

**ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY**

**80th BIRTHDAY CONCERT**

**ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

**SUNDAY 8th APRIL 1984**

**3.00 p.m.**

**ORCHESTRA LEADER : JANE PAMMENT**

**CONDUCTED BY DEREK WATMOUGH**

## The first eighty years

Mr Francis J. Foote's Choir was formed in 1904. There may have been a forerunner in "The Tunbridge Wells Harmonic Society", in which Francis Foote played the violin, but the link is not established. Mr Foote's first concert was in May 1905 and it was notable for the first provincial performance of Brahms' "Requiem". Concerts were given either in the Opera House or in the Great Hall. Seat prices ranged from 2/- to 6/-. Present day audiences are, in comparison, getting their concerts at bargain rates, for prices today would have to be about £2.50 to £9 match those of eighty years ago.

During the First World War, the Choir was renamed "The Tunbridge Wells Choral Society" but Francis Foote continued as conductor until early 1944 – a unique span of forty years. Since that time the conductors have been, in order, Albert Croucher (two years), Robin Miller (five years), Dr Harold May (eleven years), Trevor Harvey (eight years), Myer Fredman (two years) and Derek Watmough (eleven years to date). Notable visiting conductors have included Sir Adrian Boult and Richard Hickox.

Although the traditional choral repertoire has been the mainstay of the Society for the major part of its existence, recent years have seen the introduction of a number of less well-known works; Holst's "Hymn of Jesus", Puccini's "Messa di Gloria", Schubert's "Mass in A flat", Poulenc's "Gloria", Orff's "Carmina Burana", and today's works – not avant-garde enough for some funding bodies, perhaps, but sufficient to claim that the Society is continuing in the tradition of its founder.

Financial times do not get any easier and recession and other forms of entertainment all have effects on audiences. The London concert halls are not immune and we have had smaller audiences recently, even for popular works such as "The Dream of Gerontius". Without the support of our Patrons, Vice-Presidents, the National Federation of Music Societies, the Borough Council, and above all, you, our audience, we would not be looking with confidence to the future. Thank you all for your encouraging support.

### Overture – Leonora No 3

*Beethoven*

The third Leonora Overture was written in 1806 when the second performance of Beethoven's opera "Fidelio" was given in Vienna. The generally accepted composition order of Beethoven's four versions is Leonora No 2 (1805), Leonora No 3 (1806), Leonora No 1 (1807) and Fidelio (1814), the last of which is now always used with the Opera. Leonora No 3 is the most developed and the finest of the versions.

## The Choral Fantasia (Op 80)

*Beethoven*

The Choral Fantasia was first performed in Vienna on 22nd December 1808 when the subscription concert programme was:

- Pastoral Symphony (first performance)
- Aria "Ah, perfido"
- Extracts from Mass in C
- Piano Concerto No 4 played by Beethoven
- Symphony in C Minor (first performance)
- Fantasia for pianoforte alone.
- The Choral Fantasia (first performance)

What a programme! The subscribers clearly demanded value for their money. But it was a sad occasion for it was the last time Beethoven performed a piano concerto in public, due to his increasing deafness.

The Fantasia was dedicated to Maximilian Joseph, King of Bavaria. It is a set of piano and orchestral variations based on Beethoven's song "Gegenliebe" leading, as with the Ninth Symphony, to a choral ending. Kuffner's ode "Schmeichelnd hold" is first introduced by a semi-chorus and then taken up by the whole choir. The English translation of the German words (which we shall be singing today) speaks of man's harsh and hostile impulses turning to lofty thoughts of peace on earth and heart's contentment. It is music which brings man close to highest Heaven.

The whole effect of the work is festive and particularly suited to this birthday occasion.

### **Solo piano . . . Andrew Haigh**

**ANDREW HAIGH** lives at Langton Green, and although only in his twenties has already established himself as an up and coming virtuoso pianist.

His first public appearance was when he was nine years old and at eleven he made his Royal Festival Hall debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. When fifteen years old he won a full scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied with the late Cyril Smith, and subsequently with Phyllis Sellick. Although much of his time is spent in teaching, adjudicating and examining, he is in demand all over the country for concerto playing.

The Society is particularly pleased to welcome this talented local concert pianist. In 1985 he will team up with today's conductor to give a performance of "The Carnival of Animals" at a Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra concert.

## INTERVAL – 15 MINUTES

### Mass No 3 in F Minor

*Bruckner*

Anton Bruckner was born in 1824 at Ansfelden in Upper Austria. He came from a line of schoolmasters and he eventually followed suit. He had had, however, a good musical grounding as chorister, violinist, pianist, and organist. In 1856 he decided to give up schoolmastering, which had clearly become an uncongenial occupation, and became a full-time musician by obtaining a post as organist at Linz Cathedral. He once gave organ recitals in this country.

Bruckner's attitude to his work may be summed up in the head to his first Mass "O.A.M.D.G." – "Omnis ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" – "All to the greater glory of God". He was, however, subject to periods of doubt both spiritually and musically. In 1867 he had a near nervous breakdown and it was during his recovery that he commenced his F Minor Mass. The following year he was appointed to a post at the Conservatory in Vienna as a teacher of theory and organ, and it was there that he completed the Mass.

The work was not immediately performed. Musical opinion declared it to be "unperformable" and "unsingable". In 1872 Bruckner hired the Grand Opera orchestra at his own expense and gave the first performance in the Augustian Church in Vienna. He later wrote "The enthusiasm of the performers, as that of many of the listeners, was indescribable."

Bruckner's orchestration has an organ-like texture. His harmony is strikingly original and owes much of its luminosity to modulations into successive mediant keys. His melodies often show a deep affinity with Roman Catholic hymnody. The F Minor Mass performed today is a great expression of his deep personal faith and it has since been bracketed with Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis" as one of the great monumental orchestral masses of all time.

**Philippa Dames-Longworth (Soprano)**

**Christine Batty (Contralto)**

**William Pool (Tenor)**

**Anthony Michaels-Moore (Bass)**

### **PHILIPPA DAMES-LONGWORTH**

This is Philippa's third appearance with the Society, and she recently also appeared at a Symphony Orchestra concert. She is married to bass John Hancorn, an Old Boy of Skinners' School and a rising star at Glyndebourne.

Philippa is a graduate of the Trinity College of Music and her subsequent studies have included intensive summer courses at the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Studies and two years as a member of the Guildhall School Opera course.

Philippa's oratorio experience is extensive, for she has sung with choral societies all over the country, and at the Albert Hall, Fairfield Hall, St John's, Smith Square, and the South Bank. She is particularly interested in 20th Century repertoire. Her versatility is illustrated by an appearance in 1982 in a season of operettas at Sadlers Wells.

We are very glad to welcome her once again.

### **CHRISTINE BATTY**

At the age of four, Christine began studying the piano, followed by studies of the violin and cello. She received a BA in Music from York University in 1972, when she commenced singing studies. She went to the Guildhall School in 1975, and now studies with David Mason.

Christine was a BBC Singer during 1978-79 and sings abroad frequently. In October 1982 she sang Dido in Purcell's opera in Salzburg, with further performances in 1983. This is her first visit to the Society, and we extend a warm welcome to her.

### **ANTHONY MICHAELS-MOORE**

Anthony is no stranger to the Society or to Tunbridge Wells (where he lives). Anthony was a semi-finalist in last year's International Young Concert Artists Competition, and was highly commended the previous year. He was also a finalist in last year's National Federation of Music Societies competition. He appeared with the Society in a performance of Mozart's C Minor Mass in 1982, and last November sang the bass solos in our performance of "Gerontius". Whilst he is waiting to take up an appointment as principal bass in a new opera house in Malaga, he teaches at Crowborough.

# THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

## 80th SEASON

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We are most grateful for the support of Patrons and Vice Presidents, and new ones are always welcome. Please ring or write to the General Secretary, Mr L.A. Lee, 233 Greggs Wood Road, Tunbridge Wells (T.W. 21937).

The Choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please ring the General Secretary (as above) if you are interested in becoming a singing member.

The National Federation of Music Societies to which the Society is affiliated, give support towards the cost of concerts with the funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council also provides guarantees.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a registered charity.