

## Minehead Choral Society, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016

### Programme:

1. **Fauré** **Cantique de Jean Racine**  
2. **Vivaldi** **Gloria in D major, RV 589**
1. Gloria in Excelsis Deo SATB
  2. Et in terra pax SATB
  3. Laudamus te Soprano solos 1 and 2
  4. Gratias agimus tibi SATB
  5. Domine Deus Soprano solo
  6. Domine Fili unigenite SATB
  7. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei Alto solo + SATB
  8. Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi SATB
  9. Qui Seda ad Dexteram Patris Alto solo
  10. Quoniam tu Solus Sanctus SATB
  11. Cum Sancto Spiritu SATB

### INTERVAL

3. **Mozart** **Requiem**
- I 1. INTROITUS: Requiem SATB/ Soprano Solo
  - II Kyrie
  - III SEQUENZ :
    2. Dies Irae SATB
    3. Tuba Mirum quartet of soloists
    4. Rex Tremendae SATB
    5. Recordare quartet of soloists
    6. Confutatis Maledictis SATB
    7. Lacrimosa SATB
  - IV OFFERTORIUM
    8. Domine Jesu SATB + quartet of soloists
    9. Hostias SATB
  - V 10. SANCTUS SATB
  - VI 11. BENEDICTUS quartet of soloists + SATB
  - VII 12. AGNUS DEI SATB
  - VIII COMMUNIO
    13. Lux Aeterna Soprano Solo + SATB

### Programme Notes:

I am pleased to welcome back the Taunton Sinfonietta tonight who will be accompanying us as we perform the three works by Faure, Vivaldi and Mozart. Our soloists Krystal Macmillan and Stuart Laing have sung with us on numerous, memorable occasions and I am delighted to welcome alongside them, two new soloists for the society, Sian Cameron and Ryan Ross.

*Marcus Capel, March 2016*

We open our concert with the beautiful **Cantique de Jean Racine** written by Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924). The text, "Verbe égal au Très-Haut" ("Word, one with the Highest"), is a French paraphrase by Jean Racine of a Latin hymn from the breviary for matins, *Consors paterni luminis*. The nineteen-year-old composer set the text in 1864–65 for a composition competition at the École Niedermeyer de Paris, and it won him the first prize. The work was first performed the following year on 4 August 1866 in a version with accompaniment of strings and organ.

The justly famous and popular “**Gloria**” RV 589 by Antonio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741) forms the major part of our first half and introduces our soprano soloists, Krystal and Sian.

Vivaldi composed this Gloria in Venice in 1715, for the choir of the Ospedale della Pietà, an orphanage for girls (or more probably a home, generously endowed by the girls' "anonymous" fathers, for the illegitimate daughters of Venetian noblemen and their mistresses). The Ospedale prided itself on the quality of its musical education and the excellence of its choir and orchestra. Vivaldi, a priest, music teacher and virtuoso violinist, composed many sacred works for the Ospedale, where he spent most of his career, as well as hundreds of instrumental concertos to be played by the girls' orchestra. This piece presents the traditional Gloria from the Latin Mass in twelve, varied cantata-like sections.

The wonderfully sunny nature of the *Gloria*, with its distinctive melodies and rhythms, is characteristic of all of Vivaldi's music, giving it an immediate and universal appeal. The opening movement is a joyous chorus, with trumpet and oboe obligato. The extensive orchestral introduction establishes two simple motives, one of octave leaps, the other a quicker, quaver - semiquaver figure, that function as the ritornello. The choir enters in chorale-like fashion, syllabically declaiming the text in regular rhythms, contrasting with the orchestral ritornello, which contains most of the melodic interest of the movement.

The B minor *Et in terra pax* is in nearly every way a contrast to the first. It is in triple rather than duple time, in a minor key, and rather slower. Its imitative and expressive chromatic texture evokes the motets of the Renaissance era, the so-called "stile antico". *Laudamus te*, a passionate duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano, gives us some hint of the skill of Vivaldi's young singers. *Gratias agimus tibi* is a very broad and entirely homophonic prelude to a fugal allegro on *propter magnam gloriam*. The Largo *Domine Deus, Rex coelestis* is in the form of duet between the solo soprano and the solo oboe, followed by the joyful F major *Domine Fili unigenite* chorus in what Vivaldi and his contemporaries would have regarded as the 'French style'. It is dominated by the dotted rhythms characteristic of a French overture. *Domine Deus, Agnus Dei* features the alto soloist, with the chorus providing an antiphonal response, *qui tollis peccata mundi*, to each intercession. The bold harmonies of the following section, *Qui tollis*, provide a refreshing change of tone colour, and complement the intercessional alto aria, *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris*. The string accompaniment contains recollections of the opening movement, and prepares for the following movement, *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*, which takes the shape of a brief reprise of the opening movement's broken octaves.

The powerful “stile antico” double fugue on *Cum Sancto Spiritu* that ends the work is an arrangement by Vivaldi of the ending of a Gloria per due chori composed in 1708 by an older contemporary, the now forgotten Veronese composer Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, whom Vivaldi seems to have held in high esteem, as he used a second adaptation of this piece in another, lesser-known D Major Gloria setting, RV 588.

Vivaldi enjoyed considerable success during his lifetime and squandered his fortune through extravagance, being buried in a pauper's grave in Vienna. The Gloria lay undiscovered until the late 1920s.

*Adapted from Vivaldi programme notes: Peter Carey, Royal Free Singers*

Our second half consists of the dramatic and glorious “**Requiem**” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791). This work reflects the melodramatic circumstances of its composition: Just a few weeks before his own death in 1791 at the age of only thirty-five, Mozart was approached by a gentleman acting on behalf of an anonymous patron who wished to commission from him a Requiem Mass. This patron we now know to be Count Franz von Wazlsegg-Stuppach, whose wife had died in February that year. The Count, who was a keen and able amateur musician, wished to be regarded as a major composer and saw in this commemorative commission an opportunity to further his own ends by passing off the Requiem as his own. He therefore conducted all business transactions with Mozart in secrecy so as to preserve his own anonymity; hence the subterfuge of sending a business agent to act on his behalf. On several occasions this gentleman arrived unannounced at the composer’s house. To the dying Mozart, well known for his superstitious nature and quite possibly sensing his own impending demise, these mysterious visitations had all the hallmarks of the supernatural

By the time he started work on the Requiem Mozart was already terminally ill, and parts of the composition were actually written whilst on his death-bed. In the event, he died before he could complete it, to the great consternation of his widow, Constanze. Payment for the work had already been received, and she feared that if it was handed over incomplete the commissioning patron would refuse to accept it and expect his money to be returned. She therefore decided to elicit the help of some other composer who might be able and willing to finish it for her, but despite several attempts being made, notably by Joseph Eybler and Maximilian Stadler, none came to fruition. Eventually Constanze approached Franz Süssmayr. There were many advantages to this arrangement; Süssmayr was one of Mozart’s more able pupils and had been with him a good deal during the final year of his life. He had several times played through the completed parts and discussed the instrumentation with Mozart.

Of the work’s twelve movements only the opening *Kyrie* had Mozart managed to complete in its entirety. For most of the others he had written the vocal parts and a figured bass line (a kind of harmonic shorthand), leaving just the orchestration, for which he had clearly indicated his intentions. These movements may therefore be regarded as essentially the work of the master. For reasons unknown, Mozart postponed writing the seventh movement, the *Lacrymosa*, until after writing movements eight and nine, but managed only the first eight bars before death at last overtook him. He left a number of other fragments, such as the trombone solo at the opening of the *Tuba Mirum*. Süssmayr completed the Lacrymosa, and composed the whole of the last three movements, Mozart having passed away before he could even begin these sections.

Süssmayr used substantial parts of the orchestration begun by Stadler and Eybler, and for the closing passages he repeated Mozart’s own music from the opening movement, an idea which according to Constanze, Mozart himself had suggested. Much more daunting, however, was the task of writing the entire *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* himself, the prospect of which had defeated his reputedly more talented fellow-composers. Eybler, for instance, despite contributing some worthwhile orchestration, had managed only two very unconvincing bars of the Lacrymosa before giving up and returning the entire portfolio to Constanze. Süssmayr was evidently made of sterner stuff, and by the end of 1792 he had finished the task. Opinions differ as to the quality of the Süssmayr movements, though it is generally agreed that the Agnus Dei is the most successful.

A copy was made of the completed score before it was handed over to Count Walsegg's envoy, but no mention was made of Süßmayr's part in its composition and for many years it was generally believed that Mozart had indeed written the entire Requiem. Amongst Mozart's circle, however, it was common knowledge that the composer had not lived to see its completion. Consequently, some considerable controversy later ensued as to the work's authenticity, compounded by the fact that Count Walsegg's score disappeared for nearly fifty years, to be rediscovered only in 1839. Fortunately, this complete score and Mozart's original unfinished manuscripts did both survive, and are now securely housed in the Vienna State Library. Comparison of the two sources has shown quite clearly which parts Mozart either wrote down or indicated in the form of sketches and footnotes, and which parts were completed and composed by his pupil. However, the matter is not quite that straightforward. Since Mozart is known to have played through and discussed the music with Süßmayr, it seems more than likely that he would have passed on ideas that he carried in his head but had not yet written down, and for this reason we can never be entirely sure of precisely what is Mozart's and what Süßmayr's. But all this conjecture is of little consequence as we listen to the music. It is Mozart's genius that shines through.

*Mozart notes taken from John Bawden*