

Nantwich Choral Society

Claudio Monteverdi
Vespro della Beata Vergine
(The Vespers of 1610)



Sasha Johnson Manning - Soprano

Amy Wood - Soprano

David Gooda - Alto

Joshua Ellicott - Tenor

Tim Kennedy - Tenor

John Pearce - Tenor

Mark Rowlinson - Bass

Andrew Mildinhall - Organ

Jonathan Layfield - Organ

The Orchestra of Platform Four

Directed by John Naylor

St Boniface Church, Bunbury
Saturday 11th November 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Nantwich Choral Society

1st Soprano

Janice Brown
Jo Butchart
Ann Ferguson
Frances Hughes
Rosemary Jones
Bronwyn Kelly
Erica Letts
Sue Monks
Maire Pedder
Rachel Pentecost
Eileen Stittard
Kathleen Wilkes

2nd Soprano

Sue Briscoe
Christine English
Cynthia Gorton
Karen Grimwood
Gillian Handford
Grace Johnston
Liz McCrone
Steph Percy
Eileen Robertson
Sally Sissons

1st Alto

Jean Atkin
Alison Bailey
Jocelyn Cooper
Fiona Field
Frances Hutchison
Anne Nichol
Margaret Smith
Diane Wheatley

2nd Alto

Sharon Arnold
Shirley Burton
Judith Dooley
Joy Guest
Vanessa McAllan
Anne McKay
Janet Miller
Brenda Morris
Jean Nurse
Gwyneth Rollins
Joan Shaddick
Margaret Whitehurst
Heather Welch

Tenor

Suzanne Edwards
Angela Greaves
Wal Kaye
Mike Moores
Nick Smith
Philip Trinder
Joe Watson
Graham Wilkes

Bass

Christopher Findlay
David Jones
Martin Jones
Ron Kelley
Jock Knight
Jonathan Layfield
Adrian Percy
Ray Potts
Bob Pugh
Laird Ryan
Simon Stubbington
David Walker

The Society was founded in 1972 and there are still founder members singing with the choir. Each concert season typically comprises four major performances with a number of smaller events, including an NCS-hosted choral singing day also in the calendar.

The Society's normal concert venue is the parish church of St Mary's at Nantwich, often referred to as "the cathedral of South Cheshire". In recent years the choir has also performed at Chester Cathedral, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, Ellesmere College and Crewe Hall. We are delighted to be returning to St Boniface Church here in Bunbury for tonight's performance of the Monteverdi Vespers.

The Society performs a wide range of choral works ranging from Baroque masterpieces to world premieres of contemporary composers and sings either a *capella* (unaccompanied) or with an instrumental accompaniment ranging from piano or organ to brass consort or full orchestra. Plans for this season include our popular Christmas carol concert, Messiah, Fauré Requiem and a summer Opera Gala evening. The choir is also planning a tour to Macon the Spring of 2007.

We rehearse at Malbank School, Welsh Row, Nantwich, on Wednesday evenings between September and June, with breaks at Christmas and Easter. Come along on a Wednesday evening at 7:30 - 9:30; new singers will always find a very friendly welcome.

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Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610

The Vespers is a collection of psalms, selected bible texts and instrumental movements set to music for an unspecified Feast Day of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It uses seven vocal soloists, a chorus divided into two or three choirs (sometimes into as many as ten separate vocal lines), and ten or more instrumentalists who are often asked to play in true virtuoso style.

Claudio Monteverdi was born in Cremona in 1567. A cathedral chorister, he was a musical prodigy who had some of his music first published at the age of 15. He was appointed to head the music at the court of the Duke of Mantua in 1590 when he was only 23 years old and in 1607 achieved great success with his opera L'Orfeo. But any resulting happiness was overshadowed by pressures of workload and debt, and then by the death of his wife, mother of their two small children. Shortly afterwards the soprano star of his next opera died just before the first night. For a while, Monteverdi lost his motivation to compose.

Perhaps in something of a succeeding religious phase he eventually began to write again, and in 1610 he published the 'Vespers of the Blessed Virgin'. Unexpectedly in 1612 a new Duke of Mantua removed him from his court position. Nevertheless, armed with his recent compositions of the Vespers and other works Monteverdi successfully applied for the important position of Maestro di Capella at San Marco in Venice. He spent the remaining 30 years of his working life there until he died in 1643.

Monteverdi's audition for this most prestigious of posts took place two days after the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary. With 30 performers at his disposal it would be strange indeed if he did not use some or all of his Vespers music which had been published so very recently. Although still based in Mantua at the time of composition, perhaps he had written them with an eye to a prestigious church job in Venice: the music certainly befits the elaborate Venetian celebrations of Marian Feast Days.

So whilst the Vespers were not written in Venice, or even specifically for Venice, they were almost certainly written with Venice very much in mind. They were published, together with a conventional parody mass, in a single volume dedicated to the Pope as public examples of the range of Monteverdi's extraordinary talent. Perhaps he wanted to move on from Mantua after all, and saw this publication as his passport to a new position.

The Vespers combines the rather outmoded 'Falso Bordon' style of singing with more modern 'Cantus Firmus' (a long clear vocal line

accompanied by other parts singing polyphonic elaborations), complex solo arias and 'Cori spezzati' (separated choirs) so beloved by Gabrieli and Croce, Monteverdi's predecessors at San Marco.

The whole work is interspersed (when performed complete liturgically) by the relevant antiphons and propers for the appropriate Marian Feast Day. The sum of the varied musical parts adds up to one of the most amazingly complex vocal and instrumental works that could have been heard by a contemporary listener. Its impact today is still nothing less than musically stunning.

The Vespers begins with a solo tenor declaiming the opening **Versicle** followed immediately by a **Response** from all the performers. The singers intone one steady vocal line and the instrumentalists provide virtuoso flourishes, the whole is almost like a grand musical fireworks display designed to make an instant opening impression.

The following psalm **Dixit Dominus** is set for six voices and instruments which play (optional) ritornelli between the verses. Monteverdi immediately sets his stall out: here are fused examples of falso bordon, cantus firmus and elaborate vocal and instrumental sections all combined in one piece of music.

The choice of text from the Song of Songs for the solo aria **Nigra Sum** is certainly adventurous. Is she dark because she has been working in the vineyard, or is she black skinned like the Queen of Sheba with whom Solomon fell in love? Is the text selection allegorical – Mary becomes the consort of God (hence Black Madonnas)? Whatever the reason, the church authorities must have been remarkably liberal to approve a bold setting of what is without question one of the most erotically charged passages of scripture.

Laudate Pueri opens with a solo tenor voice singing a simple thematic phrase. This is quickly picked up by other solo voices and then answered by the whole chorus, who all sing gradually more complex variations. There are elaborate solo contributions and more full choral interjections. Surprisingly, the psalm almost fades to a close at the end of the Gloria as two intertwining tenor lines eventually come together and end on a single unison note.

Another love song follows in the soprano duet **Pulchra Es**, a somewhat puzzling text from the Song of Solomon which admires the beloved but has rather sinister overtones.

Laetatus Sum is started by a bassus generalis which continues throughout the whole psalm; over

this, a tenor intones the opening plainsong cantus firmus. The chorus contribution is in falso bordone style, although the rhythms become increasingly syncopated, and after elaborate solo duets and trios the imposing Gloria ends with a great 'Amen'.

Two tenors weave intricate melodic lines in the first section of **Duo Seraphim**, almost trying to outdo each other in their performance of technically challenging musical phrases. At the words 'Tres sunt' Monteverdi introduces a third tenor soloist who joins the competition; the composer once wrote: "I like to hear supernatural beings singing in an ornate style."

As far as the chorus is concerned, **Nisi Dominus** is the biggest scale piece of all. They divide into two choirs, each of five parts within which a cantus firmus threads its way between each of the other four parts. There is some splendid antiphonal choral writing: the house is defended in vain - 'frustra' the choruses call back and forward to each other. Eventually they come together as they sing that 'happy is the man who has plenty of children'. The Gloria is a masterpiece of composition, with all ten parts combining in a rich harmonic structure which again ends with a great 'Amen'.

Audi Coelum sees two equal male voices engaged in a dialogue with each other, using an echo effect at the end of each verse (first heard in L'Orfeo) to make a pun on the last syllables heard in the echo. Thus 'Audi coelum' (Hear O heaven) is echoed by the second singer in part of the last word of the first singer's verse 'gaudio' (with joy) - echo [g]audio' (I hear). Study of the text overleaf will reveal the cleverness of the wordplay. After this the chorus enter in a dance-like conclusion.

Lauda Jerusalem is a glorious hymn of praise for three choirs: two each of sopranos, altos and basses who sing polyphonically and one of the united tenors declaiming in a cantus firmus the plainsong setting of the psalm. The piece is quite short, but very compelling with some dramatic word painting: the 'waters flow' in a cascade of high notes in each of the soaring soprano parts! Perhaps the most thrilling of the chorus psalms, there is highly elaborate writing with effective syncopation, and yet another dramatic 'Amen' at the end of the Gloria.

The **Sonata sopra Maria** takes the place of the Offerterium in the Mass. It is essentially an eight part instrumental piece supported by a bassus generalis. A single soprano vocal line is superimposed above the dance-like instrumental music, which becomes more and more complex as the piece progresses. But the singers have only one prayer - 'Holy Mary, pray for us' which they repeat eleven times.

Ave Maris Stella is set as a hymn in much more traditional manner, first for eight part chorus, then

four parts, then individual solo voices. Each verse is separated by instrumental ritornelli. The Hymn has a serene beauty, perhaps in its own way also an allusion to La Serenissima set as a bright light in the surrounding waters.

One might expect the final work in the collection to be the largest scale choral piece: not so! Indeed, the **Magnificat a 7** (for seven solo voices, seven chorus voices and seven instrumental parts) opens and closes with big choral statements. But the ten verses in between are allocated only to the vocal soloists supported by differing combinations of orchestral accompaniment.

At the very end, Monteverdi marks the score *'Tutti li instrumenti & voci, & va cantato & sonato forte!* [All of the instruments and voices, which sing and play loudly]. The conclusion is a long, brilliant and triumphal 'Amen' whose rippling syncopations end the work in truly uplifting fashion.

To contemporary listeners, Monteverdi's Vespers must have seemed a radical fusion of old and modern styles of music combined with some daring choices of text. His composition cannot have failed to make an impact, but it is not known for how many years it survived in performance. As Venice declined in wealth and importance, so did the lavishness of music making in her churches. After a relatively short while, the Vespers lay unperformed, almost completely forgotten until the 20th Century.

It is tempting to wonder what other musical glories of the same period still lie undiscovered. Whatever may be found in the future, and whatever performance approach is adopted (the arguments will go on and on), the music speaks for itself. There is little doubt that the Vespers truly justifies its restoration to a place near the summit of the choral repertoire.

In the translation of the text that follows I have tried to provide a version that retains some of the familiar strains of Coverdale. However, there are one or two instances where the original Latin translator (or a copyist) has differed from the original Hebrew: the result becomes nonsense. In such cases I have attempted a correction, guided by the translators of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. I have retained the BCP translation of Magnificat, one word excepted.

Whilst I trust that any inaccuracies may be forgiven, I hope that this unashamedly inconsistent approach may nevertheless provide some assistance in understanding the text that Monteverdi has so wonderfully set to music.

John Naylor

1. Versicle & Response: **Deus in adiutorium meum**

Versicle : Deus in adiutorium meum intende.
Response : Domine ad adjuvandum me festina.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum,
Amen. Alleluia!

Versicle: O God make speed to save me.
Response: O Lord make haste to help me.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end,
Amen. Alleluia!

2. Psalm 109: **Dixit Dominus**

Dixit Dominus Domino meo:
sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum
pedum tuorum
Ritornello
Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion:
dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.
Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae;
in splendoribus sanctorum
ex utero ante luciferum genui te
Ritornello
Juravit Dominus et non poenitebit eum;
tu es sacerdos in aeternum
secundum ordinem Melchisedech.
Dominus a dextris tuis confregit
in die irae suae reges.
Ritornello
Judicabit in nationibus, implebit ruinas:conquassabit capita
in terra multorum.
De torrente in via bibet:
propterea exaltabit caput.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum,
Amen. Alleluia!

The Lord said to my Lord:
sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies
your footstall.
Ritornello
The Lord shall send the rod of your power out of Sion;
be ruler, even in the midst of your enemies.
In the day of your goodness, you are the foundation of it all.
Before the morning star appeared, in the beauties of holiness,
I have born you from the womb.
Ritornello
The Lord has sworn and will not regret it;
you are a priest for ever,
a successor of Melchisedech.
The Lord at your right hand has broken kings in pieces in the
day of his anger.
Ritornello
He will judge the nations, he will fill them with ruins;
he will shatter heads in the land of the many.
He will drink from the stream by the path:
therefore he will lift up his head.
Glory be to the Father and Son and Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end,
Amen. Alleluia!

3. Motet: **Nigra sum**

Nigra sum sed formosa filia Jerusalem.
Ideo dilexit me Rex, et introduxit
in cubiculum suum et dixit mihi:
Surge, amica mea, et veni.
Jam hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit,
flores apparuerunt in terra nostra;
tempus putationis advenit.

I am black but beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem.
So the King loved me, brought me into his bedchamber and
said to me:
"Arise, my love, and come away.
For now winter has passed, the rain is over and gone and
flowers have appeared in the countryside;
the time of singing has come."

4. Psalm 113: **Laudate pueri**

Laudate pueri Dominum:
laudate nomen Domini.
Sit nomen Domini benedictum,
ex hoc nunc, et usque in saeculum.
A solis ortu usque ad occasum,
laudabile nomen Domini.
Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus,
et super caelos gloria ejus.
Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster,
qui in altis habitat et humilia
respicit in caelo et in terra,
suscitans a terra inopem
et de stercore erigens pauperem,
ut colloset eum cum principibus,
cum principibus populi sui?
Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo,
matrem filiorum laetantem.
Gloria ...

Praise the Lord, servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord.
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
from this time onwards for evermore.
From the rising of the sun until the time it sets
the Lord's name should be praised.
The Lord is high above all nations and his glory
is above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God,
who dwells on high and looks down
far on things in heaven and earth?
He raises the weak from the ground
and lifts the poor man from the lowest place of all
to give him a place with princes,
even with the princes of his own people.
He gives a barren woman a home where she is a happy
mother of children.
Glory be to the Father

5. Motet : **Pulchra es**

Pulchra es, amica mea,
suavis et decora filia Jerusalem.
Pulchra es, amica mea, suavis
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me,
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

You are beautiful, my love,
a sweet and graceful daughter of Jerusalem.
You are beautiful, my love,
sweet and graceful as Jerusalem,
but terrible as the vanguard of an army drawn up in a fortress.
Turn your eyes away from me,
because they have made me fly away.

6. Psalm 122 **Laetatus sum**

Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi:
in domum Domini ibimus,
Stantes erant pedes nostri in atriis tuis
Jerusalem. Jerusalem, quae aedificatur ut civitas
cujus participatio ejus in idipsum.
Illuc enim ascenderunt tribus,
tribus Domini, testimonium Israel
ad confitendum nomini Domini.
Quia illic sederunt sedes in iudicio,
sedes super domum David.
Rogate quae ad pacem sunt Jerusalem,
et abundantia diligentibus te
Fiat pax in virtute tua
et abundantia in turribus tuis.
Propter fratres meos et proximos meos
loquebar pacem de te.
Propter domum Domini Dei
nostri quaesivi bona tibi.
Gloria ...

I was glad when they said unto me:
'We will go into the house of the Lord.'
Our feet stand within your gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built as a city
that is at unity within itself.
For thither the tribes the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there are set the seats of judgment,
the seats over the house of David.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem,
may those who love you prosper.
Peace be within your walls,
and prosperity within your towers.
For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I
will say 'Peace be within you'.
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek good for you.
Glory be to the Father.....

7. Motet **Duo Seraphim**

Duo Seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum:
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
plena est omnis terra gloria ejus.
Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in coelo:
Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus:
et hi tres unum sunt.
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
plena est omnis terra gloria ejus.

Two Seraphim proclaimed one to the other:
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.
There are three who bear witness in heaven:
the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit:
and these three are one.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

8. Psalm 127 **Nisi Dominus**

Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum,
in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.
Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem,
frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.
Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere,
surgite postquam sederitis,
qui manducatis panem doloris.
Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum:
ecce hereditas Domini, filii:
merces, fructus ventris.
Sicut sagittae in manu potentis:
ita filii excussorum
Beatus vir qui implevit desiderium suum ex ipsis:
non confundetur cum loquetur inimicis suis in porta.
Gloria ...

Except the Lord build the house,
those who have built it have laboured in vain.
Except the Lord keep the city,
the watchman wakes in vain.
It is useless for you to rise before dawn,
to rise when you have sat down,
you who eat the bread of sorrow,
for he has given sleep to those he loves.
Behold, children are an inheritance of the Lord,
a reward, the fruit of the womb.
As arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior,
so are the sons of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; he shall not
be shamed when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.
Glory be to the Father

PAUSE

9. Motet **Audi coelum**

Audi coelum verba mea,
plena desiderio:
et perfusa gaudio.
Audio.
Dic, quaeso, mihi: Quae est ista
quae consurgens ut aurora
rutilat, ut benedicam ?
Dicam.
Dic, nam ista pulchra ut luna,
electa ut sol replet laetitia
terras, coelos, maria
Maria
Maria Virgo illa dulcis, praedicata
a prophetis Ezechiel porta orientalis.
Talis.
Illa sacra et felix porta,
per quam mors fuit expulsa,
introducit autem vita
Ita.
quae semper tutum est
medium inter hominem et Deum,
pro culpis remedium.
Medium.
(Choir)
Omnes!
Omnes hanc ergo sequamur,
quae cum gratia mereamur vitam aeternam.
Consequamur.
Sequamur.
Praestet nobis Deus
Pater hoc et Filius et
Mater, cujus nomen invocamus,
dulce miseris solamen.,
Amen.
Benedicta es, Virgo Maria,
in saeculorum saecula.

O heaven, hear my words
full of desire
and steeped with joy.
I hear
Tell me, I entreat you: who is she
who rises and shines like the rosy dawn,
that I may bless her?
I shall tell you.
Tell, for she is as beautiful as the moon,
as choice as the sun which fills the whole
earth, the heavens and the seas with joy.
Mary
Mary, that sweet Virgin predicted
by the prophet Ezechiel, gate of the rising sun.
Such is she!
That holy and happy gate
through which death was expelled,
but life brought in,
Even so!
who is always a careful intermediary
between man and God,
a remedy for our sins.
An intermediary.

All!
So let us all follow her
by whose grace we may obtain Eternal life.
Let us seek after her.
Let us follow.
May God the Father grant us this,
and the Son and the
Mother on whose name we call,
sweet comfort for those in distress.
Amen.
Blessed are you, Virgin Mary,
for ever and ever.

10. Psalm 147 (147 VV. 12-20) **Lauda Jerusalem**

Lauda, Jerusalem, Dominum:
lauda Deum tuum, Sion.
Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum;
benedixit filiis tuis in te.
Qui posuit fines tuos pacem,
et adipe frumenti satiat te.
Qui emittit eloquium suum terrae:
velociter currit sermo ejus.
Qui dat nivem sicut lanam:
nebulam sicut cinerem spargit.
Mittit crystallum suam sicut bucellas:
ante faciem frigoris ejus quis sustinebit?
Emittet verbum suum, et liquefaciet ea:
flabit spiritus ejus, et fluent aquae.
Qui annuntiat verbum suum Jacob:
justitias et iudicia sua Israel.
Non fecit taliter omni nationi:
et iudicia sua non manifestavit eis.
Gloria ...

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem:
praise thy God, O Sion.
For he has strengthened the bars of thy gates:
he hath blessed thy children within thee.
He maketh peace in thy borders,
and filleth thee with the fine wheat in plenty.
He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth:
his word runneth very swiftly.
He giveth snow white as wool:
he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes,
He hurls down hail like crumbs:
who will survive in the face of his cold?
He sends out his word and melteth them:
he makes his wind to blow and the waters will flow.
He announces his word to Jacob,
his statutes and judgments unto Israel.
He hath not dealt so with any nation:
and he has not shown his judgments to them.
Glory be to the Father.....

11. Sonata sopra **Sancta Maria**

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.

Holy Mary, pray for us (sung 11 times)

12. Hymn *Ave maris stella*

Ave maris stella,
Dei mater alma,
Atque semper virgo,
Felix coeli porta.

Sumens illud ave,
Gabrielis ore,
Funda nos in pace
Mutans Hevae nomen.

Ritornello

Solva vincla reis,
Profer lumen caecis,
Mala nostra pelle,
Bona cunctis posce.

Ritornello

Monstra te esse matrem:
Sumat per te preces,
Qui pro nobis natus,
tulit esse tuus.

Ritornello

Virgo singularis,
inter omnes mitis
Nos culpis solutos
Mites fac et castos.

Ritornello

Vitam praesta puram,
Iter para tutum,
ut videntes Jesum
Semper collaetetur.

Sit laus Deo Patri,
Summo Christo decus,
Spiritus Sancto,
Trinus honor unus. Amen.

13. Magnificat

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae,
ecce enim ex hoc beatam
me dicent omnes generations.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est,
Et sanctum nomen ejus.
Et misericordia ejus a progenie,
in progenies timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo;
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede
et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis,
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae,
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.
Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Hail, star of the sea,
beneficent mother of God
and eternal virgin,
happy gate of heaven.

Accepting that 'ave'
from the mouth of Gabriel,
keep us in peace,
reversing the name 'Eva'.

Loosen prisoners' chains,
bring light to the blind,
drive out our wrongs,
call for blessings on us all

Show yourself to be his mother:
may he receive prayers through you,
he who, born for us,
allowed himself to be yours.

Unique virgin,
gentle above all,
make us, absolved from our sins,
gentle and holy.

Grant us a pure life,
prepare a safe road for us,
so that when we see Jesus
we may rejoice eternally.

May God the Father be praised,
and glory to Christ most high,
and to the Holy Spirit -
three honoured together in one. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden,
for behold from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He, remembering his mercy,
hath helped his child Israel,
as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

John Naylor

John Naylor, conductor, singer and organist, combines extensive performance experience in world-class choirs with a life-long passionate interest in choral music and its performance. His original training was as a choral scholar at St John's College, Cambridge under the great Dr George Guest. He subsequently became a professional member of the Chapel Royal Choir at the Tower of London and has appeared at The Proms, The South Bank, The Aldeburgh Festival and in numerous recordings.

John has been conductor of The Lydian Singers since 1980 and also conducts the renowned Newport & District Male Voice choir. He was appointed Musical Director of Nantwich Choral Society in September 2005. With them he has already given critically claimed performances of Mendelssohn's Elijah and, in Chester Cathedral last April, Bach's St John Passion.

Sasha Johnson Manning

Sasha trained at the Royal Academy of Music where she studied voice, cello, piano and composition. As a soprano soloist, Sasha has taken part in numerous broadcasts and recordings with the BBC. She sings each week for BBC Radio 4's Daily Service. Sasha's extensive oratorio repertoire ranges from Monteverdi's *Vespers* to Poulenc's *Gloria*. In March 2004, she performed works by Vivaldi, Haydn and Mozart with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for Classic FM.

Sasha is gaining a wide reputation for her choral music and solo songs and carols. Her music is now being published by Escorial Edition and Peacock Press. She has had a number of her settings of the Evening Canticles performed in several cathedrals and had her Mass for the feast of St. Bartholomew premiered in Salisbury Cathedral in August. Sasha is currently Director of Music at St Mary's Parish Church, Bowdon,

Amy Wood

Amy began singing at the age of eleven as a chorister in Sheffield Cathedral Girls' choir. Amy's solo engagements range from Monteverdi's *Vespers* to Rutter's *A Sprig of Thyme*. In addition to her work as a soloist, Amy performs extensively as an ensemble singer. She is a member of several professional groups, including the BBC Daily Service Singers, Ex Cathedra Consort and Euphony. She is also a member of Manchester Baroque, The Exon Singers and the Coupland Consort, a vocal octet who perform extensively for BBC Radio.

Amy is also a keen close harmony singer and is a founder member of close harmony octet 'The Goo Dats' who have put on a number of concerts in the Manchester area. Amy currently studies singing with David Lowe and Susan Roper.

John Pearce

John Pearce was a choral scholar at Magdalen College Oxford, and first sang with John Naylor in 1970 in the Louis Halsey Singers where they became friends. They both then progressed to the Monteverdi Choir, where John sang regularly until about 1990. He has since then sung with many groups and has also directed two choirs of his own in north east London.

Following retirement from teaching, he has decided to reduce the number of notes tackled each year: singing one of the tenor solo lines in the Monteverdi *Vespers* (one of his 'desert island' choices) fills one of his few remaining musical ambitions.

Joshua Ellicott

Lyric tenor Joshua Ellicott was born in Manchester and read Music at York University before continuing his vocal studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Joshua took four of the top prizes at this year's International Vocal Competition in s-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, including the overall First Prize.

He is a versatile singer, comfortable in song, oratorio or opera. Joshua will be singing with English Touring Opera next spring. He is in demand at home and abroad and sings at many of the most prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Albert Hall. He works regularly as a concert soloist with many of this country's orchestras. He has also worked in consorts including I Fagiolini, Ex Cathedra, Tenebrae and the Binchois Consort.

Tim Kennedy

Tim began his musical career as a treble at St. George's Chapel Windsor and as a music scholar at Winchester College. He was organ scholar at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, and subsequently organ scholar at both Chester and Manchester Cathedrals.

Currently he is a lay clerk at Manchester Cathedral, and sings with the BBC Daily Service Singers. Although he is principally a singer, Tim is also an accomplished organist and pianist and has won major prizes from The Royal College of Organists. He is the resident organist at Terra Nova School in Cheshire, where he teaches singing.

Mark Rowlinson

After a Choral Scholarship at Oxford, Mark Rowlinson spent the 1970s as a singer based in London. Perhaps the high spot of his London career was to be chosen as the baritone soloist for the performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* given as the composer's London memorial concert.

Mark spent the next 20 years as a Music Producer for the BBC based in Manchester, yet he continued to sing during this time, performing at Aldeburgh, the York Early Music Festival, the BBC Proms and abroad. As a frequent member of the New London Consort Mark has performed early music in many of Europe's most prestigious festivals. Two CDs of contemporary English song have recently been released, to warm critical acclaim.

The Orchestra of Platform Four

The Orchestra was originally formed by four professional musicians and friends in 1996 to "enjoy a bit of chamber music". The group was quickly taken on as 'ensemble in residence' at Staffordshire University in 1997 and decided that an ensemble identity was needed. The group's name was established and they soon embarked on a busy schedule of concerts, workshops and performances throughout the county. Performances soon followed at festivals and music clubs throughout the United Kingdom.

Following a performance of Handel's *Messiah* in Stone, the group were soon being asked by choirs and choral societies to provide original instrument orchestras for performances of the baroque and classical repertoire and have established long-term relations with many societies. They are now clearly recognised as one of the country's leading and busiest 'period instrument' ensembles.