

## **A reception in the Cholmondeley Room at the House of Lords, Friday 9 May, 2003, 7pm**

### **OXFORD GIRLS' CHOIR**

directed by Richard Vendome and Victoria Couper

accompanied by Colin Good

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For centuries Oxford has been home to some of the finest choral singing in the world. In 1984 a group of families whose sons sang in Oxford's famous male choirs decided to do something for their equally talented daughters, and so the Oxford Girls' Choir was born. Several former members have gone on to make singing their career.

In addition to the standard choral repertoire, OGC explores areas historically associated with women, and has premièred many works by contemporary composers, including Judith Bingham, Howard Haigh, Edward Dudley-Hughes, Kenneth Leaper, Francis Pott, and Roderick Williams, whose popular arrangements make up the core of tonight's programme.

The choir is now part of Oxford Youth Choirs, a registered charity with a staff of seven, which also includes the Oxford Prep Choir (a starter choir for boys and girls aged 4 - 7), Oxford Boys' Choir (for boys aged 7 and over), and a junior girls' choir. Every Saturday morning during term it provides a vocal and musical education for 120 children from state and independent schools in the Oxford area. The choir presents regular public workshops taken by leading musicians, and arranges occasional events such as the 1999 Power of Music symposium (on Music Therapy and Alexander Technique).

OGC has made five recordings of Hildegard von Bingen and other medieval music, and has now begun a project to record some of its unique repertoire, old and new. Lord Berkeley has kindly organised this evening's entertainment in support of this important venture.

**Richard Vendome** was given a piano on his 14th birthday - the date of Kennedy's assassination - and immediately started having lessons. A local clergyman, a man of faith rather than judgement, offered him a job as organist and choirmaster just three months later, and he has worked with choirs ever since. He studied organ, piano and composition at the Royal College of Music, singing in London choirs and at weekends running the music at St Giles' Church in Oxford.

After London he won a scholarship to the Queen's College, Oxford, and stayed on to research 16th-17th century music sources in the beautiful (and in those days very informal) surroundings of Christ Church library, teaching at the Dragon School and elsewhere. In order to keep his choir training skills on the boil Richard started a secular boys' choir (one of the founding members was Colin Good, then aged seven) and later directed the chapel music at Exeter College (where one of his choirboys was Roderick Williams).

In order to "mechanise" the laborious transcription part of his research, he developed algorithms for the computerized printing of music. This work (in the mid 70's) was among the first in its field, and won him British Technology Group and Leverhulme research fellowships at Oxford University, and a British Computer Society Medal in 1990.

Encouraged by the Professor of Music, the late Denis Arnold, who had a particular interest in the Venetian female choral tradition, Richard founded the Oxford Girls' Choir in 1984.

**Victoria Couper** was a member of OGC from 1995-2002 and has stayed to work with the choir this year as an Assistant Tutor before pursuing her further studies. She played the lead

in Roderick Williams' opera *Alice in Wonderland* in 1998, and has sung professionally with the medieval group SINFONYE throughout Europe and the USA.

**Colin Good** has spent his life in music since becoming a chorister at Magdalen College, Oxford, at the age of 9, and later reading music along the High at Queen's. But he was soon drawn inexorably towards the London jazz scene, fast winning a reputation as a skilled arranger and a hip hard-driving piano soloist.

Over the next decade, he worked as player, composer and arranger, mixing TV and theatre work with his role as musical director of the 30's-style orchestra Vile Bodies. It was his cameo role as a nightclub pianist in Sir Iain McKellen's modern dress film of *Richard III* that first, indirectly, brought him into contact with Bryan Ferry. Colin was the natural choice as keyboard artist for the *Best of Roxy Music* tour that followed, and as arranger, co-producer and pianist he has been at the heart of Bryan's latest album *Frantic*.

Years ago Colin toured with the Ink Spots. In one of their last ever sessions at Maida Vale Studios in London, the lead singer sauntered over to the fresh-faced pianist who was almost fifty years his junior: "For such a young man", he said softly, "you're playing goddam well". And as you'll hear, he still is.

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## programme

My baby just cares for me - Simone, arr. Roderick Williams  
Love walked in - Gershwin (solo - Rosie Dilnot)  
The girl from Ipanema - Jobim, arr. Williams  
Big yellow taxi - Mitchell, arr. Williams

Amarilli, mia bella - Caccini (solo - Sophie Kent)  
Erlkönig - Schubert (solo - Miranda Jewess)

Somebody loves me - Gershwin, arr. Colin Good  
Ain't misbehavin' - Waller, arr. Richard Vendome (solo - Sasha Brown)  
Summertime - Gershwin (solo - Daisy Venables)  
I can see clearly now - Nash, arr. Williams

Voi, che sapete - Mozart (solo - Gaia Marcus)  
Batti, batti, O bel Masetto - Mozart (solo - Charlotte Roberts)

Killing me softly - Gimbel/Fox, arr. Williams  
Can't help lovin' dat man - Kern (solo - Jess Butcher)  
They can't take that away from me - Gershwin (solo - Katie Birtill)  
Good vibrations - Beach Boys, arr. Williams