

Guildford Borough Council
Concerts 1978/79

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Guildford
Philharmonic
Orchestra

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL

SATURDAY 3rd MARCH 1979
at 7.30 p.m.

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL

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Dean and Chapter)

Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra

PROTEUS CHOIR

MICHAEL RIPPON

Conductor:
VERNON HANDLEY

This performance is promoted by Guildford Borough Council with financial assistance from the South East Arts Association.

Michael Rippon – Baritone

Michael Rippon has gained recognition through the variety and versatility of his vocal achievements, singing both lyrical and buffo roles on the operatic stage, and both modern and classical music in recitals, broadcasts and on the concert platform. Born in Coventry, he gained a choral scholarship to St. John's College, Cambridge, and then studied for three years at the Royal Academy of Music.

As a concert and oratorio singer, Michael Rippon sings for all the major societies throughout Britain, and he has appeared at most of the leading British Festivals (Edinburgh, Bath, Leeds, City of London, English Bach Festival, Three Choirs Festival, Aldeburgh, Windsor etc.). He has worked with many leading orchestras, both in this country and on the continent.

Michael Rippon records extensively for the BBC, singing in both radio and television operas, recitals, and concerts and he appears regularly at the BBC Promenade Concerts. He records for EMI, Decca, Pye, and Music for Pleasure. The Deutsche Grammophon recording of Purcell's "Ode to St. Caecilia" received particular acclaim. More recently he has recorded Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast", and Holst's "The Wandering Scholar", a programme of music by Kurt Weill, Mozart's "Requiem" and "Mass in C Minor" and Mathias' "Ode to Joy".

This season he records operas by Kurt Weill for Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt and also for BBC Radio 3. He will also take part in a European tour with "The Fires of London".

Michael Rippon appeared in Guildford Civic Hall with Vernon Handley and the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra in 1971 in a performance of Verdi's "Requiem".

Vernon Handley

Vernon Handley was born in Enfield, North London, and he studied at Balliol College, Oxford, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He is now one of the busiest British conductors, working regularly with all major London and regional Orchestras.

Since 1962 he has been Musical Director to the Municipality of Guildford where he has developed the Guildford Philharmonic into a professional body of major importance, and he conducts the Proteus Choir with singers all aged under thirty, as well as the larger Philharmonic Choir. He has made several records with both the Orchestra and Choirs.

In the recording field, he has currently over a dozen recordings in the catalogue for four major recording companies and with a repertoire ranging from Finzi, Vaughan Williams and Tippett to Tchaikovsky, Faure and Saint-Saens. Recently released is Dvorak's 'New World' Symphony with the Philharmonia on the new Enigma label, various modern pieces on the Lyrita label, and for Thames TV he recently recorded Vaughan Williams's ballet Job with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

His future schedule includes concerts with the LPO, Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and with most of the major regional orchestras. He will be making further recordings for Enigma, Lyrita and Classics for Pleasure, and will also be working with the BBC Northern and Welsh Symphony Orchestras.

In spite of his crowded schedule, Vernon Handley still manages to escape to his Gloucestershire home for a period every year to work on enlarging his already immense repertoire and to follow his keen interest in ornithology.

Proteus Choir

The Proteus Choir, which numbers 70 young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty, was formed in 1963 as an additional choir in the Guildford music scheme where young people could gain experience in choral work. In its ranks are trained musicians and singers, as well as young people still at school, or in the professions. The Proteus Choir gives a number of unaccompanied concerts each year, both secular and religious, as well as singing major choral works with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra. The Choir has appeared on television, recorded background music for a production at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre and

visited Germany to make a record of English music for Cologne Radio.

Because of Mr. Handley's commitments with the London Orchestras, Provincial Orchestras and the BBC, a team of chorus trainers and accompanists work with the Choir to produce each of the concerts. The Musical Director acknowledges with thanks the help he has received from Kenneth Lank, accompanist Patricia Wood and the team who assisted with sectional rehearsals.

Cantata No.82: Ich Habe Genug Bach 1685-1750

Bach was largely responsible for the form by which we now know the Cantata – a work for chorus, or several solo voices, not unlike a short oratorio. However, in the 17th century the term mainly applied to an elaborate vocal solo, complete with recitatives and arias, sometimes with an *obbligato* instrument, which was very popular at that time in cultured Italian circles.

As well as his work at the Thomasschule, Bach was expected to direct the music of Leipzig's two main churches, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas. These choirs were composed largely of students from the Thomasschule, and often the average number of voices available for a 4-part chorus was only twelve. With such material it is not surprising that Bach sometimes reverted to the older form of solo cantata. This was even more useful since his own home was often visited by touring Italian singers, whose voices were regularly joined with that of his wife.

During the 1730's the poor state of the choir led to a number of these solo cantatas, some of them making special demands on the interpretative imagination of the singer.

Ich habe genug was composed for the Purification of Mary, and scored for bass voice with an elaborate oboe *obbligato*. It is concerned with the heavenly home-sickness of the old man, who is already reaching the nearness of death in which earthly things are losing significance. The orchestra seems to look forward with joy to his release from earth during the first song, further emphasised by the arabesques of the solo oboe.

The main aria is in the nature of a death-

lullaby: "Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen; fallet sanst und selig zu" ("Slumber now, my weary eyes; close softly and contentedly."). At the end the singer reaches an ecstasy of joyful anticipation with the aria "Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod." ("I rejoice in my death").

It seems probable that this Cantata was originally composed about 1713. Bach wrote the "Schlummert ein" aria into his wife's *Klavierbuchlein* in 1725, even before transcribing the Cantata for soprano, presumably for her to sing.

Denby Richards.

"Take him, earth"

Howells b.1892

Herbert Howells was commissioned officially by Washington to write the Motet "Take him, earth" on the first anniversary of the tragic death of President John F. Kennedy for performance in Washington Cathedral. It was given its first English performance in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, immediately after that in Washington, and then by Sir David Willcocks in Cambridge University and recorded by him.

Dr. Howells had originally set the poem in its Latin version (by Prudentius A.D.400) but the commissioned version is in English.

The Motet makes great use of sub-divisions within the sections of the chorus, though some parts of it are in straight forward four part harmony. At times, the alto voices will move in thirds through the texture created by the rest of the choir, at times the basses or tenors. At the end, where the basses set a funeral march rhythm, the chorus divides into eight parts. This deeply felt work is another example of music which, although commissioned, proceeds from sincerity of a composer working in his most characteristic language.

"Forgive the Sleeping Man"

Variations on a Theme

Anthony Scott b.1911

'Forgive the Sleeping Man' is a theme which inspired several of Valentine Ackland's poems. Recurring over the years, they eventually formed a unified sequence entitled, temptingly for a musician, 'Variations on a Theme!'

The poems awaken echoes from the past: obli-

quely from the Cradle Songs of Tennyson & Blake, from Fletcher's 'Come Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving/Lock me in delight awhile:' more directly from Macbeth 'Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care' and more distantly from the words of committal at the Burial Service in her poem 'Man has not many days, and here in sunlight/Lies he sleeping'.

Although difficult to define, the mysterious reality underlying the poetic symbolism was released to me in the search for musical expression.

A variational technique seemed an inevitable challenge, but not a formal set of variations for poems so un-formal and diverse. A six note figure falling and rising in short steps, suggested by the phrase 'Forgive the Sleeping Man' is heard (altos and sopranos) in the short choral introduction using the words which conclude the last poem to give symmetrical balance to the outer movements and the theme used to generate the music of each movement.

Architecturally the third movement, the apex of a pyramid reaching to the lines 'of a summer/Whose brief, immediate radiance' is flanked by 11 and IV pianissimo movements reflecting on 'Man has not many days' and 'The Man who sleeps whose Soul has fled' and framed between 1 and V where the Baritone sings of the earthly state and suffering of the Sleeping Man and asks forgiveness for his condition.

The whole is enclosed by the wings of the opening introduction and the march-like last section where forgiveness is vehemently implored - 'Forgive the Sleepers, Lord! Thou didst so make them./Receive them . . . Movements 111 to the end are performed without a break.

Anthony Scott.

Vetrata di Chiesa -

Church Windows or Impressions for Orchestra

Respighi 1879-1936

As this year is the centenary of Respighi's birth, one can expect many performances of the tone poems which drew on aspects of life in Rome and which established Respighi world

wide. The Fountains, the Pines and the Festivals of that city are glorious and colourful orchestral essays, but touch the deeper side of Respighi's character only occasionally. Two less often played orchestral works – the Brazilian Impressions and Vetrata di chiesai show respectively the more delicate and serious sides of the composer's personality. Of them all, Church Windows is the least performed, perhaps because of its determined use in two movements of uneven metres (not beloved of European conductors) perhaps because of its overall serious nature. Yet in some ways it is the most symphonic in design of any of the composer's larger works, and because of its sonorities and subject matter particularly suitable for Cathedral performance. Speaking symphonically, the lay-out of the movements gives us two slow movements, one restlessly so, the beginning, the other full of nobility at the end. A violent scherzo as the second movement, and a particularly tender slow movement between the scherzo and the finale. Still speaking symphonically, each movement has a version of 'scotch snap' (short note followed by long note) which is the first sound that we hear on the clarinet in the first movement. All except the scherzo share repeated note motifs.

All four pictures are religious events depicted in stained glass windows in various churches in Italy.

I. La Fuga in Egitto (The Flight in Egypt).

The clarinet, accompanied by dragging repeated notes in the strings announces a meandering tune starting with the 'Scotch snap' already mentioned and reintroducing it at several points in the melody. The cellos take the tune up and eventually pass it to the violins. Fragments of the tune always with its dragging accompaniment are heard in the different colours of the orchestra and the painful procession goes on. The mood is shattered by the second impression.

II. S. Michele Arcangelo (St. Michael Archangel).

Swirling triplets as an accompaniment against a loud motif from the brass, bassoons and oboes containing a short note followed by a long note depict the Archangel driving rebellious angels from heaven. Where the first movement was meandering, this is purposeful. The triplets which started the accompaniment are carried on almost without a break throughout the

Scherzo. They are halted only for three pages of full score which might formally be called a trio except that its unearthly accompaniment to the trumpet solo destroys any idea of form. The Scherzo resumes at first pianissimo but eventually finishing with an even more towering rage than it began. The last triple forte note on the gong being allowed to vibrate lunghissima.

III. Il Mattutino di Santa Chiara (The Matin of St. Clare).

In complete contrast the repeated notes of the second violins in 5/4 introduce an expressive melody on the flute containing in the third bar the little 'scotch snap', now upside down. This is a gentle picture of the 13th Century saint who is the centre of the legend of miraculous transportation to a small church to join in the Matin service must undoubtedly be a well loved figure in Italian church lore. All instruments are given fragments of the tune and a modest climax is reached after a part of the tune is put before us on different woodwind instruments in quick succession. The whole melody returns on the flute and the cellos and the 'scotch snap' reappears poignantly to close the movement.

IV. S. Gregorio Magno (St. Gregory the Great).

Three very quiet phrases, each moving towards a pause, establish the seriousness of this movement. These three phrases are an introduction to the movement proper which then proceeds on the full orchestra but pianissimo. The horns are given a noble chorale accompanied by quiet phrases in contrary motion on the strings and woodwind. This is succeeded by a more glowing section where the strings have the tune but a further chorale is given to horns and woodwind in canon. When the first mighty climax is reached, this chorale is stated against the repeated notes of the first movement and the slowed down triplets of the second. The masses are present and it remains only for St. Gregory to bless them. This he does on the full organ which arrives when the noise of the full orchestra is at its height. The orchestra takes up the solemn crotchets of the organ, carries the tempo forward triumphantly at a slightly faster rate and eventually comes to rest on a bar of indeterminate length in which violins, violas and cellos mutter the repeated note rhythm. After this, the opening phrase of the movement returns and the great *lento*, one of the greatest sounds in orchestra literature, closes the work.

“GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC ON THE MOVE”

This week has also seen the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra performing in the South East Region with a Concert in the Woodville Hall, Gravesend. This was the third occasion that the Orchestra had appeared in Gravesend and because of the success of these Concerts it is hoped that a regular series of Concerts will be launched next season in which the Guildford Philharmonic will be a prominent feature.

The Concert comprised of music by Mozart, Beethoven, Butterworth and Dvorak with the brilliant young British pianist Andrew Haigh as soloist in Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. The large audience gave a warm and enthusiastic reception for the Orchestra's performance and we look forward very much to our next visit to Gravesend.

Now that the Orchestra is establishing itself as the regional orchestra of the South East it is also visiting certain venues on a regular basis, one of these being Folkestone. Folkestone's classical concert series for 1979/80 at the Leas Cliff Hall consists of eight concerts, with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra appearing twice. April 12th sees the opening concert of the season when the Guildford Orchestra with Vernon Handley conducting will be joined by the distinguished British pianist John Lill who will perform Rachmaninov's 3rd Piano Concerto. Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" and Borodin's 2nd Symphony will also be included in this concert. May 5th and 6th sees the Guildford Philharmonic appearing in Eastbourne and Ashford, performing Rachmaninov's 2nd Symphony and the soloist in Beethoven's first and third Piano Concertos will be the Hungarian born pianist Peter Frankl.

SUNDAY 18 MARCH 1979
at 3 p.m.

Mass in B.minor – Bach
Helen Walker – Soprano
Susan Kessler – Mezzo Soprano
Adrian Thompson – Tenor
Stephen Varcoe – Baritone
Philharmonic Choir
Vernon Handley

SATURDAY 7 APRIL
at 7.45 p.m.

Overture 'Othello – Dvorak
Fugal Concerto for Flute, Oboe and Strings
– Holst
Symphony No.2 in E.minor – Rachmaninov
Henry Messent – Flute
James Brown – Oboe
Vernon Handley