

The Cherwell Singers

present

Louis Vierne

Messe solennelle

motets by

Duruflé and Dupré

James Brown conductor

Steven Grahl organ

Saturday, 26th March 2011

Exeter College Chapel, Oxford

Programme

Messe solennelle

Louis Vierne (1870 - 1937)

Kyrie

Gloria

Adagio from Symphony no. 3 for organ

Sanctus

Benedictus

Allegro risoluto from Symphony no. 2 for organ

Agnus Dei

Interval

Panis Angelicus

César Franck (1822 - 1890)

Tantum ergo

Déodat de Séverac (1872 - 1921)

organ solo:

Fugue sur le thème du Carillon de Soissons

Maurice Duruflé (1902 – 1986)

Ave Maria

Marcel Dupré (1886 – 1971)

Tota pulchra es

Maurice Duruflé

organ solo:

Méditation

Maurice Duruflé

Ubi caritas

Maurice Duruflé

Marcel Dupré

Laudate Dominum

The later romantic period saw the flourishing of a school of French organists based at the great churches of Paris, and their choral music forms the basis of this evening's program. The development of this school was helped on its way by the great French organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. He contributed not only by building or rebuilding most of the great organs of Paris and many elsewhere, but also by supporting and encouraging some of the earlier members of the school. The organ here in Exeter College is designed after the style of Cavaillé-Coll.

Louis Vierne had been studying the organ with César Franck, and Widor took over as his teacher following Franck's death. Vierne became Widor's assistant at Saint-Sulpice from 1892, until he was appointed to the cathedral of Notre-Dame in 1900. The large French churches typically had two organs: a large one on the west wall, and a smaller one near the choir (the choir organ would have a separate organist, often notable musicians in their own right, such as Gabriel Fauré). In 1899 Vierne wrote his *Messe solennelle* which used both organs with the choir, following the pattern set twenty years earlier by Widor. Vierne's mass is on a larger scale than Widor's, and is of greater musical interest. The first performance was in 1901, but the work didn't enter the general repertoire. In 1905, the separation of the church and state in France caused a crisis for church musicians as funds for choirs dried up, and even the great churches of Paris were no longer able to perform such works. The use of the two organs in a church as large as Saint-Sulpice provides for some striking antiphonal effects; but in general these are not essential to the music, and it is common in smaller places to play the organ parts on a single instrument, as is being done tonight.

Vierne in his Symphonies for Organ is more interested in thematic development than colour. The *Adagio* from his Third Symphony shows debts to Franck and Wagner. The Second Symphony was written shortly after his arrival at Notre-Dame, and is considered by some to be the peak of Vierne's symphonic writing, the whole work developing out of the themes of the opening *Allegro risoluto*.

Marcel Dupré took over from Vierne as Widor's assistant from 1900 to 1933 (when he took over as organist until 1971). He had known

the elderly Cavaillé-Coll as a child, who had called him '*le petit prodige*'. He studied the organ with Guilmant and Vierne, and composition with Widor, who treated him as a son. The four motets which include *Ave Maria* and *Laudate Dominum* were written during the First World War. *Ave Maria* is a rather dark setting of the words, for high voices, with a climax at the words *ora pro nobis* which hints at Poulenc. *Laudate Dominum* is a rumbustious piece, originally written, like the Vierne mass, for two organs. There is a vulgar streak to this piece which harks back to the period when the French organist Lefébure-Wély was accused of 'prostituting our organs to the valse and polka', and of debasing services with *musique érotique*.

César Franck was also organist of a Paris church with a Cavaillé-Coll organ – in this case the Basilica of Ste Clotilde. In 1959, the year after he took the post, he wrote a mass for three voices to which he later added the communion anthem *Panis angelicus*. This movement was scored for a single voice with organ and harp, but an arrangement for choir was first published within Franck's lifetime, and others have been made since.

Maurice Duruflé was organist of the Paris church of St. Étienne-du-Mont for 57 years, and like Dupré studied composition with Widor. His *Quatre motets sur des thèmes grégoriens*, of which two are being performed tonight, were written in 1960. *Tota pulchra es* is a sprightly piece for high voices, whereas *Ubi caritas* is in a meditative, almost wistful, style.

Duruflé's poignant *Méditation* of 1964 was only published posthumously, delayed, one may suppose, by the composer's perfectionism. His '*Bell*' *Fugue* was written two years earlier for a volume commemorating the 25th anniversary of Vierne's death. It is based on an elaborated version of an eight-note melody corresponding to the bells that ring every hour at Soissons Cathedral.

Déodat de Séverac is the odd one out among tonight's composers in that he was not an organist by profession, although he did study the organ with Guilmant. He wrote mainly songs and piano pieces, but in 1920 he wrote a set of six motets, of which only *Tantum ergo* has become well-known.

Translations

The 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.

Motets

Panis angelicus

St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274)

The bread of the angels becomes the bread of men,
The bread of heaven that fulfils the prophesies.
Wondrous thing! The Lord becomes food
For the poor, the servant, the humble.

Tantum ergo

St Thomas Aquinas

Let us venerate this great sacrament with heads bowed,
And let the old practices yield to the new rite.
Let faith supplement imperfect senses.
To the Father and the Son be praise and jubilation,
Health, honour, power also, and blessing.
To the Spirit who proceeds from both let there be equal praise.
Amen.

Ave Maria

Early Catholic tradition

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners
Now and in the hour of our death. Amen

Tota pulchra es

Fourth-century antiphon

You are wholly beautiful, Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in you.
Your clothing is white as snow, and your face is like the sun.
You are wholly beautiful, Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in you.
You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel; you give honour to our people.
You are wholly beautiful, Mary.

Ubi caritas

Fourth-century hymn

Where there is charity and love, God is there.
We gather together as one through Christ's love.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Let us fear and love the living God.
And may we love with a sincere heart.
Where there is charity and love, God is there. Amen.

Laudate Dominum

Psalms 117 (116)

Praise the Lord, all nations; praise Him, all people!
For He has bestowed His mercy upon us,
And the truth of the Lord endures for ever.
Praise the Lord, all nations; praise Him, all people!

Steven Grahl organ

Steven enjoys a varied career as both organist and conductor. He combines the post of Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford with that of Organist & Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London, and he was acting Director of the New College Choir during Trinity Term 2010. He is a member of the Oxford University Faculty of Music. Since 2006 he has held the Principal Conductorship of the Guildford Chamber Choir.

During 2010, Steven gave performances in America, (in New York, Washington and St Louis), France, Germany and Italy. In London he performed at Westminster Cathedral and St John's Smith Square.

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 he 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, with whom he tours regularly. James currently studies the organ with Stephen Farr.

James has conducted the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Claire Appleton
Eleanor Baylis
Julia Craig-McFeely
Kim Crawford
Harriet Publicover
Sreya Rao
Clare Scott-Dempster
Beatrix Stewart

Alto

Virginia Allport
Rachel Bryans
Katherine Butler
Gillian Hargreaves
Clare Jarvis
Jo McLean
Lizzy Newton
Sally Prime

Tenor

Philip Booth
Jeremy Bryans
Felix Leach
Guy Peskett
David Sutton

Bass

Dominic Hargreaves
Neil Herington
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Iain McLean

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.

<http://www.cherwellsingers.org>

Next concert:

Sunday, 3rd July 2011

Magdalen College Auditorium

Programme to include Elgar's Songs from the Bavarian Highlands