

The Cherwell Singers

present

Durufié *Requiem* and Widor *Mass*

James Brown conductor
Steven Grahl organ
Elinor Carter mezzo-soprano
Tom Edwards baritone

Sunday, 22nd March 2009
Exeter College Chapel, Oxford

Programme

Charles-Marie Widor

(1844 - 1937)

Mass, Op 36

(arr. RH Huntington)

Kyrie

Gloria

Allegro from Symphony no. 6 for organ

Sanctus

Benedictus

Cantabile from Symphony no. 6 for organ

Agnus Dei

Interval

Maurice Duruflé

(1902 - 1986)

Requiem, Op 9

Introit

Kyrie

Domine Jesu Christe

Sanctus

Pie Jesu

Agnus Dei

Lux aeterna

Libera me

In Paradisum

Charles-Marie Widor and Maurice Duruflé were both organists of major Parisian churches, and are both known mainly for their organ and choral compositions. The organs of these churches were built or modified by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, whose organs were ‘symphonic’ in style, with a greatly extended tonal palette. In his organs the contrapuntal clarity of typical baroque organs was replaced by romantic colours and wide dynamic variations. The organ being used tonight was built recently in imitation of this style, and so is particularly appropriate for this programme.

Widor, as well as being organist of Saint-Sulpice in Paris for 64 years, was also professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire for a time, and subsequently professor of composition. He was a prolific composer of music of many types, from solo piano pieces to operas, but virtually none of his music other than the later organ symphonies and the mass is heard today.

Widor’s **Mass** was written for two choirs and two organs and was intended for liturgical use, one choir’s part being sung by the male voices of the seminarians in the congregation. It has a grandeur that matches the church of Saint-Sulpice and reinforces the splendour of the liturgy, but is musically straightforward so as to fit the dignity of the service while not distracting from it. This evening’s performance is in an arrangement for one choir and one organ.

Cavaillé-Coll’s organs, with their emulation of orchestral sonorities, inspired a number of composers to write ‘organ symphonies’; Widor was the most prolific of these, writing ten in all, and the organ solos this evening are taken from his **Symphony no. 6 for organ**. The **Allegro** is the first movement, and is being played at the position corresponding to the offertory of the mass, and the fourth movement, **Cantabile**, is being played as if to accompany the elevation of the host prior to the communion.

Duruflé was organist of the Paris church of St. Étienne-du-Mont for 57 years, a post which he later shared with Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, who became his second wife. He was also professor of harmony at the Paris Conservatoire. In contrast to Widor, with whom he had studied composition for a time, he was a slow, careful composer, constantly reworking his manuscripts, and in nearly 50 years of composing, he produced only 14 works with opus numbers, though some of them in several versions.

Durufié's early musical training had been at the cathedral in Rouen, where there was a famous school of Gregorian chant, and the use of plainchant melodies permeates his work. He was already working on a suite of pieces for organ based on plainchant taken from the Mass for the Dead when he received a commission to write a symphonic work. He decided to write a **Requiem** for choir and large orchestra, and took the sketches for the organ suite as his starting point. While many composers have used fragments of chant as a basis for their music, Durufié went well beyond this to base his entire Requiem on the medieval Offices and Mass for the Dead, in a manner not used since the fifteenth century; only the dramatic part of the Libera me is not based on actual plainchant melodies. Durufié wrote of his use of plainchant:

I have done my best to reconcile, as far as possible, the Gregorian rhythms [...] with the demands of modern metres. The strictness of barline structure [is] difficult to reconcile with the variety and suppleness of the Gregorian line where there is only a succession of rising and falling. The strong beats had to lose their dominant character [so that] the stressed Latin syllables could be placed freely on whichever beat of our modern metre.

Durufié's Requiem shows close spiritual and structural ties to the Requiem of Gabriel Fauré, composed 50 years earlier. Both composers wrote a peaceful, æthereal farewell to the dead, mostly avoiding the moments of high drama that so inspired the versions of Mozart, Berlioz, and Verdi – indeed, the dramatic 'Dies irae' movement, with its flames of hell and visions of the damned, is reduced to its short, plaintive 'Pie Jesu' conclusion by both composers. Even in its dramatic moments, Durufié's view of death rarely suggests the tortured uncertainty of other composers; instead, the piece seems designed to reassure the listener that eternal rest will indeed be granted and that death is only a step towards better things.

Today's performance uses the version of the work with organ accompaniment which Durufié made a year after publication of the orchestral version. This is not simply an orchestral reduction, but an idiomatic organ piece drawing on his extensive experience as an organist.

Translations

Mass

Kyrie

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

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.

We praise you. We bless you. We adore you. We glorify you.

We give you thanks for your great glory.

Lord God, king of heaven, God the Father almighty,

Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;

you who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;

you who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you only are holy. You only are Lord. You only are most high, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Benedictus

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Requiem

Introit

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them.

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and homage will be paid to you in Jerusalem.

Hear my prayer; to you shall all flesh come.

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them.

Kyrie

Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy; Lord have mercy.

Domine Jesu Christe

Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
free the souls of all the faithful departed from infernal punishment and the deep pit.
Free them from the mouth of the lion;
do not let Tartarus swallow them, nor let them fall into darkness;
but may your standard-bearer, Saint Michael, lead them into the holy light,
as you promised to Abraham and his descendants.

O Lord, we offer you sacrifices and prayers in praise;
accept them on behalf of the souls whom we remember today.
Make them pass over from death to life,
as you promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Pie Jesu

Gentle Lord Jesus, grant them eternal rest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant them eternal rest.

Lux aeterna

May everlasting light shine upon them, O Lord, with your saints forever,
for you are merciful.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them.

Libera me

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death on that fearful day,
when the heavens and the earth are moved, when you come to judge the world with fire.
I tremble and am afraid because of the judgment and wrath that will come;
that day of wrath, calamity and misery, day of great bitterness,
when you come to judge the world with fire.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them.

In Paradisum

May angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs receive you at your coming and lead you to the holy city of Jerusalem.
May a choir of angels receive you,
and with Lazarus, who once was poor, may you have eternal rest.

Elinor Carter mezzo-soprano

Elinor was a choral scholar at Clare College, Cambridge before studying at the Royal College of Music with Neil Mackie. She has recorded and performed widely as a soloist, notably under Sir John Eliot Gardener. Among her many solo appearances she sang in The Dream of Gerontius at the opening concert of the 2002 Three Choirs Festival.

Tom Edwards baritone

Born in France, Tom was educated in England winning a choral scholarship to New College in 1996 where he read Modern Languages. He has performed in major venues around the world with New College Choir where he is now a Lay Clerk. As a soloist Tom has sung with a variety of artists and ensembles including Rogers Covey-Crump, James Bowman and the Academy of Ancient Music.

Steven Grahl organ

Steven combines the post of Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford with that of Organist & Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London and the Principal Conductorship of the Guildford Chamber Choir. A prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford (where he was Organ Scholar) and the Royal Academy of Music, Steven gained the Limpus (highest mark) and Dixon (improvisation) prizes in his FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion.

James Brown conductor

James was Organ Scholar of Girton College, Cambridge and upon graduating studied organ at the Conservatoire de Musique, Geneva with Lionel Rogg. After two years working as an organist in Texas James returned to England where he is currently Organist of the University Church, Oxford and a lay clerk in New College Choir. He also sings with Collegium Vocale, Ghent (conductor Phillipe Hereweghe).

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Claire Appleton
Angelyn Bethel
Kipper Chipperfield
Kirstie Morton
Clare Scott-Dempster
Rachel Smith
Beatrix Stewart
Lucy Watson

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Katherine Butler
Clare Jarvis
Janet McKnight
Jo McLean
Lizzy Newton
Sarah Verney Caird

Tenor

Philip Endean
David Mahoney
Guy Peskett
David Sutton

Bass

Neil Herington
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Iain McLean
Tim Wainwright

The Cherwell Singers are very grateful to Elinor Carter for stepping in at short notice due to illness.

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

Next concert:

Purcell *King Arthur*

27th June 2009

University Church of St Mary the Virgin