

Faith in ADVERSITY



St JOHN'S CHURCH
NEWBURY
SATURDAY 3RD MARCH 2018
7:30pm

The
Cecilia
Consort

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Musical Director: Janet Coxwell

Faith in ADVERSITY

“Tonight's programme takes the Cecilia Consort into a very different sound world to the one they are accustomed. I always like to challenge and make each programme individual and this one couldn't be more different from the first concert in our season of music by Howells and Muhly.

Stravinsky, on first hearing, can be quite challenging, but with the glorious acoustics of St John's Church I think the results are really beautiful, with some spectacular harmonies.

We start this section of the programme with his very simple *Ave Maria* and, in contrast, follow with his setting of the Mass. In tonight's performance the choir will sing the solo sections. I have chosen piano accompaniment this evening, as I felt a 10 piece Wind Ensemble would overpower the choir in these acoustics, but hope to perform it again soon with other works and combined forces.

I was first introduced to Kodály's *Missa Brevis* whilst in the Chamber Choir at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. It was an experience that has always stayed with me, as I had never sung anything quite like it before and it's a great piece to sing if you are a soprano that likes to sing high.... as you will hear! I hope you enjoy it as much as I did on first hearing.

So sit back and relax as we start our programme with Glinka's slow and meditative Cherubic Hymn. I must thank Mike Barthorpe for being our Russian High Priest and Mike Ananin for coaching us on our Russian pronunciation. He was quite a taskmaster, so I hope we sound authentic!

Thank you to Steve Bowey for his usual wonderfully supportive accompanying both tonight and in rehearsal and to Dan Couchman for being our Cantor tonight.”

Janet Coxwell

Janet Coxwell



Since graduating from London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Janet has worked professionally as a solo artist and consort singer. Whilst specialising in Early Music and performing with many of the UK's leading ensembles, her musical versatility boasts many other genres and musical styles and she has worked closely with Norfolk-based composer, Patrick Hawes, on many of his original works.

Their first album *Blue In Blue* drew critical acclaim with Janet's voice being described as '*melting honey on freshly buttered toast*' (BBC Radio 3). Her '*bell-like tones*' (Financial Times) are often heard on TV, film and radio as well as on numerous classical and pop CDs. Janet enjoyed 23 wonderful years with the *Tallis Scholars* and performed in more than 900 concerts world-wide with this world-renowned ensemble. She continues to perform and record, but her love of teaching means she spends more time in the UK these days. Janet is Head of Choral Studies at Cheam School and enjoys working with her ever increasing 'family' of students and choristers.

Janet and David Woodcock (Head of Music at Harrow School) are both Directors of the newly-formed 'Early Music Academy' which enjoyed a hugely successful inaugural summer season in 2015. EMA are now on their fourth year in the UK. This year's theme will be "The Tudor Greats" and will include singing evensong in Hampton Court Chapel and featuring The Western Wind Mass. Following their inaugural course in the US last summer, 2018 sees them return to Boston to run a course featuring the wonderful Victoria *Requiem*.

As well as a busy performing schedule, Janet enjoys adjudicating choral competitions, leading singing master classes and running choral workshops, she especially loves working with and training amateur singers. She lives in Highclere (Downton Abbey land) and has enjoyed a long and fruitful association with several Newbury based choirs including 'Newbury Choral Society' (Assistant Musical Director).

Steve Bowey B.Eng FRCO



Steve studied organ and piano from an early age, playing the organ regularly at St Francis and St Andrew's churches in Coulsdon.

After gaining an engineering degree from Salford University he moved to Newbury to work for Vodafone. In 1991 Steve was appointed as

accompanist of the Cromwell Singers and later became their Musical Director. From 1992, he was Director of Music at St Mary's Church, Shaw-cum-Donnington, and regularly worked with local choirs, including the Douai Choral Society, the Downland Chorale, the RSCM Southern Cathedral Singers, Berkshire Maestros youth choirs and Worcester College Oxford.

In 2006 Steve joined the Royal College of Organists and in July the following year took the examination for Associate (ARCO) in which he was awarded the Limpus prize for performance, as well as the Sowerbutts and Samuel Baker prizes. After further study, he was awarded the Fellowship Diploma (FRCO) in January 2011. His current musical commitments include teaching organ, piano, and music theory. He is Director of Music at St Mary's Shaw-cum-Donnington, organist at Cheam School, and regularly gives organ recitals. Steve is currently the accompanist to Newbury Choral Society and the Cecilia Consort, and enjoys working with the many choirs in Newbury and the surrounding area.

Programme Notes

The Cherubic Hymn

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)

Glinka is known as the founding father of the nineteenth century Russian musical tradition and is best remembered for his two operas: *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*. His brief interest in Russian church music arose out of the success of the former of these, as the Tsar, impressed by the opera, appointed its composer to the post of *Kapellmeister* to the imperial chapel. The benefits of this included a generous salary and the use of a state apartment, but Glinka didn't find the work congenial, and resigned two years later. This setting of the *Cherubic Hymn* was written in 1837, the year of the appointment.

The text is one of the best-known in the Orthodox liturgy - the *Cherubic Hymn* was sung every day of the year except for Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday. The music is written for unaccompanied choir - no instruments were allowed by the Orthodox Church. It is scored for SATB, with each part dividing to create thicker textures where required. The three verses of the hymn have more or less the same music. They are followed by a brief *Amen*, and a final verse with *Alleluia* which starts out as though it's going to be an extended fugue, but soon subsides to a calmer ending.

Izhe kheruvimyi, taino obrazuyushchye,
i zhivotvoryashchei Troitsye trissvyatuyu pyessn pripievayuschchye,
vsyakoye ninye zhityeskoye otlozhim popyechyeniye. Amin.
Yako da Tsarya vsyekh podyimyem, angyelskiminyevidimo dorinossima chinmi,
Alleluya.

*We that in a mystery figure forth the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity,
Now let us lay aside all cares of this life. Amen
To receive the king of all who comes invisibly upborne by ranks of angels. Alleluia.*

Ave Maria

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Stravinsky was raised in the Russian Orthodox Church. Though he was inactive in his faith during his early adult years, he returned to the fold in 1926, becoming a regular congregant at a church that served the large Russian émigré community in Paris. At that time Stravinsky composed a setting for unaccompanied chorus of The Lord's Prayer. He followed this with similar settings for two other prayers, Credo and Ave Maria, in 1932 and 1934, respectively. In 1949, following his move to the United States, the composer reissued all three motets with their texts translated from Church Slavonic, the liturgical language of Russian Orthodox services, into Latin. The year 1920 marked the beginning of Stravinsky's neoclassical compositional period with the ballet Pulcinella, and ended in 1951 with his opera The Rake's Progress. In contrast to The Dove Descending, a twelve-tone composition, Ave Maria is simple and austere. "I can endure unaccompanied singing in only the most harmonically primitive music," proclaimed Stravinsky and his aim was "a simple harmonic intonation of the words." The resultant sound is, in the words of Craig Smith, "a curious combination of Debussy-like watery harmony and an almost medieval choral texture."

*Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
Et benedictus fructus ventris (tui),
Jesus.*

*Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.*

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and
blessed,
Blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now, and at the hour of our death,
Amen

Mass

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

The Mass for Mixed Chorus and Wind Instruments, one of Igor Stravinsky's (1882–1971) most beautiful compositions, was written in 1948 and first performed in Milan on October 27, 1948, under the direction of Ernest Ansermet. Stravinsky himself conducted the American premiere the following year in New York City; its first performance in Boston was given in 1950 by the Chorus pro Musica under Alfred Nash Patterson.

In a letter to the English author Evelyn Waugh, Stravinsky stressed the liturgical aspects of his setting of the Mass: “Liturgical music has practically disappeared, except, of course, the third-rate academic kind. The tradition has been lost. ...The Credo is a kind of contact with God.”

Elsewhere, the composer has said that by restricting his orchestral forces to the rather cool, unemotional timbres of a double woodwind quintet, he wished to bypass the heart and go directly to the listener's soul. Any appeal to the heart is made by the voices: the beautiful duet for two trebles in the Gloria, for instance, with bouncy, impersonal interruptions from the chorus; the extraordinary rhythmic drive of the choral “Hosanna” in the Sanctus movement; and the restrained, moving harmonies of the Agnus Dei. Tonight the Cecilia Consort will be accompanied by Steve on the piano.

*Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Agnus Dei*

-o- Interval -o-

Missa Brevis

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

Unlike his compatriot Bela Bartók, who emigrated to the USA, Kodály remained in Hungary during the Nazi occupation. After the war he became one of the leading figures in the development of music education in Europe. In common with a number of early 20th century composers, much of his music is based on national folksongs and dances. In addition to the *Missa Brevis*, Kodály produced two other major choral

works, *Psalmus Hungaricus* (1923) and the *Te Deum* (1936), as well as numerous part songs.

Early in 1945 Red Army troops finally overcame the German forces who had been occupying the city of Budapest. The surviving civilian population emerged from where they had been sheltering during the seven weeks of non-stop bombing, to find large parts of the city destroyed. Kodály was caught up in this carnage, taking refuge in the cellar of the Budapest Opera House where, somewhat improbably, the *Missa Brevis* was composed. It was not an entirely new piece, but a re-working of the composer's purely instrumental *Organ Mass* of 1942. First performed in the cloakroom of the Opera House, it later received its official première at the 1948 Three Choirs Festival in Worcester.

The regular parts of the Mass – *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* – are framed by two short movements for solo organ: *Introitus* and *Ite, Missa Est*. The work's distinctive character arises largely from Kodály's modal harmony and folksong-inspired melodies, coupled with a lyrical romanticism.

The *Introitus* immediately establishes the D minor tonality of the work with a gradually intensifying series of chords, after which a simple but important melodic idea emerges. The *Kyrie Eleison* consists of this motif in two-part imitation over a drone-like pedal D. The *Christe Eleison* is especially memorable for its haunting chord progression for a trio of high sopranos, supported by the other parts.

Fanfare-like figures characterise the energetic outer sections of the joyous *Gloria*, whilst the slow central passage beginning at ‘Qui tollis peccata mundi’ introduces a yearning, lyrical melody. The movement reaches an exultant climax with the concluding ‘Amen’.

Forming the centre of the *Credo*, the ‘Et incarnatus est’ and ‘Crucifixus’ contain some of Kodály’s most emotionally intense music. The exuberant ‘Et resurrexit’ which follows, mirrors the text with an energetic ascending figure.

For the *Sanctus* a short organ introduction prepares the way for a sequence of tranquil phrases from the upper voices of the choir, culminating in the festive fanfares of the ‘Hosanna’. The gently undulating *Benedictus* eventually leads into an expanded version of the ‘Hosanna’.

In the *Agnus Dei* the melody used for ‘Qui tollis peccata mundi’ in the *Gloria* makes a re-appearance. After a jubilant climax the final extended ‘Dona nobis pacem’ is a reworking of the entire *Kyrie* movement, bringing the Mass round full circle. The work concludes with the *Ite, Missa Est* for organ solo, a triumphant affirmation based on themes from the *Credo*.

Introitus
Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei
Ite, Missa est

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The Cecilia Consort

The Cecilia Consort was formed by Janet Coxwell 27 years ago from the members of an ad hoc choir put together to sing Mozart's *Requiem* in the Newbury and District Arts Festival in 1989. Meeting for only limited rehearsals before each of our two or three concerts each year, we sing secular and sacred music from across a broad historical spectrum. As a chamber choir, we perform not only chamber works – often *a cappella* or with organ accompaniment alone – but also larger works with orchestra, as at 2008's sell-out performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers* with Canzona at Douai Abbey. We continually learn new works, and almost every concert includes music that we have not performed before, be it a collection of anthems or an entire mass.

Forthcoming Cecilia Consort Concert

Saturday 3rd November 2018

Winter Concert

Douai Abbey, Woolhampton

7:45 pm

Howells & Muhly – The Cecilia Consort at St John's Church

The programme opened with A Hymn to St. Cecilia and although Musical Director, Janet Coxwell, was fielding a smaller than usual line up, the opening bars assured me that 'less-can-sometimes-be-more' as the lush vocal sound washed over the choir's loyal audience. Well enunciated, fabulously rich textures and a soaring soprano counter-melody, this was a lovely opening to the evening.

Fiona Bennett, Newbury Weekly News – December 2017

Remembrance – The Cecilia Consort at Douai Abbey

"Another engaging evening from this fine local choir."

Charles Medlam, Newbury Weekly News – November 2016

"Eternal Light" – The Cecilia Consort at Douai Abbey

"...special thanks and praise be to Janet Coxwell (who also gave us a couple of fine solos) and her wonderful singers for an evening of unalloyed pleasure and edification."

Newbury Weekly News – October 2014

"Any choir can sing loudly, singing that softly is a real skill" – Father Oliver Holt after a concert at Douai Abbey.



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The Cecilia Consort is affiliated to **Making Music** – the National Federation of Music Societies.

Janet Coxwell would like to thank **Amanda Salter** and **Judith Orpen** for the promotional graphics, assembling and production of this programme and all the committee members and helpers for their uplifting support" in organising tonight's concert.

Newbury Chamber Choir

Forthcoming concerts

Visit to the Sepulchre

12th Century, arranged and conducted by Edward Lambert

See the Easter story unfold in this short musical drama.

The music is simple, uplifting and meditative as it tells the story of the disappearance of Christ's body from the tomb.

St George's Church, Wash Common, Newbury RG14 6NU

Sunday, 25 March 2018 at 6.00pm

Free admission, retiring collection

A Wedding in Florence (1539)

A rare opportunity to hear the complete music written for the marriage of Cosimo de'Medici and Eleonora di Toledo in Florence during a golden age of Renaissance art and music.

Conductor: Edward Lambert

St John's Church, Newbury RG14 7PY

Saturday, 28 April 2018 at 7.30pm

Tickets £15 (School pupils free)

from www.newburychamberchoir.org

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For more details about the choir and future events, please see our website

www.ceciliaconsort.org.uk

