

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

86th SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS
SUNDAY 25th MARCH 1990

3.00 p.m.

CHICHESTER PSALMS BERNSTEIN

Tom Penta,

Soloist

GERMAN REQUIEM BRAHMS

Olivia Blackburn,
Robert Poulton,

Soprano
Baritone

Orchestra led by RITA JAMES

CONDUCTOR
DEREK WATMOUGH

Programme 40p

The Chichester Psalms, Bernstein.

These Psalm settings were commissioned by Chichester Cathedral in 1965. Bernstein wrote a version with an accompaniment for organ, harp and percussion, suitable for church use, but he also took the opportunity to write a full orchestral accompaniment which is being used tonight. (The orchestra includes a battery of percussion, trumpets and trombones, but no woodwind). The text is in Hebrew.

There are three movements. The first opens dramatically with a declamatory introduction in which a verse from Psalm 108 is sung to sonorous vibrant discords. The main part of the movement is a fast and lively setting of the 100th Psalm - "Make A Joyful Noise". The percussion is busy throughout. The very cheerful melody is given character by the asymmetric rhythm of seven beats in each bar (2+2+3).

Urah, hanevel, v'chinor!
A-irah shahar!

Hariu l'Adonai kol haarets.
Iv'du et Adonai b'simcha
Bo-u l'fanav bir'nanah.
D'u ki Adonai Hu Elohim.
Hu asanu, v'lo anahnu.
Amo v'tson mar'ito.
Bo-u sh'arav b'todah.
Hatseirotav bit'hilah,
Hodu lo, bar'chu sh'mo.
Ki tov Adonai, l'olam has'do,
V'ad dor vador emunato.

The second movement contrasts a setting of the 23rd Psalm ("The Lord is my Shepherd") sung peacefully and melodiously by the counter tenor soloist and the womens' voices to harp accompaniment, with a fierce setting of Psalm 2, verses 1-4 ("Why Do the Nations Rage") sung by the men. The two contrasting psalms are cleverly interwoven towards the end of the movement.

Adonai ro-i, lo ehsar.
Bin'ot deshe yarbitseini,
Al mei m'nuhot y'nahaleini,
Naf'shi y'shovev,
Yan'heini b'ma'agiei tsedek,
L'ma'an sh'mo.
Gam ki eilech
B'gei tsalmavet,
Lo ira ra,
Ki Atah imadi.
Shiv't'cha umishan'techa
Hemah y'nahamuni.

Ta'aroch l'fanai shulchan
Neced tsor'rai
Dishanta vashemen roshi
Cosi r'vayah.
Ach tov vahesed
Yird'funi kol y'mei hayai,
V'shav'ti b'veit Adonai
L'orech yamim.

Lamah rag'shu goyim
Ul'umim yeh'gu rik?
Yit'yats'vu malchei erets,
V'trozmim nos'du yahad
Al Adonai v'al m'shiho,
N'natkah et mos'roteimo,
V'nashilchah mimenu avoteimo,
Yoshev bashamayim
Yis'hak, Adonai
Yil'ag lamo!

Finally, after an intense thoughtful introduction played on the strings (featuring melodies heard earlier) the last movement unfolds a constant mood of serenity in its beautiful setting of Psalm 131 (again with an unusual rhythmic structure: 10 beats in the bar 2+3, 2+3). A quiet unaccompanied verse from Psalm 133 ends the work. (The theme heard here is the same as was used at the very opening but its character is now quite transformed.)

Adonai, Adonai,
Lo gavan libi,
V'lo ramu einai,
V'lo hilachti
Big'dolot uv'nifloat
Mimeni.
Im lo shiviti
V'domam'ti,
Naf'shi k'gamul alei imo,
Kagamul alai naf'shi.
Yahel Yis'rael el Adonai
Me'atah v'ad olam

Hineh mah tov,
Umah nayim,
Shevet ahim
Gam yahad

Awake, psaltery and harp!
I will rouse the dawn!

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come before His presence with singing.
Know ye that the Lord, He is God.
It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise,
Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name,
For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endureth to all generations.

The second movement contrasts a setting of the 23rd Psalm ("The Lord is my Shepherd") sung peacefully and melodiously by the counter tenor soloist and the womens' voices to harp accompaniment, with a fierce setting of Psalm 2, verses 1-4 ("Why Do the Nations Rage") sung by the men. The two contrasting psalms are cleverly interwoven towards the end of the movement.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
He leadeth me beside the still waters,
He restoreth my soul,
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
For His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk
Through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
For Thou art with me.
Thy rod and Thy staff
They comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me
In the presence of mine enemies,
Thou anointest my head with oil,
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.

Why do the nations rage,
And the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His anointed,
Saying, let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens
Shall laugh, and the Lord
Shall have them in derision!

Lord, Lord,
My heart is not haughty,
Nor mine eyes lofty,
Neither do I exercise myself
In great matters or in things
Too wonderful for me.
Surely I have calmed
And quieted myself,
As a child that is weaned of his mother,
My soul is even as a weaned child.
Let Israel hope in the Lord
From henceforth and forever.

Behold how good,
And how pleasant it is,
For brethren to dwell
Together in unity.

German Requiem, Brahms

Brahms called his work a German Requiem implying that it was not meant to be compared to the settings of the Masses for the Dead from the liturgy. Instead he himself selected passages from the Old and New Testaments that expressed his feelings about the mysteries of death and suffering.

This deeply meditated and introspective approach owed a lot to the German Lutheran tradition and to the great figure of Bach in the background in whom Brahms had his roots. Since Bach's time the language of music had been transformed by the great composers of the classical period, particularly Beethoven, but these had belonged to the Austrian Catholic tradition. In France, Berlioz had interpreted the Requiem Mass in a dramatic and extrovert manner in his *Grande Messe des Morts* (1837) producing a great cosmic vision to rival in music what Michelangelo had painted in the walls of the Sistine Chapel.

But this was not Brahms's way. He was more concerned with what was going on within his own heart. And he still speaks directly to our hearts with his wonderfully moving expression of bereavement, consolation and ultimately the affirmation of life itself in the presence of death.

I Chorus

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. *S. Matthew v, 4.*

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Who goeth forth and weepeth, and bareth precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, and bring his sheaves with him. *Ps. cxxvi, 5-6*

II Chorus

Behold, all flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen.
I Peter i, 24

Now therefore be patient, O my brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. see how the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till it receive in time the early and the latter rain. So be ye patient. *James v, 7-8.*

Behold all flesh is as the grass etc.

But yet the Lord's word standeth for evermore. *I Peter i, 25*

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return again, and come with singing unto Zion. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads always, gladness and joy everlasting shall they obtain, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. *Isaiah xxxv, 10.*

III Baritone Solo and Chorus

Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of mine days: let me know how frail I am, that I be made sure how long I have to live.

Surely, Thou hast made my days as a handbreath before Thee: And my lifetime is as nothing to Thee: Verily every man living is altogether vanity.

For surely man walketh as a shadow: and he disquieteth himself in vain, yea, all in vain: his riches, he knoweth not who shall gather them.

Now, Lord, what then do I hope for? My hope is in thee. *Ps. xxxix, 4-7*

But the righteous souls are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. *Wisdom iii, 1.*

INTERVAL

IV Chorus

How lovely are thy dwellings fair, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and flesh ring out their joy unto the living God.

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they praise Thee, Lord, evermore. *Ps lxxxiv 1,2,4.*

V Soprano Solo and Chorus

Ye now have sorrow: but I will again behold you, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you. *S. John xvi, 22*

Thee I will comfort, as one whom his mother comforts. *Isaiah lxvi, 13*

Now behold me, ye see how for a little while labour and toil were my lot, yet have I found much rest. *Ecclesiasticus li, 27.*

VI Baritone Solo and Chorus

For we have here no abiding city, but we seek that to come. *Hebrews xiii, 14*

Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet: for behold, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting? *I Corinthians xv, 51-52, 54-55.*

Worthy art Thou, Lord, of praise and glory, honour and power: for thou, Almighty, hast created all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created. *Revelation iv, 11.*

VII Chorus

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: even so saith the spirit: for they rest from their labours; and their works follow after them. *Revelation xiv, 13.*

Olivia Blackburn, Soprano.

Olivia Blackburn was born and educated in London. She studied singing at Trinity College of Music after graduating from King's College, London University with a degree in German and French.

Miss Blackburn performs regularly on the South Bank, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, where she has recently performed Haydn's "Die Schöpfung", Vivaldi's "Magnificat", and Handel's "Jeptha". Her most recent performance in England was Brahms' "German Requiem" at the Barbican with the Philharmonia.

She made her operatic debut singing the lead role in Vaughan Williams' "The Poisoned Kiss", at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London. her other operatic roles include 'Anne Page' in Nikolai's "The Merry Wives of Windsor", the 'Countess' in "The Marriage of Figaro" and Arne's "The

Guardian Outwitted”.

In the field of song, Olivia Blackburn has given recitals in Paris, Dublin, London and Cambridge and most recently at the Fairfield Halls, St. George's Hanover Square, and The Warwick Arts Trust. During 1988 she has appeared with The Songmaker's Almanac in London and at the Nottingham and Buxton festivals in a programme devoted to Byron and in The Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds in a Haydn programme.

Robert Poulton, Baritone.

He was born and educated in Brighton. He studied under Rudolf Piernay at the Guildhall school of Music and Drama winning several major awards which included the Silver Medal for Singing and the Lord Mayor's Prize. He undertook further studies at the European Opera Centre in Belgium and toured Belgium and Holland in operatic roles before returning to the Guildhall, where he attended the Opera Course on a BP Scholarship. After leaving the Guildhall he spent a year at the National Opera Studio, London.

His operatic roles include the Ferryman in Britten's "Curlow River" for Nexus Opera which was performed at Bath festival in 1986 and at the BBC Proms and televised by the BBC. Since that year he has been associated with Glyndebourne and has sung the roles of Ramiro in "L'heure Espagnole"; Tom Cat and Clock in Ravel's "L'enfant et les Sortilèges" and Douphol in Verdi's "Traviata" for their Touring Opera. In 1987 he was awarded the Glyndebourne Esso Touring Opera Prize and this year their John Christie Award.

Future engagements include De Bretigny in Puccini's "Manon" and Leandro in "The Love for Three Oranges" for Opera North; the Foreman in Janacek's "Jenufa" for Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the title role in Mozart's "Le Nozze de Figaro" for Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

Robert Poulton is by no means exclusively an operatic artist and has a wide oratorio repertoire ranging from Purcell and Haydn through to Vaughn Williams and Finzi. He has sung in most of London's major venues, throughout the UK and in Singapore. Early next year he will appear with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves.

Robert Poulton sang with the Society last November in a performance of Haydn's Creation.

THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY 86th SEASON

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

The choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please contact the Membership Secretary Miss M Standen - 38 Sandhurst Avenue, Pembury, Kent TN2 4JZ, Tel Pembury 2048 - we shall be pleased to have you join us.

SOME FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

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|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1st April 1990 | ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
including Rhapsody on a
theme of Paganini | Assembly Hall
3.00 p.m. |
| 1st April 1990 | CROWBOROUGH CHORAL SOCIETY
Music for Brass and Voices
Mick Laird Brass ensemble | Trinity
Arts Centre
7.00 p.m. |
| 22nd April 1990 | GREEN ROOM MUSIC CLUB
Orchestral Concert by Primarera | Assembly Hall
3.00 p.m. |
| 29th April 1990 | HEATHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY
45th Anniversary Concert
with London Bach Orchestra | Assembly Hall
7.45 p.m. |



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