

Joyful Company of Singers
Peter Broadbent – Conductor

Remembrance

Thursday 16 November 2023

St Gabriel's Church, Pimlico



JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS

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PROGRAMME

Libera me **Lajos Bárdos (1899-1986)**

Beati quorum via **Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)**

To Autumn (John Keats) (1st performance) **Zoe Dixon (b.1999)**

Ave Maris Stella (1st performance) **Jonathan Lane (b.1958)**

Memorial (First London performance) **John Casken (b.1949)**

Alexandra Loewe (Soprano) Tim Bull (Baritone)

Annika Lindskog, Robin Osterley (Percussion)

INTERVAL

Messa di Requiem **Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968)**

1.Requiem (Introit & Kyrie) 2.Dies Irae 3.Sanctus 4.Agnus Dei 5.Libera me

Programme notes

Lajos Bárdos was first a student then a colleague of Zoltan Kodály at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, and together they laid the foundations of 20th-century Hungarian choral music. He helped reform the curriculum of the Academy, emphasising the training of choral conducting as well as musical history and theory. Together with two colleagues he founded the publishing house *Magyar Kórus* which published over 2,000 pieces from Renaissance to contemporary choral music, until it was shut down in 1950 by the Communist regime because much of the repertoire was religious. He was a renowned conductor as well as teacher (his pupils at the Academy included Kurtág and Ligeti).

His compositions were influenced by his studies in Gregorian chant, Renaissance polyphony and Hungarian folk music, and he found time to compose over 800 pieces, mostly choral but including significant instrumental and orchestral works. His setting of the ***Libera me*** from the Absolution at the end of the Requiem Mass is subtitled *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, and the word setting is extremely vivid, with a powerful unison opening, a use of the plainsong *Dies Irae*, and a very gentle evocation of eternal light at the close, rather than repeating the opening verse.

The *Three Latin Motets*, of which ***Beati quorum via*** is the last, were composed by Sir **Charles Villiers Stanford** as graces for formal occasions at Trinity College, Cambridge. They remain some of the most popular of Stanford's short pieces, and the elegance and clarity of the 6-part writing enables the meaning of the simple text to resonate entirely naturally.

Zoe Dixon writes:

One of John Keats' most celebrated poems, *To Autumn* poignantly reflects on the season which represents both the culmination of the summer and the diminishment that heralds the winter. Far from a jubilant harvest blessing or a eulogy to the declining year, most of the poem comprises contemplative description of the season in its rich dualities: the robin (red-breast) resuming its song and the swallow departing for warmer climes, the strong autumnal sunlight and the ever-earlier falling of darkness, the promise of the imminent harvest and the prospect of Winter's bareness.

The present setting of 'To Autumn' is the latest in a series of choral pieces exploring the passage of time, classic English poetry and the seeming constancy of experience that the changing seasons have given to us until climate change-affected recent years. The dualities of the season (especially the movements between light and shadow) are conveyed tonally against an F major backdrop, a key traditionally associated with the pastoral. It is hoped that the musical setting captures and enhances the seasonal contrasts so richly described in the text, and translates the mood of wistful observation into the medium of notes, rests, and timbres.

The text of **Ave Maris Stella** can be traced back to the 9th Century and frequent use in the Divine Office has led to widespread use of segments in hymns and Marian prayers as well as those for the safe conduct of travellers.

Jonathan Lane writes:

I've always loved the text since singing settings as a treble. I think because of its simplicity, the colour of the words themselves and 4 line verse format, it lends itself to vocal settings and theme and variations. Particular favourites include those by Byrd and Palestrina, through to lovely contemporary settings by James MacMillan and Owain Park.

This composition was very much text-led and once I'd sketched the theme to the title - the first 2 bars of the piece - the rest came relatively easily. The verses with more vivid writing ("*Loosen the chains of the guilty, send forth light to the blind...*") are scored *forte*, *agitato* and contrast with the more reflective verses of reverence to Mary ("*Show thyself to be a Mother: through thee may he receive prayer....*") scored *piano*, *dolce*. It ends, as it starts: *Ave Maris Stella - Hail, star of the sea*.

John Casken writes:

Memorial is a work for choir, two soloists and percussion which I composed for its world premiere in St Michael and All Angels Church, Alwinton, on 2 August 2014 as part of Upper Coquetdale's commemoration of the First World War. I wrote the text myself as a tribute to men from Upper Coquetdale who perished during the War and in particular those who were lost and never found, their names alone recorded on the many memorials of stone.

The text alludes to WW1 poetry, Remembrance Day prayers, and there are two separate rollcalls of twelve men lost, consisting of their names, ages and the villages they came from. In addition, I have been able to use fragments of an account of the battle of Mametz Wood written by Cpl. Briton Smallman of the Northumberland Fusiliers. The work was written for Coquetdale Chamber Choir, of which I am Music Director.

Ildebrando Pizzetti studied piano from an early age, but he was also fascinated by theatre, and had written several plays whilst still at school. Despite this he focussed on music, entering the Parma Conservatory at the age of eleven, receiving a composition Diploma in 1901. He had studied the works of all the madrigalists and church composers of the Renaissance and the Baroque, developing a great interest in seventeenth-century opera, and then Verdi, Wagner, Debussy and Mussorgsky. He held several influential teaching positions as Director of institutions in Florence, Milan and finally Rome, where he taught advanced composition at the Accademia di S. Cecilia from 1936 until 1958. He was recognised by the Fascist regime, of which he was a supporter, by admission to the Reale Accademia d'Italia, but continued to teach at the Accademia di St. Cecilia after the War.

The *Requiem* was written in response to a commission from the Accademia Filarmonica in memory of the late King Umberto who was assassinated in 1900, and the composer later wrote that he found it difficult to approach the text because of his own emotional state after the recent loss of his first wife. Whilst the influence of Gregorian chant and Palestrina style polyphony is evident in the setting, there is also an inherent sense of drama and a very close identification of the emotional impact of the ancient texts. His contrasts of texture are wide, as are the varieties of vocal colour specified.

The five movements the composer decided to set include the long sequence *Dies Irae* and the *Libera Me*, which is from the absolution of the body after the Mass, the two most dramatic texts in the liturgy.

The first movement separates the *Introit* from the *Kyrie* by a measured silence, and although scored for five voices, the *tutti* passages are rare – the plainsong like opening being succeeded by canonic polyphony, but with late Romantic harmony. The tonality is based around D minor, which is a key greatly favoured by composers who wrote a Requiem.

The same is true of the *Dies Irae*, the opening six verses of which are sung by Basses & Altos doubled at the octave, as are 2nd Sopranos & 2nd Tenors who sing a wordless commentary, so the music is essentially in two parts. As the intensity increases all eight voice parts become involved, but the first *forte* of the movement is not reached until the *Rex tremendae* verse. The economy of writing along with the restrained dynamic range gives this piece a surprisingly intimate atmosphere overall, despite some of its surprising and expressive harmonic turns. The very gentle closing of the movement resolves itself in D major.

The *Sanctus* is voiced very differently, dividing into three 4-part choirs, one of Sopranos & Altos and the other two of Tenors and Basses, providing a wonderful sonority, but still with lightly scored moments. This is in the relative major of F, as is the very restrained *Agnus Dei* scored for only four voices, the composer asking for only half the choir to sing. The first two invocations are polyphonic in style, but the third has a decorative melody in the soprano line supported by chords in the lower parts.

The *Libera Me* returns to D minor, and like the opening movement it is scored for five voices. The last judgment is evoked once more, although there is a very beautiful major key response to the prayer for eternal rest and perpetual light. Nevertheless, Pizzetti observes the liturgical text and returns to the opening passage of the movement, this time very quietly, but building to a dramatic close on the warning of the judgment by fire to come and ending with an open 5th chord -neither major nor minor.

Beati quorum via**C V Stanford**

Beati quorum via integra est:
 Qui ambulant in lege Domini
Psalm CXIX, 1.

*Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
 Who walk in the way of the Lord.*

To Autumn**Zoe Dixon**

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river salallows borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

[The first and last stanzas of *To Autumn*] **John Keats** (1795-1821)

Ave Maris Stella**Jonathan Lane**

Ave, maris stella,
 Dei Mater alma,
 Atque semper Virgo,
 Felix caeli porta.

*Hail, star of the sea,
 loving Mother of God,
 and also always a virgin,
 Happy gate of heaven.*

Sumens illud Ave
 Gabrielis ore,
 Funda nos in pace,
 Mutans Evae nomen.

*Receiving that Ave
 from Gabriel's mouth
 confirm us in peace,
 Reversing Eva's name.*

Solve vincla reis,
 Profer lumen caecis,
 Mala nostra pelle,
 Bona cuncta posce

*Break the chains of sinners,
 Bring light to the blind,
 Drive away our evils,
 Ask for all good.*

Monstra te esse matrem
 Sumat per te preces,
 Qui pro nobis natus
 Tulit esse tuus.

*Show yourself to be a mother,
 May he accept prayers through you,
 he who, born for us,
 Chose to be yours.*

Virgo singularis,
 Inter omnes mitis,
 Nos culpis solutos,
 Mites fac et castos.

*O unique virgin,
 Meek above all,
 Make us, absolved from sin,
 Gentle and chaste.*

Vitam praesta puram,
Iter para tutum,
Ut videntes Jesum,
Semper collaetemur.

Sit laus Deo Patri,
Summo Christo decus
Spiritui Sancto,
Tribus honor unus. Amen

c.9th Century – author unknown

*Keep life pure,
Make the journey safe,
So that, seeing Jesus,
We may always rejoice together.*

*Let there be praise to God the Father,
Glory to Christ in the highest,
To the Holy Spirit,
One honour to all three. Amen.*

Tr. Allen H Simon

Memorial for the fallen and lost, 1914-18

John Casken

Remembering men of Upper Coquetdale who perished and whose bodies were never found, their names alone recorded on the Great War memorials

We will remember
Those lost
In foreign fields,
In death's dark land

The battering of guns,
Tentacles of wire,
Gasping death
From deadly gas and
Graves of sucking mud

The madness of it all

In foreign fields
Where sleep
Lost sons of Harbottle,
Hepple, Thropton, Alwinton

Joseph Edmonson, twenty-one
Henry George Clark, thirty-eight
Robert Gutherson, thirty-three
William Forster, twenty-four

Sons remembered
On memorials of stone:
Loos, Thiepval

In foreign fields
Trampled, crushed,
Smothered mouths
Forced shut, face-down

"Shells started to burst in the trenches...
So narrow, two men could not pass each
other...
Lie down...your only chance...

Not strong enough...no stretcher-bearers...
Exhausted for want of food and sleep...
Buried up with shell fire..." *

In foreign fields
Where sleep
Lost sons of Rothbury

Thomas Murray, thirty-one
James Robert Richardson, twenty
William John Harvey, twenty-one
Thomas Gregory, thirty-four
Thomas Murray Trotter, twenty-two
Robert William Renton, thirty
John Thomas Wintrip, thirty-five
Thomas Tate, twenty-two

Sons remembered
On memorials of stone:
Thiepval, Doiran, Tyne Cot,
Arras, Ploegsteert

Old age was not for them,
Nor to see the life
Their children's children lead

Sons and fathers
Of these heathered hills,
Erased
From the blackened fields of hell

Remembered

We will remember
Those lost

Text by John Casken

* *Fragments of an account by Cpl. Briton Smallman, Northumberland Fusiliers, who fought at Mametz Wood, Uncle of Frances Smallman of Thropton, and Great-Uncle of Clare Friend of Harbottle*

Messa di Requiem – Pizzetti

1. Requiem aeternam

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!

*Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord
And let perpetual light shine upon them
A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Zion
And a vow shall be paid to thee in Jerusalem
Hear my prayer
All flesh shall come before you.*

*Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.*

2. Dies irae

Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favilla:
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando Iudex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

Tuba, mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit, et natura,
Cum resurget creatura,
Iudicanti responsura.

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
Unde mundus iudicetur.

Iudex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet, apparebit:
Nil inultum remanebit.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix iustus sit securus?

Rex tremendæ maiestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Recordare, Iesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ:
Ne me perdas illa die.

Quærens me, sedisti lassus:
Redemisti Crucem passus:
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Iuste Iudex ultionis,
Donum fac remissionis
Ante diem rationis.

*The day of wrath, that day,
will dissolve the world in ashes:
(this is) the testimony of David along with
the Sibyl.*

*How great will be the quaking,
when the Judge is about to come,
strictly investigating all things!*

*The trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound
through the sepulchres of the regions,
will summon all before the throne.*

*Death and nature will marvel,
when the creature will rise again,
to respond to the Judge.*

*The written book will be brought forth,
in which all is contained,
from which the world shall be judged.*

*When therefore the Judge will sit,
whatever lies hidden, will appear:
nothing will remain unpunished.*

*What then shall I, poor wretch, say?
Which patron shall I entreat,
when the just may hardly be sure?*

*King of fearsome majesty,
Who saves the redeemed freely,
save me, O fount of mercy.*

*Remember, merciful Jesus,
that I am the cause of Your journey:
lest You lose me in that day.*

*Seeking me, You rested, tired:
You redeemed [me], having suffered
the Cross:
let not such hardship be in vain.*

*Just Judge of vengeance,
make a gift of remission
before the day of reckoning.*

Ingemisco, tamquam reus:
Culpa rubet vultus meus:
Supplicanti parce, Deus.

Qui Mariam absolvisti,
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

Preces meæ non sunt dignæ:
Sed tu bonus fac benigne,
Ne perenni cremar igne.

Inter oves locum præsta,
Et ab hædis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis.

Oro supplex et acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis:
Gere curam mei finis.

Lacrimosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla
Iudicandus homo reus:
Huic ergo parce, Deus:

Pie Jesu Domine,
Dona eis requiem. Amen.

*I sigh, like the guilty one:
my face reddens in guilt:
Spare the imploring one, O God.*

*You Who absolved Mary,
and heard the robber,
gave hope to me also.*

*My prayers are not worthy:
but You, [Who are] good, graciously grant
that I be not burned up by the everlasting
fire.*

*Grant me a place among the sheep,
and take me out from among the goats,
setting me on the right side.*

*Once the cursed have been silenced,
sentenced to acrid flames,
Call me, with the blessed.*

*[Humbly] kneeling and bowed I pray,
[my] heart crushed as ashes:
take care of my end.*

*Tearful [will be] that day,
on which from the glowing embers will arise
the guilty man who is to be judged:
Then spare him, O God.*

*Merciful Lord Jesus,
grant them rest. Amen.*

3. Sanctus & Benedictus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth!
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis!

*Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of hosts!
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!*

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine.
Hosanna in excelsis!

*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the
Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!*

4. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi
dona eis requiem. (x2)
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of
the world, grant them rest. (x2)
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of
the world,
Grant them eternal rest.*

5. Libera Me

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna
in die illa tremenda
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra,
dum veneris iudicare saeculum per
ignem.

*Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death
on that awful day
when the heavens and earth shall be shaken
and you shall come to judge the world by
fire.*

Tremens factus sum ego et timeo,
dum discussion venerit atque venture ira:
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.

*I am seized with fear and trembling
until the trial is at hand and the wrath to
come: when the heavens and earth shall
shake.*

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

*Day of mourning, of wrath, of calamity, of
misery, that great and most bitter day.*

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

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may
perpetual light shine on them.*

Libera me, Domine.....

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.

JOYFUL COMPANY OF SINGERS



One of the UK's leading amateur 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.

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ALTOS

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BASSES

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



Our next performance:

**18th December 2023 at 7pm – Christmas Concert
St. Gabriel’s Church, Pimlico.**

Christmas music for choir, ranging from the Renaissance through German Romantic music to 20th and 21st century settings of familiar texts. We will be joined by organist Gavin Roberts for traditional carols with audience participation, plus a piece for everyone from the Master of the King’s Music, Judith Weir.



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