



Monteverdi

1610 Vespers

Deus in adjutorium, Ave maris stella, Magnificat

Handel

Nisi Dominus The King shall rejoice

Dering — *Factum est silentium*

Humfrey — *Hear O heavens*

St Barnabas Church
8pm, Saturday 23rd January, 2010

Programme

Monteverdi *Vespers*

Deus in adjutorium

Dering *Factum est silentium*

Monteverdi *Vespers (cont.)*

Ave maris stella

Magnificat

— interval of 20 minutes, at which wine will be served —
Please return your glasses to the tables before the concert resumes

Handel *Nisi Dominus*

1. *Nisi Dominus* (chorus)
2. *Vanum est vobis* (tenor solo)
3. *Cum dederit* (countertenor solo)
4. *Sicut sagittae* (bass solo)
5. *Beatus vir* (tenor solo)
6. *Gloria Patri* (chorus)

Humfrey *Hear O heavens*

Handel *The King shall rejoice*

1. *The king shall rejoice*
2. *Exceeding glad shall he be*
3. *Glory and great worship*
4. *Thou hast prevented him*
5. *Allelujah*

Summertown Choral Society

Registered Charity 900317

Duncan Saunderson, *conductor*

with

Sally Dunkley & Carys Lane, *sopranos*

Stephen Taylor, *countertenor*

Guy Cutting & Nick Hewlett, *tenors*

George Coltart, *bass*

and

The Summertown Players

led by Janet Froomes



Summertown Choral Society was founded in 1961. New members are always welcome to this friendly and well-established choir. There is no audition and we offer trial membership. Singing is a natural way of relaxing: there are proven health benefits and it's fun! Rehearsals for our new season start at 7pm on Thursday, 4th February at the URC church in Summertown. More information, including details of social activities, choir holiday and past repertoire can be found at www.summertownchoral.org.uk, from our brochure 'Singing in Oxford' or by contacting our Chairman on chair@summertownchoral.org.uk.

Conductor: Duncan Saunderson — Accompanist: Julian Littlewood

See the back page for details of our next concert.

Programme notes

Polyphony, weaving together the separate melodic line of each voice to form the complete work, matured in England and Flanders during the latter part of the 15th century. In the first half of the 16th century the finest Flemish composers moved to Italy, to cities such as Venice and Florence, and by the end of the century polyphony attained its fullest maturity in Italian sacred music, with composers such as Palestrina, and among the English Elizabethan and early Jacobean composers, not only in church music, but also in the growing popularity of secular madrigals.

By the turn of the 16th century, however, particularly in Italy, polyphonic music was beginning to be viewed as increasingly stylized, and Italian composers began looking for more dramatic forms of musical expression. They found this in a declamatory style for the solo voice and in harmonic writing for choral work, while at the same time technical improvements in musical instruments offered scope for more flamboyance. By the late 16th and early 17th centuries Italian composers had come to be recognised as leading the development of European music, and the new Italian baroque style spread into northern Europe.

Our programme tonight traces the thread of baroque music from its leading Italian exponent Monteverdi, through works by two 17th century English composers, Richard Dering and Pelham Humfrey, to Handel, the three of whom spent some of their musical lives in Italy.

Vespro della Beata Vergine

Claudio Monteverdi

(1567-1643)

Monteverdi was born in Cremona and received his musical education at the cathedral, publishing his first set of choral works when he was 15. He was appointed as a court musician to the Duke of Mantua in about 1590 and as his *maestro di capella* in 1602, moving in 1613 as *maestro di capella* to St Mark's in Venice, where he stayed until his death. His secular compositions included madrigals, ballets and operas; his sacred works included numerous motets and masses, and the work for which he is best known, the *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin*, published in 1610 together with a six-part *Mass*. To the liturgy of the *Vespers*, which has a formal structure of an introductory verse, five psalms, a hymn and the *Magnificat*, Monteverdi added five additional motets or concertos to be sung, in the published version, alternately with the psalms. The resulting work has been described (by John Eliot Gardiner) as 'the richest and most substantial work of church music prior to Bach's *Passions*'.

Tonight we sing three of the movements, each showing the new baroque music to superb effect, demanding virtuoso performance from soloists and instrumentalists in contrast to the polyphonic singing of the chorus. The first movement is a blaze of orchestral colour set against a repeated D major chord from the chorus. In the hymn the seven verses, sung in turn by soloists and by chorus, are separated by a *ritornello* from different sections of the orchestra. In the *Magnificat* solo voices and instruments echo each other in complex phrases supported harmonically by the full orchestra, in clear contrast to the polyphonic writing of the three choral passages.

Factum est silentium

Richard Dering
(c.1580-1630)

The formative years in the life of Richard Dering are somewhat obscure, but it seems that he acquired his musical education at Christ Church, Oxford. From around 1610 he was travelling in Italy, notably to Venice where he would have heard Monteverdi's new music at St Mark's, and by 1617 he had moved to the Spanish Netherlands as organist to the community of English Benedictine nuns in Brussels. In 1625 he returned to England to take up the posts of organist to Henrietta Maria and of 'musician for the lutes and voices' at the court of Charles I.

Much of Dering's work, principally religious motets and secular madrigals, was published in Antwerp. The volume of *Cantica Sacra*, published in 1618, contained this 6-part motet *Factum est silentium*. The drama of the war in heaven is reflected in the music: the stately opening chords contrast with the turbulence of the fighting, and the joyful closing Alleluias follow a solemn declaration of homage to God.

Nisi Dominus

Georg Friedrich Handel
(1685-1759)

Handel's career as a professional musician began in Halle, where he was born, near Leipzig, when he was appointed organist at Halle Cathedral in 1702. In the following year he joined the orchestra of the Hamburg opera, and in 1706 he moved to Italy where he built up a considerable reputation as a keyboard player and composer of Italian opera and of sacred music.

Among his earlier sacred works, published in Rome in 1707, was a setting of Psalm 127 *Nisi Dominus*, one of the psalms used in the liturgy for Vespers on the feasts of the Virgin Mary. It is written in six flamboyant movements, the first for chorus, the next four for soloists, and the final *Gloria* for double chorus and double string orchestra.

Hear O heavens

Pelham Humfrey

(1647-1674)

One of the pleasing features of the restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 was the revival of the arts and of music, and prominent among the new generation of composers was Pelham Humfrey. He attracted the attention of the King, who sent him at the age of 17 or 18 to study in Paris, and he also studied in Italy at the time when the makers of the new family of stringed instruments, Stradivarius, Guaneri and the Amatis, were refining their craft in Cremona. Among the positions held by Humfrey was that of Composer for the Violins at the Chapel Royal, and his output of church, court and theatre music during his short life was a notable influence in the development of English Baroque music, not least through one of his pupils, Henry Purcell. (He seems to have been an arrogant young man: Samuel Pepys confided to his diary on 15 November 1667 'Little Pellam Humphrys ... disparages ... everybody's skill but his own.')

His anthem *Hear O Heavens* is written for three solo voices, chorus, organ and continuo, with text from the first chapter of the book of Isaiah. The declamatory style of the new Italian music, with the inter-play of the vocal line between the three soloists, is in clear contrast to the harmonic writing in the two choral passages.

The King shall rejoice

G F Handel

Handel returned to Germany in 1710 and was appointed to the post of *Kapellmeister* at the court of the Elector of Hanover, who was to become King of England as George I in 1714, but after several visits to London he moved there permanently in 1712. He established himself under the patronage of leading figures in the world of music and the arts and in composing Italian operas under commission for the newly founded Royal Academy of Music. In 1723 he was granted a stipend as Composer of Music at the Chapel Royal and in 1727 became an Englishman by Act of Parliament.

In the same year Handel was commissioned to write four anthems for the coronation service of George II and Queen Caroline. *The King shall rejoice*, the setting of text from vv.1-5 of Psalm 21, was sung at the formal recognition of the king, with the closing *Allelujah* at the moment of crowning. (Another of the anthems *Zadok the Priest*, sung at every coronation since then, marked the anointing of the king.) The anthem is in five movements for chorus and full baroque orchestra. The choral writing moves easily between polyphony and harmony, supported by lively orchestral writing with full use of trumpets and drums, in the warm and rich baroque style which Handel made his own.

Clive Williams

The Choir

Sopranos

Jane Amies, Jan Archer, Gillian Atkinson, Wendy Ball, Gillian Beattie, Jayne Bennett, Nicky Boughton, Victoria Cairns, Sue Cloke, Anne Deakin, Rosemary Dearden, Jackie Eatock Taylor, Hilde Fischer, Sue Gerhardt, Veronica Giles, Deirdre Gleeson, Birte Glimm, De Grant, Alison Gunter, Naomi Haig, Angela Hassall, Ana Henriques, Sarah Law, Mireille Levy, Adrienne Lingard, Bea Longthorp, Isidra McFarlane, Emily Newson, Ana-Maria Niculcea, Sally Prime, Julie Ross, Melissa Shorten, Rachel Smith, Enid Stoye, Jill Sudbury, Julia Wigg, Sheila Wilson, Beth Wooldridge and Valerie Worth.

Altos

Kareni Bannister, Philippa Berry, Keren Bright, Emma Britton, Vicky Bullard, Emma Campbell, Diana Chandler, Gillian Chapman, Elizabeth Dale, Jo Eames, Karin Eldredge, Felicity Feeny, Rosemary Foot, Jane Gordon-Cumming, Leah Herrgen, Hilary Hullah, Alison Jones, Eleanor Joslin, Manda Joyce, Josephine King, Beth Knight, Lynne Maddocks, Vibeke Mannion, Elsa Morgan, Meg Movshon, Diana Paine, Jo Poulton, Andy Rimmer, Catrin Roberts, Marion Robertson, Amanda Saville, Sue Shaw, Jean Smith, Jane Stockton, Gay Sypel, Lynda Ware and Jackie Wright.

Tenors

Michael Bloom, Philip Booth, Charlie Crombie, Alastair Dent, Larry Eldredge, Hugo Everitt, Richard Haydon, Colin Kilpatrick, Stuart McFarlane, and Andrew Pritchard.

Basses

Nick Attwood, Christopher Ball, Clive Booth, Andrew Crispus-Jones, Ken Eames, Nigel Hamilton, Simon Jones, Robin Knight, Iain McLean, John McCloud, Jean-Louis Metzger, Wolfgang Ritter, Edward Todd, Gordon Waite, Clive Williams, Martyn Wilson and Keith Young.

8pm, Saturday 15th May, 2010

Purcell: *Funeral Sentences*
Parry: *Ode to St Cecilia*

Our next concert will be held on Saturday 15th May in St Barnabas Church, Jericho. Rehearsals start on Thursday 4th February. New members are welcome. See the website for more details:

www.summertownchoral.org.uk

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