

CONCERTS AT CROSTHWAITE



A Feast of Song

Elgar, The Black Knight

Fauré, Pavane and Madrigal

Smetana, Česká Píseň

Organ music by Walton and Franck

Conductor: Marco Fanti

Pianist: Helena Morwood

Organist: Ian Hare

Chorus Director: Mavis Fletcher

Saturday 16th June 2012 at 7.30pm

Crosthwaite Church, Keswick

Organ Music

(Ian Hare)

Orb and Sceptre (Coronation March, 1953)

William Walton (1902-1983)

This march was composed for orchestra for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953. As with Walton's earlier *Crown Imperial* (1936), this follows a similar plan to the Pomp and Circumstance Marches by Elgar, in having a second theme which is first heard quietly and reprised triumphantly at the end, separated by sections of a more lively and rhythmic nature. There is more than one arrangement for organ, and this one is by Robert Gower.

The Black Knight (Op. 25)

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

(Pianist Helena Morwood)



This choral work has been variously described, but the terms Secular Cantata or Symphony Cantata are most frequently used. Elgar called it a symphony for chorus and orchestra. It is one of his early works, published when he was little known even in England.

After his marriage to Alice Roberts, a general's daughter, the Elgars moved to London but returned within a year to Malvern and Worcester where Edward's musical abilities were more in demand. He resumed teaching and was commissioned to write music for the Three Choirs Festival.

The Black Knight, composed in 1893, was the first of a series of choral works to be taken up by local choral societies in the Midlands. Other pieces followed – *King Olaf*, *The Light of Life* and *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, all published in 1896. The latter was a setting of poems written by Alice Elgar that became especially popular. (It was performed in 2011 at a concert by the Lancaster Singers in Christ Church, Lancaster.)

The words that Elgar chose to set in *The Black Knight* are from a poem by the German, Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862), translated here by Longfellow. Uhland was a poet, philologist and literary historian with a particular interest in medieval literature, especially old German and French poetry. He is classed with the Romantic school of poetry writing and was greatly attracted to subjects concerning the Middle Ages.

Basil Maine, a leading Elgar biographer, described the *The Black Knight* as “a close mix of vocal and instrumental tone”. The loose cantata format is shaped by dividing the piece into four contrasting scenes corresponding to the four movements of a typical symphony. The orchestral score, adapted for the piano and played this evening by the Lancaster Singers’ accompanist, Helena Morwood, is extremely rich. There are numerous passages characteristic of Elgar’s style and future compositions. Writers are ambivalent about the *purpose* of the piece, which describes the intrusion of a mysterious stranger into the king’s court. There seems to be no moral cause or explanation for his actions and generally the words are often weakly placed; it would seem that the composer gave more thought to the underlying music. But the orchestral writing is characteristic of Elgar and due to his unexpected chording to express the Knight’s wickedness, *The Black Knight* is still performed all over the world.

Scene one: The pageantry and exciting atmosphere of the Joust are described in the opening music with a triplet figure falling on the third beat. The people are happily celebrating the Feast of Pentecost, and the King’s son is winning all his competitions in the lists. That is, until he is challenged by a mysterious Knight. There is beautiful part writing for all voices in this scene and as it draws to a close, so the voices flow into each other.

*’Twas Pentecost, the Feast of Gladness,
When woods and fields put off all sadness.
Thus began the King and spake;
“So from the halls of ancient Hofburg’s walls,
A luxuriant Spring shall break.”
Drums and trumpets echo loudly,
Wave the crimson banners proudly,
From balcony the king looked on;
In the play of spears,
Fell all the cavaliers,
Before the monarch’s stalwart son.*

Scene Two: The Black Knight’s theme is heard on the piano as he enters. Diminished sevenths represent the mysterious visitor, foreshadowing the disastrous events to come. “The black and sable knight” approaches the barrier and the crowd demands his name. There is a moment of silence before he speaks: “Should I speak it, you would stand aghast with fear.” All he will say is that he is “a Prince of mighty sway.” He is a sinister figure, and at his appearance the sky blackens, the castle begins to rock and with one blow, the young Prince falls from his horse.

*To the barrier of the fight
Rode at last a sable Knight.
“Sir Knight! your name and scutcheon say!”
“Should I speak it here,
Ye would stand aghast with fear;
I am a Prince of mighty sway.”
When he rode into the lists,*

*The arch of heaven grew black with mists,
And the castle 'gan to rock.
At the first blow fell the youth
From saddle-bow,
Hardly rises from the shock.*

Scene three: Now the jousting has ended and we move to the banqueting hall - "Pipe and viol call the dances". Light and graceful themes describe the torch-lit scene. The "pipe and viol" continue throughout and we hear phrases reminiscent of the Dorabella theme that would appear later in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. The Knight dances with the King's daughter, the dance themes becoming more and more chaotic. He is dressed in "sable iron sark (shirt)", "closely clasping her limbs around". As they dance, the earlier diminished sevenths return and the flowers in her hair fade and fall to the floor. Nevertheless, the mysterious Knight asks the King for his daughter's hand in marriage.

*Pipe and viol call the dances,
Torch-light through the high hall glances;
Waves a mighty shadow in;
With manner bland
Doth ask the maiden's hand,
Doth with her the dance begin;
Danced in sable iron sark,
Danced a measure weird and dark,
Coldly clasped her limbs around.
From breast and hair,
Down fall from her the fair
Flowerets, faded, to the ground.*

Scene Four: The courtiers arrive at the banquet but the King's children look very pale. They each accept a glass of wine, offered by the Knight, who says: "Golden wine will make you whole". The fear-struck father embraces his children and watches as they die. "Take me too", the joyless King asks, but the only reply he receives from the Knight is "Roses in the Spring I gather". The Knight's refusal to kill the King is portrayed by unaccompanied voices, and the piece ends quietly as the music dies away.

*To the sumptuous banquet came
Every Knight and every Dame,
'Twixt son and daughter all distraught,
With mournful mind
The ancient King reclined,
Gazed at them in silent thought.
Pale the children both did look,
But the guest a beaker took,
"Golden wine will make you whole!
The children drank,
Gave many a courteous thank;
"O, that draught was very cool!"
Each the father's breast embraces,
Son and daughter; and their faces
Colourless grow utterly.
Whichever way
Looks the fear-struck father grey,*

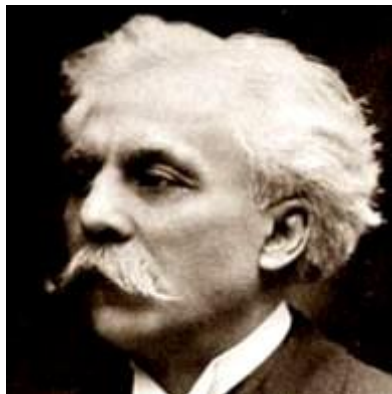
*He beholds his children die.
"Woe, the blessed children both
Takest thou in joy of youth;
Take me too, the joyless father!"
Spake the grim Guest,
From his hollow cavernous breast,
"Roses in the Spring I gather."*

Interval (refreshments provided)

Pavane

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Madrigal



Gabriel Fauré was the youngest of six children. He was born in the South of France and sent to live with a foster mother until the age of four when his father was appointed the director of a teacher training college. The young Gabriel then rejoined the family. In later life he recalled the chapel attached to his father's college: "Every time I could get away I ran there and regaled myself (on the chapel harmonium). I played atrociously, no method at all, quite without technique, but I do remember that I was happy; and if that is what it means to have a vocation, then it is a very pleasant thing."

At the age of nine, he won a scholarship to the School of Classical and Religious music being set up by Louis Niedermeyer in Paris. Niedermeyer himself was Fauré's piano tutor. Fauré boarded at the school, with its austere regime and mediocre food, for 11 years. On the death of Niedermeyer, Saint-Saens took charge of piano studies and there developed an almost filial attachment between Saint-Saens and Fauré. The pupil had immense admiration and unceasing gratitude towards his teacher throughout his life.

Fauré's early works, of which we hear two in tonight's programme, are in the tradition of French nineteenth-century Romanticism. He is regarded as a master of the French art song (*melodie*). Samuel Langford wrote of Fauré: "more surely almost than any writer in the world he commanded the faculty to write a song all of a piece, and with a sustained intensity of mood which made it like a single thought."

Pavane (Op. 50)

Composed in 1887, originally as a piano piece, it was later orchestrated with an optional chorus. The lyrics were based on some inconsequential verses supplied by the cousin of Fauré's patron. When Fauré decided to dedicate the piece to Elisabeth, comtesse Greffuhle, he felt he should make it grander and the comtesse suggested an (invisible) chorus. The "choreographic spectacle" was finally produced to grace one of her garden parties in the Bois de Boulogne.

The music ebbs and flows in its rhythm, obtained from the slow processional Spanish court dance, the Pavane. A series of melodic and harmonic climaxes conjure a cool *Belle Epoque* elegance. Fauré himself described it as "elegant but not otherwise important". He intended it to be played more briskly than has become customary today. Sir Adrian Boult heard Fauré play the piano version: in Boult's opinion, the text, added later, was "clearly a piece of light-hearted chaffing between the dancers." The following is a very free translation:

*C'est Lindor! C'est Tircis! Et c'est tous nos vainqueurs!
C'est Myrtil! C'est Lydé! Les reines de nos coeurs, comme ils sont provocants!
Comme ils sont fiers toujours!
Comme on ose se régner sur nos sorts et nos jours!
Faites attention! Observez la mesure! O la mortelle injure!
La cadence est moins lente et la chute plus sûre.
Nous rabattrons bien leurs caquets!
Qu'ils sont laids! Chers minois! Qu'ils sont fols! Airs coquets!
Et c'est toujours de même; on s'adore! On se hait! On maudit ses amours!
Adieu Myrtil! Eglé! Chloé! Démons moqueurs! Adieu donc et bonjours aux tyrans de nos coeurs.*

It is Lindor, it is Tircis and all our conquerors; it is Myrtil, it is Lydé, the queens of our hearts.
How provocative and proud they always are; how they dare to reign over our destinies and lives.
Watch out! The mortal injury! The cadence is not so slow and the fall more certain!
It is always the same: one adores them, one hates them. We soon become their slaves.
Goodbye Myrtil, Eglé, Chloé, mocking demons; farewell and good days. Goodbye to the tyrants of our hearts!

Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac. (1855-1921)

Madrigal (Op. 35)

Composed in 1883, this piece is dedicated to André Messager, a pupil and lifelong friend. The words are by Paul Armand Silvestre, who is described by Timothy Brown as "an indifferent poet". Nevertheless, Silvestre was Fauré's inspiration for some of his most exquisite *melodies*. The main theme is based on a Lutheran chorale, though Fauré does not explain why he chose this form. The music is tonal in quality, with beautiful sectional writing for the choir – almost like chamber music – and strongly shaped phrasing which all give colour to the piece.

*Inhumaines qui, sans merci
Vous raillez de notre souci
Aimez quand on vous aime.
Ingrats qui ne vous doutez pas des rêves éclos sur vos pas,
Aimez quand en vous aime.
Sachez ô cruelles Beauté que les jours d'aimer sont comptés
Sachez, Amoureux inconstants, que le bien d'aimer n'a qu'un temps!
Aimez quand on vous aime.
Un même destin nous poursuit, et notre folie est la même,
C'est celle de fuir qui nous aime, c'est celle d'aimer qui nous fuit.*

The joys of love are short so seize love when love seeks you.
We either run away from the one who loves us or suffer unrequited love ourselves.

Organ Music

Choral no 3 in A minor

César Franck (1822-1890)

This is the last of a set of three Chorals which Franck composed towards the end of his life, and is dedicated to his beloved pupil Augusta Holmes. It is not based on any specific chorale from the past, but makes use of contrasting original themes, the second of which is in the style of a chorale. After a romantic central interlude, the work builds up to a thrilling climax in which the two main themes are combined.

Česká Píseň (Böhmen's Lied)

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)



In his homeland, Smetana was widely regarded as the father of Czech music. He played in a string quartet at the age of 5, a piano recital at 6 and wrote his first composition at the age of 8. His best known works are the opera *The Bartered Bride* composed in 1866; his symphonic cycle *Ma Vlast* portraying Czechoslovakia (1872), and his first string quartet *From my Life* (1876). The finale of the quartet contains a high pitched note depicting the noise in his head at the onset of his deafness.

Arriving in Prague in 1839 he said he “wanted to be a Mozart in composition and a Liszt in technique”. He later dedicated a piano work to Liszt entitled *Six Characteristic Pieces*. The two became good friends.

Like Beethoven before him, Smetana was to become totally deaf, but this was also a period of sustained composition for him. He had relinquished his post as principal conductor at the new Provisional Theatre in Prague, with all the related controversies that beset him there, and this gave him the freedom to make his contributions to Czech music that were to be increasingly recognised and honoured. Living in isolation in the country, he composed choral pieces.

Česká Píseň – Bohemia’s Song (1860)

This piece will be sung in German, the official language in Czechoslovakia when Smetana was born. He did not use his native language in his compositions until much later in life. It was not until he moved to Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1856 that he began writing pieces for full choir. These choral works are generally nationalistic in character and romantic in style. Michael Kennedy has said the music has “a freshness and strength” which ensures its popularity. Again the work is divided into four parts.

Part one for mixed choir:

*Böhmens Lied kann macht voll singen, wenn es Gott lobt im Erklingen
Wenn befreit von Erden schwere, zu des Aller höchsten Ehre fromm der Geist zum Himmel strebt
Böhmens Lied kann macht voll klingen, wenn wir “Heilig, Heilig” singen!*

Bohemia’s song can sing out powerfully when it resounds in praise of God
When, released from earthly weight, in praise of the Almighty, the spirit reverently strives towards heaven
Bohemia’s song can ring out powerfully when we sing “Holy, holy!”

Part two for women’s voices:

*Böhmens Lied kann lieblich klingen, wenn Mägdelein, Mägdelein fröhlich singen
Fließt das Lied aus ihrem Munde, wie der Bach im Wiesengrunde munter hin zum Flusse eilt,
Böhmens Lied kann lieblich klingen, wenn Mädchen von Liebe, von Liebe singen.*

Bohemia’s song can sound delightful, when maidens sing joyfully
The song flows from their lips, as the stream in the meadow hastens merrily to the river
Bohemia’s song can sound delightful when girls sing of love

Part three for men’s voices:

*Böhmens Lied kann freundlich klingen, wenn wir gemeinsam singen,
So wie im Lenze die Winde streicheln die Zweige der Linde,
so bewegt die Freude uns!
Böhmens Lied kann freundlich klingen, wenn wir gemeinsam singen,
froh, gesellig wir singen, in frohem Kreise singen*

Bohemia’s song can have a friendly sound when we sing together
Just as in spring the breezes caress the boughs of the linden tree
So does joy move us, so does joy move us.

Bohemia's song can have a friendly sound
When we sing together
Happily, convivially we sing, sing in a happy circle
Happily, convivially we sing, when we sing in a merry circle!

Part four for mixed choir:

*Böhmens Lieder gehn zu Herzen
Bald ein Wogen, bald ein Grollen, Donnerrollen!
Bald lieblosen sie anmutig, bald umhüllt sie der Klage Kleid.
Und nun Schalk und Munterkeit!
Doch am schönsten und am wärmsten Böhmens Lieder uns erklingen,
Wenn sie Liebe zu der Heimat singen.*

Bohemia's songs find their way to our hearts
Now a gust of wind, now a rumble of thunder!
Now gracefully they caress, now they are shrouded in clothes of mourning
And now mischief and merriment
But Bohemia's songs sound most beautiful and heartwarming
When they sing of love of our homeland.

Thanks to Margaret Fancy for these programme notes.

Marco Fanti



Marco Fanti became Musical Director of the Lancaster Singers in September 2009. Born and educated in Bologna he holds degrees in Music, Classics and Linguistics and is currently Professor of Music at the University of Bologna, specialising in 18th century choral music and music education. He also teaches literature at a High School in Mantova.

As well as conducting the Lancaster Singers, Marco directs the Coro Athena in Bologna, and its children's choir Piccolo Coro Athena. In September 2010 he took up the post of Musical Director of the Preston Cecilian Choral Society, and he has also been appointed Director of Prestbury Choral Society.

Ian Hare



Ian Hare is the Director of Music at Crosthwaite Church, Keswick and of the Keswick Choral Society, as well as being Chorus Master of Cumbria Rural Choirs. He has been on the staff of Lancaster University since 1974, initially as a Lecturer in Music, now as Organist, and in 2006 was awarded an Honorary Fellowship. In addition he teaches music privately and is an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. As an organ recitalist and accompanist, he has performed widely in Britain and internationally, and has made a number of recordings and broadcasts. Some of his compositions have been published and performed in Britain and the USA.

When Ian attended Hymers College, Hull, he obtained several musical diplomas including Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and he was also an assistant organist at St. Mary's Church, Beverley. As the organ scholar of King's College, Cambridge, under Sir David Willcocks, he accompanied the famous choir on many occasions, and he also studied at the Royal College of Music and in Paris with André Marchal and Nadia Boulanger.

In 1975 Ian founded the Lancaster Singers, a chamber choir with whom he conducted many choral works, often with professional soloists and an orchestra. He was the Organist and Master of the Choristers at Cartmel Priory from 1981 to 1989, when he was appointed Assistant Organist of Carlisle Cathedral, before moving to Keswick in 1996. He has recently become the Chairman of the Cumbrian Society of Organists.

Helena Morwood

Helena Morwood read music at King's College Cambridge and has had a diverse and exciting musical career ranging from performance to research. She is now the accompanist and musical coach at Queen Elizabeth School Kirkby Lonsdale, and in her free time may be found gently cycling around the countryside.

Mavis Fletcher (Assistant Director, Lancaster Singers)



Mavis Fletcher is a graduate of RMCM and taught music in schools in Preston and Blackburn for many years before her retirement in 2000. She is an active church musician, choir mistress, organist and community choir director, and has been a member of numerous choirs as well as being the Director of the Avenham Singers.

Mavis continues to teach piano and singing at home, and helps to arrange training for choir leaders and singing workshops for adults and young people throughout the North West. She is a Trustee of the Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD), having been chair of the North West region and a member of the national council for 13 years. She is actively involved in running the North West Children's Honour Choir, who meet three times a year to work with composer Bob Chilcott and have performed joint concerts with the Lancaster Singers in summer 2010 and summer 2011.

As a member of Lancaster Singers, Mavis says that it has been a privilege to be their conductor this year.

LANCASTER SINGERS

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Maggie Bremner
Margaret Fancy
Barbara Hacking-
Douglas
Andrea King
Jean Morris
Pamela Nickols
Jean Norgate
Marilyn Pooley
Trixi Schirok-Huggett
Susan Simpson
Katy Taylor
Georgia Treglown
Lindsay Ward

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Vivienne Bonnett
Doreen Champness
Cathleen Dawson
Mavis Fletcher
Brenda Harding
Ruth Hutchison
Sarah Jackson
Serena Lailey
Sally Richardson
Gillian Sheath
Yi-Ling Tan
Annik Taylor
Jean Wangermann

TENORS

Graham Bartram
Jim Birkett
Peter Entwistle
John Falkingham
Tony Guénault
Peter Sampson
Mark Shackleton
Richard Williams

BASSES

David Brooks
Ian Cookson
Chris Haughton
Charlie Lewis
Berwyn Morris
John Nickols
John Shepherd

Lancaster Singers would like to express thanks to Crosthwaite Church for their help with this concert, and their appreciation for the services of the Lancashire County Library in providing music. Thanks also to our rehearsal accompanist Helena Morwood.

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Email: lancsingers@googlemail.com

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Lancaster Singers

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Dvořák Serenade in D minor Beethoven Symphony No 8 in F major

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