

Nantwich Choral Society

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Saturday December 18th 1999

JOY TO THE WORLD
Carols for Choir and Audience

THE MILLENNIUM CONCERT

Saturday April 8th 2000

World Première

MASS OF A THOUSAND AGES - Larley

Saturday June 10th 2000

MY SPIRIT SANG ALL DAY

20th Century music for unaccompanied choir

Nantwich Choral Society is supported by
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Box Office: Telephone 01270 625641

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manchester camerata
nantwich choral society
patrick larley

finzi
in terra pax

larley
sinfonia nativitie

britten
the company of heaven



Saturday 4th December 7.30 pm
St Mary's Church
Nantwich

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

MANCHESTER CAMERATA

Conductor - Patrick Larley

SINFONIA NATIVITIE

PATRICK LARLEY

First performance

IN TERRA PAX

GERALD FINZI

Soprano - Megan Dorke

Tenor - Neil Sharp

INTERVAL

THE COMPANY OF HEAVEN

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Soprano - Megan Dorke

Tenor - Neil Sharp

Readers - Gill Larley Richard Paul

Organ - Andrew Mildinhall

PATRICK LARLEY, conductor and composer

Patrick Larley is a freelance conductor, composer and keyboard player. He is founder and director of two professional ensembles - *The Gallery Players* and *Chudleigh's Company*, and also the *Nantwich Youth Choir* which he founded in 1998. He is also Musical Director of Nantwich, Ludlow and Stone Choral Societies.

Since giving up full time teaching in 1990 he has concentrated on composition and performance. Success in two national competitions has marked the beginning of a fruitful period which includes:

Pneuma for Symphonic Wind Band (1991) *The Sonatina for Classical Organ* (1992) *A Girl for the Blue* (1994) *Fanfara alla Fuga for Symphony Orchestra* (1994) *Song Cycle - on a Fine Morning* (1996) *On the Edge of Glory* (1997) *Appearing, Shining, Distant or Near* (1998) *Stone Circles* (1998) *Sinfonia Nativitie* (1999). *A Mass of a Thousand Ages* (1999/2000) is being written for the new millennium and receiving its first performance on 8th April 2000 in St Mary's Parish Church, Nantwich.

Sinfonia Nativitie - Patrick Larley

*'Immensity, cloysterd in thy deare wombe,
Now leaves his welbelov'd imprisonment.
There he hath made himselfe to his intent
Weake enough, now into our world to come.'*

Sinfonia Nativitie, receiving its first performance this evening, is a work for string orchestra, inspired by the opening words of John Donne's Divine poem, *Nativitie*. The one movement sinfonia falls into two distinct sections, played without a break. In the slow introduction the absolute extremes of the outer instruments are exploited, and envelop a growing quaver theme in the heart of the texture. This theme then forms a counterpoint to a new motif of energy, taken on fugally by all the instruments in turn, and leads to the vivacious *fugue of life*. This fugue is driven by irregular rhythmical and melodic energy - with its subject in 5/4 time, running and dancing.

In Terra Pax (Peace on Earth) - Gerald Finzi

Gerald Finzi was born in 1901 in London. Before he was eighteen, his father and two of his brothers had died, and the last of his brothers and his music teacher were killed in the Great War. These experiences coloured most of his work and lent weight to his agnosticism and pacifism. By the 1930s he was an established composer, mainly of choral settings of modern poems, in the English idiom of Parry and Vaughan Williams.

In Terra Pax was written in 1954. In it Finzi intersperses the words of Robert Bridges' poem 'Noel: Christmas Eve, 1913' with the familiar St Luke narration of the shepherds and the angel choir. In Bridges' poem, a solitary walker in the countryside on a dark and frosty Christmas Eve, hears church bells in the valley below and has a vision of the Nativity story. The closing words '... on earth peace, good will to all men' could be Finzi's epitaph.

Baritone solo	<i>A frosty Christmas eve</i>
Chorus	<i>And there were in the same country</i>
Soprano solo	<i>Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings</i>
Chorus	<i>And suddenly, there was with the angel</i>
Baritone solo	<i>But to me heard afar, it was starry music</i>
Chorus	<i>... and on earth peace, good will towards men</i>

The Company of Heaven - Benjamin Britten

The Company of Heaven was composed during August and September 1937, commissioned by the BBC for Michaelmas Day - 29th September, and it was on this day that the first radio broadcast was given, with Peter Pears and Sophie Wyss as the soloists. It received its first complete concert performance in The Maltings, Snape on 10th June 1989 during the Aldeburgh Festival.

It is a full-scale cantata, with the interpolation of spoken texts compiled R Ellis Roberts. The words include passages from the Bible, poems by Milton, Rossetti, Blake, Manley Hopkins, Spenser and prose from John Bunyan and John Ruskin. The final chorus is a gloriously triumphant setting of the hymn *Ye watchers and ye holy ones*.

The cantata is divided into three sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the activities of the angelic host.

Part One: Before the Creation

I Chaos - introduction for orchestra

Readings:	He maketh his angels spirits ..	Theodosius
	When all the sons of God ..	Gerard Manley Hopkins
	Hell heard th'unsufferable noise ..	John Milton

II The morning stars - hymn for chorus and orchestra

Part Two: Angels In Scripture

Reading: Angels were the first creatures .. Thomas Heywood

IIIa Jacob - chorus and organ

Readings: Genesis 28,10-12,16-17
2 Kings 6, 15-17

IIIb Elisha - chorus and organ

And is there care in heaven?	..	Edmund Spenser
It was the rebel angel, Lucifer	..	R Ellis Roberts

IIIc Hail, Mary! - soprano solo, chorus and organ

Reading: Luke 1 v26-28, 31, 38

IV Christ, the fair glory - hymn for soloists, chorus and orchestra

Readings:	Angels came to minister	..	R Ellis Roberts
	I go from earth to heaven	..	Christina Rossetti

V War in heaven - male chorus and orchestra

Part Three: Angels In Common Life and at our Death

VI Heaven is here - soprano solo, chorus and orchestra

Readings:	Ludgate Hill	..	John Ruskin
	Not where the wheeling systems	..	Francis Thompson

VII A thousand thousand gleaming fires - tenor solo and orchestra

Reading: In the reign of Queen Victoria .. R Ellis Roberts

VIII Funeral march for a boy - orchestra

Reading: Golden-winged, silver winged .. Christina Rossetti

IX Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the most High - psalm for chorus

Reading: Farewell, green fields .. William Blake

X Lento maestoso: orchestra and speaker (The Pilgrim's Progress - J Bunyan)

Readings:	Luke 20 v35-36	
	I think they laugh in heaven	.. DG Rossetti

XI Ye watchers and ye holy ones - hymn for soloists, chorus and orchestra

MEGAN DORKE (soprano)

Megan has recently graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, London, where she gained a distinction in Postgraduate Performance.

Megan was born, of Welsh parentage, in Ludlow, Shropshire. She began her musical training in Cardiff, at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, studying with Janet Price. Whilst at WCMD, she won many prizes, including the Mabel Linwood Christopher Prize, the Sir John Ireland Prize and the Sir Geraint Evans Scholarship.

In 1997, she was awarded scholarships from the Royal Academy and the Foundation for Sport and Arts to study at the RAM, where, in 1998, she won the Gilbert Betjemann Prize for Opera singing.

Megan has performed widely in Wales and England, in both concert and opera productions. In the summer of 1999, she travelled to both Italy and the USA to partake in masterclasses and concerts. She has recently sung the roles of Najade in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at St John's Smith Square, London and the Princess of France in Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost*, a new opera by Geoffrey Wright.

NEIL SHARP (tenor)

Neil was born in Essex. He was a choral scholar at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he studied Medical Sciences and History of Art before transferring to Edinburgh Medical School to qualify as a doctor. He subsequently left Medicine to pursue a career as a singer, violinist and musical director.

As a chorister, Neil has worked for Scottish Opera, Opera Ireland and, most regularly, for Opera North. His solo stage rôles include: Johnny Inkslinger (*Paul Bunyan*), The Narrator (*The Rape of Lucretia*), The Celebrant (Bernstein - *Mass*), Danilo (*The Merry Widow*) Leukippos (Handel - *Apollo and Daphne*), many of the tenor leads in the Gilbert and Sullivan canon, and rôles in the world premières of works by Edward Harper, Giles Chaundy and Robin Grant. As an oratorio soloist and recitalist he has worked throughout Great Britain and in the Republic of Ireland, France and Germany, appearing with groups including The Orchestra of the Golden Age and the Goldberg Ensemble. His repertoire includes: Bach - *St John Passion*, *B Minor Mass*, *Christmas Oratorio and Magnificat*; Monteverdi - *Vespers*; *Messiah*; *The Creation*; *The Seasons*; Mozart - *Requiem*; Mendelssohn - *Elijah*, *St Paul*; Elgar - *The Light of Life*; Finzi - *Dies Natalis* and Britten - *St Nicolas*.

Neil broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 4 as a member and soloist with the Daily Service singers. This summer he took part in the internationally renowned Wagner festival in Bayreuth for the first time.

GILL LARLEY (reader)

Gill studied Theology at Bristol University, and after post-graduate study at Warwick entered the teaching profession, and now teaches Theology and Piano at Ellesmere College and Oswestry School, in Shropshire.

Gill is administrator and programme co-ordinator for 'The Gallery Players', Nantwich Youth Choir and 'Chudleigh's Cumpanie', in which she also sings.

Gill performs as a solo reader in Concerts and Literary Festivals, and her special interest is English poetry of the 16th and 17th Centuries, and ancient Sumerian and Egyptian Literature. Recent performances include narrator in '*Under the Greenwood Tree*', a life of Thomas Hardy and readings on the 'Chudleigh's Cumpanie' Advent and Christmas CD - *Veni Emmanuel*.

Gill and Patrick have three children - two tenors and a soprano - and as a family they often share the stage together, performing in perfect harmony!

RICHARD PAUL (reader)

Richard Paul commenced his professional singing career in 1977 as a Bass Lay Clerk in the choir of Rochester Cathedral, Kent.

In 1978 he was awarded a place at Trinity College of Music London to study singing. He appeared regularly as a soloist at college concerts, and won several prizes including The English Song Prize and The Association of English Singers and Speakers Prize. In 1982 Richard won a place on the English Song Course at the Benjamin Britten/Peter Pears School. In the same year he was presented with his Licentiate Diploma of Trinity College of Music and in the following year with the Associate Diploma of the Royal College of Music. After leaving Trinity in 1983, Richard pursued a career as a freelance singer and teacher in and around London and the South East, performing at various venues including the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and St Johns, Smith Square.

In 1987 Richard Paul and his wife moved to Lichfield, Staffordshire when Richard was appointed as a Bass Lay Vicar Choral in the Cathedral choir. He has since left the choir in order to concentrate on freelance activities, in particular, the teaching of singing. Richard has a thriving teaching practice and is also a visiting teacher of singing at several schools including King Edward VI High School for Girls, Edgbaston, and The School of St Mary and St Anne, Abbots Bromley.

Richard also co-directs the Victorian and Edwardian Ensemble 'Bustles and Beaux' with his wife Jane.