



Photography by Simon Tottman

THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Directed by Stephen Cleobury
Oliver Brett and Tom Winpenny, organ

7.30pm St Mary and All Saints' Church, Fotheringhay

Cantate Domino Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

(Sing ye to the Lord a new song, sing and bless His name for He has worked wonders. Sing and exult and make music, strike the lyres and let voices sing, for He has worked wonders.)

In 1620, Giulio Cesare Bianchi published his *Libro primo de Motetti* and invited Monteverdi, with whom he had worked at the Court of Mantua, to contribute to the volume. Monteverdi supplied four motets, the present work being one of them, which provide a lively portfolio of the composer's exuberant style in the early years he spent in his prestigious post as *Maestro di Capella* of St Mark's, Venice. The expressive use of dissonance, simple counterpoint and concise phrase structure place these sacred works alongside the distinctive mannerisms he devised for his secular madrigals. The text for this motet is liberally adapted from Psalm 98, which is an Enthronement Hymn - a song of celebration for God's victory over the enemies of Israel.

Timor et tremor

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1558-1613)

(Fear and trembling are come upon me.)

After witnessing the worship and spectacle of Mass at St Mark's, Venice in 1611, the English tourist Thomas Coryat wrote that the music at San Marco was "...so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so superexcellent, that it did ravish and stupefy all those strangers who had never heard the like ... I was even rapt up with Saint Paul into the third heaven." Among the music that ravished Coryat was the work of Giovanni Gabrieli. Giovanni was Monteverdi's predecessor at St Mark's, Venice, and was himself the nephew of Andrea Gabrieli.

Gabrieli continued the traditional *cori spezzati* techniques developed at St. Mark's during the later 16th century, contrasting different groups of singers and instrumentalists and making use of the spatial effects possible in the great basilica. However, 'Timor et tremor' represents a less well known side of Gabrieli's language; it is written in the revolutionary style of the late madrigal, violating nearly all the rules of 16th century counterpoint; literally breathtaking rests, jagged figures, acute dissonances and 'false' intervals are deployed to illustrate the sinner's fear and trembling.

Fantasia on Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 713 J S Bach (1685-1750)

played by Tom Winpenny, organ

Motet Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227

(Jesu, my joy - my heart's refuge - my jewel)

All of Bach's six authenticated motets were written between 1723 and 1727 for St Thomas' Church, Leipzig, where Bach had been Kapellmeister in 1723. During this period Bach's major exercise comprised the composing and performance of weekly cantatas, and it seems likely that for ordinary Sunday services he used existing motets from the 17th century tradition, reserving his own motet compositions for special occasions. 'Jesu Meine Freude', the longest, most musically complex and earliest of the six, was written in 1723 for the funeral of Johanna Maria Käsin, the wife of Leipzig's postmaster.

It uses as its basis the eponymous chorale melody by Johann Crüger (words by Johann Franck), but includes passages from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is set in eleven short movements arranged in a symmetrical musical structure, which can be divided into three groups: chorale tune and text (nos. 1, 3, 7, 11); free settings of the chorale (nos. 5 and 9) and settings of the extra biblical text (nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10). The whole piece is centred around the fugal number 6.

This wonderful motet is preceded tonight by a treatment for organ of the same chorale, in which the mellifluous and wistful lines of the opening section yield to a pleasing dance section in triple metre.

Interval

Locus iste

Anton Bruckner (1824-96)

(This place was made by God - a priceless mystery; it is beyond reproach.)

Anton Bruckner is known as a symphonist, a master-builder of cathedrals in sound who was deeply influenced by Wagner's grand operatic designs. Bruckner's thirty-odd motets are often ignored yet they are a crucial part of his compositional output. They express his devout Roman Catholic beliefs, using the modal chords and long, Gregorian chant-like lines of the Renaissance masters.

'Locus iste', a gradual (one of a group of texts applicable at the Mass to particular festivals or occasions), relates to the dedication of a church. This well-known setting, touching in its simple eloquence, was written to celebrate the dedication of the votive chapel of the cathedral at Linz.

Ave Maria

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

(Hail, Mary, full of Grace ...)

Mendelssohn was deeply affected by the music of Weber and Beethoven, and also touched by the emergence of a new Romantic aesthetic, although the roots of his style lay in the 18th century. 'Ave Maria' dates from 1830 and is an eight-part setting of the famous text. It opens with a soaring tenor solo, answered by the chorus, then proceeds to a movingly pleading *Sancta Maria* passage, over an agitated organ pedal accompaniment, before

a sixteen-part restatement of the opening theme. The balanced themes and symmetrical phrase structures remind the listener of the Viennese classical style which the composer so often emulated.

Fugue No.6 on B.A.C.H. (Op.60 No.6) Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

played by Oliver Brett, organ

Schumann's complicated musical and personal aesthetic combined a passionate, often fragile, musical romanticism with a robust regard for the music of Bach. In the six organ fugues, all based upon the four notes of Bach's name (B flat, A, C and B natural) he pays his homage. Tonight's work, the last of the set, gathers massive momentum, with rolling triplets and a gradual accelerando throughout its 155 bars.

Mass for double choir

Frank Martin (1890-1974)

Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei

Swiss composer Frank Martin, born in Geneva in 1890 to a long line of French Huguenots (his father was a Calvinist minister), was slow to gain international recognition. His style, assimilating influences from Franck, Debussy, Ravel, and Schönberg with elements of folk and ancient idioms, found expression in his prolific output covering symphonic, chamber and choral repertoire.

Tonight's Catholic Mass, penned by a Calvinist composer, stands as one of the great choral monuments of the 20th century. Though completed in 1926 it was not premiered until 1963, but is now perhaps Martin's most frequently performed work. It is sometimes described as austere (as in the opening *Kyrie*) but sensual and supremely beautiful elements emerge (*Hosanna* ...), with nods to the neo-classicism of Stravinsky (*Benedictus* ..) and the swing of the Baroque (*Laudamus te* ...). Above all one is overwhelmed by the opulence and the sheer physical beauty of the composer's expert writing for double choir.

Stephen Cleobury is associated with two of Britain's most famous choirs: Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge and Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers. He has particularly championed contemporary music and at King's has commissioned a new carol annually for the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*, thereby