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## Wendover Choral Society

Patron: Sir Thomas Allen

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# Summer Concert



## Sacred & Secular

Music by Mozart, Bruckner, Ravel & Fauré

Saturday 17th May 2008

7.30pm

St. George's Church, RAF Halton

Programme : £1

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Mairig Gibbs, Kathy Markell, Di Wharton

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Chris Emlyn Jones, Roger Bettess,  
Margaret Cox

Cellos: Magda Pietresewska, Thomas Adams,  
Anthony Wilkes, Sue Hipkiss

Double Bass: Kate Aldridge, Richard Hodby

Flute: Rachel Goode, Jo Coles  
Oboe: Carolyn King, Tess Sheppard  
Clarinet: Barbara Stuart, Stephen Greenhalgh  
Bassoon: Simon Payne, Ian White

Horn: Martin Priestley, John Bleach  
Trumpet: Jan Morter, Marilyn Elliot  
Trombone: Rob Marsh, Sarah Hutchinson, Liz England

Harp: Rupert McShane

Celeste: Christian Wilson

Timpani/Percussion: Justin Rhodes

## *Wendover Choral Society*

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Heather Barrett-Mold  
Anne Berry  
Siân Brownhill  
Jean Cowell  
Rosemary Cox  
Liz Griffin  
Jean Hanford  
Christine Keen  
Janie King  
Shelagh King  
Catherine Mulcahy  
Hetty Taylor  
Fiona Webb  
Jean White  
Lorna Wilson  
Angela Worth  
Jean Young

### *Tenor*

Simon Beston  
Basil Cooper  
Jonathan Dodds  
William Edwards  
Albert Heal  
Chas Martin  
Simon Robertson  
Tony Young

### *Alto*

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Pat Cashmore  
Lindsay Cornell  
Anne Ford  
Phyllis Hall  
Hilary Hasler  
Sue Hetherington  
Sheila Hunt  
Jenny King  
Sylvia Levitt  
Fiona Peeler  
Rachel Ray  
Jill Richards  
Mandy Smith  
Monica Tompsett  
Val Turnham  
Olive Watts

### *Bass*

John Biddle  
Peter Foggitt  
Christian Goursaud  
Paul Hudson  
John King  
Robert Kramer  
John Lawrence  
Mike Malone  
Paul Ranford  
Greg Vallance

## *Sacred & Secular*

Music by Mozart, Bruckner, Ravel & Fauré

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### **Wendover Choral Society**

Peter Bassano : Music Director

Richard King : Accompanist

Christian Wilson : Organist

~

### **Oxford Sinfonia**

Leader : Simon Kodurand

Natasha Day : Soprano

Vojtěch Šafařík : Baritone

Wendover Choral Society is supported by  
Wendover Community Trust and ValeArts



*Aylesbury Vale Arts Council*

Wendover Choral Society also acknowledges the support given by the  
Josephine Baker Trust to the soloists in tonight's concert.

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# Programme

**Mozart (1756-1791) :** Ave Verum Corpus K.618 (1791)

**Bruckner (1824-1896) :** Motets

- i Locus iste
- ii Ave Maria
- iii Ecce Sacerdos

The audience is respectfully requested to reserve applause for the Bruckner until after *Ecce sacerdos*

**Ravel (1875-1937) :** Ma mère l'Oye (Mother Goose) :

- Five pieces for children
- i Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty
- ii Tom Thumb
- iii Empress of the Pagodas
- iv Conversation of Beauty and the Beast
- v The Fairy Garden

***Interval of 20 minutes***

**Fauré (1845-1924) :** Requiem

- i Introït et Kyrie: *Choir*
- ii Offertoire: *Choir & baritone solo*
- iii Sanctus: *Choir*
- iv Pie Jesu: *Soprano solo*
- v Agnus Dei: *Choir*
- vi Libera Me: *Baritone Solo & choir*
- vii In Paradisum: *Choir*

He has conducted a number of concerts with the RCM Chamber Choir (including the first performance in modern times of Beethoven's Trauerklänge), introduced a standing RCM Symphony Orchestra to an historically aware performance of Berlioz and directed the Baroque Orchestra in performances of three of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos at Buckingham Palace. In January 1995 he was one of the first conductors to appear at the newly built Paris concert hall, Cité de la Musique. He returned to this major Paris venue in July 1998 to conduct two concerts with the Grimethorpe Colliery Band to ecstatic reviews and high profile TV coverage. He has conducted the City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra, the Redhill Sinfonia, the Imperial College Symphony Orchestra, the Warwick University Symphony Orchestra and Ulster Youth Orchestra and in April received excellent press response for his debut with the National Youth Wind Orchestra.

A champion of new music he has commissioned and conducted the first performances of Tim Souster's *Echoes* (Manchester/BBC Radio 3), Joseph Horowitz's Tuba Concerto (Nottingham Festival) and Andrew Powell's *Falstaff: Theme and Episodes* (Paris, Cité de la Musique), Chris Batchelor's *Weasel Words & Winning Ways*, Max Charles Davies's *Trinity-Credo*, Simon Dobson's *Four Britten Sketches*, Gabriella Swallow's *Spit*, Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Stockholm Diary* and Ivor Bonnici's Three Movements for Chamber Orchestra.

He has been an external brass examiner for Birmingham Conservatoire, the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Trinity College of Music and adjudicated for the BBC Young Musician of the Year and the Royal Over Seas League competition.

Peter Bassano is a regular contributor to a number of music journals and has published research on topics as diverse as Beethoven, Byrd, Shakespeare and Veronese and is currently writing a book on the trombone for the Menuhin series of orchestral instruments.

## *Peter Bassano ~ conductor*

As well as being Music Director of the Wendover Choral Society, Peter Bassano is Music Director of the Oxford University Sinfonietta, City of Cambridge Band and the professional choir, The Gentlemen of the Chappell. From September he will become conductor of the City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra.

He is descended from a family of Venetian musicians brought to England by Henry VIII. He studied trombone and singing at the Royal College of Music, where until 2004 he was Professor of Trombone and Sackbut and Head of Brass. He has studied conducting with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Elgar Howarth, Jorma Panula and Bramwell Tovey.

In 1973 he joined the Philharmonia Orchestra as a trombonist, five years he formed and was Artistic Director of the brass quintet, Equale Brass. This ensemble made seven records, toured world-wide, and commissioned twenty seven new works from composers as diverse as David Bedford, Peter Skellern, Roger Smalley and John Tavener. He has given master-classes in the Sibelius Akademy, Helsinki, Royal Swedish Academy, Paris Conservatoire, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney Conservatoires and has lectured at the Cambridge, Duke, Hong Kong, Indiana, Open, Oxford, Queen's (Belfast), Salford, Trinity and York Universities.

He was assistant conductor to Paul McCreesh and his Gabrieli Consort and Players on his award winning *Venetian Coronation* and *Music at San Rocco* and Sir John Eliot Gardiner for his *Berlioz Romeo and Juliet* recording. He has conducted at the Royal Festival Hall in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's International Series and at the Royal Albert Hall in a BBC Promenade Concert and at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. In addition he has made several Festival appearances at Aldeburgh, Chester, Greenwich, Nottingham, the Three Choirs (Worcester Cathedral), as well as performances abroad with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Royal Danish Academy Symphony and Royal Oman Symphony.

## *Sacred & Secular*

The city of Paris is the single common bond in the widely diverse lives of all the composers featured in tonight's programme. Ravel and Fauré both studied at the Paris Conservatoire, Mozart performed and stayed there for months - it was whilst they were both in Paris in 1778 that his mother died. Bruckner's first international triumph as a performer was when he gave a recital on the organ of Notre Dame in 1869.

Apart from the fact that Bruckner and Ravel both remained unmarried and so neither had children, their lives and philosophies could not have been further apart. This is reflected in their compositions; the former's mainly 'sacred' - with his symphonies in mind Bruckner has been described as "the master-builder of cathedrals in sound" - the latter's entirely 'secular', not a single liturgical setting - unique for a composer. Mozart and Fauré fall in between these two extremes.

*Peter Bassano  
May 2008*

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## Mozart

1791 was to be the final year of Mozart's short life. He was completing his last opera *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute). The theme of *Die Zauberflöte* is Masonic and full of the cult's symbolism - some have suggested that it was this public revelation of Masonic secrets which ensured Mozart's exclusion from a court or ecclesiastical appointment. Desperate for money and a permanent job, in May Mozart wrote to the municipal council of Vienna offering his services as an unpaid assistant to the ageing *Kapellmeister* of St Stephen's. It was against this backdrop that in June Mozart visited his wife, Constanza, who was taking the waters in Baden bei Wien. *Ave Verum* was written specifically for Anton Stoll, choirmaster at Baden - its hymn-like simplicity matched only perhaps by the *Hostias* in the *Requiem* - shows Mozart taking a new path in liturgical composition. Here is a late, isolated piece imbued with Masonic feeling, with words that were to take on great personal significance to the survivors in his family when, less than six months later he died at the age of 35.

### *Ave Verum*

Ave verum Corpus, natum de Maria Virgine  
*Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary*

Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine:  
*Who has truly suffered, and was sacrificed on the cross for mankind*

Cujus latus perforatum, unda fluxit et sanguine:  
*Whose side was pierced, whence flowed water and blood*

Esto nobis praegustatum in mortis examine.  
*Be for us a foretaste of heaven, during our final trial*

O Jesu dulcis, O Jesu pie, O Jesu Fili Mariae, miserere mei. Amen.  
*O Jesu sweet, O Jesu merciful, O Jesu Son of Mary, have mercy on me.*  
*Amen.*

## Natasha Day ~ soprano

Natasha Day was born in Edinburgh in 1986 and, having completed her studies at George Watson's College and her vocal tuition with Dorcas Owen, moved to Paris to study singing with Renee Haas. She then won a scholarship to attend the Royal College of Music in London where she currently studies with Kathleen Livingstone.

Her recent solo performances have included Haydn *Harmonie-Messe*, Mahler *Symphony No4*, Mendelssohn *Hear my Prayer*, Mozart *Requiem*, *Coronation Mass* and *Exultate Jubilate*, Fauré *Requiem*, Bach *B Minor Mass*, Handel *Messiah* and Vivaldi *Gloria*. Her lead character roles range from Laurie in *Oklahoma!*, Gabrielle in *La Vie Parisienne*, Betsy Cohen in Giles Howe's contemporary opera *Turkish Delight* and the Countess in Ardingly International Music School's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Recent recitals have included performances at St. James' Piccadilly, Cannongate Kirk, Cheltenham Town Hall, Regent Hall and St. Michael's Chester Square. She also enjoyed presenting a solo act at the 2007 Royal Variety Performance, having duetted with singer Seal earlier in the show.

Natasha's vocal prizes have included the Ella Lamb Trophy, the Winnifred Crawford-Smith Trophy, the Begg Trophy, the Melrose Singing Prize and the Alice Robertson Prize for singing. She is supported by the Josephine Baker Trust.

Future performances will include a new arrangement of Janáček's *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, plus a solo recital at The Edinburgh Society of Musicians and a principal role in a contemporary opera film project with the English Chamber Orchestra.

## *Vojtěch Šafařík ~ bass-baritone*

Vojtěch was born in the Czech Republic. He graduated from the Prague State Conservatory in 2005 and is currently studying with Timothy Evans-Jones at the Benjamin Britten International Opera School at the Royal College of Music, London. At the Royal College he is the Yvonne Wells Scholar and is also kindly supported by the Josephine Baker Trust, the Robert Hendra and the Marmor Trusts. Vojtěch is also the Samling Foundation Scholar and the second prize winner of the Clonter Opera Prize 2008.

Vojtěch's operatic roles include Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* under Kirill Petrenko (International Opera Studio, Komische Oper Berlin), Mozart's *Count Almaviva*, Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Mercurio in Handel's *Atalanta* all with the Benjamin Britten International Opera School. Other roles include Marte in Caldara's *La Contesa dei Numi* (International Music Festival ČeskýKrumlov), Badger/Parson in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Woodhouse), Father in Mozart's *The Jewel Box* (Bampton Classical Opera), Mozart's *Masetto* and Vrchni in Vitězslav Novák's *Lucerna* (Czech Republic).

Vojtěch has appeared frequently as a soloist with performances including Brahms's *Requiem* under Leif Segerstam, Mozart's *Mass in C minor* under Sir Charles Mackerras, Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* with Camerata Salzburg under Sir Roger Norrington, Fauré *Requiem* Bach *St. John Passion* with the London Mozart Players and *Czech Christmas Mass* at the Cadogan Hall with the Southbank Sinfonia.

His future engagements include the role of Forester in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Benjamin Britten International Opera School and Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* at the Aiz en Provence Festival under William Christie.

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## *Bruckner*

There were three major influences on Bruckner's life; God, Wagner and Mozart, but it was God and the precepts of the Catholic faith which were most important to him.

From humble origins, Bruckner was to remain modest, unsophisticated and retain a strong and simple religious belief until the end of his life. Born in Ansfelden, near Linz, in 1824 he was the final descendant of a long line of Austrian village schoolmasters, and it showed.

When Bruckner was 13 his father died and his mother had him enrolled in the neighbouring church school at the Augustinian Abbey of St Florian as a chorister. There, the young Anton studied organ, piano and music theory and of course sang daily in the vast space of this impressive Baroque building. It was at St. Florian that he began to compose sacred music.

At 16 Bruckner entered a teacher-training school in Linz and returned to St. Florian in 1845 to work as a teacher. In 1855 he moved to Vienna to formally study harmony and counterpoint at the Vienna Conservatory under Simon Sechter and orchestration with Otto Kitzler, a cellist who introduced Bruckner to Wagner's operas.

His organ technique and musicianship were such that soon after he was appointed organist at Linz Cathedral. He returned to Vienna in 1868 to take appointments as the Emperor's court organist and replace Sechter at the Vienna Conservatory.

Bruckner's remaining years were spent largely in Vienna where the musically sophisticated public regarded him as little more than a talented peasant. In addition, his admiration for Wagner aroused hostility within the Viennese musical establishment, who much preferred the music of their home-grown Brahms. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra were reluctant to perform his symphonies, although eventually the quality of

### **Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem,  
requiem sempiternam.

*Lamb of God,  
who taketh away the sins of the world,  
Grant them rest,  
rest everlasting.*

### **Lux aeterna**

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine  
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,  
Quia pius es.  
Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Let light eternal shine on them, O Lord  
with thy saints forever,  
for thou art merciful.  
Rest eternal grant them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine on them.*

### **Libera Me**

Libera me, Domine,  
de morte aeterna,  
in die illa tremenda  
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra  
dum veneris judicare  
saeculum per ignem  
Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo  
dum discussion venerit,  
atque ventura ira.  
Dies illa, dies irae,  
calamitatis et miseriae,  
dies magna et amara valde.  
Requiem aeternam, dona eis, Domine  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Deliver me, O Lord,  
from eternal death,  
on that fearful day  
when the heavens are moved and earth  
when thou shalt come to judge  
the world through fire.  
I am made to tremble, and I fear,  
when the desolation shall come,  
and also the coming wrath.  
That day, the day of wrath,  
calamity and misery,  
that terrible and exceedingly bitter day.  
Rest eternal grant them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine on them.*

### **In Paradisum**

In paradisum deducant te angeli  
in tuo adventu  
suscipant te martyres,  
et perducant te  
in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.  
Chorus angelorum te suscipiat,  
et cum Lazaro quondam, paupere  
aeternam habeas requiem.

*May the angels lead you into paradise,  
in your coming,  
may the martyrs receive you  
and may they guide you  
into the holy city, Jerusalem.  
May the chorus of angels receive you  
and with Lazarus once poor,  
may you have eternal rest.*

### **Introitus**

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine  
et lux perpetua luceat eis  
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion  
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem  
Exaudi orationem meam;  
ad te omnis caro veniet.

*Rest eternal grant them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine on them.  
To thee praise is due, O God, in Zion,  
and to thee vows are recited in Jerusalem.  
Hear my prayer;  
unto thee all flesh shall come.*

### **Kyrie**

Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison  
Kyrie eleison

*Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.*

### **Offertorium**

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae  
libera animas defunctorum  
de poenis inferni  
et de profundo lacu.  
Libera eas de ore leonis,  
ne absorbeat eas tartarus,  
ne cadant in obscurum.  
Hostias et preces tibi,  
Domine laudis offerimus.  
Tu suscipe pro animabus illis  
quarum hodie memoriam facimus.  
Faceas Domine,  
de morte transpire ad vitam  
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti,  
et semini eius.

*Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory,  
deliver the souls of the dead  
from punishment in the inferno,  
and from the infernal lake.  
Deliver them from the mouth of the lion,  
lest the abyss swallow them up,  
lest they fall into the darkness.  
Sacrifices and prayers to thee,  
O Lord, we offer with praise.  
O receive them for the souls of those  
whom today we commemorate.  
Make them, O Lord,  
to pass from death to life,  
as thou of old has promised Abraham,  
and his seed.*

### **Sanctus**

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Pleni sunt coeli et terra  
Gloria tua.  
Hosanna in excelsis

*Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God of hosts.  
The heavens and earth are filled  
With thy glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

### **Pie Jesu**

Pie Jesu Domine,  
dona eis requiem,  
requiem sempiternam.

*Merciful Lord Jesus,  
grant them rest,  
rest everlasting.*

the works rather than the personality of the composer helped overcome the opposition of the players. These setbacks led Bruckner, never really confident of his abilities as a composer, to constantly question and revise his work. He died in 1896 before he could complete the last movement of his Ninth Symphony.

Like Mozart before him, Bruckner was fascinated by the music of Palestrina and Bach and this study is clearly influential in his own writing for both voices and instruments. As he developed as a composer, the works of Mozart became of great importance to him. For example, in his Fifth Symphony, and with great poignancy, he uses Mozart's identical eight bar *Lacrymosa* chord sequence from the *Requiem* (the final notes Mozart penned on his death-bed). Some also hear the voice of Mozart in Bruckner's simple setting of *Locus iste* and in tonight's performance *Ave Verum Corpus* is placed immediately before it to demonstrate this artistic common ground.

**Locus iste** is a setting of the gradual from the Mass for the Dedication of a Church and was first performed in October 1870. It is dedicated to Father Otto Loidol who Bruckner would often visit at the Benedictine Abbey of Kremsmünster. Despite spending his mature years in the Austrian capital, it was to St. Florian that Bruckner wished his remains to be returned to rest. He was interred in the crypt directly beneath his beloved organ. One can't help thinking that it was of the Church of St. Florian that Bruckner was thinking when he set this short but powerful text.

Locus iste a Deo factus est  
Inaestimabile sacramentum;  
Irreprehensibilis est.

*This place was made by God,  
a priceless mystery;  
it is beyond reproach.*

The seven-part setting of **Ave Maria** was written nine years before *Locus iste* and first performed in Linz when Bruckner was cathedral organist there. The first phrase is sung by women's voices, answered by the men, with a rhetorical sequence on the name of "Jesus", leading to imitative and persuasive counterpoint in what follows.

Ave Maria Gratia plena Dominus tecum; *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;*  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, *blessed art thou among women,*  
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, *and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,*  
Jesus Sancta Maria Mater Dei, *Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God*  
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus, *pray for us sinners,*  
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, *now and at the hour of our death.*  
Amen. *Amen.*

***Ecce sacerdos***, is a setting of text from *Ecclesiastes* which is generally associated with the enthronement of a bishop. It was written in 1885 for the diocese of Linz's millennium celebrations. This unusual motet uses accompanying trombones (always associated with solemn liturgy - Fauré uses them symbolically too) and organ. Its inspiration is from plainsong underlined by its opening organum harmony, its later layered levels of more complex harmony provided the grandeur required by the occasion. It concludes with a penultimate plainchant doxology, followed by the impressive chromaticism of the opening.

Ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis placuit Deo.  
*Behold a great priest, who in his days pleased God.*

Ideo jurejurando fecit illum Dominus crescere in plebem suam.  
*Therefore, by an oath, the Lord made him increase among his people.*

Benedictionem omnium gentium dedit illi, et testamentum suum confirmavit super caput ejus.  
*He gave him the blessing of all nations, and confirmed his covenant upon his head.*

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.  
*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

had been a topic of conversation between Fauré and his student Ravel? The *Requiem* has become such a firm favourite in our time that it comes as a surprise to learn that it did not gain widespread popularity until the 1950s.

In its sequence of movements the *Requiem* departs significantly from the standard liturgical text. Fauré included two new sections, the lyrical *Pie Jesu* and the transcendent *In Paradisum*, with its soaring vocal line and murmuring harp accompaniment. He omitted the *Dies Irae* and *Tuba Mirum* - too good an opportunity for most composers to miss, since these texts offer the chance to exploit the dramatic possibilities of all the available choral and orchestral forces. Consequently, the prevailing mood is one of peacefulness and serenity, and the work has often been described as a Requiem without the last judgement.

In an article on Fauré, Nadia Boulanger wrote "his voice seems to impose itself between heaven and men; usually peaceful, sometimes grave and sad, but never menacing and dramatic". In 1924, many years after its initial composition, excerpts from the *Requiem* were performed at the composer's own funeral at La Madeleine.

*Wendover Choral Society*

## **Christmas Concert**

Saturday 29th December 2008  
St. Mary's Church, Wendover

## Fauré

From the age of nine, Fauré studied at the 'École Niedermeyer de musique religieuse et classique' where Saint-Saëns was a member of staff. Saint-Saëns was regarded as a progressive teacher, introducing his pupils not only to the music of Bach and Mozart, but also to composers such as Wagner and Liszt, who were controversial at the time. Unlike most major French composers, Fauré did not attend the Paris Conservatoire, but continued his studies with Saint-Saëns, who greatly encouraged him by putting work his way and helping him to get his music published. The two became lifelong friends and Fauré later said that he owed everything to Saint-Saëns.

In 1896 Fauré was appointed organist at the prestigious Madeleine Church in Paris. He was an excellent teacher and, perhaps because of his renowned joint qualities as organist and teacher, only slowly gained recognition as a composer. He eventually became professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, and its Director from 1905 to 1920. Although he wrote several works involving a full orchestra, his particular talent lay within the more intimate musical forms - songs, piano music and chamber music. His somewhat austere style and highly individual, impressionistic harmonic language contrasts markedly with the music of the Austro-German tradition which dominated European music from the time of Beethoven until well into the twentieth century.

Fauré began work on the *Requiem* in 1885, shortly after the death of his father. The first version, which was never published was given at the Madeleine in 1888, by which time his mother had also died. A second version was heard in 1893 at the church of St Gervais and the third and final version - the one which we shall perform this evening - was given at the Trocadéro in 1900.

Under some pressure from his publishers, he reluctantly agreed to the release of this revised version containing additional instrumental parts designed to broaden the work's appeal - perhaps the re-orchestration

## Ravel

As a child Maurice Ravel's mother awarded her son six sous an hour to practice the piano. This bribery seems to have been effective because this intense study helped Ravel develop into the leading composer of his generation, following closely in the footsteps of his strong rival, Claude Debussy, the founder of musical Impressionism. Ravel's mixed Swiss/Basque ancestry gave him a more international view of music than Debussy, particularly the dance forms and flamenco songs of Spain, as well as jazz and even some oriental influences.

From the age of 14 Ravel was to spend an initial six years studying at the Paris Conservatory before returning in 1897 to study composition with Fauré. In his early professional life Ravel was something of a rebel, but - by the time he had turned 40 - he would refashion himself as a baroque composer employing 20th century harmony.

Despite his popular success, Ravel nursed certain personal and public grudges for years. He rejected the Légion d'Honneur in 1919, still bitter that the state jurors had denied him the Prix de Rome three times in his student days. The great Russian dance impresario, Diaghilev, commissioned Ravel to write a number of ballets including *La Valse* (1920), but Ravel was offended that Diaghilev decided not to use this composition. When the two men met again in 1925 Ravel refused to shake Diaghilev's hand, and subsequently Diaghilev challenged him to a duel (friends talked Diaghilev out of it).

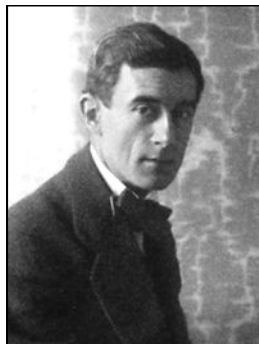
Apart from avoiding duels and rejecting awards, Ravel led an uneventful life. Although certainly not friendless, he never married and lived as a semi-recluse at his forest retreat at Montfort-l'Amaury near Paris. During the last five years of his life Ravel suffered from aphasia, which made it impossible for him to compose, speak or write, even to sign his name. He died at the end of 1937, aged 62, following unsuccessful surgery to relieve an obstructed blood vessel supplying blood to his brain.

In 1928 Ravel made a concert tour to America. In New York City he received a moving standing ovation which he remarked was unlike any of his underwhelming premieres in Paris. That same year, Oxford University awarded him an honorary doctorate which - unlike the offer of the Légion d'Honneur, a decade earlier - he was pleased to accept. Appropriate then that tonight it is the Oxford Sinfonia who will be performing *Mother Goose*.

### *Mother Goose Suite*

Ravel often remarked on the affinity he felt for children. In 1904 he wrote five piano pieces for four hands for Mimie and Jean Godebski, children of an artist friend. These pieces were based on several of their favourite fairy tales, including some from Charles Perrault's collection of Mother Goose stories. The Mother Goose Suite proved too difficult for them to play, so the first public performance, in Paris on 20 April 1910, featured Jeanne Leleu and Geneviève Durony (themselves both under age 10).

Several months later Ravel orchestrated the five pieces and these were performed as a ballet choreographed by Jacques Rouché, with a scenario by Ravel and premiered in Paris on 28 January 1912.



*Maurice Ravel*  
1912

#### i *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty in the Woods*

Princess Florine, the Sleeping Beauty, pricks her finger on the spindle and falls asleep. She sleepwalks, accompanied by two guards assigned to her by a Good Fairy.

#### ii *Tom Thumb*

The oboe plays Tom, who is wandering in the woods, dropping bread crumbs behind him to help him find his way out. But birds, heard in trills and harmonics in the violins and woodwind, eat them up.

#### iii *Laideronnette, Princess of the Pagodas*

A pentatonic tune on the piccolo heralds in the transformed princess who has been turned into an ugly little girl by a wicked witch. The Girl meets a serpent and they travel to the country of the Pagodas, a land of tiny people with bodies made of jewels. Tuned percussion evokes the oriental setting as the Pagodas play for the girl on instruments made from nutshells. Eventually the serpent returns to his original form as King of the Pagodas, the girl becomes a princess again, and the two marry.

#### iv *Conversations of Beauty and the Beast*

Beauty (represented by the solo clarinet) accepts Beast's (contra-bassoon) marriage proposal and - with a harp glissando and a triangle stroke - Beast changes into a handsome prince.

#### v *The Fairy Garden*

The Good Fairy blesses the Prince and Princess Charming and sends them away to live happily ever after. The music begins quietly with strings alone and builds in a long crescendo with woodwind, brass and percussion driving things towards a powerful climax with more than a hint of wedding bells.