

## **O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM**

Good evening, and a huge welcome back from Lancaster and District Choral Society. To say we're pleased to see you is a slight understatement. We are ecstatic to be singing in front of an audience again. For any of you who have ever sung in a choir you will know what I mean when I talk about that 'exciting buzz' you get from singing with a group of other likeminded singers. We have really missed that.

We started tonight with a truly beautiful piece, which many of you will have recognized, O Magnum Mysterium by Morten Lauridsen. It has been described as '*expressive ethereal sounds in imperturbable calmness*', but when we putting this concert together we thought it is such a sad and moving piece, it reminded us of the Dark Days at the beginning of the pandemic.

Our next piece we would like to dedicate to all the many people who have sadly succumbed to Covid - and their families and friends. It is Faure's Cantique de Jean Racine. And we will follow that with another piece of Faure, from his Requiem; In Paradisum .

## **CANTIQUÉ de JEAN Racine      REQUIEM: IN PARADISUM**

We have called our concert 'Moving On', and just by us all being here tonight, let's hope that is what we're doing. So many things have changed over the last 20 months of our lives haven't they? Some I suspect, for ever. One of our choir members, Joyce [ *give us a wave Joyce*] wrote a poem each week throughout the lockdowns, and sent it to choir members and friends, and kept it going for 60 weeks. Here is an excerpt from her Ode. ( 8 lines of poem)

One thing many of us missed more than anything was being able to visit the cinema and theatre. So here are some of our favourites from the world of entertainment. Firstly, Leonard Cohen's lovely song **Hallelujah**, which was featured in the film Shrek .....AND SIX OTHER FILMS! Followed by **Empty Chairs at Empty Tables**, and the rousing **Do You Hear the People Sing** from the long running musical Les Miserables, and finally Andrew Lloyd Webber's **Phantom of the Opera**.

## **HALLELUJAH from Shrek - EMPTY CHAIRS -**

## **DO YOU HEAR THE PEOPLE SING - PHANTOM of the OPERA**

Here's a bit more from the ODE, written back in JUNE 2020. 8 lines of poem

I am thrilled now, to introduce our guest musician this evening, the celebrated harpist Annakate Pearson, who is going to play Marcel Tournier's "Au Matin".

## **AU MATIN . Harp Solo**

Thank you Annakate. Our next two pieces have possibly been used by film and TV directors more than any others. Zadok the Priest was used in Alan Bennett's play and film The Madness of George III, and I heard it as background music the other night, when I was watching a very old repeat of Morse. Also, I am sure a young George Frederick Handel, in Dublin in 1742, could have no idea of the impact his new Oratorio would have, and that the Hallelujah Chorus from it, would be used countless times to create a certain 'desired atmosphere and audience reaction' - even 280 years later.

## **ZADOK THE PRIEST - HALLELUJAH CHORUS**

Well that's got rid of some of the cobwebs hasn't it? Continuing our optimistic mood of 'coming out the other side' of this unprecedented times, is Gerald Finzi's 'My spirit sang all Day. But before that 'Joy to the World',

Isaac Newton's hymn written in 1719. And we would love you to join in with us please for that one. And then we have another solo from AnnaKate. Benjamin Britten's Interlude from Ceremony of Carols.

**JOY TO THE WORLD - MY SPIRIT SANG ALL DAY - INTERLUDE. Harp Solo**

Our next song started life at a Remembrance Day festival at the Royal Albert Hall in 2011. Written by Paul Mealor, it brought the choir of the Military Wives to prominence. It's called 'Where Ever You Are.'

Then a 'two for the price of one' which sets the choir men against the choir ladies. The men are singing a song called 'I Believe' which was recorded in 1953 by Frankie Laine and stayed at No 1 in the charts for 18 weeks. The ladies are singing Bach's Ave Maria. We hope you enjoy them.

**WHERE EVER YOU ARE - I BELIEVE/AVE MARIA.**

*8 lines of poem*

So here we are "moving on". Well almost....and we hope. Have we learned anything over the past months? It has certainly been a time for reflection. Will we be able to carry on with the things we actually liked about lockdowns, like appreciating nature, walking in our locality, clean air, having time to do the garden, finding happiness in simple things. Let's hope so. And let us hope too that Christmas this year will go ahead and families can get together as they always have. Do you remember last year? Joyce did.....

*8 lines of poem*

Now for some Carols. The choir will sing the spiritual 'The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy', accompanied by four hands at the piano, and then will you join us in Good King Wenceslas and Silent Night?

**The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy - Good King Wenceslas - Silent Night**

We do hope that has got you in a right festive mood. The choir has so enjoyed being back in front of an audience and we thank you all so much for coming this evening. While we are saying thanks there are one or two other rather important people we need to thank as well [ and perhaps just clap at the end to save time?] Our valiant Pianist Richard McGregor, who not only has played for us tonight, but totally inspires us each week at our rehearsals. And hidden round the corner someone who many of you will know, our Organist Andy Plowman. And of course Annakate Pearson our wonderful harpist. Thank you too to all our committee of the Choral Society, who put in many hours behind the scenes: but above all our conductor John Perrin, who constantly pushes this choir to the very edge of their abilities and surprises us all in what we can do. *(applause)*

The last word then from Joyce. The 17<sup>th</sup> of May was the Red Letter day -When the Covid Bard put down her pen. She finished with.....

*A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, so they say*

*Bon Voyage, courage my friends ,as we go on our way.*

We have just two more songs for you and they are both about..... well yes...singing. 'How Can I Keep From Singing' is an American Folksong that started life as a hymn. And I am sure you will recognise our last song which was written for our Queen's Diamond Jubilee by Gary Barlow and Andrew Lloyd Webber. It's just called SING.

**HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING - SING**