

# CANTEMUS

NEWBURY

Director: **Robert Ascott**

Accompanist: **John Oxlade**

## *Music for Remembrance*

Sunday 9th November 2003  
Church of St Michael & All Angels  
Enborne

  
Making  
Music  
THE NATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF MUSIC SOCIETIES

## Programme

*Tonight's programme will be performed in four continuous sections, without an interval.  
Audience applause is welcomed, although it would be appreciated if this were kept until the end of each section.*

Man that is born of a Woman	William Croft (ed. B Wood)
In the midst of Life we are in Death	William Croft (ed. B Wood)
Thou knowest, Lord, the Secrets of our Hearts	Henry Purcell
When David heard that Absalon was slain	Thomas Tomkins (ed. J Morehen)
Justorum Animae	William Byrd

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The Silver Swan	Orlando Gibbons
Weep, O Mine Eyes	John Bennet
Draw on, Sweet Night	John Wilbye (ed. E H Fellowes)

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<b>Piano solo</b> ( <i>John Oxlade</i> ): Adagio and Rondo K617	W A Mozart
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Messe Solonelle	Gioacchino Rossini
Credo	
Crucifixus	
Et resurrexit	
Agnus Dei	

*(soloists: Sheenagh Dornie, Heather Sims, Jonathan Cox, Ian Haslam)*

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Last Post, period of silence and concluding prayer

## Programme Notes

**William Croft (1678-1727)** was born in Warwickshire. He was organist of St Anne's, Soho, from 1700-1711, then at the Chapel Royal in the reigns of Queen Anne and King George I, and finally at Westminster Abbey where he now lies buried. He wrote for the violin and piano as well as for choirs. Tonight's pieces are extracts from his setting of the Burial Service, still in frequent use today. When Croft wrote these, he realised that he couldn't improve on Purcell's setting of *'Thou knowest, Lord'*, written for the funeral of Queen Mary II in March 1695, so he composed the remainder specifically so that the Purcell fitted well at that point. For this reason, this group of pieces is being performed in reverse chronological order.

**Henry Purcell (1659-1695)** was one of the greatest composers of the Baroque period and one of the greatest of all English composers. His earliest surviving works date from 1680 but they already show a complete command of the craft of composition combining elements of the French and Italian baroque and traditional English musical forms. They include the fantasias and sonatas for strings and keyboard. In time Purcell became increasingly in demand as a composer, and his theatre music in particular made his name familiar to many who knew nothing of his church music or the odes and welcome songs he wrote for the court.

**Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)** was born St David's, Pembrokeshire, the son of the precentor of Gloucester Cathedral, and one of six musical brothers. He too was organist at the Chapel Royal, and of Worcester Cathedral until the rise to power of the Puritans deprived worship of music and hence him of a job. The text of this motet is from 2 Samuel 18:33.

**William Byrd (1542-1623)** was born in Lincoln. He became a pupil of Thomas Tallis in London with whom he was jointly organist at the Chapel Royal in the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1575 the Queen granted him a 21-year monopoly over the publication of sacred music. Given the practice of his illegal Catholic faith in post-Reformation protestant England, he was forever vulnerable to informers and would scarcely have known much of the peace described in this motet. '*Justorum Animae*' translates as 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there no torment shall touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: but they are at peace.' (Wisdom 3: 1-3).

**Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)** was born in Oxford, and became a choir boy at Kings College, Cambridge. He was yet another of tonight's composers to have been organist at the Chapel Royal, this time when aged only 21 in the reign of James I. At 40 he became organist at Westminster Abbey. He wrote for the viol and virginals as well as church music and madrigals.

**John Bennet (16th-17th cent)** has had very little written about his life and appears to be known solely through his legacy of madrigals.

**John Wilbye (1574-1638)** was born in Diss, Norfolk, and resided in the house of Sir Thomas Kytson, near Bury St Edmunds. For musical services, he was granted a lease of the best sheep farm on the estate. He is regarded as one of the greatest writers of madrigals; including '*Adieu Sweet Amaryllis*', '*Flora gave me Fairest Flowers*', '*Sweet Honey-Sucking Bee*' and '*Draw on Sweet Night*.'

**Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)** was born in Pesaro on 29 February, the son of the town trumpeter. Owing to his mother being the leading lady in the Bologna comic opera company, he grew up in the atmosphere of the theatre and later studied the cello and composition at the Bologna Conservatoire. Between the ages of 18 and 37 he composed 40 operas, but after the success of 'William Tell' in 1829, he abandoned composing completely - partly to enjoy the fortune he had accumulated, and partly because he had come to dislike much of the style of his own age. It wasn't until his later years that he turned to spiritual matters and composed two sacred works, *Stabat Mater* in 1842 and *Messe Solonelle* in 1864 ('the last mortal sin of my old age'). The mass was first performed in Paris in March 1868 - privately, as Rossini forbade it to be performed in public. It was a triumph, but the composer died that same year. The work was originally composed for chamber choir, four soloists, two pianos and harmonium. The second piano was a ripieno part, only reinforcing the first piano at suitable places. The harmonium part was marked *ad lib* and often doubles the voices. Tonight's excerpts follow Rossini's original chamber conception, except that the accompaniment is on one piano.

**Robert Ascott** studied choral conducting under James Gaddam. As a businessman, he has lived overseas for long periods of his life, and as a musician he has held organist and choirmaster posts in many cities of the world, including London, New York and Cologne. He is Treasurer of the Herbert Howells Society and lists Bach and Britten among other favourite composers. In addition to his work on the chamber choir repertoire, he has conducted opera and stage musicals.

**John Oxlade** read history at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. After obtaining his degree he went on to study the piano at the Royal College of Music. He currently holds the posts of Civic Organist for the City of Oxford, and Musical Director of Wantage Choral Society. John lives and works in Abingdon, teaching at Our Lady's Convent School there. Listeners to last Sunday's Morning Service from Dorchester Abbey on Radio 4 will have heard him accompanying on the organ.

'**CANTEMUS (Newbury)**' was formed in 1999 as a small mixed-voice chamber choir. Although based in Newbury, its members come from Reading, Marlborough and Wantage as well. The choir aims to perform three or four concerts a year, featuring music from the 16th to the 20th centuries. It meets just a few weeks before its concert date in order to prepare a specific programme. Cantemus is affiliated to the National Federation of Music Societies, a body representing and supporting amateur vocal and instrumental groups throughout the UK.

The choir has vacancies in most parts and welcomes applications from singers of a suitable standard (contact: Ian Haslam, 01635 820379 or [cantemus.2003@ntlworld.com](mailto:cantemus.2003@ntlworld.com)).

The choir also has spaces in its concert calendar and would welcome invitations from suitable venues in the Berkshire area (contact: Stephen Blinman, 0118 9734862).

**Cantemus:**

**Sopranos**

Sheenagh Dernie  
Edwina Northam  
Joyce Refausse  
Leanne Russell

**Altos**

Dinny Barker  
Alison Jestico  
Bridget Procter  
Heather Sims

**Tenors**

Jonathan Cox  
David Ramsbottom

**Basses**

Mike Ananin  
Stephen Blinman  
Ian Haslam  
Barrie Seaman

**Future Events:**

~ *for this Church*: 30<sup>th</sup> November (Advent Sunday) at 6.30 pm; Advent Carol Service, with the Enborne Consort

~ *for Cantemus*: 13th December at 7.30 pm, at Brightwalton Church, near Newbury; a programme of Christmas music and readings under the direction of Ian Westley (tickets available from Mike Ananin)

*Cantemus would like to thank the Rector, Rev. Julie Ramsbottom, for kind permission to use this Church.*

*The proceeds of tonight's collection will be donated to the Royal British Legion.*