

CONCERT

VENATIUS FORTUNATUS: POEMS FOR RADEGUND

an Opus Anglicanum sequence of words and music

for New Chaucer Society Congress 2016
Drama Studio, Queen Mary University of London Wednesday 13th July 8 pm

PROGRAMME

Tibi laus perennis - Venantius Fortunatus - chant

The most blessed Radegund came of a barbarian tribe

Pierre de la Rue - Vexilla regis prodeunt

The lady Radegund built for herself a monastery at Poitiers

William Byrd - Quem terra, pontus

Saint Radegund received pieces of wood from the True Cross

Vexilla Regis prodeunt - Venantius Fortunatus - chant

Cheryl Frances Hoad - In the crypt of the wood (2015)

Fortunatus: To Justin & Sophia on the gift of the Holy Cross

Crux fidelis - Venantius Fortunatus - chant

Anon 19th century (formerly ascribed to King John of Portugal) Crux fidelis

Fortunatus: three poems to Radegund and Agnes

Howard Skempton - Three Miniatures of Fortunatus: Matri natus ego; Ista meis manibus; Nocte salutifera (2016, first performance)

Fortunatus: To the Lady Radegund of violets

Salve festa dies - Venantius Fortunatus - chant

Gregory of Tours: The death and funeral of Radegund

Quem terra, pontus, aethera - Venantius Fortunatus - chant

Francisco Valls d 1747 - O gloriosa virginum

VENATIUS FORTUNATUS : POEMS FOR RADEGUND

The charm and impish vitality of the 6th-century Italian poet Fortunatus (530 - 609) comes across warmly in his verse. He settled in Poitiers because of his friendship with Radegund, the separated wife of the Merovingian King Clothaire I. Here he composed some of the greatest hymns of the middle ages 'Vexilla Regis prodeunt', 'Pange lingua gloriosi' and 'Salve festa dies'. Our programme involves settings of these and readings from his delightful lyrics, especially those addressed to Radegund and to Agnes the Abbess of the monastery which she had founded in Poitiers. It was here that the fragment of the Holy Cross was placed, for the ceremonial reception of which the 'Vexilla Regis' was composed.

Our programme tells the fascinating story of Radegund in the context of settings of these poems both in the original chant, and also by Pierre de la Rue and Byrd. Cheryl Frances-Hoad's 2015 'In the crypt of the wood' takes the words and musical chant of 'Vexilla Regis' as its inspiration; and her work is an important element in the sequence. Howard Skempton has composed 3 miniature pieces especially for this sequence and this is their first performance .

Fortunatus was plainly delightful company. His many little friendly poems to Radegund and to Agnes, her younger protegee and Abbess of Holy Cross, are full of friendship and love. They are

beautifully descriptive also of flowers, the elements, places, and people. Some of these are part of the sequence alongside the passionate liturgical poems mentioned above, which he also composed for Radegund.

OPUS ANGLICANUM

PATRICK DUNACHIE - counter tenor - was a chorister at Hereford Cathedral, and later choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge, from where he graduated in 2015. Patrick currently lives in Oxford where he is a Lay Clerk at Christ Church Cathedral, and works as a freelance singer and graphic designer. In January, he was appointed to The King's Singers as their new 1st countertenor, and begins touring and recording with the group from September.

DAVID DE WINTER - tenor - was a chorister of Westminster Cathedral, studied Durham University, Royal Academy of Music (Stanley Picker Trust and Leverhulme awards). He now sings in Westminster Cathedral choir; in opera - Billy Budd (Glyndebourne and New York) Hugh the Drover - title role Hampstead Garden Opera; and as soloist and recitalist (London English Song Festival & St James's Piccadilly).

RUAIRI BOWEN was choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge. Recent solo engagements have been Chilcott's Requiem at the Three Choirs Festival, Britten's Cantata Academica with English Concert Chorus at St John's, Smith Square and the Evangelist quartet of Pärt's Passio with the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. He sings with Polyphony, Tenebrae, Eric Whitacre Singers, Alamire and Exaudi.

JOHN ROWLANDS-PRITCHARD studied with Professor John Stevens and Dr. Mary Berry at Cambridge, with John Kentish, and at the Mayer-Lismann Opera Centre. Sang in choirs of Ely Cathedral & Wells cathedral, and as jobbing soloist with oratorio and choral societies. Founded Opus Anglicanum in 1988, runs its administration and is responsible for composing its unique sequences.

JOHN BOWEN chorister St Paul's Cathedral, choral scholar Kings' College Cambridge, studied Royal College of Music. Career in England and Europe - as soloist including Staatsoper Berlin and at La Monnaie Opera, Brussels & as ensemble singer including René Jacobs's Baroque opera projects in Florence, Brussels, New York, London etc. Recordings for Harmonia Mundi and Hyperion.

ZEB SOANES 'one of the most familiar voices in Britain'. BBC Radio 4 Newsreader (Today, PM, the Six O'Clock News, Shipping Forecast). An established television presenter of The Proms on BBC FOUR; and of films for Songs of Praise, the Culture Show, and Newsnight. Presents live events for the Royal Opera House, and concerts for the Southbank Centre.

WHAT IS OPUS ANGLICANUM?

Opus Anglicanum: An English Music - is 5 men singing unaccompanied and a narrator, founded in 1988.

Our purpose is to perform our own intriguing and audience-friendly story-telling sequences. These are carefully crafted, using narrated texts and unaccompanied sung music of all kinds. Our sequences have covered subjects as diverse as Shakespeare's Sonnets, the Cornish fishing industry, Angels, Gardens, the collecting of English folk music, the Tudor poet John Skelton, the escape of Charles II, the sinking of the destroyer HMS Duchess in 1939, and Einstein's theory of relativity. Some have been performed often, others a very few times, and yet others once only.

The reach of the spoken texts is wide, as are the sources of our music. We use the full historical European repertoire of polyphony, part songs, street song, music hall and traditional song, from the present right through the ages back to the seventh century chant of the Roman church, as well as commissioning our friends among contemporary composers. Including their music in the fabric of the sequences has been a feature from the start, when we gave the first performance of Gavin Bryars 'Anglo Saxon Rune' at a friend's wedding in 1992. Since then we have commissioned 25 works.

We have performed for Three Choirs Festivals at Hereford, at Gloucester and at Worcester; for the St Endellion Festival; the Royal Northern College of Music; for Windsor Festival; for Southern Cathedrals Festival; English Heritage; Two Moors Festival; on BBC Radio 3; at the Festival de Wallonie Belgium; and for the National Trust. And we have also promoted many concerts ourselves.