



PROGRAMME





THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, BRIGHTON
SATURDAY 11TH MAY 2002

ESTERHÁZY CHAMBER CHOIR

DIRECTOR~ NICHOLAS HOUGHTON

Gioachino Rossini

Petite messe solennelle

SOPRANO~ KAREN BROUGHTON

CONTRALTO~ LOUISE ARMIT

TENOR~ STEPHEN ROOKE

BASS~ LEANDROS TALLOTIS

ORGAN~ JAMES THOMAS

PIANO~ RACHAEL BUXTON

PROGRAMME NOTES

“Good Lord, there it is, finished, this poor little mass - is it indeed music for the blest that I have just written, or just some blessed music? Thou knowest well, I was born for comic opera. A little science, a little heart, that is all. So bless Thee and grant me Paradise!”

G Rossini, *Passy* 1863

Gioachino Antonio Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy, in 1792. His father was the town trumpeter, his mother was a singer. Best known for his comic operas, he stopped writing for many years following an apparent nervous breakdown in 1836 caused by his intensive work on *Guillaume Tell*. He settled in Paris in 1855 in the village of Passy (where he may have bumped into Balzac who was holed-up in a garret there trying to escape his creditors). Rossini was much loved by the artists, writers and musicians of Paris, and became known as “the swan of Pesaro”. His weekly parties were *the* place to be seen.

Rossini was 71 when he wrote the *Petite Messe Solennelle*. He had written nothing for 30 years, but instead of producing the comic opera his still-adoring public were patiently waiting for, he responded to a request from his friend, the Countess Louise Pillet-Will, who wanted a solemn mass for the consecration of her private chapel.

The *Petite Messe Solennelle* is neither *petite* nor particularly solemn, but Rossini’s consummate skill in dramatic vocal writing combines with a tongue-in-cheek approach to religious grandeur and pomposity to produce a work exuding the naïve charm of a celebration of simple faith by unsophisticated Parisian folk. This effect is accentuated by the scoring for piano and harmonium, and was originally intended for 12 singers, a perfect *salon* piece. He actually referred to the *Petite Messe* as “rather devilish music”, and confessed to a certain amount of self-indulgence in its creation. This has led to accusations of irreverence amongst the devout, as though God should only be praised with pious

solemnity, but never entertained. Those who denigrate it are denying its rightful place: it is a mass written for the comic opera audience, a mass for the masses.

A critic of *Le Siècle* once wrote “there is enough fire in the piece to melt a marble cathedral were it to be scored for full chorus and orchestra”. In 1866-7, Rossini did orchestrate it, and it was performed in February at the Théâtre-Italien, Paris. The other compositions Rossini produced during these late Paris years consist of about 150 piano pieces and songs known as *péchés de vieillesse* - Sins of Old Age. Rossini died in Paris in 1868, and was buried in the Père-Lachaise cemetery, where he can now be found resting alongside Colette, the *femme fatale* and writer of *Gigi*, and a stone’s-throw from Fauré, Chopin, Bellini and Jim Morrison.

Notes by Karen Zeff

NICHOLAS HOUGHTON~ MUSIC DIRECTOR

Nicholas began his musical career at the age of seven, as a chorister at Coventry Cathedral. He is currently Director of Music at Hurstpierpoint College and has been Music Director of the Esterházy Chamber Choir since January 2001.

Nicholas studied the organ with Lady Susi Jeans and Nicolas Kynaston while reading music at Bristol and Cambridge Universities. Since then he has worked as a professional recitalist and continuo player.

As accompanist and conductor Nicholas has worked with international artists and orchestras. He is Music Director of the Downland Chorale whom he recently conducted in a performance of Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast* to critical acclaim.

His recording credits as an organist include David Fanshawe’s *African Sanctus* produced by the composer himself in 1994. As pianist he is a member of the trio *Cause Célèbre* performing regularly throughout the UK.

KAREN BROUGHTON~ SOPRANO

Karen Broughton trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, followed by The Music Theatre Course at Banff in

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Canada. Her work ranges from opera and classical concerts to West End musicals and session singing.

Her theatre credits include the rôle of Carlotta in *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre, London, performances of Gertrude Lawrence in *Noël and Gertie* at The Comedy Theatre, London Cosette in *Les Misérables* at The Palace Theatre, London, and *Charlie Girl* at The Victoria Palace Theatre, London.

Concert performances include Beethoven *Mass in C*, Mendelssohn *Hymn of Praise*, Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, Poulenc *Stabat Mater*, Schubert *Mass in G*, and Haydn *Mass in Time of War*.

LOUISE ARMIT~ CONTRALTO

Born in South Wales, Louise studied at the Royal Northern College of Music where she made her operatic debut. She joined the Glyndebourne chorus in 1994 where she sang Doubt in the world premiere of *The Second Mrs Kong*. Solo roles followed at Scottish Opera Go Round, Covent Garden and with Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

Among many appearances in the world of oratorio she has performed Haydn's *Nelson Mass* with the English Chamber Orchestra and Mozart's *Requiem* with the London Mozart Players, both at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

STEPHEN ROOKE~ TENOR

Stephen studied at the Royal Northern College of Music where he won several distinguished prizes for singing and made his first solo appearances in opera. Stephen has been a member of Glyndebourne Festival and Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Roles there included Ferrando and Pilade in *Ermione* and Chaplinsky in *The Queen of Spades*. A masterclass given by Sir Michael Tippett in 1988 led to an invitation to give a recital at the Tivoli Festival in Copenhagen. More recently Stephen has sung for Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and in a gala performance of Handel's *Messiah* with the Esterházy Chamber Choir at Glyndebourne.

LEANDROS TALIOTIS~ BASS

Born in London, Leandros was educated at Cambridge University and won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music.

Operatic roles include Papageno *Magic Flute* in Wales and London, Watchman *Oresteia* (Xenakis) for the English Bach Festival, Antonio *Le Nozze di Figaro* conducted by Sir Colin Davis, Polyphonus *The Donkey's Shadow* for English National Opera, Junius *Rape of Lucretia* and Elviro *Xerxes* (understudies) for British Youth Opera and Garsington Opera.

Concerts have included the European premiere of Christos Hatzis *Everlasting light* in Athens and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the world premiere of Will Todd *A Song of Creation*, Mahler *Das Lied von der Erde*, a Young Greek Masters Series recital in London, Handel *Judas Maccabeus* in Nürnberg, Brahms *Requiem* in Paris, Orff *Carmina Burana* and Walton *Belshazzar's feast*.

JAMES THOMAS~ ORGAN

James Thomas has held several teaching positions as well as prestigious organist posts, including Oundle School (as Director of Chapel Music), Shrewsbury Abbey and St. Mary's Bourne Street. He studied the Organ with David Sanger and Margaret Phillips and in 1992 James was a semi finalist in the Paisley International Organ competition. His MA research and performance was concerned with the little known romantics August Ritter and Johann Töpfer.

In September 2000 James became Director of Music at St. Leonard's-Mayfield School. He also conducts the Sussex Philharmonic Chorus and the Hastings Chamber Choir and is Organist/Director of Music at Christchurch St. Leonard's on Sea.

RACHAEL BUXTON~ PIANO

Rachael studied first at the Junior Guildhall School of Music and Drama before going on to spend a year at the Royal College of Music studying piano with Bernard Roberts and Simon Nicholls. She graduated with a BMus from King's College in 1997 while continuing her piano studies at the

Royal Academy of Music. Her postgraduate studies in piano accompaniment with Geoffrey Pratley and Aaron Shorr were completed in 2001. Racheal has also participated in masterclasses with Rudolf Jansen, John Streets, Geoffrey Parsons and Martin Isepp at the Britten-Pears School.

THE ESTERHÁZY CHAMBER CHOIR

The Esterházy Chamber Choir was founded in 1993 and is based in Lewes, East Sussex. Comprising around thirty experienced singers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the choir aims to perform at a professional standard whilst remaining firmly rooted in the fine English tradition of amateur music making.

It is characteristic of the choir that it usually performs in 'quartets' rather than the traditional blocks of singers in voice parts - a technique designed to heighten both the audience's and the singers' enjoyment of the music.

The choir's repertoire spans four centuries of sacred and secular music, and, under Nicholas Houghton, performances accompanied by period instruments are a particular feature.

As a charity, the choir strives to make music more accessible to the young by offering free admission to accompanied children at concerts which the choir itself promotes - in particular its family Christmas concert.

THE CHOIR FOR THIS CONCERT

SOPRANOS

SARAH BRIDGLAND
BECKY CLIFFORD
FRAN DU CORBIER
ROSALIND FULLER
DYLIS GOGGINS
DENISE JONES

ALTOS

MARIA BIRCH
CLAIRE CARBERRY
MERYLL GOODWIN
ROBIN HOUGHTON
SARAH JARVIS
BRIONY LAMBERT
JOYCE PHILLIPS
KAREN ZEFF

TENORS

RICHARD BRIDGENS
ROBERT CARPENTER
NICK MARTIN
RICHARD WARE

BASSES

JOHN ASTBURY
CHRIS DIXON
DEREK FROUD
DAVID GOODWIN
JOHN HAYLLAR
TAM LARGE
MATTHEW SPENCER

REHEARSAL PIANIST: SARAH JARVIS

The choir welcomes approaches for audition from experienced singers. Contact **Sarah Bridgland** for details: 01903 761446

THE FRIENDS OF ESTERHÁZY

BENEFACTORS

MR S FFAULKES
MR & MRS H FOORD

MR D FROUD
DR J HESTER

PATRONS

MISS M E BUDLEIGH
MR M EVANS
MR C B D'A FEARN
MR & MRS P GILLHAM
MRS P JOHNSTONE

MR & MRS M. LIPTON
MR D MILLINGTON
DR M A NORMAN
MR D J PLATT OBE
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ASSOCIATES

MR D BOTIBOL
MR A BRUCE
K & J COLEY
MR H CORNWELL
MRS M FREEMAN

MR N HOLLINGTON
MS D M PEAT
MRS A ROBINSON
REV D W A STRIDE
MR R L VIGARS

To become a Friend, contact **Robin Houghton**: 01273 472489

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Saturday 29th June~ 7.30pm

Ringmer Parish Church (for charity)
'Music for a Summer's Evening'

Saturday 23rd November~ 7.30pm

Lewes Town Hall
St. Cecilia's Day Concert
Britten: Hymn to St Cecilia
Haydn: Caecilienmesse

Tuesday 10th December~ 6.45pm

All Saints Church, Hove
Carols for Chichester Cathedral Appeal
Chichester Cathedral Choir
Band of The Irish Guards

Saturday 21st December~ 7.30pm

St Bartholomews Church, Brighton
Christmas Music with brass

Sunday 22nd December~ 3.30pm

St. John's Sub-Castro, Lewes
Family Christmas Concert

Fundraising 2002

Members of the ESTERHÁZY CHAMBER CHOIR are embarking on a 'Fundraising Feast' programme. Briefly, the idea is to invite four (or more) friends to a meal with the proviso that:

- They contribute £10 per person in aid of our choir (a small proportion will be donated to the Lewes Library Appeal as we have made good use of this facility for borrowing music).
- They agree to host a similar event within the next 2 months.

This will generate a 'pyramid' which will, at successive levels (even allowing for some degree of drop out), more than double.

If you are interested in joining the scheme, a pack is available giving full details, invitations, reply cards, Freepost envelopes and Gift aid forms. Please contact **Robin Houghton:** 01273 472489.

As an added incentive, a meal to the value of £200 at a restaurant of the winner's choice has been donated by Creedgrove Ltd for the Friend or Member who generates the greatest income.

The scheme will run until the St Cecilia's Day concert in November. We hope to announce the winner of the meal at the Christmas Concerts in Brighton and Lewes.

Our choir relies heavily on fundraising to enable us to produce concerts of the highest calibre. Any contribution will help us enormously. Thank you.



Supported by
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