

Verdi Requiem



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GLC ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
London SE1 8XX

Monday 18th March 1985
at 7.30 pm

Verdi Requiem

Jo Ann Pickens
Jean Rigby
Stuart Kale
Donnie Ray Albert

Goldsmiths Choral Union
Guildford Philharmonic Choir
Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra

Brian Wright conductor



Promoted by Goldsmiths Choral Union
Concert Management:
Norman McCann International Artists Ltd
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Programme: 50p

Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi was born on October 10th, 1813, in the village of Le Roncole in northern Italy, where his parents ran the local inn. He was taught to read by the local priest and learnt music from the village organist. He showed an early aptitude for music and when he was eight his father bought him a spinet. At the age of ten Verdi went to school in the neighbouring town of Busseto, where he got to know the founder of the Philharmonic Society. He studied with the director of the society and by the age of sixteen was often deputising for him at church, as well as playing in his own village and beginning to compose. Verdi was sent to study in Milan, but being rejected by the Conservatory, went to study for three years under the director of La Scala. Later he returned to his home town as Director of the Philharmonic Society and the church and married a local girl. In November 1839 his first opera, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio* was performed at La Scala. It was such a success that the impresario Merelli contracted him to write three more. But after this successful start, Verdi's life went sour. His first two children died less than a year old, and in June 1840 his wife Margherita herself died.

Heartbroken, Verdi returned home from Milan. Two months later his new opera *Un Giorno di Regno* was hissed by the public and damned by the critics. Verdi said then that he would never compose again.

However, a chance meeting with Merelli enabled the latter to persuade Verdi to change his mind and set to music a libretto by Solera. The resulting opera, *Nabucco*, first performed in March 1842, was a resounding triumph. As Verdi himself said, "With this opera my artistic career may be said to have begun". His identification with Italian nationalism had also begun as the Milanese audience identified with the oppressed Jews under the Babylonian rule of Nebuchadnezzar. Verdi's next opera, *I Lombardi*, was more overtly nationalist, with the Saracens — against whom the crusading Lombards defended the Holy Land — being readily identified with the ruling Austrians. At the first night, in February 1843, the response

was so enthusiastic that the police were powerless to prevent encores - forbidden because of their potential as nationalist demonstrations. After *Nabucco* Verdi always had as many commissions as he wanted, and the ensuing period was highly productive. He wrote *Ernani*, *I Due Foscari*, *Giovanna d'Arce*, *Alzira* and *Macbeth*, his greatest success to date.

After the toppling of King Louis Philippe in France in 1848 the republican movement in Italy took heart. Venice declared itself a Republic, and barricades went up in Milan, although the city's leaders, much to Verdi's annoyance, refused either to declare a Republic or be annexed to Piedmont. In response to the new mood, Verdi wrote the nationalist opera, *La Battaglia di Legnano* which was greeted with wild enthusiasm when it was performed in Rome in January 1849, shortly before Rome was declared a Republic.

It was his next opera which marked a turning-point in his career. *Rigoletto*, first performed in Venice in March 1851, was a new departure. Verdi broke new ground, especially in the Third Act, by abandoning the operatic tradition of set pieces linked by recitative, and making the scene as a whole, rather than the aria, the most important musical unit. *Rigoletto* was a triumph, and Rossini said that "in this music I at last recognise Verdi's genius". Verdi followed this with more big successes, notably *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, as well as *The Sicilian Vespers*, *Simon Boccanegra* and *Un Ballo in Maschera*. When Parma voted in a plebiscite for union with Piedmont, Verdi was elected by his home town, Busseto, as its delegate to the Assembly. He was also elected to the new Italian parliament, but, although he remained a member until 1865, he took little part, concentrating instead on his writing. *Forza del Destino* was well received at its première in St. Petersburg in November 1862, although *Don Carlos*, first performed in 1867, was not so successful.

From now on, however, Verdi became increasingly depressed at the death of many of his old friends and collaborators. In

November 1868 Rossini died, and Verdi was angry at the failure of his efforts to organise a Requiem Mass made up of contributions from various composers. He nevertheless went on writing, and on Christmas Eve 1871 *Aida* was first performed at the new Cairo Opera House. It was in this period that Verdi wrote his *Requiem Mass*. He also produced *Otello* and his last, and only truly comic opera, *Falstaff*, which was performed at La Scala in February 1893. After that Verdi wrote little. His health declined towards the end of 1897, and he died on January 1901.

In his attitude to life Verdi was essentially negative. In a letter to the Countess Maffei after the première of *Il Trovatore* in January 1853, he wrote: "People say the opera is too sad, and that there are too many deaths in it. But, after all, death is all there is in life. What else is there?" There is something

paradoxical in this because Verdi, unlike many other great musicians, had many advantages — notably recognition and adulation in his own lifetime — early enough to allow him to enjoy the material fruits of his success and to compose free from financial constraints. Part of the reason for his gloomy outlook almost certainly lay in the premature death of his first wife and their two children. In later life, the death of so many friends and collaborators undoubtedly deeply affected him, so much so that by 1883 he was able to write, "My years are really beginning to be too many, I think ... life is such a stupid thing, and, what is worse, a pointless thing. What do we do? What shall we do? Taking it all together, there is only one answer, humiliating, and extremely sad: NOTHING!" But Verdi's music, even when at its most tragic, belies that sentiment.

Requiem Mass

Verdi was not a religious man. As his last librettist, Boito, wrote of him, "He lost his belief early, like all of us, but he retained, more than the rest of us perhaps, a regret for it all his life." Although he wrote little sacred music, Verdi was on two occasions moved by specific events to set to music the words of the Requiem Mass. The first time was on the death of Rossini in 1868. Verdi arranged for various composers to write sections of the Mass and, although the intended performance in Rossini's native Bologna never took place because of the failure to find a suitable chorus or orchestra, the Mass was written and Verdi's contribution to it was the final movement, the "Libera Me". The second occasion was the death in May 1873 of the Italian poet and novelist, Alessandro Manzoni, whom Verdi revered and whose death affected him so much he could not bring himself to attend the funeral. He did, however,

persuade the Mayor and Council of Milan to pay for the first performance of a Requiem Mass which he would compose. He had of course already written a "Libera Me", which itself contained themes for the opening movement and the "Dies Irae". This earlier composition found its way into the new Mass, which was first performed in the Church of San Marco in Milan on the first anniversary of Manzoni's death, on May 22nd, 1874. The scale of the work is such that it is undoubtedly better suited to the concert hall than the church, but it would be wrong to infer from its large scale and operatic character any lack of sincerity on Verdi's part. As his second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi, said, "I say that a man like Verdi must write like Verdi, that is, according to his own way of feeling and interpreting the text". The result is a work whose power and popularity have never faded.

Text of the Mass

Requiem & Kyrie

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine
et lux perpetua luceat eis, Te decet
hymnus, Deus, in Sion et tibi reddetur
votum in Jerusalem. Exaudi orationem
meam, ad te omnis caro veniet.

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison.

Grant them, Lord, eternal rest and may
perpetual light shine upon them.
Thou O God art praised in Sion and
unto Thee shall the vow be performed
in Jerusalem: O hear my prayer,
unto Thee shall all flesh come.

Lord have mercy upon us
Christ have mercy upon us
Lord have mercy upon us.

Dies Irae

Dies irae, dies illa,
solvat saeculum in favilla
teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
quando iudex est venturus,
cuncta stricte discussurus!

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
per sepulchra regionum
coget omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit et natura
cum resurget creatura
judicanti responsura.

Liber scriptus proferetur
in quo totum continetur,
unde mundus iudicetur.

Judex ergo cum sedebit,
quidquid latet apparebit:
nil inultum remanebit.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus,
cum vix justus sit securus?

Rex tremendae majestatis,
qui salvandos salvas gratis:
salva me, fons pietatis.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
quod sum causa tuae viae:
ne me perdas illa die.

Quaerens me, sedisti lassus,
redemisti crucem passus,
tantus labor non sit cassus.

Juste iudex ultionis,
donum fac remissionis
ante diem rationis.

Day of wrath and doom impending,
David's word with Sibyl's blending:
Heaven and earth in ashes ending.

Oh, what fear man's bosom rendeth,
When from heaven the judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth!

Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth,
Through earth's sepulchres it ringeth,
All before the throne it bringeth.

Death is struck, and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking,
To its judge an answer making.

Lo! the book exactly worded,
Wherein all hath been recorded,
Thence shall judgement be awarded.

When the judge his seat attaineth,
And each hidden dead arraigneth,
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

What shall I, frail man, be pleading?
Who for me be interceding,
When the just are mercy needing?

King of majesty tremendous,
Who does free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us.

Think, kind Jesus, my salvation
Cause Thy wondrous Incarnation:
Leave me not to reprobation.

Faint and weary Thou hast sought me:
On the Cross of suffering bought me:
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?

Righteous judge, for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution
Ere that day of retribution.

Ingemisco tamquam reus,
culpa rubet vultus meus,
supplicanti parce, Deus.

Qui Mariam absolvisti
et latronem exaudisti,
mihi quoque spem dedisti.

Preces meae non sunt dignae
sed tu, bonus, fac benigne,
ne perenni cremer igne.

Inter oves locum praesta,
et ab haedis me sequestra,
statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,
flammis acribus addictis
voca me cum benedictis.

Oro supplex et acclinis,
cor contritum quasi cinis,
gere curam mei finis.

Lacrymosa dies illa
qua resurget ex favilla
judicandus homo reus.
Huic ergo parce, Deus.

Pie Jesu Domine,
dona eis requiem.
Amen.

Guilty, now I pour my moaning:
All my shame with anguish owning:
Spare, O God, Thy suppliant groaning.

Through the sinful Mary shriven,
Through the dying thief forgiven,
Thou to me a hope hast given.

Worthless are my prayers and sighing:
Yet, good Lord, in grace complying:
Rescue me from fires undying.

With Thy sheep a place provide me,
From the goats afar divide me,
To Thy right hand do Thou guide me.

When the wicked are confounded,
Doomed to flames of woe unbounded:
Call me, with Thy Saints surrounded.

Low I kneel, with heart submission,
See, like ashes, my contrition:
Help me in my last condition.

Ah! that day of tears and mourning,
From the dust of earth returning,
Man for judgement must prepare him.
Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.

Lord, all-pitying, Jesus blest,
Grant them Thine eternal rest.
Amen.

Domine Jesu (Offertorium)

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae
libera animas omnium fidelium
defunctorum,
de poenis inferni et de profundo
lacu: libera eas de ore leonis, ne
absorbeat eas tartarus, ne cadant
in obscurum. Sed signifer sanctus
Michael repraesentet eas in lucem
sanctam, quam olim Abrahae
promisisti et semini ejus.

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine,
laudis offerimus Tu suscipe pro
animabus illis quarum hodie
memoriam facimus: fac eas, Domine,
de morte transire ad vitam quam olim
Abrahae promisisti et semini ejus.

Libera animas omnium fidelium
defunctorum de poenis inferni,
fac eas, de morte transire ad vitam.

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
deliver the souls of all the faithful
departed from the pains of hell and
from the deep pit: deliver them from
the jaws of the lion, lest they fall
into the darkness and the black gulf
swallow them up. But let Thy
standardbearer, blessed Michael, bring
them into that holy light, which of old
thou didst promise to Abraham and his seed.

We offer unto Thee, O Lord, this
sacrifice of prayer and praise; do Thou
receive it on behalf of the souls of
those whose memory we this day
recall: make them, O Lord, to pass
from death unto life which of old Thou
didst promise to Abraham and his seed.

Deliver the souls of all the faithful
departed from the pains of hell; make
them to pass from death unto life.

Sanctus

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

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he
that cometh in the name of the Lord.

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 eternal rest.

Lux Aeterna

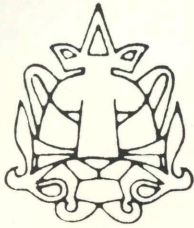
Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia
pius es.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis cum
Sanctis tuis in
aeternum, quia pius es.

Light eternal shine upon them, O Lord.
with Thy Saints for ever, because Thou
art gracious.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord
and let perpetual light shine upon them,
with Thy Saints for ever, because Thou
art gracious.

Libera Me

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna
in die illa tremenda, quando coeli
movendi sunt et terra,
dum veneris iudicare saeculum
per ignem.
Tremens factus sum ego et timeo,
dum discussio venerit atque ventura ira:
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.
Dies irae, dies illa, calamitatis
et miseriae, dies magna at amara
valde.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death
in that awful day, when the heavens
and the earth shall be shaken,
when Thou shalt come to judge the
world by fire.
I am seized by fear and trembling
until the trial shall be at hand, and
the wrath to come: when the
heavens and earth shall be shaken.
That day, a day of wrath, of calamity
and of misery, a great day and
exceeding bitter.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.



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