Highworth Choral Society
conducted by Veronica Phillipson
presents

Messe
Solennelle
by Rossini
Saturday 8 April 1995

St Michael’s Church,
Highworth
7.30pm

Admission
by Programme - £4.00
Petite Messe Solennelle

by

Rossini

Soloists

Josephine McNally  Soprano
Louise Tucker       Contralto
Edward Bamford     Tenor
Clifford Friend    Baritone

Christine Williams  Piano
Nicholas Riddle    Organ

with Highworth Choral Society

conducted by

Veronica Phillipson
First performed in 1864 when Rossini was 71, the composer described his Petite Messe Solennelle as 'the last mortal sin of my old age'. It was his last major work, and his only large scale composition in a number of years.

Despite its title, it is often said that the work is neither little, solemn or especially liturgical. The 'petite' however does not refer to the size of the work, but to Rossini's understated opinion of it. He wrote:

'Good God - behold completed this poor little Mass - is it indeed music for the blest that I have written or merely some blessed music? Though knowest well I was born for comic opera. A little science, a little heart, that is all. So bless thee and grant me Paradise!'

But despite his mock-modest protestations, none who heard that first performance [in a house in Paris] had any doubt that it was a magnificent feat of self-renewal in the 71 year old composer.

The Mass was originally scored for full chorus, two pianos and harmonium, although the second piano is often omitted. A French newspaper critic maintained that 'there was enough fire in the piece to melt a marble cathedral, were it to be scored for full chorus and orchestra'. This Rossini proceeded to do during the years 1866-7.

The Mass falls into various sections - the Kyrie, and the Palestrina-like Christe Eleison; the rhythmic Gloria; the Gratias; the martial Domine Deus; the Qui Tollis; the operatic Quoniam, with its distant echoes of William Tell. Then the Cum Sancto Spiritu, whose skilful double fugue impressed Rossini's contemporaries greatly. The Credo follows; then the short Crucifixus; and the Et Resurrexit, which includes another extremely skilful contrapuntal passage. Next comes the Preludio Religioso - a noble tribute to the keyboard works of Bach. The Sanctus encompasses the beautiful Benedictus, after which we hear the soprano's hymn 'O Salutaris'. The Agnus Dei, scored for Rossini's favourite voice - the contralto - includes soothing choral support which adds light at the end of the piece ... a fitting balance to the Kyrie.
Petite Messe Solennelle

1. Kyrie - Christe - Kyrie  Chorus
2. Gloria - Laudamus  Soloists & Chorus
3. Gratias  Terzetto for Contralto, Tenor & Bass
4. Domine Deus  Tenor Solo
5. Qui tollis  Duet for Soprano & Contralto
6. Quoniam  Bass Solo
7. Cum Sancto  Chorus

INTERVAL
[15 minutes]

8. Credo  Soloists & Chorus
9. Crucifixus  Soprano Solo
10. Et resurrexit  Soloists & Chorus
11. Preludio religioso  Piano
    Ritornello  Organ
12. Sanctus  Soloists & Chorus
13. O Salutaris  Soprano Solo
14. Agnus Dei  Contralto Solo & Chorus
Jo McNally is a BME graduate of Valparaiso University [USA]. As a singer she has performed a wide variety of music from cabaret with 'FOUR PLUS' to recital, recording and concert work. Jo sings regularly with VOCEM Electric Voice Theatre. Television credits include Judith Weir's Heaven Ablaze in His Breast, BBC's Music Time, Into Music and Scipio's Dream [Weir]. She has taught class/choral music in both state and international schools, frequently leading workshops in classroom techniques and the young singer. She conducts three young choirs for the London Borough of Hillingdon. Recent performances include Poulenc 'Gloria' and the première of a new work by Michael Finnissy with VOCEM.

Louise Tucker - Upon leaving the Guildhall School of Music, Louise appeared at Buxton Festival in Lucia di Lammermore and for Kent Opera. She has appeared in many festivals worldwide and in the UK at the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall amongst others. Future performances will include Bach's Christmas Oratorio and the Verdi Requiem. Although her first love is opera and classical music, she has made a successful career in light entertainment, with two solo albums 'After the Storm' and 'Midnight Blue' which went Gold and Platinum [three million copies sold]. Louise is currently studying with Ann Howard.

Edward Bamford was born in Liverpool where he sang as a treble, later as a tenor in churches and chapels in Merseyside and received early training from Adeline Meredith. He then studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Trinity College of Music with Reinhold Gerhardt and James Christiansen and at the London Opera Centre. He has devoted most of his career to education but has combined this with singing, mostly in and around London, in oratorio from Bach to Britten, in opera from Don Basilio to Don Jose and in recital work ranging from Renaissance to Spirituals.

Clifford Friend studied privately with Mervyn Collins at Guildford Cathedral and then with Ann Hart. Clifford is much in demand as a soloist and has performed with most choral societies in the Swindon area. He is an active recitalist with a repertoire which concentrates on 20th Century English music and he often performs and has recorded a number of works written specifically for him. He has appeared in a wide range of stage roles and has a particular interest in the operas of Britten. Future performances include Haydn's Creation in Marlborough.

Chris Williams began playing the piano at the age of eight. She studied music at Liverpool University where she obtained a BA[Hons] degree and followed this with a year at Gypsy Hill College of Education gaining a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. After several years of classroom teaching, she now teaches privately and is actively involved in the musical life of the local community.

Nicholas Riddle was born in 1957 and educated at Cheltenham and St Peter's College, Oxford. There he studied under Jane Glover, amongst others. He was involved with the music at Christ Church Cathedral. His greatest musical interest has been the life and works of Benjamin Britten of which he has made a particular study. He has studied conducting with David Parry. He teaches both piano organ and music theory, but his full-time employment is as Managing Director of Peters Edition, Music Publishers in London. He has recently been appointed to the Board of the Royal Philharmonic Society.
Acknowledgements

The Highworth Choral Society is particularly grateful to:

♦ The Rev Canon A N Graham and the Churchwardens of St Michael’s Church for the use of the church
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♦ The Methodist Church for the loan of the chairs
♦ Christine Williams - Rehearsal Pianist
♦ Jill Peel for programme design and production

... and finally you, the audience,

for being here this evening

Future Concerts

♦ The Lions present Warneford School in Concert on Saturday 6 May in St Michael’s Church at 7.30pm

Highworth Choral Society’s future concerts include:

♦ Saturday 17 June   Highworth Methodist Church
♦ Saturday 15 July   Gilbert & Sullivan Evening at Warneford School