

CONVIVIUM SINGERS

NEIL FERRIS

FAURÉ

REQUIEM

CONVIVIUM
RECORDS

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1926) began work on his *Requiem* purely ‘for the pleasure of it’, although it was quite probably composed in response to the recent death of his father. The subsequent passing of his mother shortly after its first performance gives the work an added poignancy, not least since the *Requiem* was an evolving work which he continued to revise from its inception in 1887 until the first published version of 1900.

Fauré wrote several works involving a full orchestra, but his particular talent lay within the more intimate musical forms – songs, piano music and chamber music. Fauré deliberately avoided the grander kind of orchestral music, preferring instead to embrace an elegant and subtle musical language.

In its sequence of movements the *Requiem* departs significantly from the standard liturgical text. Fauré does not underline the terrors of the Day of Judgement, and specifically includes the response *In Paradisum* from the Burial Service. Consequently, the prevailing mood is one of peacefulness and serenity.

This new arrangement for string quintet and organ by Michael Higgins was first performed on Remembrance Sunday in 2007 in the intimate setting of the choir stalls at St John’s Church, Wimbledon. By using a small number of singers, similar to the twenty or so in Fauré’s choir at the Madeleine, added to the chamber music quality of the strings, unique colours and textures are created which breathe new life into an otherwise familiar but continually evolving work.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) played at various churches in Paris and from 1857 held the eminent position of organist at the Église de la Madeleine, where he was succeeded in 1877 by Fauré. Although he is not generally associated with sacred music, Saint-Saëns’ sacred compositions are numerous and include settings of several psalms and

liturgical texts, and this setting of the *Ave verum corpus*. The poem is a meditation on the Catholic belief in Christ’s Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Tantum ergo by Déodat de Séverac (1872-1921) is a serenely beautiful setting, and one of Séverac’s best known compositions. The words are taken from the final two verses of *Pange Lingua Gloriosi* by St Thomas Aquinas: ‘Therefore we, before him bending, this great Sacrament revere’.

Fauré’s *Ave verum corpus* is written in a style that recalls his *Requiem* – simple and emotional. The text, attributed to Pope Innocent VI, is a prayer for the Feast of Corpus Christi and in just five lines covers the Incarnation, the Passion, the Eucharist and the Last Judgement. The *Cantique de Jean Racine* is an early work, winning first prize from l’Ecole de Musique Classique et Religieuse of Paris where he was a student of Camille Saint-Saëns. Scored originally with harmonium and string quartet accompaniment, recorded here in a new arrangement for string quintet, one can hear rhythmic triplets contrasting with the steady declamation of Racine’s text.



NEIL FERRIS



MICHAEL HIGGINS

NEIL FERRIS

studied at Royal Holloway, University of London and the Royal College of Music. Neil combines his conducting engagements with his post as Head of Choral Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where he oversees the internationally recognised choral conducting course and the conservatoire's choral ensembles. He is also on the tutorial panel for the Association of British Choral Directors National Conducting Courses and has been a guest teacher for the Association of Irish Choirs and at Birmingham Conservatoire.

Neil is Music Director of Cardiff Polyphonic Choir, which in recent years has broadcast for BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4 as well as an appearance last year on BBC Television. Since 2009 he has been the Music Director of Wimbledon Choral Society, one of London's leading amateur choruses.

Neil also works regularly as a guest conductor with other choirs; he is Principal Guest Conductor of Birmingham Bach Choir and Convivium Singers.

He is Associate Chorus Master of London Symphony Chorus and Chorus Master at the Endellion Summer Festival. He has also worked with the BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC National Chorus of Wales, Royal College of Music Chorus, Manchester Chamber Choir and the New London Singers. As a chorus master Neil has prepared choirs for conductors including Valery Gergiev, Carlo Rizzi, Richard Hickox, Francois-Xavier Roth, Thierry Fischer, David Atherton, Ryan Wigglesworth, David Hill and Owain Arwel Hughes.

MICHAEL HIGGINS

studied piano with Margaret Newman at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and at the Royal Academy of Music, London, with Julius Drake. He was awarded the Joseph Weingarten Memorial Trust Scholarship and completed his studies with Kálmán Dráfi at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest. He also studied the organ with Andrew Fletcher and is currently Director of Music at St John's Church, Wimbledon.

Regularly performing throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and further afield, he has given concerto performances with the New London Soloists Orchestra at St Martin in the Fields and worked with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain conducted by Daniel Barenboim and Gustavo Dudamel (BBC Proms).

Michael regularly collaborates with Gareth Malone and has filmed a new season of 'It Takes a Choir' for USA Network television, as well as forming a choir to record the album 'Voices' on the Decca label. He also appeared on the Queen's Christmas Message accompanying the Military Wives Choir filmed at Buckingham Palace.

As a composer and arranger he has answered a number of commissions including songs for a set of educational books published in Singapore, arrangements for various projects with Gareth Malone including 'Voices', the Classic BRIT awards and BBC Children in Need, and many of his choral and organ works are published by Novello and Kevin Mayhew Publishers.

GEORGINA STALBOW (SOPRANO)

Originally from Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire, Georgina recently graduated from Birmingham Conservatoire with a First Class Honours degree in Vocal and Operatic Studies. She studied with Margaret Field, Julian Pike and Louise Crane. Georgina is very versatile singer and regularly appears as a soloist in many concert and oratorio performances around the country. She has a wide repertoire of professional operatic experience and made her international debut at the Fondazione Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte in Montepulciano, Tuscany, in 2010 singing "Emmie" in Britten's *Albert Herring* and "Echo" in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Georgina has worked with internationally renowned conductors and directors including Roland Böer, Stephen Barlow, Lionel Friend, Richard Hickox, Keith Warner and Tilman Knabe.

JOHNNY HERFORD (BARITONE)

Winner of the 2013 Kathleen Ferrier Song Prize and of the Jean Meikle Duo Prize at the 2013 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, Johnny Herford studied at Cambridge University and the Royal Academy of Music. He has sung principal roles in operas by Judith Weir, Jonathan Dove and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, as well as *The Magic Flute* (Papageno), *Albert Herring* (Sid), and *The Merry Widow* (Danilo). As a concert singer, his repertoire includes Bach's oratorios, Haydn's *Seasons*, Brahms' *German Requiem*, and song-cycles by Schubert, Schumann and Britten.



GEORGINA STALBOW



JOHNNY HERFORD
Photo: Maximilian Führig



CONVIVIAM SINGERS
Photo: Jacqui Marie Photography

CONVIVIUM SINGERS

Convivium Singers is an award winning, critically acclaimed choral ensemble, providing opportunities for young singers at the early stages of performing careers, as well as for talented musicians who have chosen not to pursue careers in music. The ensemble specialises in performing and recording sacred and secular music by living British composers. They were described as 'an extraordinarily good choir to listen to' by BBC Radio 3's 'CD Review', with reference to the recently released NAXOS disc of music by Jonathan Dove.

Convivium Singers have also delved into early music, and their CD of motets by Peter Philips (Convivium Records) received a five-star review in the magazine 'Choir & Organ'.

The Singers often work with established conductors and composers to introduce contemporary music to wider audiences. They were prize-winners at the Tolosa International Choral Contest (Spain), and recently performed in Milan at the festival 'La Fabbrica del Canto' and in Hradec Králové at the Czech choral festival 'Sborové slavnosti.'

The group has a diverse repertoire from traditional choral music to folk-songs, partsongs and popular arrangements. Convivium Singers are well suited to performing for weddings, private functions and corporate events, however remote, and are happy to offer a free quotation and advice with music choices and even facilitate new compositions where requested.

I INTROITUS—KYRIE

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem.
Exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn is fitting to Thee, O God, in Zion,
and a vow shall be paid Thee in Jerusalem.
Hear my prayer;
to Thee all flesh shall come.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

II OFFERTORIUM

O Domine, Jesu Christe, Rex Glorïae
libera animas defunctorum
de poenis inferni
et de profundo lacu.
Liberâ eas de ore leonis
ne absorbeat eus tartarus
ne cadant in obscurum.

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine,
laudis offerimus.
Tu suscipe pro animabus illis
quarum hodie memoriam facimus.
Fac eas, Domine,
de morte transire ad vitam.
Quam olim Abrahamae promisisti,
et semini eus.

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory,
deliver the souls of the departed
from the pains of hell
and from the infernal lake.
Save them from the lion's jaws,
that hell may not engulf them,
that they may not fall into darkness.

Sacrifices and prayers to Thee, O Lord,
we offer with praise.
Do Thou receive them on behalf of those
souls whom this day we commemorate.
Grant them, O Lord,
to pass from death to life,
which Thou of old promised to Abraham
and to his seed.

III SANCTUS

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

IV PIE JESU

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem,
requiem sempiternam.

Merciful Lord Jesus, grant them rest,
eternal rest.

V AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem, requiem sempiternam.
Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

O Lamb of God,
who takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest, eternal rest.
Let everlasting light shine on them, O Lord,
with Thy Saints for ever,
for Thou art merciful.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and may perpetual light shine upon them.

VI LIBERA ME

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra,
dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo
dum discussio venerit, atque ventura ira.

Dies illa, dies irae,
calamitatis et miseriae,
dies magna et amara valde.

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death,
on that terrible day when the heavens and
the earth will be shaken, when Thou shalt
come to judge the world by fire.

I am made to tremble, and fear
when the day of reckoning comes.

That day, a day of wrath,
calamity and misery,
a great and exceedingly bitter day.

VII IN PARADISUM

In paradisum deducant te angeli,
in tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres,
et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.

Chorus angelorum te suscipiat,
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere
aeternam habeas requiem.

May the angels receive thee in paradise,
at thy coming the martyrs receive thee,
and bring thee into the Holy cit of Jerusalem.

May the choir of angels receive thee,
and with Lazarus, once a beggar,
may thou have eternal rest.

VIII / XI AVE VERUM CORPUS

Ave verum corpus, natum de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum in
cruce pro homine,
cuius latus perforatum fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.
O Iesu dulcis, O Iesu pie,
O Iesu, fili Mariae.
Miserere mei. Amen.

Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary,
who having truly suffered, was sacrificed on
the cross for mankind,
whose pierced side flowed with water and blood:
May it be for us a foretaste of the Heavenly
banquet in the trial of death.
O sweet Jesus, O pious Jesus,
O Jesus, son of Mary,
have mercy on me. Amen.

IX / X TANTUM ERGO

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui:
Præstet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.
Genitori genitoque
Laus et jubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio:
Procedenti ab utroque
Compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

Therefore so great a Sacrament
Let us fall down and worship,
And let the old law
Give way to a new rite,
And let faith stand forward
To make good the defects of sense.
To the Father and the Son
Be praise and joy,
Health, honour and virtue
And blessing,
And to him proceeding from both
Be equal praise.
Amen.

XII CANTIQUE de JEAN RACINE

Verbe égal au Très-Haut,
notre unique espérance,
Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux,
De la paisible nuit nous rompons le silence:
Divin sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux.

Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce puissante;
Que tout l'enfer fuie au son de ta voix;
Dissipe le sommeil d'une âme languissante
Qui la conduit à l'oubli de tes lois!

Ô Christ ! sois favorable à ce peuple fidèle,
Pour te bénir maintenant assemblé;
Reçois les chants qu'il offre à ta gloire immortelle,
Et de tes dons qu'il retourne comblé.

Word of God, one with the Most High,
in Whom alone we have our hope,
Eternal Day of heaven and earth,
We break the silence of the peaceful night;
Saviour Divine, cast your eyes upon us!

Pour on us the fire of your powerful grace,
That all hell may flee at the sound of your voice;
Banish the slumber of a weary soul,
That brings forgetfulness of your laws!

O Christ, look with favour upon your faithful people
Now gathered here to praise you;
Receive their hymns offered to your immortal glory;
May they go forth filled with your gifts.

RECORDED AT ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST
UPPER NORWOOD, 26TH-28TH JULY 2012

CONDUCTOR

Neil Ferris

ORGANIST & ARRANGER

Michael Higgins

PRODUCER

Alexander Norman

ENGINEER

Adaq Khan

SOLOISTS

Georgina Stalbow (Soprano, tr 4), Johnny Herford (Baritone tr 2,6)

QUINTET

SOPRANOS

Helen Briggs
Bridget Caldecote
Laura Gullan
Natalie Johnson-Hyde
Joanna Loxton
Georgina Stalbow

ALTOS

Richard Furstenheim
Helena Gullan
Thomas Jordan
Joe Waggot

First Violin
Helen Davies

Second Violin
Rosie Tompsett

Viola
Amy Stanford

Cello
Leonie Adams

Double bass
Alice Kent

TENORS

Adrian Green
William Davies
Matthew Spillett
Ewan Stockwell

BASSES

James Goddard
Richard Parker
James Proctor
Ciaran Walshe
James Wilder

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

John Bevan

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Adrian Green



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