

Guildford
Philharmonic
Orchestra

Guildford Corporation Concerts 1972-73

Rose Ring

Hymn of Jesus

This concert is promoted by Guildford Corporation with financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

SATURDAY 9th DECEMBER

Civic Hall—Guildford

at 7.45 p.m.

**Guildford
Philharmonic
Orchestra**

Led by John Ludlow

**Philharmonic
Choir**

A section of the Proteus Choir

Vernon Handley

Conductor

The Musical Director wishes to acknowledge with thanks the help he has received in training the Philharmonic Choir from the assistant conductor, Mr. Kenneth Lank, and accompanists Miss Mary Rivers, Miss Patricia Finch and Miss Prudence Edden, and the help given by Miss Linden Andrew and Miss Christine Francis in preparing a seating plan to accommodate the choir.

The semi-chorus in the Hymn of Jesus is drawn from the sopranos and altos of the Proteus Choir.

This concert contains four neglected masterpieces of twentieth century music. They stem from very different emotional and intellectual worlds, yet all are approachable at first hearing. They share one characteristic, and that is that each eschews easy popular effects to win its audience, but relies on worthwhile artistic inspiration and procedures.

PROGRAMME

Metamorphosen

Richard Strauss 1864—1949

Between 1943, when Strauss heard of the partial destruction of Munich, and 1945, when Paul Sacher commissioned a work from him, the *Metamorphosen*, subtitled a Study for 23 Solo Strings, was composed. Strauss was born in Munich in 1864, and the Opera House, which had meant so much to him, was in a part of the city that was destroyed. The work, therefore, is a lament, and includes as part of its thematic material, a falling theme which has strong resemblance to the second phrase of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Funeral March. The design is a long one, rather in the form of a huge arch, and because the work is

intricate, the composer has made sure to provide his listeners with certain reference points. Although the 'Eroica' phrase, and, indeed, the first phrase heard, and later a tune beginning with accented repeated notes, are all subject to metamorphoses, yet each returns in its original state at different points in the work, thus serving to remind us what the developing lament is about, at least musically. It is not until the final page that the implications of the 'Eroica' theme are allowed to unfold in a simple statement of that tune. The listener is tempted to count out in detail the different developments of the material, but it is doubtful whether there is much profit in this. The work is complicated in structure, but exceedingly simple in sentiment, and the reference points already mentioned serve to carry the listener through the emotional building up to the quiet, dark ending.

The disposition of the 23 solo strings is ten violins, five violas, five 'cellos and three double basses.

Strauss was 80 when he finished *Metamorphosen*, and lived for another four years.

The Garden of Fand

Bax 1883—1953

The emotional world of *The Garden of Fand* is no less real or powerful than that of the *Metamorphosen*, but it is expressed in a less sentimental idiom than that which Strauss habitually used. Bax, like Rachmaninov, was aristocratic in his culture, and though the middle section of this tone poem discloses a mighty passion, Bax balances this in the centre of a form which is otherwise colourful, but not concerned with morbid personal emotion.

The Garden of Fand is the sea. The ancient saga tells how Cuchulain, the Achilles of the Gael, was lured from the world of deeds by Fand, the daughter of Manannan, Lord of the Ocean. The hero's ship is borne to Fand's miraculous island on the crest of an immense wave. The humans are carried away by the dance and Fand sings her song of immortal love, until the sea overwhelms the whole island; the mortals perish, the immortals laugh and dance on. Bax pointed out, 'The tone poem has no special relation to the events of the legend'. The different sections of the work, which is in a clear beautifully controlled form, are interrelated thematically and harmonically, and this integrity of composition needs no programme to be convincing. Nevertheless, no opening of any piece of music concerned with the sea could give a clearer picture than does this one, and boiling out of it surely comes a great wave, although the chromatic crescendo is perfectly placed as a bridge section to lead to the dance. Of course, the dance spends itself, musically and by the legend, and no-one can mistake the passionate love song.

What critics often miss is that the second phrase that we hear from the double basses and 'cellos under the Atlantic swell, is the basis of the prominent horn theme in the dance; that the dance is made of a quickened version of the cor anglais and horn tunes heard at the beginning of the work, and that Fand's song is a metamorphosis of the scales that are fragmented over the whole orchestra in the opening pages. From Fand's song onwards, the form of the work takes charge. A recapitulation of the material takes place in reverse order, and we are left, although with an empty seascape, nevertheless with a feeling of the inevitability of the work.

INTERVAL

During the interval, refreshments will be served in the Surrey Room by members of the Concertgoers' Society.

The Bard, Op. 64

Sibelius 1865—1957

Sibelius wrote this short tone poem in 1913, so it dates from the same period as his Fourth Symphony, a work thought by many to be his greatest. It is like that symphony in that it avoids any gesture that would win it easy popularity. There is no definite poetic programme, yet it is a nationalistic work in that one cannot imagine it having been written by anyone but Sibelius, the Fin. Most of the music is very quiet, and, indeed, there is only one brief fortissimo climax, the heavy brass being required to play only two notes. Because the musical material sounds to be mere wisps of sound, it is tempting to hear in the clearest instrumental part in the score, namely that of the harp, the composer looking, as it were, through the mists of time, at that figure so important to the early culture of many nations, the wandering bard, or harper. The picture of this character is so distant from us now that it is difficult to understand the passionate, possibly war-like, legend that he sings of in this piece, yet Sibelius manages to convey the immense primitive culture that produced the bard, certainly no relation, despite what some musical commentators maintain, of the modern casual guitarist. Here is another work that refutes entirely the popular belief that if a work is modern it has to employ strange effects and strange instruments, and make a lot of noise. Strange effects there are, but obtained with the economy characteristic of the two composers in this half of the concert.

Hymn of Jesus

For two choruses, semi chorus
and orchestra

Holst 1874—1934

The story behind this astonishing work is a strange one. Whenever Holst felt the need to compose a work of original form, he immersed himself absolutely in the subject of the work long before he started to compose, and it was in August 1917 that he began work on the Hymn of Jesus, taking his text from the Apocryphal Acts of St. John. Just as he had worked at Sanskrit for the Rig-Veda Hymns, and as later he was to work at Keats for his Choral Symphony, so now he copied out each Greek word separately, adding the pronunciation and the literal English equivalent. Then, as his daughter tells us, he made his own translation, keeping as near as possible to the spirit of the original. The Hymn of Jesus is nothing like nineteenth century oratorio, and although uncompromisingly of the twentieth century it has recourse to older music and mediaeval chants for some of its material. The prelude is tranquil and almost cold; built on two plainsong hymns, the *Pange lingua* and *Vexila Regis*. Although we hear these chants, the way the orchestra discusses them gives us an almost timeless back-cloth for the outburst of the Hymn itself. At this outburst one realises that this is called the Hymn *of* Jesus and not a Hymn *to* Jesus. Although many critics have drawn attention to important and dazzling passages in the piece, for example, the setting of 'Ye who dance not, know not what we are knowing', the extraordinary radiance of 'To you who gaze, a lamp am I', and the quivering harmony of 'Know in me the word of wisdom!', these

wonderful examples of Holst's musical originality and detail are of secondary importance to his mastery of a completely tight form, for after the outburst of the Hymn one assumes that the material of the introduction has been left behind, and yet those plainsong chants recur in unexpected circumstances, but do not shock with their return because they seem so inevitable. Inevitable also, and perfectly placed in the span of the work, is the return to 'Glory to Thee, Father'. After this second outburst, Holst, with characteristic economy, compresses the musical ideas that have gone before in order to finish the work, and he brings together as one choir the two choruses, while the semi chorus, who throughout the piece have linked the ideas of the other choirs with their floating 'Amens', also join the rest of the singers and the orchestra for the final cadence.

Holst is a much neglected composer whose highly original music should be known the world over. If the 'Planets' is his most extrovert piece, the Hymn of Jesus is one of his most religiously exalted. If he had written only these two works he would have deserved a place in the world repertoire.

Vexila regis prodeunt
Fulget Crucis mysterium
Quo came camis Conditor
Suspensus est patibulo
Pange lingua gloriosi praelium certaminis
Et super crucis trophaeum
Dic triumphum nobilem qualiter
Redemptor orbis
Immolatus vicerit. Amen.
Glory to Thee, Father! Amen. Amen.
Glory to Thee, Word! Amen.
Glory to Thee, O Grace! Amen.

Glory to Thee, Holy Spirit! Amen.

Glory to Thy Glory!

We praise Thee, O Father ; we give thanks
to Thee, O shadowless light Amen.

Fain would I be saved ; and fain would
I save. Amen.

Fain would I be released ; and fain
would I release. Amen.

Fain would I be pierced ; and fain
would I pierce.

Fain would I be borne ; fain would
I bear.

Fain would I eat ; fain would I be eaten.

Fain would I hearken ; fain would I
be heard.

Fain would I be cleansed ; fain would
I cleanse.

I am Mind of All! Amen.

Fain would I be known.

Divine Grace is dancing: fain would
I pipe for you.

Dance ye all! Amen.

Fain would I lament: mourn ye all!
Amen.

The Heavenly Spheres make music for
us. Amen.

The Holy Twelve dance with us—
All things join in the dance!

Ye who dance not, know not what we
are knowing. Amen.

Fain would I flee ; and fain would I
remain. Amen.

Fain would I be ordered ; and fain
would I set in order.

Fain would I be infolded ; fain would
I infold.

I have no home ; in all I am dwelling.

I have no resting place ; I have the earth.

I have no temple ; and I have Heav'n.

To you who gaze, a lamp am I. Amen.

To you that know, a mirror. Amen.

To you who knock, a door am I.

To you who fare, the way. Amen. Amen.
Give ye heed unto my dancing.

In me who speak, behold yourselves. Amen.

And beholding what I do, keep silence
on my mysteries.

Divine ye in dancing what I shall do,
For yours is the passion of man that
I go to endure.

Ah! Ah! Ah!

Ye could not know at all what thing
ye endure,

Had not the Father sent me to you
as a Word.

Beholding what I suffer, ye know me as
the Sufferer.

And when ye had beheld it, ye were not
unmoved,

But rather were ye whirled along, ye
were kindled to be wise.

Had ye known how to suffer, ye would
know how to suffer no more.

Learn, and ye shall overcome.

Behold in me a couch ; rest on me! Amen.

When I am gone, ye shall know who I am.

For I am in no wise that which I
now seem.

When ye are come to me, then shall
ye know.

What ye know not will I myself teach you.

Fain would I move to the music of
holy souls.

Know in me the word of wisdom!
And with me cry again:

Glory to Thee, Father!
Amen. Amen.

Glory to Thee, Word! Amen.

Glory to Thee, Holy Spirit!
Amen. Amen.