

THE CHERWELL SINGERS

The Cherwell Singers

with

The Oxford Symphonia Orchestra

director: Andrew Carwood

DURUFLE REQUIEM

**Lyndsay Bramley (soprano)
Tim Rowe (baritone)**

**LITANIES A LA VIERGE NOIRE
Poulenc**

**QUATRE MOTETS SUR DES THEMES
GREGORIENS
Durufé**

**8.00pm Saturday 23rd June 1990
New College Ante-Chapel,
Oxford**

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PROGRAMME

Quatre Motets Sur Des Themes Gregoriens - DURUFLE
Op. 10 (1960)

Ubi caritas et amor
Tota pulchra es, Maria
Tu es Petrus
Tantum ergo sacramentum

SIMON LAWFORD - ORGAN

Cortege & Litanie - DUPRE
Litanies - ALAIN

Litanies a la vierge noire (1936) - POULENC

* INTERVAL *

Requiem Op. 9 (1947) - DURUFLE

1. Introit
2. Kyrie
3. Domine, Jesu Christe
4. Sanctus
5. Pie Jesu
6. Agnus Dei
7. Lux Aeterna
8. Libera me
9. In paradisum

This evening's concert is devoted to music inspired by the Church and heavily influenced by plainsong. Plainsong was and still is the language of the Catholic Church and it has been the starting point for many compositions not only from the Renaissance (Taverner and Sheppard for example) but also in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Bruckner and Durufle).

Durufle's output is remarkably small - he has written only a dozen works. For him, composition was a very laborious task: he wrote with difficulty and subjected his work to constant revision. His preferred medium was the organ on which he was a highly skilled player. A modest man, he once expressed himself as 'incapable of adding anything significant to the pianoforte repertory, views the string quartet with apprehension and envisages with terror the idea of composing a song after the finished examples of Schubert, Faure and Debussy.'

Unlike his friend and fellow-student, Olivier Messiaen, Durufle has never been an innovator. Unmoved by the experiments that surrounded him, standing aside from fashionable avant-garde movements, Durufle looks backward rather than forward. His music fuses two streams - the modality which derives from his liturgical background as an organist and the harmonies colouring the compositions of his immediate seniors (Debussy, Ravel and more especially Dukas).

The 'Requiem' is his largest and most important work. Dedicated to his father, its model is obviously the 'Requiem' of Faure. Durufle's version although just as integrated as Faure's, offers slightly more variety, for its thematic material is older (the smooth plainsong lines are recognisable, and not just pressed into service as 'canti fermi') and its instrumental writing is newer. It expresses a feeling which grows out of his close links with the Church (he never wrote a secular piece of music) and thrills by its delicate textures, excellent word setting and clever use of sentimentality - never cloying but surely often present.

The 'Quatre Motets' are obvious in their use of the chant (sung tonight complete before each motet). The range of expression from the brusque 'Tu es Petrus' to the quietly devotional 'Tantum ergo' and from the concentration on lower voices in 'Ubi caritas' to the soprano and alto dominated 'Tota pulchra es' is greatly inspiring. They are exquisite miniatures.

Francis Poulenc's 'Litanie a la vierge noire' was written in 1936 for intensely personal reasons. It marks his return to the Faith after a period of having lapsed, uses only female voices and was written in memory of a close personal friend who died very suddenly. It is an interesting 'bridge' piece between the elegant sophistication of his earlier music and the more open romanticism of later works such as the Mass and 'La figure humaine'.

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ABOUT THE SINGERS

The Cherwell Singers were founded in 1979 bonded by a common cause to sing for relaxation while aiming at a high standard of performance.

The choir consists of over twenty singers and performs a wide range of sacred and secular music in the Oxford area. The choir specialises in entertainment for conferences, country house festivals and charity events and unaccompanied and full scale concerts with orchestra.