

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY



Charles Gounod Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile



John Rutter

PSALMFEST

**Serenna Wagner – soprano
Andrew Lockwood – tenor
Oliver Dunn - baritone
Andrew Mildinhall – organ
Jonathan Layfield - piano**

John Naylor – conductor

**St Mary's Church, Nantwich
Saturday March 28th 2009**

Programme £2.00

Message from the Chairman of Nantwich Choral Society

Welcome to this evening's concert. In all our 37 years, this is our first performance of Gounod's *Solemn Mass of St Cecilia* and we are delighted to be singing it together with John Rutter's exciting and moving *Psalmfest*. We are especially pleased to be back singing in St Mary's with its lovely acoustics and welcoming feeling.

In January we memorably celebrated two events with a wonderful performance of *Messiah* – the last concert in the old Methodist Church in Nantwich and also the 250th anniversary of the death of Handel. This year also marks the 200th anniversary of the death of Haydn, and in our Summer Concert in the Civic Hall we will be performing his great oratorio '*The Seasons*'. The combination of a modern translation for soloists and chorus together with the composer's imaginative and exciting orchestration promise real enjoyment for everyone from this light, lively and at times very amusing work.

In the autumn of this year Nantwich Choral Society are planning an even more exciting concert – a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* by Edward Elgar. This large scale work requires many more voices than we have and an extended orchestra, so we have invited three other choirs to join with us - members of Romsey, (Hants) Choral Society, The Border Singers (Whitchurch) and the Lydian Singers from Knutsford who will sing the separate semi-chorus part. To accommodate all these extra people, we are holding the concert in Chester Cathedral on 7th November. We are all looking forward to this exciting departure from our normal concert presentation and we will arrange return coaches from Nantwich to Chester.

As you can see, we are a very lively and friendly choir who work towards the highest musical standards. We have very enthusiastic members, a purposeful committee, and an adventurous programme. The choir welcome new members at all times: if you or someone you know would like to join us for a term to experience singing with a large and welcoming mixed choir – do come. You would be welcome to sing with us for a term free of subscription. Please contact me on 01270 522664.

Our new NCS 200 Club is proving to be very popular and helps in raising funds for our concerts. We hold a monthly draw with two cash prizes and once a year a bonus prize. It costs only £20 per year. Do think about taking part in this – it will help our finances tremendously! Application forms are provided with this programme or are available from tonight's 'front of house' team.

I hope that you will enjoy tonight's performance very much indeed.

Anne Barnard

Nantwich Choral Society gratefully acknowledges help and support during the recent past from The Harding Trust, The National Lottery through Awards for All, Barclays Bank plc, our auditors Hall Livesey Brown, Chartered Accountants, Tarporley, GT webMarque and Michael Vernon Photography.

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Messe Solonelle de Sainte Cécile - Charles Gounod

Gounod was born in Paris in 1818, the son of a pianist mother and a draftsman father. His mother was his first piano teacher and as a result of her teaching the young Charles developed outstanding musical talents. He entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1836 where he studied counterpoint and composition and in 1839 he won the Prix de Rome for his cantata *Ferdinand*. When he went to Rome for further studies he discovered the music of Palestrina and 16th century polyphony together with the music of Bach, Beethoven and Mendelssohn to whose music he was introduced by Fanny, Mendelssohn's sister.

In 1842 he spent time in Vienna and in 1843 he studied in Leipzig. All these influences set him apart from many of his contemporaries when he returned to France: they were mostly focused on composing operas, whereas Gounod, having acquired a wider understanding of European musical traditions, was equally acquainted with sacred and secular music. From 1846-8 Gounod began training for the priesthood but still remained an insatiable womaniser; like his near contemporary Franz Liszt he never succeeded in reconciling his clerical aspirations with his amorous inclinations and he failed to proceed to ordination.

He wrote two unsuccessful works for the Paris Opéra in 1851 and 1854, but then after a move to the Théâtre-Lyrique he enjoyed a run of successes with the five operas which justly consolidated his early fame, including *Faust* (1859) and *Romeo and Juliette* (1867).

The key to unlocking this success was the success of his composition of the *Messe Solennelle de Saint Cécile* in 1855 which moved away from the austerity of some of his earlier polyphonic efforts towards a more fluid and operatic style. This and his other best works combine some of the best facets of the Italian operatic tradition with French precision and elegance.

Four parts of the St Cecilia Mass were first performed in 1851 at St. Martin's Hall in London to great acclaim. Four years later on St. Cecilia's feast day, November 22, 1855, the St. Cecilia Mass was heard in its entirety in Paris and Gounod's reputation as a noteworthy composer was made. Above all, he was concerned with rendering the spirit of the text in a manner that did honour to the patron saint of music. He wrote (somewhat dramatically) concerning it: "There is only one difficulty... It is to match in music the demands of this incomparable and inexhaustible subject: the Mass!...in music!...by a paltry man! ... May God take pity on me!"

When it was first performed, Saint-Saëns wrote (in his usual exaggerated style): "The appearance of the Saint Cecilia Mass caused a sort of stupor. This simplicity, this grandeur, this serene light which rose upon the musical world like a dawn troubled people greatly: one felt the approach of genius..."

Originally scored for Soprano, Tenor and Bass soloists and Chorus with orchestral accompaniment, the Mass is an unashamedly operatic tribute to the patron saint of music. In setting the text Gounod took certain liberties with the normal liturgy, including in the music at least one section normally said by the priest, an Offertory for the orchestra alone and at the end 'Domine Salvum', the prayer for the King provided in the Roman Missal for chanting after Solemn Mass on Sundays in some countries.

The *Kyrie* begins with the different singers re-affirming each others' pleas for mercy. Gounod avoids the usual dramatically loud beginning to the *Gloria*, starting instead with a gentle, almost ethereal opening in which the soprano solo is then taken up by the hushed chorus like the calm before a storm. Only with the affirmation of faith (*Laudamus te* – We praise you), does he briefly unleash his full forces but then quickly reins them in again with the soloists singing *Gratias* in a very conversational way – like old friends meeting up. Gounod then demonstrates his operatic talents in the bass solo leading to a chromatically introspective *miserere* and then on to the final *Cum sancto spiritu* fugue which gradually builds to an expansive climax in the dramatic *Amens* at the end of the movement.

The *Credo* starts with a bold and confident affirmation of faith. The lower parts of the accompaniment drive the piece forward with a dotted rhythm which disappears several times only to re-emerge when the most important parts of the Creed are sung – “I believe in One God”, “God of God, Light of Light” and “He ascended into heaven”. The passages of the text which deal with Jesus' earthly life and death are much calmer – some of this music is marked *pppp* (*p* being “quiet” and *pp* being “very quiet”) but two pages later we are up to *fff* again when Jesus ascends into heaven. The grandest part of the *Credo* is saved for the core Christian belief “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”

A peaceful and lyrical *Invocation* follows to lead us into the beautiful *Sanctus* which starts simply with a tenor solo followed by the chorus. A more mysterious tone enters the piece when the chorus sing about heaven and earth (*coeli et terra*), the tension mounts with various unusual key changes until everybody ends in a glorious repeat of all the text followed by *hosanna in excelsis*.

In contrast, the setting of the *Benedictus* is much more straightforward, but no less effective. The chorus repeat the tenor's opening statement – their six part harmonies contrasting with the simplicity of the opening melody.

Gounod's operatic tendencies surface once again in the *Agnus Dei* where the almost jaunty musical setting in compound time seems slightly at odds with the religious intensity of the text sung by the chorus. Gounod clearly wished to give his soprano and tenor soloists a chance to show off towards the end of the work, so in two interludes he unusually assigns them words normally spoken by the priest.

This would normally be the end of the *Mass* but many countries have a tradition of reciting prayers for the monarch at the end – as Gounod lived in the time of Napoleon III the original setting of the prayers was for him. In Gounod's composition the prayer is offered first by the Church, then the Army and then the State. Each short prayer, although the same tune, has the “spirit” of its origin. Thus, the prayer from the Church is rich and unaccompanied, the prayer from the Army definitely martial in origin and the Prayer from the State the most opulent.

It is interesting to note that the sequence of published texts goes through various amendments: the original publication mentions ‘Imperatorem nostrum Napoleonem’ – Napoleon III was Emperor of France from 1852-1870. The Third Republic was established

in 1870, and so the 1879 version modifies the prayer to 'Domine salvum fac Rempublicam'. The English edition published in 1874 tactfully changes to 'Reginam nostram Victoriam'. In tonight's performance the monarch remains anonymous.

This last edition also contains Gounod's own transcription for organ accompaniment and the version used tonight is based on it. It contains the following introduction:

TO THE MUSICAL PUBLIC

This Mass (St Cecilia) was written in the year 1853 (twenty years ago).

I discovered last year that it had not been properly protected at Stationers' Hall, and that the great English publishing firms had not scrupled to publish it, solely for their own benefit, not only in almost the original form but cut up, made into pieces for the organ, and adapted to the Protestant form of worship. This I strongly object to - uselessly, I am aware, as it is a time-honoured practice in England.

I have, however, been persuaded by many friends to write an Organ Accompaniment and a second Offertory for the Mass, as this expedient, I am informed, in a small measure restores to me my lost property.

I have, therefore, not hesitated to use what, *in my hands*, are, I believe, legitimate means for the purposes of recovering some of those rights in this work, of which, as in the case of so many other works, I have been deprived by the licence which the laxity of the law allows the vigilant cupidity of the musical trade.

CH. GOUNOD

*Tavistock House, Tavistock Square
December, 1873.*

The war of 1870 -1 forced Gounod to escape to England where he was immensely popular and he became the first conductor of the Royal Choral Society. Unfortunately he was unwise in his personal relationships and his disastrous liaison with the possessive and calamitous singer Georgina Weldon caused him public ridicule and much personal grief.

His later music crossed the line from the sophisticated simplicity of his earlier career to increasingly repetitive banality; although he remained popularly successful he ended his career as a composer with a great future behind him. Sadly, Saint-Saens prophesy of approaching genius was unfulfilled and now, perhaps unsurprisingly, much of Gounod's music has fallen out of favour.

In later life he became deeply religious and died in 1893 in Saint-Cloud, France, as he put the finishing touches to a requiem "Le Grand Requiem" inspired by the death of his grandson, a major work which he was never to hear performed.

KYRIE ELEISON

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison

*Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy*

GLORIA

**Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax hominibus voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te, glorificamus te,
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam**

*Glory to God in the highest
And in earth peace, goodwill towards men.
We praise you, we bless you, we glorify you,
We praise you for your great glory,*

**Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater
omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu
Christe altissime, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.**

*Lord God, King of Heaven, God the Father
almighty, only son of the Father, Jesu Christ the
highest, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
Father.*

**Qui tollis peccata mundi misere nobis, qui tollis
peccata mundi misere nobis, qui tollis peccata
mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram,**

*You who take away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us, you who take away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us, you who take away the
sins of the world, hear our prayer,*

Qui sedes ad dextram Patris miserere nobis,

*You who sit at the right hand of God, have mercy
upon us,*

**Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu
solus altissimus Jesu Christe**

*You only are holy, you alone are the Lord. You, O
Christ, alone are the most high.*

**Cum Sancto Spiritu in Gloria Dei Patris,
Amen.**

*With the Holy Spirit you are (most high) in the
glory of God, Amen.*

CREDO

**Credo in unum Deum Patrem omnipotentem,,
factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium et
invisibilium**

*I believe in one God, The Father almighty, maker
of heaven and earth and of all things visible and
invisible.*

**Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium
Dei unigenitum et ex Patre natum ante omnia
secula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum
verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum
consubstantialem Patri, per quem omnia facta
sunt. Qui propter nos homines et propter
nostram salutem descendit de coelis. Et
incarnatus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria
virgine et homo factus est.**

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten
Son of God, begotten of his Father before all
worlds, being of one substance with the Father by
whom all things were made. Who for us men and
for our salvation came down from heaven. And
was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin
Mary and was made man.*

**Et incarnatus est de Spiritu sancto ex Maria
virgine et homo factus est.**

*And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the
Virgin Mary and was made man.*

**Cruxifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato,
passus et sepultus est.**

*He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.*

Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas: et ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris, et iterum venturus est cum gloria iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis.

And on the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.

Et in spiritum sanctum Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit, qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam.

(And I believe) in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the Prophets. And I believe one holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Confiteor unum baptisma in remissione peccatorum,

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins,

Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi seculi, Amen.

And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

INVOCATION

SANCTUS

Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth, pleni sunt coeli gloria eius. Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy is the Lord God of hosts, the heavens are full of his glory. Hosanna in the highest.

BENEDICTUS

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini: Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, misere nobis.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Domine, non sum dignus ut intres meum tectum: sed tantum die verbo et sanabitur anima mea.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter my dwelling, but only say the word and my soul will be healed.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, Dona nobis pacem. Amen

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Grant us your peace. Amen

DOMINE SALVUM

Prayers of the Church, the Army and the Nation

**Domine, salvum fac regem nostrum
Et exaudi nos in die qua invocaverimus te.**

*God save our King,
And hear us when we call upon you*

Psalmfest – John Rutter

John Rutter is one of England's best-known composers of the late twentieth century, as well as a widely respected choral conductor and music scholar and editor. While his choral works (including the *Te Deum*, *Magnificat*, and *Requiem*) and especially his carol compositions are the most familiar, he has also written instrumental works, including a piano concerto, the *Suite Antique* for flute, harpsichord, and strings, and two children's operas.

Musically he might be described as reactionary since his works show very distinct influences from the past and show almost no signs of progressivism or even contemporary influences. He has a strong sense of the English musical tradition, and some of the more significant English musical influences on his work include Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Walton, and Benjamin Britten. Non-English influences include Fauré, Gregorian chant, and Bach. However, his music's immediate accessibility, being both tuneful and expressive, and its wide general appeal have still earned him a place in the English musical tradition, though not the place of an innovator, and while he is most popular in England and the United States, his music is performed worldwide.

He began his musical career at Highgate School where amongst his contemporaries was John Tavener. He continued to study the organ and went on to Clare College, Cambridge. At the age of 30, in 1975, after a period as a freelance composer, arranger and musical copyist he returned to Clare, where he was Director of Music. In 1979, however, he left his college post in order to give more attention to composing and to conducting, although he still contributed to the study of choral music, acting as editor of the *Carols for Choirs* and *Oxford Choral Classics* series. He formed the Cambridge Singers in 1981, but once they were established as a leading chamber choir he resigned from the regular conductorship, again in order to concentrate on composing and conducting.

In 1985 his *Requiem* had its first performance, followed in 1990 by his *Magnificat* and his 1993 *Psalmfest*. In 1996 he was awarded a Lambeth Doctorate of Music by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his services to church music. In addition to all of these activities, he manages a CD label, Collegium Records, largely devoted to his own music. This was more or less by chance; he had no intention of doing so until an established label offered him a contract; the terms struck him as being so unsatisfactory that he decided to do it himself.

Rutter's work is firmly anchored at the contemporary end of British twentieth century choral music although it draws also on harmonic and melodic elements of late nineteenth and twentieth century European music – notably Duruflé and Fauré. His work is justifiably valued for its craftsmanship, which is both melodious and exuberant, particularly in his *Gloria* (1974) and *Magnificat* (1990), as well as introspective, particularly and appropriately in the lovely *Requiem* of 1990. Most singers really enjoy singing his music.

All of these qualities are to be found in the nine movements of *Psalmfest*, which collects pieces written over some twenty years. However, only two (number 5: *Cantate Domino* and number 8: *O how amiable are thy dwellings*) had not previously been published and performed. John Rutter's stated aim "in gathering these psalm settings together...was to open them up for concert as well as liturgical use" – although so far this ambition has not yet led to a recording of the complete work.

In order to facilitate concert performance, the composer has edited some of the original versions, and passages for soloists have been included in numbers 2 (*I will lift up mine eyes*), 4 (*The Lord is my shepherd* – which is also included in the *Requiem*), 6 (*The Lord is my light and my salvation*) and in an entirely new section, Psalm 84 is sung by soloists only. In tonight's performance, some further editing has allowed for the inclusion of a Bass as well as Soprano and Tenor soloists.

PSALMFEST

PSALM 100

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands :
serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God :
it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise :
be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.
For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting :
and his truth endureth from generation to generation.
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.

PSALM 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills :
from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord :
who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved :
and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel :
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper :
the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;
So that the sun shall not burn thee by day :
neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil :
yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in :
from this time forth for evermore. Amen

PSALM 146

Praise the Lord, O my soul; while I live will I praise the Lord :
yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God.
O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man :
for there is no help in them.
For when the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth :
and then all his thoughts perish.
Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help :
and whose hope is in the Lord his God;
Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is :
who keepeth his promise for ever;
Who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong :
who feedeth the hungry.
The Lord looseth men out of prison :
the Lord giveth sight to the blind.
The Lord helpeth them that are fallen :
the Lord careth for the righteous.
The Lord careth for the strangers; he defendeth the fatherless and widow :
as for the way of the ungodly, he turneth it upside down.

The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore :
and throughout all generations.
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.

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd :
therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture :
and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul :
and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil :
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me :
thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.
But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life :
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

From PSALM 27.

The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear :
the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?
Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid :
and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in him.
One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require :
even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and
to visit his temple.
For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his tabernacle :
yea, in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.
Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation with great gladness :
I will sing, and speak praises unto the Lord.
Hearken unto my voice, O Lord, when I cry unto thee :
have mercy upon me, and hear me.
My heart hath talked of thee, Seek ye my face :
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.
O hide not thou thy face from me :
nor cast thy servant away in displeasure.
Thou hast been my succour :
leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me :
the Lord taketh me up.
be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.

PSALM 47 vv 1-7

O clap your hands together, all ye people :
O sing unto God with the voice of melody.
For the Lord is high, and to be feared :
he is the great King upon all the earth.
He shall subdue the people under us :
and the nations under our feet.
He shall choose out an heritage for us :
even the worship of Jacob, whom he loved.

God is gone up with a merry noise :
and the Lord with the sound of the trump.
O sing praises, sing praises unto our God :
O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.
For God is the King of all the earth :
sing ye praises with understanding.

PSALM 84

O how amiable are thy dwellings :
thou Lord of hosts!
My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord :
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young :
even thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house :
they will be alway praising thee.
Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee :
in whose heart are thy ways.
Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well :
and the pools are filled with water.
They will go from strength to strength :
and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.
O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer :
hearken, O God of Jacob.
Behold, O God our defender :
and look upon the face of thine Anointed.
For one day in thy courts :
is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God :
than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.
For the Lord God is a light and defence :
the Lord will give grace and worship,
and no good thing shall he withhold from them that live a godly life.
O Lord God of hosts :
blessed is the man that putteth his trust in thee.

PSALM 148

O praise the Lord of heaven : praise him in the height.
Praise him, all ye angels of his : praise him, all his host.
Praise him, sun and moon : praise him, all ye stars and light.
Praise him, all ye heavens : and ye waters that are above the heavens.
Let them praise the Name of the Lord : for he spake the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created.
He hath made them fast for ever and ever : he hath given them a law which shall not be broken.
Praise the Lord upon earth : ye dragons, and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and vapours : wind and storm, fulfilling his word;
Mountains and all hills : fruitful trees and all cedars;
Beasts and all cattle : worms and feathered fowls;
Kings of the earth and all people : princes and all judges of the world;
Young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the Name of the Lord :
for his Name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

JOHN NAYLOR - conductor

John Naylor, conductor, singer and organist, combines extensive performance experience in world-class choirs with a lifelong passionate interest in choral music and its performance. Following a successful business career he now devotes most of his activities to conducting and choir development.

His original training was as a choral scholar at St John's College, Cambridge with the great Dr George Guest after keyboard studies with Conrad Eden at Durham Cathedral where he was a chorister, a music scholarship at Rossall School and singing studies with Wilfrid Brown and Lyndon van der Pump from The Royal College of Music.

He subsequently became a professional member of the Chapel Royal Choir of St Peter ad Vincula at H.M. Tower of London and worked with John Eliot Gardiner, Louis Halsey, Neville Mariner and Richard Hickox, appearing under their direction at The Proms, The South Bank, The Aldeburgh Festival and in numerous broadcasts and recordings. He has sung in the cathedral choirs of Christ Church Oxford, Carlisle and Chester.

John has been Director of The Lydian Singers since 1980 with whom he has performed extensively in the North West and in most of the cathedrals in Great Britain, often returning several times by invitation. He will continue until September as Musical Director of the renowned Newport & District Male Voice Choir when he will conduct the Combined Shropshire Male Voice Choirs (some 300 voices) in their 'Help for Heroes' concert.

He was appointed Music Director of Nantwich Choral Society in September 2005 for whom he has conducted highly acclaimed performances of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', Bach's 'St John Passion' (in Chester Cathedral), and Monteverdi's 'Vespers of 1610', Bernstein's 'Chichester Psalms' and Fauré's 'Requiem'. In July 2007 he conducted a memorable joint performance in Nantwich of Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* with Ensemble Vocal Arpège de Mâcon and in November a much praised performance of Mozart's *Requiem* with the 18th Century Concert Orchestra.

2008 included a recital of a capella English Pastoral Music, Tewkesbury Abbey, recitals in Perugia, Assisi, Orvieto, Spoleto and Todi cathedrals and Hexham abbey and Bangor Cathedral with The Lydian Singers, together with recitals, a new CD recording and filming an excerpt from 'Miss Saigon' with Newport & District MVC. With NCS he conducted *Brahms Requiem* in March, a highly enjoyable *Opera Gala Evening* in July, a memorable performance of Bach's *B minor Mass* in November and most recently in January *Messiah* as the last ever concert in the former Nantwich Methodist church.

Future plans include Haydn's 'The Seasons' and Elgar's 'Dream of Gerontius' (Chester cathedral) with Nantwich Choral Society, and Peterborough Cathedral,

Westminster Abbey and Durham Cathedral with the Lydian Singers. From September John has been appointed conductor of The Phoenix Singers of Shrewsbury and will first conduct them in their December Christmas Concert and then in a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in March 2010.

ANDREW MILDINHALL - organ

Andrew studied the organ & piano with Nicholas Danby, Vivian Langrish & Eric Thiman. After a long career in fund-raising & marketing, he is now operates as a freelance musician, playing the organ, piano and harpsichord for concerts, special occasions and church services throughout Cheshire. He was organist of Nantwich Parish Church for 12 years and until recently ran 'Sounds Musical', a specialist cd shop in Nantwich.

He is the regular accompanist of Nantwich Choral Society. They have recently performed his compositions 'A Christmas Sequence' (2006) and 'I saw three ships' (2007) to very warm audience receptions.

Andrew's performances with NCS are always well received, not least his recent playing in the double piano accompaniment of the March 2008 performance of the Brahms German Requiem. In April NCS will record Andrew's most recent Christmas composition 'Twas the night before Christmas' which was very warmly received at its premiere last December in a performance by NCS with Nantwich Young Voices.

SERENNA WAGNER - soprano

Born in Leeds of Polish-English parentage, Serenna Wagner took her first degree in Music and English at Birmingham University where she studied singing with Julian Pike. She subsequently trained at the Royal Northern College of Music where she received distinctions in both her Postgraduate Performance Diploma and in her Masters Degree under the tutelage of Susan Roper. Serenna now studies privately with Laura Sarti. Operatic roles include Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte*, Tatyana *Eugene Onegin* and Mimi *La Bohème* (Heritage Opera), Countess *The Marriage of Figaro* (University of Birmingham Festival Opera), Governess *The Turn of the Screw* and Rachel Lockhart *Dr Heidegger's Fountain of Youth* (RNCM), Mimi *La Bohème* and Susanna *The Marriage of Figaro* (Pendle Opera), the title roles in *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Bartered Bride* (Preston Opera) and Second Lady *Die Zauberflöte* (Opera by Definition). Serenna has also appeared in *The Queen of Spades* (RNCM) and *Falstaff* (British Youth Opera). She has performed many excerpts from operas including *Rusalka*, *Fidelio*, *Peter Grimes*, *Otello* and *Mary Queen of Scots*. In musical theatre she has performed Adèle *Die Fledermaus*, Bessie Throckmorton *Merrie England*, Young Heidi *Follies* and Yum-Yum *The Mikado*. She has appeared as a soloist in Janaček's *Zápisník Zmizelého* (The Diary of One Who Vanished) with the

Hallé Orchestra at the Bridgewater Hall and in Stravinsky's *Cantata* at the Cheltenham Festival with Emma Kirkby and James Gilchrist, a performance that was subsequently broadcast on Radio 3. Oratorio solos include Handel *Messiah*, Mendelssohn *Elijah*, Mozart *Exsultate jubilate*, *Requiem*, *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* and *C Minor Mass*, Beethoven *Mass in C*, Brahms *Requiem*, Vivaldi *Gloria*, Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, Haydn *Creation*, *Nelson Mass*, *Harmoniemesse* and *The Seasons*, Schubert *Mass in G*, Charpentier *Messe de Minuit*, Dvořák *Te Deum*, Rutter *Requiem* and Fauré *Requiem*. Serenna has frequently appeared on the concert platform where the repertoire has tended to reflect her special interest in Slavonic repertoire. She is also a regular Guest Artist for Swan Hellenic Cruises, Dean Taylor Productions and the Interlude Choir in Normandy. Last December Serenna sang the soprano solos in Handel's *Messiah* at Preston Guild Hall, a performance that was broadcast on BBC1.

ANDREW LOCKWOOD – tenor

Andrew graduated from the University of Southampton in 1986 with a degree in Engineering Acoustics. After working for five years as an Acoustic Consultant, he then commenced a three year course of post graduate vocal training at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying initially with Patrick McGuigan and subsequently with his current tutor, John Noble. Whilst at the Royal Northern College of Music, Andrew took part in several operatic productions including *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1991 and Vaughan Williams' *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1992. In 1993, he understudied the role of Flute in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in 1994, he performed the role of Raymond in Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans*. Since leaving the Royal Northern College of Music, he has sung widely across the country, primarily on the concert platform. His oratorio repertoire in particular is extensive, and in 1999, he was privileged to take part in a unique combined performance of Elgar's *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* as the culmination of the Mananan International Music Festival on the Isle of Man. He also appears regularly with Sheffield City Opera and is currently studying the role of Turridu for their forthcoming production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

OLIVER DUNN – baritone

British Baritone Oliver Dunn is currently studying on the Opera Course at the Royal Academy of Music with Mark Wildman and Iain Ledingham. On entry to the Academy Oliver was awarded the Norman McCann Scholarship, for which he is extremely grateful. Previously to this he completed a degree and two Post Graduate years of study at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester under the tutelage of Robert Alderson.

On the concert platform he has appeared extensively across Britain with a variety of orchestras and

ensembles including The Hallé, The Hanover Band and Manchester Camerata. Oratorio performances include Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, Bach *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion* (Christus), Handel *Messiah*, Haydn *Nelson Mass*, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Puccini *Messa di Gloria*, Purcell *King Arthur* and Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, conducted by the composer. Oliver also performed concert excerpts of Disney's *The Jungle Book* and *The Lion King* with the RNCM Wind Orchestra at the Bridgewater Hall in which he played the roles of 'Baloo' and 'Scar'.

Operatically, for the Gawsworth Festival 2006 Oliver performed the role of 'Pish-Tush' in Phoenix Opera's production of *The Mikado*. In 2007 he returned to Gawsworth to play 'Captain Corcoran' in their production of *HMS Pinafore*. In July 2007 Oliver appeared as 'Aeneas' in the Yorke Trusts summer production of *Dido and Aeneas*. Most recently he performed the role of Zurniga for Clonter Opera in their 2008 Summer production of *Carmen*.

During his time at the RNCM, Oliver was involved in a wide variety of performances including chorus parts in the college's productions, after which he went on to perform a variety of roles in RNCM Opera productions, most notably 'the Forester' in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, 'Zaretsky' in *Eugene Onegin* and also the title role in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. He was involved in a number of staged excerpts took part in masterclasses within the RNCM with distinguished pedagogues such as Dame Emma Kirkby and Sir Mark Elder.

In 2006, whilst at the RNCM, Oliver won the Alexander Young Prize and was awarded the William Macloud Johnson prize for Male singing and in 2007 the John Cameron Prize for the singing of Lieder.

Since his arrival at the Royal Academy, Oliver's activities have ranged from private and public Masterclasses with Chevalier José Cura, Dennis O'Neill and Robert Tear to performing excerpts of *Così fan Tutte* and Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* in the '5 days, 100 Concerts' opening festival of the new King's Place Concert venue close to King's Cross Station. This January he played the roles of Don Giovanni and Guglielmo in staged excerpts directed by David Edwards. He was also awarded Second place in the prestigious Richard Lewis/Jean Shanks Award within the Royal Academy.

The keyboard, (specified in preference to a piano by John Rutter in his performance notes for *Psalmfest*), is played by **JONATHAN LAYFIELD** who is a member of Nantwich Choral Society and an occasional organist at St Mary's Nantwich.

The timpani and percussion are played by **DAN MOWBRAY** and **HANNAH EDWARDS** who are members of The United Co-op Band (Crewe) and appear by kind permission of the band's Director, Mr Geoff Sparkes.