



Feel the Spirit

St Thomas' Church

20th October 2012



Soprano: Elinor Carter

Accompanist: Simon Brett

Conductor: Frances Brewitt-Taylor

Programme

Mizmor shir / How good it is	Srul Irving Glick
Long time ago	trad arr A Copland
Down by the Salley Gardens	trad arr Wagner
O nata lux	Morten Lauridsen
Motet for the annunciation	Frank Ferko
Amor de mi alma	Z Randall Stroope
This marriage	Eric Whitacre
Living in a holy city	Stephen Hatfield

Interval

(Wine and soft drinks will be served in the Canterbury Room)

Feel the Spirit

A cycle of spirituals arr. John Rutter

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
Steal away
I got a robe
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Ev'ry time I feel the spirit
Deep river
When the saints go marching in

Programme Notes

The north American continent, like England, has been colonised by waves of immigrants bringing with them their own cultures, history, religious affiliations, customs and music. The rich mixture that this brings about has its social unease but allows a wider appreciation of the highlights of other cultures.

Traditional songs (such as 'Down by the Salley Gardens') from the British Isles were taken across the Atlantic by waves of emigrants over several centuries. Immigrants from all over Europe and the Baltic countries have settled in north America and young European composers often travel today to the Juilliard School of Music in New York to further their training. Hispanic, Jewish, native Indian and many other communities live alongside, each maintaining their individual forms of folk songs, dances and prayers. And in the United States the influence of the black Africans descended from the generations of slaves is everywhere seen in the prevalence of spirituals, jazz and the blues.

The pieces in the first half of the programme are from well-recognised composers illustrating typical contemporary sounds and textures from across North America including Canada. There is an amazing diversity in the choice of texts.

Srul Irving Glick's parents moved to Canada from Bessarabia and, born in 1934, he grew up in Toronto where he is choir director of the Beth Tikvah Synagogue. This is the first of 'A Psalm Trilogy' and it begins with a procession of sopranos who symbolize the seventh day of creation. The mixed Hebrew and English text is from Psalm 92, vv1-3:

A psalm, a song for the Sabbath day.
How good it is to give thanks to You, O Lord.
How good it is to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.
How good it is to sing praises to Your kindness, O Lord,
to sing and play on the ten-stringed lute and harp.

Morten Lauridsen, born in 1943 of Danish descent on his father's side, is Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California. He is now one of the most widely performed of American choral composers, renowned for an almost mystic quality. O nata lux comes from the larger work Lux aeterna which shows the influence of Gregorian chant:

O born light of light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
mercifully deem worthy and accept
the praises and prayers of your supplicants.
Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
for the sake of the lost ones,
grant us to be made members
of your holy body.

Frank Ferko, born in Ohio in 1950, is at Stanford University. His compositions are much influenced by his lifelong interest in liturgical music, the organ and the music of Messiaen. This motet sets a text from the Troparion of the Feast of the Annunciation, an English translation from the Eastern Orthodox liturgies.

Z Randall Stroope was born in New Mexico in 1953 and is currently a Professor at Oklahoma State University. Amor de mi alma sets a text by Garcilaso de la Vega (1503-1536):

I was born to love only you;
My soul has formed you to its measure;
I want you as a garment for my soul.
Your very image is written on my soul;
Such indescribable intimacy
I hide even from you.
All that I have, I owe to you;
For you I was born, for you I live,
For you I must die, and for you I give my last breath.

The intense emotion of the text is mirrored in the anguished melodic lines and rich, heartfelt melodies.

Eric Whitacre, born in 1970 in Reno, Nevada, came late to composing but has made up for it since, becoming very widely known and performed by his 'virtual choirs.' The text of this piece is a translation from the 13th century Sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi. In this piece Whitacre uses more traditional chords than in many of his pieces but his demands for precision, intonation and ensemble are no less rigorous. The rhythmic flexibility of the music reflects the tenderness of the poem.

Stephen Hatfield, born in 1956, is a native of Canada's Pacific coast where he is a leader in multiculturalism and musical folklore. Living in a holy city begins with an adaptation of a South African folksong that speaks of solidarity, and a longing for a true and final home. Its typical African syncopation and percussiveness develop into a work of tremendous energy and power.

Feel the Spirit is a cycle of spirituals arranged by John Rutter and first performed in New York in 2001. The familiar tunes are clothed in a rich chromatic and harmonic language with many rhythmic subtleties, all of which make it exciting to sing but not as straightforward as it first appears. The mezzo-soprano soloist plays a leading role in setting the mood and generating the emotion, pathos and excitement. Though maybe far from the original style of these poignant spirituals, the cycle shows the enduring power of this music over subsequent generations.

Elinor Carter

Elinor Carter first came across Feel the Spirit when she sang in the original recording as part of the Cambridge Singers under the direction of the composer, John Rutter. She decided that the solos would rather suit her, and is delighted to have been asked to perform them with Goring Chamber Choir tonight.

Although based in Wallingford for many years now, Elinor grew up in York. Following a language degree from Clare College, Cambridge, where she was a choral scholar, she continued her vocal training at the Royal College of Music, studying with Neil Mackie, John Blakely and Roger Vignoles. During her time there she won prizes for Bach, Handel and English song and was awarded a Senior Exhibition.

Elinor recorded Vivaldi's Gloria with Sir John Eliot Gardiner as a member of the Monteverdi Choir and one of the soloists. She has performed solos in major international venues including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Lincoln Center in New York, The Royal Albert Hall (as part of the Proms) and Birmingham's Symphony Hall, where she sang Mendelssohn's Elijah with the CBSO. In 2002 she opened the Three Choirs' Festival in Worcester Cathedral with The Dream of Gerontius by Elgar.

Choir

Musical Director: Frances Brewitt-Taylor

Accompanist: Simon Brett

Sopranos:

Sandy Boshier, Geraldine Crippen, Ginty Fay, Amanda Hines, Lesley Lambert, Valerie Loveday, Christine Richardson, Audrey Rogers, Suzanne Smith, Susan Terry, Frances Thompson

Contraltos:

Jenny Boyd, Myrtle Campbell, Val Cooper, Myra Cottingham, Tanya Hawley, Susan Lee, Marilyn Purdie, Liz Rapple, Mary Rollinson, Jane Ryder, Elma Wishart, Jenny Worthington, Cassie Watcyn-Jones

Tenors:

Andy Button, John Cottingham, Stuart Crippen, Charles Lambert, Graeme Pearce

Basses:

Paul Bradstock, John Burton, Elwyn Hughes, Henry Parkinson, Peter Purdie, Nigel Suffield-Jones, Tom Worthington

Choir Notes

Forthcoming Events

Our Christmas concert is scheduled for 3pm on Sunday 16th December in St Thomas' Church. There'll be audience carols for you to join in with and we'll be serving wine and mince pies afterwards.

The choir visits Oporto in Portugal in early April. We will be performing a pre-tour concert in St Thomas' on Saturday 23rd March at 7:30pm.