

GRADUATE SINGERS

1993 SUBSCRIPTION SERIES



CHRISTMAS BRASS

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Graduate Singers

Soloists

Brian Gilbertson

Barbara Rennison

Grant Doyle

Alan McKie

Conductor

Jason Shute

St Francis Xavier Cathedral
Saturday, 11th December 1993, 8.00pm

- Programme -

Gabrieli

"In Ecclesiis"

Shute

Summer Noels

Monteverdi

"Cantate Dominum canticum novum"

Watt

Missa Brevis for voices and brass

Gabrieli

"Buccinate in Neomenia tuba"

- Interval (20 minutes) -

Schutz

The Story of Jesus Christ's Birth

PROGRAMME NOTES

"In Ecclesiis..."

Giovanni Gabrieli

Giovanni's career followed quite closely the career of his uncle, Andrea Gabrieli, gaining experience as a young musician in the Bavarian court in Munich before becoming, in his turn, organist at the cathedral of San Marco in Venice. By 1585, Venice's power and influence, which had grown out of its favoured position for Levantine trade, was in decline. Nevertheless, this was still a very splendid city which had a unique ability for celebrating civic or religious occasions. The performance of large-scale, celebratory music at St. Mark's had encouraged the development of a style involving spatial separation of several performing groups, though scholars are less convinced these days that this was simply a result of the architectural features of the cathedral. In homage to the developments of his uncle, Giovanni worked on an edition of Andrea's works, bringing them out as *Sacrae Symphoniae* in 1587. Giovanni continued to build on these foundations, supplying grand ceremonial music, engaging singers and instrumentalists as necessary. His fame spread north of the Alps, causing Austrian and German princelings to send their talented youngsters to study with him; prominent among these pupils was Heinrich Schutz. As an accomplished organist, it is not surprising that Gabrieli has left a considerable literature for that instrument but he did not greatly concern himself with the popular forms of vocal music such as villanelle or madrigals. A sense of contrast and dialogue were his main concerns; his sonatas *pian'e forte* were not quite the first to mark dynamic contrasts but in building on his uncle's legacy he did develop a skill which, for the first time, might be described as orchestration. Even in his latter years when the kidney stone that killed him was developing and he could no longer fulfil his duties at St. Mark's he remained interested and aware of the novel 'stile rappresentativo' exemplified by Monteverdi. His German students remained faithful to what had been learned of him at least until the 1630's when the new style was becoming better known.

The text of the large-scale motet *In Ecclesiis* is non liturgical but could be connected with the celebration of St. Mark's day according to the speculation of Denis Stevens in his 1970 edition of the work. The alleluias would tend to indicate a date not too long after Easter.

Blessed be the Lord in the assemblies of the people, Alleluia
In every place of the dominion bless, o my soul, the Lord, Alleluia
In God my wholesomeness and my glory
God is my support and my hope is in God, Alleluia
Our God, we call upon Thee, we praise Thee, we adore Thee;
free us, save us, vivify us, Alleluia
God our helper, eternally, Alleluia

The instruments provide a *sinfonia* besides accompanying the vocal soloists and chorus. The upper brass voices were originally cornetti, that curious hybrid of woodwind construction (and fingering) coupled with an ivory imitation of a brass player's mouthpiece and lip technique. The middle and lower voices are violas and trombones, while bass and Gabrieli's original organ part bind the whole together.

Summer Noels

Jason Shute

Twin "inspirations" occasioned the composition of this work. In the first place there was no work which would fit the bill in uniting our varied instrumental resources involved in the Gabrieli, Schutz and Watt. The challenge offered by this unorthodox line-up of 2 flutes, bassoon, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, a Mozart string quintet and double-bass could not be easily ignored with its colourful potential. Secondly my 'trial' rehearsal with the Graduate Singers, just over a year ago, caused me to observe what a strange experience it was for me to be rehearsing *Messiah* on a lovely warm evening; *Messiah* rehearsals have always been associated with rain, fog, frost (even snow) as a UK native. The idea of Christmas, birthdays etc. being shifted to the opposite season on changing hemispheres takes a little while to adjust to; hence, Summer Noels. I've tried to capture an impression of this experience - the notion of "Noel" in a warm though not necessarily arid climate.

"Cantate Dominum canticum novum..."

Claudio Monteverdi

Monteverdi's early abilities were developed in private lessons with the organist and composer Ingegneri in Cremona. He was first published at the age of fifteen and employed as a string player at the Gonzaga court in Mantua. His adherence to the Platonic precept that the text came first and was backed up by music in its ability to move the listener, made his mind receptive to the new style emanating from Florence. This naturalistic declamation, supported only by skeletal accompaniment, appealed to Monteverdi, and his *Orfeo* of 1607 placed him in the forefront of composers working in the then novel form we know as opera. Monteverdi could also tread a traditional path, becoming maestro de capella at San Marco, Venice on Giovanni Gabrieli's death in 1612. He carried over some of this new secular style into sacred composition. Unlike his predecessor, he was an avid madrigalist infusing the form with an enhanced dramatic expression. The setting of words, culled from Psalms 96 and 98, *Cantate Dominum...* is a lively example in six vocal parts (divided sopranos and tenors) with a homophonic dance-like opening succeeded by a more contrapuntal texture with imitation.

O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing and bless His name who has done marvels. Sing and exult, play upon the cythara and sing psalms to Him, who has done miraculous things.

Missa Brevis for voices and brass

Howard Watt

This work won the choral section of a nation-wide composers' competition sponsored by the Welsh county of West Glamorgan in 1978. Howard Watt was, at that time, a twenty three-year old postgraduate student at Cardiff University (enquiries to discover his present whereabouts have proved unsuccessful). Jason Shute was commissioned to prepare and perform the Mass with the County Youth Chamber Choir and brass ensemble at the Gower Festival the following July. A read-through of the Kyrie at the fag-end of a January choral course, whose performance had to be cancelled due to the fact that the country was brought to a standstill by snow, filled no one with optimism about the task ahead on the next course!

However, once preparations had begun in earnest the work immediately displayed its qualities and endeared itself to the choir and brass-players alike and their commitment ensured the composer a fitting premiere of his winning work.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison
Gloria
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

Soloists: Alison McCall (soprano) Catherine Cox (alto) Michael Wright (baritone)

"Buccinate in Neomenia tuba..."

Giovanni Gabrieli

The words of this motet are closely related to a passage in Psalm 81. Though this is a late work, the style of composition is that of the earlier part of Giovanni's career, closely modelled on that of his uncle, in the *cori spezzati* manner. Mixed *cori* of voices and instruments share the dialogue.

Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day, Alleluia. Leap up, vocally, with an excess of rejoicing, exalting God our helper, Alleluia. Let us be jubilant in God with strings and organ, with drums and choirs. Sing and exult, sing to the accompaniment of strings, skilfully, Alleluia.

The Story of Jesus Christ's Birth

Heinrich Schutz

There always seems to be a mystic link (quite irrational though) connecting this earlier German master with Bach and Handel, as he was born exactly one hundred years before them in the same part of Germany (i.e. in 1585). His three years' study with Giovanni Gabrieli he found to be sufficiently taxing to cause him to rue the fact that he had given up his Law studies, particularly as his parents were against such a precarious change. He did sufficiently well though to deputise for his master, and ever after, held him in high regard and affection. His abilities were recognised very early when the Elector of Saxony "poached" his services from his subordinate, and Schutz's patron, the ruler of Hessen-Kassel. From 1615 until 1657, Schutz provided music for the major court occasions, though with little financial security, particularly after Saxony became embroiled in the Thirty Years War in the late 1620's. Keeping abreast of new musical developments, Schutz revisited Venice to study with Monteverdi in 1628, picking up "fresh devices to tickle the ears of today". He returned to Dresden with new instruments and players.

For Christmas 1660, Schutz brought out his *Historia von der Geburt Jesu Christi*. He used the full panoply of modern techniques, writing in a more popular idiom than perhaps in any of his other works.

For the first time in Germany, to Schutz's knowledge, the Evangelist's narration was rendered in the style of *secco recitative*, i.e. the voice was accompanied by basso continuo, whereas, until then the Evangelist's part had always been sung in unaccompanied plain-chant. The characters in the story, the angels, the shepherds, kings and high priests, were featured in *Intermedia* - concerted items featuring obbligato instruments (e.g. a pair of pastoral flutes for the shepherds, regal trumpets for Herod, dignified trombones for the high priests, a shimmering halo of viola d' amore sound for the angel).

Schutz published only the Evangelist's parts, offering the hire of the *Intermedia* in manuscript parts on reasonable terms. He was utterly pragmatic as far as these were concerned, aware that only the well-appointed princely courts would be able to render these concerted numbers, so he stated his acquiescence if these sections had to be adapted, or even if totally new sections had to be composed on the spot to suit local needs. He even went as far as to say that the published Evangelist's part could be dropped in favour of the old style, if preferred. The edition being used tonight is that of Arthur Mendel, who reconstructed it from available sources in 1949.

Overture and opening chorus
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium I - The Angel
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium II - Chorus of Angels
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium III - The Shepherds
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium IV - The Wise Men
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium V - The High Priests and Scribes
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium VI - Herod
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium VII - The Angel
Recitative - The Evangelist
Intermedium VIII - The Angel
Recitative - The Evangelist
Conclusion

Jason Shute

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Jason Shute was born in "old" South Wales, though he gained his first musical experience where he was brought up on the south coast of England. At London's Royal College of Music he studied Voice (with tenor, Wilfred Brown and baritone, Redvers Llewelyn), and Violin and was awarded GRSM and ARCM diplomas, also winning the Van Someren-Godfrey prize for English Song. There followed two years of full-time training at the RCM's Opera School and the Else Mayer-Liesmann Opera Workshop.

Jason's professional operatic debut was in the 1972 Patti Festival in the diva's own theatre in her Welsh mountain castle, Craig y nos, singing Mozart's *Figaro* (alongside Australia's own Geoffrey Chard as the Count). He immediately joined the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and performed a number of the great G & S baritone roles at Sadler's Wells and throughout Great Britain.

Since the mid '70s Jason has pursued a freelance career, embracing concert and recital work as well as opera, with appearances at some of Britain's leading festivals (such as Aldeburgh) and BBC radio and television broadcasts. His singing has taken him to Germany, Russia, Denmark and Malta.

In recent years Jason has also been in increasing demand as a conductor - an interest begun in school days. Whilst a member of the Company he conducted the D'Oyly Carte Singers, and later, went on to conduct, arrange and compose for the West Glamorgan County Youth Chamber Choir and youth orchestras. From 1984 he conducted University College Swansea's Choral Society, giving numerous first performances, and 1988, he was invited to form Neath Chorale performing the core choral repertoire. He has chorus mastered the BBC Welsh Chorus on numerous occasions since its inception in the early '80s. He has conducted two seasons for the Cadoxton Opera of *La Traviata* and *Faust*, whilst with the chamber orchestra Sinfonia Cambrensis, which he founded in 1979, he has given performances ranging from Baroque to middle Beethoven.

During 1993 Jason conducted a successful season of *Pirates of Penzance* with the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and took up the position of Musical Director of Graduate Singers. We are pleased to announce that Jason will continue as Musical Director of Graduate Singers in 1994.

Brian Gilbertson studied vocal technique with Maestro Franz Schuch-Tovini and drama studies in Opera at the 'Hochschule fur Musik Darstellende Kunst' in Vienna. He has sung as guest artist with the St. Polten State Opera and 'Kammeroper' in Austria and toured from Vienna to America. In Australia Brian has performed as principal artist in opera, operetta and musicals having been engaged by the State Opera of South Australia, The Australian Opera, the ABC, and The Adelaide Festival Trust. As a concert soloist Brian has performed in Europe and Australia in a variety of works ranging from baroque to modern. Brian last performed with the Graduate Singers in 1990 in the Monteverdi *1610 Vespers* and we are very pleased to have him performing the role of the Evangelist in tonight's performance of Heinrich Schutz's *The Story of Jesus Christ's Birth*.

Barbara Rennison has been associated with the Graduate Singers for many years, being a foundation member. She has been a soloist with many choirs including the Bach Choir, Flinders Street School of Music, Adelaide University Choral Society and the Saddleworth Choral Society (UK). Barbara has performed several leading roles with the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of SA. Since completing her Diploma in Advanced Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, UK in mid 1993, Barbara has resumed work with the SA State Opera Chorus. She is looking forward to furthering her singing and teaching opportunities in Adelaide.

Grant Doyle graduated this year with an Honours Degree in Music (Performance) from the University of Adelaide. He has performed in many University productions with the Elder Conservatorium Chamber Singers both as a soloist and choir member. Roles with the Opera School include Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Tobia Mill in Rossini's *La Cambiale* and Jupiter in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Grant has been a member of the SA State Opera Chorus for two years. He hopes to spend several years working in Adelaide before furthering his studies interstate and overseas.

Alan McKie has been a frequent soloist with the Graduate Singers and has been acknowledged with Honorary Life Membership of the choir. In the past few months his busy musical schedule has included singing with the Adelaide Chamber Singers in the Melbourne International Music Festival and as a soloist in last Saturday's performance of the Bach *Mass in B Minor*, as a soloist in Haydn's *Creation* during the Adelaide Honda Music Festival, as Sir Roderick Murgatroyd with the Gilbert & Sullivan Society as well as demanding rehearsal and performance season as musical director for Strauss's *The Gipsy Baron*.

An academic librarian by profession, Alan enjoys music as a listener too (especially Beethoven's later string quartets) and indulging in some gentle bush walking when he can find the time.

Graduate Singers

Graduate Singers was formed in 1977, and has grown steadily in number over the years. It has sung under a number of conductors, including Jonathon Draper, Carl Crossin, Hilary Weiland, Graeme Quinn, Graham Abbott and David Blight. The choir has performed many different styles of music, ranging from successful chamber concerts of music from all periods, to more ambitious presentations of great choral classics, including Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and *Magnificat*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers*.

Graduate Singers has performed for the ABC on many occasions and has broadcast on ABC-FM. Graduate Singers has also combined with other choirs to sing larger works, including Poulenc's *Gloria*

and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9 ("Choral")* in the ABC Masters Series in 1989, and Britten's *War Requiem* in the ABC Choral Series in 1990. The choir has gained critical acclaim for its concerts with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, performing Handel's *Messiah* directed by Graham Abbott in December 1990 and 1992, and Mozart's *Kyrie* and *Requiem Mass* directed by Nicholas Braithwaite in May 1991. In June 1992 the choir performed with the ASO in a Masters Series Concert which included Haydn's *Te Deum* and Kodaly's *Psalmus Hungaricus*, conducted by Janos Furst and this year joined with the ASO again to perform Faure's *Requiem* with David Porcelijn. The choir recently combined forces with the Adelaide and Flinders University Choral Societies to perform Beethoven's *Mass in C* conducted by John Grundy. Performances this year conducted by Jason Shute have covered a wide variety of works including Schubert's *Stabat Mater* and *Mass in G*.

Graduate Singers first concert for the 1994 Subscription Series will be Handel's Oratorio *Samson*. Details of the 1994 Subscription Series will be available early in the new year.

GRADUATE SINGERS

Sopranos

Christine Beal
Brigid Bruer
Deborah Caddy
Helen Carrig
Helen Claridge
Julie Claridge
Lisa Maeorg
Alison McCall
Carol McHugh
Lynne Smythe
Vicky Standish
Michelle Zweck

Altos

Susan Arnold
Helen Clarke
Catherine Cox
Penny Dally
Mary Doube
Vera Green
Lisa Hayes
Cathy Lock
Sue Nichols
Sherry Proferes
Deborah Tranter
Penny Tranter

Tenors

Andrew Mair
Martin Penhale
Sarah Stroher
Colin Telfer
Louise Tunbridge

Basses

Mark Hastings
Bill Jackson
Phillip Lock
Neil Piggott
Chris Steketee
Peter Watt
Michael Wright

ORCHESTRA

Violins

Julie Ransom
Jennifer Newman

Violas

Martin Butler
Rosi McGowan

Cello

Christopher Handley

Double Bass

Peter Cassidy

Flutes

Jennifer Newsome
Karen Fletcher

Bassoon

Samantha Doley

Trumpets

Gregory Frick
James Dempsey
Nicholas Bauer

Trombone

Ian Denbigh
Clare Littleton
Howard Parkinson

Organ

Lyndall Simonsen

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Alison & Graham St. Jack
Front of House Staff:
Trudie Austin, Richard Black, Craig Weatherill,
Roger Jones - Chamber Organ

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Tonights concert has been presented by:
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