

# The Cherwell Singers

**James Brown** *conductor*  
**Carleton Etherington** *organ*

**Stabat mater**  
**Giuseppe Verdi**

**The**  
**Seven Last Words**  
**of Christ**  
**Théodore Dubois**

**Lianne-Marie Skriniar** *soprano*  
**Daniel Turner** *tenor*  
**Stephen Foulkes** *bass*

Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008  
Exeter College Chapel

**Anton Bruckner**  
**Vexilla regis**

**Giuseppe Verdi**  
**Stabat mater**

*There will be a pause of five minutes*

**Théodore Dubois**  
**The Seven Last Words of Christ**

Introduction: O vos omnes qui transitis per viam  
*O all ye that pass by*

First word: Pater, dimitte illis, non enim sciunt, quid faciunt  
*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*

Second word: Hodie mecum eris in paradiso, amen, dico tibi  
*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise*

Third word: Mulier, ecce filius tuus  
*Woman, behold thy son!*

Fourth word: Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?  
*My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Fifth word: Sitio!  
*I thirst!*

Sixth word: Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum  
*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*

Seventh word: Consummatum est!  
*It is finished!*

## **Lianne-Marie Skriniar** *soprano*

Lianne-Marie Skriniar studied voice and piano at Trinity College of Music. She has performed numerous operatic roles under conductors including Nicholas Kok, Charles Farncombe and Christopher Field. In 2001 she won the Second Prize and the Song Prize in the Kathleen Ferrier Competition. She last sang with the Cherwell Singers in their concert in December.

## **Daniel Turner** *tenor*

Daniel Turner is currently studying voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. A former organ scholar of Queen's College, Oxford, he has also sung with the choir of New College. Daniel is Director of Music at Wolvercote Parish church.

## **Stephen Foulkes** *bass*

Stephen Foulkes is a lay clerk in the choir of Wells Cathedral and formerly sang with Bristol Cathedral Choir for ten years. He is a regular soloist with choirs and choral societies throughout the UK, though tonight is his first performance with the Cherwell Singers.

## **James Brown** *conductor*

James Brown is Organist of the University Church, Oxford and a lay clerk in the choir of New College. He also sings with Collegium Vocale, Ghent (conductor Phillipe Herreweghe), and next weekend begins a three week tour with them around Europe performing Brahms Requiem with the Orchestre des Champs Elysees. This is his second concert as director of the Cherwell Singers.

## **Carleton Etherington** *organ*

Carleton Etherington has been Organist of Tewkesbury Abbey since 1996. A former student of the Royal Academy of Music, he was a first prizewinner at the 1992 Paisley International Organ festival competition and the Royal College of Organists Performer of the year in 1993. He has travelled widely as a recitalist, has made several recordings both as soloist and accompanist, and has broadcast on BBC Radio and TV.

## **Rachel Wick** *harp*

## **Justin Rhodes** *timpani*

## Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) – *Vexilla regis*

Bruckner was a modest and diffident man, fortified by a strong and traditional religious faith. He wrote many masses, and a considerable number of motets, some with trombone accompaniment. This setting of the Passion Sunday hymn *Vexilla regis*, written in 1892, was the last of Bruckner's motets. Modal in its opening, it is a modified strophic setting of the hymn, meditative in mood, and ending with a hushed *Amen*.

The royal banners forward go,  
The cross shines forth in mystic glow,  
Where he in flesh, our flesh who made,  
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

O cross, our one reliance, hail!  
So may thy power with us prevail  
To give new virtue to the saint,  
And pardon to the penitent.

To thee, eternal Three in One,  
Let homage meet by all be done:  
Whom by thy Cross thou dost restore,  
Preserve and govern evermore. Amen.

*Venantius Fortunatus (tr. J.M Neale)*

## Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) – *Stabat mater*

Verdi is best known for his operas, but wrote a few pieces of sacred music: the *Requiem* and four individual pieces which were written near the end of his life. These four pieces are not related, but were gathered together by his publisher as the *Four Sacred Pieces*. One of these pieces is the *Stabat mater*, a setting of a mediæval poem which was used as a sequence on Good Friday, and has been set by very many composers. Verdi composed his setting in 1896-97, and it was one of the last pieces he wrote. The setting has been described as a mixture of the purity and simplicity of the sixteenth century version of Palestrina, with the drama and pathos of Il Trovatore; the text is set with no repetition.

At the Cross her station keeping,  
stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
close to Jesus to the last.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,  
all His bitter anguish bearing,  
now at length the sword has passed.

O how sad and sore distressed  
was that Mother, highly blest,  
of the sole-begotten One.

Christ above in torment hangs,  
she beneath beholds the pangs  
of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,  
whelmed in miseries so deep,  
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

By the Cross with thee to stay,  
there with thee to weep and pray,  
is all I ask of thee to give.

For the sins of His own nation,  
She saw Jesus wracked with torment,  
All with scourges rent:

She beheld her tender Child,  
Saw Him hang in desolation,  
Till His spirit forth He sent.

Can the human heart refrain  
from partaking in her pain,  
in that Mother's pain untold?

O thou Mother! fount of love!  
Touch my spirit from above,  
make my heart with thine accord:

Make me feel as thou hast felt;  
make my soul to glow and melt  
with the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy Mother! pierce me through,  
in my heart each wound renew  
of my Saviour crucified:

Let me share with thee His pain,  
who for all my sins was slain,  
who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,  
mourning Him who mourned for me,  
all the days that I may live:

Let me, to my latest breath,  
in my body bear the death  
of that dying Son of thine.

Virgin of all virgins blest!,  
Listen to my fond request:  
let me share thy grief divine;

Wounded with His every wound,  
steep my soul till it hath swooned,  
in His very Blood away;

Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,  
lest in flames I burn and die,  
in His awful Judgment Day.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,  
by Thy Mother my defence,  
by Thy Cross my victory;

When my body dies,  
let my soul be granted  
the glory of Paradise. Amen.

*13<sup>th</sup> century sequence (tr. E Caswall)*

## Théodore Dubois (1837-1924) - *The Seven Last Words of Christ*

Dubois was a distinguished French teacher (he was head of the Paris Conservatoire from 1896 to 1905, and his books on theory are still in some use) and organist (he became choirmaster at Sainte Clotilde in 1871, and organist at the Madeleine in 1877). In 1861 he was awarded the prestigious Prix de Rome for composition, but in 1905 he was forced to resign from the Conservatoire after his refusal to award the same prize to Ravel created a substantial public outcry. His own output is distinguished by quantity rather than quality – he was overshadowed in composition by his contemporaries such as Gounod, Fauré and Saint-Saëns. Only a few organ works and the oratorio *The Seven Last Words of Christ* survive in use today.

Musical settings of the passion narrative and meditations on it have been composed regularly throughout musical history. One of the commonest texts to be set is the *Stabat mater dolorosa*, but the *Seven Last Words* have been used only rarely. The late nineteenth century produced a number of such works with an exaggerated religiosity, including Liszt's *Via crucis*, Stainer's *The Crucifixion*, Maunder's *Olivet to Calvary*, and Dubois' *Seven Last Words of Christ*. These works have tended to stay at home, becoming well-loved by amateur choirs in their countries of origin (but also, in the case of the Dubois, Canada and the United States of America).

*The Seven Last Words of Christ* has eight movements: an introduction followed by a movement for each word of Christ from the cross. Dubois used other phrases from the gospels and elsewhere in the bible, together with traditional texts from the Roman Catholic Holy Week liturgies as meditations on the scriptural account. The introduction is the antiphon *O vos omnes* traditionally sung at Tenebrae services; following the third word, two verses taken from the 13th-century sequence *Stabat mater* are sung; after the fourth word he uses the liturgical text *Omnes amici mei*; and he concludes with a hymn-like setting of the medieval antiphon *Adoramus te, Christe*, much like a chorale at the end of an 18th century cantata.

Dubois' setting is somewhat four-square, but with considerable drama. There are frequent echoes of his contemporaries such as Fauré and Verdi. The work was originally written with orchestral accompaniment, but has as often been performed with organ, harp and timpani, as tonight.

Introduction: All ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.  
The Lord hath dealt bitterly with me; call me not Naomi, call me Mara.

First word: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*  
The people cried out: away with him, crucify him! His blood be on us, and on our children! And they did crucify Jesus, and with him two thieves; one at his right hand, and the other at his left.

Second word: *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise*  
Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Third word: *Woman, behold thy son!*  
At the Cross her station keeping,  
stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
close to Jesus to the last.  
Is there one who would not weep,  
whelmed in miseries so deep,  
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Fourth word: *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*  
All my friends have forsaken me, and my enemies prevail; one that I loved betrayed me. My chosen vine, that I planted, how is it that you have turned to bitterness, so that you would crucify me?

Fifth word: *I thirst!*  
And the Jews that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying: Thou that destroyest the temple, if Thou be Christ, the Son of God, come down from the cross that we may see and believe. If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Sixth word: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*  
For Thou art my God and my Father; Thou art my Saviour.

Seventh word: And Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: *It is finished!*  
and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. And it was about the sixth hour; and the sun was darkened, and there was darkness over all the earth. And the veil of the temple was rent, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.

Prayer: We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee:  
because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

# The Cherwell Singers

## **Soprano**

Claire Appleton  
Sue Bignal  
Abigail Bradfield  
Kipper Chipperfield  
Sarah Franks  
Beatrix Stewart  
Lucy Watson

## **Alto**

Virginia Allport  
Jennie Ayres  
Katherine Butler  
Caroline Higginbottom  
Jo McLean  
Helen Maidlow  
Lizzy Newton  
Sally Prime

## **Tenor**

Paul King  
James Martin  
Tim Nixon  
Guy Peskett  
David Sutton

## **Bass**

Christopher Franks  
Neil Herington  
Paul Hodges  
Simon Jones  
Iain McLean  
Simeon Mitchell

## Next Concert

Sunday, 22nd June 2008, 8pm  
Jacqueline du Pré Music Building

**Brahms**    *Zigeunerlieder*

**Stanford**    *Songs of the Sea*

**Vaughan Williams**    *Five Mystical Songs*

Please visit our web site to learn more about the choir, and listen to some of our recordings online. Use the web form to register yourself on our email list, to ensure you receive notification and full details of future concerts.

[www.cherwellsingers.org](http://www.cherwellsingers.org)