on Radio 3 and Radios Medway and Oxford.

In February she sang the title role in Verdi's 'Joan of Arc' for the Oxford University Opera Society winning much acclaim for her portrayal and singing of the part.

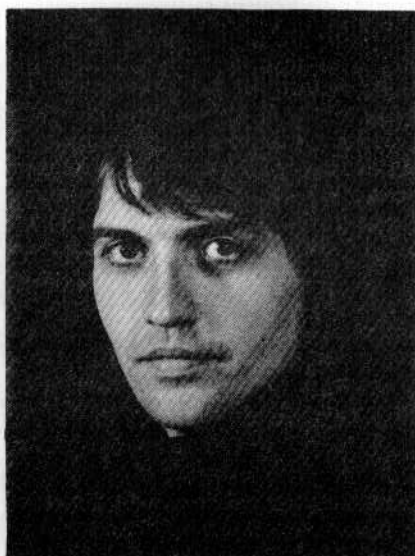
Prior to her appearance in Purcell's 'Fairy Queen' for the Lamberhurst Choral Society, she sang in the Prize-winner's Concert of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Green Room Club at the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells.



GRAHAM GOUGH is at present studying with Ellis Keeler at the Guildhall School of Music. He has made appearances in a number of works, amongst which was the tenor role in Bach's 'Magnificat' under the baton of Ivor Keys and the Berlioz 'Te Deum' with the same conductor. He has appeared with many local music Societies of which Shoreham, Crowborough, Lamberhurst and Redhill are a few. His repertoire includes the works of Haydn, Mozart, Bach, Handel, Britten, Schubert and Berlioz.

JOHN HANCORN was educated at Skinners School, Tunbridge Wells and has just completed a 4 year course at the Trinity College of Music where he studied piano and singing.

He has performed for the college as a soloist in performances of Vaughan Williams' 'Dona Nobis Pacem' and Tippett's Oratorio, 'A Child of our Time' and also in many oratorios in London and the provinces, including the Bach 'St John Passion', Handel, 'Messiah' and the Mozart 'Requiem'. Last year he was awarded the Elizabeth Schumann Prize for Leider at his College. This year he is continuing his singing studies with Miss Elizabeth Hawes and will fulfill certain teaching appointments as well as a busy singing programme. This is John's first appearance with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society.



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DEREK WATMOUGH — Conductor and Musical Director

Musical Director of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society, was educated in Yorkshire and showed his musical ability at an early age as a violinist in the National Youth Orchestra. Later he gained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music and although he still plays the violin, the piano is now the instrument of his choice.

As well as performing and conducting, Derek Watmough is also a composer and music critic. The high standards of the Society reflect his outstanding musicianship and capacity for hard work. Apart from his public engagements, he is musical director of the Beacon School at Crowborough.

SONG OF DESTINY — Brahms

Brahms composed his Song of Destiny between 1868 and 1871, just before the Variations on a Theme of Haydn. In 1869 he had completed his German Requiem and was encouraged by its success to write other choral works, including the Song of Triumph to commemorate Prussia's victory over France (now rarely performed) and later the Alto Rhapsody. It was not until 1876 that he ventured to write a Symphony.

(The words of the song, by Holderlin, contrast the unruffled bliss of the Olympian gods 'far in yon region of light, where pleasures fail not', with the restlessness and unhappiness of humans, who 'wander . . . blindly, from one sad hour to another, like water from cliff unto cliff ever dropping'.)

The music is in Brahms' vein of the highest seriousness. Like many other composers,—Mozart, Beethoven, Delius, Holst,—he was untroubled by the unorthodoxy of his beliefs, but was a man of deep religious feelings and a Seeker After Truth in many directions. His attitude is clear from the first notes of the work, the muted violins rising in a gorgeous curve of expressive melody. Brahms' view of Heaven is no cold classical Olympus, but warm, emotional and attainable. When the voices enter it is the rich tones of the contraltos, in their most effective register, which carry the melody. After a modulation and a climax, solemn trombones return the music to the mood and the E flat key of the opening.

The wild frenzy of the C minor middle section introduces the 'grief-laden mortals'. The music is very similar to 'For behold, the trumpet shall sound' in the Requiem. The chorus falls at length into an awed silence on the words 'At last do we pass away'. But Brahms is no nihilist, to leave us in despair. Out of the desolation a flute (and what an inspiration to use just this instrument) rises into the clear air in a calm bright C major and returns us to the atmosphere of the opening, but subtly changed, as is the key, by the storm the music has passed through. The chorus is silent; only wordless instruments can carry Brahms' message of consolation without a false sentimentality.

A. B. S-M

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