

Lux Beata

Joyful Company of Singers
Conducted by Peter Broadbent
and Olivia Tait

Zoe Dixon – piano

Thursday 4th November 2021
St Gabriel's, Pimlico



JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS

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The Friends of JCS

The coronavirus pandemic has affected everyone and hit amateur singing particularly. We send a huge 'thank you' to all our Friends who have 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 provides a bursary for a young conductor to work with us and be coached by our founder-director, Peter Broadbent, one of Britain's leading choral conductors. Tonight, we welcome Olivia Tait as our new Junior Conducting Fellow.

We are now offering improved benefits in the Friends Scheme to all who donate regularly a minimum £5 monthly/£60 annually – larger amounts are most welcome, of course!

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-promotions
- Participation in JCS 'Come and Sing' days at discounted rates
- Coming soon – 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

To join the Friends, please use the contact form on www.jcos.co.uk or send an email to friends@jcos.co.uk.

The JCS is indebted to our current Friends:

Amanda Abbitt
Kevin Bailey
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Jenny Ball
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Philip Caine
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Bruce O'Brien
Nigel Richards
Howard Simmons
Janet Stephen
Joanna Thompson
Christopher Williams
Sally Zimmermann
...and others who prefer
to remain anonymous

Programme

Locus Iste / Ave Maria

Anton Bruckner

Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen? Johannes Brahms

Impromptu in A flat major Op. 90 No.4 (D899)

Franz Schubert

Zoe Dixon (Piano)

Deus, qui claro lumine

Cecilia McDowall

Soprano: Cathryn Caunt

Conductor: Olivia Tait

Hymn to the Creator of Light

John Rutter

Pause

Mass for 5 voices

Lennox Berkeley

Kyrie – Gloria – Sanctus - Benedictus (Soprano: Sarah Intriery) - Agnus Dei

O Nata Lux

Alexander Campkin

Sopranos: Jenny Ball & Nicola Roberts Alto: Debbie Johnstone

Tenor: Richard Milnes Bass: Andy Mackinder

Intermezzo in A major Op.118. No.2

Johannes Brahms

Zoe Dixon (Piano)

Christus factus est

Anton Bruckner

Programme Notes

The motets framing this programme are part of the legacy that **Bruckner** left to choral music as products of his years as organist at St. Florian's Monastery, where he had studied. During this time he met Liszt, and was introduced to the music of Wagner. Like Liszt he was a devout Catholic, and the Abbé's innovative harmonic language and respect for Palestrina and his tradition certainly influenced the Austrian's development. The apparent simplicity of *Locus Iste*, written in 1869 for the dedication of a Chapel in Linz Cathedral where he had also been organist, provides a solemnity to match the text, and the solidity of the main section is balanced by a mysterious chromatic passage to the words "Irreprehensibilis est". The earlier setting of the *Ave Maria* is one of three he wrote, and fully exploits the seven-part texture. Bruckner also set the Gradual text *Christus factus est* three times, and this is the last, written in 1884. Although written for only four voices this is a dramatic and vivid setting of the text, from the falling octaves of "obediens" to the winding lines of "quod est super", the wide-ranging tonality and dynamic contrasts remind one that he was a confident and mature symphonist.

Brahms had a great love for the music of Bach, and his motet *Warum is das Licht gegeben dem Müßeligen?* clearly pays homage to the great Lutheran. The form of this motet is similar to Bach's great motets, using Chorale melodies and containing much imitative writing. However, he makes no attempt to imitate the musical style, writing in his own harmonic language, full of expressive chromaticism. Brahms assembled the text himself from Biblical sources, and the punctuation of the opening section with the cries of "Why?" indicates a real spiritual search. The dancing compound time in F major at *Lasset uns unser Herz* provides a real contrast in mood, but also recalls Bach, as does the rich Chorale-like passage which follows. The final chorale is Luther's metrical version of the Nunc Dimittis.

Franz Schubert poured out his soul in an extraordinary profusion of music over the last two years of his short life. The 4 Impromptus Opus 90 were written in 1827, the year in which he helped carry Beethoven's coffin and only a year before he was buried nearby his hero. As with so

much of his late music it is the harmony of this piece which dictates the shape of the music. Despite the title describing the tonality as A flat major, the opening theme consists of falling arpeggio figures in A flat minor, and the searching and somewhat melancholic effect of the brief answering phrase delays the eventual arrival of the major key. The middle section – described as a Trio – is in the apparently remote key of C sharp minor (really D flat minor) and combines a feeling of intense sadness with a sense of dignity. The final section is essentially a repeat of the first.

Cecilia McDowall enjoys a well-deserved reputation as a particularly fine composer of choral music. *Deus qui Claro lumine* was commissioned as long ago as 2005. Beginning with a single note the piece extends upwards to the high solo soprano entry. The fading light of day is suggested by the downward shift of tonality, and the work closes with the gradual descent of the soprano solo over the gently repeated Amens.

John Rutter's *Hymn to the Creator of Light* was written to mark the centenary of Herbert Howells and the dedication of the memorial window in Gloucester Cathedral, and clearly demonstrates his affection for that composer. The texts, by Lancelot Andrewes and Johann Franck, both relate to the theme of light. The music falls into three sections, the first mysterious, the second more animated, and the third tranquil, based on the old chorale melody *Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele*.

Sir Lennox Berkeley was a major composer whose elegant and cultivated style reflected his personality and his Anglo-French heritage, nurtured by his studies with Nadia Boulanger, who to some extent is said to have encouraged him to become a Catholic. His personal reluctance to take the limelight may have affected the musical public's appreciation of his gifts, but he was highly regarded by his fellow composers and students. Malcolm Williamson wrote "if quality meant more than fame, then Lennox Berkeley should be placed in a position of the highest eminence". His ***Mass for Five Voices*** was commissioned by Cardinal Heenan, then Archbishop of Westminster, in 1964 and first performed by the Choir of Westminster Cathedral. This is a *Missa Brevis* in the fact that there is no setting of the Creed, and is unaccompanied, with divided Sopranos. It is a very concentrated setting with close attention to the text, the rhythms and shaping guided entirely by the

words. At this stage in his life Berkeley's music was still tonal, but often ambivalent and questing.

The polyphonic opening of the *Kyrie* reflects the Renaissance through 20th Century ears, whilst the impassioned cries of "Christe" in the middle section are more chordal, and the reprise of the *Kyrie* inverts the Tenor and Bass lines before dying away to a single note. The changing metres and contrasting dynamics in the *Gloria* demonstrate the intention he voiced in an article entitled *Truth in Music* that he wanted his music to '*merge into the liturgy, and not create a violent contrast or cause too much distraction*'. The return to the music of the *Hosanna* after the *Benedictus* with its interweaving lines is remarkable for remaining *pianissimo* – like an echo of the *Sanctus*. The opening invocation of the *Agnus Dei* is in unison, starting in E major, but shifting constantly and the gentle "miserere nobis" leads back to the dominant. The same motif opens the second invocation in which the voices answer imitatively from lowest to highest, whilst the "miserere" this time leads to D major for a simple three-part statement of the opening and the closing "dona nobis pacem" closes with an exquisite cadence on a chord of B major.

Alexander Campkin studied at Oxford University, the Royal Academy of Music and in Vienna. He has established a reputation as one of the leading composers of his generation, with a prolific output. The text of ***O nata lux*** is best known in the setting by Tallis, and the composer writes that *his setting remained quietly at the back of my mind as I composed*. The work was written for Patrick Russill and the Chamber Choir of the RAM. The calm opening gives way to a more turbulent central section, and after the climax there is a recapitulation of the opening material.

The *Intermezzo in A major* is one of Brahms' last works for piano, and was dedicated to Clara Schumann, with whom he had a long and tender friendship, and this wistful and gentle piece can be thought of as full of regret as well as happy memories. Clara died in 1896 and Brahms survived her by less than a year.

JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS

One of Europe's most 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. The first composition competition was won by young Australian composer Chris Williams and in 2016 the JCS co-commissioned the major work *Dancing Star* from Toby Young. In addition, we now welcome Olivia Tait as our fifth funded Junior Conducting Fellow to work with the choir.



Peter Broadbent, the founder conductor of the Joyful Company of Singers, is one of Britain's leading choral conductors. 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.

Guest engagements outside the UK include concerts with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra and Kodály Chorus in Debrecen (Hungary), a broadcast concert with the National Chamber Choir in Dublin and a European tour with the World Youth Choir.

Broadbent gives workshops and master classes throughout Europe and was the first Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors. In 2007 he was presented with the Pro Cultura Hungarica Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture for his services to Anglo-Hungarian musical relations, and in 2017 was presented with the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.

Olivia Tait is a London based conductor, recently having graduated with a distinction in her MA Choral Conducting from the Royal Academy of Music, where she held an entrance scholarship and studied under Patrick Russell. As well as her Junior Fellowship with the Joyful Company of Singers, Olivia is also the St Martin-in-the-Fields Conducting Fellow, where she works with the St Martin's Choral Scholars and Chamber Choir in conducting weekly services. She is also the Genesis Sixteen Conducting Scholar 2020/21 where she receives tutoring from Harry Christophers and Eamonn Dougan in conducting the Genesis Sixteen Choir. This summer, Olivia received a place on the Jette Parker Women Conductors Course, where she conducted scenes from Verdi's La



Traviata with the City of London Sinfonia at the Royal Opera House under the tuition of Sian Edwards, Alice Farnham and Jessica Cottis and went on to deputise as chorus master for Opera Holland Park's production of Janacek's The Cunning Little Vixen. She also participated in the DIMA International Choral Conducting Competition where she was a finalist and received the Gheorge Dima Special Prize.

Olivia graduated with a first-class honours degree in music from the University of Birmingham where she studied orchestral conducting under Daniele Rosina and was mentored by Simon Halsey.



Zoe Dixon is a budding professional musician from the east midlands, specialising in Baroque, Classical, and early Romantic repertoire. She spent three years studying piano with Caroline Costello at the Royal Birmingham Junior Conservatoire, and has subsequently studied with Jonathan Darnborough since graduating from this institution. Commended in particular for her nuanced interpretations and sensitive approach to voicing, she has performed in the Elgar Room in the Royal Albert Hall, and represented the RBJC in the final of the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe's annual competition in 2017.

Zoe is also a gifted composer, having studied with Robert Saxton and Thomas Hyde while undertaking her music degree at the University of Oxford. She has had works premiered at Wigmore Hall and Handel House museum, and has fulfilled commissions from various musicians including British recorder virtuoso James Risdon.

TONIGHT'S SINGERS

SOPRANOS

Amanda Abbitt
Jenny Ball
Felicitas Biskup
Cathryn Caunt
Viktorija Dronseikiene
Sarah Intriери
Olivia Tait

Margaret Green
Jane Metcalfe
Nicola Roberts
Carrie Symes
Alexandra Loewe

ALTOS

Bernice Arthur
Francesca Caine
Alicia Cropley
Debbie Johnstone

Hannah Bale
Denise Fabb
Lorna Perry
Joanna Thompson

TENORS

Richard Milnes

Mark Johnstone
Peter Murphy

BASSES

Kevin Bailey
Tim Bull
Andy Mackinder

Peter da Costa
Jonathan Lane
David Lowe
Garrod Stephen
Christopher Williams

**Our next performance at St Gabriel's - Thursday 31st March 2022
'Towards the Light - Music for Passiontide'**

Victoria Tenebrae Responsories, Roxanna Panufnik Deus, Deus meus, Poulenc Motets pour un temps de penitence, MacMillan Miserere.
Programme also includes Kate Risdon (flute) and Fergus Black (piano).



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