

12 November 1978

ROYAL
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SOCIETY

75

Assembly Hall Theatre · Royal Tunbridge Wells
ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY
75th ANNIVERSARY SEASON

BRAHMS

GERMAN REQUIEM. Op 45

FAURÉ

REQUIEM Op. 48

HELEN WALKER — Soprano
GLYN DAVENPORT — Bass Baritone
FULL ORCHESTRA
Leader: Penelope Howard

ORGANIST
Anthony Smith-Masters

CONDUCTED BY
Derek Watmough

Sunday, 12th. November 1978 at 3 p.m.

This profile on a rising young singer from Tunbridge Wells has been specially written for this programme by Ted Marchant



Helen Walker

Soloist Helen Walker, the girl who is 100 per cent Tunbridge Wells, has her feet half way up the ladder of success towards becoming a truly international lyric and dramatic soprano.

This is the opinion of her tutor Hans Hotter, the leading bass baritone who is remembered especially for his Wotan at Covent Garden.

Helen was born to sing. At Tunbridge Wells Grammar School, where she obtained seven 'O' and three 'A' levels, she much preferred singing to mathematics, and performed solos with the choir and on special occasions throughout the school year. One day she timorously asked her teacher Margaret Mortimore, who is now the Choral Society's Concert Secretary, if she thought she was good enough to make music her career.

An audition was arranged with Dr. John Haynes, who was then County Education Officer at Maidstone. He was so impressed that he told his friend Dr. Bela de Csillery, Music Advisor to the Kent Education Committee, about Helen and, in his turn, Dr. de Csillery invited her to sing with his Youth Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall. By then, she had already given her first solo performance in public with Myer Fredman's Tunbridge Wells Opera here in the Assembly Hall.

Events now moved swiftly. Dr. de Csillery telephoned the Principal of the Guildhall School of Music in London and, after a further audition, she was accepted as a student. Five years of hard work followed, and on leaving the College in 1976 she joined the Glyndebourne Touring Opera — that nursery for promising young musicians.

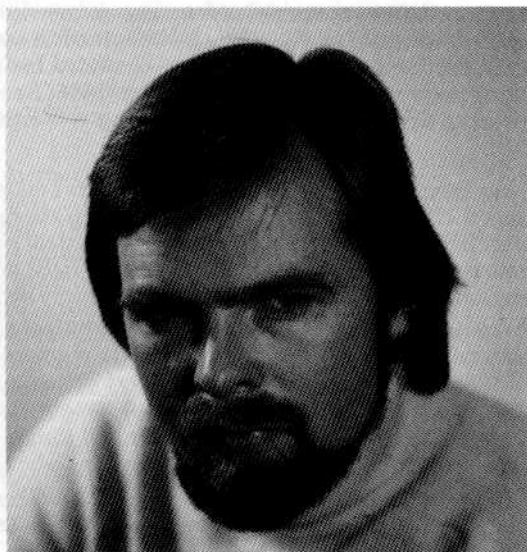
From the chorus she graduated to the position of understudy, and got her first 'break' with a favourite part — Fiordiligi in 'Cosi fan Tutte' — which, she

says, has always been lucky for her. She was called to step in for two performances when a principal was suddenly taken ill. Her performance was widely acclaimed by the critics.

Other engagements quickly followed, including her first appearance with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society in November 1977.

She has recently sung Pamina in 'Der Zauberflöte', and has broadcast on BBC 3, Radios Medway, Brighton and Oxford, and on Southern TV. She has extended her field to singing with Harry Blech's London Mozart Orchestra, and the Handel Opera Society together with such noted artists as Anthony Rolfe-Johnson, Teresa Cahill and Michael Rippon.

What is the secret of this girl of twenty-six who has not allowed success to spoil her natural charm? Just hard work and the help of many people at school, at Glyndebourne and at South East Arts. And she still takes lessons from her London teacher Noelle Barker, and twice a year she spends two or three weeks studying with Hans Hotter in Munich.



Glyn Davenport

When Glyn Davenport's family moved south from Yorkshire he became a chorister at Portsmouth Cathedral and, at the age of ten, was accepted as a pupil by the Winchester Choir School and, later, by Lancing College, during which time he played the viola with the National Youth Orchestra.

In 1970 he was awarded a scholarship to enable him to study singing at the Royal College of Music, and a subsequent scholarship from the German Government enabled him to study lieder in Hamburg. In 1972 he won the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Award.

The following year saw a highly successful début at the Wigmore Hall and he is now in steady demand as a soloist with leading orchestras and choral societies up and down the country, as well as with opera companies at Aldeburgh, Windsor, Wexford and Flanders.

The richness of Brahms and the delicacy of Fauré

For this opening concert in our 75th anniversary season we have chosen two great masterpieces, each of which carries the word 'Requiem' in its title. Yet two more different examples from the choral repertoire of the latter part of the 19th century can scarcely be imagined. A span of only twenty years separates the two works: Brahms completed his Requiem in 1868 and the Fauré Requiem was first performed in 1888. Between the two stands another towering achievement in choral writing — Verdi's great Manzoni Requiem of 1874.

It has been argued that the title of the Brahms work is in fact a misnomer since it offers up no prayer for the dead: in sharp contrast, Fauré follows a strict liturgical form. Brahms's rich orchestral scoring is often dark and sombre in texture, while that of Fauré is light and delicate, in which highly original harmonies are used within a strictly conventional form.

There has been a great deal of rather pointless speculation as to whether Brahms wrote his 'German Requiem' in memory of his mother or of his fellow-composer and compatriot Robert Schumann, whose death affected Brahms deeply. What we do know for certain is that his choice of non-liturgical texts, drawn from the Bible and the Apocrypha, was quite deliberate and that 'nothing made him angrier than to be taken for an orthodox church composer on account of his sacred compositions'.

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In his introductory essay to the Novello edition, Ernest Newman makes the point that Brahms 'is one of the select few whom we feel to be thinkers in music; his whole work embodies a philosophy of life none the less definite for not being expressed, or perhaps expressible, in words....' This same point has been taken up by Andrew Porter: "The German Requiem has as its subject the living rather than the dead. It is a Protestant's reflections on the mysteries of death and an affirmation of what a Christian's attitude towards them should be'.

Fauré composed his Requiem to the memory of his father, who died at Toulouse in 1885. It was first performed at the Madeleine, in Paris, in 1888, by which time his mother had also died. The work was given a rather mixed, not to say lukewarm, reception by the critics: Eric Blom has suggested that 'it may have appeared too audacious in technique, yet too mild in effect'. Even today we find a French critic still asserting that 'religious music never inspired Fauré to his best, and the popularity of the rather "smooth" music of the Requiem has contributed to his reputation as a sentimental rather than as a profound composer'. What nonsense this is: can it be that, like Berlioz, Fauré is a prophet without honour in his own country?

Not for the first time nor, I daresay, for the last, have audiences all over the world proved the critics wrong. They at least have long recognised Fauré's Requiem for what it is — a work of translucent beauty and one which, to quote the words of our own conductor at a recent rehearsal, is 'sunny, hopeful, gentle and mild.'

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BRAHMS German Requiem, Op 45

I Chorus

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

II Chorus

Behold, all flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower thereof is fallen.

III Baritone Solo and Chorus

Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days: let me know how frail I am, that I be made sure how long I have to live.

IV Chorus

How lovely are Thy dwellings fair, O Lord of hosts!

V Soprano Solo and Chorus

Ye now have sorrow: but I will again behold you, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.

VI Baritone Solo and Chorus

For we have here no abiding city, but yet we seek that to come.

VII Chorus

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours; and their works shall follow after them.

FAURÉ Requiem, Op 48

- I* Introit — Kyrie
- II* Offertorium
- III* Sanctus
- IV* Pie Jesu
- V* Agnus Dei
- VI* Libera me
- VII* In Paradisum

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Assembly Hall Theatre

CONCERT DIARY

1978

- 3 December 3 pm Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra. Soloist: Gillian Samson. Guest Conductor; John Carewe. Works by Wagner, Mendlessohn and Dvořák.
- 10 December 3 pm Green Room (Music) Club
Musikverein Quartet of Vienna. Works by Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert.
- 17 December 7.45 pm **Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society**
CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND CAROLS
Soloists: Alexandra Thompson and Mark Adam.
Mayfield Silver Band conducted by Ken Rich.
Choir and audience conducted by Derek Watmough.

1979

- 21 January 3 pm Green Room (Music) Club
Prize-Winning Young Concert Artists
Works by Duparc, Walton, Rossini, Saint-Saens, Fauré, Britten and Prokofiev.
- 4 February 3 pm Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra
Soloists: Bernard Roberts. Conductor: Elgar Howarth. Works by Mendlessohn, Beethoven and Vaughan Williams
- 18 February 3 pm Green Room (Music) Club
Richard Hickox String Orchestra
Works by Vivaldi, Elgar, Berkeley, Holst and Pachelbel.
- 4 March 3 pm Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra
Soloists: Angela Tennick and Jane Pamment. Conductor: Elgar Howarth. Works by Haydn, Charles Ives, Bach, Howard Jones and Beethoven.

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- 18 March Green Room (Music) Club
3 pm Song Makers' Almanac at Home.
- 24 March Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society
7.30 pm **75th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT**
Carl Orff — Carmina Burana
William Walton — Facade
Constant Lambert — Rio Grande
Soloists: Barbara Lowe and Stephen Roberts. Special
Guest appearance of RICHARD BAKER as Narrator.
Conductor: Derek Watmough.
- 1 April Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra.
3 pm Soloist: Valerie Tryon. Conductor: Elgar Howarth. Works by
Borodin, Rachmaninov and Elgar.
- 29 April Green Room (Music) Club
3 pm Music Group of London. Works by Brahms, Hindemith and
Schubert.
- 20 May Green Room (Music) Club
3 pm Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. Works by Handel, Bach,
Haydn and Tchaikovsky
- 3 June Green Room (Music) Club
8 pm Robert Tear and Benjamin Luxon. An evening of Victorian
Ballads

We would like to thank all our advertisers for their continued support during our current season. The Society's programmes represent a prestige advertising medium for both local and national companies who wish to reach, at minimum cost, a quality audience throughout the Borough of Royal Tunbridge Wells. A limited amount of space is still available for full rates and details, please write to the Vice-Chairman, John Veysey, Finchcocks Cottage, Goudhurst, Kent.

