

Programme notes for Bernstein *Chichester Psalms*, Pärt *The Beatitudes*, Janáček *Otčenáš* and Rutter *Requiem*

Chichester Psalms

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

1964 was a difficult year for Leonard Bernstein. He always felt that composition should be the true centre of his life, but his position as Music Director of the New York Symphony Orchestra, with all this entailed in terms of concerts, recordings and planning, added to his increasing fame as a conductor and the international invitations with which he was bombarded, meant that it had taken a distant back seat for several years. In addition to this, the assassination of President Kennedy, with whom he had become friendly, in November 1963, followed in January 1964 by the murder of composer Marc Blitzstein, a close friend since the late 1930s, had knocked him sideways emotionally. He felt he needed to get back to composition in a serious way, and decided to take a sabbatical from performance during 1965.

The plan was to write a musical based on Thornton Wilder's play *The Skin of our Teeth* with Adolf Green and Betty Comden (with whom he had worked on *On the Town* in 1944), but by early 1965 the project had stalled and soon after fell through completely. In a letter written in November 1964, Bernstein wrote: "*Skin* is stalled. Life, this agonizing November, is a tooth with its skin stripped off. I don't know what I'm writing. I don't even know what I'm not writing... I can't get over Kennedy or Marc. Life is a tooth without a skin." He described himself as "a composer without a project". By good chance, Rev Walter Hussey, the Dean of Chichester Cathedral, had written to Bernstein in December 1963 requesting a piece for the 1965 Chichester Festival, and to this he now turned his mind.

Walter Hussey was one of the most important commissioners of new art in Britain in the twentieth century. His commissions included an altarpiece painted by Graham Sutherland, stained glass windows designed by Marc Chagall, a Madonna and Child by Henry Moore, a litany and anthem by W.H. Auden, and the cantata *Rejoice in the Lamb* by Benjamin Britten. He wrote in his letter to Bernstein, "The Chichester Organist and Choirmaster, John Birch, and I, are very anxious to have written some piece of music which the combined choirs could sing at the Festival to be held in Chichester in August, 1965, and we wondered if you would be willing to write something for us. I do realize how enormously busy you are, but if you could manage to do this we should be tremendously honoured and grateful. The sort of thing that we had in mind was perhaps, say, a setting of the Psalm 2, or some part of it, either unaccompanied or accompanied by orchestra or organ, or both. I only mention this to give you some idea as to what was in our minds." He went on to say, "Many of us would be very delighted if there was a hint of *West Side Story* about the music." Bernstein agreed, and after the personal pain of the previous 18 months and the anguished nature of his last composition (the *Kaddish* Symphony, based on the Jewish prayer for the dead and written in memory of John F. Kennedy), he felt that something life-affirming was what he needed. He later said of it, "I spent almost the whole year writing 12-tone music and even more experimental stuff. I was happy that all these new sounds were coming out: but after about six months of work I threw it all away. It just wasn't my music; it wasn't honest. The end result was the *Chichester Psalms* which is the most accessible, B-flat majorish tonal piece I've ever written." He even penned a poem for the New York Times when he had finished the composition which includes the lines:

But there it stands – the result of my pondering,
Two long months of avant-garde wandering –
My youngest child, old-fashioned and sweet.
And he stands on his own two tonal feet.

Bernstein got permission from Hussey to premiere the work in New York two weeks before its performance in Chichester. The *Chichester Psalms* were first performed on July 15, 1965 with Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. On July 31, they were performed in Chichester at the Southern Cathedrals Festival by the combined choirs of Chichester, Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals.

When Hussey had hoped for "a hint of *West Side Story* about the music", he could not have anticipated how much his wish was to be granted: Bernstein re-used large parts of the music that he had written for the aborted *The Skin of our Teeth* and also a chorus which had been written for *West Side Story* but jettisoned. In fact, not a single one of the seven principal melodic themes used in the piece was originally written for *Chichester Psalms*.

Despite Bernstein's comment about its being "the most accessible, B-flat majorish tonal piece I've ever written", the piece is far from being straightforwardly positive. The second movement begins with the treble soloist, sopranos and altos singing Psalm 23 "The Lord is my shepherd", but the tenors and basses interrupt with Psalm 2, "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?". The two psalms

dramatise the conflict between faith and the crises that threaten it, a central theme in Bernstein's life as well as in much of his music. As he wrote to Hussey, "this movement ends in unresolved fashion, with both elements, faith and fear, interlocked". The work ends with a chorale which Bernstein called "a prayer for peace" – "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity" – a message which could hardly be more apposite for our own troubled times.

Paul Steinson
Rochester Choral Society
March 2016

<p>Psalm 108. vs.2 Urah, hanevel, v'chinor! A-irah shaḥar</p>	<p>Awake, psaltery and harp: I will rouse the dawn!</p>
<p>Psalm 100. Hari'u l'Adonai kol ha'arets. Iv'du et Adonai b'simḥa Bo'u l'fanav bir'nanah. D'u ki Adonai Hu Elohim. Hu asanu v'lo anaḥnu. Amo v'tson mar'ito. Bo'u sh'arav b'todah, Ḥatseirotav bit'hilah, Hodu lo, bar'chu sh'mo. Ki tov Adonai, l'olam ḥas'do, V'ad dor vador emunato.</p>	<p>Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His court with praise. Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good, His mercy everlasting And His truth endureth to all generations.</p>
<p>Psalm 23. Adonai ro-i, lo eḥsar. Bin'ot deshe yarbitseini, Al mei m'nuḥot y'nahaleini, Naf'shi y'shovev, Yan'ḥeini b'ma'aglei tsedek, L'ma'an sh'mo. Gam ki eilech B'gei tsalmavet, Lo ira ra, Ki Atah imadi. Shiv't'cha umishan'techa Hemah y'naḥamuni. Ta'aroch l'fanai shulchan Neged tsor'rai Dishanta vashemen roshi Cosi r'vayaḥ. Ach tov vaḥesed Yird'funi kol y'mei ḥayai V'shav'ti b'veit Adonai L'orech yamim. Psalm 2 vs. 1-4 Lamah rag'shu goyim Ul'umim yeh'gu rik? Yit'yats'vu malchei erets, V'roznim nos'du yaḥad Al Adonai v'al m'shiḥo. N'natkah et mos'roteimo, V'nashlichah mimenu avoteimo. Yoshev bashamayim</p>	<p>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk Through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, For Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff They comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me In the presence of my enemies, Thou anointest my head with oil, My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy Shall follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. Why do the nations rage, And the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His anointed. Saying, let us break their bands asunder, And cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens</p>

Yis'hak, Adonai Yil'ag lamo!	Shall laugh, and the Lord Shall have them in derision!
Psalm 131 Adonai, Adonai, Lo gavah libi, V'lo ramu einai, V'lo hilachti Big'dolot uv'niflaot Mimieni. Im lo shiviti V'domam'ti, Naf'shi k'gamul alei imo, Kagamul alai naf'shi. Yahel Yis'rael el Adonai Me'atah v'ad olam.	Lord, Lord, My heart is not haughty, Nor mine eyes lofty, Neither do I exercise myself In great matters or in things Too wonderful for me. Surely I have calmed And quieted myself, As a child that is weaned of his mother, My soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord From henceforth and forever.
Psalm 133. vs.1 Hineh mah tov, Umah na'im, Shevet a'him Gam yahad	Behold how good, And how pleasant it is, For brethren to dwell Together in unity

The Beatitudes

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

Arvo Pärt was born in the small town of Paide in Estonia and graduated from the Tallinn Conservatory in 1963. All three Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) had been occupied by Russia in 1940 and pro-Soviet governments installed, a situation which continued until 1991. Pärt's early years therefore coincided with the end of Stalinism and the height of the Cold War, during which time Soviet cultural policy dictated the syllabus of all institutions within the purview of the USSR. Pärt was, however, a rebel from the beginning, and his first orchestral work *Nekrolog*, composed when he was a student, used Schönberg's twelve-tone technique. He was criticised for using this "decadent" form by Tikhon Khrenikov, the General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, for "susceptibility to foreign influences", but surprisingly nine months after this, Pärt won First Prize in a competition held by that very same body. In the 1970s Pärt began to feel that atonalism was a dead end for him and made an extensive study of medieval and renaissance choral music. He also felt increasingly stultified by official Soviet restrictions, and after a long struggle with officialdom was allowed to emigrate in 1980, eventually settling in Berlin.

His study of early choral music radically changed his compositional style, leading to a style he dubbed "Tintinnabuli" because of its similarity to the sound of bells. It is characterised by simple, essentially triadic, harmony and slow, unchanging tempi and rhythms. Pärt has said, "I work with very few elements - with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation." Many of his works are religious, and his texts are usually in Latin or Old Church Slavonic to give a further hieratic feel to the music. Having moved to the West to escape the interference and criticism of the Soviet authorities, he found that critics here were largely contemptuous of his new style, regarding it as reactionary, simple-minded "New Age" banality. However the increasing popularity and respectability of Minimalist composers such as John Adams, Philip Glass and (more relevantly) John Tavener and Henryk Górecki, has led to a change of attitude, and the "holy minimalism" of Pärt has now entered the mainstream.

Tonight's work, *The Beatitudes*, one of the few that Pärt has composed in English, was written for the RIAS Chamber Choir in 1990 and revised the following year. The text of the Sermon on the Mount is from St Matthew's Gospel. Like the Rutter Requiem, the structure, though divided into two distinct parts, is palindromic. In the first part, the choir begins in F minor and is accompanied by single pedal organ notes which rise by a semitone each time. At the climax to the first part on "Amen" the organ joins the choir in a full accompaniment around C sharp minor. The second part consists of an organ solo whose pedal line falls in mirror image to that of the first part ending back in F minor.

Paul Steinson, Rochester Choral Society, March 2016

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
 Blessed are those who mourn: for they will be comforted.
 Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth.
 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be filled.
 Blessed are the merciful: for they will be shown mercy.
 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they will see God.
 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they will be called children of God.
 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.
 Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
 Amen.

Otčenáš

Leos Janáček (1854 - 1928)

Although we do not tend to think of Janáček as a choral composer, his earliest musical training centred almost entirely on church music. He was born in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) and as a child he was a chorister at St. Thomas's Abbey in Brno. In 1874 he enrolled in the Prague Organ School, and after finishing his studies he returned to Brno to teach music and conduct a number of choirs. In 1881 he founded an organ school in Brno which later became the Brno Conservatory. From the early 1890s he became deeply interested in Moravian and Silesian folk music, which came to imbue his entire compositional style, leading him to take a very negative view of German styles of composition.

Janáček composed a number of sacred pieces in the first decade of the 20th century, including tonight's setting of the Lord's Prayer in 1901, which he revised in 1906. This period was not an easy one for the composer; his professional life seemed to have stalled, and in 1903 his daughter Olga died. *Otčenáš* (Our Father) is scored for the unusual combination of choir with tenor soloist, organ and harp, and consists of six short sections which all show his debt to the folk music of his country.

Paul Steinson
 Rochester Choral Society
 March 2016

<p>Otče náš, jenž jsi na nebesích, posvět' se jméno tvé, Ó přijď království tvé, Buď vůle tvá jako v nebi, tak i na zemi. Chléb náš vezdejší dej nám dnes a odpusť nám naše viny, jakoz i my odpouštíme našim viníkům neuvod' nás v pokušení, ale zbav nás vseho zlého. Amen.</p>	<p>Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.</p>
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INTERVAL

Requiem

John Rutter (b. 1945)

To embark upon the composition of a requiem must be a daunting task for any composer. Some of the greatest masterpieces of western music from the renaissance onwards stand as a challenge to any newcomer, demanding whether they really have anything to add to what has gone before. Earlier requiems, such as those of Victoria and Mozart, were intended for liturgical use, but from the 19th century many were essentially concert works. Whilst some of the greatest requiems have begun in a

more distanced response to a tragedy (for example Britten's *War Requiem* and Berlioz' *Grande Messe des Morts*, commissioned in 1837 to commemorate the victims of the Fieschi revolution of 1830), many of the great requiems have stemmed from a personal loss. Some have been from grief at the loss of an admired public character, such as Verdi's *Requiem* for the poet Manzoni, but often the death of a family member is the seed from which the composition grows. Brahms' mother's death prompted his *Deutsches Requiem*, and his father's death that of Fauré. At the very time that John Rutter's father died in 1983, by chance the original manuscript of Fauré's *Requiem* was rediscovered and made available to scholars, so "within 48 hours" of hearing of this, Rutter was on a plane to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris to study the manuscript in detail. He has said that the moment when he first actually touched the manuscript was the moment he thought that he wanted to write a requiem himself. Fauré's *Requiem* and that of Maurice Duruflé (which is also dedicated to the memory of his father) were undoubtedly the inspirations for Rutter. It is perhaps hardly surprising that the requiems which stem from the bereavement following the death of someone close tend to concentrate on ideas of consolation and hope rather than judgement, and so avoid the "Dies irae" tract which forms some of the most memorable parts of the requiems of Mozart, Berlioz and Verdi; Rutter follows the example of Fauré and Duruflé in omitting it. He also follows the example of Britten's *War Requiem* (a piece in whose premiere in 1963 Rutter had sung as a chorister) and Fauré by introducing texts which are not part of the actual requiem mass. Rutter introduces two main texts, the 130th psalm, "Out of the deep", and the 23rd psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd", but also shorter texts which come from the Book of Common Prayer and (following Fauré's innovation) the "Pie Jesu", which comes from the Burial Service.

Although Rutter's father enjoyed music, he was not in any way a trained musician, and Rutter has said that he specifically wanted to write music that "could be appreciated by people everywhere" and which could be performed in both ecclesiastical and concert settings. For the previous 15 years, Rutter had composed almost entirely to commission and had begun to feel somewhat straight-jacketed by this. The *Requiem* was his first large-scale piece not written to commission, but as something which he felt he wanted to write. He contacted his great friend and patron Mel Olsen, who had commissioned his *Gloria* in 1974 and who was by this time Minister of Music at Fremont Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, California, offering him the first performance of a requiem, if he should write one. The choir at Fremont Presbyterian was a high quality amateur group, which dictated the sort of level of difficulty to which he could write. Olsen accepted with delight, and Rutter began composition. Unfortunately, he was suddenly struck down with myalgic encephalomyelitis (M.E.) and by the date of the premiere had only finished four of the seven movements, which were performed on 14 March 1985 in the version with chamber accompaniment which we are using in tonight's performance. The reception was so positive that he determined to finish the work and contacted another great friend, Alan Pote, the Director of Music at the Lovers' Lane United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas, offering him the first performance of the complete work in its full orchestral version. Rutter was still not completely well, but embarked on the remaining three movements for a performance date only seven months later. He has admitted that he was still putting the finishing touches to the "Lux aeternam" the night before that performance on 13 October 1985. Both of the premiere performances were conducted by the composer himself. The *Requiem* was published soon after, and achieved an astonishing 500 plus performances in the USA alone within six months of publication.

The seven movements are "bookended" (to use Rutter's own expression) by the texts which open and close the requiem liturgy ("Requiem aeternam" and "Lux aeternam"), with the remaining movements forming an "arch" of paired movements in a palindromic structure. The added psalm texts, "Out of the deep" and "The Lord is my shepherd", provide movements two and six, and movements three and five are the more contemplative, personal prayers "Pie Jesu" and "Agnus Dei". At the centre of the structure, like the keystone of the arch, is the "Sanctus", a movement proclaiming the glory of God.

Paul Steinson
 Rochester Choral Society
 March 2016

<p>1. Requiem aeternam equiem aeternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis.</p> <p>Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion, et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem.</p>	<p>Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, We pray to thee and light perpetual shine on them for ever.</p> <p>Thou, Lord art worshipped in Sion, Thy praises shall ever be sung in all Jerusalem.</p>
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<p>Exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis caro veniet.</p> <p>Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.</p>	<p>O Hear us; O Lord hear thy faithful servants' prayer, To Thee shall all mortal flesh return.</p>
<p>2. Out of the deep Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well: the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss. O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared. I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch. O Israë! trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israë! from all his sins.</p>	
<p>3. Pie Jesu Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem, Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem sempiternam.</p>	<p>Blessed Lord Jesus, grant them rest, Blessed Lord Jesus, grant them eternal rest.</p>
<p>4. Sanctus Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth; Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.</p> <p>Hosanna in excelsis.</p>	<p>Holy, Holy, Holy, God of power and majesty. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.</p>
<p>5. Agnus Dei Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis requiem.</p>	<p>Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest.</p>
<p>6. The Lord is my shepherd The Lord is my shepherd therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. Yea though I walk thro' the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil For Thou art with me thy rod and thy staff comfort me Thou shalt prepare a table for me against them that trouble me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full. But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.</p>	
<p>7. Lux æterna I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours; even so saith the Spirit.</p>	
<p>Lux æterna luceat eis Domine; Cum sanctis tuis in æternum, quia pius es.</p> <p>Requiem æternam dona eis Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.</p>	<p>Light eternal shine upon them, Lord; We pray with saints and angels ever dwelling, for thy mercy's sake. Grant them eternal rest, Lord our God, We pray to Thee: and light perpetual shine on them for ever.</p>