

Minehead Choral Society, Saturday 23rd March 2013
Easter Concert

Programme

Howard Goodall

“Eternal Light” a requiem.

1. Requiem: Kyrie: Close now thine eyes.
2. Revelation: Factum est silentium
3. Litany: Belief
4. Hymn: Lead kindly light
5. Lacrymosa: do not stand at my grave and weep
6. Dies Irae: In Flanders Fields.
7. Recordare: Drop, drop slow tears.
8. Revelation: Tum angelus tertius clanxit
9. Agnus Dei
10. In paradisum: Lux aeterna.

INTERVAL

Charles-François Gounod

Messe Solennelle de Sainte Cecile

1. Kyrie
2. Gloria in Excelsis
3. Credo
4. Invocation, offertoire pour orgue seul
5. Sanctus
6. Benedictus
7. Agnus Dei
8. Domine Salvum
 - 1. Priere de l'eglise
 - 2. Priere de l'armee
 - 3. Priere de la Nation

Programme Notes:

Eternal Light:

Howard Goodall (1958)

Howard Goodall is an EMMY, BRIT, Gramophone and BAFTA award-winning composer of choral music, stage musicals, film and TV scores, a highly respected broadcaster and an energetic campaigner for music education. In January 2007 he was appointed as England's first ever National Ambassador for Singing. His settings of Psalm 23 and Love Divine are amongst the most performed of all sacred music in the UK and have featured on numerous platinum-selling CDs. He is also Composer-in-Residence for Classic FM.

This Requiem was written as a choral-orchestral-dance piece in 2008 as a commission for the London Musici to celebrate its 20th anniversary, working with the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford

and the Rambert Dance Company. It subsequently earned Howard Goodall a Classical BRIT award for Composer of the Year.

Below are some notes written by the composer:

"Most requiems are based, one way or another, on the medieval church's Mass for the Dead, which is made up of a series of sections ('movements') beginning with the 'Kyrie Eleison' (Greek meaning Lord have mercy) and ending with 'In Paradisum' (Into paradise). Although the traditional requiem text calls for 'eternal peace, rest and light' for those who have died, it also emphasises judgement and everlasting damnation for anyone who transgresses the Roman Catholic Church's code of behaviour, as seen from the perspective of the Middle Ages.

I did not feel at ease with this approach to the appalling pain of loss and grief, so in an attempt to provide some solace for the living that mourn, I stripped down the old Latin texts to a few phrases in each movement and laid beside them words from English poems from across the last 500 years. The movements are arranged like this:

1. **Requiem aeternam** (everlasting peace) – Kyrie Eleison – 'Close now thine eyes and rest secure, thy soul is safe enough, thy body sure'
2. **Revelation I**: a passage from the Bible depicting the end of the world (Apocalypse)
3. **Litany**: Belief. 'I have to believe that you still exist somewhere, That you still watch me Sometimes, That you still love me Somehow. I have to believe That life has meaning Somehow, That I am useful here Sometimes, That I make small differences Somewhere. I have to believe That I need to stay here For some time, That all this teaches me Something, So that I can meet you again Somewhere.'
4. **Hymn**: 'Lead, kindly light amid the encircling gloom, Lead thou me on...'
5. **Lacrymosa** (Tears): 'Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there, I do not sleep...'
6. **Dies Irae** (That terrible day): 'In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses row on row...'
7. **Recordare** (Remember us, sweet Jesus): 'Drop, drop, slow tears...'
8. **Revelation II**
9. **Agnus Dei** (Lamb of God)
10. **In Paradisum** – Lux Aeterna (In paradise, eternal light & everlasting peace)"

Howard Goodall, composer

Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile (1855)

Charles-François Gounod

During his lifetime, Gounod was one of the leading French composers, though known mainly for his operas. He was so renowned that the Khedive (King) of Egypt considered Gounod along with Wagner and Verdi for an invitation to compose *Aïda*, to inaugurate the Cairo Grand Opera House. Nevertheless, it was the St. Cecilia Mass that solidified Gounod's reputation. In truth, his operatic expertise lent the Mass some of its dramatic effects.

Gounod's devotion to Catholicism began around 1840, when he had won the coveted Prix de Rome for composition. Living in Rome, he found inspiration in the extraordinary religious paintings of Michelangelo and in the music of Palestrina and other 16th Century church composers. When Gounod returned to Paris, his deepening faith led him to seminary studies at Saint-Sulpice. He considered becoming a priest and, for a time, even referred to himself as Abbé Gounod. Gounod was also deeply moved by the Romantic authors like Goethe (especially his *Faust*), and by the sumptuous French poetry

of Lamartine. These two muses, faith and romanticism, bring an enchanting juxtaposition to much of Gounod's music. The Mass exemplifies the sensuous beauty of his works, and their simple, forthright expression.

The hagiography behind this Mass is an even grimmer tale than most saints': Around the year 177, the Romans persecuted Cecilia for her Christianity, tried to boil her alive, and then tried to cut her head off. Miraculously, she survived for three days. Cecilia became the patron saint of music somewhat by mistake, when a Latin inscription of "organis" under a portrait of her was misinterpreted to mean that Cecilia herself played the organ. Thus, when the Academy of Music opened in Rome in 1584, Cecilia was made its patron saint, with a painting of her playing the organ. She has been associated with music ever since.

Although Gounod intended his Mass for St. Cecilia for both church and stage, his pious expression was no mere posturing. In fact, he wrote his own prayers to be spoken at the appropriate moments during the Mass Proper.

As befits Cecilia's somber martyrdom, he begins the **Kyrie** with a plaintive seven-note motif that grows out of the silence, gradually adding more instruments and a counter-line, and, finally, the choir. This reflective reverence soon transforms into a sweetly tender plea to Heaven, with a wafting arpeggiated accompaniment. The musical tension builds for a time over a sustained pedal note and then releases in a colossal, liberating cadence – one of Gounod's dramatic signatures.

The next two movements, the **Gloria** and Credo, are the cornerstones of the Mass and among the most stunning pieces of religious music ever written. An expression of ebullient adoration, the Gloria draws upon Gounod's predecessors Bach and Handel. The musical variety is wonderful, especially in the lyric middle section's rich solos for tenor, bass, and soprano. With a return to the first section, the Gloria ends with voices blazing.

In the incomparable **Credo**, Gounod joyfully proclaims his faith. The motor-like accompaniment sounds like a child skipping in pure glee. In the middle section (Et incarnatus and Et resurrexit), the chorus parts are splintered into extra layers, with passages suggesting fantastical and mysterious wonderment.

The **Offertory** is a lush orchestral interlude, a gentle contrast to all that precedes and follows it.

In the poetic **Sanctus**, Gounod gives the solo tenor a sublime two-phrase melody followed by a half-bar of instrumental stillness. Gounod's ability to adorn such a sensuous song so humbly brings a sense of deep contentment.

The **Benedictus** is a simple hymn.

The **Agnus Dei** finishes the Mass with a feathery lightness and a smiling lyricism. However, tonight we will also perform the added prayers for the King, **Domine Salvum** reflecting the performance of the mass, where three prayers for the King (in this case, the Emperor Napoleon) were said at the end of the service, from the church, the army and the people.

Camille Saint-Saëns attended the premiere and aptly exclaimed, "The appearance of the Messe Saint-Cécile caused a kind of shock. This simplicity, this grandeur, this serene light which rose before the musical world like a breaking dawn, troubled people enormously... at first one was dazzled, then charmed, then conquered."

Words

Howard Goodall: Eternal Light – a Requiem

2nd movement – Revelation: factum est silentium (Revelations 8 1, 2, 6 – 13)

8th movement – Revelation: tum angelus tertius clanxit (Revelations 8 10 – 13)

vs 1

Factum est silentium in coelo.

vs 2

Et vidi septem illos angelos

Qui adstant in conspectu Dei;

Quibus datae sunt septem tubae.

vs 6

Et septem angeli qui habebant tubas Praeparaverunt se ut clangerent.

vs 7

Primus igitur angelus clanxit,

Et facta est grando et ignis mistaque sanguine, Projectaque sunt in terram:

Et tertia pars arborum exusta est,

Et omne gramen viride exustum.

vs 8

Deinde secundus angelus clanxit,

Et quasi mons magnus igne ardens

Projectus est in mare:

Factaque est tertia pars maris sanguis;

vs 9

Et mortua est tertia pars

Creaturarum quae errant in mari,

Animantia dico;

Et tertia pars navium periit.

vs 10

Tum angelus tertius clanxit,

Et cecidit e coelo stella magna,

Ardens velut lampas,

Ceciditque in tertiam partem fluminum,

Et in fontes aquarum;

vs 11

Nomen autem stellae dicitur Absinthium:

Versa est igitur tertia pars aquarum

In absinthium;

Et multi homines mortui sunt ex aquis,

Quod amarae factae essent.

vs 12

Deinde quartus angelus clanxit,

Et percussa est tertia pars solis,

Et tertia pars lunae, et tertia pars stellarum;

Ita ut obscuraretur tertia pars eorum,

Et diei non luceret pars tertia, et noctis similiter.

vs 13

Et vidi, et audivi unum angelum

Volantem per medium coeli, Dicentem voce magna,

Vae, vae, vae incolis terrae

A reliquis sonis tubae

Trium illorum angelorum, qui clangent!

English Translation:

There was silence in heaven.
And I saw the seven angels Who stood before God;
And to them were given seven trumpets
And the seven angels which had the trumpets Prepared themselves to sound.
The first angel sounded,
And there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, And they were cast upon the earth:
And the third part of trees was burnt up,
And all green grass was burnt up.
And the second angel sounded,
And as it were a great mountain burning with fire Was cast into the sea:
And the third part of the sea became blood;
And the third part died
Of the creatures which were in the sea,
And had life;
And the third part of the ships was destroyed.
And the third angel sounded,
And there fell a great star from heaven, Burning as it were a lamp,
And it fell upon the third part of the rivers And upon the fountains of waters;
And the name of the star is called Wormwood: And the third part of the waters
Became wormwood;
And many men died of the waters, Because they were made bitter.
And the fourth angel sounded,
And the third part of the sun was smitten,
And the third part of the moon and the stars; So as the third part of them was darkened, And the day
shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
And I beheld, and heard
An angel flying through the midst of heaven, Saying with a loud voice,
Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth By reason of the other voices of the trumpet Of the three
angels, which are yet to sound!