

**THAMES VOYCES  
&  
CHANTRY SINGERS**

*conductor: Peter White*

**A cappella works  
for  
double chorus**

**Saturday 18th March 2000**

**8pm**

Holy Trinity Church, Guildford

**Saturday 8th April 2000**

**7:30pm**

Wellington College Chapel, Crowthorne

# Programme

Komm, Jesu, Komm

**Johann Sebastian Bach**  
(1685 - 1750)

Three Motets

*Justorum animae*  
*Coelos ascendit hodie*  
*Beati quorum via*

**Charles Villiers Stanford**  
(1852 - 1924)

Christus Factus est  
*sung by Chantry Singers*

**Anton Bruckner**  
(1824 - 1896)

Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen?  
*sung by Thames Voyces*

**Johannes Brahms**  
(1833 - 1897)

Bring us, O Lord God  
Faire is the Heaven

**William Harris**  
(1883 - 1973)

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**Interval**

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Messa di Requiem  
*Requiem*  
*Dies Irae*  
*Sanctus*  
*Agnus Dei*  
*Libera me*

**Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880 - 1968)**

# Programme Notes

## Komm, Jesu, Komm

J.S Bach

Bach's motets represent the late flourishing of an ancient musical form. The motet began as a liturgical trope in the 13th century and, via many changes of style and form, reached its peak in the polyphonic splendours of the Franco-Netherlands school of Josquin and his followers. Many of these masterpieces were in the Leipzig repertory and were sung as occasional pieces, as introits or during communion. The Latin motet though, was considered old-fashioned in Bach's time and the cantata, with its solos, independent instrumental parts and wider textual sources, was given much greater importance in the Lutheran liturgy. As a result, Bach composed only a handful of motets, all composed for special occasions. However, this small group of works represent the quintessence of Bach's greatness as a choral composer; structurally complex, technically skillful, wonderfully sonorous, challenging to both performer and listener yet going straight to the heart of both with their spiritual intensity.

Unlike all Bach's other motets in which the texts are taken from the bible, *Komm, Jesu, Komm* is a setting of a poem by Paul Thymich. Despite there being no written instrumental parts for the motets, there is considerable evidence that most performances were given some orchestral support. Here again, *Komm, Jesu, Komm* stands apart in being the only motet that seems likely to have been intended to be sung *a cappella*. Its origins are uncertain, but it might have been intended for a memorial service in March 1730, and as such, is one of Bach's last known motets.

Although in eight parts, it has an intimate, lyrical quality quite different from other larger motets. There are two verses, the second being a simple four-part aria or chorale. From the opening yearning stanza, *Komm, Jesu, komm* to the happy certainty of *Du bist der rechte weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben*, Bach's response to each line, even each word is notably subtle in both colour and rhythm. It is a moving affirmation of a strong faith.

Komm, Jesu, komm, mein leib ist müde,  
die Kraft verschwindt je mehr und mehr,  
ich sehne mich nach deinem Friede;  
der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!  
Komm, ich will mich dir ergeben;  
du bist der rechte Weg,  
die Wahrheit und das Leben

Come, Jesus, come, my body is weary  
my strength fails more and more.  
I long for your peace;  
the bitter path becomes too hard.  
Come! I will yield to You;  
You are the right path,  
the truth and the life.

Drum schließ ich mich in deine Hände  
und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!  
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu Ende,  
ist doch der Geistwohl angebracht.  
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer schweben,  
weil Jesus ist und bleibt der wahre Weg zum  
Leben.

So I give myself into Your hands  
and say "World, good night!"  
Just as my life's course is hurrying towards its  
end,  
the Spirit is opportunely healthy  
it hovers next to its Creator,  
as Jesus is and remains the true way to life.

### Three Motets Op.38

Charles Villiers Stanford

Though strongly associated with the *English Renaissance*, Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924) was in fact born in Dublin, the son of an Irish Protestant lawyer, and he studied in Dublin before winning a place as a choral scholar at Queens' College, Cambridge. He remained at Cambridge, first as organist at Trinity and from 1875 as Professor of Music, and through this post and his role as professor of composition at the foundation of the Royal College of Music, he became the most influential teacher of his time, coming into contact with virtually all the English composers of the next forty years. His church music has remained in constant daily use in Anglican choral foundations throughout the world, but his orchestral music and significant operatic output have been relatively neglected until quite recently. The Three Motets were written for Alan Gray and the choir of Trinity College in 1905 and each is for slightly different forces. The gentle and straightforward *Justorum Animae* is for four part choir with some doubling while the vigorous *Coelos ascendit hodie* is composed throughout for double choir. *Beati quorum via*, written for two sopranos, alto, tenor and two basses is undoubtedly the best known of these three pieces; its simple lyricism and lilting rhythms combining to create a masterpiece of Edwardian church music.

### Christus Factus est

Anton Bruckner

Anton Bruckner, like Harris, was an organist and choirmaster and was appointed professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Vienna Conservatorium in 1868. The motets are central to the choral repertoire and rightly so, being beautifully-crafted and approachable works written by a man who made his name as a great symphonist. Bruckner was a devout believer, and his motets were for the Roman Catholic liturgy. *Christus Factus est* is a setting from 1884 of the Holy Week gradual intended for Maundy Thursday.

## Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen

Brahms

In spite of powerful Romantic characteristics in his music, Brahms imposed a traditional sense of order on his music and he thus ranks as a figure of constructively Classical inclinations in a Romantic age. He was a Lutheran too, not perhaps an orthodox Lutheran, but ethically Lutheran and an admirer of Luther's translation of the Bible, and this also sets him apart from his contemporaries such as Bruckner and Liszt who found inspiration in texts from the Catholic liturgy. The ancestry therefore for Brahms' motets are those of Bach, and in general, Brahms' choral writing owes less to the great works of his own century, than to the strict contrapuntal music of the Baroque period. In four sections, and like so many of Bach's motets, dwelling on the subject of death, *Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen?* (Why is the light given to the heavy heart?) is a setting of extracts from Luther's Bible and a Lutheran Chorale. The opening section, punctuated by heavy chords on the word *Warum* is richly contrapuntal with the opening melody introduced in a strict fugue. The following two movements concerning the praise of God are lighter in mood and linked by a shared 6/4 passage. The closing chorale brings the work to a calm close, as death eventually brings a peaceful sleep.

## Bring us, O Lord God & Faire is the Heaven

William Harris

Sir William Harris was a key figure in English church music during the first half of the twentieth century. Born in 1883, he won an organ scholarship to the Royal College of Music in 1899 where he studied composition with Charles Wood and Walford Davies, both of whom had been pupils of the great Stanford. Following several appointments as an organist in London, he moved to Lichfield Cathedral as an assistant organist before going on to succeed Hugh Allen as organist of New College, Oxford. From there he moved to Christ Church in 1929 and to St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1933. In addition to his work as an organist he was a fine choir trainer and he maintained the highest standards in all the cathedral and collegiate choirs he directed throughout his career. In addition, he conducted the Bach Choir from 1926-1933 and while at Oxford, he helped to found the University Opera Club conducting a performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1925.

As a composer he shunned the new idioms of the early twentieth century and remained conservatively entrenched in the Anglican tradition. His two best known works are the two motets we perform this evening: *Faire is the Heaven*, a setting of a poem by Edmund Spenser composed in 1925, and the later *Bring us O Lord God* written in 1959, a setting of another great Elizabethan poet, John Donne.

In both works Harris exploits to the full the rich sonorities available in a *cappella*, double choir writing and particularly effective is his use of overlapping textures between the two choirs, most evident in the opening bars of *Faire is the Heaven*.

Harris had a consummate understanding of effective word-setting and he displays an extraordinary sympathy for the lines of these Elizabethan poems which emerge with great clarity, despite the often complex writing and the emotional intensity with which both works are charged.

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## Requiem

Ildebrando Pizzetti

With the exception of Bruckner, one could identify an essentially conservative outlook in all the music of tonight's concert. Bach steadfastly adhered to the principles of the Baroque style while his younger contemporaries developed the rococo and classical styles. Brahms placed himself firmly as a traditionalist amongst his more experimental fellow composers, while Stanford and Harris are both writing in the English Choral tradition, one which has seldom if ever flirted with the more aggressively intellectual modernism of other European schools.

So too, Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880 - 1968) reacted against the melodic and emotional excesses of Puccini and Mascagni, and while some of his contemporaries, most notably Alfredo Casella, were active propagandists for all things new, Pizzetti looked to the past for much of the inspiration for his music.

In particular, his principal stylistic models were Gregorian chant and the fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian masters of polyphony, whose music had been introduced to him in his teens by his teacher Giovanni Tebaldini. Nevertheless, perhaps because of a childhood fascination with drama, it was opera that remained his lifelong passion. One of his very last works, published in 1965, was the opera *Clitennestra*. Despite this, Pizzetti never achieved great success in the opera house and today, most of his operatic output is neglected.

However, while Pizzetti's handling of characterization, dramatic structure and orchestration may not have placed him in the premiere league of operatic composers, in one respect, that of his writing for the chorus, he demonstrated a true mastery. There is some wonderful choral writing in the incidental music to

D'Annunzio's play *La nave* written in 1905, his first major success as a composer, and long after his first complete opera *Fedra* (first performed in 1915) had fallen into relative neglect, the choral prelude that opens the last act remains in the choral repertoire. Pizzetti's entire output was small and he wrote less than a dozen purely choral works but of these, the *Requiem*, written in 1922, is undoubtedly the finest.

The influences of sixteenth century polyphony and the plainchant of the Catholic Mass are both clearly identifiable from the very opening bars of the first movement - *Requiem*. At the words *Kyrie eleison* the texture becomes more sparse as a brief fugal passage is introduced. The *Dies Irae*, based on the plainchant setting from the *Requiem Mass*, is by far the longest movement of the work. At its opening there is an extended passage of simple two-part writing; the altos and basses sing the plainchant in a slow and steady, march-like tempo while the sopranos and tenors, provide a grief stricken counter-melody. At the words *Quid sum miser* the texture thickens though the underlying melodic motif remains the plainchant *dies irae*. The movement reaches an impassioned climax as the cries for deliverance, *Salva me*, are repeated in rich eight part chords. After a brief return to the thin two-part writing of the opening, a sudden calm emerges as the music moves into the major key for a brief and simple, but extraordinarily beautiful setting of the words *Pie Jesu*.

At the *Sanctus* the choir divides further into three four-part choirs calling into mind the vivid colours and textures of sixteenth century Venetian church music. The full and vibrant sound of the full choir singing *Hosanna in excelsis* melts into a more restrained and delicate *Benedictus* before the return of the *Hosannas* brings the movement to a rousing close. The *Agnus Dei*, tonight sung by a solo quartet, is a simple and reflective setting. The shortest of the movements, it provides an almost prayer-like interlude before the final *Libera me*, marked to be sung "with profound fervour". The five part texture of the first movement returns in a dark and unsettled setting which finally finds peace and rest in an exquisite last flowering of the words fundamental to the whole work: *Requiem aeternam dona eis*.

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Peter White began his musical education as a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral. He was a music scholar at the King's School, Canterbury before he went on to study music at New College, Oxford as a choral scholar. In 1979 he joined the staff of Ampleforth College and in 1980 was the founder and first Director of the Helmsley Festival described by the Musical Times as "everything a small festival should be". Since 1984 he has been Director of Music at the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, an appointment through which he has become closely involved with much of the music making in Guildford and its surrounding area, particularly as a choral and orchestral conductor.

As Musical Director of Guildford Opera he has conducted performances of *Turandot*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Macbeth*, *Yeoman of the Guard*, *Nabucco* and *L'Elisir d'Amore*, while as Musical Director of Loseley Opera he conducted performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Barber of Seville*. He is the conductor of Thames Voyces (a chamber choir based at the Wilde Theatre in Bracknell), and for several years worked as Assistant Chorus Master of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir. He has also conducted performances with many local choirs and choruses including Woking Choral Society, the Chantry Singers and the Guildford Chorale. In 1998 he was appointed Chorus Master for the Woking Pops Chorus that has performed under Carl Davis with both the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

## Chantry Singers

The Chantry Singers are a chamber choir based in Guildford regularly performing three concerts a year. The choir was formed in 1982 by Tim Venvell when he was deputy music director at R.G.S. Guildford. He went on to conduct it for the next ten years. His successors, Peter Coulson and Andrew Wilson, carried forward the policy of alternating the unaccompanied repertoire with set performances of major works. Some memorable past concerts include Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas*, Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, Langlais' *Messe Solennelle* and Howells' *Requiem*.

Throughout, the accent has been on a variety of musical styles from a variety of musical ages. Away from home, the choir has sung services in several cathedrals, notably Rochester, Salisbury and St George's Chapel, Windsor. The current conductor, Sarah Baldock, herself hails from Winchester Cathedral where she is assistant organist and director of the girls' choir.

Rehearsals are on Tuesdays at the Royal Grammar School, Guildford from 7:45pm. Please contact the secretary, Margaret Jackson on 01483 562592 for more details.

### SOPRANOS

Sylvia Coghill  
June Hoare  
Fiona Linford  
Sally Muriel  
Jennifer Nicholas  
Chris Reddin  
Claire Rennison  
Sue Trumble  
Pat Turner  
Frances Worpe

### ALTOS

Garth Allan  
Shirley Aston  
Vicky Barlow  
Caroline Eade  
Margaret Jackson  
Jean Matthews  
Shirley Neish  
Margaret Roberts  
Sue Russell  
Vicki Shore  
Julia Slater  
Karen Tickle

### TENORS

Andrew Ford  
Anthony Harrow  
Tony Kemp  
Andrew King  
Roger Smy  
Hugh Walker

### BASSES

Simon Brennann  
John Hart  
Peter Hoare  
Mike Lodge  
Tony Morden  
Mike Roberts  
James Tickle  
John Trundle  
Mike Trumble

# Thames Voyces

Thames Voyces was founded as the "New Thames Singers" in 1967 by Ewan Davidson, an organ scholar from Emmanuel College at Cambridge. We gave our first ever concert on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1967 and it included works by Byrd, Bach, and Poulenc. This wide coverage of centuries and styles has remained a hallmark of the chamber choir's activities throughout its existence.

We started life in Windsor but have been based at South Hill Park Arts Centre in Bracknell since 1977. We perform in a wide range of places all over the south-east of England for a wide variety of purposes covering madrigals to modern part-songs, Tudor church music to 20th century oratorio, Christmas carols to the St John Passion.

We generally give between six and eight performances a year, including sung services at cathedrals such as Salisbury, Winchester, & St Albans, aiming to keep a wide repertoire which we perform to the highest possible standards.

Enquiries are always welcome from good singers with sight-reading ability who are interested in joining the choir (subject to audition), and who are able to commit themselves to regular attendance at rehearsals which are on Tuesdays in the Recital Room at South Hill Park, Bracknell from 7:45pm to 9:45pm. Please contact the membership secretary, Julia Smith (0118 9789134) for more information.

We are a Registered Charity.

## **SOPRANOS**

Susannah Arnaboldi  
Celia Auld  
Ann Bradford  
Louisa Davies  
Elaine Poole  
Julia Smith  
Rachel Walker

## **ALTOS**

Marjory Bisset  
Anne Harrison  
Jackie Keay  
Heather Kershaw  
Joanna Milner

## **TENORS**

Ron Ferris  
David Ruddock  
Rod Sowden  
John Walton

## **BASSES**

Ted Auld  
Alan Jackson  
Tim Legg  
Peter Rowntree  
Peter Soul