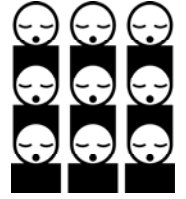


WHITEHALL CHOIR



Photograph of Whitehall Choir at The Banqueting House by Ken Mears

Poulenc Chansons françaises

Ravel Sonatine (piano solo)

Puccini Messa di Gloria

CONDUCTOR **Paul Spicer**

PIANO **James Longford** TENOR **Oliver Johnston**

THE BANQUETING HOUSE Whitehall, London SW1A 2ER
Monday **22 March 2010, 7pm**

Programme: £2

PROGRAMME

Poulenc *Huit chansons françaises*

1. Margoton va t'a l'iau
2. La belle se sied au pied de la tour
3. Pilons l'orge
4. Clic, clac, dansez sabots
5. C'est la petit' fill' du prince
6. La bell' si nous étions
7. Ah! mon beau laboureur
8. Les tisserands

Ravel *Sonatine* (piano – James Longford)

Puccini *Messa di Gloria*
(with Oliver Johnston, tenor)

Supper will be served in the crypt after the concert.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)



A man of sharp contradictions, not least those prompted by the tensions between his homosexuality and Catholic faith, Poulenc developed a lasting reputation as a suave modernist, devoted to the artistic pursuit of stylistic elegance and sophisticated wit. He was born into a wealthy family in Paris, where his father ran a pharmaceutical manufacturing business with his two brothers. The boy's mother, a keen amateur musician, encouraged Francis to learn piano and explore composition at an early age. In 1923, Poulenc made his breakthrough with the ballet score *Les biches*, successfully staged in Monte Carlo by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in January 1924. "I am religious by deepest instinct and by heredity," Poulenc once observed: "I am a Catholic. Nevertheless the gentle indifference of the maternal side of my family had, quite naturally, led to a long fit of forgetfulness of religion".

During his lifetime Poulenc was probably best known for his frivolous piano pieces. His fondness for writing such light-hearted and inconsequential music no doubt stemmed from the incident which he claimed first inspired him to embark on a career as a composer: As a young boy he had put a handful of centimes into a pianola and was utterly captivated by the charms of a piece of typical salon music (by Chabrier) which emanated from the machine. His father, a devout Catholic and wealthy businessman (the family firm of pharmaceutical manufacturers exists today as the massive Rhône Poulenc corporation), wished his son to pursue a traditional musical education, but with his own death in 1917 and Francis's rejection from the Paris Conservatoire the same year the eighteen-year-old Poulenc began to rebel against both the French musical establishment and, to a lesser extent, the Catholic faith. In this he was certainly not dissuaded by his mother, herself an accomplished pianist and an eager Paris socialite. Indeed it was his mother who gave him his earliest music lessons and, apart from some further piano tuition from Ricardo Vines, he received no real formal musical education until, on completing his period of obligatory military service, he was taken on as a composition pupil by Charles Koechlin. It was Koechlin who instructed him on writing for voices and enabled him in 1922 to compose his first choral piece *Chanson à boire*, a setting of an anonymous seventeenth-century text in praise of drink. Scored for four-part male choir this is typical of what might be described as Poulenc's 'hooligan' tendency, degenerating in the final bars into an outrageous imitation of drunkenness

The death of his friend the composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud in a car accident in 1936 effectively revived the vigour of Poulenc's childhood faith. Thereafter, he produced one of the largest and certainly finest outputs of sacred choral music by any French composer since pre-Revolutionary times. Had it not been for that event, Poulenc would doubtless have continued to revel in musical hedonism and frivolity. Ferroud was not only a close friend but, through the concerts he arranged in Paris, an active promoter of Poulenc's music. The horrific nature of his death (he was decapitated in a car crash) and the fact that he was actually a year younger (almost to the day) came as a bitter shock to Poulenc, who a couple of days later set out to visit the shrine of the Black Virgin at Rocamadour, a village in the mountainous region between the Auvergne and the Mediterranean. Abruptly faced with the reality of mortality and searching for some deeper purpose in life Poulenc found it at

Rocamadour in the re-awakening of his Catholic faith, so studiously ignored since the death of his father. His immediate response was to write a sacred choral work (*Litanies à la Vierge Noire*) and from then on choral music formed a central part of his compositional output. Indeed he was to say shortly before his death in 1963: "I think I've put the best and most genuine part of myself into my choral music. If anyone is still interested in my music in fifty years' time, it will be for my choral rather than my piano music." But besides his sacred music Poulenc also enriched the repertoire of secular vocal compositions, touching the sublime with works such as the song-cycle *Tel jour, telle nuit* and the cantata *Figure humaine*. Immediately following his visit to Rocamadour he wrote two further choral works in quick succession, *Petites voix*, a setting of verses by Madeleine Ley for three-part children's voices and *Sept chansons* to surrealist texts. Here is the darker, more serious side of Poulenc with a musical language which at times seems to delve into the depths of desolation. But he was never able fully to shake off the frivolity of his youth, and while there is a much deeper, more serious vein in the music written after 1936, the two very contrasting sides of his personality (a contemporary described him as "part monk, part hooligan") coexist in all his music to a greater or lesser extent.

During the dark years of the Second World War and the Nazi occupation Poulenc remained in Paris but found his own means of resistance through the poems of Paul Éluard, whom he had first met in 1917. Throughout the early years of the occupation Poulenc received hand-printed copies of the poems which make up *Figure humaine*. These became something of an anthem for the Resistance movement. Poulenc was so fired with enthusiasm by Éluard's poetry that he stopped work on everything else to compose a setting which could be performed as soon as France was liberated. He wrote *Figure humaine* in six weeks during the summer of 1943, had it printed in secret, and is said to have taken great pride in displaying a copy of it in his window as the allied troops marched through the streets of Paris. However, its first performance took place in London in January 1945, sung in English; it had to wait until 1947 for its French premiere under the conductor and musicologist Paul Collaer. Before that, though, Poulenc had set more of Éluard's texts in *Un soir de neige*, a chamber cantata for six-part choir. Written mostly on Christmas Day 1944 it reflects what the American scholar Keith Daniel describes as 'both the inner feeling of peace generated by Christmas and the bleak solitude of another winter of occupation in France'. The text may be secular, but for Poulenc there was no sense of division between secular and sacred; everything he did was an expression of religious faith and in his eyes being a Frenchman and being a Catholic were virtually synonymous – his fervent Frenchness and his by now unshakeable faith were one and the same thing.

Poulenc celebrated the end of the war in 1945 with the *Huit chansons françaises* which are being performed tonight, settings of eight short and cheerful French folk-songs. As was the case with one of his musical idols, Stravinsky, Poulenc's arrangements of early music may preserve the original melodies, but they have a uniquely individual harmonic language and musical character. The sheer energy and *joie de vivre* of such earthy songs as 'Clic, clac, dansez sabots' and 'Pilons l'orge' are examples of 'Poulenc the hooligan' – albeit in a far more discreet manner than the *Chanson à boire*. The tremendous swagger about 'Clic, clac dansez sabots' owes as much to the composer's ostinato patterns and sonorous harmonies as to the unrelenting tread of the song's original melody, while 'Poulenc the monk' sits quite happily alongside in songs such as 'C'est la petit' fill' du Prince' which narrowly avoid the kind of cheap sentimentality which, in his late teens, Poulenc would probably have been only too eager to exploit.

Poulenc manages to inflect his choice of artless popular tunes with sufficient personal touches to lift them above the usual run-of-the-mill folk arrangements. The direct expressions of bucolic pleasures and pains found in these *Chansons françaises* suited the patriotic spirit of post-war France.

[With acknowledgements to Marc Rochester, and to The King's Singers (www.kingssingers.com)]

Huit chansons françaises, op. 130

(1) Margoton va t'a l'iau

Margoton va t'a l'iau avecque son cruchon.
La fontaine était creuse, elle est tombée au fond,
"Aïe", se dit Margoton.
Par là passèrent trois jeunes et beaux garçons.
"Que don'rez-vous la belle qu'on vous tir' du fond?"
"Tirez d'abord", dit-elle. "Après ça nous verrons."
Quand la belle fut tirée commence une chanson.
"Ce n'est pas ça, la bell', que nous vous demandons,
"C'est votre petit cœur savoir si nous l'aurons."
"Mon petit cœur, messir's, n'est point pour greluchons."

*Margoton goes to fetch water with her little jug.
The spring was in a deep hollow and she fell in.
"Oh dear", said Margoton to herself.
Three handsome young men pass by.
"What will you give, pretty, if we pull you out?"
"Pull me out first", she says, "and we'll see."
When the pretty one was out she strikes up a song.
"That is not what we want, pretty one,
It's to hold your little heart if we may."
"My little heart, sirs, is not for boobies."*

(2) La belle se sied au pied de la tour

La belle se sied au pied de la tour,
Qui pleure et soupire et mène grand douleur.
Son père lui demande:
"Ah! fille qu'avez-vous voulez-vous mari
Ou voulez-vous seigneur?"
Je ne veuille mari, je ne veuille seigneur,
Je veuille le mien ami qui pourrit en la tour.
Par Dieu ma belle fille alors ne l'aurez vous
Car il sera pendu demain au point du jour.
Père si on le pend enfouyé moi dessous,
Ainsi diront les gens ce sont loyales amours.

*The fair maid sits at the foot of the tower
And weeps and moans and heaves a great sigh.
Her father asks her:
Ah, daughter, do you want a husband,
Or do you want a lord?"
"I do not want a husband, I do not want a lord,
I want my beloved who languishes in the tower."
By heaven, my dear daughter, you shall not have him,
For tomorrow he is to be hanged at dawn."
Father if they hang him, bury me beneath,
So that people will say these were loyal lovers."*

(3) Pilons l'orge

Pilons l'orge, pilons l'orge, pilons la.
Mon père m'y maria
À un vilain m'y donna,
Tirez vous ci, tirez vous là.
Qui de rien ne me donna.
Tirez vous ci, tirez vous ça.
Mais s'il continue cela
Battu vraiment il sera.

*Thrash the barley, thrash the barley, thrash it well.
My father is going to marry me off.
He's giving me to a rascal.
Pull here, pull there.
Who never gave me a thing.
Pull this, pull that.
But if he continues in that
He will be soundly beaten.*

(4) Clic, clac, dansez sabots

Clic, clac, dansez sabots
Et que crèvent les bombardes.
Clic, clac, dansez sabots
Et qu'éclatent les pipeaux.
Mais comment mener la danse
Quand les belles n'y sont pas?
Allons donc quérir les filles

*Click, clack, dance clogs
And let the cannons explode.
Click, clack, dance clogs
And let the reed-pipes sing out.
But how is one to call the tune
When the pretty girls are not here?
Let us seek the girls,*

Ben sûr qu'il n'en manquera pas?
Ben l'bonjour messieurs et dames
Donnerez-vous la belle que v'là?

LE PÈRE Les filles c'est fait pour l'ménage
Et pour garder la maison.

Ouais mais pour faire mariage
Vous faudra bien des garçons.
Vous n'en avez point fait d'autre
Vous patronne et vous patron.

LE PÈRE Allez donc ensemble au diable,
Ça s'ra bien un débarras.

Ah! patron et vous patronne
Qu'on s'embrasse pour de bon.

*Surely we won't go without.
Well good-day, lords and ladies,
Will you give us the pretty girl there?*

*FATHER Girls are made for housework
And to look after the home.*

*Yes, but to get married
You need to have boys.
You did not do things differently,
You, sir, and you, madam.*

*FATHER Then you can go to the devil
And good riddance.*

*Ah, sir, and you too, madam,
Let's embrace and have done.*

(5) C'est la petite fille du prince

C'est la petite fille du prince qui voulait se marier.
*Sus l'bord de Loire mariez-vous la belle
Sus l'bord de l'eau, sus l'bord de Loire joli matelot.*

Elle voit venir un bateau et quarante galans dedans.
Le plus jeune des quarante lui commence une chanson.
Votre chanson que vous dites je voudrais bien la savoir.
Si vous venez dans mon bateau belle je vous l'apprendrai.
La belle a fait ses cent tours en écoutant la chanson.
Tout au bout de ses cent tours la belle se mit à pleurer.
Pourquoi tant pleurer ma mie
Quand je chante une chanson?
C'est mon cœur qui est plein de larmes
Parce que vous l'avez gagné.
Ne pleure plus ton cœur la belle
car je te le rendrai.
N'est pas si facile à rendre comme de l'argent prêté.

*The prince's little daughter wanted to marry.
On the banks of the Loire will you marry, pretty maid,
On the banks of the water, of the Loire, pretty sailor.*

*She spied a boat coming in and forty gentlemen.
The youngest of the forty began singing her a song.
That song you sing, I would like to learn it.
If you come into my boat, pretty one, I'll teach you it.
The fair one paced up and down listening to the song.
As she finished her pacing she began to weep.
Why weep so, my love,
When I sing you a song?
For my heart is full of tears
Because you have won it.
Let not your heart weep, pretty one;
I shall give it back.
It is not so easy to give back as money that is lent.*

(6) La belle si nous étions

La belle si nous étions dedans ton haut bois.
On s'y mangerions fort bien des noix,
On s'y mangerions à notre loisir nique nique no muse.
Belle vous m'avez t'emberlificoté par votre beauté.

La belle si nous étions dedans ton vivier,
On s'y mettrions des petits canards nager.
On s'y mettrions à notre loisir nique nique no muse.
Belle vous m'avez t'emberlificoté par votre beauté.

*My fair one, if we were within these woods
We'd have plenty of fine nuts to eat,
We'd eat to our hearts' content.
My fair one, your beauty has tied me up in knots.*

*My fair one, if we were within this fish pond
We'd put some little ducks there to swim around.
We'd put them there to our hearts' content.
My fair one, your beauty has tied me up in knots.*

La bell' si nous étions dedans stu fourneau.
On s'y mangerions des p'tits pâtés tout chauds.
On s'y mangerions à notre loisi nique nac no muse.
Belle vous m'avez t'emberlificoté par votre biauté.

*My fair one, if we were within this oven
We'd have nice little warm pâtés to eat,
We'd eat to our hearts' content.
My fair one, your beauty has tied me up in knots.*

La bell' si nous étions dedans stu jardin
On s'y chanterions soir et matin
On s'y chanterions à notre loisi nique nac no muse.
Belle vous m'avez t'emberlificoté par votre biauté.

*My fair one, if we were within this garden
We'd sing there all day long,
We'd sing to our hearts' content.
My fair one, your beauty has tied me up in knots.*

(7) Ah! mon beau laboureur

Ah! mon beau laboureur de vigne ô lire ô la
N'avez pas vu passer Margueritte ma mie?
Je don'rais cent écus qui dire où est ma mie.
Monsieur comptez-les là, entrez dans notre vigne.
Dessous un prunier blanc la belle est endormie.
Je la poussay trois fois sans qu'elle osat mot dire.
La quatrième fois son petit cœur soupire.
Pour qui soupirez-vous Margueritte ma mie?
Je soupire pour vous et ne puis m'en dédire.
Les voisins nous ont vus et ils iront tout dire.
Laissons les gens parler et n'en faisons que rire.
Quand ils auront tout dit n'auront plus rien à dire.

*Ah! my handsome farm lad working on the vines,
Have you seen Margueritte, my love, pass by?
I will give money to the man who tells me where she is.
Sir, count it out there, come into our vineyard.
The pretty maid is sleeping beneath a plum tree.
I nudged her three times without her stirring.
The fourth time her little heart sighed.
What are you sighing for, Margueritte, my love?
I sigh for you, and do not deny it.
The neighbours have seen us, and will tell all.
Let people gossip; we'll just laugh.
When they've said all they won't have more to say.*

(8) Les tisserands

Les tisserands sont pir' que les évêques:
Tous les lundis ils s'en font une fête.
Et tipe et tape et tipe et tape,
Est-il trop gros, est-il trop fin.
Et couchés tard, levés matin.
En roulant la navette le beau temps viendra.
Et le mardi ils ont mal à la tête.
Le mercredi ils vont charger leur pièce.
Et le jeudi ils vont voir leur maîtresse.
Le vendredi ils travaillent sans cesse.
Le samedi la pièce n'est pas faite.
Et le dimanche il faut de l'argent maître.

*Weavers are worse than bishops.
Every Monday they have a jolly time.
Tip tap, tip, tap.
Is it too coarse? Is it too fine?
Late in bed, early to rise,
In plying the shuttle good times will come.
On Tuesday they have a headache;
On Wednesday they go to load their looms;
On Thursday they go to see their mistress;
On Friday they work without ceasing;
On Saturday their piece is not quite finished;
And on Sunday money is needed, master.*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)



Ravel was born on 7 March 1875 in Ciboure, near Biarritz, close to the Spanish border. His mother was of Basque descent and his father was an inventor and industrialist from French Haute-Savoie. Both were Catholics and they provided a happy and stimulating household for their children. Ravel's Basque heritage was a strong influence on his life and music.

The family moved to Paris three months after the birth of Maurice, and there his younger brother Édouard was born. Maurice Ravel began piano lessons when he was seven, and received his first instruction in harmony, counterpoint, and composition at the same age. His earliest public piano recital was in 1889 at the age of fourteen.

Ravel's parents encouraged his musical pursuits and sent him to the Conservatoire de Paris, where despite receiving a first prize in the piano student competition in 1891, he had a chequered career. He studied composition with Gabriel Fauré, and even after being dismissed from the class in 1900 for having won neither the fugue nor the composition prize, Ravel found his teacher's personality and methods sympathetic, and they remained friends and colleagues.

Around 1900, Ravel joined an innovative group known as the *Apaches* (hooligans or "artistic outcasts"), which met regularly until the beginning of the First World War. The members often inspired each other with intellectual argument and performances of their works before the group. One of the first works Ravel performed for the Apaches was *Jeux d'eau*, his first piano masterpiece, and clearly a path-finding impressionistic work.

Ravel further extended his mastery of impressionistic piano music with *Gaspard de la nuit*, based on a collection by the same name by Aloysius Bertrand, with some influence from the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, particularly in the second part. However, unhappy with the conservative musical establishment which was discouraging performance of new music, Ravel, Fauré, and some others formed the Société Musicale Indépendante (SMI). During 1910, the society presented the première of Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose) in its original piano version. With this work, Ravel followed in the tradition of Schumann, Mussorgsky, and Debussy, who also created memorable works of childhood themes. During 1912, Ravel's "Ma Mère l'Oye" was performed as a ballet (with added music) after being first transcribed from piano to orchestra. Looking to expand his contacts and career, Ravel made his first foreign tours to England and Scotland during 1909 and 1911.

During the First World War Ravel worked as a truck driver on the Verdun front. However, he continued to compose, one of the works of this time being *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, a commemoration of the musical ideals of the early 18th-century composer, which premiered during 1919.

In the 1920s Ravel maintained his influential participation in the SMI, which continued its active role of promoting new music, particularly of composers such as Arnold Bax, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson. During 1927, Ravel's string quartet received its first complete recording. By this time, like Edward Elgar, he had become convinced of the importance of recording his works, and he made recordings nearly every year from then until his death. After returning to France from a four-month concert tour in America during 1928, Ravel composed his most famous and controversial orchestral work *Boléro*, originally called "Fandango".

During late 1937, Ravel, who had received a head injury in a taxi accident some years earlier, consented to experimental brain surgery. One hemisphere of his brain was re-inflated with serous fluid. He awoke from the surgery, called for his brother Edouard, lapsed into a coma and died shortly afterwards, on 28 December, at the age of 62. Ravel was buried at the cemetery at Levallois-Perret, in north-west Paris.

Ravel wrote the first movement of tonight's work, the **Sonatine**, for a competition sponsored by the *Weekly Critical Review* magazine. The competition requirement was the composition of the first movement of a piano sonatina no longer than 75 bars, with the prize being 100 Francs. Ravel was the only entrant; however, his sonatina was disqualified for being a few bars too long, and the competition was ultimately cancelled as the magazine was close to bankruptcy at the time. Two years later, Ravel completed the second and third movements and the complete work was published shortly afterwards.

The *Sonatine* was first performed in Lyons in March 1906, and shortly afterwards it received its Paris première. Although the piece is titled 'Sonatine' rather than 'Sonata', the diminutive refers to its modest length, and not to any simplicity, either in structure or ease of execution. Indeed, shortly after the Lyons performance, Ravel wrote that although he was pleased with the public reception of his work, he was worried about its difficulty. Indeed, while Ravel recorded a piano roll of the first two movements, he felt unable to play the technically demanding third movement and frequently left it out at public performances.

The opening theme of the first movement is subject to variations and transformations in the second and third movements, especially the opening 'falling fourth' motif, which is reversed into a series of ascending fourth 'horn calls' at the start of the third movement. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form, and the second movement, which is in the form of a minuet, lacks the traditional trio section; Ravel's use of accents and changes in tempo stop the movement from turning into a simple waltz. The third movement has been described as a virtuosic tour de force. This movement is a toccata; Ravel went on to expand the proportions used in this piece to structure the 'Toccata' section of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*.

[This note was adapted from Wikipedia articles.]

Sonatine James Longford, piano

I. Modéré II. Mouvement de menuet III. Animé

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)



The operas of Giacomo Puccini, who was born in Lucca, include *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*, and are among the most frequently performed in the standard repertoire. Some of his arias, such as "O mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi*, "Che gelida manina" from *La bohème*, and "Nessun dorma" from *Turandot*, have become part of popular culture.

Tonight the Whitehall Choir is performing Puccini's *Messa a quattro voci* ('Mass for four voices', more widely but inaccurately known as the *Messa di Gloria*) with a piano accompaniment. However, the work was originally composed for choir and orchestra with tenor and baritone soloists, which is the way it is more usually heard. The references to orchestral instruments later in this note should be read with that in mind. It is a full Mass, properly speaking not a 'Messa di Gloria' at all, since that term is usually applied to a setting which is confined to the 'Kyrie' and 'Gloria' and omits the 'Credo', 'Sanctus', 'Benedictus' and 'Agnus Dei'. The change in title occurred with the alleged 'rediscovery', in 1951, of 'the aged manuscript' among the collection of Puccini's works held by the family of his musical secretary, Vandini. The family were assisting the research of an *émigré* Italian priest by then settled in America, Father Dante del Fiorentino, who was visiting Lucca to collect material for a biography of the composer, and had purchased an old copy of the manuscript of the Mass from them under the impression that it was the original score. However, the actual autograph, in the possession of the Puccini family, had in fact been given by the composer's daughter-in-law to Ricordi, Puccini's publishers. A legal battle ensued, which was finally resolved by dividing the rights to the work between Ricordi and Mills Music (the US publishers of Fiorentino's manuscript). On returning to New York, Fr Del Fiorentino arranged for the first US performance of the Mass in Chicago on 12 July 1952, seventy-two years after its first performance in Lucca. 'Program Notes' detailing the 'rediscovery' of 'this musical treasure' were published on the *verso* of the cover of the scores published in America by Mills Music in 1951 and in Europe by Ricordi in 1952, when it was performed in Naples in December of that year. In fact, 'rediscovery' was not necessary - the work was never lost, nor had it disappeared. It was always known to Puccini scholars, of whom Fr Del Fiorentino would not have been the first to consult the Vandini collection. The rarity of performance, until its entry into the modern choral repertoire, was almost certainly a result of Puccini's intention that the Mass should stand as a summation of his style as a composer of liturgical music, and as his valediction to the genre.

Puccini composed the Mass as his graduation exercise from the Istituto Musicale Pacini. It had its first performance in Lucca on July 12, 1880, although the 'Credo' had already been written and performed in 1878 and was initially conceived by Puccini as a self-contained work. Puccini never published the full

manuscript, and while it was well received at the time, the work was not performed again until the Chicago and Naples revivals referred to above. However, he re-used some of its themes in other works, such as the 'Agnus Dei' in his opera *Manon Lescaut* and the 'Kyrie' in *Edgar*.

Puccini was destined initially to be a composer of religious music. For four generations before him, since 1739, a member of his family had been regarded as the 'official musician' of the city of Lucca - organist and choirmaster at Lucca Cathedral (the 'Duomo'), a role handed down from father to son. Thus, when Puccini's father, Michele, died in 1864, his uncle Fortunato Magi was appointed to the post by the city council, with the stipulation that he "should and must" abdicate in favour of Giacomo as soon as the latter became qualified. To this end, Puccini entered the Istituto Musicale Pacini in his early teens, having been a choirboy and then, from the age of fourteen, organist at the Duomo, becoming known for his precocious and at times irreverent improvisations on Tuscan folk songs and contemporary popular opera.

By 1877, Puccini had already decided his future career would be in opera rather than liturgical music. He had been sufficiently eager, during the spring of 1876, to walk the twenty miles from Lucca to Pisa and back for a performance of Verdi's *Aida*, and it is this experience which seems finally to have settled him on that change of direction. He said later in life that he felt that on that occasion a musical window had opened for him.

If Puccini's contemporaries harboured any doubts that his musical future was to be in the theatre, hearing his Mass would surely have dispelled them. From the outset, with the fugal elaborations of 'eleison' in the opening lines of the 'Kyrie', the chorus begins a dramatic celebration of the ritual accompanying the liturgical action, which is sustained throughout its performance. Moreover, several passages of this work appear subsequently, in scarcely disguised form, in his operas. Relatively short though it is (just 67 bars), the 'Kyrie' nevertheless contains two distinct themes, structured in three parts; the first and last is stated in an orchestral introduction and brief conclusion, dominated by strings, and developed in the phrase 'Kyrie eleison' itself in A flat major, which opens and closes the choral passages of the movement. Between these, the 'Christe eleison', in F minor, offers a brief, almost stentorian fugal endorsement of the plea for mercy, led *forte* and rapidly by the basses. Puccini put the same melody to use for the prayer and Tigrana's entrance in Act I of *Edgar*, and repeated in Act II, at Tigrana's words "Quel che sognavi un di" (All that you dreamed one day).

The 'Gloria' makes clear how the Mass came to acquire its apocryphal title. A breathtaking tour de force of compelling excitement, it takes up almost half the entire work - indeed, divided into nine separable parts, it constitutes almost a work in its own right for choir and tenor soloist. It opens with 'Gloria in excelsis Deo', the theme of which foreshadows the beginning of the *Inno a Diana* (1897). It is set as a light and joyously happy choral fugue, *allegro* in C major, begun *piano*, by sopranos and altos, repeated *mf* by tenors and basses, then *ff* by the full choir, punctuated briskly with staccato brass. With a sudden change to *andante* and *piano*, the sopranos develop the fugue solemnly into 'Et in terra pax'. In the background, occasional, distant echoes from the horns anticipate the explosive brass fanfare that precedes a 'Laudamus te' reminiscent of Verdi in its majesty, which moves through a climax to modulate, with a mellifluous 'adoramus te', into a soft, closing orchestral interlude. This introduces, *andante sostenuto*, a distinctly operatic tenor solo on 'Gratias agimus', through most of which the orchestra seems to pursue its own narrative path, until the choral reprise of 'Gloria in excelsis', this time as a prelude to the brief 'Domine Deus'. The mood grows solemn, as the basses introduce the 'Qui tollis', *andante mosso*. Fittingly, this develops into a slow, sprightly march, involving some flashy, irregular changes of step, as if for a marching band, on 'deprecationem nostram, suscipe'. Majesty returns, with a declaratory statement, *maestoso*, in the 'Quoniam', which concludes with four huge chords, again from the orchestral brass. Basses then commence, at a brisk *allegro*, the fugue 'Cum sancto spiritus' which develops, with increasing speed and polyphonic complexity, to incorporate an anticipation of the concluding 'Amen' as well as a final reprise of 'Gloria in excelsis'.

Conceived initially as a self-contained work of eight parts in C minor, the 'Credo' is similar to the 'Gloria' in structure, though not quite as long. It opens with a forceful statement of 'Credo in unum Deo' which is linked to the following 'Patrem omnipotentem' and 'Qui propter' by a chromatic accompaniment in which woodwind play as important a part as did the brass in the Gloria. 'Et incarnatus' is scored operatically, in G

major for tenor and chorus, effectively dramatising the narrative of the incarnation with a ringing, concluding endorsement: 'et homo factus est'. The tragic narrative of the crucifixion is similarly dramatised in G minor, before the basses move up to the major key to begin a brisk *allegro* choral fugue in celebration of the resurrection and ascension. The opening orchestral chromatics of the 'Credo' are reprised to accompany 'Et in spiritum sanctum' as the basses hold the tune until the sopranos lead into the quiet conclusion: 'conglorificatur'. A quiet, confident calm, swelling to occasional crescendi, permeates a return to C major for the graceful, pastoral melody of 'Et unam sanctam'. Trumpets precede the statement of 'Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum' before an orchestral passage builds to the emphatic concluding fugue on 'Et vitam venturi saeculi'.

The 'Sanctus' is quite perfunctory, no more than a simple liturgical statement. Opened by the chorus in a dignified *andante*, before breaking briefly into a brisker pace for 'Pleni sunt coeli' which is concluded by a rather clamorous initial 'Hosanna', it moves to a smooth, confident statement for the 'Benedictus' before a final, choral *hosanna*. The 'Benedictus' provides a phrase which Puccini uses later for the minuet in Act II of *Manon Lescaut*, and he used the entire, closing 'Agnus Dei' for the same opera, where it is termed 'madrigale' and sung by a bored heroine as she performs her morning toilet. Its gentle pastoral character is sustained here by a lilting tenor solo, whose melody is elaborated at recurrent intervals by the chorus on 'miserere nobis' until the passage scored for tenor and baritone duet, which is sung tonight by all the tenors and basses. The chorus concludes with the triplets of 'dona pacem', echoed by the orchestra in the closing bars of the work.

[Adapted from the Wikipedia articles on Puccini and the *Messa di Gloria*, and from Paul Filmer's programme note on the *Mass* (North London Chorus, April 2005)]

Messa di Gloria

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.*

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax hominibus
Bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te,
Benedicimus te,
Adoramus te,
Glorificamus te,
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam tuam
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens,
Domine, Fili Unigenite,
Jesu Christe;
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris:
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis;
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Suscipe deprecationem nostram;
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
Miserere nobis.

*Glory be to God on high
And on earth peace to men
Of good will.
We praise Thee,
We bless Thee,
We worship Thee,
We glorify Thee,
We give thanks to Thee
For Thy great glory:
O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty,
O Lord, the only-begotten Son,
Jesu Christ;
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father:
That takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us;
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
Receive our prayer;
Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father,
Have mercy upon us.*

Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus Altissimus,
Jesu Christe,
Cum Sancto Spiritu,
In gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

*For Thou alone art holy,
Thou alone art the Lord,
Thou alone art the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Ghost,
In the glory of God the Father.
Amen.*

Credo

Credo in unum Deum
Patrem omnipotentem,
Factorem coeli et terrae,
Visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
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.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis,
Sub Pontio Pilato.
Passus et sepultus est.
Et resurrexit tertia die
Secundum scripturas,
Et ascendit in coelum,
Sedet ad dexteram Patris:
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria,
Judicare vivos et mortuos,
Cujus regni non erit finis.
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.
Confiteor unum baptismam
In remissionem peccatorum.
Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
Et vitam venturi saeculi.
Amen.

*I believe in one God,
The Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
And of all things, visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The only-begotten Son of God,
Born of the Father before all worlds.
God of God,
Light of Light,
Very God of very God,
Begotten, not made,
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.
And was crucified also for us,
Under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again
According to the scriptures,
And ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on 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.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son
Together is worshipped and glorified,
Who spake by the Prophets.
And I believe one holy
Catholic and apostolic church.
I acknowledge one baptism
For the remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come.
Amen.*

Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.

*Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.*

Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit
In nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei

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

*Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He that cometh
In the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*O Lamb of God, that takest away
the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away
the sins of the world,
Grant us peace.*

Paul Spicer



Paul Spicer, musical director of the Whitehall Choir, began his musical training as a chorister at New College, Oxford. He studied with Herbert Howells and Richard Popplewell (organ) at the Royal College of Music in London, winning the top organ award (the Walford Davies Prize) in his final year. Paul is best known as a choral conductor, partly through the many CDs he made with the Finzi Singers for Chandos Records. He conducted Bach Choirs in Chester and Leicester before moving to conduct the Bach Choir in Birmingham in 1992. He taught at the Royal College of Music between 1995 and 2008, and now teaches choral conducting at the Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also directs both chamber choirs, and at Oxford University. Until July 2001 Paul Spicer was Artistic Director of the Lichfield International Arts Festival and the Abbotsholme Arts Society. He was Senior Producer for BBC Radio 3 in the Midlands until 1990, and today is in considerable demand as a composer and as a recording producer.

The first complete recording of Paul Spicer's large-scale *Easter Oratorio* was released in 2005 to critical acclaim, the work being recognised by Gramophone magazine as "the best of its kind to have appeared ... since Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi*". *The Deciduous Cross*, for choir and winds, based on poems by RS Thomas and premièred in 2003, was commissioned for Paul's tenth anniversary as conductor of the Birmingham Bach Choir, and was recorded by the Whitehall Choir. Robert Sharpe, when Director of Music at Truro Cathedral, recorded his complete works for organ. A recording of his shorter choral works was made by the choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge, in 2008.

Paul Spicer's biography of his composition teacher, Herbert Howells, was published in August 1998 and has been reprinted twice, and he is currently working on a full-scale biography and study of works of the composer Sir George Dyson. He has written articles for many periodicals and is a contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Paul has recently completed a large-scale choral and orchestral work, an *Advent Oratorio*, to another libretto by the New Testament scholar Dr. Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham, who wrote the text for the *Easter Oratorio*. The first performance was in Lichfield Cathedral on 5 December 2009.

Paul Spicer is in great demand for his choral workshops, which take him all over the world. He runs an annual choral course/Arts Festival called the English Choral Experience at Abbey Dore, in Herefordshire, each July (www.englishchoralexperience.co.uk). He is a broadcaster, lecturer and popular speaker. Paul Spicer is a member of the Council of Lichfield Cathedral, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an Honorary Research Fellow of Birmingham University, an Honorary Fellow of Birmingham Conservatoire, a Trustee of the Finzi Trust, Chairman of the Finzi Friends, Vice-President of the Herbert Howells Society, and Advisor to the Sir George Dyson Trust.

James Longford



James Longford studied at the Royal College of Music in London where he won the Tagore Gold Medal, the Walford Davies Organ Prize and all the accompaniment prizes. His postgraduate studies there were supported by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. He was organ scholar at St Martin-in-the-Fields, was awarded the first RCM Legal & General Junior Fellowship in 2000, and has been the principal keyboard player of the groundbreaking orchestra Southbank Sinfonia since their inception.

As a collaborative pianist, his work with a variety of singers, instrumentalists and ensembles has taken James to many major UK venues, including the Barbican Hall, Wigmore Hall, Royal Opera, Royal Festival Hall, Purcell Room, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Westminster Abbey, St David's Hall Cardiff, Snape Maltings and the London Palladium; he has also performed abroad throughout Europe, the Middle East, the US and the Baltic States, and has broadcast on BBC Radio, most notably live from Wigmore Hall on Radio 3 with Ann Murray. James was recently on the music staff for *On the Rim of the World*, a new opera by Orlando Gough – a six-month project which culminated in a performance by over 200 primary schoolchildren and their parents on the main stage of the Royal Opera House.

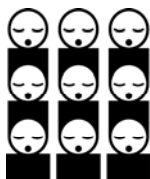
James is one half of the acclaimed longfordbrown piano duo with New Zealand pianist Lindy Tennent-Brown. They are laureates of several major international competitions and are fast becoming one of the UK's foremost two-piano teams, recently giving two acclaimed performances of Poulenc's *Concerto for two pianos* at Wiltshire Music Centre under Gerry Cornelius.

Visit jameslongford.com and longfordbrown.com for more information.

Oliver Johnston



Oliver Johnston was born in 1989, and as a treble took part in various ENO, BBC and theatre productions. In 2004 he was awarded a place to study at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music under the tutelage of Sara Reynolds. Then in 2008 Oliver was awarded a scholarship to attend at the Royal Academy of Music, where he is currently studying with the prestigious Scottish tenor Dr Neil Mackie CBE and is coached by Iain Ledingham. Recent choral solos include: Gounod's *Messe Solennelle* in Dorchester Abbey, Handel's *Messiah* at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, and Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. Recent opera roles include: Albert in *Albert Herring* by Britten (Young Opera), Damon in *Acis and Galatea* by Handel (Woodhouse Opera), Don Basilio in *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart (Young Opera), Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell (New College Music Society, Oxford University), The Soldier in *Fra Diavolo* by Auber (Stanley Hall Opera), *Semele* by Handel, Chorus (Royal Academy of Music Opera with Sir Charles Mackerras). In addition Oliver has taken part in recitals at St Martin-in-the-Fields, New College, Oxford, and the Chichester Festival. Oliver is generously supported by the Josephine Baker Trust. He has recently been accepted into the Concordia Foundation's International Ensemble.



THE WHITEHALL CHOIR

Conductor: Paul Spicer

Accompanist: James Longford

The Whitehall Choir's high standards are reflected not just in the wonderful sound it creates in several concerts each year but also in the number of new singers wishing to join. Repertoire, performed often alongside professional soloists and orchestras, includes music from the 15th to the 21st century. Members share a strong commitment to the Choir and, in addition to attending weekly rehearsals, take part in occasional tours abroad, singing workshops, and a 'Come and Sing' event. The Choir is a friendly group, and prizes this as highly as singing sensitively and accurately. Originally a lunch-time madrigal group at the old Board of Trade in the Second World War, the Whitehall Choir now performs in leading venues across London, including St John's, Smith Square, Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, and the Banqueting House in Whitehall. Singers from backgrounds as diverse as law, medicine, teaching, publishing, PR, and, as the name suggests, the Civil Service, ensure a lively mix of talents and interests.

For further details of the choir and its CDs visit www.whitehallchoir.org.uk. (Charity no. 280478.)

Sopranos

Joanna Bradley
Hilary Davies
Imogen Davies ^(b)
Anne Delauzun
Ruth Eastman
Jacky Erwtaman
Maya Freedman
Kate Goulden ^{(a) (e)}
Kate Hand ^{(b) (d) (e)}
Katherine Herzberg
Caroline James ^(b)
Kate Johnston
Nisha Kaduskar
Jo Mullin
Lesley Raymond
Rachel Salisbury ^(e)
Louisa Stanway
Yvette Street
Janet Winstanley

Altos

Helen Audaer ^(e)
Rose Chandler
Miranda Douce
Samantha Foley
Polly Fortune
Katherine Howes
Kate Mole
Paula Nobes
Jean Orr
Marion Paul
Penny Prior
Moira Roach ^(e)
Jean Robinson
Phillipa Rudkin
Holly Tett ^(e)
Liz Walton
Lis Warren

Tenors

François Feuillat
Patrick Haighton
Graham Hand
Ken Holmes
Chris Jones
Kevin McManus ^(a)
Ben Nicholls ^(e)
Philip Pratley
David Rawlins ^(e)
Alastair Tolley
Danny Tomkins
Jonathan Williams ^(e)

Basses

James Gourlay
Laurence Grace
Richard Grafen
Mark Graver
Michael Growcott ^(e)
Martin Humphreys
William Longland ^(e)
Brendan O'Keefe ^(c)
Tony Piper ^(e)
Malcolm Todd
Daniel Walton
Ian Williamson

- (a) Soloist in Poulenc no. (1)
- (b) Trio in Poulenc no. (1)
- (c) Soloist in Poulenc no. (4)
- (d) Soloist in Poulenc no. (7)
- (e) Semichorus in Poulenc no. (7)

WHITEHALL CHOIR COMMITTEE, 2009-10

SAMANTHA FOLEY, Chairman; JONATHAN WILLIAMS, Hon Secretary; KEN HOLMES, Hon Treasurer; RACHEL SALISBURY, Assistant Secretary; RUTH EASTMAN and MARTIN HUMPHREYS, Publicity Managers; KATHERINE HERZBERG and PENNY PRIOR, Business Managers; ROSE CHANDLER and LAURENCE GRACE, Librarians; KATE GOULDEN, Soprano rep; LIZ WALTON, Alto rep; GRAHAM HAND, Tenor rep; MALCOLM TODD, Bass rep; RICHARD GRAFEN, BIS Rep; TAMSIN COUSINS, Webmaster

PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF WHITEHALL CHOIR:

This season sees the launch of our new Friends and Patrons scheme. Friends and Patrons of the Choir are a vital part of our future. They help fund not only our regular concerts but also additional activities such as workshops, sing-through days, and tours. As well as supporting our musical future, Friends will receive a range of benefits. For further details about how to become a Patron or Friend, please see the 'Support Us' page of the website www.whitehallchoir.org.uk.

Patron and Friend: Mr John Purkiss; Captain B. V. Woodford CBE, RN; and others who wish to remain anonymous

Friend: Miss Elsie Broadbent; Mrs E. Gotto; Mrs Gillian Holmes; Mr Paul Roach; Ms Christine Robson; Mr John Warren; Mr D. Wedmore; and others who wish to remain anonymous



To stay up to date with the Choir's latest news, why not follow us on Facebook? Just search for 'Whitehall Choir' and click 'Become a Fan'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Choir is very grateful for the support that it continues to receive from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The Choir would like to thank all tonight's volunteer helpers.

FUTURE CONCERTS

Saturday 3 July 2010, 7.30pm

Haydn Paukenmesse

Weber Mass in E Flat

St John's, Smith Square, SW1

Friday 26 November 2010, 7.30pm

Bach Missa Brevis in A

Leighton Columba Mea

St John's, Smith Square, SW1

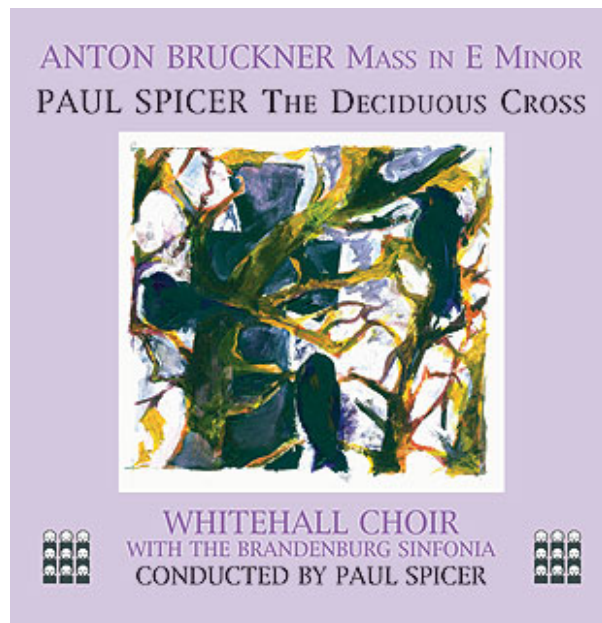
CHORAL WORKSHOP

Paul Spicer and the Whitehall Choir are hosting a choral workshop at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Narbonne Avenue, Clapham, SW4, on Saturday 22 May 2010. We will explore Handel's *Coronation Anthems* and Elgar's *The Music Makers*, and the workshop will culminate in an early evening performance. If you are a singer and would like to take part in the workshop, or if you would like to attend the evening concert, please contact us at events@whitehallchoir.org.uk.

In 2009 the Choir recorded its second CD, a selection of music for the season of Christmas. The CD, *Fairest flower of any field*, is recommended as a best buy in Gramophone's 2009 Christmas edition, while the December 2009 edition of *Classical Music* magazine highlights "...[the Choir's] fine balance and floating lines ensuring this is a satisfying selection."



During 2007 the Whitehall Choir produced a CD featuring the first recorded performance of Paul Spicer's *The Deciduous Cross*. On this disc the Choir also recorded Bruckner's *Mass in E minor*.



"...instrumental writing which is assured, inventive and colourful...a performance which is committed and compelling..." Organists' Review, October 2007

"...Definitely recommended!" Bruckner Journal, November 2007

Both CDs are on sale via the Choir's website: www.whitehallchoir.org.uk.