

performances

presented by  
the Department of Music  
School of Performing Arts

# Peace and Harmony

a musical plea for peace in our time

February 2000

**SATURDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2000 at 7.30 pm**

**GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL**

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**GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR  
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY CHOIR  
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

leader Anne Hullett

**DIANA GILCHRIST soprano**

**GLYN DAVENPORT baritone**

conductors **JEREMY BACKHOUSE & SEBASTIAN FORBES**

**Mars, from The Planets**

**HOLST**

**A Prayer**

**BRIDGE**

**Dies natalis**

**FINZI**

short interval

**Dona nobis pacem**

**VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**

Guildford Philharmonic Choir Officers

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**DIANA GILCHRIST** (soprano) is from Canada and studied in New York and London. Her solo career as a coloratura began in North America with Mozart rôles and concert performances and broadcasts. In 1989 her operatic career took her to Germany (Koblenz, then Mainz). Recent rôles have included *Queen of the Night* in Vienna and Berlin. She continues to enjoy concert work, and she and her husband, Canadian pianist Shelley Katz, appear regularly together in concerts, radio and television. A CD was released in 1999 and more are in preparation.

**GLYN DAVENPORT** (baritone) studied at the Royal College of Music and then in Hamburg. International competition successes included the Kathleen Ferrier Prize. His Wigmore Hall début met with critical acclaim and led to his first stage appearances with Britten's English Opera Group. He has appeared in the UK and Europe particularly in operas by Britten and Henze, and is also active in recital work, especially the Lied, and oratorio in the UK and Europe, in repertoire ranging from Monteverdi to Tippett. His teaching of singing includes Surrey University.

The **GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR** was founded in 1947 by the Borough of Guildford and has worked with Vernon Handley, Sir Charles Groves and Sir David Willcocks (the current President). It is well known in the South East for its performances of the standard repertoire and also for 20th-century English works, with recordings of works by Finzi and Patrick Hadley. Jeremy Backhouse took over the conductorship in January 1995.

**SURREY UNIVERSITY MUSIC DEPARTMENT**, founded in 1970, has always maintained a special interest in the practical side of its activities, with its Symphony Orchestra and University Choir giving annual performances in this Cathedral under their staff conductors, Nicholas Conran and Sebastian Forbes. Tonight's orchestral leader, Anne Hullett, is in her final BMus year and studies violin at the University with Paul Robertson.

**JEREMY BACKHOUSE** (conductor) was Head Chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and then studied Music at Liverpool University. He has worked as Music Editor for the RNIB, and for EMI as Literary Editor and then Consultant Editor, and combines record producing with freelance conducting. Amongst the many orchestras and choirs he conducts is the Vasari Singers, with whom he won the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year Competition in 1988 and has undertaken numerous concerts, broadcasts, and recordings. Particularly high acclaim followed his CDs of the Vaughan Williams *Mass*, and the Howells *Requiem* and Frank Martin *Mass*.

**SEBASTIAN FORBES** (conductor) studied at the Royal Academy of Music and then at Cambridge University. He was a BBC producer (1964-67) before becoming a university lecturer — first at Bangor and from 1972 at Surrey, where he has been Professor of Music since 1981 and, in addition, Director of Music since 1991. His extensive output of compositions — orchestral, chamber, solo instrumental, and choral — goes back to the early 1960s. Among recent works are String Quartet No 4 (for the Medici), Sonata-Rondo for piano (for Jana Frenklova), and *Reflections* for organ (for Margaret Phillips). In progress is Duo-fantasy for clarinet and piano.

## Peace and Harmony a musical plea for peace in our time

The year 2000 is an appropriate moment from which to look back over the last hundred years and consider how artists have sensitively responded to their environment. For us, the century was marked by two World Wars, and the new year by the widespread reading of the *Millennium Resolution*, expressing the hope of peace. Tonight's programme comprises music by four English composers, of the early twentieth century, whose collective vision runs parallel to this theme. The threat of war is constant, of course, but so is man's sincere search for its avoidance and plea for mutual co-operation. Artists, including all poets and composers represented in this programme, are able to offer a further dimension: premonition.

In some ways Holst's style stands apart from the English tradition. His view, 'I only study things that suggest music to me', brought quick response when, in 1913, a friend introduced him to astrology. *Mars, the bringer of war*, completed in draft before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, was aptly described by Richard Capell in 1927 as 'the most ferocious piece in existence' and remains as powerful today.

It was indeed bold of Frank Bridge to choose a text of German origin (Thomas à Kempis, 1380?–1471) in 1916 to express his pacifist beliefs. The result is his only major choral work and suggests that he had all the ability to contribute more fully to our established tradition. *A Prayer* is carefully structured, and within its subtle harmonic idiom we may gain a glimpse of his later, more revolutionary style.

Finzi's loss, at an early age, of his father and three older brothers intensified, for him, the impermanence of human existence. His music is also marked by unusually sensitive response to English texts and his refined writing for strings, enhanced, no doubt, by his experience as a conductor. *Dies natalis*, to words by Thomas Traherne (1636?–74) took time to complete but is fully worthy of its recognition as one of his finest works.

In *Dona nobis pacem*, composed to mark the centenary of the Huddersfield Choral Society, Vaughan Williams anticipated Britten's *A War Requiem* by some 25 years, not least in embodying war poems in the context of words from the Mass. Texts, biblical and otherwise, are drawn from a wide range. The cantata offers an urgent warning in a decade of turbulence as well as a hope for a better life on Earth. Both Holst and Vaughan Williams had long been attracted to the poetry of the American Walt Whitman, whose collection *Drum Taps* (1865), from which the cantata's texts are largely drawn, reflects the Crimean war, as does the "Angel of Death" speech given by John Bright in the House of Commons in 1855. The composer's setting of the Agnus Dei ranges widely from peace to anguish, and the work takes us through the reality of war, a hope for reconciliation, a noble funeral procession, and a positive vision of ultimate peace.

From The Planets, for orchestra

Gustav HOLST  
(1874-1934)

Mars, the bringer of war (1914)

A Prayer (1916), for choir and orchestra

Frank BRIDGE  
(1879-1941)

Grant me Thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me,  
and may labour me, and continue with me to the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that which is most acceptable to Thee,  
and which pleaseth Thee best.

Let Thy will be mine, and let my will always follow Thine  
and agree perfectly therewith.

Grant that I may die to all things in the world, and for Thy sake  
love to be despised and not to be known in this world.

Grant that I may rest in Thee above all things that can be desired,  
and that my heart may be at peace in Thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, Thou art its only rest;  
out of Thee all things are irksome and restless.

In this very peace which is in Thee, the one supreme Eternal God,  
I will sleep and take my rest.

Thomas à Kempis in translation

Dies natalis (1926 & 1938-9), for soprano and strings

Gerald FINZI  
(1901-56)

Intrada: Andante con mot –  
Rhapsody (Recitativo stromentato): Andante con moto  
The Rapture (Danza): Allegro vivace e gioioso  
Wonder (Arioso): Andante  
The Salutation (Aria): Tempo commodo

Intrada

(strings only, leading with a break into Rhapsody)

Rhapsody (Recitativo stromentato)

Will you see the infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? I was a stranger, which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys; my knowledge was Divine. I was entertain'd like an Angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory. Heaven and Earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam than to me. Certainly Adam All appear'd new, and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. All things were spotless and pure and glorious. The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reap'd nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood everlasting to everlasting. The green trees, when I saw them first, transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were strange and wonderful things. O what venerable creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And the young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! I knew not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally. I knew not that they were sins of complaints or law. I dream'd not of poverties, contentions or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. I saw all in the peace of Eden. Everything was at rest, free and immortal.

The Rapture (Danza)

Sweet Infancy!  
O Heavenly Fire! O Sacred Light!  
How Fair and bright!  
How Great am I  
Whom the whol World doth magnify!

O hevenly Joy!  
O Great and Sacred Blessedness  
Which I possess!  
So great a Joy  
Who did irt to my Arms convey

From God above  
Being sent, the Gift doth me enflame  
To praise his Name;  
The stars do mov,  
The Sun doth shine, to shew his Lov.

O how Divine  
Am I! To all this Sacred Wealth,  
This Life and Health,  
Who rais'd? Who mine  
Did make the same! What hand divine!

Wonder (Arioso)

How like an Angel came I down!  
How bright are all things here!  
When first among his Works I did appear  
O how their Glory did me crown!  
The World resembled his ETERNITY,  
In which my Soul did walk;  
And evry thing that I did see  
Did with me talk.

The Skies in their Magnificence,  
The lovely lively Air,  
O how divine, how soft, how sweet,  
how fair!  
The Stars did entertain my Sense;  
And all the Works of God so bright  
and pure,  
So rich and great, did seem,  
As if they ever must endure  
In my Esteem.

A Nativ Health and Innocence  
Within my Bones did grow,  
And while my God did all his Glories  
show  
I felt a vigor in my Sense  
That was all SPIRIT: I within did flow  
With seas of Life like Wine;  
I nothing in the World did know  
But 'twas Divine.

The Salutation (Aria)

These little Limbs,  
These Eys and Hands which here I find,  
This panting Heart wherewith my Life  
begins;  
Where have ye been? Behind  
What Curtain were ye from me hid so  
long!  
Where was, in what Abyss, my new-made  
Tongue?

When silent I  
So many thousand thousand Years  
Beneath the Dust did in a Chaos ly,  
How could I Smiles, or Tears,  
Or Lips, or Hands, or Ears perceiv?  
Welcom ye Treasures which I now receiv.

From Dust I rise,  
And out of nothing now awake;  
These brighter Regions which salute mine Eys  
A Gift from God I take:  
The Earth, the Seas, the Light, the lofty Skies  
The Sun and Stars are mine; if these I prize.

A Stranger here  
Strange things doth meet, strange Glory see,  
Strange Treasures lodg'd in this fair World  
appear,  
Strange all and New to me:  
But that they mine should be who Nothing was,  
That Strangest is all; yet brought to pass.

Thomas Traherne

Cantata: Dona nobis pacem (1936)  
for soprano, baritone, choir and orchestra

Ralph VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS  
(1872-1958)

- I Lento (Soprano and choir) –  
II Allegro moderato (choir) –  
III The Reconciliation: Adantino (baritone and choir; soprano) –  
IV Dirge for Two Veterans: Moderato alla marcia (choir) –  
V L' istesso tempo (soloists and choir)

I        Agnus Dei;  
qui tollis peccata mundi  
Dona nobis pacem.

*O Lamb of God,  
that takest away the sins of the world,  
grant us thy peace.*

II        Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
Through the windows—through the doors—burst like a ruthless force,  
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,  
Into the school where the scholar is studying;  
Let the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,  
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field, or gathering in his grain,  
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;  
Are beds prepared for the sleepers at night in the houses? No sleepers must sleep  
in those beds.  
No bargainers' bargains by day—would they continue?  
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?  
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,  
Let even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,  
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

(Walt Whitman)

III        Reconciliation

World over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly, wash again and ever  
again this soiled world;

For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,  
Beat down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

(Walt Whitman)

IV        Dirge for Two Veterans

The last sunbeam  
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,  
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking  
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and the silent moon.

I see a sad procession,  
And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,  
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding  
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,  
And the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums  
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,  
In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,

Two veterans, son and father, dropped together,  
And the double grave awaits them.

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,  
'Tis the mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing.

O strong dead-march you please me !  
O moor intense with the silvery face you soothe me !  
O my soldiers twain ! O my veterans passing to burial !  
What I have I also give to you.

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.

(Walt Whitman)

V

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old .....to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on.

(John Bright)

Dona nobis pacem

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble !  
The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and they have devoured the land ..... and those that dwell therein.....  
The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.....  
Is there no balm in Gilead?; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

*Jeremiah VIII*

'O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.'  
*Daniel x. 19.*

'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former .....and in this place will I give peace.'

*Haggai II. 9.*

'Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.  
And none shall make them afraid, neither shall the sword go through their land.  
Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.  
Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them.  
Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; and let them hear, and say, it is the truth.  
And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues.  
And they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and they shall declare my glory among the nations.  
For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, so shall seed and your name remain for ever.'

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

*[Adapted from Micah iv. 3, Leviticus xxvi. 6, Psalms lxxxv. 10, and cxviii. 19, Isaiah xliii. 9, and lxvi. 18-22, and Luke ii. 14.]*