

Nantwich Choral Society

MESSA DI GLORIA

PUCCINI

GLORIA

POULENC

SATURDAY 30th JUNE
- 1990 -



The Parish Church of St. Mary, Nantwich
at 7.30 p.m.

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Catrin Ley, soprano
Jeffrey Cresswell, tenor
Philip Ravenscroft, bass

Simon Dixon, organ

conducted by
Stephen Buckman



Puccini

MESSA DI GLORIA

1. KYRIE
2. GLORIA
3. CREDO
4. SANCTUS
5. AGNUS DEI

Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924) came from a long line of church musicians. For four generations his family had controlled the musical life of Lucca in Northern Italy and he was expected to succeed his father (who died when Giacomo was only five) as organist and choirmaster at the church of S. Martino as soon as he was old enough. He was taught at the local institute of music, sang in church choirs and from the age of 14 was organist at several churches in the area. At 17 he began composing organ and choral music and looked set to follow the family tradition until a visit to Pisa for a performance of Verdi's "Aida" made him realise that what he really wanted to be was a composer of opera. He decided to study at the Conservatory in Milan, the centre of Italy's operatic life, but first he had to graduate from the Institute in Lucca. The Mass in Ab (nowadays called the "Messa di Gloria") formed part of his final exams there and was composed in 1880 when Puccini was 21.

As might be expected, the music is sometimes very operatic and shows the influence of his idol, Verdi, but the depth of Puccini's religious feeling is never in doubt, whether in the fervent prayer of the Kyrie or the pure joy of jaunty tune at the beginning of the Gloria. The skill of the young composer is also never in doubt (this was, after all, an exam piece): the Gloria, whose music would for the most part be quite at home in the opera house, ends with a good academic fugue which in its final pages gloriously combines with the opening jaunty tune.

Puccini was justifiably proud of his Mass and although it was only performed once in his lifetime, some of the music reappears later in his opera either literally (in "Manon Lescaut" and "Edgar") or else in style, as in parts of "Tosca" and "Suor Angelica".

INTERVAL

Poulenc

GLORIA

1. GLORIA
2. LAUDAMUS TE
3. DOMINE DEUS
4. DOMINE FILI UNICENITE
5. DOMINE DEUS, AGNUS DEI
6. QUI SEDES AD DEXTERAM PATRIS

Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963) wrote no religious choral music before 1936 when, following a visit to Notre Dame de Rocamadour which restored him to the Catholic faith, he wrote the "Litanies a la vierge noire". The following year saw the composition of a Mass in G and in 1950 he set the "Stabat Mater" for soprano, choir and orchestra. The "Gloria" was composed in 1959 to a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation and was first performed in Boston on January 20, 1961.

The music alternates between the joyous, dancelike character of the purely choral movements and the lyrical mysticism of the sections in which the solo soprano sings. The final movement begins in a declamatory style, and is based on the music heard at the start of the work, but after the soprano enters the mood changes to one of rapturous serenity (Poulenc marks this section "extraordinairement calme") and after a final outburst the work ends almost inaudibly.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Saturday 28th July. Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire.
Concert of Popular Choral Classics.

Nantwich Choral Society's 1990/91 Season will include:-
Dettingen Te Deum (Handel)
St. John Passion (Bach)
and Five Tudor Portraits (Vaughan Williams)

as well as the usual performances of Messiah and Carols for Choir and Audience. The Choir opens its season with a performance of Haydn's Creation at the Beckenham Festival of Music and Arts on Saturday 10th October. Our first performance at St. Mary's Church, Nantwich will be on Saturday 17th November.