

laudibus

michael brewer, director

7.30pm

st mary's church, fotheringhay



J S Bach

In procession: Antiphona ad introitum:

Die 3 maii SS Philippi et Jacobi, Apostolorum

Laudibus in Sanctis

William Byrd (1543-1623)

William Byrd was the greatest English composer of the first Elizabethan age, a Catholic who managed to flourish in Protestant surroundings. He was appointed organist of Lincoln Cathedral at the age of 20, and in 1575 became joint organist of the Chapel Royal.

In 1591 he published his second book of Cantiones Sacrae, including *Laudibus in Sanctis*, setting a free Latin paraphrase of Psalm 150: 'O praise God in his holiness!' The motet is notable for its sense of colour and contrast, and for its rhythmic vitality. Reflecting the words of the text, the setting echoes the splendour of trumpets and cymbals, and dances with spiritual fervour.

Crucifixus

Antonio Lotti (c.1667-1740)

Antonio Lotti was born in 1667 and lived and worked in Venice throughout his life, becoming Maestro di Cappella at St Mark's in 1736. In addition to a substantial output of Masses, hymns and psalms, he was a successful composer of operas and madrigals and attracted the interest of the King of Saxony, who invited him to Dresden to perform a number of his works.

This setting of *Crucifixus*, etiam pro nobis, is probably Lotti's best known work, with its memorable opening created by a sequence of dissonances on the third syllable of 'Crucifixus' and the powerful climax on the word 'passus'.

Dixit Dominus

Tomas Luis de Victoria (1518 - 1611)

This is a setting of Psalm 110: 'The Lord says unto my Lord "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet"'.

Victoria was the leading Spanish composer of the late Renaissance, and was a boy chorister at Avila Cathedral. On leaving he moved to the Jesuit Collegio Germanico in Rome, where he eventually took charge of the music and entered the priesthood. Whilst there he wrote *Dixit Dominus*, in 1581. Victoria's musical disposition was described by the composer King John IV of Portugal thus: 'being naturally sunny, he never stays downcast for long'.

Miserere Mei, Deus

Gregorio Allegri (1582 - 1652)

Allegri became a member of the Papal Chapel of Pope Urban VIII in 1629, and is chiefly remembered for this one work, composed to be sung by the Papal Choir during Holy Week. The words are those of Psalm 51: 'Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your unfailing love'. On one level it is a harmonised version combined with the plainsong, but the extra dimension of an ornamented version placed between the verses, where the treble part soars to a top C, transforms it. A five-part choir sings the contrapuntal harmonised verses, alternating with the male voices singing the plainsong; a quartet sings the ornamented sections.



Arvo Pärt

Music of such transcendental beauty was a jealously guarded treasure of the Papal Choir, but in the late 18th century it began to circulate, by coincidence soon after the young Mozart wrote it out from memory.

Der Geist hilft unserer Schwachheit auf

J S Bach (1685-1750)

The motet was first performed on 16th October 1729 for the funeral of the Head of St Thomas's School. Bach was the Cantor at St Thomas's and had some teaching duties at the School.

The text of the motet is from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and Bach divides it into three sections: (1) 'The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for.' (2) 'But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.' (3) 'And He who searches our heart knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.' A chorale concludes the motet.

interval

May Magnificat

William Mathias (1934-1992)

The title is that of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844 - 1889), who was converted to Catholicism, and who learned Welsh while studying theology in North Wales. The poem praises both mother earth and the motherhood of the Virgin Mary. Roman Catholics celebrate May as 'Our Lady's Month'.

William Mathias was a leading Welsh composer, closely associated with the teaching of music at the University of Bangor in North Wales. This piece uses two choirs. Mathias sets the poem for one group, and the Latin words of the Magnificat, Mary's song from St Luke's Gospel, for the other.

My Soul, there is a country C Hubert Parry (1848-1918)
from Songs of Farewell

Parry was one of the composers who, with Elgar and others, was in the vanguard of the renaissance of English music that peaked at the beginning of the twentieth century. He is best known today as the composer of Jerusalem.

The Songs of Farewell comprise a set of six motets composed during the last three years of his life. They emphasise his belief in the existence of the soul and a higher plane of being, reflecting his personal faith. 'My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars' sets seventeenth century words by the metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan.

Salve Regina

Richard Allain (b.1965)

The Latin text of *Slave Regina* is a prayer of supplication to the Virgin Mary. The piece opens with a series of dense, sustained chords which evoke the unease of the supplicant as he turns to seek grace. For the central sections of the piece the choir divides into two groups. The upper voices intone the 'Eia advocata nostra' in a figure that recalls the plainsong origins of the text, creating a soft halo of sound against which the lower voices sing 'Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui'. The last section is a hymn of praise setting the words 'O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria'.

I am the True Vine

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Memento Mori

Tribute to Caesar

I am the True Vine was composed in 1996 for the 900th anniversary of Norwich Cathedral. The work deliberately mirrors the slow, twisting growth of a vine in the way its chords and vocal lines roam up and down through a wide vocal range.

Memento Mori dates from 1994, and was commissioned by the Göteborg Music Festival and the International Forum of New Choral Music, Rotenburg. A disarmingly simple work on paper, in performance it reveals a genuine and dignified spiritual depth.

Tribute to Caesar is a setting of a text from the Gospel according to St Matthew. Pärt makes use of contrasting chordal passages and mostly stepwise melodic declamation, combined here with a new fluidity of texture and a more idiomatic moulding of choral sonorities. As in *I am the True Vine*, Pärt is revealed as a virtuoso of the a cappella choral medium.

Three Spirituals from A Child of Our Time

Michael Tippett (1905-1997)

Nobody Knows
By and By
Deep River

These arrangements of traditional Afro-American spirituals come from the oratorio *A Child of Our Time*, which Tippett began just after the outbreak of World War II. The work reflects his pacifist views, and its subject is man's inhumanity to man. The Spirituals take on something of the role of the chorales in such works as Bach's *St Matthew Passion*.

Bridge over Troubled Water

Paul Simon
arr. Louise Marshall

This gospel style arrangement of Simon and Garfunkel's *Bridge over Troubled Water* has been arranged by Louise Marshall, a former member of the National Youth Choir and of *Laudibus*.

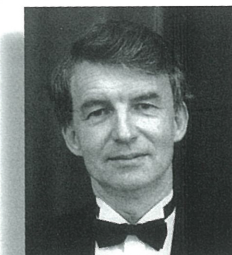
Hamba Lulu

arr. Michael Brewer

A free arrangement of a Zulu folksong.



Laudibus



Michael Brewer

Laudibus

Already hailed by audiences and critics as one of the finest chamber choirs in the world, *Laudibus* has existed for just five years. Each member, selected by audition from the 130 strong National Youth Choir, brings to their singing the skills of listening and adaptation which come from many hours of intensive rehearsal together. Their willingness to tackle difficult new works and their familiarity with repertoire ranging from the great multi-choir masterpieces of the Renaissance to contemporary and ethnic music means that they are greatly in demand at festivals at home and abroad.

Michael Brewer

For twenty years Michael Brewer was director of music at Chetham's School in Manchester, Britain's largest specialist school for gifted young musicians. Since 1983 he has also been musical director of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. Michael Brewer is frequently engaged as an adjudicator, and is on the panel for the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year and the BBC Chorgirl of the Year competitions.

rainer hersch gets brahms and liszt

10pm

Stahl Theatre, Oundle

After leaving university Rainer Hersch worked for several years as a classical music agent. In 1996 he decided to combine his extensive knowledge of music with his talent for comedy, and his one man show *All Classical Music Explained* was born, which was a sell out success at the Edinburgh Fringe the same year. Rainer toured the show extensively throughout the UK, including appearances at the Purcell Room in London.

Rainer Hersch is team captain on BBC1's *The Entertainment Game*, and a regular on *Loose Ends* on Radio 4.

