



OXFORD GIRLS' CHOIR

25th ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Musical Director: Richard Vendome
Accompanist: Benedict Lewis-Smith



This evening's programme has three main themes:

- Christmas songs ("Cantiques") by Alexandre Pierre François Boëly, who died 150 years ago this Christmas.
- arias by Handel (who died 250 years ago next year).
- jazz arrangements specially composed for Oxford Girls' Choir by Roderick Williams and Colin Good.

Cantiques – A.P.F. Boëly (1785–1858), on tunes published by Denizot (Paris, 1553),
with vocal harmonizations by Richard Vendome
Seigneur Dieu ouvre la porte
Espritz divins

Di due rai languir costante – Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) – *Georgina Whittington, soprano*

Cantiques – A.P.F. Boëly
Voicy la premiere entrée
Reveillez vous reveillez pastoureaux

operatic arias – G.F. Handel (1685–1759)
Cangiò d'aspetto (Admeto, Re di Tessaglia) – *Anna Souter, contralto*
Lusinghe piu care (Alessandro) – *Clemency Stephenson, soprano*

Cantiques – A.P.F. Boëly
Quel estonnement vient saisir mon ame
Sus sus qu'on se reveille

arias from "Messiah" – Handel
But who may abide – *Lucy Prendergast, contralto*
Rejoice greatly – *Hermione Thompson, soprano*

Cantiques – A.P.F. Boëly
Le vermeil du Soleil
Lyre ce n'est pas en ce chant

Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne in C major – Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707) – *Benedict Lewis-Smith, organ*

Porgi, amor (Le nozze di Figaro) - W.A. Mozart (1756–1791) – *Henrietta Gullifer, mezzo soprano*

Andante con moto in G minor – A.P.F. Boëly – *Richard Vendome, organ*

– INTERVAL (20 minutes) –

music for female voices – Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)
1. Maria, mater gratiae
2. En prière – *Olivia Knops, soprano*
3. Le Ruisseau – *Emma Gullifer, soprano solo*

Un bel di vedremo (Madama Butterfly) – Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) – *Felicity Souter, soprano*

Jazz arrangements for high voices and piano

1. My Baby Just Cares For Me – Nina Simone (arr. Roderick Williams)
 2. The Girl from Ipanema – Antonio Carlos Jobim (arr. Williams) *Rosie Dilnot (contralto)*
 3. Can't Help Lovin' dat Man – Jerome Kern (arr. Williams) *Eleanor Thompson (soprano)*
 4. I Can See Clearly Now – Johnny Nash (arr. Williams)
 5. Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell (arr. Williams)
 6. There Ain't No Sweet Man – Fred Fischer (arr. Colin Good)
- [encore] Good Vibrations – Beach Boys (arr. Williams)

Alexandre Pierre François Boëly was born in 1785 and died 150 years ago on 27th December 1858. He received his first musical instruction from his father, a singer at Saint-Chapelle in Paris and harpist at the court of Versailles, and went on to study violin and piano at the Paris Conservatoire. During the early 19th century he cultivated an old-fashioned but attractive style as a composer, making a special study of Bach, Haydn and Mozart. But, although his work was admired by composers such as Franck and Saint-Saëns, such high taste was no longer appreciated in Parisian society or by the clergy of St Germain-l'Auxerrois, where he was organist from 1840; he was obliged to resign his post there in 1851 and spent the rest of his days working as a piano teacher.

In the *Andante con moto* we hear Boëly's lighter style, but the *Préludes sur des Cantiques de Denisot* are clearly based on Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, composed 130 years earlier. Boëly took his melodies from the *Cantiques du Premier Advenement de Iesu-Christ*, unaccompanied songs on the subject of the Nativity by "le Conte d'Alsinois", the anagrammatic pseudonym of Nicolas Denisot (1515–59). A hand-written note in the British Library copy reads "je crois que la musique est de Marc-Antoine Muret" (1526–85).

Gabriel Urbain Fauré (1845–1924) was the leading French composer of his age and his original melodic and harmonic style paved the way for the language of Debussy and his contemporaries. As a boy he attended the École Niedermeyer studying with, among others, Saint-Saëns. In 1871 he formed the Société Nationale de Musique, together with Chabrier and Duparc, and this gave him a platform for premières of new works. He was a regular performer at Saint-Saëns' salon, succeeding him as choirmaster at the Église de la Madeleine in 1877. In 1896 he became organist there and took over from Massenet as professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, where his students included Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger. Fauré succeeded Dubois as Director of the Conservatoire in 1905, finally retiring due to deafness in 1920.

Le Ruisseau, dating from 1881, is a rarely heard but exquisite setting of an anonymous text for female voices and soprano soloist. *Maria, mater gratiae* was probably composed as a Benediction hymn for the choir of the Madeleine in 1888; it also exists in a version for male voices. *En prière* sets a text by Bordèse and dates from the following year.

The organ of Kidlington Parish Church was designed and built in 1975–6 by Richard Vendome and Paul Hale (now at Southwell Minster) with the help of volunteers and some professional input from Grant, Degens & Bradbeer Ltd, builders of the organ at New College. The most challenging part of the project was the tonal design; the church was re-ordered at this time with a new stone floor and new seating, and the organ reuses material from the former Willis instrument, which was situated in the north transept and was barely audible from the nave. Not being limited by the exigencies of a normal 'rebuild', we were able to plan a substantially new instrument, although the restriction of using old soundboards provided a valuable discipline; the organ has 20 stops and a total of 1378 pipes.

Architecturally, the building has changed little since ca.1440, and it was our intention that the instrument should be at home both in terms of sound and appearance. This has been realized largely by mild voicing and the design of the new organ case of English oak in a conjectural 15th-century style. It was decided that the fresh but warm sound we were aiming at could only be obtained from a carefully scaled new Great chorus, full toned but not over-loud. The project took some 9000 man-hours of work and cost about £6000. Our professional adviser, John Bailey, enabled us to achieve a fine balance between matters technical, musical, historic and financial. The instrument has been played in concert by such distinguished organists as Lady Susi Jeans, James Dalton and David Briggs, and broadcast by BBC Radio 3.

