

North London Chorus

at Proms at St. Jude's

Saturday 24 June 2006, 7.30pm

The Church of St. Jude-on-the-Hill,
Hampstead Garden Suburb



The Season of Singing (Matthew King)

World Premiere

Sally Silver *soprano*

Valerie Reid *mezzo-soprano*

Murray Hipkin *conductor*

'The Season of Singing' has a kind of arch shape: movements 1 and 5 balance each other. Both are written using the B flat 'acoustic' mode (B flat, C, D, E natural, F, G, A flat), both share basic thematic material and both have a kind of elevated character with Biblical associations, but in very different ways - Milton is very spiritually minded whereas the Song of Songs is simply a beautiful, ancient love lyric. The soloists carry most of the text in the first movement with the choir singing wordlessly, while the roles are reversed in the fifth movement where the choir sing the texts and the soloists tend towards *vocalise*.

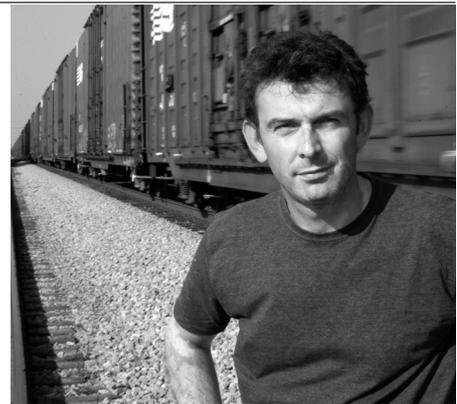
Movements 2 and 4 also parallel each other. Both have a certain kind of Englishness; a strange combination of eccentricity and regret; both share a madrigal-like character; both combine old and new texts. The second movement is a complex three-tiered structure in which the songs of birds and humans, ancient and modern texts, sacred and profane elements all merrily co-exist. Throughout this movement the two female soloists sing passages from E. E. Cummings (poems 32 & 33 from his last published collection, '72 Poems'). The first is his famous line about singing and talking and the second is a short poem about the song of a robin. Meanwhile, the men's voices sing William Byrd's Preface to his 1588 collection 'Psalms, Sonets, and Songs of Sadnes and Pietie'. Simultaneously, the women's voices sing two Shakespeare lyrics about birdsong.

Movement 4 contrasts the unaccompanied setting of two beautiful Herrick couplets - one sung by the women (a lyric originally entitled 'The Voice and Viol'), the other sung by the men (a lyric called 'Upon Julia's Voice') - with an accompanied duet, a setting of DH Lawrence's poem 'The Piano' in which the orchestra revives a pianistic accompaniment from the second movement. Then, finally, all three groups combine as the texts are sung simultaneously.

The third movement is a pivot for the whole piece. It is a kind of scherzo made up of several combined melodies in the Phrygian mode. The text is William Blake's 'Laughing Song' from his 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience'.

'The Season of Singing' was composed for the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth as a companion piece to his Requiem. The two works have a similar scoring except that 'The Season of Singing' has only two soloists, a soprano and a mezzo-soprano, with the addition of a piano or electric keyboard. Tonight the work will be performed using classical instruments (including natural trumpets) but there is an alternative version for modern instruments.

Matthew King



I A Song of Spiritual Creatures

Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night: how often from the steep
Of echoing Hill or Thicket have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air.
Sole, or responsive each to others note
Singing their great Creator: oft in bands
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk
With Heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonic number join'd, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.

(John Milton: Paradise Lost, Book 4, lines 677-688)

II A Song of Byrds

all which isn't singing is mere talking
and all talking's talking to oneself

(E.E. Cummings: from poem 32 of '73 poems')

Reasons briefly set down by the author, to persuade every
one to learn to sing.

First, it is a knowledge safely taught and quickly learned,
where there is a good Master, and an apt Scholler.

To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals
There will we make our beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies

*(William Shakespeare: The Merry Wives of Windsor
Act 3, Scene 1)*

The exercise of singing is delightfull to Nature, and good to
preserve the health of Man.

It doth strengthen all parts of the brest and doth open up
the pipes.

It is a singular good remedie for stuttering and stammering
in the speech.

The ouzel cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill.
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay.

*(William Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream,
Act 3, Scene 1)*

It is the best means to procure a perfect pronunciation and
to make a good Orator.

It is the only way to know where Nature hath bestowed the
benefit of a good voice: which gift is so rare, as there is not
one among a thousand, that hath it.

christ but they're few

all (beyond win
or lose) good true
beautiful things

god how he sings

the robin (who
'll be silent in
a moon or two)

(E.E. Cummings: poem 33 from '73 poems')

And in many, that excellent gift is lost because they want
Art to express Nature.

There is not any musicke of instruments whatsoever,
comparable to that which is made of the voices of men,
where the voices are good, and the same well sorted and
ordered.

The better the voice is, the meeter it is to honour and serve
God there-with: and the voice of man is chiefly to be
employed to that end.

"Omnes Spiritus Laudes Dominum"

Since Singing is so good a thing,
I wish all men would learn to sing.

*(William Byrd: Preface to "Psalms, Sonets, and Songs of Sadnes
and Pietie" 1588)*

III Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily,
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha, ha, he."

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha, ha, he."

(William Blake: from 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience')

IV A Song (without and with accompaniment)

Rare is the voice itself: but when we sing
To th' lute or viol, then 'tis ravishing.

(Robert Herrick: 'On the Voice and the Viol')

So smooth, so sweet, so silv'ry is thy voice,
As, could they hear, the Damned would make no
noise,
But listen to thee (walking in thy chamber)
melting melodious words to Lutes of Amber.

(Robert Herrick: 'On Julia's Voice')

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling
strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles
as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our
guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for
the past.

(D. H. Lawrence: 'Piano')

V A Song of Love

My beloved spake and said to me,
"Arise, my Love, my fair one, and come away.
See! The winter is past;
The rains are over and gone.
Flowers appear on the earth,
The season of singing is come;
And the cooing of turtledoves is heard in our land.
The blossoming vines with their tender grapes
Give out their sweet fragrance.
Arise my fair one and come away."

('The Song of Songs' 2:10-13)

The Chorus

<i>soprano</i>	Judith Moser
Lucy Allen	Janet Ridett
Helena Beddoe	Cheryl Rudden
Nancy Braithwaite	Alison Salisbury
Michaela Carlowe	Judith Schott
Laura Cohen	Belinda Sharp
Heather Daniel	Joanna Shepherd
Sheila Denby-Wood	Sonia Singham
Alex Edmondson	Jane Spender
Penny Elder	Lisa Sutton
Anne Godwin	Catherine Whitehead
Debbie Goldman	
Enid Hunt	
Marta Jansa	<i>tenor</i>
Shanti Lall	Ridley Burnett
Nikki Lloyd	James Brown
Jo Lunt	Alan Chandler
Joanna Macdonald	Mark Layton
Ros Massey	Jeremy Pratt
Joan Reardon	Gill Robertson
Janet Saunders	Stephen Sharp
Julia Sabey	Chris Siva Prakasam
Shantini Siva Prakasam	Christine Westlake
Jennie Somerville	Terrë Yuki
Julia Tash	
Jenny Taylor	<i>bass</i>
Pauline Treen	David Berle
	William Brown
<i>alto</i>	Martin Cave
Marian Bunzl	Norman Cohen
Alison Cameron	Andrew Elder
Lucy Ellis	Paul Filmer
Sarah Falk	Simon Gibeon
Eleanor Flaxen	Reinhold Kloos
Helene Gordon	Yoav Landau Pope
Viv Gross	Stuart Little
Sue Heaney	Paul Long
Jo Hulme	Neil Parkyn
Jane May	David Philpott
Alice Mackay	Harvey Ratner
Sarah Mcguire	Tony Shelton
Kathryn Metzenthin	Andrew Westlake
Vivienne Mitchell	

The Orchestra

<i>leader</i>	<i>bassoon</i>
Miles Golding	Wouter Verschuren
	Zoe Shevlin
<i>1st violin</i>	
Kathryn Parry	
Peter Fender	<i>trumpet</i>
Eleanor Gilchrist	Neil Brough
Pauline Smith	Matthew Wells
Claire Mera Nelson	
<i>2nd violin</i>	<i>trombone</i>
Bill Thorpe	Kate Rockett
Ann Monnington	Phil Dale
Fiona Hugget	Pat Jackman
Felicity Broome-Skelton	
Richard Wade	<i>timpani</i>
	Adrian Bending
<i>viola</i>	
Trevor Jones	<i>organ / keyboard</i>
Kath Rodham	Duncan Aspden
Virginie Guiffroy	
Melisa Bastin	
<i>'cello</i>	
Cath Rimer	
Anna Holmes	
<i>bass</i>	
Cecelia Bruggemeyer	
<i>bassett horn</i>	
Jane Booth	
Ingrid Pearson	

Patron *Janis Kelly*

Committee *Jeremy Pratt (Chair), Norman Cohen (Secretary), Hélène Gordon (Treasurer), James Brown, Marian Bunzl, Alan Chandler, Heather Daniel, Sheila Denby-Wood, Jo Hulme, Gill Robertson*

Musical Director *Murray Hipkin* Rehearsal accompanist *Catherine Borner*

Chamber organ supplied by Brian Macartney

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