THE HAMPTON SINGERS

CHORAL CONCERT

MONTEVERDI Beatus Vir

J.S. BACH God's time is the best

ELGAR Give unto the Lord

BRITTEN Rejoice in the Lamb

Saturday 14th April 7.30 pm 1984

Hampton in Arden. Parish Church

PROGRAMME

Sarah Wright	Soprano
Kathryn Halsall	Contralto
Richard Priest	Tenor
Michael Coppock	Bass
Amanda Smith	Recorder
Brian Dipple	Recorder
Nigel Argust	Organ
Andrew Dicks	Conductor

The Hampton Singers would like to thank all those who have helped towards tonight's concert. Particularly to the Hampton-in-Arden P.C.C. for permission to perform in the Church and to the Birmingham School of Music, with whose permission our four soloists appear. appear.

If you are interested in singing, the Hampton Singers all always ready to welcome new members. Rehearsals take place on Monday evenings at the Manor Hall, Hampton-in-Arden starting at 8.00 pm. We sing a wide range of music both accompanied and unaccompanied. Our members come from all walks of life but all live in or near Hampton-in-Arden.

Anyone interested in joining the Hampton Singers should contact Mr A Morden 134 Old Station Road, Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull (tel. Hampton 2642) or come along to one of our weekly rehearsals.

Beatus Vir — Claudio Monteverdi

This work was first published in 1641 in a collection of sacred pieces - the SELVA MORALE E SPIRITUALE. It is the first of two settings that Monteverdi composed of Psalm 112 "How blessed is the man that feareth the Lord" and was probably written in 1630 when he was director of music at St. Mark's Venice. It is written over an irregular basso ostinato that can be divided into two bass motives which follow one another in irregular sequence. Many scholars have noted the similarity between this psalm-setting and the madrigal "Chiome d'oro" of 1619. Perhaps this accounts for its joyful mood.

Cantata No. 106 Actus Tragicus J.S. Bach

Gottes Zeit ist die Allerbeste Zeit

This cantata was probably first performed in August 1707 at the funeral of one of Bach's uncles. Written when Bach was 21 years old, the work compares and contrasts the spirit of the Old and New Testaments - between the wrath of an avenging God, and the Love of Christ. Bach's choice of words, his use of Bible passages and chorales commonly used in Germany in the early 1700's give the whole work an underlying mood of optimism.

Bach's music appeals nowadays to our sense of mathematical precision, it is abstract and highly ordered. It is also worth remembering that his style of composition was probably the most advanced that has been achieved in the western world, particularly in his treatment of tonality. It was at the pinnacle of Baroque art. So, in this cantata we have (for the first time in a Church cantata) a symmetrical arrangements of movements: chorus-solos-chorus-solos-chorus. In sections 2 and 4 we also have two precisely symmetrical fugues. Within this neat framework lies such a profound range of musical expression that it has become one of the most popular of his choral works, both for performers and listeners alike.

The work begins with a gently flowing sonatina in E flat. Great stress is then laid on the first words from the chorus "God's time is the best, ever best of all," but soon we are in C minor for a sombre "and in Him we die, at his good time, when he wills."

The following tenor solo is accompanied by a dance-like figure played by the flutes which is repeated through the movement. The bass soloist then sings of the fear and inevitavility of death, a theme which is taken up by the three lower voices of the choir singing an apochryphal text. This middle choral section which is in F minor is interrupted (precisely in the centre of the work) by the sopranos with a quotation from the book of Revelation. Blended into the texture also is the melody of an old funeral hymn, played by the instruments.

The alto solo words that follow in the next movement are taken from Psalm 90; words that werespoken by Christ on the Cross. The bass solo then includes more words uttered by Christ on the Cross ; "You shall be with me today in Paradise". Comforting words to one of the robbers that were hanged with him. To complement this Bach adds a chorale which is sung by the altos, bringing the movement to a close in C minor.

The final chorus returns to E flat major and praises victory over death by Christ. This begins majestically but breaks into a lively fugue in the last line. The music reinforces the joy of victory through Christ and leaves the listener with an echo of the final "Amen."

Sonatina

Chorus	God's own time is the best, ever best of all. In him we live and move and have our being, as long as he wills. And in him we die, at his good time.
Tenor	O Lord incline us to consider that our days are numbered. Make us apply our hearts unto wisdom.
Bass	Set in order your house, for you shall die and shall not remain among the living.

Chorus — It is the old bond: Man you are mortal.
Yea come, Lord Jesus.

Alto — Into your hands I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

Bass — You shall be with me today in Paradise.

Altos — With joy and peace I now depart,
According to God's will.
For full comfort is my heart,
So calm and sweet and still,
So does God His promise keep,
And death is to me but a sleep.

Chorus — Glory, honour, praise and splendour
to you God the Father and Son be given.
Also with the Holy Spirit, your divine
power has given us the victory
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Interval

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Psalm 29 — Give Unto the Lord — Sir Edward Elgar

The anthem Give Unto the Lord, was composed for the Sons of the Clergy Festival at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1914. The opening is marked Maestoso and Nobilmente, a word coined by Elgar to describe a richness and warmth of melody which pervades much of his music. This work above all however, demonstrates his masterful skill at setting English words to music. Natural speech rhythms are used to complement sweeping melodies, for example, in the phrases "Worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness" and "The God of Glory thundereth; it is the Lord that ruleth the sea." The anthem is full of contrasts in dynamics and speeds, from the majestic opening to the final phrase "the blessing of peace" which fades away almost to nothing.

Rejoice in the Lamb Op 30 Benjamin Britten

The festival cantata, Rejoice in the Lamb was composed in 1943 for the 50th. anniversary of the consecration of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton and first performed in the autumn of that year. The words are taken from a long poem of the same name written by the eighteenth century poet Christopher Smart. Written while Smart was in a lunatic asylum, the main theme of the work is the worship of God by all creatures, each in its own way.

The cantata is made up of ten short sections. The first sets the theme. In the second, characters from the Old Testament are called to join with some creature in praising God. The third is a quiet Hallelujah. Smart's cat is the subject of the fourth section, and its natural opponent, the mouse, is the subject of the fifth. Flowers - "the poetry of Christ" are dealt with in the sixth section, and in the seventh Smart refers to his troubles and suffering. But even here he praises God, for through Christ he will find deliverance. The eighth section refers to four letters from an alphabet, and section nine speaks of music's praise of God. Finally, the Hallelujah is repeated.