

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY
81ST SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

SUNDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 1984

3.00 p.m.

“AUTUMN” FROM “THE SEASONS”

HAYDN

“REQUIEM”

MOZART

ORCHESTRA LEADER : JANE PAMMENT

CONDUCTOR: DEREK WATMOUGH

Entry by Programme—£3.50
(Senior Citizens £3.00, Children £1.50)

Seats and Programmes

Now that the seating in the Assembly Hall has been much improved by the advent of raked seating, practically all the seats in the Hall have a good view and good acoustics. For our performances there is one problem – we can no longer remove seats from the rear of the Hall and re-arrange the remaining seats in order to make room for the orchestra. That being so, the front five rows of arm chairs have now to be removed. This further democratises the seating, for they are now all the same size! Accordingly, we have felt it right to have one price entry (with reductions for senior citizens and children).

Even with the reduced seating which the raked arrangement imposes, the Hall is rarely full for our concerts. Rather than print numbered tickets and sell particular seats we have also thought it better to give everyone a free choice of seat, and to include the price of the programme in the entry price. We hope that you will approve of this arrangement.

There is one snag. Less mobile members of the audience will not wish to climb up to the balcony or up the raked seating. For this concert we shall be reserving a small number of ground level seats for those who cannot reach a seat elsewhere. Please ask for one if you require it at the door on the day. We shall review that arrangement after the concert.

“AUTUMN” from “THE SEASONS”

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Haydn

Susan Bullock – Soprano

Peter Bronder – Tenor

Lawrence Wallington – Bass-baritone

The Text of “The Seasons” is based mainly on the Scottish poet James Thomson’s poem “Seasons” with a new happy ending supplied by the adapter and translator Baron van Swieten. “Spring” speaks of man ploughing and sowing the land, and having done his part invoking Heaven to “be propitious and spread a rich autumnal feast”. The “fervent prayers are heard” and God “makes glad the heart of man” by providing all that is needed for the crops. “Spring” ends with an extended chorus of praise to Almighty Lord.

“Summer” is far more secular, giving praise to the sun rather than God. In a passage which is very topical this year the poet speaks of “drooping leafage, thirsty pastures, founts exhausted, and panting man and beast”; but help is at hand, for a thunderstorm breaks. As it dies away, “the twinkling stars to sleep invite”.

“Autumn” is even more secular, praising “Industry” as the source of every good. However, industry is soon forgotten in the joys of love, game shooting, the hunt, wine and dancing. One feels, instinctively, that Haydn must have enjoyed setting this section, despite his 70 years.

“Winter” speaks of “light and life” languishing dejectedly. In the winter, however, spinning and weaving can proceed in the light and warmth of the cottage, and when the daily tasks are done, story-telling can take place around the fire. Finally, the work asks God to direct us in all our ways so that we may enter into eternal life.

“AUTUMN”

1. Overture
2. Whate’er the blossom’d spring Recit.
3. Thus nature ever kind Terzetto & Chorus
4. Ye swains, now hasten Recit.
5. Ye gay and painted fair Duet
6. Lo! Where the plenteous harvest wav’d Recit.
7. Behold, along the dewy grass Air
8. Ere yet the orient sun Recit.
9. Hark! the mountains resound Chorus
10. The vineyard now its wealth displays Recit.
11. Joyful the liquor flows Chorus

INTERVAL 15 MINUTES

“REQUIEM”

Mozart

—
 Susan Bullock — Soprano
 Marion Olsen — Mezzo-soprano
 Peter Bronder — Tenor
 Lawrence Wallington — Bass-baritone

1. “Requiem with Kyrie” Chorus with soprano solo
2. “Dies Irae” Chorus
3. “Tuba Mirum” Quartet
4. “Rex Tremendae Majestatis” Chorus
5. “Recordare” Quartet
6. “Confutatis” Chorus
7. “Lacrymosa” Chorus
8. “Domine Jesu” Chorus with solos
9. “Hostias” Chorus
10. “Sanctus and Hosanna” Chorus
11. “Benedictus” Quartet
12. “Agnus Dei” Chorus with soprano solo

There is a slightly tenuous connection between the works we are performing today. Although Haydn did compose one or two works after the first performance of “The Seasons” in April 1801, it was his last great work. He himself said “‘The Seasons’ gave me the finishing stroke’. When he died on 31 May 1809, Mozart’s “Requiem” was performed in his honour at the Schottenkirche in Vienna. Mozart’s last work was, of course, his “Requiem”, which was left unfinished when he died on 5 December 1791. Strangely enough, the “Requiem” was the first of Mozart’s vocal works (including his operas) to be performed in England (at Covent Garden Theatre on February 20, 1801), two months before the first performance of “The Seasons” in Vienna.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 to 1809) had been fired by Handel's oratorios which he heard during visits to London. When he had completed "The Creation" his friend Baron van Swieten persuaded him to commence another oratorio, the words of which he had adapted from Thomson's poem "Seasons". Haydn was reluctant, for he felt his powers were failing, but once he began to compose, "The Seasons" was soon completed, for the work as a whole interested him much. Both "The Creation" and "The Seasons" are remarkable for their freshness, despite the age which Haydn had attained when he composed them (nearly seventy). He wrote nearly one thousand works, but each was composed with care and deliberation. Many Haydn quotations have come down to us and two which are relevant to "The Seasons" are "Singing is almost one of the forgotten arts, and that is why the instruments are allowed to overpower the voices." (He objected to composers not learning to sing.) "It is the air which is the charm of music, and it is that which is most difficult to produce. The invention of a fine melody is a work of genius." Would that such aphorisms were more regarded today.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) wrote six hundred works in a life span less than one-half of Haydn's. The story of the commission to write a Requiem is too long for a programme note, and those who would like more information are referred to "The story of Mozart's Requiem" (Novello and Co. Ltd). Suffice it to say that at the age of thirty-five Mozart was subject to a tangle of sordid cares and difficulties. To these problems was added physical and mental overstrain which laid him open to the deadly typhus. The commission to write a Requiem for a mysterious stranger seemed in his disordered imagination an evil device to provide for his own funeral. Yet he worked hard during the remaining weeks of his life and it held his intensest ardour to the end. But it was unfinished when he died, and this caused his widow great trouble, for Mozart had been paid in advance and she feared that she might have to repay the commission fee. It occurred to her and her friends that someone might be found to complete the work. Fortunately, a pupil of Mozart's and one who had been with him during much of the time he was composing "The Requiem", agreed to do so. Francois Xavier Sussmayer was able to complete the accompaniments for numbers 2 to 6 and 8 and 9 from Mozart's very clear directions, and we may look upon those items as if every note had been written by the master himself. No. 1 (Requiem with Kyrie) was completely finished by Mozart. The first eight bars of No. 7 "Lacrymosa" were almost completely written by Mozart, and represent the last strokes of his pen. The remainder of No. 7 and Nos 10 ("Sanctus and Hosanna"), 11 ("Benedictus") and 12 ("Agnus Dei") were written by Sussmayer, and there is no proof that Mozart had any hand in them. However, there may have been some scraps of notes which Mozart left, but as Sussmayer also had the ability to imitate Mozart's manuscript writing, we shall never know for sure how much original Sussmayer there is in the work. Suffice it to say that he was a very competent musician, and we must be grateful that he was on-hand when needed.

TODAY'S SOLOISTS

SUSAN BULLOCK (Soprano) comes from Cheadle Hulme in Cheshire and began her singing career as a Junior Exhibitioner at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. After graduating from London University with an Honours Degree in Music, she entered the Royal Academy of Music as a post-graduate student of Marjorie Thomas. In 1983 she was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship, and also won the singing prize at the Royal Overseas League Music Festival. She has been the soprano soloist in a "Messiah from Scratch" at the Royal Albert Hall.

MARION OLSEN (Mezzo-soprano) was born in New Zealand and came to this country in 1981. The 1983-84 Season saw her debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and she is singing most of the familiar oratorio roles during the current year.

PETER BRONDER (Tenor) was born in Hertfordshire of German/Austrian parentage and worked in the electronics industry while studying privately with Peter Harrison and later with Joy Mammen at the Royal Academy of Music. He has sung the leading tenor roles in a number of operas and on the concert platform the tenor solos in Verdi's "Requiem" and Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana". Recently he appeared at the Wigmore Hall in Masterclasses with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Tito Gobbi.

LAWRENCE WALLINGTON (Bass-baritone) won a Choral Scholarship from Charterhouse to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he gained an Honours degree in French and German. He won first prize and the Alec Redshaw Memorial Award in the first Grimsby International Singing Competition in 1980. He made his debut at the Albert Hall in a Prom. performance of Handel's "Hercules" and next year will be singing in the "Messiah" in Westminster Abbey during the Handel celebrations in May.

All these soloists are new to the Society and we extend a warm welcome to them.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

at the Assembly Hall
at 3.00 pm

Sunday 18th November 1984 – Green Room Music Club Concert

Sunday 2nd December 1984 – Symphony Orchestra Concert

Sunday 16th December 1984 – Choral Society "Carols"

Sunday 24th March 1985 – "St John Passion"

THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

81st SEASON

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We are most grateful for the support of Patrons and Vice Presidents, and new ones are always welcome. Please ring or write to the General Secretary, Mr L.A. Lee, 233 Greggs Wood Road, Tunbridge Wells (T.W. 21937).

The Choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please ring the General Secretary (as above) if you are interested in becoming a singing member.

The National Federation of Music Societies to which the Society is affiliated, give support towards the cost of concerts with the funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council also provides guarantees.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a registered charity.