

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

87th SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
SUNDAY 14th APRIL 1991

3.00 p.m.

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**A SEA SYMPHONY**  
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

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Helen Walker *Soprano*  
John Oakley-Tucker *Baritone*

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**GLORIA**  
POULENC

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Helen Walker *Soprano*

*Orchestra led by* PENELOPE HOWARD

CONDUCTOR  
DEREK WATMOUGH

*Programme 50p*

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## GLORIA *Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)*

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**P**oulenc was born of a wealthy family and remained a bachelor until he died. His musical philosophy can be summed up in a letter he wrote in 1944 in which he said, "I know perfectly well that I'm not one of those composers who have made harmonic innovations like Stravinsky, Ravel or Debussy, but I think there is room for new music which doesn't mind using other people's chords. Wasn't that the case with Mozart or Schubert?"

When we consider that the first performance of the Gloria was only just over 30 years ago, we can, perhaps, be thankful that Poulenc was, above all, a melodic composer.

In his youth he was described as one of "les sportifs de la musique" and, on another occasion as "part monk, part guttersnipe". His religiousness is always merry (and why should it not be?), but there are passages of deep feeling for, in his later life, he was a devout catholic.

The Gloria was composed in 1959 and was commissioned in memory of Serge Koussevitzky (conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1924 to 1949) and his wife, Natalie. There are six sections: *Gloria, Laudamus Te, Domini Deus, Domini Fili Unigenite, Domine Deus Agnus Dei* and *Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris*.

G.D.S.

**Helen Walker - Soprano**

INTERVAL 15 Minutes

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## A SEA SYMPHONY *Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958)*

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**T**he early works of Vaughan-Williams show little evidence of that unmistakable personal idiom which is so recognisable to music lovers. He began to develop his individual style in his thirties with "Songs of Travel", "A Norfolk Rhapsody" and "Toward the Un-

known Region"; then came the work which established him as an important composer of remarkable originality.

**A Sea Symphony** was first performed at the Leeds Festival in 1910, conducted by the composer. He was then thirty-eight, and had

spent seven years working on it. Walt Whitman's words deal with the sea in varying moods and aspects, the ships, and the men who sail in them. But there is also a more philosophical meaning: man sailing on the sea of life, and the voyage of his soul to its ultimate destination.

The opening is electrifying when heard for the first time. After a very brief fanfare the chorus proclaims: "Behold the sea itself, and on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships"; on the word "sea" the orchestra comes surging in, conveying an impression of great waves. Later the words are concerned with ships, wind and spray, sailors, and flags of all nations; towards the end a quieter section is a lament for "all that went down, doing their duty"; the movement ends peacefully.

The second movement is headed "*On the beach at night, alone*" and the orchestra begins by depicting a deserted seashore, with the waves lapping gently in the darkness. The poem tells of the "one-ness" of the universe, "all distances, all souls, all nations, all identities, this vast similitude spans them".

In the third movement, "*The Waves*" which is very lively indeed,

chorus and orchestra combine to give a vivid picture of sweeping waves, flying spray and billowing sails.

"*The Explorers*", the final movement, is the longest and most profound. Here the poet and composer grapple with the subjects of the world, the universe, man's place in the scheme of time, and the journey of the soul toward an unknown region; the music has a solemn spaciousness and a kind of ecstatic yearning. After a long section for chorus and orchestra only, the soloists have an extended duet, in which the baritone seems to represent "man" and the soprano his soul; this beautiful passage has a rapt religious fervour. Suddenly the music becomes more vigorous, with the chorus singing "Away, O Soul! hoist instantly the anchor... Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only"; the soloists join in and a very dramatic climax is reached. After a brief silence, the mood changes to quiet resignation; soloists and chorus sing the words "O my brave soul! O farther, farther sail", and the music sails farther and farther away until it is completely out of our hearing.

*Roy Douglas*

**Helen Walker - Soprano**  
**John Oakley-Tucker - Baritone**

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# GLORIA

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- i* Gloria  
*ii* Laudamus Te  
*iii* Domine Deus  
*iv* Domini Fili Unigenite  
*v* Dominus Deus, Agnus Dei  
*vi* Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris
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## A SEA SYMPHONY

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### *i* A Song For All Seas, All Ships

Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;  
See, where their white sails, bellying in the  
wind, speckle the green and blue,  
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming  
in or out of port,  
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants  
of smoke.  
Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships.

Today a rude brief recitative,  
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special  
flag or ship-signal,  
Of unnamed heroes in the ships – of waves  
spreading and sprcading as far as the eye  
can reach,  
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and  
blowing,  
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all  
nations,  
Fitful like a surge.  
Of sea captains, young and old, and the mates,  
and of all intrepid sailors,  
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate  
can never surprise nor death dismay,  
Picked sparingly, without noise by thee, old  
ocean, chosen by thee,  
Thou sea that pickest and cullst the race in  
time, and unitest nations,  
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying  
thee,  
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Flaunt out, O sea, your separate flags of  
nations!

Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-  
signals!  
But do you reserve especially for yourself and  
for the soul of man one flag above all the  
rest,  
A spiritual woven signal for all nations,  
emblem of man elate above death,  
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid  
sailors and mates,  
And all that went down doing their duty,  
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid  
captains young and old,  
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time,  
o'er all brave sailors,  
All seas, all ships.

### *ii* On The Beach At Night Alone

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro  
singing her husky song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a  
thought of the clef of the universes and of  
the future.  
A vast similitude interlocks all,  
All distances of place however wide,  
All distances of time,  
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever  
so different,  
All nations, all identities that have existed or  
may exist,  
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present,  
future,  
This vast similitude spans them, and always  
has spanned,  
And shall forever span them and compactly  
hold and enclose them.

### iii (Scherzo) The Waves

After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,  
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars  
and ropes,  
Below, a myriad, myriad waves hastening,  
lifting up their necks,  
Tending in ceaseless flow towards the track of  
the ship,  
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling,  
blithely prying,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven,  
emulous, waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and  
buoyant with curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking  
displaced the surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the  
ocean yearningly flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes,  
flashing and frolicsome under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of  
foam and many fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the  
wake following.

### iv The Explorers

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,  
Covered all over with visible power and  
beauty,  
Alternate light and day and the teeming  
spiritual darkness,  
Unspeaking high processions of sun and  
moon and countless stars above,  
Below, the manifold grass and waters,  
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden  
prophetic intention,  
Now first it seems my thought begins to span  
thee.  
Down from the gardens of Asia descending,  
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad  
progeny after them,  
Wandering, yearning with restless explorations,  
questionings, baffled, formless,  
feverish, with never happy hearts  
that sad incessant refrain, —  
*"Wherefore unsatisfied soul?  
Whither O mocking life?"*  
Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?  
Who justify these restless explorations?  
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?  
Yet Soul be sure the first intent remains, and  
shall be carried out,  
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.  
After the seas are all crossed,

After the great captains and engineers have  
accomplished their work  
After the noble inventors,  
Finally shall come the poet worthy of that name,  
The true son of God shall come singing his  
songs.

O we can wait no longer,  
We too take ship, O Soul,  
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,  
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of  
ecstasy to sail,  
Amid the wafting winds (thou pressing me to  
thee, I thee to me, O Soul)  
Caroling free, singing our song of God,  
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

O Soul thou pleasest thee, I thee,  
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in  
the night,  
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space  
and Death, like waters flowing,  
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,  
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave  
me all over,  
Bathe me, O God, in thee, mounting to thee,  
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O thou transcendent,  
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,  
Light of the light, shedding forth universes,  
thou centre of them.  
Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,  
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space  
and Death,  
But that I, turning, call to thee O Soul, thou  
actual me,  
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,  
Thou matest time, smilest content at Death,  
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater stars or suns  
Bounding O Soul thou journeyest forth;  
Away O Soul! hoist instantly the anchor!  
Cut the hawsers — haul out — shake out every sail!  
Sail forth — steer for the deep waters only.  
Reckless O Soul, exploring, I with thee, and  
thou with me,  
For we are bound where mariner has not yet  
dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.  
O my brave soul!  
O farther, farther sail!  
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas  
of God?  
O farther, farther, farther sail!

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## THE SOLOISTS

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**John Oakley-Tucker** (baritone) trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has since studied in masterclasses and privately with the late Sir Peter Pears, Gérard Souzay and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf; currently he studies with David Pollard. In 1986 he was chosen to take part in the first Songmakers' Almanac masterclasses with Graham Johnson. His many awards have included the Countess of Munster Musical scholarship.

His recent concert work has ranged from Handel's *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*, Mozart's *C Minor Mass*, Schubert's *Masses*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solonelle*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Dvorak's *Te Deum*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and Elgar's *The Apostles* through to contemporary music.

In opera, John Oakley-Tucker has sung roles in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Masetto), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Count Almaviva, Figaro), *Così fan Tutte* (Guglielmo) and, at the Cockpit Theatre, *The Magic Flute* (Papageno); the title role in *Owen Wingrave* at the Aldeburgh Festival and Menotti's *The Telephone* (Ben) in performance at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. He has also sung several operatic roles for Camden, Henley and Edinburgh festival and worked last season with Scottish Opera in Judith Weir's *The Vanishing Bridegroom* and Berlioz' *The Trojans*. John has been a member of the Glyndebourne Festival Chorus for three seasons, taking part with them in a BBC Prom appearance, television recording and BBC Radio 3 broadcast. Most recently for Glyndebourne he covered the role of Sid in Britten's *Albert Herring* and sang in their Royal Festival hall concert performance of Janacek's *Jenufa* with The London Philharmonic Orchestra under Andrew Davis.

He is well known on the recital platform and has performed with The Songmakers' Almanac and Graham Johnson on many occasions.

Future engagements include concert performances of Mozart's *Requiem* and Symanovsky's *Stabat Mater* while in recital he will perform Schubert's *Winterreise*.

John Oakley-Tucker was invited to Berlin to take the lead role of Tom in Henze's opera *The English Cat* which formed part of that composer's birthday celebrations. For subsequent performances at Montepulciano, Italy, which were also

broadcast live by Italian radio, John received considerable critical acclaim in the English press. 1991 will involve further performances of *The English Cat* in the BBC's Henze Festival at the Barbican, London and a recording of the work for German television. He will also take part in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Venture singing in one of the newly commissioned operas.

**Helen Walker** (soprano) was born Tunbridge Wells and trained at the Guildhall School of Music with Noelle Barker. Honours won in the early years of her career include the Susan Longfield Competition, the Ricordi Prize for Opera, South East Arts Young Musicians Competition, the Mozart Memorial Prize, The Glyndebourne Touring Award and the prestigious John Christie Award.

For Glyndebourne Touring Opera she has sung Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Anne Trulove (*Rake's Progress*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan Tutti*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Ninetta; and for the Glyndebourne Festival she has sung Fiordiligi, Elettra (*Idomeneo*), Virtu and Poppea, and also Helena at Hong Kong, a role she has also sung at Covent Garden and in the Aldeburgh Festival.

Other British opera companies for whom she has sung include Opera North (Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Fenena in *Nabucco and Cassilda*), Opera Northern Ireland (Alice Ford in *Falstaff*), Handel Opera Society, the English Bach Festival, Chelsea Opera, New Sadler's Wells Opera and the English Music Theatre.

Helen Walker is also a popular concert artist and she has worked with many of this country's major orchestras and with choral societies throughout the British Isles. Concert engagements have also taken her to France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Israel and Hong Kong and her repertoire includes Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, Mendelssohn's *The Elijah*, Verdi's *Requiem* and all the popular oratorio works.

Current engagements include Strauss's Elektra at Covent Garden and the combined roles of Freia, Sieglinde and Guttrune in the highly successful City of Birmingham Touring Opera version of Wagner's *The Ring Saga* produced by Graham Vick.

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# THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

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<b>Honorary Life President:</b>	John H. Johnson
<b>Chairman:</b>	Helen McNab
<b>Musical Director and Principal Conductor:</b>	Derek Watmough
<b>Honorary Life Member:</b>	Anthony Smith-Masters

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

The choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please contact the Membership Secretary Miss M Standen - 38 Sandhurst Avenue, Pembury, Kent TN2 4JZ, Tel Pembury 2048 - we shall be pleased to have you join us.

# PROGRAMME FOR NEXT SEASON

Sunday 8th December 1991

Coronation Mass *Mozart*

Fantasia on Christmas Carols *Vaughan-Williams*

Carols for Choir and Audience *John Rutter*

Sunday 12th April 1992

Messrs Solenelle de St.Cecile *Gounod*

The Music Makers *Elgar*



The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society acknowledges, with thanks, financial assistance from the South East Arts Association