

ARTS CENTRE

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Rossini
PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE

Mary Wells, soprano
Catherine Wyn-Rogers, contralto
Harry Nicoll, tenor
Jonathan Best, bass

Richard Markham, piano
David Nettle, piano
Peter King, harmonium

University of Warwick Chorus
Guildford Philharmonic Choir

Conductor – Simon Halsey

Thursday 20 June 1985.

PART I

- Kyrie – Christe* Soloists and chorus
Gloria – Laudamus Soloists and chorus
Gratias Terzetto for contralto, tenor and bass
Domine Deus Tenor solo
Qui tollis Duet for soprano and contralto
Quoniam Bass solo
Cum Sancto Soloists and chorus

PART II

- Credo* Soloists and chorus
Crucifixus Soprano solo
Et resurrexit Soloists and chorus
Preludio religioso during the Offertory, for Harmonium
Sanctus Soloists and chorus
O Salutaris Soprano solo
Agnus Dei Contralto solo and chorus

MARY WELLS was born in Bromley, Kent, and made her professional debut in opera. She won the International Competition for Singers at Munich, the Worshipful Company of Musicians Scholarship for Opera Singers and became a principal soprano at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Sir Malcolm Sargent invited her to sing at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts and she then sang for him frequently both in this country and abroad. She has appeared before Her Majesty the Queen at the Royal Concert in the Festival Hall. She broadcasts regularly for the BBC, and worked with Benjamin Britten on several occasions. Mary Wells has recorded both for EMI and Decca. Recently she has sung at festivals in Aldeburgh, Harrogate, Norwich, Nottingham, York, Flanders, Lucerne, Cambridge and Brugge.

CATHERINE WYN-ROGERS studied at the Royal College of Music with Meriel St Clair and has sung with Kent and Glyndebourne Operas. She made her London recital debut in 1982 at the Purcell Room. Her concert work has been extensive, and recent appearances include Judas Maccabaeus and Messiah at the Festival Hall (for Handel's 300th birthday) and the B Minor Mass on Bach's 300th anniversary at the Royal Albert Hall with the English Concert Orchestra (televised on Good Friday). At the beginning of the year Catherine Wyn-Rogers went to Israel with the Bach Choir, which resulted in a return invitation to work with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in February, and as a result of the second visit she will be returning again to do seven Messiahs with the Israel Chamber Orchestra. Catherine Wyn-Rogers sang the B minor Mass at the opening concert

of the Bergen Festival in Norway in May. She is going to France to sing with La Chateau Royale in Aix and later in the year in Flanders with the same group.

HARRY NICOLL was born in Inverness and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama where he sang in *L'Ormindo*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Il Tabarro* and *The Tender Land*. He has made many television, radio and concert appearances in Scotland.

Harry Nicoll joined Scottish Opera Go Round in 1979 and his roles included Nemorino in *L'Elisir D'Amore*, Ferrando in *Così Fan Tutte*, Alfredo in *La Traviata* and Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*. With Welsh National Opera, Harry Nicoll has sung Valetto in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and Vasek in *The Bartered Bride*. For New Sadler's Wells Opera he has sung Brissard in *Der Graf Von Luxembourg* and in the record of highlights from that production. For English National Opera he has sung Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Other operatic engagements have included *School for Fathers* for Phoenix Opera, *The Turn of the Screw* for the Midlands Arts Centre, Dorvil in *La Scala de Seta* and Milthort in *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* for Scottish Opera and appearances at the Glyndebourne, Wexford and English Bach Festivals and for Musica nel Chiostro. Operatic engagements abroad have included Thespis in *Platee* for the English Bach Festival in Versailles, Pedrillo in *Die Entführung Aus Dem Serail* for Opera voor Vlaanderen in Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges, Peter Maxwell Davies' *Der Leuchtturm (The Lighthouse)* and *Il Re Pastore* in Berlin, Vasek in *Die Verkaufte Braut* in Cologne and his debut at La Fenice, Venice, in staged performances of the *St John Passion*.

Engagements in 1985 include Soliman in *Zaide* at La Fenice, Polidoro in the new production of *La Finta Semplice* for the Park Lane Group at the Camden Festival, further performances of Vasek in Cologne and Pedrillo for the Opera voor Vlaanderen and the *Christmas Oratorio* in Bordeaux. Engagements in 1985/6 include his debut for Opera North as Nanki-Poo in *The Mikado* followed by Brighella in *Ariadne Auf Naxos*. He will also return to Welsh National Opera for a new production of *Wozzeck*.

JONATHAN BEST was born and educated in Kent. On leaving school he was awarded a choral scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge. During his three years there he toured extensively with St John's Choir, in Europe, the USA, Canada and the Far East. He then spent two years on the Opera Course at the Guildhall School of Music, London, and won the BP Award in 1982.

In the summer of 1983 Jonathan Best appeared at the Spitalfields Festival and in Italy in Cesti's *La Dori*. During the 1983/4 season he made his debut with Welsh National Opera as Sarastro and he returned to the company in 1984/5 for several roles, including Masetto in the company's new production of *Don Giovanni*. He sang the same role this season for Scottish Opera. During the summer of 1984 he sang Pluto in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*

in London, Florence and Milan and returns to Welsh National Opera in the 1985/6 season.

Jonathan Best is also in considerable demand as an oratorio singer. During the 1983/4 season he made his debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Barbican and recently he has appeared with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Manchester Camerata and has also completed for the BBC a recording of *Maschinist Hopkins*, an opera by the 20th century Austrian composer Max Brand.

RICHARD MARKHAM and DAVID NETTLE are rapidly gaining a reputation as the leading British piano duo. Their musical tastes encompass the standard repertoire as well as less familiar, unjustly neglected works. The range and variety of the programmes they devise for one piano/four hands and two pianos is vast. They also appear as soloists with major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, Ulster and Halle Orchestras.

The duo made a special feature of the two piano music of Percy Grainger during his centenary year, presenting concerts and recordings both in the UK and in the Netherlands, and also performed the complete piano duet works of Stravinsky in centenary recitals in 1982.

Following their recent studio recording for the BBC of Max Bruch's rediscovered Concerto Op 88a for two pianos and orchestra, they gave the first British public performance in Manchester on 18 June with the Halle Orchestra, conducted by Sir Charles Groves, on the opening night of the 1985 Halle Proms. The London premiere will follow in May 1986 with the Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican.

Their recital and orchestral appearances range world-wide as well as throughout the UK. They frequently take part in British festivals and record regularly for the BBC and European Radio stations. In 1979 they made their North American debut. Their travels in 1983 included a tour of the Far East (covering 35,000 miles in three months) which began in Sydney where the duo joined the QE2 as performers on the World Cruise, and a tour of the Middle East, sponsored by the British Council. Last year they visited Greece and Bulgaria, where their performance in the Sofia Music Festival was recorded for radio and television. Last January found them giving concerts in Sri Lanka, and in February they made their German debut.

Future plans include a two piano recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in October to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint-Saens, a tour of the Middle East in November, and appearances in Cologne and Berlin.

Richard Markham and David Nettle have recently complete two recordings for Saga Records, Stravinsky's piano duet transcriptions of *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

PETER KING studied the organ with Allan Wicks and the piano with Ronald Smith. He won the Maine Organ Exhibiton at Queens' College, Cambridge, where he read Law and Music. In 1975 he became Assistant Organist at Lichfield Cathedral and since 1980 has also been Accompanist and Assistant Chorus Master to the CBSO Chorus. In April this year he undertook a concert tour of the USA with Lichfield Cathedral Choir. Peter King plays regularly with the CBSO, including performances in London's Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls and on radio and television. He is frequently heard as a recitalist and broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 3.

PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE

Rossini's last major work was begun in the summer of 1863 when the composer was 71 years old and first performed on 14 March 1864 at the consecration of the Comtesse Louise Pillet-Will's private chapel, she being the work's dedicatee.

For one music lover who has attended a public performance of it, a hundred are familiar with the comment that the Messe is neither little nor particularly solemn; and the work is indeed longer than most masses. As for its solemnity, a number of conflicting considerations have to be taken into account: solemnity was never Rossini's style but to assume that his approach to the work was frivolous would be wrong. Like Poulenc, generations later, he saw no reason why sacred music should always aspire to the pious and penitential. If then the seriousness of Rossini's intentions is not in question, it should also be remembered that he was a tremendous teaser or farceur, as the title of the Petite Messe Solennelle demonstrates, and in a footnote to the work he wrote: "Is it really sacred music or is it merely abominable music? I was born for opera buffa as thou well knowest. Little skill, a little heart, and that is all."

Yet what Rossini produced is a very substantial, intricately devised and extended setting of the mass in fourteen sections. It is scored, originally, for a quartet of soloists, a small chorus of 'men, women and castrati', together with two pianos and harmonium. Eccentric as such accompaniment might seem today, it was less so in the 1860s. The harmonium, which evolved in France in the 1840s, where it was sometimes referred to as the orgue expressif, had the advantage of a discreet, sustaining capacity: moreover, a setting of the mass requiring women voices was considered ineligible for performance in church and, as not every concert hall or salon had an organ, the choice of harmonium proved practical from several points of view. The mass is also essentially accompanied by a single piano, the second having a limited role, being used mainly in tutti passages.

Many of the tunes in the mass, whether arresting or hauntingly beautiful, derive from similar inspiration to that which marked Rossini's long operatic career, yet a feature of the work's style, relatively new to its composer

(although he had already begun to develop it in the earlier Stabat Mater) is the increasingly interesting and innovatory use of challenging harmonies, which would certainly have been out of place in the opera style. It is therefore the chromatic and modulatory richness of the messe which gives it its unique feel as, for example, in the Qui Tollis and the Quoniam where sharp dissonances are frequently employed.

What is more, although Rossini had won acclaim as an opera buffa composer, he always maintained a passion for the sacred music of Haydn and Mozart and these two composers may well owe something to the strict ecclesiastical counterpoint of the opening Kyrie and the extended splendours of the messe's two vast double fugues: Cum Sancto Spiritu and Et vitam venturi. Perhaps Rossini was also eager to demonstrate that his expert knowledge of 'profane' musical procedures could also produce dense contrapuntal textures comparable to those of Cherubini.

The Preludio Religioso No 11 has, yet again, a different source of inspiration. An affectingly lyrical four-part fugue, it recalls many of the cantatas of J. S. Bach. (In the 1850s Bach's complete works had once again become available and Rossini, like many of his contemporaries, was an avid subscriber.)

A blend of austerity and joy the Petite Messe Solennelle turned out to be a fitting climax to Rossini's long career and perhaps his own, typically understated words deserve final commemoration: "My main ambition was to leave one last legacy which might possibly serve as an example of how to write for the voice. Amen".

Duncan Hadfield

Monday 24 June

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conductor — Simon Halsey

Soloist — David Curtis, viola

Copland : Rodeo

Walton : Viola Concerto

Sibelius : Symphony No 5

Hall 8.00pm

Thursday 27 June

COULL STRING QUARTET

with James Walker, piano

Mendelssohn : String Quartet in Eb (1823)

Shostakovich : String Quartet No 4

Dvorak : Piano Quintet in A Op 81

INTERNATIONAL CELEBRITY CONCERT SERIES

Friday 4 October

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Conductor – Simon Rattle

Sponsored by Mitchells and Butlers East

Wednesday 16 October

Philharmonia Orchestra

Conductor/Soloist – Vladimir Ashkenazy

Wednesday 23 October

Shura Cherkassky – piano

Sponsored by Arther Andersen & Co

Wednesday 6 November

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor – Andre Previn

Thursday 5 December

Vienna Chamber Orchestra

Conductor/Soloist – Philippe Entremont

Friday 24 January

Cecile Ousset – piano

Tuesday 4 February

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor – Klaus Tennstedt

Soloist – Radu Lupu

Friday 14 February

Igor Oistrakh – violin

Natalis Zertsalova – piano

Friday 21 February

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Conductor – Okko Kamu

Soloist – Pierre Amoyal, violin

Sponsored by West Midlands Gas

Sunday 9 March

Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra

Conductor – Janos Ferencsik

Soloist – Vilmos Szabadi, violin

Thursday 1 May

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
and CBSO Chorus

Conductor – Simon Rattle

Sponsored by Arthur Young

Saturday 17 May

English Chamber Orchestra

Conductor – Raymond Leppard

Soloist – Cho-Liang Lin

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For your safety

In accordance with the requirements of Coventry City Council

- i. the audience may leave at the end of the performance by all exit doors*
- ii. all gangways, corridors, staircases and passages which afford a means of exit shall be kept entirely free from obstruction and persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any such gangways during the performance*
- iii. smoking is not permitted on stage except as an integral part of the performance.*

The Arts Centre, University of Warwick, gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from West Midlands Arts.