

A reception in the Cholmondeley Room at the House of Lords, Friday 26 March, 2004, 7pm

OXFORD GIRLS' CHOIR

directed by Richard Vendome and Penelope Martin-Smith, accompanied by Colin Good

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, some of whose popular arrangements are heard in 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. Venetian music for female voices is another choir interest, and Lord Berkeley has kindly organised this evening's entertainment in support of the choir's forthcoming visit to Venice.

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.

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.

Oxford Girls' Choir
a 20th anniversary reception
in the Cholmondeley Room
at the House of Lords
Friday 26th March 2004

directed by Richard Vendome and Penelope Martin-Smith
accompanied by Colin Good

Somebody loves me - George Gershwin, arr. Colin Good
Summertime (*Amy Charles, soprano*) - George Gershwin
The girl from Ipanema (*Jessica Butcher, mezzo*) - Antonio Carlos Jobim, arr. Roderick Williams

Les roses d'Ispahan (*Katriona Birtill, soprano*) - Gabriel Fauré
Au bord du clair ruisseau (*Sophie Kent, mezzo*) - Gabriel Fauré

Begin the beguine (*Hermione Thompson, soprano*) - Jerome Kern
My baby just cares for me - Nina Simone, arr. Roderick Williams
My funny Valentine (*Jessica Butcher, mezzo*) - Rogers and Hart

Sutra [2003] (*Daisy Venables, flute*) - Kenneth Leaper

Ain't misbehavin' (*Aliki Salter, soprano*) - Fats Waller, arr. Richard Vendome
My romance (*Daisy Venables, mezzo*) - Rogers and Hart
What can I do (*Sasha Brown, mezzo*) - Corrs, arr. Roderick Williams

In a mist (*Colin Good, piano*) - Bix Beiderbecke

It ain't necessarily so (*Katriona Birtill, soprano*) - George Gershwin
Can't help lovin' dat man (*Rosie Dilnot, Rita Oldenbourg, mezzos*) - Jerome Kern, arr. Roderick Williams
Big yellow taxi - Joni Mitchell, arr. Roderick Williams

[encore – Good Vibrations – Beach Boys]