



**Contemporary
Music
Venture**

Concert 3

University of Bristol Schola Cantorum

Directed by Dr Emma Hornby

Wednesday 18 May 2011

7pm St. Paul's Church

Generously supported by The Duignan Fund, Bristol University Music Department, Racks Wine Bar,
Monday Morning Music on Burst Radio, and the Octogenarian

The Contemporary Music Venture

The Contemporary Music Venture is a series of concerts run by postgraduate students of Bristol University Music Department. The venture aims to provide students the opportunity to have their music performed to the highest standard by the Department's finest performers at a public concert, as well as offering audiences the occasion to hear some of the best established contemporary repertoire.

The Programme

Stirps Jesse

We open our concert with a piece of Aquitanian polyphony, notated in the twelfth century. It is in 'melismatic' style, with a florid and improvisatory melody above a very slow-moving chant melody. **EH**

Benedict Todd – *Fides*

Congaudeant catholici

This song is famous – probably wrongly – for being the first surviving piece of notated three-part music in western Europe. It appears in the Codex Calixtinus, a book of material pertaining to pilgrims en route to Sant' Iago di Compostela in northern Spain. As well as various chants for St James, useful Spanish phrases, and a route guide, the manuscript also contains pilgrim songs, some just with a melody and others in two voice parts. In *Congaudeant catholici*, two voice parts are notated in black, and the other in red. Nowadays, scholars generally interpret it as being a two-part piece, with an alternative melody part. We are singing one verse with each melody and then the third verse, for fun, with all three voice parts at once, in the familiar modern guise (although it doesn't really fit with medieval expectation for the treatment of dissonance!) **EH**

David Greenhorne – *This Day*

Soloist: Laura Bell

This Day is a setting for contralto soloist of words taken from *Easter* by George Herbert, blended with material developed from *Congaudeant Catholici*, a piece of 12th-century polyphony sung by a female choir. It is short, simple (though not necessarily easy to perform!) using only "white-notes". **DG**

O adiutor

According to the *Codex calixtinus*, in which this chant appears, 'A certain priest, who was saved by St James from shipwreck as he was returning from Jerusalem, wrote this song, which is in the first mode'. In the usual format for polyphony of the time, the solo sections of the chant are sung in polyphony, and the chant sections that would usually be sung by the choir are sung as single-line chant melodies. This gives a structure polyphony-chant-polyphony-chant-polyphony-chant. Towards the end of the prosa section, the repetitions seem to tumble over each other more and more intensely. **EH**

Josh Bishop – *Call of the Wild*

Soloist: Laura Bell

The chants heard this evening were composed as expressions of Christian beliefs; having been saved, Christians believe they are able to live a full and free life. My response is an

expression of my own beliefs, although secular, and how I came to understand myself. The text is composed of extracts from the novel 'Call of the Wild' (1903) by Jack London. The novel's protagonist, a dog named Buck, is dog-napped from his suburban home and sent to Alaska to pull sleds with Huskies during the gold rush. It awakens in him the feelings which lay dormant over the generations since the domestication of his ancestors. I read the novel as a metaphor and applied it to myself - coming to university was my own choice but has left me with a similar situation to Buck in what, whilst I return to my mum's house each holiday, it no longer feels like I'm any more than visiting. Nearing the end of my degree, I realise how I have changed as a person and what university life has taught me about myself.

As the plot progresses, Buck gradually loses the support he once depended on - first the loving family and comfortable life, the steady food supply and finally the human master. Each loss, though hard at first, eventually brings liberation and freedom to be the master of his own destiny. The text I have arranged articulates these moments which gradually awaken Buck - hunting food driven by starvation, fighting for his life against the alpha male and stepping blindly into the unknown - in the hope that we can see parallels in memories from our own lives and understand how everything we have experienced has created the person we are now. **JB**

Noster Cetus

This piece of polyphony was copied in a manuscript from Aquitaine in the 12th century. In the manuscript, only one voice part is apparently present. However, the music for the first half of verse one works in perfect harmony with the music for the second half, the music for the first half of verse two works in harmony with the music for the second half, and so on. When performed polyphonically, the melodies swap between the two sides of the choir, then, in a clearly audible manner. Unlike the complex *O adiutor*, this piece of music is almost entirely syllabic in its setting, just with a melismatic flourish at the very end. We go straight from the medieval polyphony into Arthur Keegan-Bole's response, without a pause. **EH**

Arthur Keegan-Bole – Noster Cetus

Soloist: Bethan Waters

The structure of this piece becomes apparent as it progresses; it is based on the striking melismatic (multiple notes per syllable) flourishes in the chant and makes a feature of the long silences between phrases that in traditional sacred performance practice were intended as periods of reflection upon the words being sung. The virtuosic solo part elaborates on the melody of the chant while the choir extends the textural implications of this early polyphony.

I must thank Emma and Schola for all their hard work and enthusiasm and Bethan for her dedication and help in writing her solo line. **AKB**

Stirps Jesse (see above)

David Ridley – Stirps Jesse

Soloist: Bethan Waters

The Singers

The Bristol University Music Department Schola Cantorum is a women's choir open to music students and joint-honours music students. The choir numbers 5-15 members, depending on availability. We specialise in medieval music, from Hildegard to 13th-century motets, from plainchant to 16th-century Italian laudesi. This evening, the choir is represented by:

Rachel Abbot, Polly Aitman, Lucy Armstrong, Laura Bell, Rosie Buggins, Sophie Burton, Lily Caunt, Georgina Jones, Leila Mather, Marina Papageorgiou, Rhiannon Stubbs, Lydia Trewin, Jane Warren, Bethan Waters, Charlotte Woodley.

For more information about the choir and about our upcoming performances, see <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/music/unimusicmaking/sc.html>

The Director

Emma Hornby has been a Lecturer in Music at the University of Bristol since 2007, and formed the department Schola Cantorum soon after arriving here. Her research focuses on liturgical chant in the medieval west, with her most recent projects concentrating on the Old Hispanic liturgy (including an AHRC-funded project on Old Hispanic Lent in 2009-11).

Thanks for coming! Join us for drinks and jazz – provided by Waistcoat Collective – across the road at Racks.

A retiring collection will be made to cover the costs of the CMV concert series.