

Minehead Choral Society - Saturday, 24th November 2013, 7.30pm Avenue Methodist

Programme Notes:

Faure Requiem

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| 1. Introit – Kyrie | Chorus |
| 2. Offertorium | Baritone Solo/ Chorus |
| 3. Sanctus | Chorus |
| 4. Pie Jesu | Soprano Solo |
| 5. Agnus Dei | Chorus |
| 6. Libera Me | Baritone (bass) Solo / Chorus |
| 7. In Paradisum | Chorus |

Rossini Stabat Mater

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| 1. Stabat Mater dolorosa | Chorus and Quartet |
| 2. Cujus animam | Tenor Aria |
| 3. Quis est homo | Soprano Duet |
| 4. Pro peccatis | Bass Aria |
| 5. Eja Mater | Chorus and Recitative (Bass) |
| 6. Sancta Mater | Quartet |
| 7. Fac ut portem | Soprano II Cavatina |
| 8. Inflammatus | Soprano I Aria and Chorus |
| 9. Quando corpus morietur | Quartet |
| 10. In sempiterna saecula, Amen | Chorus |

Gabriel Faure (1845 - 1924)

Requiem

From the age of nine Fauré studied music at the École Niedermeyer, the ‘École de musique religieuse et classique’, where Saint-Saëns was a member of staff. Saint-Saëns was regarded as a progressive teacher, introducing his pupils not only to the music of Bach and Mozart but also to controversial composers such as Wagner and Liszt. Unlike most major French composers, Fauré did not attend the Paris Conservatoire but continued his studies with Saint-Saëns, who greatly encouraged him by putting work his way and helping him to get his music published. The two became lifelong friends and Fauré later said that he owed everything to Saint-Saëns.

Fauré was a fine organist and in 1896 was appointed to the prestigious Madeleine church in Paris. He was also an excellent teacher, and perhaps because of his renowned expertise as organist and teacher only slowly gained recognition as a composer. He eventually became professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, and its Director from 1905 to 1920. Although he wrote several works involving a full orchestra, his particular talent lay within the more intimate musical forms – songs, piano music and chamber music. His somewhat austere style and highly individual, impressionistic harmonic language contrasts markedly with the music of the Austro-German tradition which dominated European music from the time of Beethoven until well into the twentieth century.

The subtlety of Fauré’s music, and his concentration on the small-scale, led many to criticise him for lacking depth, a judgement based on the mistaken premise that the bigger and bolder a composer’s music the more worthwhile it must be. Fauré deliberately avoided the grander kind of orchestral music that could easily have brought him fame and fortune. He preferred instead to embrace an elegant and subtle musical language that has won him increasing numbers of admirers, particularly as a composer of songs, a genre in which he is now recognised as a master.

The *Requiem* was composed in 1888, when Fauré was in his forties, quite probably in response

to the recent death of his father. Shortly after its first performance, Faure's mother also died, giving the work an added poignancy. The score is marked with a sweetness and a delicacy that places it wholly in its own class. Whilst it includes solemn moments, the tone of the Requiem is best described as serene as opposed to sorrowful. Faure himself referred to it as a "lullaby of death".

In its sequence of movements the *Requiem* departs significantly from the standard liturgical text. Fauré included two new sections, the lyrical Pie Jesu and the transcendent In Paradisum, with its soaring vocal line and murmuring accompaniment. He also omitted the Dies Irae and Tuba Mirum - for most composers an opportunity to exploit to the full the dramatic possibilities of all the available choral and orchestral forces. Consequently the prevailing mood is one of peacefulness and serenity, and the work has often been described, quite justly, as a Requiem without the Last Judgement.

Of the many settings of the *Requiem*, this is probably the most widely loved. In comparison with the large-scale masterpieces of Verdi, Brahms and Berlioz, Faure's setting seems gentle and unassuming, yet it is this very quality of understatement which contributes so eloquently to the work's universal appeal. It is impossible not to be moved by the ethereal beauty of this humble masterpiece.

Note that the text that Fauré set for the Requiem is not the standard Requiem text:

Introit et Kyrie

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem:
exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Grant eternal rest to them, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine on them.
A hymn befits you, God in Zion,
and a vow to you shall be fulfilled in
Jerusalem. Hear my prayer, for unto you all
flesh shall come.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Offertoire

O Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae,
libera animas ... defunctorum
de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu:

libera eas de ore leonis,
ne absorbeat eas tartarus,
ne cadant in obscurum...

Hostias et preces tibi,
Domine, laudis offerimus:
tu suscipe pro animabus illis,
quarum hodie memoriam facimus:
fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory,
free the souls of the dead from infernal
punishment, and from the deep abyss.

Free them from the mouth of the lion,
do not let Hell swallow them up,
do not let them fall into the darkness.

Sacrifices and prayers of praise
we offer to you, O Lord.
Receive them for the souls of those
whom we commemorate today.
Lord, make them pass from death to life,

vitam, Quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et
semini ejus.

as you once promised to Abraham, and to his
seed.

Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Domine Deus Sabaoth,
pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis!

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts,
the heavens and earth are filled with your
glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

Pie Jesu

Pie Jesu Domine,
dona eis requiem,
requiem sempiternam.

Merciful Lord Jesus,
grant them rest, eternal rest.

Agnus Dei et Lux Aeterna

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

Lamb of God, who removes the sins of the
world, grant them rest.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

Lamb of God, who removes the sins of the
world, grant them rest.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Lamb of God, who removes the sins of the
world, grant them eternal rest.

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.

May eternal light shine on them, Lord,
with your saints, for eternity,
for you are merciful.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Grant eternal rest to them, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine on them.

Libera Me

Libera me, Domine,
de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda:
Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra:

Free me, Lord,
from eternal death,
on that day of dread,
when the heavens and earth shall move,

Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.
Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo,

when you shall come to judge the world by
fire. I am made to tremble, and to fear,

dum discussio venerit,
atque ventura ira.

when destruction shall come,
and also your coming wrath.

Dies illa, dies irae,
calamitatis et miseriae,
dies magna et amara valde.

O that day, that day of wrath,
of calamity and misery,
the great and exceedingly bitter day.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Grant eternal rest to them, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine on them.

In Paradisum

In Paradisum deducant te Angeli;
in tuo adventu
suscipiant te martyres,
et perducant te
in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem,
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere
aeternam habeas requiem.

May angels lead you into Paradise.
At your coming
may martyrs receive you,
and may they lead you
into the Holy City, Jerusalem.
May the chorus of angels receive you,
and with Lazarus, who once was a pauper,
may you have eternal rest.

Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868)

Stabat Mater

The son of a trumpeter and an opera singer, Rossini grew up a talented singer and accomplished horn, viola and harpsichord player. He composed his first opera as a student at the Bologna Academy of Music and experienced a meteoric rise to fame, with a string of commissions and a growing international reputation. At the age of 23 he was engaged as Musical Director of the two Naples opera houses, for each of which he was required to compose a new opera annually, one of which included the *Barber of Seville*. His working pattern tended towards the indolent, interspersed with frantic activity in order to complete the commissions. He travelled widely and in 1824 settled as the Director of the Theatre Italien in Paris. His Masterpiece *William Tell* was completed in 1829 when he was still only 37, his 36th opera in 19 years, after which he composed nothing more for the rest of his life, other than two important religious works, the *Stabat Mater* and the *Petite Messe Solennelle*. It is suggested that he may have run out of inspiration and energy after *William Tell*, or perhaps he had just made so much money that he could enjoy his life of luxury and self-indulgence, with an endless line of visitors to his villa at Passy welcomed with good food and entertainment.

In 1831, Rossini wrote the *Stabat Mater* at the request of Don Francisco Fernandez Varela, archdeacon of the Madrid Cathedral, whom he met while visiting that city. Rossini agreed on condition that the work never be published. When Varela died in 1837, a Paris publisher bought the manuscript from his estate and sought permission from Rossini to publish it. Rossini refused, not wanting to admit that only six of the original 12 movements were his own (Rossini had asked his friend and colleague Giovanni Tadolini to complete the rest, and Varela was none the wiser). After managing to stop the publication, Rossini completed the remaining movements, shortened the whole from 12 to 10 sections and finished it in 1841.

The text of the *Stabat Mater* dates from the 13th century. It describes the suffering of Mary, mother of Jesus, as her son is crucified; it is part of the Catholic liturgy of Our Lady of Sorrows, observed on Sept. 15. Musically, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* combines two entirely different styles of composition: traditional church music in the Renaissance manner of Palestrina and Pergolesi, and arias that would not sound out of place in a typical Rossini opera. The austere choral movements, such as the men's unaccompanied *Eia, Mater, fons amoris* contrast sharply with the purely operatic style of the solos and duets, like the *Fac ut portem* for tenor and soprano and the *Cujus animam gementem* for solo tenor.

With his setting of the *Stabat Mater*, Rossini intended to honour the Catholic tradition within which he was raised, even though he no longer practised it as an adult. The *Stabat Mater* also served as a perfect vehicle for Rossini to express his grief over the deaths of his parents, as well as two close friends, and the loss of his theatre, the *Théâtre Italien*, which had burned down in 1838.

The work was criticised, notably by Richard Wagner, for the incongruous contrast between the theatrical music and the extreme solemnity of the thirteenth-century text, however, Rossini brushed such criticism aside and declared that most important of all should be music of the finest quality, with which he succeeded in this glorious *Stabat Mater*.

Text and Translation

I. Introduction/Chorus and Quartet

Stabat Mater dolorosa
juxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendeat Filius.

The grieving Mother stood
beside the cross weeping
where her Son was hanging.

II. Aria (Tenor)

Cuius animam gementem
contristatam et dolentem
Per transivit gladius.
O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti!
Quae maerebat et dolebat
Et tremebat, dum videbat
nati poenas incliti!

Through her weeping soul,
compassionate and grieving,
a sword passed.
O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed
Mother of the Only-begotten!
Who mourned and grieved,
and trembled, as she witnessed
the torment of her glorious Son.

III. Duet (Soprano I & Soprano II)

Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
Christi Matrem si videret
in tanto supplicio?
Quis non posset contristari,
piam Matrem contemplari
dolentum cum Filio?

Who is the man who would not weep
if seeing the Mother of Christ
in such agony?
Who would not have compassion
on beholding the devout mother
suffering with her Son?

IV. Aria (Bass)

Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Jesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum!
Vidit suum dulcem Natum
moriendo desolatum,
dum emisit spiritum.

For the sins of His people
she saw Jesus in torment
and subjected to the scourge.
She saw her sweet Son
dying, forsaken,
while He gave up His spirit.

V. Chorus & Recitative (Bass)

Eia, Mater, fons amoris,
me sentire vim doloris
fac ut tecum lugeam.
Fac ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Christum Deum
ut sibi complaceam.

O Mother, fountain of love,
make me feel the power of sorrow,
that I may grieve with you.
Grant that my heart may burn
in the love of the Lord Christ
that I may greatly please Him.

VI. Quartet

Sancta mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas

cordi meo valide.
Tui Nati vulnerati

tam dignati pro me pati
poenas mecum divide.
Fac me vere tecum fieri
Crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero!
Juxta crucem tecum stare
Te libenter sociare
in planctu desidero.
Virgo virginum praeclara,
mihi jam non sis amara;
fac me tecum plangere.

Holy Mother, grant this of yours,
that the wounds of the Crucified be well-
formed
in my heart.
Grant that the punishment of your wounded
Son,
so worthily suffered for me,
may be shared with me.
Let me sincerely weep with you,
bemoan the Crucified,
for as long as I live.
To stand beside the cross with you,
and for me to join you
in mourning, this I desire.
Chosen Virgin of virgins,
to me, now, be not bitter;
let me mourn with you.

VII. Cavatina (Soprano II)

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
passionis fac consortem
et plagas recolare!
Fac me plagis vulnerari,
cruce hac inebriari
Ob amorem Filii.

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ,
Let me share His torments with Him
and the remembrance of His wounds.
Let me be wounded with distress,
and through this cross, let me be filled
with love for your Son.

VIII. Aria (Soprano I and Chorus)

Inflammatum et accensum
per te, Virgo, sim defensum
in die iudicii.
Fac me cruce custodiri,
morte Christi praemuniri,
confoveri gratia!

Lest I be destroyed by fire, set alight,
then through you, Virgin, may I be defended
on the day of judgment.
Let me be guarded by the cross,
fortified by the death of Christ,
and cherished by grace.

IX. Quartet

Quando corpus morietur,
fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria.

When my body dies,
grant that to my soul is given
the glory of paradise.

X. Chorus

In sempiterna saecula.
Amen.

World without end.
Amen