

Nantwich Choral Society

As the sun spirals its longest dance,
Cleanse us
As nature shows bounty and fertility
Bless us
Let all things live with loving intent
And to fulfill their truest destiny
Taken from a Wiccan blessing for Summer

Solstice of Light *Maxwell Davies*
Blest Pair of Sirens *Parry*
Five Mystical Songs *Vaughan Williams*

Steven Newlove Tenor
Adrian Blakeley Baritone
Graham Eccles Organ

Conducted by Patrick Larley

The Parish Church of St Mary, Nantwich
Saturday 26th June 2004 at 7.30 p.m.

Nantwich Choral Society

The + Way + of + the + Cross

Via Crucis - Franz Liszt

Two Motets - Gabriel Fauré

Messe Solennelle - Jean Langlais

Sarah Cromwell - Soprano
Katie Harvey - Mezzo Soprano
John Rowlands-Pritchard - Bass

Andrew Mildinhall - Organ

Directed by Patrick Larley



The Parish Church of St Mary, Nantwich
Saturday 27th March 2004 at 7.30 p.m.

Via Crucis - Franz Liszt (1811 - 1886)

The 14 Stations of the Cross for mixed choir, vocal solos and organ

1.	Introduction	Vexilla regis prodeunt	Choir
2.	Station I	Jesus is condemned to death	Solo
3.	Station II	Jesus receives his Cross	Solo
4.	Station III	Jesus falls for the first time	Choir & Solo
5.	Station IV	Jesus meets his holy Mother	Organ
6.	Station V	Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his Cross	Organ
7.	Station VI	Saint Veronica wipes the face of Jesus	Choir
8.	Station VII	Jesus falls for the second time	Choir & Solo
9.	Station VIII	The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus	Solo
10.	Station IX	Jesus falls for the third time	Choir & Solo
11.	Station X	Jesus is stripped of his garments	Organ
12.	Station XI	Jesus is nailed to the Cross	Choir
13.	Station XII	Jesus dies on the Cross	Choir & Solo
14.	Station XIII	Jesus is taken down from the Cross	Organ
15.	Station XIV	Jesus is laid in the grave	Choir & Solo

Liszt began *Via Crucis* in 1866 and finished it at the Villa d'Este in the summer of 1878. In 1874 he wrote that the work would not be 'learned or ostentatious', but 'simple reflections of my youthful emotions'. But in this piece we do not see the flamboyancy of the young Liszt, but the dark, introspective side of the composer, now in his mature years. The work was rejected for publication by Pustet in Regensburg basically because it was too original and would not sell. It remained unpublished and unperformed in Liszt's lifetime. The first performance took place in Budapest on Good Friday 1929.

'The Way of the Cross' is a devotion that describes the journey of Christ carrying the Cross, divided into fourteen stages or 'stations'. Most Catholic churches have pictures or statuettes of these scenes along the walls of the nave, usually seven on each side. The devotion consists of meditations on each scene, usually in the form of prayers and singing. If the number of participants is not too large, they move around the church in a group, stopping at each station. This was what Liszt visualized when he composed the music. Tonight's performance will recreate this devotion, with the soloists singing from different areas of the church.

The devotion originated with the Franciscans, who as guardians of the holy places in Jerusalem began to erect models in their churches, which acted as a substitute for an actual visit to Jerusalem. The devotion is a form of Passion, and is particularly associated with Lent.

Liszt uses two Latin hymns and two German chorales. The Latin hymns are *Vexilla regis* and *Stabat Mater*. The German melodies are *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, and *O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid*, both found in a collection of chorales arranged by Liszt for the piano. Both are known in harmonisations by Bach, but here the harmony is Liszt's own.

As a programmatic composer, Liszt was able to provide the musical equivalent of a meditative commentary, along the lines of the texts printed in books of the Stations. An example is his use of the *Stabat Mater* at the three stations where Jesus stumbles (Nos. III, VII, IX) sung by three solo female voices. Here we see Mary with Jesus in the picture at these points. Another striking comment is perhaps theological: when the women of Jerusalem meet Jesus, he tells them not to weep for him, but for their children. Liszt at this point adds a vivid passage for the organ redolent of martial trumpets, but unresolved in its tonality, including fortissimo whole-tone chords.

Liszt's real genius lay in creating musical character; the nailing to the Cross is conveyed in hideous grinding staccato discords, the compassion of Veronica lies in the curve of an unadorned melodic line, the carrying of the Cross produces a heavy mind-numbing trudge, the meeting with Mary is a mixture of anguish and heart-ease in music of great harmonic originality.

In the Introduction, Liszt uses a three-note musical symbol of the Cross, consisting of a rising tone plus minor third, soh-lah-doh, an intonation from a plainsong hymn by Fortunatus (c.530 - 600). The same motif emerges again in the Final Station, framing a work of much beauty, great intensity and overwhelming spirituality.

The alto solo part in tonight's performance is sung by choir member Jocelyn Cooper.

INTERVAL

Two Motets

Gabriel Fauré (1845 - 1924)

Maria, Mater Gratiae
Ave Verum Corpus

Sung by Sarah Cromwell and Katie Harvey
With Andrew Mildinhall at the organ

Messe Solennelle

Jean Langlais (1907 - 1991)

1. Organ solo Pièce Modale de mi (Allegro)
2. Kyrie
3. Gloria
4. Organ solo Pièce Modale de sol (Allegro)
5. Sanctus
6. Benedictus
7. Organ solo Pièce Modale de ré (Andantino)
8. Agnus Dei

Jean Langlais has written some of the noblest, richest and most awe-inspiring sacred music there has ever been. He wrote more organ music than J. S. Bach, and most of it is as suitable for liturgical performance as sung music. His style is a powerful mixture of chant-like motifs (including actual quotations from Gregorian chant) and bold dissonances that give way to pure, radiant tonality.

He draws on a wide range of expressions too, from radiant and blazing to quiet and ecstatic. He was truly a craftsman of the highest calibre, and a credit to the distinguished musical heritage of his native France.

He was born on 15th February 1907 and became blind at the age of two. Despite this he became one of the most respected organists of the twentieth century. He studied at the National Institute for the Young Blind with André Marchal and then at the Paris Conservatory where he studied organ under Marcel Dupre and composition under Paul Dukas (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*). At the age of 23 he won the Conservatory first prize in organ. In 1945 he became organist at the Basilica of St Clotilde in Paris, and it was during his time here that he composed his "Messe Solennelle" for choir and organ.

The work had a remarkable gestation. Langlais first talked of composing a Mass in 1934 but it was not until 1949, some 15 years later, that he distilled all his ideas in a flurry of creativity, taking just two weeks to complete the composition. It is therefore important to consider this work in its historical context, the ideas forming and evolving during a time when the world was at war.

The work uses five movements of the Latin Mass - Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei. It is essentially modal in form taking much of its inspiration from plainsong chants. Langlais was also a choir trainer for many years, and this shows in the choral writing, which contains some quite demanding displays of vocal dexterity. Even more demanding however is the organ part - it certainly shows that Langlais was a master when it came to improvisation and indeed there are passages in this work (for instance the Sanctus) that are notoriously tricky.

The work received its premiere in the Basilica of St Clotilde in 1950 with the choir of the National Institute for the Young Blind, where Langlais had studied as a child. Perhaps remarkably it is now rarely performed in France. In a recent interview on the BBC, Madame Langlais declared that the choirs in France were not too good (!) and that they "don't understand the music as the English do".

Composed at around the same time (1952) are his Eight Modal Pieces for solo organ. In tonight's performance, three of these pieces will be played alongside the movements of the Mass.

Patrick Larley — Musical Director

Patrick Larley, composer and conductor, has been Musical Director of Nantwich Choral Society since 1998 and holds a similar post with Ludlow Choral Society in Shropshire. During this time he has widened the choir's horizons by adding new and challenging works to the standard repertoire and by encouraging the performance of unaccompanied choral music. The choir, under his directorship, has also worked with a number of prestigious orchestras, including The Orchestra of the Golden Age, Northern Chamber Orchestra, His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts and The Manchester Camerata.

Patrick studied Organ, Singing and Choral training at the Royal Northern College of Music, and since then he has worked with a number of leading professional orchestras in the North-West as conductor, keyboard player and singer, and has taken part in many of country's major music festivals including Aldeburgh, Chester, Paisley, York and the Proms.

Patrick is to take the role of Evangelist in the first performance, by a British choir, of Ton Koopman's reconstruction of J.S. Bach's *St. Mark Passion* in Newcastle on March 28th 2004. The work received its premiere in the Proms last year directed by Koopman.

Patrick's compositions have been recorded on CD and broadcast on Radio 3 and have been performed widely throughout the UK and in America. *A Mass of a Thousand Ages*, commissioned by NCS for the millennium celebrations and premiered on April 8th 2000 in St. Mary's Church, Nantwich has received more recent performances in Ludlow Parish Church and St. Asaph Cathedral. On July 9th this year Patrick was present at the first performance of *Sing to the Lord* - a joyful anthem composed for the Berkshire County Youth Choirs and Orchestra celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, performed in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle conducted by Gillian Dibden, and his cantata *On Christmas Day*, a setting of words by Thomas Traherne and George Herbert commissioned by the Bognor Regis Choir in Sussex received its London premiere by The Genesis Chorale on December 13th 2003. He has just completed *Columcille*, a sequence on the life of St. Columba, commissioned by Opus Anglicanum, which will receive its premiere in Glasgow Cathedral on May 30th 2004.

Sarah Cromwell — Soprano

Sarah read music at Wolverhampton University. Her solo engagements include performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Bach's *B Minor Mass*. Her professional choral work includes performances of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and a recording of Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. Sarah has worked with the English Haydn Orchestra, and Musica Donum Dei Baroque Ensemble and has performed in such venues as Birmingham Symphony Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

Katie Harvey — Mezzo - Soprano

Katie won a major music scholarship to Ellesmere College where she led the College orchestra and was head chorister in the chapel choir. Whilst at Ellesmere she studied singing with Mark Wildman and Cathy Benson and took a number of solo roles with the College Choral Society and principal parts in college operas and musicals.

Katie read Psychology at Manchester University, studying voice with Sarah Castle at the Royal Northern College of Music and singing with the University Chamber Choir and The William Byrd Singers. Her solo career has encompassed a variety of styles including oratorio, jazz, traditional folk and popular music. She has also performed and recorded with Chudleigh's Company.

Katie now combines her musical activities with that of a Life Coach in Brighton. Visit the website at www.katieharveycoaching.com

John Rowlands - Pritchard — Bass

John Rowlands-Pritchard started as a chorister in the cathedral choirs at Ely and Wells. He then studied singing with John Kentish (Head of English Opera Centre), Ron Murdock, and with the Mayer-Lismann Opera Centre.

He has performed extensively as an Oratorio soloist, especially in the Baroque repertoire, with oratorio and choral societies, including New College Choir, Croydon Bach Choir, Bristol Cathedral Special Choir, Wells Oratorio and Nantwich Choral Society. A specialist in early chant, he studied with Professor John Stevens and with Dr. Mary Berry at Cambridge University illustrating lectures and broadcast talks for both.

He is a principal Cantor with Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge having performed and recorded in England, Holland, Belgium, France and Canada; in Notre Dame de Paris, Pontigny Abbey, Dijon Cathedral, Sainte Chapelle - Paris, and the Vatican. He leads chant workshops, most recently for Salisbury cathedral choir on Sarum chant, for Bede's World Jarrow on Anglo-Saxon chant, and for the Royal School of Church Music

In 1988 he founded Opus Anglicanum, five singers and a BBC reader, and is responsible for its unique sequences of words and music. Visit the website at www.opus-anglicanum.com

Forthcoming Concerts

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At the Parish Church of St Mary, Nantwich
Solstice of Light-Maxwell Davies
Five Mystical Songs-Vaughan Williams
Blest Pair of Sirens-Parry

Tickets for all concerts are available from the Box Office at
"Sounds Musical" : 01270 625579
Tickets are also available from St. Mary's Church Shop or at the door
For more information visit our website at www.nantwichchoral.org.uk

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

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