

*Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society*

# ROSSINI

**Overture The Thieving Magpie  
Petite Messe Solennelle**



**Sunday 12th November at 3pm 2000**

Sponsored by



*Specialists in Retirement Housing*

Programme 50p

***Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society***  
***Musical Director and Conductor: DEREK WATMOUGH***  
***Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society Orchestra***  
***Leader: MARTIN PALMER***  
***Organ: WILMARC ELLMAN***

**CONSTANCE NOVIS - Soprano**

Constance Novis graduated from the University of Toronto, Canada, and began her professional career at Wexford Festival Opera. Since then, she has developed a wide repertoire singing major roles with many opera companies in the UK and abroad. Her concert engagements have included the **Missa Solemnis** with Saffron Walden Choral Society, the Dvorak **Requiem** in Rochester Cathedral, a New Year's Eve Viennese Gala at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, a Viennese Evening with the Milton Keynes City Orchestra, the Verdi **Requiem** at the Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone, and in the Great Hall at Reading University, a Verdi Gala at the Royal Festival Hall and Last Night of the Proms at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon. Her recordings include **Matilda** in the **Kiss of Peace** (David Reeves) with James Bowman and David Wilson-Johnson under the direction of Martin Neary, which was premiered at this year's Canterbury Festival.

**LOUISE MOTT - Mezzo Soprano**

Born in Barnet, Louise Mott was awarded a Wolfson Foundation Scholarship to the Royal College of Music. A former Recommended Artist of the NFMS, she also won the Madeline Finden Memorial Trust and the Audrey Strange Memorial Prize at the Royal Overseas League Music Competition and is currently completing her studies at the National Opera Studio. She has sung major operatic roles with companies such as Almeida Opera, British Youth Opera, Cambridge Opera Group, the Early Opera Company, the Other Theatre Company and Welsh National Opera. She made her English National Opera debut as Bradamante in **Alcina**. She is also a highly experienced concert artist, her engagements including the **St Matthew Passion** with the Northern Sinfonia, **Messiah** with the Halle orchestra and appearances at the Beaumaris Festival, 1999 Cambridge Goehr Festival and many other important musical venues. She has also sung with most of the major UK choral societies and has broadcast for BBC Radio 3, Radio Scotland, Classic fM, RTNF Belgium, Radio Classique, France, Blue Danube Radio, Vienna and recorded **Marthe/Schuld/Maria Aegyptica** in Schumann's **Scenes from Goethe's Faust** under Philippe Herreweghe for Harmonia Mundi. She recently broadcast her second BBC Recital and toured with the London Sinfonietta in **Greek**.

## **CRAIG DOWNES - Tenor**

Craig Downes studied at the University of Cape Town Opera Studio from 1988 to 1989, before joining CAPAB Opera, Cape Town as a Studio Soloist, being promoted to Junior Soloist in 1991. This enabled him to be involved in productions of opera, operetta and musicals. He also sang in other venues throughout South Africa, and in 1994, was invited to sing in Mauritius. While still resident in South Africa, Craig Downes' performances of Neapolitan Songs and Operetta were recorded by SABC Television. He also appeared regularly in oratorio, concerts and cabaret, and was actively involved in the development of Opera in the rural areas of South Africa. During this time he toured throughout South Africa, performing many operatic roles. In 1995 he moved to the UK to join Welsh National Opera where his roles included Pinkerton in **Madama Butterfly**, a role he also sang in Raymond Gubbay's production at the Royal Albert Hall and on tour in the UK. He made his ENO solo debut in 1999 as First Knight in **Parsifal**. Craig Downes is also experienced as a concert artist, his current engagements including the Beethoven **Choral Symphony** at Truro Cathedral, the Berlioz **Te Deum**, for the Felsted Arts Festival, a **Child of our Time** for the Three Spires Singers, Truro, the Verdi **Requiem** in Ripon Cathedral and a New Year's Eve Gala at the Theatre Royal Bath.

## **SIMON NEAL - Baritone**

Born in Louth, Simon Neal studied at Leicester University where he appeared frequently in recital and concert. Following a successful career in Marketing, he resumed his vocal studies, which are continuing with June Wyn Jones in London. He has appeared in many leading operatic roles in operas such as **Carmen**, **Don Giovanni**, **Le Nozze di Figaro**, **La Boheme**, **Tosca**, **The Barber of Seville** and **Don Carlo**, with opera companies all over the UK. He will be singing Marcello in **La Boheme** and Figaro in **The Barber of Seville** with European Chamber Opera and Figaro again and Scarpia in **Tosca** with Opera Brava. He is also experienced as a concert artist, singing in many of the well-known and less well-known works of the choral repertoire and he has future engagements with choral societies in Reading, Durham, Hereford, Northampton and Maidstone.

## Gioacchino Antonio Rossini

Rossini was born at Pesaro in 1792 and moved with his parents to Bologna at the time Napoleon's troops entered Northern Italy. Rossini had a musical upbringing, starting composing at about the age of twelve, and writing seriously for the theatre in his late 'teens'. He studied at the University of Bologna, becoming an enthusiast for the music of Mozart, who had died the year before Rossini was born. Rossini later referred to Mozart as 'the admiration of my youth, the desperation of my mature years and the consolation of my old age'.

Rossini achieved both fame and fortune early in his career, continuing writing operas until 1829, including *The Thieving Magpie*, best remembered for its sparkling Overture which is being performed today. In this period he held positions as Musical Director of theatres in Naples and later in Paris. However, in 1829, his last opera *William Tell* was produced and he 'retired', having written thirty-six operas. He wrote nothing until 1855 when he began writing again, mainly songs and piano pieces. During this last period, he was asked by a friend, Countess Louise Pillet-Will to write a mass for the consecration of a private chapel; it was first performed in Passy near Paris in March 1864. In his annotations to the autograph copy of the score, Rossini referred to the composition as 'the last mortal sin of my old age' and at the end wrote 'Good Lord, there it is, finished, this poor little mass. I do not know if this music is sacred or sacrilegious. I was born for comic opera as You well know. Little skill, some feeling and that's all. Therefore let me sing Your praises and grant me Your paradise.' His 'little' has stuck to the work so that it is frequently referred to as the 'Petite' Messe Solennelle, in spite of taking over 80 minutes to perform!

The 'little mass' was the last of Rossini's major compositions and was immediately received enthusiastically by Meyerbeer and other musical eminences in Paris of the day. While commissioned for small forces, Rossini clearly envisaged performance on a larger scale and he orchestrated it a year or two later though this setting was not performed in his lifetime. The hand of the opera composer undoubtedly shows in the writing, but does not dominate. Indeed some sections could be taken as Rossini showing his mastery of form with affinities to older styles eg the strict canon of the unaccompanied *Christe Eleison* early in the work. This is framed by two Kyrie sections, where the smooth vocal parts are underlain by rhythmic piano writing in a quite different style. Occasionally, in such solos as *Domine Deus* and *Quoniam*, the theatre takes over, and there are times when the Rossini of 1863 comes stylistically close to Verdi. This perhaps is less to be wondered at than the contrapuntal skill and vitality of the fugal sections *Cum Sancto Spiritu* and *In Vitam Venturi*. The instrumental *Preludio Religioso* certainly offers a rare glimpse of a more serious and academic Rossini than might be expected by listeners who know only the operas he composed up to 1829, the time of *William Tell*. The work contains the full text of the High Mass - hence 'solennelle' in the title - but in addition, Rossini has set *O Salutaris Hostia*, a text suitable for the feast of *Corpus Christi*.

*These programme notes were prepared with the assistance of the NFMS  
Programme-Note Bank*

# Overture The Thieving Magpie

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## Petite Messe Solennelle

### PART 1

<i>Kyrie-Christe</i>	Chorus & Soloists
<i>Gloria-Laudamus</i>	Chorus & Soloists
<i>Gratias</i>	Contralto, Tenor, Bass
<i>Domine Deus</i>	Tenor
<i>Qui Tollis</i>	Soprano, Contralto
<i>Quoniam</i>	Bass
<i>Cum Sancto Spiritu</i>	Chorus & Soloists

### INTERVAL

### PART 2

<i>Credo</i>	Chorus & Soloists
<i>Crucifixus</i>	Soprano
<i>Et resurrexit</i>	Chorus & Soloists
<i>Preludio religioso</i>	Organ
<i>Sanctus</i>	Chorus & Soloists
<i>O Salutaris</i>	Soprano
<i>Agnus Dei</i>	Contralto & Chorus

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## ENGLISH COURTYARD



Specialists in Retirement Housing

The country's leading developer of luxury retirement housing, award-winning English Courtyard has arrived in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Work has now started on the company's latest project in Rusthall, which will provide six 'Wing' houses, three traditional English Courtyard cottages and 14 spacious flats, together with a guest suite, laundry and resident manager's accommodation.

Set in mature grounds and with landscaped gardens, the development will be approached by an avenue of lime trees and is within easy walking distance of shops, public transport and other facilities. The historic Pantiles are a leisurely stroll across the common.

Designed by leading architects Sidell Gibson Partnership - who worked on the restoration of Windsor Castle after the fire - the development cleverly reflects the important Decimus Burton architecture of the town. It is called Muskerry Court, after Lord Muskerry - the first person to refurbish the Chalybeate spring on the Pantiles - and this is the first time he has been commemorated in the town. Lord Muskerry met an untimely death in 1665 fighting the Dutch at the Battle of Southwold, and was unable to continue his good work.

Further information is available by calling Freephone 0800 220 585 or from the website [www.englishcourtyard.co.uk](http://www.englishcourtyard.co.uk).

**The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society wish to express their thanks to English Courtyard for their sponsorship of today's concert**

## ***FORTHCOMING CONCERTS***

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

Saturday Evening 9th December 2000

CAROLS 7pm 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 3rd December 2000      Julian Lloyd Webber ('cello)

Sunday 4th February 2001      Florian Uhlig (Piano)

Sunday 4th March 2001      John Wallace (Trumpet)

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

Sunday 26th November 2000      Piers Lane (Piano)

Sunday 21st January 2001      The Primavera Chamber Orchestra

Sunday 18th February 2001      The London Mozart Trio

### ***Mid Sussex Sinfonia***

Saturday 16th December 2000      Ditchling Choral Society  
3.30pm and 7pm      Dolphin Leisure Centre

Haywards Heath

## *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 and Mary Standen

### *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: Celia Sumner 01892 534814***