

Reflective music including Durufle's Requiem, Allegri's Miserere and music by Stainer, Chilcott, Todd and Sparkhall

LUX AETERNA

4.00PM SATURDAY 29TH MARCH 2025
ST MARY'S CHURCH, NANTWICH, CW5 5RG



Registered Charity Number 1211249

Lux Aeterna: Programme

<i>God so loved the World</i>	Bob Chilcott
<i>Crux Fidelis</i>	John IV of Portugal
<i>Lux Aeterna</i>	Olivia Sparkhall
<i>Stabat Mater</i>	Will Todd
<i>Miserere</i>	Gregorio Allegri
<i>Crux Fidelis</i>	Sarah Macdonald
<i>God so loved the World</i>	John Stainer
<i>Requiem</i>	Maurice Duruflé
<i>Introit</i>	
<i>Kyrie</i>	
<i>Domine Jesu Christe</i>	
<i>Sanctus and Benedictus</i>	
<i>Pie Jesu</i>	
<i>Agnus Dei</i>	
<i>Libera me</i>	
<i>Lux Aeterna</i>	
<i>In Paradisum</i>	

The major item in our Spring programme is the *Requiem* by Maurice Duruflé, a deeply expressive and original setting in which the composer brings together “*plainsong, liturgical modality, subtle counterpoint...sensuous harmonies*”, as Andrew Macgregor has said. Before that, we explore the varying moods relating to the season of Lent: penitential, meditative, and at the same time full of faith and hope. Music from the 17th to 21st centuries is bookended by two settings of these famous words from St John’s gospel: “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, That whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” The first is by the wonderfully talented Bob Chilcott, and the second the very familiar and well-beloved version by the 19th century John Stainer.

God So Loved the World Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
That whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world;
But that the world through him might be saved.
God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
That whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)*

Bob Chilcott surely needs little introduction. His range of output for choirs has hugely enriched the repertoire for every season. In the spirit of Stainer’s setting of these familiar words, Chilcott allows them to speak to us with emotional directness, and no superfluous embellishment. Maintaining the same gentle mood as Stainer, he employs a characteristic harmonic flexibility and introduces a beautiful soprano descant in the final pages. With passion, but ending in gentle hopefulness, capturing a quiet mood of wonder. And a very happy 70th birthday next month, Bob!

Crux Fidelis

John IV of Portugal (1604-1656) (attrib)

*Crux fidelis, inter omnes, Arbor una nobilis:
 Nulla silva talem profert, Fronde, flore, germine:
 Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, Dolce pondus sustinet.
 Amen.
 (6C attrib. Venantius Fortunatus)*

*Cross most faithful, high exalted, noble tree beyond compare:
 Never grew there one so blessed, Branches, blossoms green and fair:
 Sweetest wood, sweetest nails, sweetest burden thou dost bear.
 Amen.
 (Trans. John Rutter)*

This poignant miniature is probably not by King John of Portugal at all, as it didn't appear until the mid-19th century, and there is no original manuscript or contemporary copy with which to verify its provenance. King John was certainly a composer, but little of his music survives to be studied and compared. However, we've decided to let him take the credit, since otherwise it would have to be awarded to the prolific Anonymous (although as Virginia Woolf said "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman", so nominations are welcome). Straightforward and heartfelt, *Crux Fidelis* applies an almost disjunctive juxtaposition of major key with a mood of deep sorrow. The words come from a much longer hymn for the penitential season, *Pangue lingua*, and here it focuses on a single image as a means of meditation.

Lux Aeterna

Olivia Sparkhall (b.1976)

*Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine: Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius est.
 Requiem aeternum dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis, in aeternum.*

*May eternal light shine on them, Lord, with your saints for ever, for you are merciful.
 Eternal rest give to them, Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them, with your
 saints for ever, for you are merciful.
 (From the Requiem Mass)*

This original and haunting setting of familiar words is arranged for equal voices in six parts. Sparkhall explains that the work “*reflects on the near-death visions of Julian of Norwich by juxtaposing the ethereal qualities of some contemporary sacred music with the music we know would have been familiar to Julian and her contemporaries. Using the original plainchant Lux Aeterna melody...as an intonation...I have attempted to reimagine the sounds associated with Julian’s 14th century voice in the 21st century.*”

The elusive, shimmering chromaticism of the piano accompaniment creates a musical cloud of light and mysticism, against which the chant-like melodies stand in sharp relief.

Stabat Mater

Will Todd (b.1970)

*Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat Filius.
Stabat Mater lacrimosa.*

*O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti.
Stabat Mater lacrimosa.*

*Quis non posset contristari
Christi Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?
Stabat Mater lacrimosa.*

*At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to her Son to the last.*

*O how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother, highly blest,
Of the sole-begotten One.*

*Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother’s pain untold?*

(Stabat Mater C13 trans Edward Caswall, 1814-1878)

Will Todd has previously successfully blended classical and jazz idioms in his *Mass in Blue* and the same approach is evident here, in this darkly expressive extract from his *Passion Music*. It begins *a cappella* with sustained close harmony, full of crunching discord but gentle in dynamic. When the piano enters with a rippling, bluesy *arpeggio* figure it transforms the musical landscape and provides an almost startling combination of lyrical jazz and stately, almost hymn-like declamation. As the mood intensifies, a soprano solo enters, soaring above the choral and piano texture to paint the sky, and draw the hymn to a quietly contemplative close.

Todd has dedicated this piece “*to inspirational mothers Mary, Jean and Iris*”.

Miserere Mei, Deus

Gregorio Allegri (c1582-1652)

Miserere mei, Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.

Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.

Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.

Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco: et peccatum meum contra me est semper.

Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris.

Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum: et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.

Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti: incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.

Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor: lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.

Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam: et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.

Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis: et omnes iniquitates meas dele.

Cor mundum crea in me, Deus: et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.

Ne proicias me a facie tua: et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.

Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui: et spiritu principali confirma me.

Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus: cor contritum, et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.

Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion: ut aedificentur muri Ierusalem.

Tunc acceptabis sacrificium iustitiae, oblationes, et holocausta: tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.

*Have mercy upon me, O God: after Thy great goodness.
 According to the multitude of Thy mercies, do away mine offences.
 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.
 For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me.
 Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that Thou mightest
 be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou art judged.
 Behold, I was shapen in wickedness: and in sin hath my mother conceived me.
 But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts: and shalt make me to understand
 wisdom secretly.
 Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me, and I
 shall be whiter than snow.
 Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast
 broken may rejoice.
 Turn Thy face from my sins: and put out all my misdeeds.*

*Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.
 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt
 Thou not despise.*

*O be favourable and gracious unto Sion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.
 Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-
 offerings and oblations: then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.*

(1662 Book of Common Prayer)

There are various myths attaching to this famous setting of Psalm 51, and a catalogue of errors and accidents happening on its journey from 17th century Vatican to the concert halls of today. The alternating choirs of 4 and 5 parts respectively, interspersed by plainsong, give it the sense of rolling on in eternal supplication, with repeated glimpses of heaven in the soaring top Cs. These latter were quite possibly introduced in error in the 19th century when a transcription by Felix Mendelssohn was misinterpreted. But hey! Would we want to lose them now? *(If you are interested in find out out more, this website is recommended:*

earlymusicsources.com/youtube/falsobordone).

Crux Fidelis

Sarah MacDonald (b.1968)

*Crux fidelis**Eclipse at midnight - it was dark before sunset at Easter -**Blindness on the dawn -**Faint star of Bethlehem gone down, gone down!**Crux fidelis**His harmlesse hands unto the Crosse they nailde,**Between two thieves, unpitied, unbewailde,**With sharpest pangs and terrors thus appailde,**Crux fidelis**To know just how he suffered would be dear -**To know if any Human eyes were near**To whom he could entrust his wav'ring gaze**Until it settle broad on Paradise.**Crux fidelis**'Remember me, remember me,' implored the thief!**Sunset at Easter - A Guest in Paradise,**Crux fidelis**in Paradise!**(From Pangué lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis, attrib. Venantius Fortunatus, C6)*

Like the earlier setting of these words, MacDonald's exquisite and original *Crux Fidelis* uses the simple familiar Latin phrase "faithful cross" as what she terms a "mantra-like repetition", but here it serves also to link poetic meditations by two very different writers on the meaning and significance of the cross itself. As MacDonald explains, the words of Emilia Lanier (1569-1645) and Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) "tell the story of the cross...from the point of view of the thief, and of an observer".

Rising and descending scales, with matching undulation of dynamic, are ever supported by the slow, relentless reiterations of "crux fidelis". The piece draws to an exhausted but optimistic resolution with a gently rising motif on the final reiteration of "in Paradise".

God So Loved the World

John Stainer (1840-1901)

*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
That whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world;
But that the world through him might be saved.
God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
That whoso believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)*

John Stainer was very busy chap - organist, examiner, committee member, teacher - all of which activities took time away from composition, and little of his output is performed now. He was himself somewhat dismissive of his own work, but this deservedly beloved short anthem has an emotional directness that is skilfully channelled through deceptively simple melodic lines and harmonic progressions. The gentle but intense and urgent *crescendo* towards climax on “*should not perish but have everlasting life*” feels like the sun breaking through and illuminating a gorgeous stained glass window in church. The final repetition of the opening phrase evokes deep, refreshing peace - and all through the purest of perfect major key cadences.

Requiem

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)

Introit

*Requiem æternam dona eis Domine.
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion,
Et tibi redetur votum in Ierusalem.
Exaudi orationem meam
Ad te omnis caro veniet.*

*Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord,
And let light perpetual shine upon them.
It is proper to sing Thee hymns, O God, in Sion,
And prayer shall be offered to Thee in Jerusalem.
Give ear to what I say,
Unto Thee shall all flesh come.*

Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison
 Christe eleison
 Kyrie eleison

Lord have mercy
 Christ have mercy
 Lord have mercy.

Domine Jesu Christe

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex Gloriæ,
 Libera animas omnes fidelium defunctorum
 De pœnis inferni, et de profundo lacu,
 Libera eis de ore leonis,
 Ne absorbeat eas tartarus,
 Ne cadant in obscurum.
 Sed signifer Sanctus Michael
 Repræsentet eas in lucem sanctam,
 Quam olim Abrahæ promisisti, et semini eius.
 Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus,
 Tu suscipe pro animabus illis,
 Quarum hodie memoriam facimus:
 Fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam.

Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory,
 Deliver the souls of all the faithful departed
 From punishments of hell and from the bottomless pit.
 Deliver them from the mouth of the lion,
 And let not Tartarus swallow them up
 Nor let them fall into darkness.
 But let St Michael, the standard-bearer,
 Bring them back again into the holy light
 That Thou hast promised once to Abraham and his seed.
 We offer unto Thee praises with sacrifices and prayers.
 Do Thou accept them for those souls
 Whose memory we keep today.
 Grant them O Lord, to pass from death to life.

Sanctus and Benedictus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
 Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
 Pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria tua.
 Hosanna in excelsis.
 Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
 Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
 Lord God of Hosts
 Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory,
 Hosanna in the highest.

Pie Jesu

Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.

Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Merciful Jesus, Lord, grant them rest.

Merciful Jesus, Lord, grant them everlasting rest.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Dona eis requiem sempiternam.

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Grant them rest.*

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
Grant them everlasting rest.*

Lux æterna

Lux æterna Luceat eis, Domine,

Cum sanctis tuis in æternum,

Quia pius es.

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine,

Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Let light eternal shine upon them, O Lord,
With Thy saints for ever and ever,
For Thou are merciful.*

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Libera me

Libera me, Domine, de morte æternam,

In die illa tremenda:

Quando cœli movendi sunt et terra;

Dum veneris judicare sæculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo,

Dum discussio venerit,

Atque ventura ira.

Dies illa, dies iræ, calamitatis et miseræ,

Dies magna et amara valde.

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine:

Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Deliver me, O Lord, from everlasting death,
On that day when all must tremble,
When the heavens and earth are to be moved,
When Thou shalt come to judge the age by fire.
I am made to tremble, and I am frightened
When the day of reckoning shall come
And the approaching wrath.*

That day, a day of wrath, calamity and misery,

*A great and very bitter day.
Eternal rest grant them, O Lord,
And let light perpetual shine upon them.*

In paradisum

*In Paradisum deducant te Angeli:
In tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres,
Et perducant te in civitatem sanctam, Ierusalem.
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,
Et cum Lazaro quondam paupere
Æternam habeas requiem.*

*May angels lead thee to paradise,
At they coming the martyrs take thee,
And bring thee through into the
Holy city of Jerusalem.
May the choir of angels take thee,
And with Lazarus, once a beggar,
Mayst thou have eternal rest.
(Latin Requiem Mass)*

Durufié's *Requiem* was composed in 1947 (revised 1961) and dedicated to his father. The guiding principle is the Gregorian plainchant of the original Latin mass, and these plainsong themes are evident throughout and in every movement, but Durufié embeds them in a richly chromatic harmonic texture, as the organ weaves a deeply atmospheric cloud of music around the sung melodies. The overall focus is on forgiveness and redemption, both gentle and affirmative, with moments of explosive, passionate drama either side of the *Pie Jesu*, which itself feels like the central still point.

The structure of the *Requiem* as a whole resembles an arc - beginning in quiet mystery, exploding into drama, then poised at the centre for a moment before erupting again into storm and eventually subsiding into gentle peace.

Beginning in mysterious mood and with voices in unison, gradually the complexity develops through the *Introit* and *Kyrie*. *Domine Jesu Christe*

also begins in quiet mystery but it erupts into high drama with increasing urgency throughout the repeated and ever-climbing “*Libera eas*”, subsiding gradually for the entry of the baritone soloist. The drama ebbs and flows more gently through the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, leading to the shimmering pivotal moment of the whole. This is the *Pie Jesu* which, as in Fauré’s version, is set for mezzo-soprano soloist. It comprises one long gentle undulation towards climax at “*Dona eis requiem*”, then *calmando poco a poco* to the end. The *Agnus Dei* introduces a fresh rippling effect in the organ underneath the *legato* alto line opening, until gradually all parts join in and the constant babbling brook carries all to a gentle close. *Lux Aeterna*, which follows, embodies a meditative calm, as if the brook has at length flowed into a deep, still pool. *Libera me, Domine*, like *Domine Jesu Christe* earlier, seems to encompass the whole of the drama in itself. Including baritone solo, it moves from mystery to drama, to exaltation, to meditation. The closing movement *In Paradisum* feels like one long, gentle cadence, a final, beatific and peaceful *Amen*. Or, as Andrew McGregor puts it beautifully, “*The opening chords form an ethereal mist from which the sopranos emerge, finally at peace. The sensuous chords of the full choir add to the spiritual tranquillity, and the last chord, an unresolved dominant ninth, evaporates into eternity.*”

The Nantwich Singers
Musical Director: Ian Crawford

Soprano

Barbara Arch
Lyn Bright
Katie Jankinson
Annabel Nielsen
Katy Robinson
Kathryn Skerratt

Alto

Jan Campbell
Rachel Duerden
Gilly Liebeck
Anne-Marie Naylor
Rachael Parkinson
Marjorie Seddon

Tenor

Michael Booth
John Duthie
William Hall
Liam Tyler-Murphy

Bass

David Burrowes
Quentin Duerden
David Guest
Oliver Rowland

Ian Crawford is Musical Director of Nantwich Singers. Ian grew up in London and was educated at Christ Church, Oxford. He regularly works with choirs and ensembles across the North West; recent highlights include Bach's *St John Passion* with 18th Century Sinfonia, Finzi's *In Terra Pax* with Northern Chamber Orchestra and Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. Ian's compositions are published by Oxford University Press, Novello and through his own website: www.redscarfmusic.co.uk. His *Sussex Carol* (pub. OUP) was selected as an Editors' Choice by J.W. Pepper in 2018 and was featured last Christmas on BBC television. Ian is currently Director of Music at The King's School in Macclesfield.

Tim Sagar held a choral and organ award at Magdalene College, Cambridge, reading Classics to pass the time between Evensongs. He also studied the piano with Martin Roscoe. Tim has played in many cathedrals, at the Royal Albert Hall, for Classic FM and for BBC Songs of Praise. He was Director of Music at Newcastle under Lyme School from 2005-2023, recently conducting *Into the Woods* and *Les Misérables* with their full orchestrations, and where he led singers through works such as Duruflé Requiem and Vierne Messe Solennelle, and on to Cambridge choral awards success. Tim is also Assistant Organist at St Mary's Collegiate Church, Stafford, Accompanist to Shifnal Chorale, and in demand as an arranger, accompanist and theatrical musician.

New Singers - Join us!

We are always pleased to hear from singers of any voice parts who are interested in joining us. It is important to have some experience of singing choral music and to be a reasonably good sight reader. Commitment to a challenging and wide-ranging repertoire is essential. We rehearse every Tuesday during term time between 7.30 and 9pm at St Mary's Church, Nantwich. For a short, informal audition with our musical director, please contact us via our website www.thenantwichsingers.org.

Forthcoming events

Summer concerts on the theme of *Voyages*

Sunday 20th July 3pm at **St Peter's Congleton**

Thursday 24th July 12.30pm at **St Mary's Nantwich**

Sound and video recording by the audience is prohibited.

Thank you.