

*Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society*

# **THE KINGDOM**

## **EDWARD ELGAR**



**Saturday 15th April 2000**

**7.30pm**

**Programme 50p**

**Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society**  
**Musical Director and Conductor: DEREK WATMOUGH**  
**Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society Orchestra**  
**Leader: RITA FRENCH**

**Lyn Cook - Soprano**

Lyn was born in Stroud and was encouraged to pursue a singing career after winning prizes at the Cheltenham Festival of Music. While studying at the Royal Academy of Music with Marjorie Thomas, she gained a notable reputation for her London performances with the student Baroque group under Michael Proctor and for a series of recitals with the Norwegian pianist Bjorg Julsrud. On completion of her Diploma course she received a Vaughan Williams Trust Award to continue her studies, giving performances of Opera, Oratorio and Concert work under many notable conductors. Her portrayal of Micaela in *Carmen* received much critical acclaim. Her work during master classes at Aldeburgh particularly impressed Sir Peter Pears and Geoffrey Shaw. She now continues her studies with Keith Bonnington and has established an enviable reputation for Concert work. In 1987 Lyn joined the English National Opera where she has been chosen to sing cameo roles in *Madam Butterfly*, *Osud*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Force of Destiny*, *Cunning Little Vixen* and *Damnation of Faust*. In 1990 she toured the USSR with the company and amongst recent acclaimed concert performances have been *Messiah* (Handel), *Requiem* (Verdi), *Pastoral* (Bliss), *B minor Mass* (Bach) and the first performance of a new translation of *St John's Passion* by Neil Jenkins. Major understudies include Chloe in *Queen of Spades*, Lidka in *Two Widows*, Heavenly Voice in *Damnation of Faust* and first Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*. In 1996 she made her debut as Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. Lyn has also recently taken part in the Baylis Programme of ENO in an adaptation of *The Magic Flute* for schools. Future plans include understudying First Lady in *The Magic Flute* for ENO, the *Verdi Requiem* at Lavenham and the *Rossini Petite Messe* for Framlingham Choral Society.

**Kate McCarney - Mezzo Soprano**

Kate was born in Belfast and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and the National Opera Studio. She has sung principal roles with all of the major British opera companies as well as with the New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv and Pocket Opera of Nuremburg. In Ireland she has sung with Opera N Ireland, Castleward Opera, Dublin Grand Opera, Opera Theatre Company and at the Wexford Festival. Recently she was one of four soloists in the nationally televised Prince's Trust concert to mark the official opening of the Belfast Waterfront Hall. Kate has sung at the Batignano Festival in Italy, with the Brabant Orkest in Holland and with the Orchestral du Centre in France. She has sung the title role in *Carmen* and *Verdi's Requiem* under the baton of Enrique Batiz in Mexico and will return there this year to sing in *Beethoven's 9th Symphony*. She is a member of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

## **Richard Braebrook - Tenor**

Richard, born in Huddersfield but now living in Tunbridge Wells, is at present in his tenth season with English National Opera. He studied at the Royal College of Music, then with Gerald English and is currently studying with Keith Bonnington, who is also a member of ENO. He has sung with the BBC Singers and the old D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, undertaking numerous principal tenor roles and travelling extensively. He is a founder member, with Petronella Dittmer, of the Kensington Gore Singers, with whom he has sung for HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at Royal Lodge, Windsor. As an accomplished pianist and conductor he was Musical Director of the Feltham Choral Society. He has sung with Kent Opera, the Singers Company, Figaro Opera Company and in 1983 was first prize winner in the World International Singing Festival in Rio de Janeiro. Richard sings regularly with leading Choral Societies in works ranging from Handel and Bach to Elgar and Britten. He has performed in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, the Barbican in London and the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow. His Operatic roles include: Anfinomous (*Return of Ulysses*), Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) and Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), however, Richard is also at home singing in cabaret, having completed engagements at the Café Royal and aboard the SS Canberra and Sea Princess for P&O. He has also recently made a very successful debut in Wales performing with the Beaufort Male Voice Choir, the Blaenau Gwent Chorale and the Trelanwyd Male Voice Choir.

## **John Hancorn - Bass Baritone**

Born in Inverness, John studied at Trinity College of Music and was awarded the Elizabeth Schumann Lieder Prize; with Sir Peter Pears at the Britten-Pears School, Aldeburgh; at the National Opera Studio supported by the Countess of Munster Trust; and with Thomas Hampson at the Brereton International Symposium. In 1980 he was a winner of the SE Arts Young Musicians Platform; in 1982 he won the Richard Tauber Competition; in 1983 he was a major prize-winner at 'sHertogenbosch. John has wide experience in opera, singing principal rôles with ENO, Kent Opera, Royal Opera and Welsh National Opera; *L'Orfeo* under Sir Roger Norrington at Maggio Musicale, Fiorentino; Jupiter (*Semele*); Macheath (*The Beggar's Opera*); Claudio (*Agrippina*); *Noye's Fludde*; *Julius Caesar Jones*; *Crystal Balls* (Stephen Edwards); Marcello (*La Bohème*); *The Fairy Queen*; *Zhuwan (The Enchantress)*; and *Onegin (Eugene Onegin)*. He also toured with *Jesus Christ Superstar* in Scandinavia! In concert John has worked with leading orchestras at home and abroad including: Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, The English Concert, London Mozart Players, Northern Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. Engagements include: *B Minor Mass* Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields; *St John Passion* and *Beethoven Mass in C* Snape Maltings; *L'Enfance du Christ* and *Harvey Passion and Resurrection* Brighton Festival, Dvorák *Stabat Mater* Winchester Cathedral, *Messiah* Royal Festival Hall, *Theodora* Queen Elizabeth Hall and *Schubert Mass in G* (Vienna Boys' Choir) St John's, Smith Square. Recordings include: CD and video as The Devil in *Ordo Virtutum* (Hildegard von Bingen) and Weelkes *Madrigals and Anthems* with The Consort of Musicke under Anthony Rooley. Engagements this season include the *Mozart Requiem* and *Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle*.

# **THE KINGDOM**

by

**Sir Edward Elgar**

**(1857 - 1934)**

*This performance is dedicated to the memory of Joan Lowdon,  
a committed and loyal member of the Society from 1961  
until her death last year.*

By 1906 Elgar was in receipt of public recognition and, having been knighted in 1904, also of royal approval. His most popular works included "The Dream of Gerontius" and "The Enigma Variations", which were frequently performed in this country and abroad, especially in Germany. A devout Roman Catholic, Elgar had long cherished the dream of a trilogy of religious oratorios based on the growth and spread of Christianity and his notebooks show ideas sketched over a period of several years. "The Apostles" (1904) was the first part and during the following two years, despite ill-health, Elgar worked on the next part called "The Kingdom", the first performance of which took place in Birmingham in 1906. The projected final oratorio was never written.

Elgar selected texts from the Bible adding linking narration to show how the Kingdom of Heaven would come upon earth through the work of priests of the early Church in spreading the gospel by healing and teaching. The music itself rises above the constraints of creed and dogma to convey this universal message and could only have been written by Elgar, a true Romantic. There is magnificence in much of the choral writing and the lush orchestration conveys the moods and excitement by its exact scoring, whether with augmented brass or reduced strings.

## **PRELUDE**

The orchestral prelude opens majestically with a rising crescendo and subtle changes of harmony. In Wagnerian manner motto themes are introduced which will reappear through the oratorio to represent various ideas. The most unmistakable is the noble melody of the New Faith with its ascending triplets which both Peter and John sing.

## ***PART 1 - IN THE UPPER ROOM***

The Apostles and Holy women gather in an upper room after the Ascension to discuss past events and elect Matthew to replace Judas as one of the Twelve. The prelude dies away and soloists and chorus open unaccompanied, which emphasises the brightness of the texture. The orchestra echoes a traditional plainchant melody "O Sacrum Convivium" while the Apostles contemplate Jesus' sayings. Moods change frequently becoming more dramatic at "The Light of the World", then simple and tranquil before merging into a fugue "O Praise the Name". Lots are cast and the soloists declare Matthew is chosen of the Lord and the chorus continues with a flowing melody in triplets leading to the climax of the movement "O Ye Priests". Chords are almost hammered out and a noble theme emerges. The sopranos' song in praise of the messengers of the Lord soars to the heavens before the movement ends in great peace and harmony.

## ***PART 2 - AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE***

This is set outside the temple on the morning of Pentecost with the lame man waiting for alms and the two Marys looking on in pity. The orchestra opens peacefully and with gracious simplicity as the soprano and contralto soloists tell of the preparations being made for worship inside the temple. Scoring is delicate including a harp, strings, woodwind and horns but no other brass and the music of the Temple Singers from The Apostles accompanies the soloists.

## ***PART 3 - PENTECOST***

The central movement depicts how the Disciples receive the Holy Spirit or Comforter in the upper room and then go forth to preach the word to the astonished multi-tongued crowd outside the temple. Elgar's ability to use the orchestra to colour the text is shown to full effect especially the mighty wind depicted by the brass and woodwind. A mystic chorus of women's voices recites a blessing as the Disciples go out to prophesy. A fugal chorus with angular counter subjects and interjections from the brass as the crowd wonders why everyone can

understand the speech of the Galileans "What meaneth this?". The bass soloist, Peter, solemnly tells how the Holy Spirit has come upon them, accompanied in the orchestra by the New Faith theme heard in the prelude. He preaches Christ crucified and the crowd realises with sorrow what they had done "His blood be on us" and in a chorus of rising intensity and drama they and the soloists seek repentance "In the name of Jesus Christ". The movement ends in a luscious climax (echoes of Gerontius) with the New Faith theme in the orchestra.

#### ***PART 4 - THE SIGN OF HEALING***

This takes place at the Beautiful Gate where the lame man is healed by Peter and John, their subsequent arrest and Mary's prayer in benediction. The opening sets the varying moods of passion and tranquility and the contralto and bass soloists relate the healing. The crowd watches in amazement and Peter and John explain in a powerful aria that faith in Jesus Christ brought this about. The mood hardens as the contralto describes the arrest of the Disciples. The remainder of the movement is a soliloquy for soprano, Mary, "The sun goeth down" which incorporates two Hebrew melodies adding oriental richness to Elgar's own. The orchestration adds poignancy to the words and the climax comes with Mary's soaring aria "The Gospel of the Kingdom" merging with the "Beatitudes" theme from "The Apostles" before ending gently.

#### ***PART 5 - THE UPPER ROOM***

Peter and John have been released from prison but forbidden to preach. Together with the other Disciples and the Holy women they celebrate the breaking of bread, concluding with the Lord's Prayer. The chorus sing a hymn of praise and the Disciples describe what happened at their arrest and the others comment "Lord, Thou did's't make the heav'n". The straightforward writing expresses praise and leads to the most important part of the movement celebrating the Eucharist in which soloists and chorus join together in "Thou Almighty Lord". This solemn section ends with the singing of The Lord's Prayer and the New Faith theme as the Disciples commend themselves to God and the work ends peacefully.

## **FORTHCOMING CONCERTS**

### ***Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society***

**Sunday 12th November 2000**

*Assembly Hall at 3pm*

**Rossini: Petite Messe Solonnelle**

**Saturday Evening 9th December 2000**

**Carols at Goudhurst Church**

**Sunday 8th April 2001**

*Assembly Hall at 3pm*

**Rutter: Requiem & Puccini: Messa di Gloria**

### ***Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra***

*Assembly Hall at 3pm*

*Soloists*

Sunday 1st October 2000

*Rumon Gamba & Emma Johnson*

Sunday 5th November 2000

*Frederick Kempf*

Sunday 3rd December 2000

*Julian Lloyd Webber*

### ***Green Room Music - Trinity Arts Centre at 3pm***

Sunday 17th September 2000

*The Marais Ensemble*

Sunday 15th October 2000

*The New Pro Arte Guitar Trio*

Sunday 26th November 2000

*Piers Lane (Piano)*

*The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society  
would like to express their gratitude to  
John Sumner  
Theatre Manager of the Assembly Hall  
for the hard work and tremendous support  
he has always given to the Society  
in staging their concerts over many years  
We wish him well on his retirement this year*

### ***Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society***

<i>President</i>	Roy Douglas
<i>Vice President</i>	Geoff Stredder
<i>Musical Director and Conductor</i>	Derek Watmough
<i>Accompanist</i>	Wilmarc Ellman
<i>Honorary Life Members</i>	Joyce Stredder & Len Lee

### ***Patrons***

<b>Bailey Wighton Ltd</b>	<b>Mr I Short</b>
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**If you would like to become a Patron and support the Society,  
please contact the Treasurer, Roy Dunstall - 01580 211814  
or the General Secretary, Olivia Seaman - 01892 863760**

***If you enjoy singing - why not come and join us?  
Rehearsals are held on Mondays at 7.30pm  
in St John's Church Hall, Tunbridge Wells  
Contact: Mary Standen - 01892 822048***

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a member of The National Federation  
of Music Societies and is a Registered Charity No. 273310