



JOINT CONCERT

by the

NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

and

CANTARE

Conductor : Alasdair Gordon
Leader : Andrew Rostron

Saturday 18th November 2023
at 3:00pm

St. Aidan's Church,
Manchester Road, Sudden, Rochdale

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G F Handel : Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 in C minor, HWV 326

G Holst : St. Paul's Suite for Strings, Op. 29 No. 2

CANTARE

S Quartel : Lux Aeterna from *Sanctum*

T Tallis : If ye love me

INTERVAL

CANTARE AND NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

A Vivaldi : Gloria in D major, RV 489

PROGRAMME NOTES

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 in C minor, HWV 326 G F Handel

Allemande: Andante
Grave – Andante allegro
Adagio
Siciliana: Andante
Allegro

In the summer of 1739, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) had suffered some operatic disasters, so he decided to turn his hand to oratorio writing. While preparing two major works in oratorio style (*Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and *L'Allegro ed Il Pensero*) for the coming season at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Handel started to compile some instrumental pieces for 'two new concerts for several instruments, never performed before'. In fact, he wrote twelve *concerti grossi* for his Opus 6 in little more than a month – each taking only about two days to compose – specifically for performance between the acts of these oratorios.

These 'Grand Concertos' – a title given by Handel more to emphasise the large scale of the works – contain various new musical elements evolved to satisfy the expectations of Handel's audiences, including greater dynamic contrast and new harmonic boldness. Most of them consist of entirely new musical material, although some movements are reworkings of previous pieces by Handel or other composers (e.g. Domenico Scarlatti).

The eighth concerto in the set is one of Handel's more experimental works. It has a form not unlike an Italian *concerto da camera*, a 'chamber concerto' consisting of Baroque dances, but draws much of its musical material from several of his earlier works. The opening *Allemande* for full orchestra is a reworking of the opening movement of Handel's second harpsichord suite from his third set (No. 16 in G minor, HWV 452). It is followed by a short sombre and dramatic *Grave* in F minor, a true concerto movement with exchanges between the *concertino* (solo violins and 'cello with continuo) and the *ripieno* (remainder of the orchestra), before an original and somewhat experimental *Andante allegro* that takes its short four-note central motif from his opera *Agrippina*.

The brief *Adagio* that follows starts with a direct quotation from Cleopatra's aria 'Piangerò la sorte mia' ('I will lament my fate') in his opera *Giulio Cesare*. The *Siciliana* afterwards is similarly operatic in style: its theme originates in a discarded

aria ‘Love from such a parent born’ for his oratorio *Saul*, which he later reused in the aria ‘Se d’amore amanti siete’ (‘If you are lovers of love’) from *Imeneo* and also hints at the Pastoral Symphony and ‘He shall feed his flock’ from the yet-to-be-written oratorio *Messiah*. The final *Allegro* is a *polonaise* in binary form for full orchestra, albeit with a transparency and crispness that results partly from a single independent voice stated by the second violins and violas together.

Linda A Williams (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

St Paul’s Suite for Strings, Op. 29 No. 2 — Gustav Holst

Jig: Vivace
Ostinato: Presto
Intermezzo: Andante con moto
Finale: Allegro

Gustav Holst (1874-1934) is best known for his orchestral suite, *The Planets*, but he composed a large number of other works across a range of genres. Initially inspired by Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, Holst was later inspired by the English folksong revival of the early 20th century and, following the example of rising modern composers such as Maurice Ravel, he developed and refined his own individual style. His uncompromising personal style of composition was often seen as overly austere and his popularity declined, but he influenced many younger English composers such as Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten.

Throughout his life Holst wrote music for his pupils to sing and play, raising both standards and taste. He began teaching at St. Paul’s Girls’ School in Hammersmith in 1905, and held a post there until his death. At this time, like his colleague Ralph Vaughan Williams, he became deeply interested in English folksong and, having just written two *Suites for Military Band* (influenced by Morris dance tunes), he wrote this *Suite* for the school string orchestra in 1913, which was finally published in 1922 after making a number of revisions. Twenty years later Holst wrote the *Brook Green Suite* for their junior orchestra.

The *Jig* deals with two sprightly 6/8 tunes in a harmonically simple context, although the time signature occasionally changes to 9/8 and back again to 6/8. The *Ostinato* has the same group of four quavers curling down and up throughout the movement played (mostly) by the second violins, over which a muted solo violin introduces a carefree lilting tune. The third movement—originally labelled ‘Dance’ in the manuscript—has *pizzicato* chords beneath a plaintive solo violin, interrupted twice by an aggressive and disruptive *vivace* element. The finale is almost identical with

the *Fantasia on the Dargason* at the end of the second *Military Band Suite* and cleverly includes the folk tune *Greensleeves* as a fitting counter-melody.

CRW for Ilkley Concert Club (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Lux Aeterna from *Sanctum* — Sarah Quartel

Sarah Quartel (b. 1982) is a Canadian composer and music educator known for her fresh and exciting approach to choral music. Deeply inspired by the life-changing relationships that can occur while making choral music, Sarah writes in a way that connects singer to singer, ensemble to conductor, and performer to audience. Her works are performed by choirs across the world, and she has been commissioned by groups including the American Choral Directors Association, the National Children's Chorus of the United States of America, and New Dublin Voices. Although she has been a full-time composer since 2017, Sarah chooses to remain connected to her past as a music educator and is a guest teacher in her hometown of London, Canada. Sarah continues to work as a clinician and conductor at music education and choral events at home and abroad.

Sanctum is a captivating setting of four movements of the Requiem text for unaccompanied upper voices (sopranos and altos), inspired by the landscape of the west coast of Canada. Each movement depicts an aspect of Vancouver Island (the water, mountains, wind, and sky), exploring landscape as a place of healing and sanctuary. The combined effect is some of Quartel's most atmospheric and dramatic writing to date. It was commissioned by Ensemble Laude, a women's choir based on Vancouver Island who first performed the work in April 2014 under its director Elizabeth MacIsaac.

The final movement is a setting of *Lux aeterna luceat eis* ('May eternal light shine on them'), which in the context of a Requiem Mass accompanies the sacrament of the Eucharist, the symbolic offering of bread and wine in remembrance of the Last Supper. Quartel's four-part setting is inspired by the sky of Vancouver Island and comes with an aptly descriptive tempo marking: *With lots of push and pull*.

Sarah Quartel, adapted by M Seaton

If Ye Love Me — Thomas Tallis

The breaking away of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church during the Tudor period led to radical changes in English church music. In particular, composers such as Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-1585), a prominent musician of the Chapel Royal, had to change from setting sacred texts in Latin to English ones and

start using a simple style that gave 'to each syllable a plain and distinct note'.

Tallis's setting of *If Ye Love Me* uses verses from the Gospel of John – words spoken by Jesus to his disciples foretelling his own death and promising that God the Father will send to them the Holy Spirit as a 'Comforter' – as given in William Tyndale's English translation of the Bible. The text was appointed as the Gospel reading for Whit Sunday in the lectionary of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, but Tallis's setting might pre-date this based on its appearance in the Wanley Partbooks (c.1548-1550). This takes the form of a motet for a four-part *a cappella* choir, very much in the English Reformation compositional style: essentially homophonic but with some elaboration and imitation. It consists of two distinct musical sections, with the second section repeated.

While it was largely forgotten after the religious turmoil of the 17th century, its re-publication in 1847 by the Motett Society has made it the most performed of Tallis's works, even being sung during Pope Benedict XVI's 2010 visit to the United Kingdom and at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in 2018.

M Seaton

INTERVAL

Tea & coffee will be served at the back of the Church

Gloria in D major, RV 589 — A Vivaldi

Gloria in excelsis: Allegro
Et in terra pax: Andante
Laudamus te: Allegro
Gratias agimus tibi: Adagio
Propter magnam gloriam tuam: Allegro
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis: Largo
Domine Fili unigenite: Allegro
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei: Adagio
Qui tollis peccata mundi: Adagio
Qui sedes a dexteram Patris: Allegro
Quoniam tu solus sanctus: Allegro
Cum Sancto Spiritu: Allegro

The Venetian composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) learned to be a dazzling violin virtuoso under the tutelage of his father, but he was initially destined for a career in the church. Although he was ordained as a priest, his health was allegedly too

delicate to allow him to discharge his religious duties, and he gave up saying Mass almost as soon as he was ordained in 1703. From then until 1718 he devoted his life to composing and to teaching at an orphanage for girls in Venice, the *Ospidale della Pietà*. Here he fostered the talents of the young girls who lived there, for whom he wrote many of his instrumental works. In the last 23 years of his life, he visited other parts of Italy, notably Mantua and Rome, and travelled widely in Europe, selling concertos and arranging performances of his operas and other music. In the late 1730s, he returned to the *Pietà*, where his continued frequent absences to arrange musical performances outside Venice angered his employers. In 1741, he travelled to Vienna apparently on just such a trip and died there.

Vivaldi was a prolific composer, producing concertos and other orchestral and instrumental works, operas, cantatas, oratorios, and sacred music. In this last category, his output included motets, settings of the *Magnificat* and a number of psalms, and settings of the Roman Catholic Mass or of isolated sections of it. Among these Mass sections are at least three settings of the *Gloria*, one of which is now lost. Of the other two, the one catalogued as RV 589 is the better known and indeed is arguably Vivaldi's most widely popular choral work. Like the other surviving and rather more elaborate *Gloria* (RV 588), it dates from 1708 and uses similar orchestral forces. Although the work is usually performed by a mixed (SATB) choir, the fact that Vivaldi wrote it while at the *Pietà* suggests that it might have been performed by the girls using just female voices, and we present it today in that form.

The work falls into 12 sections, each of which displays the clarity and vitality of Vivaldi's text-setting. The first movement, *Gloria in excelsis Deo* ('Glory to God in the highest'), set for chorus and orchestra, is a jubilant call to worship and is cast positively in D major. The chordal writing is homophonic rather than contrapuntal, making a strong declaration with which to start the piece. This movement contrasts noticeably with the *Et in terra pax hominibus* that follows. This is a quieter chorus mainly in B minor representing Earth's peaceful response to the angels' song. *Laudamus te* is a dazzling duet for sopranos, who sing 'we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee' in a spectacular, typically Italianate style[*]. The setting of *Gratias agimus tibi* ('We give Thee thanks'), another chorus, serves as a chordal introduction to *Propter magnam gloriam tuam*, a short fugue to the

[*] If you somehow ever find yourself driving in Los Angeles and pull up next to a car driven by stand-up comedian and actress Retta at traffic lights, it is highly likely she will be singing along to this duet while waiting for the lights to change! (*Conan*, 2012)

words ‘For Thy great glory’. *Domine Deus Rex coelestis* is a solo for soprano, with oboe or violin *obbligato*, to ‘Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty.’

The triple-time chorus *Domine Fili*, invoking God the Son, contrasts two distinctive musical figures: one a dotted, almost jaunty theme, and the other a melody that proceeds in longer, more *legato* notes. This is followed by a setting of *Domine Deus, Agnus Dei* (‘Lord God, Lamb of God’), which, along with the next two numbers, sets the short litany that forms the core of the text. This first one is set as a solo for altos with full choral interpolations. The ensuing *Qui tollis peccata mundi* is a short chordal rendering of ‘Who takest away the sins of the world, sustain our prayers’, and is followed by *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris* (‘Who sittest at the right hand of the Father’), another alto solo. The *Quoniam tu solus sanctus* (‘For Thou only art holy’) is musically an abbreviated reprise of the opening number. It sets us up nicely for Vivaldi’s grand finish, a double fugue on the words *Cum Sancto Spiritu* (‘With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.’). This is a splendid chorus, and it need not worry us much that Vivaldi lifted it straight out of a *Gloria* setting for double choir by one of his contemporaries, Giovanni Maria Ruggieri. Indeed, Vivaldi, who used the same finale in his other *Gloria* (RV 588), seems to have filched the movement while the ink on Ruggieri’s piece (also composed in 1708) was still wet! Regardless of its provenance, this fugue still makes for a rousing ending.

Unknown (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

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www.northernbaroque.org.uk

Alasdair Gordon : Conductor



Alasdair studied trombone at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has performed throughout the North West of England as a freelance trombonist, performing with many symphony orchestras, jazz ensembles and brass bands.

Since taking over as musical director of Sweet Rhythm Jazz Orchestra at the start of its 1989/1990 season, Alasdair has established himself as a successful and respected conductor in the North West. He has conducted Worsley Amateur Operatic Society, Heykids AODS (Heywood Amateur Operatic And Dramatic Society's junior section), Saddleworth Musical Society and Bacup Theatre Company.

CANTARE

Cantare is a Rochdale-based choir for female voices. It was originally founded in 1982 as the Debrose Choir, changing its name to Cantare in 2009, and includes women of all ages from all walks of life who love to sing and want to do it well.

Its repertoire is exciting and wide-ranging, from pop standards and songs from the shows, to classical and contemporary choral pieces. As well as performing on its own in concerts and competitions in and around Rochdale, Cantare also joins forces with other choirs and musical ensembles.



MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

1st Violins
Andrew Rostron
Fiona Liddy
Lorraine Lees

2nd Violins
Peter Farnbank
Louise Bennett

Violas
Michael Seaton
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Jackie Holt
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Lynn Lucas
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Kathy Hudson
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Karen Thornton
Eileen Graham

Altos
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Rebecca James
Carol Smith
Cornelia Stirzaker
Mags Green
Karen Martlew
Jean Radcliffe
Karen Myers
Christine Foggon
Hilary Clarke
Cath Alexander
Carolynn Brierley

Musical Director
Adam Summers

THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

In the early 1980s, the late Linda Williams, violinist and peripatetic teacher in Rochdale, had the idea of forming a small chamber orchestra with her friends and fellow professionals to perform at least two concerts a year, basing their repertoire principally on the Baroque period. The Northern Baroque Orchestra was born soon after and gave its first concert on 22nd May 1985.

Essentially a string ensemble, it invites along woodwind or brass players as required, as well as concerto soloists either from within its ranks or friends and colleagues. The orchestra also offers young musicians, including soloists from RNCM and Chetham's School of Music, opportunities to play or sing with an ensemble.

The NBO has worked with different conductors, among them members of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra: Bob Chasey, Timothy Ang, Richard Davis and Simon Robertshaw. George Kennaway from the Orchestra of Opera North and Leeds University also conducted the orchestra regularly. Michael Dow, Director of Music at Stockport Grammar School, has given sixteen consecutive summer concerts with the orchestra since June 2004, and Paul Witkiewicz, conductor of Bolton Symphony Orchestra, has given six autumn/winter concerts as well as a spring concert in 2019.

The NBO is delighted to welcome both Alasdair Gordon as our conductor and the choir Cantare to perform with us at this afternoon's concert. We very much enjoy working with Alasdair and Cantare, and trust that this enjoyment transmits itself to you in our playing.

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NEXT NBO CONCERT

May/June 2024 (to be confirmed)

Visit our website for more details:
www.northernbaroque.org.uk

CHRISTMAS WITH CANTARE

Saturday 16th December 2023, 7:30pm

Church of St Chad, Sparrow Hill, Rochdale, OL16 1QT

Join Cantare for a concert of beautiful music in the glorious setting of Rochdale's Parish Church. Festive crafts and refreshments available. Let Christmas commence!

Tickets for £12 available (children free) from choir members, Eventbrite (via Cantare's website, **cantarechoir.wordpress.com**) or on the door (cash or card payments accepted)

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By becoming a patron you guarantee us an annual income, thereby supporting the orchestra and, more generally, amateur music making in the community.

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