

Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society



BEETHOVEN CONCERT
Coriolanus Overture
Choral Fantasia
Mass in C

Musical Director and Conductor
Derek Watmough

Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society
Orchestra

Leader : Rita French

Programme 50p

1998

Sunday November 8th

BEETHOVEN CONCERT

OUR SOLOISTS

Andrew Haigh

Piano

Natalie Clifton Griffith

Soprano

Harriet Webb

Mezzo Soprano

Mark Anderson

Tenor

Jonathan Gunthorpe

Baritone

Alison Ogden

Soprano

Michael Webb

Tenor

ANDREW HAIGH

Piano

Andrew made his debut at the age of eleven, performing with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. When thirteen he was a prize-winner in the BBC Mozart Competition. At the Royal College of Music he studied with Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick.

He has performed extensively as soloist, recitalist and chamber group pianist in the United Kingdom and Europe. He has performed frequently with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic and London Festival Orchestras.

After winning the National Piano Competition and the Royal Overseas League Competition he was presented to the Queen and invited to play for Princess Alexandra at St. James's Palace.

He now lives in Tunbridge Wells and leads a very active role in the music life of Kent teaching, adjudicating and diploma examining for Trinity College.

NATALIE CLIFTON GRIFFITH

Soprano

Natalie graduated from the Birmingham Conservatoire in 1996 with a First Class Honours degree in Music and has just completed her studies at the Royal College of Music.

She has enjoyed professional engagements with choirs such as English Voices, Ex-Cathedra, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Ludus Baroque and The Sixteen. Solo engagements include Bach *St. John Passion*, Brahms *Requiem* and *Christmas Oratorio*. She has had several operatic roles including Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Future engagements include *Dixit Dominus* for the Birmingham Bach Choir, *Messiah* in Gloucester and Truro Cathedrals, Britten *Rejoice in the Lamb* and Haydn *Stabat Mater* for the Solihull Choral Society and Poulenc *Gloria* for Daventry Choral Society.

HARRIET WEBB

Mezzo soprano

Harriet was educated at Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls and went to Manchester University to read Music. She studied violin with Ronald Birks of the Lindsay Quartet and singing with Diane Matthews at The Royal Northern College of Music.

Harriet is currently studying singing with Sarah Dunstan. She sings and records regularly with several chamber choirs including the Corydon and the Holst Singers. She also sings with the BBC Singers and has toured with the Schutz Choir of London.

Solo work has included performances of Bach *St John Passion* and *Magnificat*, Vivaldi *Gloria*, Handel *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*, Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, Haydn *Nelson Mass*, Schumann *Requiem* and Britten *Christ's Nativity*.

MARK ANDERSON

Tenor

Mark was a choral scholar at New College, Oxford and furthered his studies at the Cologne School of Music. Whilst at Oxford he began work with early music ensembles such as the Academy of Ancient Music, the Choir of the Enlightenment, The Sixteen and The King's Consort.

Mark has worked regularly with the BBC Singers, the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir and the Cologne Chamber Choir.

He has had many solo engagements including the *St John Passion*, *Israel in Egypt*, *Coronation Mass* and *Petite Messe Solennelle*. Future engagements include *St Matthew Passion* for Tonbridge Philharmonic Society.

JONATHAN GUNTHORPE

Baritone

Born in Brackley, Jonathan read English and Russian at Leeds University, furthering his studies in singing with Janet Edmunds at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Currently he is studying at the Opera School of the Royal School of Music.

Concert engagements have included *St. John Passion* with the English String Orchestra in Southwark Cathedral, *St. Matthew Passion* at Durham and Lichfield Cathedrals and Mozart *Coronation Mass* at St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Jonathon is an experienced singer of opera, his roles including Mr. Noye in *Noye's Fludde* and Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Future engagements include *Missa di Gloria* and *St. Matthew Passion* for the Tonbridge Philharmonic Society.

ALISON OGDEN

Soprano

Alison started singing at the age of twelve in the Torbay Gilbert and Sullivan Society. She went on to study singing and violin at Dartington College of Arts and Trinity College of Music. She has only recently moved to Tunbridge Wells. Alison is currently a member of the cabaret group Quintessence and sings with the Philharmonia Chorus London.

MICHAEL WEBB

Tenor

Michael sings with the Philharmonia Chorus London and for ten years was the conductor of the Tunbridge Wells Mixed Voice Choir. He also sings with the Tunbridge Wells Choral Society and is the General Secretary.

Beethoven : 1770-1827

Beethoven, the composer who was to effect the change from the classical to the romantic age in music, was born in Bonn in 1770 into a poor family. The circumstances of his life caused him much suffering. Deafness encroached from the age of 30. He found it difficult to socialise, was suspicious of others and became a lonely isolated figure whose business arguments, lack of financial security and anxiety over his nephew, added to his troubles. Deafness forced him away from a career as a virtuoso pianist into the new and virtually unprecedented role of having to seek a living exclusively from composing. His resulting unconventional attitude, both in musical and social matters, marked him out as a revolutionary, a child of his time.

Overture : Coriolanus Op.62

The period 1806-1808 saw the composition of a great wealth of orchestral music by Beethoven, including the *Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies* and two overtures, *Leonora No3* and *Coriolanus*.

The first performance of Collin's tragedy *Coriolanus* was given late in the year 1802 with incidental music arranged by Stadler from Mozart's *Idomineo* and although Beethoven was certainly acquainted with Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, it was for the play by Collin that this overture was written.

The music seems to follow the spirit of Collin's plot more closely than that of Shakespeare, for the scurrying quavers in the strings show us an indecisive Coriolanus whose triumphal return as conqueror, no doubt portrayed in the opening bars, is so soon to be followed by his banishment to Rome. It is not without difficulty that the ambassadors who are later sent to the city succeed in overcoming his pride. This scene is surely described

by the spacious tune presented by the first violins and later taken up by other parts of the orchestra. The overture, which began with a unison fortissimo from the strings, draws quietly to its close, to end on a unison C once more from the strings, but this time pizzicato and pianissimo.

Choral Fantasia

In 1808 when Beethoven was living in Vienna and had no dependable source of income, he was given access to the Theater an der Wien for the night of 22nd. December. He arranged an enormous benefit concert. The evening was to include performances of the *Fourth and Fifth Symphonies*, the *Fourth Piano Concerto*, parts of the *Mass in C* and the *Scene and Aria Ah Perfidia*.

Beethoven decided he needed a finale and quickly threw together the work now known as the *Choral Fantasia*. This is to some extent the forerunner of the *Ninth Symphony* in that it includes a choral finale to words by Schiller and uses a theme with a distinct similarity to that of *Ode to Joy*.

It opens with a piano solo introduction in C minor, leading to the entry of the orchestra in the same key, recitativo style. The piano then announces the main theme and variations for flute, oboes, clarinets, string quartet and full orchestra lead to the dramatic entry of the solo voices and chorus.

Written at the last minute the work was under-rehearsed. The orchestra, already on bad terms with Beethoven after an earlier dispute in rehearsal, broke down in the middle of Fantasia and had to be restarted. Beethoven quarrelled with the original soprano and a substitute had to be found. The theatre was bitterly cold. Success was mixed. In including it in this afternoon's programme the Society is confident that none of this will apply!

Mass In C

The *Mass in C* was composed in 1807 during a period of intense compositional activity which also produced the *Fifth Symphony*. At the time

Beethoven was conscious of his inexperience in this genre, realising that he risked comparison with Haydn's established masterpieces in this form. In the event, however, he accomplished much by breaking new ground with master strokes of style and texture not found in the work of his contemporaries.

There are many unconventional moments, some of which lay the foundation for the style of the great *Missa Solemnis* of 1823. Such instances are the use of the solo vocal quartet in contrast with the chorus; the close piling up of voice entries in the *Quoniam* and near the end of *Dona nobis pacem*; the sudden switches of sonority from chorus to orchestra and back again and the unconventional yet inspired resolutions of the fugal sections, *Cum sancto spiritu* and *Et vitam venturi*. The former blossoms into an ardent, exalted Amen. The latter culminates in a serene coda in which the vocal soloists are echoed by the orchestra.

Finally Beethoven achieves formal unity, when in the concluding *Dona nobis pacem* he reminds us of the melody of the opening *Kyrie*.

- I Kyrie
- II Gloria
- III Credo
- IV Sanctus
- V Agnus Dei

Programme notes by David Harland and Euan Fairburn. These notes were supplied by the National Federation of Music Societies.

Forthcoming Concerts for 1998-99

Sunday December 13th.

**St.Mary's Church Goudhurst
at 6.30pm**

Carol Concert with The Mayfield Band

Sunday April 18th

Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells, 3pm

Orff Carmina Burana

Brahms Song of Destiny

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If you would like to become a Patron and support the Society, please contact the Treasurer, Roy Dunstall, on 01580 211814 or the General Secretary, Michael Webb, on 01892 528241

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a member of The National Federation of Music Societies and is a registered charity no. 273310