

*The Chantry Singers*

**FRENCH  
SACRED MUSIC FOR  
CHOIR AND ORGAN**

Organ -- Robert Langston

Conductor -- Timothy Venvell

Chilworth Friary

Saturday 1st July 1989 8.00 p.m.

Admission by programme  
price £3.00 (concession £2.00)

## PROGRAMME

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|--|------------------|
| 1. Quatre Motets sur des thèmes Grégoriens Op. 10    | Durufié          |
| i Ubi caritas  | iii Tu es Petrus |
| ii Tota pulchra es                                   | iv Tantum ergo   |
| 2. <i>From</i> Six Antiennes "pour le temps de Noël" | Dupré            |
| i Ecce dominus veniet                                |                  |
| ii Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae             |                  |
| 3. Deux Offertoires Op. 65                           | Fauré            |
| i Ave verum  | ii Tantum ergo   |
| 4. Scherzo in E                                      | Gigout           |
| 5. Hymne à la Vierge                                 | Villette         |
| Vinea mea electa                                     | Poulenc          |

## INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES

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| 6. Messe solennelle in C# minor Op. 16 | Vierne        |
| i Kyrie                                | iii Sanctus   |
| ii Gloria                              | iv Benedictus |
| 7. O sacrum convivium                  | Messiaen      |
| 8. Messe - conclusion                  |               |
| v Agnus dei                            |               |
| 9. Toccata in B <sup>b</sup> minor     | Vierne        |

This evening's concert consists of music taken exclusively from the French sacred tradition of the 19th and 20th centuries. This has been a particularly rich period in French music, with contributions to its repertoire from such major composers as Fauré, Poulenc and Messiaen. This is probably due to the fact that many French composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were also organists, causing the French musical establishment to be much closer to the (Catholic) Church than their English counterparts. The link with the Church also gives French music of this period its distinctive modal flavour, with so much of it influenced to varying degrees by plainsong.

Most French sacred music is written, of course to be used in the central service of the Mass, and tonight's selection reflects this. The second half consists of a complete mass setting, interrupted by a suitable motet, and rounded off with an organ *sortie* (a 'going-out' piece). The first half consists of a number of motets written for use in different parts of the service and at different times of year.

The four motets based on Gregorian plainchants by Duruflé illustrate immediately the dependence of French composers on this style of sacred song. Duruflé (1902-1986) was an organ pupil of Tournemin, Vierne and Gigout, and a composition pupil of Dukas. He shared with Dukas an almost painfully slow composition technique, constantly revising his work, and as a result very few pieces are published. Those that are, however, are beautifully polished works, the largest and most well-known being the Requiem, also based on plainsong melodies. The four motets were published in 1960. As well as the plainsong influence, they also show Duruflé's great sensitivity to texture ('Ubi caritas' is a constantly changing palette of tone colour, though very subtly achieved), and his delight in and control of contrapuntal technique (the other three motets are contrapuntally conceived throughout). 'Tota pulchra es' is for soprano and alto voices only, beginning in three parts, but sometimes expanding to five. 'Tu es Petrus' returns to a full choir texture, and is full of short imitations between voices. 'Tantum ergo' is also in four voice parts, with an approximate canon throughout between the soprano and tenor parts. For this reason, the tenors are requested in the score to sing a little more loudly than everyone else.

Such organists of this period were (and still are) renowned for their improvisation skills, and a fertile starting point for their improvisations was, of course, plainsong. Some of these improvisations were later written down, and this is one example.

Fauré (1845-1924) is probably most well-known for piano music, his songs and his Requiem, and his Church music is only a small part of his output. Nevertheless, he was active in the Church music scene in Paris for most of his life, being educated at the École Niedermayer, which gave Church music a higher profile than the rival Conservatoire, and serving as assistant to Widor at Saint-Sulpice, and Saint-Saëns at the Madeleine, before taking over as *organist titulaire* at the latter in 1896. The two pieces heard tonight are for high voices and organ, and are published as 'Two Offertoires', presumably to be sung at the time in the Mass when the bread and wine are taken up

to the altar to be blessed. Not all organ music of this period was plainsong-based, and another typical style of the period was a light scherzo, of which this next piece is a good example. Most scherzos were in ternary form, with bright, extrovert outer sections and a slightly less dazzling central section.

The 'Hymne à la Vierge' by Pierre Villette is the only item in this evening's programme not in Latin, but in French. It was composed as recently as 1954, but in a highly romantic idiom, with lush chromatic harmonies abounding. It is simply a hymn of praise to the Virgin Mary, who, is of course, highly revered in the Catholic tradition.

The final item in the first half of this evening's programme is by Poulenc (1899-1965), who had little to do with the Church in his own performing career. Nevertheless his choral music is a significant part of his output, and his eight motets for a *capella* voices, four for Christmas, and four *pour un temps de pénitence* of which 'Vinea mea electa' is one, are particularly telling in their musical language. The motet is built up largely of short phrases repeated in a chantlike manner.

The complete Mass setting performed tonight is by Louis Vierne (1870-1937), who is most noted for his organ compositions. He was a brilliant organ virtuoso, studying at the Conservatoire under Franck and Widor, and acted as assistant to the latter at Saint-Sulpice before being appointed to the most prestigious post in Paris, *organist titulaire* at Notre-Dame Cathedral. He died at the console, suffering a heart attack in the middle of giving a recital (Marcel Dupré completed the recital!). The Mass setting is in C<sup>♯</sup> minor, and scored for 4-part choir and two organs. This is because French cathedrals normally have an *orgue du chœur* at the east end, near the choir, used for accompanying purposes, and a *grand orgue* in a gallery at the west end, used mainly for voluntaries and recitals. In the Mass, Vierne uses the *grand orgue* mostly as an answering effect to the choir, and to add punch at the climaxes. Tonight we have to compromise, of course, but the louder passages are mainly those that would have been played on the west end organ. Since this Mass was written for liturgical use, the Credo has not been set to music, since it was either said or chanted at High Mass at Notre-Dame.

Interpolated in the ordinary of Vierne's Mass setting is a motet dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, 'O sacrum convivium' by Messiaen. This would probably have been sung just before the bread and wine were distributed. Messiaen (b. 1908) is one of France's leading contemporary composers, perhaps the most important figure this century. He studied at the Conservatoire under Dupré and Dukas among others, and in 1931 was appointed organist at the Trinité in Paris, a post he has held ever since. His contribution to the organ repertoire is tremendous, showing great originality in his approach to the instrument; and indeed all his compositions have many novel features, including use of Hindu rhythms, and 'modes of limited transposition', a technique of musical language Messiaen developed for himself. It is therefore a pity that his contribution to the choral repertoire is small, consisting only of a Mass and two other works besides this motet. Messiaen is a devout Catholic, something which has coloured his composition

throughout his life, and this motet is an expression of his own intense and ecstatic wonder at the gift of the blessed sacrament. This is achieved with a very slow pulse, and exceptionally slow-moving chromatic harmonies, gradually building up to a climactic top A<sup>4</sup> in the sopranos; the music then subsides to a murmured added sixth chord, which seems to go on for ever. The piece is scored for only a four-part choir; but the harmonies Messiaen achieves are extraordinarily rich.

To end this evening, we return to an organ solo. The service of Mass always ends with a *sortie*, and Vierne was a great exponent of the art of improvising triumphant and climactic pieces for this purpose. It is unlikely that he improvised a piece as complex as the piece we hear tonight, but its constant movement (*moto perpetuo*) makes an exciting end to the Mass, and to this evening.

## Four Motets (Duruffe)

### 1. Ubi caritas

Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor. Exsulemus et in ipso iucundemur. Timeamus et amemus Deum vivum, et ex corde diligamus sincero.

Where Charity and Love are there God is also. The love of Christ has joined us together. Let us rejoice and be glad in that love. Let us fear and love the living God, and let us love one another with a pure heart.

### 2. Tota Pulchra es

Tota pulchra es, Maria, et macula originalis non est in te. Vestimentum tuum candidum quasi nix, et facies tua sicut sol. Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri.

Thou art altogether beautiful, Mary; from the beginning thou wert spotless. Thy garment is white like snow, and thy face like the sun. Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and the honour of our people.

### 3. Tu es Petrus

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam.  
Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.

### 4. Tantum Ergo

Tantum ergo Sacramentum veneremur cernui, et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui. Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui. Genitori Genitoque laus et jubilatio, salus, honor, virtus quoque sit et benedictio. Procedenti ab utroque compar sit laudatio.

Therefore, bowing down, let us venerate this great Sacrament, and let old practice give way to a new rite. Let faith repair the deficiency of our senses. Let us laud and magnify the Father and the Son, and ascribe to them deliverance, honour, virtue and blessing. And to the Holy Spirit let there be equal praise.

### Deux Offertoires (Fauré)

#### Ave Verum

Ave verum corpus, natum de Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine, cuius latus perforatum unda fluxit cum sanguine; esto nobis praegustatum mortis in examine. O Jesu, Jesu dulcis, o Jesu, Jesu pie, o Jesu fili Mariae. Tu nobis miserere. Amen.

Hail, true body, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered on the cross for mankind, whose side was pierced and flowed with blood; feed us with Thy body at the hour of our death. O sweet Jesus, o holy Jesus, o Jesus Son of Mary. Have mercy on us. Amen

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### Hymne a la Vierge ( Vilette)

O toute belle Vierge Marie, votre âme trouve en Dieu le parfait amour. Il vous revêt du manteau de la Grâce comme une fiancée parée de ses bijoux. Alleluia. Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur, car tu as pris soin de moi, car tu m'as enveloppé du voile de l'innocence.

Vous êtes née avant les collines, o sagesse de Dieu, Porte du Salut. Heureux celui qui marche dans vos traces, qui apprête son coeur à la voix de vos conseils. Alleluia. Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur, car tu m'as faite, avant le jour, car tu m'as fait précéder le jaillissement des sources.

Avant les astres vous étiez présente, Mere du Createur, au profond du ciel. Quand Dieu fixait les limites du monde vous partagiez son coeur étant à l'oeuvre avec lui. Alleluia. O toute belle Vierge Marie.

O wholly beautiful Virgin Mary, your soul finds in God the perfect love. It clothes you in the cloak of Grace like a bride adorned with its joys. Alleluia. I will sing your praise, Lord, for you have taken care of me, for you have surrounded me with the veil of innocence.

You were born before the hills, o wisdom of God, Gateway to Salvation. Happy is he who walks in your footsteps, who turns his heart to the voice of your counsels. Alleluia. I will sing your praise, Lord, for you have created me before the day, for you have created me before the gushing springs.

Before the stars you were present, Mother of the Creator, in the heights of Heaven. When God was determining the confines of the world you were there in his heart with him. Alleluia. O wholly beautiful Virgin Mary.

**Vinea mea electa (Poulenc)**

vinea mea electa, ego te plantavi.  
quomodo conversa es in amaritudinem,  
ut me crucifigeres et Barrabam dimitteres.  
sepivi te et lapides elegi ex te  
et aedificavit turrim.

O chosen vineyard, I planted thee. How thou has turned into a place of bitterness, to crucify me and free Barabbas. I fenced thee in and took stones from thee and built a tower.

**Messe Solennelle (Vierne)**

### 1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.

### 2. Gloria

Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, Dominus Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; suscipe deprecationem nostram; qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis; tu solus dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

And on earth peace to men of goodwill. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father almighty, o Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; receive our prayer; who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us; since Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord, Thou alone art most high, o Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

### 3. Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus; Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.

### 4. Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

### 5. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of god, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; grant us peace.

O sacrum convivium (Messiaen)

O sacrum convivium! in quo Christus sumitur: recolitur memoria passionis eius: mens impletur gratia: et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur. Alleluia.

O blessed sacrament in which Christ is consumed: the memory of His passion is worshipped again: our hearts are filled with grace: and the promise of glory to come is given to us. Alleluia.

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Next concert:- Saturday 9th December 1989, Clandon Park  
Christmas at Clandon

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