

SATURDAY 2 AUGUST 2008 AT 7pm

Wells Cathedral



SOMERSET CHAMBER CHOIR

"firmly established as among the best"

SOUTHERN SINFONIA

"one of our leading professional orchestras"

SONGS OF WAR & PEACE

POULENC

Gloria

KODALY

Psalmus Hungaricus

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Dona nobis pacem

Charlotte Ellett (*soprano*)

Andrew Staples (*tenor*)

Benedict Nelson (*baritone*)

GRAHAM CALDBECK *conductor*

ADVANCED BOOKING ADVISED

Call MusicBox on 01275 349010

Tickets from £7.50 (£2 for children & students)

www.somersetchamberchoir.org.uk

Over more than two decades, the Somerset Chamber Choir has built a fine reputation for first class music-making, performing regularly with the UK's finest vocal soloists and instrumentalists. One of Britain's leading choral conductors, Graham Caldbeck also directs Nonsuch Singers ("one of London's best chamber choirs" The Times). Joining the choir will be an exciting trio of young, award-winning vocal soloists and the highly acclaimed professional orchestra Southern Sinfonia (Sir Roger Norrington Patron).

This exciting concert brings together three contrasting 20th-century masterpieces in a moving and life-affirming programme about the pursuit of freedom and peace on earth.

Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* was commissioned in 1923 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of the cities of Buda, Pest and Óbuda to create the Hungarian capital of Budapest. Kodaly was drawn to the text, a 16th century poem based on *Psalms 55*, because of the recent turmoil brought to his country by the First World War. This dramatic, folk-inspired work draws parallels between the sorrows of King David and the suffering of the people of Hungary, which was under Turkish occupation when the poem was written. Lavish orchestral writing, a thrilling role for solo tenor and dramatic choruses all combine to create one of the composer's most inspired works.

We mark the 50th anniversary of the death of that best-loved English composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams, with a performance of his intensely moving cantata, *Dona nobis pacem*, for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus and orchestra. The composer had served in the Medical Corps during the Great War, and his impassioned and eloquent plea for peace - an angry warning by a composer with a social conscience - was written in 1937 as Europe lurched towards another major war. Vaughan Williams draws his texts from a rich variety of sources, including the American Civil War poetry of Walt Whitman and biblical texts - the phrase *Dona nobis pacem* ("Give us peace") punctuates the entire piece.

Poulenc's *Gloria*, with its matchless tunes and unmistakable freshness, enjoyed immediate acclaim following its first performance in Boston in 1961 - it has remained a firm favourite with performers and audiences ever since. The arresting opening movement 'Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of goodwill', with its brass fanfares and swirling ostinati, sets the almost irreverent tone for this joyful masterwork, and stunning soprano solos add an exciting extra dimension to the work. The composer's sense of humour - '*..while writing it I had in mind those frescoes by Gozzoli where angels stick their tongues out at each other*' - and his love of life, shine through in the exuberance of this wonderful music. So here, then, is the perfect piece for a summer evening - described by Poulenc as "*without question my best work*".

Book your tickets today and enjoy the splendour of this occasion in the lovely setting of Wells Cathedral.

'It is a tribute to the versatility of this choir, and its conductor, that they can perform such innovative and varied programmes to such a high standard.' SOMERSET COUNTY GAZETTE

Call MUSICBOX on 01275 349010

19 Coleridge Vale Road East, Clevedon, BS21 6NS

£25, £20, £15, £12.50 (reserved) £10, £7.50 (side aisles unreserved)

Children and students £2.00 (group bookings unreserved & subject to availability).

All major credit & debit cards accepted

Friends of the choir have priority booking ~ Public booking opens on 9th June



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Somerset Chamber Choir ~ Registered Charity 1003687

Vice-Presidents: Sir David Willcocks, Chris Cutting, Benjamin Luxon, Adrian Male

The right is reserved, without incurring liability, to substitute artists and to vary programmes for reasons beyond our control, although these details are correct at the time of going to press.