

The West Somerset Singers

The West Somerset Singers welcome you and present

Mozart – Requiem

Rutter – Magnificat

Sat 25th April 2009

Musical Director - Nick Thomas

Organist - Alex Davies

About West Somerset Singers

The West Somerset Singers is a mixed voice adult choir founded in 1945 by Arthur Temple, head of music at Taunton School.

The intention was for the choir to perform unusual works in contrast to Taunton Choral Society. At this time the choir had twenty four singers drawn mostly from the music staff of local schools and concentrated on cameo, unusual and frequently modern works.

Arthur Temple's friend, the baritone Henry Cummings, became Patron and joined the choir in both religious and secular works. The great Soprano, Isobel Baillie, was also a soloist in those days and works such as E.J. Moerans 'Songs of Springtime' and Malcolm Sargent's 'The Second Crucifixion' appeared in the programmes.

Arthur Temple conducted the choir for the first fifteen years or so handing over to the leading soprano, Elizabeth Rowe. Three years later, the remarkable Bob Tullett, the musical director at Bishop Fox's School, took on the baton. He coached the choir to success at Bath Music Festival.

Over the years the choir has seen a few changes in conductor including Chris Banks, Richard Barrell and Dawn Lankester but Arthur Temple's original concept of performing little known works has largely been maintained.

In 1994 the choir became a registered charity. Its Committee is elected annually at the AGM and comprises Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, NFMS representative and not more than six other members including a librarian and publicity officer.

The West Somerset Singers celebrated their Golden Jubilee in December 2005 with a concert at St Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton with a repertoire including Charpentier 'Midnight Mass', Buxtehude 'The Newborn Infant' and Vivaldi 'Gloria'.

Today the choir is led by Nick Thomas, head of music at Kingsmead School, Wiveliscombe. Choir numbers have fluctuated but currently are close to fifty.

West Somerset Singers meet on Monday evenings for two terms in the Gwyn Williams room at Taunton School. Our next rehearsal will take place on Monday 14th September at 7.30pm. New members very welcome.

Programme

Mozart - Requiem

Interval – 15 mins

Rutter - Magnificat

**Refreshments will be served in the church hall after
this evening's performance.**

Programme Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Requiem Mass in D minor, K 626

A passionate and eccentric music lover – grandly named Franz, Count of Walsegg, Stuppach – had the occasional habit of commissioning works from leading composers and getting his court musicians to guess who had written them, a process that doubtless led to rewarding flattery. These commissions were anonymous. The death of the Countess in February 1791 led to Mozart's turn, the commission and the advance payment of half the fee being brought by a "grey messenger" according to a letter of the composer's whose authenticity is disputed. Wolfgang's death meant not only that the work was not finished, in the ordinary sense of being written down by him in detail, but that financial stress made it imperative for his widow Constanze to get it finished. For some reason she gave this task first to Joseph Eybler a Viennese musician who was a faithful attender at the bedside of the dying Mozart. Eybler made a good job of completing some of the orchestration in the *Dies Irae*, but when it came to composing he had to give up. We can see this in the feeble two bars of soprano part which he sketched into the *Lacrimosa* after the terror-climax "homo reus" which were the last notes that Mozart wrote.

Constanze then gave the job to the man who should have had it in the first place, the family friend and not inconsiderable composer Franz Xavier Süssmayer, who had helped Wolfgang with a rehearsal score for *Die Zauberflöte* and with the recitatives for *La Clemenza di Tito*. So Süssmayer completed the Requiem, but what his share amounted to will never be proved. What remains in Mozart's hand will be mentioned before each movement. Only two autograph sketches otherwise remain: four bars of *Rex tremendae*, from which it would be impossible to step into Mozart's brain and arrive at their eventual form, and some 16 bars of exposition of a D minor Amen fugue which was presumably at one time intended for the end of the *Lacrimosa*, and therefore of the end of the whole sequence *Dies Irae*.

The movements are:-

1. Introitus (*Requiem aeternam* – "Eternal Rest") an Adagio leading to *Kyrie*, an Allegro. These are fully scored, including directions for the organ by Mozart. Noteworthy are two deliberately archaic features: the plainsong *Tonus Peregrinus* to the soprano soloist's first entry at *Te decet hymnus* and the common property Baroque subject of the *Kyrie* fugue.
2. Sequence, first movement: *Dies Irae* ("Days of Wrath"), of which Mozart has left all the voice parts, the instrumental figured bass and most of the first violin line, including all the interludes.

3. Tuba Mirum ("Wonderful Trumpet"), Nowak claims the trombone solo at this point as a "good Viennese tradition since the time of Fux" (1660 - 1741), but this does not detract from its striking individuality. The sotto voce onset of the solo quartet is the first intimation of tenderness in the work, and here Mozart has given us the deeply expressive violin part.

4. Rex Tremendae ("Almighty King"). Mozart's are the chorus parts, the instrumental bass line and the first violin part. As in the C minor mass, the idea of majesty evokes sharply dotted rhythms, but the movement closes with a quiet personal plea, leading to:

5. Recordare ("Remember"). Mozart wrote out the voice parts, the instrumental bass, some of the string parts and the whole of the exquisite counterpoint of the introduction, beginning with the pleading canon of the two basset-horns with their successive long notes each capping the other; the answering phrase is no less beautiful with the intertwining violins falling whilst the violas rise. The beauty of this prayer is heightened by the smell of sulphur surrounding it.

6. Confutatis ("Stand confounded"). Mozart's are the voice parts, the instrumental bass and most of the first violin part, which itself serves as the bass to the upper voices when they are used in contrast to the lower ones. This points the difference between those directed downwards and those who are to rise. But these contrasts cease as all mankind is on its knees in supplication and fear, to truly awestruck chromatic harmonies leading to:

7. Lacrimosa ("Weeping / Tears"). Mozart drafted numbers 8 and 9 before essaying this culmination of the Dies Irae sequence. He established the sighing motif of the upper strings in the first two bars, then the first six bars of the voice parts leading to the climactic top A for "homo reus" - guilty man. Süßmayer (if it is he) has some memorable phrases after this tremendous opening. If he is deemed to have shirked the fugue with his plain "Amen" it must be remembered that he too was working against time.

8. Domine Jesu ("Lord Jesus") and Hostias ("Sacrifices") are linked together as the Offertorium by their fugal refrain "Quam olim Abrahae". These shorter choral movements Mozart had formed in his head and wrote down, as far as voice parts and instrumental bass (with some violin phrases) before attempting the Lacrimosa.

9. Sanctus ("Holy") and

10. Benedictus ("Blessed"). These traditionally form another pair with the Sanctus choral and the Benedictus for solo quartet. "Osanna in excelsis" forms a choral refrain for both of them, though here in different keys. As far as we can know, nothing here can be attributed to Mozart, and some have cited the shortness of the Osanna choruses as a defect, perhaps forgetting Mozart's frequent brevity at this point. If the melting beauties of many a phrase in the Benedictus are not Mozart's he would truly have greeted his friend's inspiration.

ii. Agnus Dei ("Lamb of God"). The opening petitions contain passages of Mozartean intensity, though we have no evidence, and culminate in a mysterious interrupted cadence and distant modulation. At the soprano solo "Lux aeterna" the music reverts to Mozart's Introitus and Kyrie. There is precedent for this in the several masses of his which revert to the opening music during Agnus Del.. So, on a bare fifth, ends this fascinating work, whose sometimes terror-struck utterance, compared with the noble stoicism of say the Masonic Funeral Music, seems to bespeak a state of mind quite out of the ordinary which somehow accords with the notion (historically suspect though it may be) that Mozart had persuaded himself he was writing the Requiem for his own death.

Perhaps there is one thought to be added, in modern circumstances: there is no single note of it either composed or written by Salieri.

Author: Ivor Keys (Programme Note has been amended. This note was supplied through the Programme Note Bank of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies)

John Rutter (born 1945)

Magnificat

The passage from St Luke (Chapter 1, verses 46-55) known as the Magnificat - a poetic outpouring of praise, joy and trust in God, ascribed by Luke to the Virgin Mary on learning that she was to give birth to Christ - has always been one of the most familiar and well-loved of scriptural texts, not least because of its inclusion as a canticle in the Catholic office of Vespers and in Anglican Evensong. Musical settings of it abound, though surprisingly few of them since J.S. Bach's give the text extended treatment. I had long wished to write an extended Magnificat, but was not sure how to approach it until I found my starting point in the association of the text with the Virgin Mary. In countries such as Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico, feast days of the Virgin are joyous opportunities for people to take to the streets and celebrate with singing, dancing and processions. These images of outdoor celebration were, I think, somewhere in my mind as I wrote, though I was not fully conscious of the fact till afterwards. I was conscious of following Bach's example in adding to the liturgical text - with the lovely old English poem 'Of a Rose' and the prayer 'Sancta Maria' both of which strengthen the Marian connection, and with the interpolated 'Sanctus' (to the Gregorian chant of the Missa cum júbilo) in the third movement, which seems to grow out of the immediately preceding thought 'et sanctum nomen eius'. The composition of Magnificat occupied several hectic weeks early in 1990, and the première took place in May of that year in Carnegie Hall, New York.

Author: John Rutter

(Programme Note Author - John Rutter. This note was supplied through the Programme Note Bank of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies)

English Translation of the Magnificat from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer

Magnificat

Magnificat anima mea Dominum:
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden:
for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Quia fecit mihi magna

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen eius.
Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are filled with thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Et misericordia

Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus cum.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.

Fecit potentiam

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.

He hath shewed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the
humble and meek.

Esurientes

Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae.
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel.
As he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.

Gloria Patri

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sancta Maria, succurre miseris,
iuva pusillanimes, refove flebiles:
ora pro populo, interveni pro clero,
intercede pro devoto femineo sexu:
sentiant omnes tuum iuvamen,
quicumque tuum sanctum implorant auxilium. Alleluia.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Holy Mary, succour those in need,
help the fainthearted,
support the weak:
pray for the laity, assist the clergy,
intercede for all devout women:
may all feel the power of your help,
whoever prays for your holy aid. Alleluia.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

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Biographies

Musical Director - Nick Thomas

Nick is at present head of music at Kingsmead School, Wiveliscombe. His musical interests are wide and varied. He is a multi instrumentalist concentrating mainly on flute, piano and piano accordion. He was until recently musical director and organist at St George's C of E Church, Wilton. He has performed and worked with many groups in the Taunton area including Orchestra West, and many local operatic societies.

As well as directing the West Somerset Singers, Nick is the musical director for Somerset Opera's touring show 'Patience.'

He regularly plays accordion, flute and whistle with his folk band 'Transters Folly'. He greatly enjoys making music, and in particular bringing out the best in other performers - be they adults or young people.

Organist – Alex Davies

Alex Davies studied at Trinity College of Music London where his organ teachers included John Winter and Sean Farrell. On completion of his Bmus he was awarded a scholarship to pursue post graduate studies in organ with Roger Sayer at Rochester Cathedral. Whilst studying at college he won the Cardnell organ prize and was organ scholar to St Augustine's Queens Gate and St. Alfege in Greenwich. He has performed in concerts, and given recitals at venues throughout London including; Marylebone Parish Church, Royal Naval College Chapel, Royal Festival Hall, Southwark Cathedral. In 2003/4 he worked at Blackburn Cathedral as organ scholar assisting the busy music department, accompanying services and playing in concerts and recitals.

Currently Alex is working in the family Hotel business in Lyme Regis and locally as a musician. He is organist at the Parish Church and a member of the Lyme Regis organ appeal committee and directs Lyme Bay Chorale. Over the last two years Alex has directed numerous concerts at the Parish Church in Lyme, which have raised significant funds for local charities and has recently produced the CD recording "With love from Lyme" capturing over one hundred local performers which has sold successfully in aid of the organ appeal.

Michael Collins – Bass

Mike grew up in Wellington, Somerset and was involved with music from an early age, both his parents having been professional musicians. While at school and university, Mike sang in a variety of choirs, including memorable performances at a range of venues such as St. Peter's, Rome, Truro, Ripon and Worcester Cathedrals and Symphony Hall, Birmingham. He has also been an enthusiastic member of local musical theatre and opera societies, often rehearsing two or three shows at once while at school! Leading roles include Javert in Les Miserables, Seymour in Little Shop of Horrors, Leporello in Don Giovanni,

Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, and Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden*, for which he won the John Mickle award for outstanding potential.

Whilst at university Mike studied with the internationally renowned Baritone, Henry Herford, he currently has lessons with Margaret Humphrey Clark. Having graduated this summer with a BMus (Hons) degree and a First in his final performance, Mike now lives in Gloucester with his girlfriend, Esther, and holds the post of Lay Clerk at Tewkesbury Abbey. When not singing, Mike enjoys walking and making jam!

Peter Oakley - Countertenor

Peter's first experience of singing was in the Exeter Cathedral Choir where he was a treble for six years becoming head Chorister in his final year. He won a music scholarship to Kings College Taunton where he became a countertenor and was part of the choir which won "Songs of Praise Choir of the year."

In 2007 Peter won Taunton young musician of the year and has since become a recognised soloist in the Taunton area. He has been accompanied by Taunton sinfonietta in a recital and his recent appointments include Handel "messiah," Bach "Magnificat" and Purcell verse anthems.

Peter has been offered a choral scholarship to Kings College Cambridge and is working hard to meet the necessary grades. He plays violin, piano and organ to grade 8 standard and has recently taken up Jazz piano. Future ambitions include becoming a musical director or a professional singer.

Simon Hurrell - Tenor

Simon has undertaken many solo roles in oratorio including; Haydn's *Creation*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, the Mozart *Requiem*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and *Petit Messe Solenne*. He sang solo tenor parts for the West Somerset Singers' Christmas concert in 2007.

Simon enjoys English song having performed works by Rutter, Vaughan-Williams and Britten.

Janet Distin - Soprano

Janet hails from Cornwall and now lives in Devon. She has been singing since the age of twelve, having been taught by her father, Geoffrey Savage, who was a well known West Country bass-baritone. Janet enjoys singing a wide variety of music and was co-founder of the Ashburton based *In-Con Singers*. She has been a member of a folk group appearing at many venues throughout the West Country.

Janet sang regularly at Stogumber Arts Centre with a repertoire ranging from folk through Gilbert and Sullivan to cabaret and opera. With a group of close friends and esteemed West Country musical director, Rob Young, she appears in the Max and Rebecca Memorial Concerts and over the past nine years has helped to raise over £30,000 for three children's charities and is now rehearsing for their Gala Christmas Special.

Janet sang the solo Soprano parts for the West Somerset Singers' Christmas concert in 2007.

Acknowledgments

The West Somerset Singers would like to thank St George's C of E, Wilton for their hospitality.

Thank you also to Somerset Performing Arts Library for supplying the music copies and Making Music for programme notes.

Members would like to express their gratitude to Philip Lloyd for accompanying the choir at their Monday evening rehearsals. Philip moved to Somerset in 2001 from Hampshire, and responded to an advertisement for a pianist to accompany the West Somerset Singers as a way of involving himself in music in his new surroundings. Since then he has given eight years' loyal service to the choir.

Philip is leaving to devote more time to musical projects in his village of Combe St Nicholas. These include the village hand-bells, a village society that stages various concerts, and the Cloverleaf Productions pantomime. He also accompanies the New Horizon singers.

We would like to thank Philip for all his dedication over the years, and wish him every success for the future.

If you know anyone who would be interested in taking on the role of accompanist from September 2009 please contact Marianne Bray - Chairman on (01823) 480888.

