

Joyful Company of Singers

Peter Broadbent *Conductor*



Rachmaninov

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 31

Reger

Acht Geistliche Gesänge, Op. 138

Thursday 30th March 2023 at 7pm

St Gabriel's Pimlico, London SW1V 2AD



JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS

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The Friends of JCS



The coronavirus pandemic affected everyone and hit amateur singing particularly. We send a huge 'thank you' to all our Friends who continued to support the choir through this very difficult period.

Friends support us both with donations and as audience members. Friends also support our Youth Fund which has provided bursaries for young conductors to work with us and be coached by our founder-director, Peter Broadbent, one of Britain's leading choral conductors, and Friends' donations have enabled us to engage our new Composer-in-Association, Zoe Dixon.

We warmly invite new Friends to enjoy the Scheme's benefits for all who donate regularly a minimum £5 monthly/£60 annually – larger amounts are most welcome!

Friends' benefits include:

- 10% discount on unlimited tickets to JCS own-promotion events
- Pre-concert 'Meet the Musicians' talks and complimentary Friends' receptions at all JCS own-promotion concerts
- Participation in JCS 'Come and Sing' days at discounted rates
- A password-protected Friends page on the JCS website offering choir news and free downloads of JCS copyright audio recordings.
- A free copy of our 'Sing Joyfully' CD
- Discounts on new JCS recordings and archive CDs from our stocks

Join the Friends via the contact form on www.jcos.co.uk or email friends@jcos.co.uk.

Our current Friends

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PROGRAMME

Please note - there will be no interval in this performance - there will be a short pause between the Reger Sacred Songs and the Rachmaninov Liturgy.

The bar will be open before and after the performance. Audience members are free to purchase drinks before the concert to take them to their seats.

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Acht Geistliche Gesänge (Eight Sacred Songs), Op. 138

Johann Baptist Joseph Maximilian Reger (19 March 1873 – 11 May 1916)

Reger composed the motets forming *Acht geistliche Gesänge (Eight Sacred Songs)*, Op. 138, in Meiningen in 1914, at the beginning of World War I. Inspired by Bach's motets, he had previously composed "extended a cappella choral settings" such as *Geistliche Gesänge, Op. 110*, with challenging double fugues. In contrast, he composed the eight motets featured in our performance as a master of "new simplicity", setting the words of both known and unknown poets.

Reger had wanted to publish the motets only after World War I had ended, but he did not finish checking his publisher's proofs – they were found next to his bed when he died in a hotel in Leipzig in 1916 – lending additional poignancy to the opening words of the first motet: 'Der Mensch lebt und bestehet nur eine kleine Zeit' [A man can live and flourish for but a little time]. The work was thus first published posthumously in Berlin later that year, 1916.

1. Der Mensch lebt und bestehet

Nur eine kleine Zeit;
Und alle Welt vergehet
Mit ihrer Herrlichkeit.
Es ist nur Einer ewig und an allen Enden,
Und wir in Seinen Händen.

Matthias Claudius (1740 –1815)

Mankind lives and thrives

*Only a short while.
The whole world shall pass away
With all its splendours.
Only One is eternal and omnipresent,
And we are in His hands.*

Translator unknown

2. Morgengesang

Du höchstes Licht, ewiger Schein,
du Gott und treuer Herre mein,
von dir der Gnaden Glanz ausgaht
und leuchtet schön gleich früh und spat.

Das ist der Herre Jesus Christ,
der ja die göttlich Wahrheit ist,
der mit seinr Lehr hell scheint und leucht,
bis er die Herzen zu ihm zeucht.

Er ist der ganzen Welte Licht,
dabei ein jeder klarlich sicht,
den hellen, schönen, lichten Tag,
dem er selig werden Mag.

Johannes Zwick, pastor. (1496 – 1542)

Morning Song

*You, greatest light, eternal shine
You God and constant Master mine
From you, the shine of mercy cometh
and shines beautifully, from early to late.*

*That is the Lord Jesus Christ
who is the divine truth
that with its lesson shines bright
until he guides the hearts to Him.*

*He is the light of the whole world
whereby everyone sees clearly
the bright, beautiful, light day
when he will be blessed.*

3. Nachtlid

Die Nacht ist kommen,
Drin wir ruhen sollen;
Gott walt's, zum Frommen
Nach sein'm Wohlgefallen,
Dass wir uns legen
In sein'm G'leit und Segen,
Der Ruh' zu pflegen.

Treib, Herr, von uns fern
Die unreinen Geister,
Halt die Nachtwach' gern,
Sei selbst unser Schutzherr,
Schirm beid Leib und Seel'
Unter deine Flügel,
Send' uns dein' Engel!

Lass uns einschlafen
Mit guten Gedanken,
Fröhlich auswachen
Und von dir nicht wanken;
Lass uns mit Züchten
Unser Tun und Dichten
Zu dein'm Preis richten!

Petrus Herbert, Bohemian Brethren (1530? – 1571)

Night Song

*The night has fallen,
And we should rest;
God is there, to care for us
By his good will,
So that we settle
In his company and blessing,
To maintain the peace.*

*Father, drive the evil spirits
Far away from us;
Keep the night watch;
Be our protector;
Shield both body and soul
Under your wings;
Send us your angels!*

*Let us go to sleep
With good thoughts,
Happily awaken
And never waver from you;
Let us, with rearing,
Focus our deeds and words
On your glory!*

Translator unknown

4. Und unser lieben Frauen

der traumet ihr ein Traum
wie unter ihrem Herzen
gewachsen wär ein Baum.

Und wie der Baum ein Schatten gäb
wohl über alle Land:
Herr Jesus Christ der Heiland,
also ist er genannt.

Herr Jesus Christ der Heiland
ist unser Heil und Trost,
mit seiner bitteren Marte
hat er uns all erlöst.

German/Russian spiritual folk song

Our Lady lay a-sleeping

*And dreamed a dream, as e'er 'tis said:
That there beneath her heart lay
A tree that grew with branches outspread.*

*And lo, the tree its shadow gave
To shelter ev'ry, ev'ry land:
Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour,
That tree is he, and aye shall stand.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, our saving health,
Hears us when we call:
By his most bitter Passion
He hath redeemed us all.*

Translated Catherine Winkworth

5. Kreuzfahrerlied

In Gottes Namen fahren wir,
seiner Gnaden begehren wir,
nun helf uns die Gottes Kraft
und das heilig Grab,
da Gott selber inne lag.
Kyrieleis.

Sanktus Petrus der ist gut,
der uns viel seiner Gnaden tut,
das gebeut ihn die Gottes Stimme,
Fröhlich nun fahren wir!
Nun hilf uns, edle Maria, zu dir.
Fröhlich und unverzagt!
Nun hilf uns, Maria, reine Magd.

(probably a pilgrims' song, 12th century)

Song of the Crusader

*We are travelling in God's name
We desire His mercies
Now God's power help us
and the holy grave,
wherein God himself lay.
Kyrieleis.*

*St Peter, he is good,
who was merciful towards us
as God's voice commanded him
Let us now travel joyfully!
Now help us, noble Mary, to come to you.
Joyfully and undaunted!
Now help us, Mary, pure Maiden.*

6. Das Agnus Dei

O Lamm Gottes unschuldig
am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet,
allzeit gefunden duldig,
wie wohl du wurdest verachtet:
All Sünd hast du getragen,
sonst mößten wir verzagen,
erbarm dich unser, o Jesu.

(hymn from Catholic-Protestant war of 16thC)

The Agnus Dei

*O Lamb of God, guiltless,
Slaughtered at the stem of the cross,
you were always enduring,
though you were despised:
All sins you bore,
lest we must despair,
take mercy on us, O Jesus.*

7. Schlachtgesang

Mit Gottes Hilf sei unser Fahrt!
Maria halt uns in der Wart!
Sankt Peter unser Hauptmann sei!
Unsere Sünde Herre Gott verzeih,
dass wir ewgen Todes frei!
Kyrie eleison.

Dank sei dir, Dank dem heiligen Gott,
des Himmels Fürst, Herr Sabaoth!
Allgegenwärtig Dreifaltigkeit,
steh uns bei zur Gerechtigkeit!
Lob und Dank sei dir geseit!
Kyrie eleison.

Matthias Kemnat, humanist (1430? – 1476)

Song of Slaughter

*May God help us on our journey!
May Mary watch over us!
May St Peter be our Captain!
May God forgive our sins,
that we be free from eternal death.
Kyrie eleison.*

*Thanks be to You, thanks to the holy God,
of Heaven's Prince, Lord of Hosts!
Omnipresent Trinity,
help us create Justice!
Praise and thanks be sung to you!
Kyrie eleison.*

(The text may refer to the battle of Seckenheim 1462)

8. Wir glauben an einen Gott

Schöpfer Himmels und der Erden:
mit Worten ließ er werden alle
Dinge zu seinem Gebot.
Von der Zarten ward er geboren,
Maria, der reinen, auserkoren,
uns zu Trost und aller Christenheit.
Für uns wollte er leiden,
ob wir möchten vermeiden schwere Pein,
den Tod der Ewigkeit.

(Anon. 14th century)

We believe in one God

*Creator of Heaven and Earth
With words, he created all things according to his
command.
He was born by the tender [maid]
Mary, pure, chosen
to console us and all of Christendom.
For us he wanted to suffer,
that we might avoid great pain,
the death of Eternity.*

We are grateful to Felicitas Biskup for providing the literal translations of Nos. 2 and 5-8

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 31

Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninov (1 April [O.S. 20 March] 1873 – 28 March 1943)

"I have been thinking about the Liturgy for a long time, and for a long time I strove to write it. I started to work on it somehow by chance, and then suddenly became fascinated with it. And then I finished it very quickly. Not for a long time have I written anything with such pleasure." Sergei Rachmaninov

In the summer of 1910, Rachmaninov finally found himself at home. The long American tour of 1909, during which he had performed, among other works, his new *Piano Concerto, No. 3*, had left him miserable and homesick despite critical success. Now back at Ivanovka, the family country estate inherited from his uncle, he happily immersed himself in the landscape and musical traditions of his native Russia. He planted many willow trees. And then he took up an old project that had previously eluded him, composing his *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 31*, in about three weeks.

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is the liturgy most commonly used by the Orthodox Church. It is so named because a portion of its text is attributed to John of Antioch, a 4th & 5th century Archbishop of Constantinople known as "Chrysostom" or "Golden mouth" for the persuasive eloquence of his prayers. (He is also remembered for his markedly homophobic and anti-Semitic homilies, although the liturgy that came to bear his name is neither.) The liturgy is comprised of a collection of hymns, litanies and prayers sung by the congregation in response to the Celebrant and the Deacon in a Eucharistic rite analogous to the Catholic mass. It is always sung. This evening, the JCS performs a modified concert version of the full liturgy, omitting some of the more extended litanies of call and response.

Rachmaninov, though a spiritual person, was notably not a religious one. The *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, his first large-scale sacred choral work, draws however upon the taproot of his childhood memories of attending church with his grandmother:

"We spent hours standing in the beautiful St. Petersburg churches. Being a greenhorn, I took less interest in God and religious worship than in the singing...especially in the cathedrals where one frequently heard the best choirs in St. Petersburg. I usually managed to find room underneath the gallery, and never missed a single note." (Rachmaninov's Recollections)

Even later in life, according to his friend the composer Goedicke, "[Rachmaninov] loved church singing, and often, even in winter, rose at seven and went by cab to the early liturgy at the Andronief Monastery, hearing the old chants sung by the monks". The echoes of these chants can be heard in moments such as the opening of his *Third Piano Concerto* or the *Dies Irae* chant quoted in his *Second Symphony*.

But in setting the *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Rachmaninov was not merely drawing upon these echoes. He was also placing himself firmly in a new school of Russian composition centred on the church and chant. In the latter half of the 19th century, there had been a movement to rid Russian sacred music of foreign influence and to return it to its roots. Among the composers involved,

Tchaikovsky, a major influence on Rachmaninov, had composed his own *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* in 1878. His was a large-scale setting, whose movements of harmonised chant were intended for concert performance as well as liturgical purposes. Scandalised Orthodox Church authorities tried to suppress it. In the end, Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy* was not approved for liturgical purposes, but he did manage to have it published, thus opening prospects for future Russian composers of polyphonic sacred music.

Rachmaninov had been urged to write his own *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* by Stepan Smolensky, a noted authority on Russian medieval music and conductor of the Moscow Synodal School Choir, made up of boys and men. In composing it, Rachmaninov sought the advice of the current director of the school, the composer Alexander Kastalsky. Like Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov set the entire *Liturgy* so that it might be performed either in a modified concert version or be used in the Orthodox service.

Following the rules of the Russian Orthodox Church, the liturgy is *a cappella*, so as not to obscure the text. Rachmaninov, however, did not actually set the ancient Znamenny chants of the ritual, but instead composed his own chant-like melodies, setting them to harmonies and textures that evoked the sounds of the Orthodox ritual.

To set his chants, Rachmaninov turned away from traditional Western European counterpoint, drawing instead on techniques of "counter-voiced polyphony" developed by the new school of Russian church music. Although the music is tonal, the modes of early Russian music are also strongly in evidence. There are no fugues; melodic variation is more common than the harmonic variety. Parallel voice leading is allowed and melodies are set against drones. If you are reminded of folk music on occasion, it is with good reason, as many of these practices stem from the world of Russian folk song.

In the centre of it all is the chant. The rhythm, stress and meaning of its phrases shape the constantly fluctuating shifts of dynamic and tempo through which the piece pulses and breathes. The smaller shapings accumulate into larger arcs that highlight the meaning of the text, and become driving, determining forces in the musical structure.

Complementing these techniques are Rachmaninov's vast, almost orchestral array of choral textures. Even though the writing remains largely homophonic, with the voices singing in the same rhythms, you will also hear double choirs, solo and small group lines, hushed murmurs of the congregation, unusual doublings that create new resonances, and constantly shifting groupings of different timbres. Adding to the expressive mix, Rachmaninov's kaleidoscopic palette of harmonic colours and contrasts in articulation help to bring the text alive.

The work was premiered on November 25, 1910 by the Moscow Synodal School Choir under the direction of Nikolai Mikhailovich Danilin. Despite the pains that Rachmaninov had taken to comply with their strictures, the ecclesiastical authorities would not sanction the *Liturgy* for church performance due to what they called its "spirit of modernism." A teacher of religious studies explained

that it was “absolutely wonderful, even too beautiful, but with such music it would be difficult to pray; it is not church music.”

Whether or not it was indeed “too beautiful” to be proper church music, there seems no doubt of the wonderful nature of Rachmaninov’s setting of the liturgy. The movements of the *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* offer the performer and the listener alike beautifully nuanced examples of the myriad ways to set text expressively. But in a sense, Rachmaninov does not just set the words of the Liturgy, he brings the ritual radiantly to life. You not only hear the chant, you hear the congregation intoning it, the surging procession of priests, the stamp of folk song, and the great ringing peal of bells.

[Notes by Yoshi Campbell – used with permission]

The opening of the public part of the Divine Liturgy is the **Liturgy of the Catechumens** and in this concert performance we omit here (and throughout) the Litanies, which involve the congregation responding with a simple phrase to a number of petitions.

After the exclamations (exphoneses) of the Deacon and the Celebrant the choir sings **The first Antiphon**: *Bless the Lord, O my Soul* in which the Altos lead the prayer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This leads on to **The Second & Third Antiphons**, said to have been composed by the Emperor Justinian in the 7th Century: *O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, although immortal You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change becoming Man; O Christ our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death; You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.*

Then there is **The Small Entrance** in which the Gospel is carried by the Deacon accompanied by altar boys with candles, during which a hymn or Kontakion is sung, in this case, **The Beatitudes**. After which the Gospel is placed on the altar by the Celebrant and everyone sings: **Come let us worship and fall down before Christ....**

After this, and a brief exchange between the Deacon and the Celebrant, the Choir sings **The Trisagion** – the Thrice Holy Hymn: *Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!*

The Epistle and Gospel would now be read or sung, and after several Litanies (omitted) and the dismissal of the Catechumens we move to the most important part of the rite: **The Liturgy of the Faithful.**

During the **Great Entrance**, when the clergy carry the bread and wine from the Table of Oblation to the Altar, the choir sings **The Cherubic Hymn** (*Like a choir of Angels*) pausing until the Celebrant arrives in the Sanctuary to finish the triumphant ending of the Hymn (*The King of All Who comes invisibly attended by the Angelic Hosts. Alleluia*).

There is a shortened ***Litany of Supplication*** leading to ***The Creed*** [after which there will be a short pause].

The Anaphora (Offering of Gifts) is very similar to a traditional Roman Catholic or Anglican Communion Service in which, after the Deacon calls on everyone to "*Stand aright - stand with fear*", the Choir responds with ***A Mercy of Peace***. After the familiar invitation to "Lift up your hearts" and the other responses, the Celebrant sings a brief preface before the Choir sings: ***Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts...***

After the sacred moment of consecration the choir sings ***To thee we sing***, the most gentle and straightforward movement, to which the composer gave the marking "barely audible".

After a brief exclamation from the Celebrant there follows a hymn to the Virgin Mary: ***It is truly fitting to bless you O Mother of God***. The Celebrant then exclaims an introduction to ***The Lord's Prayer*** set for double choir, concluding with the Celebrant intoning "*For Thine is the Kingdom...*".

This is followed by ***O Praise the Lord from the Heavens*** which ends with a series of very quiet "Alleluias", followed by a pause.

The closing movements of the Liturgy then follow quickly on each other, with ***We have seen the Light of Truth***, with two exclamations from the Celebrant; the Choir then sings ***May our mouths be filled with Thy glory***, a short rhythmical exultant movement based almost entirely on one chord, ***May the name of the Lord be blessed*** and a very brief ***Prayer for the Blessing of the Faithful***.

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In this concert performance:

Celebrant - Richard Milnes

Deacon - Garrod Stephen

Soprano solo in *Tebe poem - We Praise Thee* - Alexandra Loewe

JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS



One of Europe's prominent chamber choirs, the Joyful Company of Singers is known for its virtuosity and intensity of spirit, as well as for an astoundingly wide repertoire, ranging from the 16th Century to the present day, including many first performances.

Formed in 1988 by conductor Peter Broadbent, the choir first came to prominence when it won the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition in 1990. Since then, it has maintained its profile in the music world, winning an impressive list of national and international competitions leading to many invitations to perform. Concert appearances include most of the leading UK festivals and regular concert tours in Europe, broadcasting in many countries as well as on BBC and Classic FM. A discography of over 25 CDs includes Rachmaninov's *All-night Vigil* on Nimbus: 'beautifully characterized and shaped by Peter Broadbent' (International Record Review).

The JCS has also instituted a Youth Fund to encourage the development of young choral conductors, singers and composers and we now support our first-ever Composer-in-Association, Zoe Dixon.

SOPRANOS

Amanda Abbitt, Jenny Ball, Cathryn Caunt, Sarah Intrieri, Jane Metcalfe, Margaret Green, Alexandra Loewe, Wendy Norman, Louisa Roberts.

ALTOS

Bernice Arthur, Alicia Cropley, Philippa Gardner, Debbie Johnstone, Hannah Bale, Francesca Caine, Elaine Gould, Lorna Perry.

TENORS

Nick King, Stephen Mason, Julian Tolan, Mark Johnstone, Peter Murphy.

BASSES

Kevin Bailey, Tim Bull, Neville Hargreaves, Andy Mackinder, Tom Spanyol, Peter da Costa, Jonathan Lane, David Lowe, Robin Osterley, Christopher Williams.

Peter Broadbent - Conductor

Peter is one of Britain's leading choral conductors and whose experience ranges from brass bands to large-scale choral works, opera and musicals. In addition to his work with the Joyful Company of Singers since our creation, he has conducted the London Mozart Players, Divertimenti Chamber Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Southern Sinfonia, the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, Apollo Voices and the BBC Singers, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM.



Engagements outside the UK include concerts with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra & Kodály Chorus in Hungary, a broadcast with the National Chamber Choir in Dublin and a European tour with the World Youth Choir in 2006. He gives workshops and master classes throughout Europe, and as the first Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors he helped to instigate and develop choral conducting courses.

In 2007 he was presented with the Pro Cultura Hungarica Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Education & Culture for his services to Anglo-Hungarian relations and in 2017 was presented with the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.

Peter was awarded an MBE in the 2022 New Year's Honours for his service to music.



**Our next performance:
Friday 23rd June 2023 at 7pm**

**Summer Concert – choral works by
Byrd, Weelkes, Harris, Paul Reade & Zoe Dixon**

St. Gabriel's Church, Pimlico, London SW1V 2AD

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