

 *Tring Choral Society* 

Conductor: Colin Stevens



Felix Mendelssohn

Ave Maria

Johannes Brahms

A German Requiem

SOLOISTS

Gillian Ramm (Soprano)

Michael R Bundy (Bass)

Chiltern Orchestral Society

Leader: Janet Hicks

Saturday 7 July 2012



The Soloists



GILLIAN RAMM (SOPRANO); Australian-born Gillian studied at the Western Australian Conservatorium of Music before taking part in the Young Artist Programme with West Australian Opera. She received a scholarship at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she was generously supported by the Peter Moores Foundation, the Tait Foundation and the Ian Potter Foundation of Australia, and was awarded the John Cameron Lieder Prize and the Ricordi Prize for Opera.

Operatic engagements include Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Glyndebourne on Tour, Budapest Festival Orchestra), Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* (Glyndebourne on Tour), Second Niece in *Peter Grimes* (Teatro di San Carlo), Aci in *Aci Galatea e Polifemo* (London Handel Festival), Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* (West Australian Opera), Anne Truelove in *The Rake's Progress* (RNCM), Clorinda in *La Cenerentola* (Ryedale Festival), Yum Yum in *The Mikado* for Carl Rosa, Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* for English Touring Opera, and her debut with English National Opera as First Niece in a new production of *Peter Grimes*.

Concert work has included performances with the Classical Opera Company, Opera North, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Teatro Comunale di Bologna.

Recent and future highlights include First Niece in *Peter Grimes* (Opera de Oviedo and at the BBC Proms), Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (Salzburger Landestheater under Leo Hussain), *Messiah* (Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria with Paul McCreech), the title role in Handel's *Rodelinda* (Early Opera Company with Christian Curnyn), and Aci in *Aci Galatea e Polifemo* (Göttingen Handel Festival under Laurence Cummings)



MICHAEL R BUNDY (BASS); Michael is a music graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and has performed widely in diverse genres: He has appeared as soloist with groups such as The Sixteen and The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and has a continuing relationship with the BBC Singers. His operatic repertoire exceeds forty roles and he has sung with English National Opera, Kent Opera, Scottish Opera, the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Mauritius Opera, and the Narodni Divadlo in Prague. He appeared with Theater Basel in *Actus Tragicus* - a new staging of some of Bach's church Cantatas by the renowned director Herbert Wernicke - and performed with Opera Restor'd and the Akademie für Alte Musik, Berlin, in their production of Lampe's comic opera *The Dragon of Wantley* at the Musikfestspiele Potsdam.



The Soloists



His Oratorio repertoire is catholic, and his frequent broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 have included the oratorio *Poèmes Fransiscains* by the organist-composer Bonnal. Work with Trevor Pinnock and The English Concert has included Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* in Europe, Istanbul and Japan, and he appeared as soloist with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and The English Baroque Soloists in works such as Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, Handel's *Israel in Egypt* (both BBC promenade concerts), Bach's *B Minor Mass* and Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and the *Odes and Masques* of Purcell. He broadcast the role of Gobryas in Handel's oratorio *Belshazzar* with Robert King and the King's Consort, and recently sang Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in Ely and Rochester cathedrals and the Smetana Hall in Prague. Recent engagements have included a further performance of *Gerontius* in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh and Mahler's Eighth Symphony at the Royal Albert Hall; future highlights include Verdi's *Requiem* in Winchester Cathedral and St Albans Abbey.

Specialising in French *mélodie*, and in addition to writing a book - *Prophets without Honour: The Forgotten Mélodies of Widor, Vierne and Tournemire* - he has issued a series of recordings with Naxos featuring the *mélodies* by these same composers. Other commercial recordings include Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (Dantone/ Accademia Bizantia), Chausson's *Le Roi Arthus* (Botstein/BBC Symphony Orchestra), Tovey's *The Bride of Dionysus* (Vass/Ulster Orchestra) and, recently, Michael Hurd's opera *The Widow of Ephesus*. Having given the premières of works by John Hardy, Eddie McGuire, Cecilia Macdowall, and Noam Sharriff, he has demonstrated that he is as at home in contemporary music as he is with 'lighter' music, having broadcast the roles of Olin Britt (*Music Man*), Mr Lindquist (*A Little Night Music*) and has performed live with Sarah Brightman on BBC Radio 2.

A Sea Sympathy

However great a composer Brahms may have been, it is fairly certain that he couldn't have written the *Hebrides Overture*. As is well known, Mendelssohn wrote this piece as the result of visiting Fingal's Cave on the uninhabited island of Staffa - and, of course, he had to go by boat, a thing that Brahms could not have done. The reason? Our Johannes had a great fear of boat travel as a result of his one sea-going experience (in a skiff) - a dread that was sustained by the tales of sea-sickness that he'd heard from Clara Schumann.

This (irrational?) fear even prevented him from crossing the English Channel, and cost him an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University in 1877, whose offer had been on condition that it was accepted in person.



Felix Mendelssohn (Bartholdy)



FELIX MENDELSSOHN was born in Hamburg, on 3 February 1809, the son of Leah Salomon, and Abraham Mendelssohn, a wealthy banker, and the grandson of Jewish rabbi and philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. While Moses Mendelssohn frowned upon German Jews converting to Christianity in the hopes of gaining social acceptance outside their ghettos, that did not stop Felix Mendelssohn's parents from baptizing their four children in the Lutheran Church, and from converting to the Lutheran faith themselves in 1816, when they moved from French-occupied Hamburg to Berlin - hence the added surname Bartholdy. Oddly enough, Felix resisted the name change, and kept the last name of Mendelssohn.

The move to Berlin proved to be beneficial for young Felix, who had received prior musical instruction from his sister Fanny, as it was there he studied the piano under Ludwig Berger and composition with Karl F. Zelter. Felix then travelled to Paris to study the works of Mozart and Bach with his sister Fanny. In addition to the literary works of Goethe, Mendelssohn found inspiration in the works of Shakespeare and, at the age of seventeen, he composed the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the piece being considered one of the most beautiful works of the Romantic period.

During the years that followed, Mendelssohn travelled and performed all over Europe and, in 1832, presented his magnificent *Hebrides Overture*, as well as other important works, in London, a city where he greatly enjoyed performing his works. At the age of twenty-six, Mendelssohn moved to Leipzig and became conductor of the Leipzig

Gewandhaus Orchestra, performing works by Bach and Beethoven among others.

Mendelssohn founded, and directed, the Leipzig Conservatory, a Conservatory that became one of the most prestigious music



institutions in Germany, for over half a century. In addition to his post at the Conservatory, he was named director of the Music Section of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. These two posts meant that he was left with little time for his own work, but he still managed to compose such masterpieces as the *Ruy Blas* overture, the previously-mentioned *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Scottish Symphony*, the third of his five symphonies.

In 1847, he suffered two strokes, from the second of which he died on 4 November. He was buried alongside his beloved sister, Fanny, in the cemetery of Holy Cross Church in Berlin.



Mendelssohn; Ave Maria



The Ave Maria, written in 1830, is set for eight-part chorus and a semi-chorus of eight soloists. It displays Mendelssohn's considerable melodic gift as well as his ability to handle complex musical structure effortlessly. Tune detectives may notice the similarity of the main theme to the finale of Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony, which he began sketching about the same time. The eight soloists are members of the choir. They are indicated by an asterisk against their names later in this programme.

Ave Maria, gratia plena
Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus.
Sancta Maria. Ora pro nobis, Sancta Maria
nunc et in hora mortis nostri.

*Hail, Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.
Saint Mary, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.*



Brahms; A German Requiem



1. Blessed Are They That Mourn (Chorus)

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
Who goeth forth and weepeth, and beareth precious seed, shall come again rejoicing and bring his sheaves with him.

2. Behold All Flesh Is As The Grass. (Chorus)

Behold all flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower thereof is fallen.

Now therefore be patient, O my brethren, to the coming of the Lord. See how the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till it receive in time the early and the latter rain. So be ye patient.

Behold all flesh is as the grass and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower thereof is fallen.

But yet the Lord's word standeth for ever more.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return again, and come with singing unto Zion.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads
always, gladness and joy everlasting shall they obtain, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

3. Lord Let Me Know Mine End (Baritone Solo and Chorus)

Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days, let me know how frail I am, that I be made sure how long I have to live.

Surely, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth before Thee, and my lifetime is as nothing to Thee. Verily every man living is altogether vanity.

For surely man walketh as a shadow, and he disquieteth himself in vain, yea, all in vain his riches, he knoweth not who shall gather them.

Now, Lord what then do I hope for? My hope is in Thee.

But the righteous souls are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.

Interval

4. How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings (Chorus)

How lovely are Thy dwellings fair, O Lord of hosts .

My soul longeth, yea, longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and flesh ring out their joy unto the living God.

Blessed are they, which dwell in Thy house, they praise Thee, Lord, evermore.

5. Ye Now Have Sorrow (Soprano Solo and Chorus)

Ye now have sorrow, but I will again behold you, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.

Thee will I comfort, as one whom his mother comforts.

Now behold me, ye see how for a little while labour and toil were my lot, yet have I found much rest.

6. For We Have Here No Abiding City (Baritone Solo and Chorus)

For we have here no abiding city, but yet we seek that to come.

Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. For behold, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory . O death, where is thy victory? Death, where is thy sting?

Worthy art Thou, Lord, of praise and glory, honour and power.

For Thou, Almighty hast created all things, and because of Thy will, they were, and were created..

7. Blessed Are The Dead Which Die In The Lord (Chorus)

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow after them.

Brahms and Liszt

When the young Brahms was introduced to Franz Liszt at a friendly gathering, he was so nervous that he declined to play. Liszt kindly collected the young composer's scherzo from a table and played it with such proficiency (while simultaneously critiquing the composition) that Brahms himself was quite amazed. Some time later, Liszt was asked to play one of his own sonatas, a recent work of which he was particularly fond. As he came to the most expressive portion of the piece, he gazed around to see whether it was having the desired emotional impact on his listeners - and was surprised to find Brahms soundly dozing in his chair.

But Brahms did have his lighter side. He was once invited to dinner by a noted wine connoisseur. In the composer's honour, the man opened one of his finest bottles. "This," he announced to his assorted guests, "is the Brahms of my cellar." Brahms nodded, carefully examining the wine - inhaling its bouquet, swirling it in his glass, and holding it up to the light - before setting it down without further comment. "How do you like it?" the host asked with anticipation. "Well," Brahms replied, "better bring out your Beethoven."



Johannes Brahms



Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on 7 May 1833. His father, an innkeeper and a musician of moderate ability, taught him to play both violin and piano from a very early age. After working hard at the piano, Brahms began piano lessons with Eduard Marxsen when he was ten years old (Brahms that is, not Maxsen!). This hard work paid dividends, as Brahms was able to give financial help to his family by playing the piano in taverns and local dance halls while in his early teens. The constant work proved to be a strain on him and affected his health, but he was offered a chance to take a long rest at Winsen-ander-Luhe, Germany, where he conducted a small male choir for whom he wrote his first choral compositions.

Brahms very soon became involved in the wider musical world and started to meet, and get to know, some of the great names in music, among whom was Joseph Joachim, the famous German violinist to whom his violin concerto was dedicated. Joachim introduced Johannes to Liszt who, in turn, introduced him to the Schumanns, Robert and Clara. Schumann's enthusiasm for the young composer knew no bounds and he wrote articles praising Brahms; he also arranged for the publication of Brahms's first compositions. When Schumann later had a breakdown and attempted suicide Brahms stayed close to the Schumanns, assisting Clara even after Schumann's death in 1856.

In 1865 Brahms's mother, long separated from her husband, died. During the next year Brahms worked on the *German Requiem*, a performance of which you will enjoy this evening, in her memory. The next years saw an increase in composing activity, the most important of which were

the *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, the *String Sextet in G Major*, and several song collections.



It is not always possible to date Brahms's compositions exactly because of his habit of revising a work or adding to it frequently. Thus, the *German Requiem*, practically finished in 1866, was not published in its final form until 1869. It was also given its first complete performance that year.

In 1880, the University of Breslau offered Brahms a doctor's degree, in appreciation of which he wrote two orchestral concert pieces. He was also awarded a doctorate by Cambridge University but, for reasons you will learn about elsewhere in this programme, he was unable to accept it.

When he was about sixty years old, Brahms began to age rapidly, and his production decreased sharply. His health took a further turn for the worse after he heard the news of the death of Clara Schumann in 1896 and, on 3 April 1897, he died of liver cancer. He was buried next to Beethoven and Schubert, honoured by Vienna and the entire musical world.

HAPPINESS IS...



...SINGING IN A CHOIR

If you like what you hear (and see) tonight, and would like to be involved as a choir member, patron or helper (or perhaps you would simply like to learn more about Tring Choral Society), our web site will provide a mine of information.

Our web site contains details of future concerts, rehearsal dates and many other details that are sure to interest friends of our choir.

You can visit us at www.tringchoral.org.uk

As a member of the choir, you will not only have the chance to sing some of the world's greatest music, but you will also benefit from the choir's healthy social life!

Our Membership Secretary, Margaret Flanigan, will be pleased to hear from you on 01442 823915.



The Choir



SOPRANOS

Betilyn Alwyn-Jones
Celestria Bell
Gillie Bligh
Anne Box
Jacquie Cadge
Hilary Colbert
Margaret Collier
Lesley Culley
Sally Dussek*
Barbara Eykel
Ann Gray
Mary Haywood
Zoe Hill
Jeanie Jenner
Katie Johnson
Sue Jones
Victoria Just de la
Paisieres
Christine Keen
Margaret Kirkby
Katie Hughes
Charlotte Mackinder
Harriet Mackinder
Brigid Mathers
Heather Nash*
Fiona O'Neill
Eileen Patterson
Barbara Pearce
Sheila Pulfer
Pam Rush
Carol Scribbins
Gill Shelvey
Rosemary Southworth
Brenda Stapleton
Jenny Stevens

Helen Stokes
Jenny Thallon
Elizabeth Thompson
Jenny Watkins

ALTOS

Karen Baldwin
Janet Briant
Nicky Bull
Jean Bygate*
Sally Cottle
Kate Davies*
Ann Denwood
Margaret Flanigan
Sarah Garrett
Natasha Gething
Janet Graves
Maggie Halsey
Ann Hawkes
Jenny Hoare
Lorna Lang
Debbie Lea
Jane Legg
Gill Lerigo
Jennifer McAllister
Elizabeth Moxley
Rhian Nicholls
Enid Powell
Marilyn Pryor
Phyllis Reynolds
Jacquie Rotheroe
Chris Sivers
Ann Sykes
Anne Wales
Heather Wignall
Kate Winterbottom

TENORS

Jenny Brannock-Jones
Cliff Brown*
Richard Brown
Jeanne Eustace
Ron Franklin
Jonathan Haskell
Roger Judd
Nigel Lewis
David Richardson
Sue Roper
David Wilde*

BASSES

Robert Allnutt
Alan Archer*
Dave Clarke
Adrian Collin
Bob Davies
Paul Doughty
Peter Graves
Richard Grylls
Geoff Harrison
David Hayes
Jim Hetherington
Hugh Hudson
David Long
Tony Mackinder
Richard Onslow*
Tim Roberts
Richard Tregoning
John Watkins
Guy Williams

* *Semi-chorus singers*



Chiltern Orchestral Society



Leader; Janet Hicks

Violin; Ed Hewitt, Muriel Abbott, Frances Bigg, David Glenister, David Moore, Marion Garrett, Fiona Jacob, Frances Stanhope, Roger Neighbour, Mark Redman
Clarinet; Theresa Whiffen, Esther Moors
Bassoon; Caroline Cartwright, Thomas Dryer-Beers

Viola; Katie Hayes, Steffi Cook
Horn; John Lovell, Stuart Carruthers, Adrian Smith, Liz Kadir

Cello; Hilary Drinkall, Mary Harris

Bass; Keith Leonard, Sudhir Singh
Trumpet; Jeremy Loukes, Allan Robinson

Flute; Caroline Welsh, Rachel Tuckley
Trombone; Steph Dyre, Simon Astridge, Chris Brown

Oboe; Emily Cockbill, Frances Slack
Timpani; Richard Baron-Tait

Organ; Mark Cyphus



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Tring Choral Society thanks the Iain Rennie Hospice at Home shop, Tring, for support as our ticket agents.

The piano accompanist for Tring Choral Society rehearsals is Adrian Johnson.

Our thanks go to Roy Mathers for writing and compiling this programme.

Tring Choral Society is financially supported by Dacorum Borough Council through Tring Arts Trust.

We are grateful for the presence of St John Ambulance representatives at this concert.



Financial assistance received from the Eastern Arts Board, administered by NFMS Eastern Region.





Patrons of Tring Choral Society



Mr G E Bull
 Mr J Burchell
 Mr J H Cadge
 Mr and Mrs G Caloia
 Mrs J Cherry
 Mr and Mrs F Clark
 Mr S Eustace
 Mr R Flanigan
 Mrs D Franklin
 Mrs S K Franklin
 Mr J Hawkes
 Mr C W Hoare
 Mrs J Hollingsworth
 Mr M Jackson
 Mr K Johnson

Mrs E Marchant
 Mr I Martin
 Mrs B Matthews
 Mrs MF Merlier
 Mrs E Nicholls
 Mr Rossa O'Reilly
 Mr C B J Pearce
 Mr G Pulfer
 Mrs H Renals
 Mr D Rush
 Mr P Scribbins
 Mr J Stack
 Mr and Mrs J Stanhope
 Mrs J Stevens
 Mr W Stringer

Mr and Mrs E Tapson
 Dr D Thallon
 Mr and Mrs W Thomas
 Mr and Mrs K Todd
 Mr and Mrs J K Watson
 Mr and Mrs M Watson
 Mr A Winterbottom

Life Members

Mrs J Aldridge
 Mr and Mrs D Banyard
 Mr R Grylls
 Mr J Renals
 Mrs K Woodward

Why not become a Patron of Tring Choral Society?

For a minimum donation of £25, you too could become a Patron of Tring Choral Society, this annual donation entitling you to two free tickets (in any one season). You will also receive an annual newsletter giving concert details in advance, and an invitation to join our social events.

To become a Patron, simply fill in the form below and send, with your donation, to
Mrs B S Mathers, 8 Old Mill Gardens, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2NZ
Telephone; 01442 872727

I would like to become a Patron of Tring Choral Society and enclose
 a cheque for £.....

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... Tel No.....

Email address.....