

INVITATIONE presents
MUSIC FROM TURBULENT TIMES:
BYRD, GESUALDO, SHOSTAKOVICH

Saturday 11th April 2015, 7.30

in Beverley Minster

Proceeds in aid of Beverley Minster

Invitatione was established in 2011 by a group of local musicians and music teachers. We aim to provide high quality live music in local venues, and to create enjoyable and varied performing experiences for our players and singers. Our members range from those as young as 11 to those in their retirement; this mix of ages enables the youngest and the least experienced of our group to enjoy the support of others and to tackle challenging repertoire with confidence. We have now had a number of students pass through our ensemble and our tutelage, who have gone on to university or music college, and it is with great pleasure that we are able to welcome some of them back for this performance. Indeed, the concert has been organised in the Easter holidays specifically with this in mind. Half of tonight's performers are still at school, university or music college.

We have performed large and small scale concerts in churches in Hull, Beverley and Driffield, raising money for charities and good causes. Highlights include a concert for Amnesty International which raised over £2,000 (January 2012); the semi-staged *Messiah* performed in Holy Trinity Church, Hull (Easter 2012); a collaboration with East Riding Theatre using the words of, and music inspired by, Shakespeare (June 2013); and thrilling performances in Beverley Minster of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (2013), and (in 2014) Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*.

The idea for this evening's concert started with the plan to rehearse and perform Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony. Two years ago, we performed the Fifth Symphony, which, for many of our students, has been an A-level Music set work. In order to support their studies, we have chosen to rehearse and prepare the Tenth, similar in many ways, such as orchestration and thematic development, but different in other respects, including the personal, political and cultural context in which it was written. We then wanted to offset the mighty symphony with a first half consisting of music of the opposite extreme – small vocal and instrumental groups – but, nevertheless, music created by composers living through turbulent times. Creations of genius frequently result from trials and tribulations. Art in all its manifestations is, after all, an expression of our humanity. The ultimate triumph of the best outpourings of painters, poets, composers, is that they survive the individual contexts in which they were written, remaining meaningful to successive generations who recognise in them their own sufferings, joys and concerns.

The period of history from the late Renaissance through the Reformation and into the seventeenth century, with its political and religious upheavals, seemed a good place to start, and the first-half programme grew up around the familiar figure of William Byrd and the less familiar, but intriguing, Carlo Gesualdo. Meanwhile, the first item of the concert - Purcell's 'Music for a while' - reminds us of music's ability to transcend time, place, politics, religion and society, and to soothe pain, comfort the oppressed, and calm troubled waters. The words of the pieces sung by the chamber choir express prayerful requests for calm and for peace; 'Ah silly soul' speaks of the vanity of worldly matters in comparison with heavenly concerns; and the music throughout the concert takes us away to where our individual experiences become those of humanity as a whole.

Programme

Henry Purcell (c. 1659 – 1695)

Music for a while from *Oedipus*, 1692

Soloist: Lucy Bates

Remember not, Lord, our offences

Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1561 – 1613)

O vos omnes from the *Tenebrae Responsories for Holy Saturday: V*

Gagliarda del Principe de Venosa

Tristis est anima mea from the *Tenebrae Responsories for Maundy Thursday: II*

William Byrd (c. 1540 – 1623)

Domine, salva nos from *Cantiones sacrae*, 1591

Fantasia no. 2

Ah, silly soul! from *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnetts*, 1611

Soloist: Lucy Bates

Plorans plorabit from *Gradualia*, 1605

INTERVAL of 15 minutes

Refreshments are available in the North Transept



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

Symphony no. 10 in E minor, op. 93

I Moderato

II Allegro

III Allegretto

IV Andante - Allegro

William Byrd (c. 1540 – 1623)

Donald McCloud (presenter of BBC Radio 3 Composer of the Week) describes William Byrd as “one of music’s great mavericks”. Byrd composed some of the greatest choral music of the Renaissance period. He was intellectual, well read, interested in the religious and political debates of the time, an entrepreneur and businessman, and a genuinely open-minded thinker. He was also a devout Catholic living and working in a dangerous post-Reformation England. Despite Queen Elizabeth’s own tolerance, Byrd and his family and servants were watched, his property was searched, and he and his wife were persecuted for recusancy (failure to attend church). He escaped prosecution thanks to the support of the queen and a handful of aristocratic Catholic patrons, support founded on the reputation Byrd had built for himself in London. He was finally excommunicated, though his fate could have been much worse.

William Byrd was born in London around 1540, the year in which Henry VIII was twice married, first to Anne of Cleves and then to Catherine Howard. Little is known of Byrd’s childhood, but he did survive the plague and bouts of influenza which wiped out whole sections of the population. He was taken under the wing of Thomas Tallis, nearly 40 years his senior, at the Chapel Royal, where Byrd sang and then acted as Tallis’s assistant. In March 1563, he was appointed organist of Lincoln Cathedral, but his Catholicism prevented him from feeling secure under the watchful and hostile eye of Archdeacon Aylmer, who openly pursued recusants.

In 1572, he moved to London to be sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, where he played a diplomatic game to secure favour from Queen Elizabeth and a number of influential sponsors. Elizabeth showed so much faith in Byrd and his friend Tallis that she granted them a 21-year patent for the printing of music in England and rights over the importation of foreign music. In 1575, Tallis and Byrd published *Cantiones que ab argumento sacrae vocantur*, consisting of 17 pieces from each composer, one for each of Elizabeth’s 17 years on the throne.

The 1580s saw an increase in Byrd’s Catholic devotion and its expression in his music. Two sets of *Cantiones sacrae* were published in 1589 and 1591, in which texts set in the motets were metaphors for the plight of the Catholic community, focusing on the persecution of the chosen people and the hope of deliverance. **Domine, salva nos** is from the collection of 1591, and is a prayer for help and for peace, taking its text from Matthew 8, 25-26. The disciples, on the Sea of Galilee, ask Jesus to still the storm. The word painting - the descending scale on ‘perimus’ (‘we perish’) and the stillness of ‘tranquillitatem’ (‘calm’) in the final passage - is simple and exquisite.

Byrd semi-retired from the Chapel Royal in the 1590s and had more time to compose. He devoted himself to writing music for Catholic worship. Despite the problems caused by his religious convictions, the composer continued to compose Latin works for private devotions, including three mass settings. This was at a time when no masses had been composed for over thirty years; Byrd may have been one of the few musicians who could remember ever singing a mass. The masses and motets were published bravely in two collections which he called *Gradualia* of 1605 and 1607.

The first volume of the *Gradualia* contains music for the Marian feasts, as well as settings of miscellaneous non-liturgical sacred texts, a group of Marian hymns from the Primer and one of office music for Easter and Holy Week. The opening motet, **Plorans plorabit**, is based on words from Jeremiah 13, vv 17-18. It could be thought that the ‘king and queen’ of the text are a contemporary reference to James I and Anne of Denmark. This would be typical of Byrd’s tendency to use double meanings in his music, often addressing political issues through the careful selection of unimpeachable biblical texts. Here the text could be read as a warning to the king and queen that they would be subject to divine retribution for holding the Lord’s flock captive unless they humbled themselves.

At the time of publication, merely possessing a copy of such music could have been construed as a treasonable offence. In 1605, the year of the gunpowder plot, a traveller was arrested in a London pub and

thrown into Newgate prison for possessing “certain papistical books written by William Byrd, and dedicated to Lord Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton”. These books were probably the first set of *Gradualia*. A second edition was issued in 1610, when the domestic political situation had become more secure for Roman Catholics. Byrd had long since retired from London to the rural surroundings of Stondon Massey, Essex, where the recusant group linked to the Petre family would have first heard this music.

Byrd’s output also included music for viol consort, for which there was a growing market. He wrote a number of dynamic and expressive works for viols, as well as songs for voice and viols, many of them remarkable for the role they allocated to the viols, which were not treated as mere accompaniment, but given their own independent lines. He published two books of English songs (1588 and 1589), creating his own experimental song forms rather than sticking to the fashionable madrigals of the time. **Ah silly soul** was published in Byrd’s final volume of English vocal music (1611): *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnetts*. Although a secular consort song, it is based on a biblical text and could be interpreted as reflecting the soul’s struggle with the world. ‘Silly’ in Byrd’s day referred to something ignorant and rather helpless. The song is written for voice and five viols (today played by more familiar instruments), the voice composed as the second of the six lines, showing clearly how Byrd envisaged this not as voice with accompaniment, but a combined contrapuntal texture; indeed, compositions from this period might commonly serve for either voices or instruments alike.

Texts and translations:

Domine, salva nos, perimus:
impera, et fac Deus tranquillitatem.

Lord, save us, we perish:
give the command, O God, and bring calm.

Plorans plorabit, et deducet oculus meus
lachrimas meas, quia captus est grex
Domini.

Weeping [my soul] shall weep, and mine eye
shall drop tears, because the flock of our Lord is
captive.

Dic regi et dominatrici, humiliamini, sedete,
quoniam descendit de capite vestro corona
gloriae vestrae.

Say to the king, and to her that ruleth: Be
humbled, sit down: because the crown of your
glory is come down from your head.

Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1561 – 1613)

Turbulence of a different kind attended an Italian contemporary of William Byrd: Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa. His fame rests almost equally on his status as a murderer as on his accomplishments as a composer, though the latter are gradually being recognised more widely. Stravinsky orchestrated Gesualdo’s madrigal *Beltà, poi che assenti* in his 1960 ballet score *Monumentum pro Gesualdo*.

Don Carlo returned home one night in 1590 to find his wife, Donna Maria d’Avalos, *in flagrante delicto* with her lover, the Duke of Andria. Both were brutally murdered by the Prince and his attendants. This event certainly shaped Gesualdo’s subsequent state of mind, which ranged from penitence and the hope of divine absolution to melancholy and isolation.

Gesualdo’s father, Duke Fabrizio, had been granted the principality of Venosa by Philip II of Spain in 1560, following a well-chosen dynastic marriage to the sister of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo and niece of Pope Pius IV. It is known that Duke Fabrizio supported music and the arts; he might even have been a composer himself, and he certainly employed musicians in his household. Carlo Gesualdo was born around 1561, at about the time his uncle was appointed Cardinal by Pius IV. Music would have played a role in his courtly upbringing. Carlo was married in 1586; following the murders of 1590, he withdrew to his castle, to avoid reprisals from his dead wife’s family. His noble rank helped him escape prosecution, but the ensuing scandal became the subject of several contemporary literary works. Don Carlo’s personal atonement included endowing a Capuchin monastery, which contains his only known portrait. This painting shows Gesualdo as a penitent, attended by a Cardinal, gazing at Christ on the Day of Judgement but on the cusp of purgatory, and desperately seeking divine forgiveness.

Having succeeded to the title of Prince of Venosa on his father's death in 1591, he turned to composition. His status as a nobleman, with his social privilege and personal wealth, enabled him to pursue his interest in music. His first book of madrigals was published in 1594 under an assumed name, which was the usual procedure in order to disguise an aristocrat's work.

In 1593, Gesualdo remarried, this time into the Este family of Ferrara, renowned for their patronage of the arts. Gesualdo became fascinated with the experimental musical scene in Ferrara, and, during the next few years, his growing passion for music resulted in the publication of several books of madrigals. The Ferrarese composer, Luzzasco Luzzaschi, influenced Gesualdo, whose style evolved to include Luzzaschi's most adventurous chromatic harmonies. Gesualdo's work was now being taken seriously by professional virtuosi, accomplished musicians of the Ferrara court, and composers including Pomponio Nenna and Scipione Lacorcia. The complexity and avant-garde innovation of this select band of contemporary Italian aristocrats, patrons and creators of the arts lies within the bounds of modal harmonies pushed to the extreme for the delight of the educated elite. Astonishing chromatic turns were now a feature of Gesualdo's style, along with intricate counterpoint. Gesualdo's choice of texts dealing with emotional extremes and torments goes hand in hand with his musical language. Finding new ways for music to express words had become increasingly important for composers in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

As to the composer himself, there are reports of melancholia, feelings of guilt, sado-masochism, and violence towards his second wife; some commentators suggest connections between Gesualdo's mental state and the music he produced. He spent his final years in lonely isolation and deeply depressed, at least in part due to an increasing sense of guilt. This should not detract from the fact that his mature work – the fifth and sixth books of madrigals, and the Responsoria for Holy Week, published in 1611 – is of a consistently high quality, a body of fine composition from a complex individual, infused with rich, colourful, constantly surprising delights. **O vos omnes** and **Tristis est anima mea** are taken from these Responsories, and both display the breathtaking, astonishing harmonic twists and turns typical of Gesualdo. Some passages of **Tristis est anima mea** would not be out of place in a madrigal by Alessandro Scarlatti – 'Vos fugam capietis', for example – but the harmonic language here is more outlandish by far.

A few instrumental works also survive from this period, one of which is presented this evening: the **Gagliarda del Principe de Venosa** ('The Prince of Venosa's Galliard'). It too demonstrates the chromaticism which permeates Gesualdo's work.

Texts and translations:

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,
attendite et videte: si est dolor similis sicut
dolor meus. Attendite universi populi, et
videte dolorem meum.

Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.
Sustinete hic et vigilate mecum. Nunc
videbitis turbam quae circumdabit me. Vos
fugam capietis, et ego vadam immolari pro
vobis. Ecce appropinquat hora, et Filius
hominis tradetur in manus peccatorum.

O all you who pass by on the road, stay, and see if
there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.
Stay, peoples of the world, and behold my sorrow.

My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay here and
watch with me. Now you will see the crowd
surround me. You will flee, and I will go to be
sacrificed for you. Behold, the hour approaches, and
the Son of Man shall be given up into the hands of
sinners.

Henry Purcell (c. 1659 – 1695)

Henry Purcell was of a slightly later generation, and was able to enjoy the renewed flowering of music after the restoration of the monarchy. He was born in the aftermath of the Civil War which had scattered the court and the services of the Church of England, and shut down professional theatres, taking away sources of income for musicians. Through continued political and religious upheaval, Purcell managed to carve out a successful career for himself, serving three successive monarchies on the English throne: Charles II, James

II, and William and Mary. Purcell's court responsibilities dwindled with the end of James II's reign; William and Mary's accession to the throne marked the end of royal prerogative. There were major changes. Musical patronage diminished substantially, as William and Mary did not much care for music. Purcell turned his hand to composing for the theatre, which, fortunately, was experiencing something of a revival.

John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee's 1692 reworking of Sophocles's *Oedipus* became one of the staples of Restoration drama, playing up the blood and gore to please London audiences. Purcell's incidental music to the play (Z.583) includes, in the second of four movements, 'Music for a while'. The words express the idea that whatever is happening in the world, music can transport the listener to another plane, where no pain is felt. The song features, as do many of Purcell's compositions, a ground bass, with melodic development layered above. It was originally for voice and continuo, here arranged for voice and strings by Sue Wheeldon.

All the while, Purcell held the position of organist, first at Westminster Abbey and then at the Chapel Royal. 'Remember not, Lord, our offences' is a five-part anthem, which sets a passage from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. It was composed somewhere between 1679 and 1682, at the beginning of Purcell's tenure as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, a post he held from 1679, taking over from his teacher, John Blow.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

Shostakovich was possibly the most gifted composer to spend virtually his whole life within a totalitarian system. His response to this was not through overt polemic, but through satire, sensitive poetic references and what seem to be 'secret' messages and cyphers in his music. As well as a sculptor's genius in crafting satisfying cohesive musical edifices with material and thematic integrity, he had a political and philosophical gift which enabled him to express personal tragedy whilst ostensibly satisfying political diktat. The Tenth Symphony (1953) contains Shostakovich's musical monogram DSCH – expressed in the German transliteration as the notes D, E flat, C, B natural – which he used increasingly in his works from this point onwards. The use of this personal reference is an overt expression of the sense of personal liberation felt by the composer, which resulted from the death of Joseph Stalin in that year.

Shostakovich had repeatedly been threatened, both personally and professionally, over the course of the previous two decades. The Fifth Symphony had been written following Stalin's criticism of the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, when the composer was publicly denounced and disgraced. The Fifth Symphony had returned him to some degree of favour. However, he was again humiliated in the 'anti-formalist' cultural purges of 1948, despite by this point being recognised and acknowledged for his work across the world: he was stripped of his teaching positions and forced to represent the Soviet Union in a series of international 'Peace' congresses, parroting words written for him by the Party. He was forced to earn a meagre living by composing film scores and the occasional patriotic cantata. Other, more serious, works were composed and kept hidden for years. By 1953, a significant number of works were waiting to see the light of day.

The Ninth Symphony had been composed in 1945, and had caused controversy because it bucked the trend of other composers' mighty Ninth Symphonies. Shostakovich's Ninth is relatively short, lightweight and capering in character. Eight years then passed before the composer presented his Tenth. When it came, it reflected, as ever, the experiences of the composer and his contemporaries. As a musical work, it has been credited with being the most significant symphonic achievement of the twentieth century. As a musical expression of complex humanity, it surely encapsulates the whole gamut of experience, from fear and trepidation, intense suffering, uncertainty, through anger and aggression, to the release of what could even be described as joy in the finale.

The first movement is possibly the most brilliantly sculpted first movement of all Shostakovich's symphonies, making a great deal of very little material (the trait of a great symphonist). It begins tentatively with a few footsteps in the dark. The footsteps gradually build up enough confidence to proffer

a slightly intimidated dance in the woodwind. As the momentum gathers, the central section of the movement picks up the pace and combines the different thematic cells in a variety of gestures of protestation through squealing clarinets, snarling brass and frenetically stabbing strings. The release of tension at the recapitulation is palpable, and the mass of energy ebbs away to leave once again almost a sense of lethargy and disappointment, and a final lament from the piccolos.

The second movement was allegedly described by Shostakovich, in Solomon Volkov's *Testimony*, as "a musical portrait of Stalin", though the authenticity of this description was later disputed by the composer's son, Maxim. The character of this music speaks for itself: hard, brutal, aggressive, discomforting, unforgiving and relentless. Whatever it is or is not meant to represent, here are four minutes of powerful and poisonous venom spewing from the composer's pen.

In complete contrast, the third movement begins with a delicate, quiet, tiptoeing three-four dance marked 'allegretto'. Nothing is as it seems, of course, and the minor tonality, together with the almost mocking imitation of one part by another (canon being one of Shostakovich's favourite devices), and pointed interjections from the lower strings and then the woodwind, show that this is not going to turn out to be a Classical third movement minuet. In fact, the woodwind present the first of two themes in this movement which have personal significance. The composer's monogram, on the notes D, E flat, C, B, is heard extensively in the flutes and piccolo and then developed in the upper strings. A low flute is heard, using the extreme low reaches of the instrument (indeed, we have had to employ an alto flute in this performance, as the instruments our players regularly use do not have the low B necessary to play this passage). A solo bassoon picks up the tiptoeing minuet theme, but the music is interrupted by a horn call, repeatedly issued on the same pitches, and linked remarkably with a series of reminders of the tragic and desperate opening of the symphony. For forty years, this horn call was presumed to have a meaning, but no-one could work out what that meaning was. In 1994, an answer to this was suggested: the notes E, A, E, D, A might refer, in a cryptic mixture of French and German note-spellings (E, La, Mi, Re, A), to Elmira Nazirova, Shostakovich's Azerbaijani composition pupil, who was also his muse, confidante and object of unrequited affection at the time. The two monograms, DSCH and ELMIRA, are heard again at the end of the movement, the first still on the flute and piccolo and the second still on the horn, also intertwined with the minuet theme, which in the meantime has been transformed through a variety of guises in the course of the movement, including a Spanish-style incarnation complete with tambourine.

A prolonged introduction to the fourth movement seems almost directionless at times. The cellos' and basses' attempts to draw up a position are repelled listlessly by melancholic woodwind phrases. The strings eventually join forces menacingly, before a burst of energy begins the final rollercoaster ride. A seemingly jaunty clarinet plays a rising fifth, which is the start of a new melody, making what is just about the first real excursion into major tonality in the whole symphony. This does not last, of course: chromaticism and minor tonal areas mount a reinforced invasion, with threatening and uneasy transformations of the introduction's themes. References to the three rising scalar notes which began the first, the second and third movements reappear at the climax of the fourth, circling round and round like a needle stuck on a turntable, with pounding snare and timpani, until they are finally dispelled by the DSCH motto and a clamour of gong and cymbal. The cellos resume their opening theme, low brass slowly echo 'DSCH', the woodwind *en masse* take up their rambling opening motifs. Eventually a nonchalant solo bassoon re-establishes the theme of the allegro, and, like the pied piper conjuring followers, gradually attracts other instruments to join in. From here, with horn and then lower brass statements of 'DSCH', the final straight is reached, and the race is on. In a truly determined finish, major tonality returns, with a focus on the major third at the top of the texture, and fully-formed and flying major scales (compare this with the false triumph of the finale of the Fifth, which has no leading note and strains for its begrudging final major chords). The timpani, of all things, pound home the DSCH motto as the rest of the orchestra bounce and frolic to the close. This is – finally – a release from tension, a reassertion of self, a true triumph of individuality for this remarkable man and his music.

Rachel Poyser

The Orchestra and Chamber Ensemble of *INVITATIONE*

Violin	Rosie Owen (leader)	Eden Clark	Adam Davies
	Lesley Finlayson	Katy Harston	Julie Jenkins
	Sam Kitchen	Stephanie Noble	Amy Parkin
	Jacob Phillipson	Shannon Smith	Louise Turner
	James Waide	Andrew Ward-Campbell	
Viola	Helen Booth	Paula Bowes	Penny Cook
	Olly Clark	Helen Keep	Elizabeth Mathieson
Cello	Clare Allan	Lucy Bates	Alan Edgar
	Emily Hanover	Edward Lock	Trish Ringrose
	Sue Sidwell		
Bass	Viv Cooling		
Flute	Rebecca Barber	Claire Holdich	Margaret Pearson
	Sue Wheeldon		
Piccolo	Kate Lutley		
Oboe	Tommy Hill	Jack Stanley	Martin Lutley
Cor anglais	Martin Lutley		
Clarinet	Grace Burnett	Emma Dawber	Matthew Essam
	Katherine Longman		
E flat clarinet	Ian Franklin		
Bassoon	Peter Bolton	Katie Whitehead	Mandy Whitehead
French horn	Sue Berrieman	Daniel Edwards	Martin Jones
	Christopher Leathley	Luca Myers	Garry Oglesby
	Sammy Hoodless	Joseph Mathieson	David Morrison
Trumpet	Ruby Orłowska		
	Bethany Arrowsmith-Cooper		Lizzie Connell
Trombone	Matthew Lock	Daniel Phillips	
	Brandon Cox		
Tuba	Brandon Cox		
Percussion	Christine Carter	Siobhan Shay	Alex Smith
	Alex Walker		

The Chamber Choir of *INVITATIONE*

Lucy Bates	Peter Bolton	Rachel Collins	Emma Dawber
Jan Hayton	Claire Holdich	Edward Lock	Matthew Lock
Elizabeth Mathieson	Joseph Mathieson	Kathleen Nield	Rachel Poyser
Siobhan Shay	Alex Smith	Janice Summers	Sue Wheeldon
Kevin Wheeldon			

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