



GUILDFORD
PHILHARMONIC

1996 / 1997 SEASON



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GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC

The Guildford Philharmonic, a professional orchestra of 75 players, is at the heart of music-making in the south east, with a huge repertoire extending from the 17th century to the present day. Its main concert season runs from September to May in two venues: the Civic Hall, Guildford, and Guildford Cathedral; and as well as this it gives concerts throughout London and the south of England in a number of venues which include Kenwood Park, Royal Festival Hall, King's College Cambridge, St George's Chapel Windsor, and the cathedrals of Winchester, Chichester, and Canterbury.

As well as the more mainstream orchestral concerts, the orchestra is involved in a wide range of educational projects, both in schools and concert halls, involving young composers, instrumentalists and singers.

The young Chinese conductor En Shao was appointed Principal Conductor in 1995, following in the illustrious footsteps of Crossley Clitheroe (who founded the orchestra in 1944), Vernon Handley, Sir Charles Groves and Sir Alexander Gibson. With En Shao, the orchestra continues its work of attracting new audiences for all types of classical music, and of blending the traditional and familiar with the new and challenging.

The orchestra is funded and promoted by Guildford Borough, with assistance from the South East Arts Board, South East Music Trust, the Musicians' Union, and the Friends of the Philharmonic. It is grateful to corporate sponsors, both local and national, and looks forward to many more such mutually beneficial relationships in the future.

CIVIC HALL, GUILDFORD

SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER 1996 at 7.30pm



GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC

Principal Conductor: EN SHAO

Associate Leaders: Hugh Bean, John Ludlow

VISIONS OF PARADISE

This concert marks the

50th ANNIVERSARY of the GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Poulenc

Choral Scenes from *Les Dialogues des Carmelites*

Szymanowski

Stabat Mater

I N T E R V A L

Howells

Hymnus Paradisi

KATHERINE TANSEY (soprano)

ANDREW MURGATROYD (tenor)

TERESA SHAW (mezzo-soprano)


COLIN CAMPBELL (bass)

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

JEREMY BACKHOUSE (conductor)

All concerts in the current season are funded by  Guildford Borough

The orchestra is grateful to the following for financial assistance:

 South East Arts Board

South East Music Trust

The Friends of Guildford Philharmonic

 Musicians' Union

The definitive biography of Herbert Howells, by Christopher Palmer, will be on sale tonight in the foyer. Sir David Willcocks, President of the Herbert Howells Society, and the composer's daughter, Ursula Howells, will be signing copies before the concert and in the interval.



JEREMY BACKHOUSE

Jeremy Backhouse was Head Chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and later studied music at Liverpool University. He spent five years as Music Editor at the Royal National Institute for the Blind, transcribing print music into Braille, before moving to EMI Classics to work as a Literary Editor. Since 1990 he has been a Consultant Editor for EMI and other companies, and a freelance musician. In 1981 he became the first Conductor of the Vasari Singers, the chamber choir which won the prestigious Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition in 1988, and which has recently recorded Herbert Howells's Requiem. From 1991 to 1995 he was Music Director of Streatham Choral Society and the BBC Club Choir, conducting many of the major works of the choral repertoire.

In January 1995 he was appointed Chorus Director of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir. He works regularly with the Kent Youth Choir and Kent Youth Chamber Choir, with whom he has recently toured in Italy. In April 1995 he conducted the BBC Singers for the first time in a programme of music by Lennox Berkeley broadcast on Radio 3, and has since conducted them in broadcast programmes of Holst, Rubbra, Massenet and Delibes.



KATHERINE TANSEY

Katherine Tansey was born in Epsom and grew up in Wimbledon. She read Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and since leaving has returned to perform many concerts there with the Cambridge Baroque Soloists and Cambridge Classical Orchestra.

She performs regularly with the New Chamber Opera and Bloomsbury Opera, and she has just understudied the role of Marzelline in Beethoven's *Leonore* for John Eliot Gardiner. She made her debut as a soloist at St John's Smith Square in Fauré's Requiem and returned there this year to sing in Mozart's C Minor Mass. Recent concert repertoire has included Britten's War Requiem, John Tavener's *Folksongs*, Bach's Magnificat, Berlioz's *Nuits d'Été* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

Katherine Tansey studies with David Pollard and has participated in Masterclasses given by James Bowman and Ian Partridge. Future engagements include Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* with York University and Bach's St Matthew Passion with Bury St Edmunds Bach Choir.

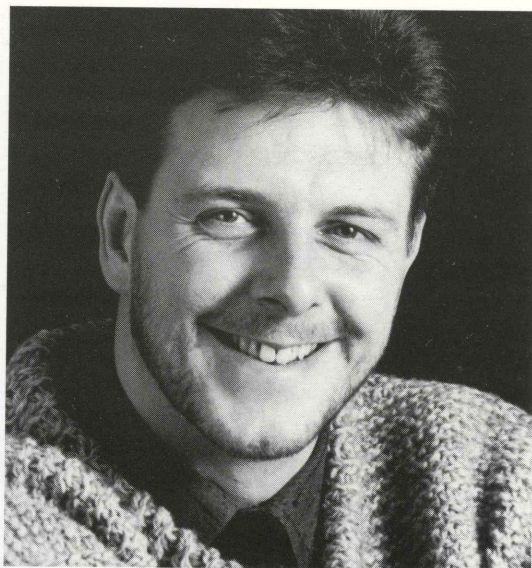




TERESA SHAW

Teresa Shaw was born in London and studied at Manchester University and the Royal Academy of Music, winning many major awards. Since completing her studies she has developed a career in opera, oratorio and recitals. During 1996 she made her debut with English National Opera as Hope (*Orfeo*) and at the BBC Proms (Stravinsky's *Cantata*). She appeared in John Woolrich's opera *The House of Crossed Desires* in Stuttgart, and in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (The Composer) at Castleward Opera.

Teresa Shaw has performed several world premieres and has sung with Electric Phoenix, The Matrix Ensemble, Music Projects London and Vocem in contemporary repertoire, and this autumn she will appear at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Her operatic repertoire is wide-ranging, and she has appeared with many British opera companies including ENO, Opera North, Opera Factory and Pimlico Opera. She broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 3 and has made a number of recordings, including the role of the Sorceress (*Dido & Aeneas*) and the *Liebeslieder* Waltzes for John Eliot Gardiner.

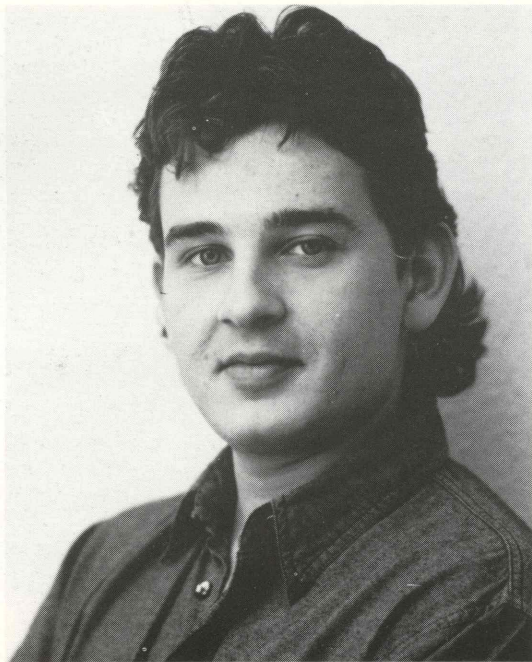


ANDREW MURGATROYD

Andrew Murgatroyd was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire. After reading music at Lancaster University he spent two years as a Lay-Clerk at Christ Church, Oxford, and during this period attended masterclasses given by Sir Peter Pears and furthered his vocal studies with Rudolf Piernay.

His concert engagements have taken him across the UK and Europe, and have included *The Dream of Gerontius*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *The Seasons*, Sir Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, and the Evangelist in Bach's *St John Passion*. He has appeared frequently at the BBC Proms, including works by John Tavener, Teixeira and Weill. Recordings include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Ninth Symphony and Monteverdi's *Vespers* with The Sixteen Choir and Orchestra.

Forthcoming engagements include Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Oslo Cathedral, Mozart's Coronation Mass with the Royal Flanders Philharmonic Orchestra, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in Wells Cathedral, concerts of music by Bach in Israel with the Gabrieli Consort, and a Christmas Gala concert in the Royal Festival Hall.



COLIN CAMPBELL

Colin Campbell was born in London and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has appeared as a soloist throughout the UK and also in numerous festivals on the continent and in the Far East. His operatic repertoire is extensive, having sung principal roles with English Touring Opera, Pavilion Opera and The English Bach Festival. He has broadcast on RTE Television, BBC TV and Radios 2 and 3. His discography includes recordings on the Hyperion, Decca, Naxos and Philips labels.

Recent concert engagements have included the *Messiah* with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music, Thea Musgrave's *Wild Winter* with viol consort Fretwork, and appearances with the King's Consort at the Wigmore Hall and the BBC Proms – the latter in Handel's *Deborah*. He has sung the bass solos in Monteverdi's *Vespers* in Cremona and Milan with John Eliot Gardiner and The Voice of Christ in John Tavener's *The World is Burning*, recorded by Philips Classics. Recent projects have included engagements in Salzburg, Amsterdam, New York, Santiago de Compostela and Lille.

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir is delighted to announce that Sir David Willcocks, this country's most distinguished choral conductor, has agreed to be its new President, and is particularly pleased that he is here this evening, giving the pre-concert talk as President of the Herbert Howells Society.

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir was formed by Guildford Borough in order to perform the major choral repertoire with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra. As well as performing well-known choral works, the choir specialises in 20th-century, particularly British, music. It has recorded Gerald Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality* with the Guildford Philharmonic and Patrick Hadley's *The Trees So High* with the Philharmonia Orchestra, both recordings conducted by Vernon Handley.

The choir has worked with many eminent conductors, and as well as giving concerts in Guildford, it visits other British cities. Guildford is twinned with Freiburg, and in 1990 the choir joined forces with the Freiburger Bachchor in Freiburg Munster, and then in November 1993 gave an outstanding performance of Britten's *War Requiem* with them under Neville Creed.

Tonight's performance is conducted by the choir's Chorus Director, Jeremy Backhouse, who was appointed to the post in January 1995.

The choir's next major concert with the Guildford Philharmonic is on Saturday 8 March 1997 in Guildford Cathedral in a performance of Rachmaninov's *The Bells*. If you would like more details about singing in the choir, please telephone: 01932 221918.



VISIONS OF PARADISE

As the title of this concert implies, the music we are to hear tonight is concerned with Paradise. In each case, the hope of Paradise, of a heavenly life after the earthly, is the succour to violent or tragic death. A personal tragedy in the life of each composer has contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the powerful impact of the three works. Poulenc portrays a group of Carmelite nuns going to the guillotine in Revolutionary France, singing gloriously of the divine rewards soon to be enjoyed; Szymanowski uses the familiar *Stabat Mater* text, telling of the Virgin Mary weeping at the foot of the Cross, to create an image of celestial peace after death; and Howells reacts to the loss of his nine-year-old son by creating a highly personal musical document depicting the eternal light of heaven.



FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)

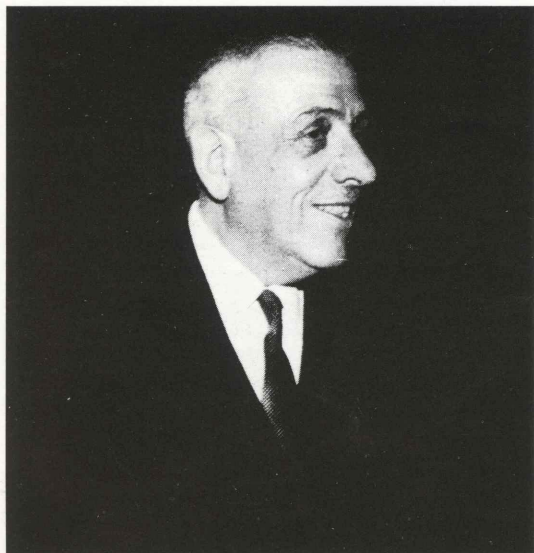
Born of wealthy parents, Poulenc was largely self-taught as a composer. He had received piano lessons from his mother from the age of five and in 1915 studied piano with Ricardo Viñes, the friend and champion of the music of Debussy and Ravel; beyond that, he had little formal musical education. Two years later he achieved notoriety with his first published work *Rapsodie Nègre*, influenced strongly by the aesthetic and music of Eric Satie. In 1920 he attached himself to the avant-garde group of young composers known as *Les Six*, and soon gained entry to the elite of Parisian cultural society. He produced a number of witty and acerbic works, including in 1923 the ballet *Les Biches* for Diaghilev, the *Concert Champêtre* for Harpsichord and Orchestra (1928), the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* (1932), and a great number of masterly songs.

The death in a motor accident of his close friend Pierre-Octave Ferroud in 1935 prompted a personal crisis, a return to the Catholic Faith and the composition of many sacred pieces or works on a religious theme. Although he continued to write high-spirited and witty secular music, the sacred compositions that followed were highly-charged and successfully combined a new-found profundity with the popular style of his earlier works. A large number of a *cappella* choral works, the *Mass in G* (1937), the *Stabat Mater* (1950), and the *Gloria* (1959) are amongst the sacred music that Poulenc himself considered to be his most lasting musical achievement.

Choral Scenes from 'Dialogues des Carmélites'

In 1953 the publishers Ricordi suggested to Poulenc that he write a ballet for La Scala, Milan on the subject of St Margaret of Cortona. His response was less than enthusiastic; however, his

request for an opera libretto brought the suggestion back that the play by Georges Bernanos, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, might be suitable. Poulenc had read and seen the play twice, and began composition in August 1953. He became almost obsessed with the work and suffered a number of crises throughout its composition: there were difficulties over the rights for the *Carmélites* libretto; the power of the story, in particular the death of the elderly Prioress who agonisingly loses faith at the point of death, profoundly affected Poulenc, and ultimately, his health suffered. Depression followed and work on the opera came to a halt. He returned to it early in 1955, after a spell in a clinic, completed the orchestration in 1956 and it was given its first performance in La Scala on 26 January 1957.



Francis Poulenc

The action is set in Paris 1789, during revolutionary times. Although the opera is ostensibly concerned with the group of Carmelite nuns who, in the face of revolutionary persecution, accept martyrdom rather than renounce their faith, the underlying message is the conquering of fear and the attainment of grace, as portrayed in particular by one nun, Sister Blanche. Born of a noble family, she spends her life in fear of fear. At the outset, she informs her father of her decision to join the order of Carmelite nuns in order to escape the violence on the streets. She is warned by the Prioress at interview that the convent should not be regarded as a withdrawal from an aggressive world, that with membership of the order come responsibilities to God and the family of nuns.

In the suite that has been assembled for this performance, a brief orchestral fanfare, taken from the second scene of Act I, introduces us to the convent and the nuns. We then move to Act II: the nuns have assembled in their chapel to pay obedience to the new Prioress. She has addressed them and stressed the importance of prayer. We join the action as Mère Marie suggests to the other nuns, following the wishes of their new Prioress, that they should kneel and pray. Together they sing the *Ave Maria*. Later in the same act, the chaplain tells the nuns that he has been forbidden by the Legislative Assembly to celebrate Mass. The Mass they have just received will have been their last. They kneel and sing the *Ave verum corpus*. Following this extract, the story proceeds with the nuns deciding to accept martyrdom in preference to renouncing God. At this Blanche flees in fright, leaving her colleagues to certain arrest and death. We rejoin the action in the final scene of the opera. The nuns are brought to the Place de la Révolution for public execution, watched by a large crowd. Singing the *Salve Regina*, they are guillotined one by one. Their fear of death is conquered by their expectation of paradisiacal grace. As the last of the nuns prepares for the guillotine, Blanche pushes through the crowd and joins her, going fearlessly to her death.

i) Prelude (Acte I, Tableau II)

ii) Ave Maria (Acte II, Tableau II)

Mère Marie

Mes soeurs, Sa Révérence vient de nous dire que notre premier devoir est la prière.

Mother Marie

My Sisters, Her Reverence has explained to us that our most important duty is to pray.

Conformons-nous donc, non seulement de bouche, mais de coeur, aux volontés de Sa Révérence.

Mère Marie, La prière, Les carmélites
Ave Maria. Gratia plena.
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesu.
Sancta Maria. Mater Dei.
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc
et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Let us obey, not only with our tongues but with our hearts, the noble precepts of our Reverend Mother.

Mother Marie, Prioress, Carmelites
Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God
pray for us sinners, now
and at the hour of our death. Amen.

iii) Prelude - Ave verum corpus (Acte II, Tableau IV)

L'aumônier

Mes chères filles, ce que j'ai à vous dire n'est plus un secret pour certaines d'entre vous. Je suis relevé de mes fonctions et proscrit. Cette messe que je viens de dire est la dernière. Le tabernacle est vide.

The Chaplain

My dear daughters, many among you already know what I am about to say. I have been forbidden to perform my duties. This Mass that I have just completed is the last. The House of God is empty.



Maria of Agreda

Je répète aujourd'hui le geste
de nos premiers pères chrétiens.
Ce jour est un grand jour pour le Carmel.
Adieu, je vous bénis.
Nous allons chanter ensemble.

L'aumônier, Les carmélites
Ave verum corpus natum
Ex Maria Virgine.
Vere passum immolatum
In cruce pro homine.
Cujus latus perforatum
Unda fluxit et sanguine.
Esto nobis praegustatum
Mortis in examine.
O clemens! O pie!
O Jesu Fili Mariae. Amen.

I partake today of the grief
of our early Christian fathers.
Today is a great day for Carmel.
Goodbye; I give you my blessing.
We will now sing together.

The Chaplain, Carmelites
Hail true body born
Of the Virgin Mary.
which truly suffered and was sacrificed
on the cross for man.
Whose pierced side
flowed with a wave of blood.
May we have tasted of you
when we come to the hour of death.
O Merciful One! O Pure One!
O Jesu, Son of Mary. Amen.

iv) Prelude - Finale (Acte III, Tableau IV)

La foule
Oh! Oh!

Les carmélites
Salve Regina,
Mater misericordiae,
vita dulcedo
et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus,
exules fili Hevae.
Ad te suspiramus
gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo Advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte.
Et Jesum benedictum
fructum ventris tui
nobis post hoc exilium ostende,
O clemens, O pia,
O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Constance
O clemens, O pia,
O dulcis Virgo Ma ...

Blanche
Deo Patri sit gloria
Et Filio qui a mortuis
Surrexit ac Paraclito
In saeculorum saecula,
In saeculorum ...

The crowd
Oh! Oh!

Carmelites
Hail, O Queen,
Merciful Mother
Our life, our sweetness
Our hope, hail!
To you we cry out
We children of Eve in exile.
To you we sigh
Moaning and weeping
In this vale of tears.
O you, our advocate
Turn towards us
Your merciful gaze.
And let us see Jesus, the blessed
Fruit of your womb
When our exile is over,
O Merciful One, O Pure One,
O Sweet Virgin Mary.

Constance
O Merciful One, O Pure One,
O Sweet Virgin Ma ...

Blanche
To God the Father be glory
And to the Son who rose
From the dead to the Holy Ghost,
World without end,
World without ...

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI (1882-1937)



Karol Szymanowski (centre)

Born in the Ukraine of wealthy landowner parents, Szymanowski is regarded as the greatest Polish composer since Chopin. Both his parents were musical and he studied piano privately from an early age, entering the Warsaw Conservatoire in 1901; twenty-six years later, he was to be appointed Principal, a post he held for only two years. After the First World War, the Russian Revolution brought financial hardship from which he never recovered. During the last years of his life he suffered seriously from tuberculosis; he died in Lausanne aged fifty-four.

Perhaps understandably, his early works show strong influence of Chopin, but his output also declares a debt to Beethoven, Wagner, Richard Strauss and, later, Stravinsky. He wrote much piano music, songs and a *cappella* choral works, but is perhaps best known today for his symphonic repertoire and large-scale choral output. The first of his two Violin Concertos and the third of his three Symphonies - 'Song of the Night' - have found particular favour recently.

STABAT MATER

In 1924, while in Paris, Szymanowski received a commission from the Princesse de Polignac for a work for chorus and orchestra with soloists. He had wanted to write a work with a distinctive Polish flavour and began by looking at poets such as Kochanowski and Mieciewicz. Research on the project continued apace, focusing on the idea of "some kind of 'Peasants' Requiem' - something peasant and ecclesiastical ... a sort of prayer for souls". Two deaths finally concentrated his mind on the work: the first was the tragic passing of his young niece Alusia Bartoszewicz, the second the demise of the wife of a leading Polish industrialist, Dr Bronislaw Krystall. The text on which Szymanowski eventually decided was the medieval Latin *Stabat Mater* poem by Jacopone da Todi; for performances within Poland however, the composer was insistent that the Polish translation by Czeslaw Janowski should be used. In translating the Latin into Polish, Szymanowski set out to make the grief of the Virgin Mary symbolic of the suffering of the people of his native country. Indeed much of the tonality of the melodic material is strongly reminiscent of the modal character of Polish folk song.

The work was finished in March 1926 and given its first performance in January 1929 with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and chorus conducted by Grzegorz Fitelberg. One of the soloists at that first performance was the mother of the niece, Alusia. Szymanowski divides the poem into six parts, each with its own distinctive mood and culminating in a sublime musical vision at the words (in translation): "When this earthly frame is riven, grant that to my soul be given all the joys of Paradise".

I.

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa,
Dum pendebat filius.

Cuius animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransiuit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti.

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
Pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati poenas incliti.

II.

Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari,
Christi Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem Natum
Moriendo desolatum,
Dum emisit spiritum.

III.

Eja, Mater, fons amoris.
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum,
Ut sibi complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas,
Cordi meo valide.

Tui Nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Poenas mecum divide.

IV.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

Mother bowed with grief appalling
must thou watch, with tears slow falling,
on the cross Thy dying Son!

Through her soul, of joy bereaved,
Bowed with anguish, deeply grieved,
Now at length the sword hath passed.

Oh, how mournful and oppressed
was that Mother ever-blessed,
Mother of the Spotless One:

She, whose grieving was perceiving,
contemplating, unabating,
all the anguish of her Son!

Is there any, tears withholding,
Christ's dear Mother thus beholding,
in woe - like no other woe?

Who that would not grief be feeling
for that Holy Mother kneeling -
what suffering was ever so?

For the sins of every nation
she beheld his tribulation,
given to scourgers for a prey:

saw her Jesus foully taken,
languishing, by all forsaken,
when his spirit passed away.

Love's sweet fountain, Mother tender,
haste this hard heart, soft to render,
make me sharer in Thy pain.

Fire me now with zeal so glowing,
love so rich to Jesus flowing,
that I favour may obtain.

Holy Mother, I implore Thee,
Crucify this heart before Thee -
Guilty it is verily!

By Thy glorious Death and Passion,
Saving me in wondrous fashion,
Saviour, turn my heart to Thee.

In Thy keeping, watching, weeping,
by the cross may I unsleeping
live and sorrow for His sake.

Juxta crucem tecum stare,
Te libenter sociare
In planctu desidero.

V.

Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fac, ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortem
Et plagas recolere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Cruce hac inebriari
Ob amorem Filii.

Inflammatum et accensum,
Pet te, Virgo, sim defensum
In die judicii.

VI.

Fac me cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi praemuniri,
Confoveri gratia.

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac, ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.
Amen.

Close to Jesus, with Thee kneeling,
all Thy dolours with Thee feeling,
oh grant this - the prayer I make.

Maid immaculate, excelling,
peerless one, in heaven high dwelling,
make me truly mourn with Thee.

Make me of Thy death the bearer,
In Thy Passion be a sharer,
Taking to myself Thy pain.

Let me with Thy stripes be stricken!
Let Thy Cross with hope me quicken,
That I thus Thy love may gain.

Thus inspired and affected
let me, Virgin, be protected
when sounds forth the call for me!

May his sacred cross defend me,
he who died there so befriend me,
that His pardon shall suffice.

When this earthly frame is riven,
grant that to my soul be given
all the joys of Paradise!
Amen.

**HERBERT HOWELLS
(1892-1983)**

Howells was born in Lydney, Gloucestershire of humble but musical parents. The young Herbert very soon showed an unusual aptitude for music and by the age of thirteen was receiving piano lessons from the revered Herbert Brewer, Organist of Gloucester Cathedral. By 1911 he had tired of Brewer and decided he would move to London to study with C.V. Stanford. By now he was composing avidly and absorbing the cathedral choral tradition that was to shape so much of his music and career. In 1912 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music and by 1920 was teaching composition there - a task he continued into his eightieth year. In 1936 he succeeded Holst as Director of Music at St Paul's Girls' School in London, a post he held until 1962. In 1950 he became the King Edward VI



Herbert Howells

Professor of Music at London University. He was made a CBE in 1953 and a Companion of Honour in 1972.

Howells will be remembered principally for his unparalleled contribution to the music of the Anglican choral tradition. Many are the settings of the Evening Service, each composed with a specific building and choir in mind; equally numerous are the anthems, motets and carols that are the mainstay of most cathedral, church and chamber choirs. More recently we have come to know, through the foresight of recording companies (one in particular), much of his output for chorus and orchestra (*Stabat Mater*, *Missa Sabrinensis*), his orchestral work (especially fine is the *Elegy for solo Viola, String Quartet and Strings*, written in memory of a friend fallen in the First World War), and his not inconsiderable contribution to the solo song and chamber repertoire. His music is suffused throughout with honesty and craftsmanship, yet through his strong harmonic and polyphonic style, he attains immediacy and luminosity.

HYMNUS PARADISI

The words of the composer himself on his masterpiece serve better than most. I quote extensively and without apology. In a talk broadcast on the BBC on 5 December 1968 Howells described *Hymnus Paradisi*:

"It's none too easy to speak objectively and with appropriate reticence about a work of one's own, if and when its origin is of a very personal nature. The Requiem I call *Hymnus Paradisi* for two soloists, chorus and orchestra is of that kind.



Michael Howells

The sudden loss, in 1935, of an only son - a loss essentially profound and, in its very nature, beyond argument - might at any time be of such impact as to impel a composer, after a time, to seek release and consolation in language and terms nearest and most personal to him. Music might well have power beyond any other medium to offer that release and comfort. It did so in my case.

From the first, what I then composed became a personal, private document. For text I sought immemorial prose. At the outset, and at the end, I used only two sentences from the Latin Requiem Mass, knowing that one of them - 'et lux perpetua luceat eis' - would govern the work: especially that one word 'lux' - light. Light, indeed, touches all but one of the six movements. 'Blessed are the dead' alone stands outside, and yet is in sight of, that same light; and even the gravest verse of the 23rd Psalm reflects it. And the movement in which I combine 'Sanctus' with 'I will lift up mine eyes' blazes with it. For an ending I had still to summon, if I could, an

even more intense degree of the work's pervasive radiance. I searched a long time for a verbal text that would serve that purpose - and for a long time I was baffled. Then my friend Sir Thomas Armstrong found what I had been looking for. Gratefully, I still read the letter in which Sir Thomas, in his beautiful handwriting, wrote out the text of 'Holy is the true light', found in the Salisbury Diurnal and again at the end of Robert Bridges' *The Spirit of Man*.

Hymnus Paradisi was finished in 1938. For twelve years more it remained what I originally wished it to be - a personal, almost secret document. But in 1950 Ralph Vaughan Williams asked to see the work, and he insisted upon my releasing it. So, in that same year, I conducted its first performance at the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival: on the 15th Anniversary of the death of Michael Kendrick Howells - in whose memory it was composed, and to whom it is dedicated."



Recent research shows that on two points from the above, more light can be cast. Firstly, it is now known that substantial parts of the work were written before the death of his son, being based on the *Short Requiem* by Walford Davies, and drawn together in his *a cappella* Requiem (not released for performance or publication by the composer until 1980). Secondly, the initiative for the release of the *Hymnus Paradisi* came not from Vaughan Williams but from Herbert Sumsion and Gerald Finzi. (For a full discussion of the composition of this work and a thoroughly fascinating study of the composer, his work, writings and much more besides, refer to Christopher Palmer's excellent "Herbert Howells - A Celebration", published by Thames).

A more analytical note by the composer appeared in the programme for the concert (the first performance) in Gloucester Cathedral on 7 September 1950, from which the following is extracted:

"*Hymnus Paradisi* is a setting of Latin and English texts, most of them well known, and all appropriate to the mood of a Requiem. It began in a setting of a Medieval Latin poem by Prudentius (348-c.405) - the 'Hymnus circa exsequias defuncti'. In the present work that poem has no place, except that its first two lines form the dedication to one whose early death was the origin of the composition.

The Prudentius setting was the first part of a five-movement Sequence for unaccompanied voices: a Requiem by nature, but not ritualistic. Out of that Sequence has grown the present choral-orchestral version. The actual lines of Prudentius are excluded. Much of the music, and their temper and mood, are retained. A setting of Psalm 23 (Movement III) is also here. To its accompaniment is added one of the three or four themes that have place in all but the fifth movement. Movements IV and V are also derived directly and extensively from the earlier Sequence. Movement VI was from the first, essentially choral-orchestral. Its scope and style required a similar medium for the work as a whole. There were added essential parts for two soloists (Soprano and Tenor). But the chorus itself is the predominant factor.

Hymnus Paradisi comprises two parts. Part One (Movements I, II and III) is unbroken, and is mainly contemplative. Part Two (Movements IV, V and VI) is built of three separate movements. It ends with a briefly restored initial mood ('Requiem aeternam') and is at a more active level, despite the tranquillity of Movement V and the ultimate quietude in the last pages."

These personal thoughts on his work are of course uniquely fascinating, but what they modestly fail to say is that the work is a masterpiece of the twentieth-century choral-orchestral repertoire, that his personal vision of paradise radiates light and wonder, and, although a memorial to his son, exudes a matchless optimism. In the words of Christopher Palmer, it is a "song of joy, of victory, of celebration, of Life".

I Preludio -

II Requiem aeternam -

Requiem aeternam
Et lux perpetua luceat eis

Grant unto them eternal rest,
and may perpetual light shine upon them.

III The Lord is my Shepherd

The Lord is my Shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
thy rod and staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me:
thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.
But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

IV Sanctus - I will lift up mine eyes

Sanctus, santus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;
So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth for evermore.

V I heard a voice from heaven

I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write.
From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord:
even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours.

VI Holy is the true light

Holy is the true light, and passing wonderful, lending radiance to them that endured in the heat of the conflict: from Christ they inherit a home of unfading splendour, wherein they rejoice with gladness evermore. Alleluia.

Requiem aeternam,
Requiem dona eis sempiternam.

Rest eternal,
Grant them everlasting rest.

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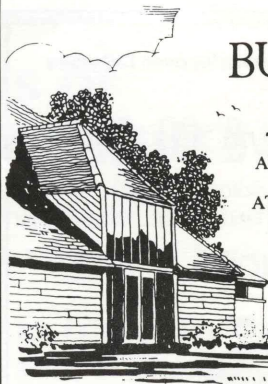
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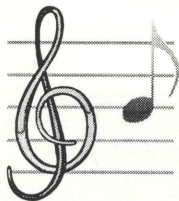
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