

Saturday 18th November 2006, 7.30pm
Fairfield Halls, Croydon

The Armed Man

(A Mass For Peace) - Karl Jenkins

Te Deum
Anton Bruckner

Serenade To Music
Ralph Vaughan Williams

Croydon
Philharmonic Choir

and

Wimbledon
Choral Society

with the
New London Sinfonia

conducted by
Michael Ashcroft
David Gibson

Tickets: £18, £15, £12
Special student rate: £7.50
Box Office: 020 8688 9291 (Fairfield Halls)
www.fairfield.co.uk

Lorna Anderson
Soprano

Heather Shipp
Mezzo-Soprano

Nicholas Sales
Tenor

Nicholas Warden
Bass

Fairfield
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Croydon
Guardian
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The Armed Man - A Mass For Peace by Karl Jenkins, is the result of a special millennial commission from the Royal Armouries and the latest in a six century old tradition of "Armed Man" masses that take the fifteenth century French song *L'Homme Armé* as their starting point. Jenkins' work is rarely out of Classic FM's Hall of Fame. Excerpts from this extremely popular piece are played almost every day on the radio and will be familiar to many.

According to Guy Wilson, Master of the Royal Armouries "The theme that 'the armed man must be feared' which is the message of the song seemed to me painfully relevant to the 20th century and so the idea was born to commission a modern 'Armed Man Mass'. What better way both to look back and reflect as we leave behind the most war-torn and destructive century in human history, and to look ahead with hope and commit ourselves to a new and more peaceful millennium."

Large scale in both scope and scale *The Armed Man* is a profoundly moving yet very accessible work which uses the most traditional of means to explore an all too contemporary subject. As Jenkins explains, "As I started composing *The Armed Man* the tragedy of Kosovo unfolded. I was reminded daily of the horror of such conflict and so I dedicate the work to the victims of Kosovo".

In his music for *The Armed Man* the composer has drawn on a diverse array of cultural and historical sources. It's difficult to think of another composer who could successfully place a muezzin's call to prayer within a Mass setting and follow it with a Kyrie that quotes both Palestrina and Brazilian drum rhythms. That Jenkins does so with such ease and to such powerful effect is a tribute to his remarkable skill and musical sensitivity.

With the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the ever-present threat of terrorism, A Mass for Peace, with its message of peace and reflection, is even more appropriate today. This concert is an unmissable opportunity to hear this most moving and exciting work performed live and with great effect by a large choir.

In stark contrast, Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* is a fine example of the composer in his most lyrical mood. It was written for Sir Henry Wood to mark the conductor's Golden Jubilee and dedicated to him "in grateful recognition of his services to music". Both men became Presidents of Wimbledon Choral Society at later dates. The text for the work is taken from the scene in Portia's garden in the last act of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Vaughan Williams wrote it for 16 famous British singers of the time, all of whom had been associated with Wood at some point in his career.

The momentum of the Bruckner *Te Deum* is set from the start and is non-stop. Although in form it follows a pattern similar to Haydn's setting of the same text, though on a much larger scale, musically it is unique. Bruckner's preference for unison melody and modal harmony make the piece sound like a huge Gregorian chant for chorus with orchestral accompaniment. The piece was an instant success at its first performance (it blew Mahler away) and even Bruckner himself singled the work out as his favourite, referring to it as "the pride of my life."

This concert programme can be approached on many levels – it can be thought-provoking, calming, exciting and emotional. Make a date for your diary now to be sure not to miss what will surely prove to be a unique concert experience.

Tickets can be obtained either directly from the Fairfield Halls (see other side for details), or from members of both choirs, or by emailing tickets@wimbledon-choral.org.uk.