

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 25 September 2021 7.30pm

## Le Concert Spirituel

**Hervé Niquet** conductor

**François Saint-Yves** organ

<b>Anonymous</b>	Prelude (organ solo)
<b>Plainchant</b>	Lucis creator optime
<b>Charles Gounod</b> (1818-1893)	Kyrie from <i>Messe</i> (1843)
<b>Léo Delibes</b> (1836-1891)	Ave maris stella (pub. 1891)
<b>Charles Gounod</b>	Gloria from <i>Messe</i> (1843)
<b>Anonymous</b>	Meditation (organ solo)
<b>Camille Saint-Saëns</b> (1835-1921)	Credo from <i>Mass Op. 4</i> (1856)
	Offertoire pour la Toussaint (1904)
<b>Charles Gounod</b>	Sanctus – Benedictus • Agnus Dei from <i>Messe</i> (1843)
<b>Plainchant</b>	Te lucis ante terminum
<b>Charles Gounod</b>	Les sept paroles de N. S. Jésus-Christ sur la croix (1858)

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Religion was in retreat in Paris long before the French Revolution, harried by such atheist *philosophes* as Baron d'Holbach and Claude Adrien Helvétius. Its decline appeared terminal following the fall of the monarchy and establishment of the Republic. Between 1789 and 1814 over 250 of the capital's 290 churches were either destroyed or converted for secular use. The new state's appropriation of property and wealth from the Roman Church met with little resistance from a population indifferent to Christian worship and often hostile to the tithes, taxes and other obligations imposed on them by priests and prelates. For all the city's anticlerical outlook, however, Catholicism found favour again after the restoration of Louis XVIII in 1815, encouraged by government and members of the aristocracy. Old churches were soon reconsecrated, others built to replace those dismantled by the revolutionaries. People began to learn and enjoy the rituals of Mass and the music that intensified them.

**Charles Gounod**, born in the opening decade of the Bourbon Restoration, received a thorough grounding in harmony and counterpoint at the Paris Conservatoire, one of the great institutions of revolutionary times. He had already taken private lessons from the Prague-born Antoine Reicha, master of contrapuntal invention and a fine teacher. In 1839, at the third attempt, Gounod won the coveted *Prix de Rome* and gained a government stipend to imbibe Italian musical culture as a student at the French Academy in Rome. While he was irritated by the operas of Donizetti and Bellini, the Cappella Giulia's performances of Palestrina held him spellbound. His own Catholic faith deepened after he became a follower of the Rome-based priest Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, a charismatic orator and advocate of social justice. Fuelled by Lacordaire's liberal theology, Gounod appears to have contemplated joining the priesthood; he applied his religious zeal instead to the composition of sacred musical works, 21 mass settings among them.

Gounod spent part of his third and final *Prix de Rome* year in Vienna, where he secured a performance of the Mass for choir and orchestra he had recently written in Rome and made his first setting of the ancient Latin text for unaccompanied choir. The latter, conceived for the season of Lent, was commissioned by Count Stockhammer for Vienna's Karlskirche, where it was first performed on the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March 1843. 'I was glad to take this fresh opportunity, not only of gaining practice in my art, but also of getting my work performed – a rare and precious privilege at the opening of a man's career,' recalled the composer in his autobiography.

On returning to Paris in May 1843, Gounod became *maître de chapelle* at the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères. His determination to improve and purify French sacred music was hampered by the church's limited choral resources – two basses, one tenor and a boy chorister – and by the congregation's conservatism. The clean lines and clear textures of his *a cappella* Mass, which echo the style of Palestrina, gave an early signal of Gounod's intention to revivify the nation's church

music. It proved too difficult, however, for the meagre church choirs of Paris and beyond.

In keeping with a work conceived for the Feast of the Annunciation, Gounod prefaces each of its movements with a short hymn-like invocation (or *coral*) drawn from the *Alleluia* of the Mass and vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He sustains his neo-Palestrinian writing with striking consistency, especially so in the imposing *Kyrie*, deviating occasionally to accommodate anachronistic harmonies, melodic themes akin to popular French *chansons*, and a Romantic vision of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*.

**Léo Delibes**, best known for his ballet *Coppélia*, was raised as a boy chorister at Ste Marie-Madeleine in Paris. He became organist of St Pierre-de-Chailot at the age of 17 and remained there long after he began composing for the stage. His 'Ave maris stella' for two female voices with organ or piano accompaniment, published posthumously in the year of his death, may date from his time at St Pierre-de-Chailot. The motet makes a virtue of melodic and harmonic simplicity in its tender delivery of St Bernard of Clairvaux's hymn to the Blessed Virgin.

Prolific throughout his long creative lifetime, **Camille Saint-Saëns** turned his art and the considerable craft that underpinned it to everything from grand opera to a hymn to the glory of electricity. In 1853 he became organist at the Parisian church of Saint-Merri, home to a fine organ by the firm of Clicquot. Over the next four decades, he wrote a Mass and composed more than 30 settings of various liturgical texts. Saint-Saëns dedicated his Mass, first performed in 1857 in a version for choir and organ and published as his Op. 4, to Jean-Louis Gabriel, curé of Saint-Merri, who responded by inviting the young musician to join him on a trip to Italy. While inconsistent in quality, this substantial work includes a sonorous setting of the *Credo*, largely syllabic in its treatment of the confessional text and hallmarked by effective contrasts of solo and choral texture. While the *Offertoire pour la Toussaint*, written for the Feast of All Saints in 1904, long postdates Saint-Saëns's days as a church organist, it evokes the simple style cultivated for sacred choral music in France for over half a century.

In addition to a dozen operas and other works for the Paris stage, Gounod wrote around a hundred motets, cantatas and sundry short Latin liturgical pieces. *Les sept paroles de N. S. Jésus-Christ sur la croix*, a homage to Palestrina comparable to his Mass of 1843, underlines why Saint-Saëns was such an admirer of his older contemporary's sacred music. 'The achievement of expressiveness was always Gounod's preoccupation,' wrote Saint-Saëns: 'that is why there are so few notes in his music ... each note "sings"'.

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# Anonymous

## Prelude (organ solo)

## Plainchant

### Lucis creator optime

*Anonymous*

Lucis creator optime,  
Lucem dierum  
proferens,  
Primordiis lucis novæ,  
Mundi parans originem.

Qui mane junctum vesperi  
Diem vocari præcipis,  
Tetrum chaos illabitur,  
Audi preces cum fletibus.

Ne mens gravata  
crimine,  
Vitæ sit exsul munere,  
Dum nil perenne cogitat,  
Seseque culpâ  
illigat.

Cælorum pulset  
intimum,  
Vitale tollat præmium,  
Vitemus omne noxium,  
Purgemus omne pessimum.

Præsta, Pater piissime,  
Patrique compar Unice,  
Cum Spiritu Paraclito  
Regnans per omne sæculum. Amen.

## Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

### Kyrie from *Messe* (1843)

*Liturgical text*

Dei genitrix intercede pro nobis

Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison  
Kyrie eleison

### O blest creator of the light

O blest creator of the light,  
who mak'st the day with radiance  
bright,  
and o'er the forming world didst call  
the light from chaos first of all.

Whose wisdom joined in meet array  
the morn and eve, and named them Day:  
night comes with all its darkling fears;  
regard thy people's prayers and tears.

Lest, sunk in sin, and whelmed with  
strife,  
they lose the gift of endless life;  
while thinking but the thoughts of time,  
they weave new chains of woe and  
crime.

But grant them grace that they may  
strain  
the heav'nly gate and prize to gain:  
each harmful lure aside to cast,  
and purge away each error past.

O Father, that we ask be done,  
through Jesus Christ, thine only Son;  
who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,  
doth live and reign eternally. Amen.

## Léo Delibes (1836-1891)

### Ave maris stella (pub. 1891)

*Anonymous*

Ave, maris stella,  
Dei mater alma,  
Atque semper virgo,  
Felix caeli porta.

### Hail star of the sea

Hail, star of the sea,  
loving Mother of God,  
and ever a virgin,  
blessed gate of heaven.

Ave, maris stella,  
Dei mater alma.

Solve vincula reis,  
Profer lumen caecis,  
Mala nostra pelle,  
Bona cuncta posce.

Monstra te esse matrem,  
Sumat per te preces  
Qui pro nobis natus  
Tulit esse tuus

Ave, maris stella,  
Dei mater alma,  
Amen

Hail, star of the sea,  
loving Mother of God.

Break the chains of sinners,  
bring light to the blind,  
dispel our evils,  
entreat good things.

Show that you are a mother,  
may he accept prayers through you,  
he who, born for us,  
chose to be yours.

Hail, star of the sea,  
loving Mother of God,  
Amen.

## Charles Gounod

### Gloria from *Messe* (1843)

*Liturgical text*

Dignare me laudare te virgo sacrata.

Gloria in excelsis Deo:  
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae  
voluntatis.

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.  
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.  
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam  
gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,  
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite,  
Jesu Christe, Domine Deus,  
Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
Miserere nobis.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
Suscipe deprecationem nostram.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,  
Miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,  
Tu solus Dominus,

Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,  
Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei  
Patris.

Amen.

Let me praise thee, Holy Virgin.

Glory to God in the highest:  
and peace on earth to all men of  
good will.

We praise you. We bless you.  
We adore you. We glorify you.  
We give thanks to you for your  
great glory.

Lord God, king of the heavens,  
God the Father almighty,  
Lord, only begotten son,  
Jesus Christ, Lord God,  
Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

Who takes away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.

Who takes away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer.

Who sits at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are Holy,  
you alone are Lord,

you alone are the highest, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of  
God the Father.

Amen.

## Anonymous

### Meditation (organ solo)

## Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

**Credo** from *Mass* Op. 4 (1856)

*Liturgical text*

Credo in unum Deum,  
Patrem omnipotentem,  
Factorem caeli et terrae,  
Visibilem omnium et invisibilem;  
Et in unum Dominum, Jesu Christum,  
Filium Dei unigenitum,  
Et ex Patre natum  
Ante omnia saecula;  
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,  
Deum verum de Deo vero,  
Genitum non factum,  
Consubstantiali Patri,  
Per quem omnia facta sunt,  
Qui propter nos homines  
Et propter nostram salutem  
Descendit de caelis;  
Et incarnatus est  
De Spiritu Sancto  
Ex Maria virgine,  
Et homo factus est.  
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis  
Sub Pontio Pilato;  
Passus et sepultus est,  
Et resurrexit tertia die  
Secundum scripturas,  
Et ascendit in caelum,  
Sedet ad dexteram Patris,  
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria  
Iudicare vivos et mortuos,  
Cuius regni non erit finis;  
Et in Spiritum Sanctum,  
Dominum et vivificantem,  
Qui ex Patre Filioque  
procedit,  
Qui cum Patre et Filio  
Simul adoratur et conglorificatur,  
Qui locutus est per prophetas;  
Et in unam sanctam catholicam  
Et apostolicam Ecclesiam.  
Confiteor unum baptisma  
In remissionem peccatorum;  
Et expecto resurrectionem  
mortuorum  
Et vitam venturi saeculi.  
Amen.

I believe in one God,  
Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and of earth,  
all things visible and invisible;  
and in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
only begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father  
before all ages;  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten not made,  
one in substance with the Father,  
through whom all things are made,  
who for mankind  
and for our salvation  
descended from heaven;  
made incarnate  
by the Holy Ghost  
from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
He was crucified for us  
under Pontius Pilate;  
suffered, and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
according to the scriptures,  
and ascended to heaven,  
sitting at the right hand of the Father,  
and he shall come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
of whose reign there shall be no end;  
and in the Holy Ghost,  
Lord and giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and  
the Son,  
who with the Father and Son  
together is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets;  
and in one holy catholic  
and apostolic Church.  
I confess one baptism  
for the remission of sins;  
and I await the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the age to come.  
Amen.

**Offertoire pour la Toussaint**  
(1904)

*Liturgical text*

Justorum animae in manu Dei  
sunt  
Et non tanget illos tormentum  
malitiae.  
Visi sunt oculis insipientium  
mori:  
Illi autem sunt in pace.

**Offertory for All Saints' Day**

But the souls of the just are in the  
hand of God,  
and the torment of wickedness shall  
not touch them.  
In the sight of the unwise, they  
seemed to die,  
but they are in peace.

## Charles Gounod

**Sanctus – Benedictus** from *Messe* (1843)

*Liturgical text*

*Sanctus*  
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth,  
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.  
Osanna in excelsis.

*Sanctus*  
Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God of Hosts,  
heaven and earth are full of thy glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

*Benedictus*  
Benedictus qui venit in nomine  
Domini.

*Benedictus*  
Blessed is he who comes in the  
name of the Lord.

**Agnus Dei** from *Messe* (1843)

*Liturgical text*

Post partum virgo inviolata  
permansisti.

After childbirth thou didst still  
remain an inviolate virgin.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata  
mundi:  
Miserere nobis.  
Agnus Dei dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the  
sins of the world:  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, give us peace.

## Plainchant

**Te lucis ante terminum**

*Liturgical text*

Te lucis ante terminum,  
rerum Creator, poscimus,  
ut solita clementia  
sis praesul ad custodiam.

**Before the end of the day**

Before the end of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
that with thy wonted favor, thou  
wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

Te corda nostra somnient,  
te per soporem sentiant,  
tuamque semper gloriam  
vicina luce concinant.

Lord, when we sleep, be in our hearts,  
your spirit peace and rest imparts;  
then, with the light of dawn, may we  
your glory praise unendingly.

Vitam salubrem tribue  
nostrum calorum refice,  
taetrum noctis caliginem  
tua collustret claritas.

Your living power breathe from above,  
renew in us the fire of love;  
and may your brightness drive away  
all darkness in eternal day.

Praesta, Pater omnipotens,  
par Iesum Christum Dominum,  
qui tecum in perpetuum  
regnat cum Sancto Spiritu.  
Amen.

O Father, that we ask be done,  
through Jesus Christ, thine only Son,  
who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,  
doth live and reign eternally.  
Amen.

# Charles Gounod

## Les sept paroles de N. S. Jésus-Christ sur la croix (1858)

*Liturgical text*

### *Prologue*

Filiae Jerusalem,  
Nolite flere super me,  
Sed super vos ipsas flete,  
Et super filios vestros.  
Et venerunt in eum qui  
dicitur,  
Calvariae locum,  
Ibi crucifixerunt Jesum.

/

Praeter euntes autem  
blasphemabant eum moventes  
capita sua.  
Jesus autem dicebat:  
Pater dimitte illis,  
non enim sciunt quid faciunt.

//

Unus autem de his qui pendebant  
latronibus,  
dicebat ad Jesum:  
Domine, memento mei,  
cum veneris in regnum tuum!  
Et dixit illi Jesus:  
Amen dico tibi:  
Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso.

///

Cum vidisset ergo Jesus matrem,  
et discipulum stantem quem  
diligebat  
dicit matri suae:  
Mulier, ecce filius tuus.  
Deinde dicit discipulo:  
Ecce mater, mater tua.

IV

Tenebrae factae sunt  
super universam terram.  
Et circa horam nonam  
clamavit Jesus voce magna dicens:  
*Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*  
Quod est interpretatum:  
Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?

V

Postea sciens Jesus  
quia omnia consummate  
sunt  
ut consummaretur scriptura,  
dixit: Sitio.

## The seven words of Our Saviour Jesus Christ on the cross

### *Prologue*

Daughters of Jerusalem,  
weep not for me,  
but weep for yourselves,  
and for your children.  
And when they came to the place  
that is called  
the place of the Skull,  
they crucified Jesus.

/

And they that passed him  
reviled him, wagging their  
heads.  
Jesus said of them:  
Father, forgive them,  
they do not know what they are doing.

//

One of the robbers who was to be  
hanged  
said to Jesus:  
Lord, remember me,  
when you come into your kingdom!  
And to him Jesus said:  
Truly I tell you:  
today you will be with me in Paradise.

///

When Jesus saw his mother there,  
and the disciple whom he loved  
standing nearby,  
he said to his mother:  
Woman, behold your son.  
Then he said to the disciple:  
Behold your mother.

IV

Darkness fell  
over all the land.  
And at the ninth hour  
Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying:  
*Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*  
which is, being interpreted,  
My God, why have you forsaken me?

V

After this, Jesus, knowing  
that all things were now  
accomplished  
that the scripture might be fulfilled,  
said: I thirst.

VI

Vas ergo erat positum aceto  
plenum.  
Illi autem spongiam plenam aceto  
hyssopo circumponentes  
obtulerunt ori ejus,  
cum ergo accepisset Jesus  
acetum  
dixit: Consummatum est.

VII

Pater, in manus tuas  
commendo spiritum meum.

VI

A jar full of sour wine was standing  
there.  
They put a sponge full of the sour wine  
upon a branch of hyssop  
and brought it to his mouth,  
and when Jesus had received the  
sour wine,  
he said: It is finished.

VII

Father, into your hands  
I commend my spirit.

*Translations kindly provided by Le Concert Spirituel*