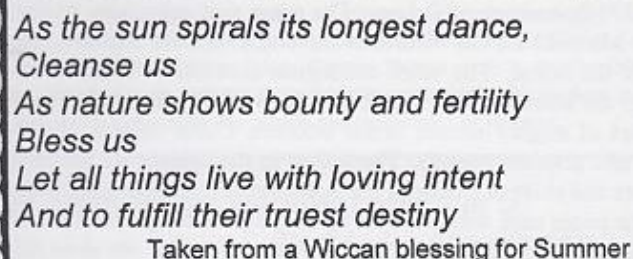


Nantwich Choral Society



*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.

Solstice of Light

Peter Maxwell-Davies (1934 -)

Solstice of Light is an extended poem by George Mackay Brown (1921 – 1996), a native of Orkney. The poem was especially written for Peter Maxwell Davies' fourteen movement cantata depicting the history of the island. The work catalogues successive waves of incomers to the islands - from the first arrivals in twig and hide boats; the hewers of mighty stones; broch builders; Celtic monks; Norsemen; oil and uranium seekers. The voices in the cantata are the hills and waters and skies of Orkney - the ever-present, yet changing, presences. The poem ends with a Prayer to St. Magnus, the patron saint of the Orkneys - 'that the last ice may not cover us, that the dove fall still between sun and cornstalk'.

Solstice of Light was first performed in St Magnus Cathedral at the 1979 Orkney Festival, with Neil Mackie (tenor), Richard Hughes (organ) and the St. Magnus Singers conducted by the festival director, Norman Mitchell.

- 1 New Hills and Lochs and Shores
- 2 The Mild Circle of the Sun (*Organ solo*)
- 3 We Rowed Blindly North and North
- 4 Green Whirls of Melted Ice (*Organ solo*)
- 5 The Hills, the Skies, the Sweet and the Salt Waters
- 6 Earthbreakers, Hewers of Mighty Stone (*Organ solo*)
- 7 Circles of Stone on the Blank Moor (*with Tenor solo*)
- 8 Solstice of Light
- 9 The Celtic Priests
- 10 The White Weave of Peace (*Organ solo*)
- 11 Hawkship
- 12 Norsemen (Tenor solo)
- 13 Invocation of the Dove (*Organ solo*)
- 14 Prayer for these Islands: New Troves (*with Tenor solo*)

INTERVAL

Blest Pair of Sirens

Sir Hubert Parry (1848 - 1918)

Blest Pair of Sirens is a setting of John Milton's *At a Solemn Musick*. The rather quaint and unprepossessing title belies the quality of both its powerful verse and its delightful music. Far from being an obscure Victorian curiosity, its noble, masculine treatment of Milton's poetry stands out as a landmark in the development of the English choral tradition. Despite Parry's roots in the English church tradition, this music reveals his characteristic openness to the modern influences of his day and especially to the genius and techniques of Brahms.

Organ Solo: Allegro Maestoso (Sonata in G)

Sir Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

Five Mystical Songs

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958)

In 1911 Vaughan Williams was commissioned to write a piece for the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester and decided to complete the settings of five poems by George Herbert, the Metaphysical poet (1593-1633), which he had been working on for some time. The poet was himself a musician who associated music with a 'divine voice', a view totally in sympathy with the visionary aspects of Vaughan Williams' art. The opening song 'Easter' establishes the nature of the whole cycle with its ardent religiosity where 'musically, light is shed by the frequent move from flat to much sharper tonal centres'. The second song 'I got me flowers' is a fine example of Vaughan Williams' ability to express emotion with the simplest arrangement of notes. 'Love bade me welcome' uses the plainchant hymn 'O sacrum convivium' as a wordless chorus set against the Baritone soloist and 'The Call' - for solo voice only - has a modal melody which gives it a sense of apparent antiquity. This is a striking contrast to the 'Antiphon' - 'Let all the World in every corner sing' which rings out with unequivocal conviction from the chorus.

- 1 Easter: Rise Heart, thy Lord is risen
- 2 I got me flowers to strew thy way
- 3 Love bade me welcome
- 4 The Call: Come my Way, my Truth my Light
- 5 Antiphon: Let all the World in every corner sing.

Solstice of Light

George Mackay Brown

1. New Hills and Lochs and Shores

We are the new hills and lochs and shores,
Lissom shapes from ice,
The gray hands of the ice lie folded now,
far north.

All's new and good
Under the beckoning sun.
The firths are fretted with fish.
Birds visit the high heather, birds walk
about in the ebb.
A first boat has blundered into Rackwick.
Many new creatures
Live under the mild circle of the sun.

2. The Mild Circle of the Sun

3. We Rowed Blindly North and North

We rowed blindly north and north.
We came in boats of skin and branch.
Green whirls of melted ice.
Where are the promised birds and fish,
Our prey, our kin?
I cried one morning: *Look,
The blue whales, children of ice!
The whales will whelm our boats!*
The whales stood all about us.
The whales were the hills.
We drew out curraghs up beaches of shell.
We called the place "Whale Islands".

4. Green Whirls of Melted Ice

5. The Hills, the Skies, the Sweet and the Salt Waters

The hills, the skies, the sweet and the salt
waters.
We have long forgotten
The gray trumpeter of ice, the mammoth.
Under the breeding sun
The beasts make their circuits, birth to
death.
The full moon
Draws a wavering legion into the nets.

The people who come and go in cells of
stone

Are glad of the sun-cattle
And the glancing sillocks of the moon.
They were glad.
Their ashes lie in cells of stone.
A stronger race has come,
Earth-breakers, hewers of mighty stone.

6. Earth-breakers, Hewers of Mighty Stone

7. Circles of Stone on the Blank Moor

Why should the hands be red always with
battle?
Our cheeks gaunt with hunger
Many a rieving winter.
Kindred tribes shouldering us west and
north.
North we sailed bearing the sun key.
A cry from the helm one dawn –
Islands of the Whale!
A young earth untouched
By the hands of sun and scytheman.
We breached quarries. We levered stones.
We honoured sun and moon
With circles of stone on the blank moor.
Our ploughs struck virgin earth.
We drew haddocks from broken horizons.
Seedtime and winter, bread and death –
We praised that round in a womb and web
of stone.

8. Solstice of Light

We have long put off drab coats, heather
and moor.
They give us in summer
The pasture patched with sheep,
The yellow drapes of barley and oat.
The new islanders
Have quartered the fecund sun.
Islands and islanders dance together
In the solstice of light.
Their heart of darkness is merry with
flame and song.
The "painted people", first Celts.
What are the lonely strangers with crossed
hands?
They stand, gray shapes,

Between the broch and the forge of dark
edges.

They break our clods like dust-of-gold.
"Little silver brothers" they call the fish.

9. The Celtic Priests

What is that sun? A goodly fire.
It will be ashes soon.
Everlasting to everlasting the true Light.
A man, breathing, bears a bead of that
brightness.

Body breaches at last
With sickness, or sword, or silver frosts of
age.

The sweet light endures,
A little pool soon lost
In a circling sea, the magnificent peace of
God.

10. The White Weave of Peace

11. Hawkship

The endless kiss of peace, cell to cell,
Shore to shore,
Matins, lauds, terce, evensong, compline.
It worked another garment about us,
The white weave of peace.
In small islands they fish, break, furrow,
pray.
The people are glad of that mildness.
Hills and waters and ploughland
Were gathered inside the psalm and the
pastoral...
Against the dayspring, a single hawk-shape!
Before noon
The light at the altar was quenched.
At sunset more than one redness
Between the hill and the shore,
The island was rigged in tatters of blood.
At midnight
In the bleached hawkship, boast and flame
and saga.

12. Norsemen

Ever foremost our banner
At hunt, howe-break, host-melling.
Many a maiden found we delightful.
High vaunted in hall, the viking victory.
Gull-breasted girls
Gave horns, fleece-hung, to the warriors

Twixt hearth and praising harp.
No war-wolf reddens maw
At our wounds, before tower or belfry
Or sword-scrolled sea.
Brighter wears our fame to leaf-fall.
They hail us
From halls of youth, fallen forgotten
heroes.

13. Invocation of the Dove

14. Prayer for these Islands: New Troves

What hero hailed the hawk-men at last?
Magnus, our Christ's hero, hailed them
In Egilsay, one Easter dawn, early:
"Flames in France? Broken ikons and
altars
Between the Volga and the Hebrides;
English ships rudderless, cargoes with
wounds.
We have carried those seeds back to our
shores.
The furrow is choked with tare and thorn.
How shall we live
Without the Bread and the Word on our
tongues,
That white circle of peace?"...
The hawk raged in, red, at the door of his
skull.
It fluttered free, gray dove.
It fell, it folded, on the furrows' first green
braird.
Christ's hero, he hailed them, healed
them,
Herded them back from the hell-gate.
Magnus Martyr, pray for us.
Hidden under our furrows, deep
Hidden under our waves
New troves
Wells and mines unproved
Locked at the roots of the islands.
That these flames may be for our peace
And for the peace of our children
And for the peace of the world
That the last ice may not cover us
That the dove fall still between sun and
cornstalk

Saint Magnus, pray for us.

Patrick Larley — Musical Director

Patrick Larley, composer and conductor, has been Musical Director of Nantwich Choral Society since 1997 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, leading the choir in performances with prestigious orchestras such as the Manchester Camerata, Orchestra of the Golden Age and His Majetys Sagbutts and Cornetts, and by encouraging the performance of unaccompanied choral music.

Patrick studied Organ, Singing and Choral training at the RNCM, 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. He is also founder and director of his own orchestral ensemble - **Consort**, the vocal ensemble **Chudleigh's Company**, and the children's choir, **Ludlow Young Voices**.

Many of Patrick's compositions have been recorded on CD and broadcast on Radio 3 and have been performed widely throughout the UK and in America. Recordings include *The Rose of Peace* - music for a cappella voices, and *On a Fine Morning* - music for solo voice and piano. *A Mass of a Thousand Ages* was commissioned by NCS for the millennium celebrations and premiered on April 8th 2000 in St. Mary's Church, Nantwich. Patrick's joyful anthem, *Sing to the Lord* was commissioned by Berkshire County Youth Choirs and Orchestra to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and received its premiere performance in St. Georges Chapel Windsor Castle on July 9th 2003. Recently, he attended the first performance, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, of *Columcille*, a musical sequence on the life of St. Columba, commissioned by Opus Anglicanum for the final concert of the Glasgow Cathedral Festival 2004.

Stephen Newlove — Tenor

Stephen Newlove was born in East Yorkshire and studied for a music degree at Huddersfield followed by a Masters in composition at the University of Hull. He studies singing with Nicolas Powell. As an experienced cathedral singer in the choirs of York Minster and Chester Cathedral, he has broadcast on radio and television and has featured on a number of acclaimed recordings. He is currently a member of the Britten Singers, Canzonetta and Chudleigh's Company. Recent engagements as a soloist include Monteverdi's *Vespers* with the Orchestra of the Golden Age and His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts, Britten's *St Nicolas Cantata*, Bach's *St John Passion* with the English Haydn Orchestra, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* and the Evangelist in the *St Matthew Passion*. Future concerts include the Evangelist in Bach's *St John Passion* and Handel's *Saul* with Holmes Chapel Singers and Wensleydale Choral Society. In July 2004 Stephen will also give a recital here in St Mary's Nantwich as part of the lunchtime recital series. As well as performing Stephen is Director of Music at Carmel College in St Helens, Merseyside.

Graham Eccles — Organ

Graham Eccles first studied the organ at Worksop College in Nottinghamshire. He subsequently studied at the Royal Northern College of music in Manchester under Ronald Frost and was appointed Boddington Organ Scholar at St. Ann's Church. As well as graduating from the college with an upper division diploma he gained the Diploma in Professional Performance and the Alice Shawcross prize in Church music.

More recently, he has been awarded the diploma in Choral Directing from the Royal College of Organists, gaining the Brook Memorial Prize.

In 1989 Graham started as Assistant Organist at Chester Cathedral and has played a key role in the musical life of the city both in and out of the Cathedral. Some notable recital engagements have taken place in Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, Cantù (Italy), the Cathedral of Sens (France) and in Memphis, New York and Atlanta USA. In 2002 he participated in the Keyboard Festival at the Conservatorium of Music in Newcastle, Australia.

He was Organist and Master of the Choristers at St Asaph Cathedral in North Wales between 1998 and 2003 and has recorded the first CD on the rebuilt organ entitled "Organ and Harp from St Asaph", with Eira Lynn Jones playing the harp.

From the start of this year, Graham has become a freelance musician and as well as teaching and performing locally, he is one of the regular organists for the Daily Service on BBC Radio 4. He is a visiting tutor in organ at the University of Wales, Bangor and is Deputy Conductor of St Asaph and Colwyn Bay Choral Societies. He is in regular demand as an organ accompanist by many choirs and Choral Societies in the North West and has played many times with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Hallé orchestras.

Adrian Blakely — Baritone

Adrian studied singing at Huddersfield University in the late seventies and has been engaged regularly as a soloist throughout the country ever since. For 10 years up to 1990 he was Senior Bass Layclerk at Manchester Cathedral Choir and is currently a member of the BBC Daily Service Singers, where on occasions he undertakes live solo performances.

Over the years Adrian has been involved in many concerts with Nigel Ogden, (presenter of BBC radio 2's *The Organist Entertains*). This has afforded him the opportunity to gain a repertoire of lighter music and Adrian's recordings have featured on two CDs with Nigel Ogden and Altrincham Choral Society. He was also involved with live broadcasts from Bethlehem as part of the BBC's millennium celebrations. Forthcoming engagements include Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Liverpool Cathedral.

Forthcoming Concerts

Concert Season 2004 - 2005

2nd October 2004: Ellesmere College

Choral Singing Day 10.00 - 18.30

Belshazzar's Feast - Walton

4th December 2004: Bunbury Parish Church

Fantasia on Christmas Carols - Vaughan Williams

On Christmas Day - Larley

In the Beginning - Copland

18th December 2004: St Mary's Church, Nantwich

Family carols

12th March 2005: St Mary's Church, Nantwich

Nelson Mass - Haydn

25th June 2005: Nantwich Civic Theatre

Carmina Burana - Orff

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

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