

The Chantry Singers

POULENC

Gloria

LANGLAIS

Messe Solennelle

DURUFLE

Motets

Soprano Katharine Fuge

Organist David Swinson

Conductor Andrew Wilson

Holy Trinity Church, Guildford

Saturday 6th December, 1997

PROGRAMME

Messe Solennelle

Jean Langlais (1907-1991)

- Kyrie
- Gloria
- Sanctus
- Benedictus
- Agnus Dei

Les Angelus

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

Three Motets

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)

- Tantum ergo
- Tu es Petrus
- Ubi caritas

INTERVAL

Prelude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain

Maurice Duruflé

Gloria

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

- Gloria
- Laudamus te
- Domine Deus
- Domine fili unigenite
- Domine Deus, Agnus Dei
- Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris

The music in tonight's programme draws from the large variety of styles and techniques used by French composers from this century. The blind organist and composer Jean Langlais was for many years organist at the basilica of Saint Clothilde in Paris. Much of his music, both organ and vocal, is based on plainsong. The *Messe Solennelle* follows a number of previous models by composers such as César Franck (from which the famous *Panis Angelicus* originates), Widor and Vierne. It was written in 1951 and is actually intended to be performed by choir and two organs, according to the custom which prevailed in some large Parisian churches. The choir in the chancel is accompanied by the petit orgue, while the grand orgue magnificently pronounces from its commanding position on the west wall. When this spatial separation is possible the result is stunning; even when one organ has to suffice, the effect is quite thrilling.

Maurice Duruflé was the organist at Saint Etienne-du-Mont in Paris from 1930 till his death in 1986. He was a pupil of Paul Dukas and Louis Vierne, but unlike his fellow student Olivier Messiaen he decided against compositions using the new avant-garde language. Instead he preferred a rather more retrospective style which like Langlais, uses plainsong as a compositional tool, together with the rich harmonic language of Debussy, Ravel and Fauré. The *Quatre Motets* were composed in 1960 and are based on the plainsongs of the same names. *Tantum ergo* and *Ubi caritas* flow freely in a very syllabic fashion allowing the natural rhythm of the words and the plainsong to combine in a very fluid way. *Tu es Petrus* is a more rousing work, the church's foundation being indicated by the building of the motet on the strong canonic opening.

The organist and composer Jehan Alain was killed in active service for his country in the second world war in 1940. A number of his contemporaries wrote music as a tribute to his life including Langlais and Duruflé. Langlais honours him with a organ piece *Chant Heroïque* which quotes directly from the French National Anthem. Duruflé however, uses Alain's name as a starting point. The *Prelude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain* is based on the notes ADAAF (=ALAIN). He arrived at this by extending the musical alphabet past H so that I=A, J=B and so on. The prelude is a quiet yet sparkling exposition of running triplets, all of which combine with a plainsong-like melody which is based on a theme from Alain's most famous piece for organ, *Litanies*. After the triplets have stopped, there is a direct quotation from the *Litanies* at the end of the prelude. Duruflé uses the same ADAAF theme as the subject of the fugue. After a semiquaver figure appears quietly under the fugue subject, the two are combined in a stunning display of contrapuntal dexterity, involving the main subject in strettos and inversions, and building inexorably to a thrilling climax.

Much of Francis Poulenc's early output is characterised by the witty and almost trivial tones of the *joie de vivre* that was apparent in much of French (and in particular Parisian) social life in the 1920's. It is evident in works such as the internationally acclaimed ballet *Les Biches*. However, the death of a close friend in a car accident led Poulenc to a renewal of his religious convictions and much of his music then undertook a more serious nature. The *Gloria* of 1959 still contains some of his early lightheartedness about it, but with it a more serious sense of his new angle on life itself. The music owes much to Vivaldi's work and the *Laudamus te* even quotes Vivaldi's example. The exuberance of the opening is recalled in the last movement while the more restrained nature of the third and fifth movements includes some soaring soprano solo lines.

David Swinson began his musical career as a chorister at Magdalen College, Oxford. He studied at the Royal College of Music and as an organ scholar at Jesus College, Cambridge. Distinctions during this period included five RCM prizes, a scholarship from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and a place in the final of the RCO Performer of the Year competition. Since leaving Cambridge he has had a varied musical career, touring Europe as both an organist and conductor. He is currently Director of Music at Portsmouth Grammar School and since 1993 has been Musical Director of Brockham Choral Society as well as leading a busy career as a freelance organist and accompanist.

After spending her childhood in Jersey, **Katharine Fuge** moved to London to study music, first at the City University and then at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she studied with Tereas Cahill. Katharine is kept busy not only with her two young sons, but also by her increasingly varied singing career. Apart from singing with professional choirs such as the Monteverdi Choir, she regularly sings in major venues, cathedrals and festivals up and down the country: Monteverdi's *Vespers* in Derby cathedral, Handel's *Messiah* in the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, Bach's *St. John Passion* in Norwich Cathedral, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* in St. John's Smith Square, Mozart's *Requiem* in St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Elgar's *The Kingdom* and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* both in Guildford Cathedral, and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* in Portsmouth Cathedral. In 1995 she sang the title role in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in the Leith Hill Festival, and returned there the following year to critical acclaim to perform Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*. Engagements this season include Handel's *Messiah* in Edinburgh, Beethoven's *Mass in C* in Lowestoft, Mozart's *Mass in C minor* in Newcastle and Poulenc's *Gloria* in Bridgewater.

Andrew Wilson was born and educated in Leeds. He went on to study at Edinburgh University where he won the prize for organ performance. Since leaving Edinburgh, he has spent time at Cardiff University studying for an MA in Eighteenth Century Music and in particular, English oratorio of the period, and has given recitals in Cambridge and Ipswich, Glasgow and Edinburgh. He is currently Assistant Director of Music at the Royal Grammar School in Guildford, having previously held a similar position in Ipswich, and accompanies the University of London Chamber Choir, with whom he has made a number of recordings. At present he also conducts the Guildford Choral and Sinfonia, a youth choir and orchestra based in Guildford with whom he undertook a successful tour of Western France this summer, and examines for GCSE and A-level.