

WASO Chorus Sings

Northern Lights

Fri 31 May 8.30pm

Denmark Civic Centre, Denmark

ARVO PART *Magnificat*

OLA GJEILO *Tota pulchra es*

OLA GJEILO *Northern Lights*

OLA GJEILO *Ubi caritas*

ARVO PART *Da pacem Domine*

TOMAS LUIS DE VICTORIA *O magnum mysterium*

MORTEN LAURIDSEN *O magnum mysterium*

ERIKS ESENVALDS *Only in sleep*

Christopher van

Tuinen

conductor

Bronwyn Elliott

Sue Hingston

Michelle John

Jane Royle

Lucy Sheppard

Sarah Shneier

Gosia Slawomirski

Carol Unkovich

Alicia Walter

Margo Warburton

WASO CHORUS

SOPRANO

Evie Anderson

Valerie Bannan

Anna Börner

Alinta Carroll

Penelope Colgan

Clara Connor

Charmaine de Witt

Ceridwen Dumergue

ALTO

Marian Agombar

Patsy Brown

Sue Coleson

Jeanette Collins

Catherine Dunn

Jenny Fay

Susanna Fleck

Dianne Graves

Kate Lewis

Lynne Naylor

Deborah Pearson

Deborah Piesse

Fiona Robson

Neb Ryland

Moira Westmore

Jacquie Wright

TENOR

David Collings

Allan Griffiths

Guy Hooper

Jay Reso

Chris Ryland

Simon Taylor

Arthur Tideswell

Stephen Turley

BASS

Justin Audcent

Bertel Bulten

Ken Gasmier

Andrew Lynch

Tony Marrion

Patrick Melling

Peter Ormond

Jim Rhoads

Steve Sherwood

Program Notes

An abiding image from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union is of crowds of people in the Baltic countries, singing at the barricades. And singing, not rugby-chanting, in an enviable choral tradition that extends across northern Europe.

Arvo Pärt
(born 1935)
Magnificat

With the fall of Communism, the West for the first time became aware of many composers from countries in the Soviet sphere. Estonian composer Arvo Pärt had at first toed the official 'socialist-realist' line, but experimented with contemporary Western musical language during the 1960s; his Credo of 1968 earned him official disfavour for its frankly Christian expression and 'decadent' compositional techniques. In response to a crisis both religious and artistic, Pärt wrote very little between then and the mid-1970s when he produced a group of works which established his individual voice and international reputation. These works coincide with his formal reception into the Orthodox Church.

Pärt left Estonia in 1980 and has made his home in Berlin since. The *Magnificat* dates from 1989 and is dedicated to Christian Grube and the Staats- und Domchor Berlin, the city's oldest musical organisation, based at the Cathedral. The text is Mary's response, in the gospel, to the angel Gabriel's annunciation that she is to bear the child Jesus. The simple lines that begin it overlap, creating gentle dissonance in what sounds like a large space. Pärt's music is restrained in manner, but not without drama, as the text praises God's generosity and might.

Ola Gjeilo
(born 1978)
Tota pulchra es
Northern Lights
Ubi caritas

Norwegian-born composer Ola Gjeilo has lived in the USA since 2001, where he studied at the Juilliard School in New York. Gjeilo's unaccompanied choral works are frequently based in the Latin hymnody of Catholic liturgy. *Tota pulchra es*, composed in 2009, sets a fourth century hymn to the Virgin that is traditionally sung during the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Gjeilo introduces the text in the soprano and alto voices, answered by the tenors and basses, before embarking on a rich, largely homophonic texture. As the prayer unfolds, Gjeilo deploys smaller ensembles from within the six-part texture, but creates a satisfying climax where Mary is described as the glory of Jerusalem.

Northern Lights is, as the composer tells us, 'inspired by the ethereal aurora borealis phenomenon, or northern lights', but it too sets a text that has come to be associated with the Virgin, at least since Monteverdi's inclusion of it in his 1610 *Vespers*: *Pulchra es* is taken from Hebrew Bible's Song of Songs (6:3), and is a hymn to the beauty of the beloved. Finally, we hear Gjeilo's setting of *Ubi caritas*, a hymn to divine love traditionally sung during the ritual where the priest imitates Christ at the Last Supper, washing parishioners' feet on Maundy Thursday.

Arvo Pärt
Da pacem Domine

In March 2004 coordinated terrorist bombs killed 193 and injured some 2,000 people in commuter trains in Madrid. Pärt was commissioned by early-music great Jordi Savall to compose a work for a peace concert, and the resulting *Da pacem Domine* has been performed there annually in commemoration. This prayer for peace is based on texts from three Hebrew sources (Kings, Chronicles and Psalms). Pärt, again, creates a deceptively simple texture, though the overlapping of long notes separated by rests in the different voices adds to the sense of a gentle pealing of bells.

Tomás Luis de Victoria
(1548 - 1611)
O magnum mysterium

O magnum mysterium is, of course, associated with Christmas, with the charming (if non-Biblical) image of the animals in the stable, seeing the newborn Christ. US composer Morten Lauridsen's setting is characteristically serene and slow-moving but building to a beautiful ecstatic response to the mystery of the Incarnation. One of the best-known Renaissance settings of the same text is by Tomás Luis de Victoria, the Spanish composer whose setting dates from 1572. Victoria weaves a hushed counterpoint to embody the mystery, but breaks into a dance-like rhythm for the joyful final alleluias.

Morten Lauridsen
(born 1943)
O magnum mysterium

Latvian composer (and chorister) Ēriks Ešenvalds composed *Only in Sleep* in 2010 for the University of Louisville Collegiate Chorale and Cardinal Singers. It sets a poem by US lyric poet Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) in which sleep provides an escape from the ravages of time. Ešenvalds responds with a floating solo line over regular phrases, inflected with subtle harmonic changes, that offer a comforting, hypnotic feel.

Ēriks Ešenvalds
(born 1977)
Only in Sleep

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