

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

director Owen Rees

MUSIC BY **JOHN TAVENER & ARVO PÄRT**

Jesus College Chapel, 5 December 1993, 8.15 p.m.

PROGRAMME

Funeral Ikos (1981)	John Tavener
The Lamb (1976) The Tiger (1987)	John Tavener
De profundis (1977)	Arvo Pärt
Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen (1988): 1 O Weisheit 2 O Adonai 3 O Sproß aus Isais Wurzel 4 O Schlüssel Davids 5 O Morgenstern 6 O König aller Völker 7 O Immanuel	Arvo Pärt

INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES

Magnificat (1989)	Arvo Pärt
Two Hymns to the Mother of God (1985) A hymn to the Mother of God Hymn for the dormition of the Mother of God	John Tavener
Today the virgin (1989)	John Tavener
God is with us (1987)	John Tavener

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The Cambridge Taverner Choir

sopranos: Diana Baumann, Josie Dixon, Helen Garrison, Bernadette Nelson
Caroline Preston Bell, Margaret Simper, Rachel Sutton, Sally Terris,

altos: Toby Gee, Simon Godsill, Martin Neill, Nicholas Perkins, Rupert Preston Bell

tenors: Paul Baumann, Philip Mills, Stephen Lawrence, Finlay Lockie, Edwin Simpson

basses: Patrick Devine, Jeremy Hayter, Richard Perry, Gary Snapper, Karl Stevens, David Stout, Paul Watson

Stefan Reid - organ

Douglas Blair - percussion

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The sound-worlds of Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) and John Tavener (b. 1944) have become familiar to a wide audience in the last decade, and share many central characteristics: sonorous, repetitive, with a great simplicity and economy of melody (sometimes akin to plainchant) and harmony. Both concentrate on religious texts (whether of the Catholic or Orthodox tradition), aiming to capture the mystery and majesty of solemn liturgy. In the case of the Estonian composer, this religious emphasis and chant-informed style is a product of a change of direction in his work which occurred in the 1970s. The influence of chant can be heard clearly in the opening piece of tonight's concert - Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* - which sets words from the Greek Orthodox Order for the Burial of Dead Priests. Pärt's *De profundis* is still more extreme and sombre in its melodic simplicity, although here the organ provides harmonic colour.

Many of the works performed tonight are appropriate to Advent and Christmas. John Tavener's setting of *The Lamb* has become well known as a Christmas piece, partly through its inclusion in the broadcast Service of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College. When setting another poem by William Blake - his famous *The Tiger* - Tavener paired it with the earlier work through musical recollection at the line 'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?', a device which is no less powerful for being obvious.

Pärt's *Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen* is a setting of the Great Antiphons (or "'O' Antiphons') - the antiphons to *Magnificat* sung at Vespers on the last days of Advent (16-23 December), and each beginning with the word 'O'. Although they would thus have been heard on different days, Pärt sets them as a cycle, the links being carefully conceived to increase the dramatic impact of the whole. The cyclic form is strengthened by a reminiscence of the first movement during the last. Harmonically, the most striking movement is no. 5, *O Morgenstern*, where the use of different key-signatures in various voice-parts results in a poignant fluctuation between major and minor modes.

The *Magnificat* is also, of course, a text associated with Advent and Christmas, being the Cantic of Mary rejoicing at the news that she is to be the Mother of the Redeemer. Pärt's treatment of the text is articulated by changes in scoring, most but not all of them at the ends of verses or half-verses in the text. In many of these sub-sections the soprano maintains a monotone against which other parts move to produce gently shifting harmonic colours.

In *A Hymn to the Mother of God* Tavener employs the simplest of techniques to create harmonies of extraordinary grandeur: the work is scored for two choirs, the second following on the heels of the first, but the piece is not canonic in the conventional sense: the harmonies of the two choirs are simply allowed to clash, producing an impression of monumental inevitability. The *Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God* features two of Tavener's most typical devices: firstly, a drone sustained by the basses (as a support for the opening tenor verse), and secondly the doubling of a single melody in thirds, fifths, and octaves to produce a rich texture of triads moving in parallel. The first of these effects is heard again in the verses of the carol *Today the Virgin* and both devices appear in *God is with us* (also a Christmas carol), together with passages for solo tenor which borrow something of the ornamental style of Byzantine chant.

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Funeral Ikos

Why these bitter words of the dying, O brethren, which they utter as they go hence? I am parted from my brethren. All my friends do I abandon and go hence. But whither I go, that understand I not, neither what shall become of me yonder; Only God, who hath summoned me, knoweth. But make commemoration of me with the song: Alleluia. But whither now go the souls, how dwell they now together there? This mystery have I desired to learn, but none can impart aright. Do they call to mind their own people as we do them? Or have they forgotten all those who mourn them and make the song: Alleluia. We go forth on the path eternal and as condemn'd, with downcast faces, present ourselves before the only God eternal. Where then is comeliness? Where then is wealth? Where then is the glory of this world? There shall none of these things aid us, but only to say of the psalm: Alleluia. If thou hast shown mercy unto man, O man, that same mercy shall be shown thee there; and if on an orphan thou hast shown compassion, the same shall there deliver thee from want. If in this life the naked thou hast cloth'd, the same shall give thee shelter there, and sing the psalm: Alleluia. Youth and the beauty of the body fade at the hour of death, and the tongue then burneth fiercely, and the parch'd throat is inflamed. The beauty of the eyes is quench'd then, the comeliness of the face all altered, the shapeliness of the neck destroyed; And the other parts have become numb, nor often say: Alleluia. With ecstasy are we inflamed if we but hear that there is light eternal yonder: that there is Paradise wherein every soul of righteous ones rejoiceth. Let us all also enter into Christ, that all we may cry aloud thus unto God: Alleluia.

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, & bid thee feed
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb,
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child,
I, a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

(William Blake)

The Tiger

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp?
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

(William Blake)

De profundis (translation)

Out of the depths have I called unto You O Lord: Lord hear my voice.

May Your ears listen to the voice of my prayer.

If You are mindful of sins, O Lord who will bear it?

For there is mercy with You, and because of Your law I have held You up, O Lord.

My soul is supported by His word: my soul hopes in the Lord.

From the morning watch until the night, let Israel hope in the Lord.

For with the Lord there is mercy, and copious redemption.

And He Himself will redeem Israel from all her sins.

Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen (translation)

1. O Wisdom, come from the mouth of the Most High, You span the world from one end unto the other, and order all things with strength and gentleness: come and show us the way of wisdom and understanding.

2. O Adonai, Lord and Master of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning thorn bush, and gave unto him the law on the mountain: O come and absolve us with Your strong arm.

3. O shoot of Jesse's root, set up as a sign for the peoples, the kings of the world fall silent before You, the peoples plead with You: O come and free us, and do not delay long.

4. O key of David, sceptre of the house of Israel, You open and no-one can close, You close and no-one can open: O come and open the prison of darkness and the fetter of death.

5. O morning star, splendour of eternal light, sun radiating justice: O come and shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

6. O King of all peoples, their longing and anticipation, the keystone which supports the building: O come and free mankind, which you formed from clay.

7. O Emmanuel, our king and teacher, the hope and saviour of the peoples: O come, hasten and help us, our Lord and our God.

A Hymn to the Mother of God

In You, O Woman full of Grace, the angelic choirs, and the human race, all creation rejoices. O sanctified Temple, mystical Paradise, and glory of Virgins. In You, O Woman full of Grace, all creation rejoices. All praise be to You.

Hymn for the dormition of the Mother of God

O ye apostles, assembled here from the ends of the earth, bury my body in Gethsemane: and Thou my Son and God, receive my Spirit.

Today the Virgin

1. Today the Virgin comes to the cave

To give birth to the Word eternal:

Rejoice, O World

With the Angels and the Shepherds

Give glory to the Child!

Alleluia!

2. Mary my wife, O Mary my wife!

What do I see?

I took you blameless before the Lord

From the priests of the Temple.

What do I see?

Rejoice, O World etc.

3. Joseph the Bridegroom, O Joseph the Bridegroom!

Do not fear.

God in his mercy has come down to earth.

He takes flesh in my womb

For all the world to see.

Rejoice, O World etc.

4. Mary my Bride, O Mary my Bride,

What do I see?

You, a virgin giving birth.

Strange mystery!

Rejoice, O World etc.

5. Joseph the Bridegroom, O Joseph the Bridegroom!

Do not fear.

God in his mercy has come down to earth.

He takes flesh in my womb

For all the world to see.

Rejoice, O World etc.

6. Warned by the Angel, we believe

That Mary gives birth inexplicable.

To the infant, Christ, our God.

Rejoice, O World etc.

God is with us

God is with us. Hear ye people, even to the uttermost end of the earth.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. The people that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined. For unto us a child is born! For unto us a son is given! And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful! Counsellor! The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

Hear ye people, even to the uttermost end of the earth. God is with us.

Christ is born!

Christ is born!

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