



*part of the Crucifixion with the Virgin and*  
**St John the Evangelist Mourning**

Rogier van der Weyden, *circa* 1450

# FLEISCHMANN CHOIR

Eamonn Mulhall *tenor*

Brendan Collins *baritone*

James Taylor *organ*

Tom Doyle *conductor*

SIR JOHN STAINER

## **The Crucifixion**

Sunday, 2 April 2023

Curtis Auditorium, MTU Cork School of Music

## *The Crucifixion*

1. Recitative: And they came to a place named Gethsemane
2. The Agony – Recitative: And they laid their hands on Him
3. Processional to Calvary
4. Recitative: And when they were come
5. Hymn: The Mystery of the Divine Humiliation
  
6. Recitative: He made Himself of no reputation
7. The Majesty of the Divine Humiliation
8. Recitative: And as Moses lifted up the serpent
9. Chorus: God so loved the world
10. Hymn: Litany of the Passion
  
11. Recitative: Jesus said, “Father, forgive them”
12. Duet: So Thou liftest Thy divine petition
13. Hymn: The Mystery of Intercession
14. Recitative: And one of the malefactors
15. Hymn: The Adoration of the Crucified
  
16. Recitative: When Jesus therefore saw His mother
17. Recitative: Is it nothing to you?
18. Chorus: The Appeal of the Crucified
19. Recitative: After this, Jesus knowing that al
20. Hymn: For the love of Jesus

## *Programme Notes*

**SIR JOHN STAINER** (1840 – 1901) was organist of St Paul's Cathedral and professor of music at Oxford, but he made it his special vocation to provide good music for parish choirs of moderate abilities, publishing a large number of anthems, chants and hymn tunes with this end in view. Though undoubtedly there was a financial motive, the cult of simplicity also suited Stainer's temperament and philosophy. He made himself an expert in the art of drawing emotion and depth of meaning out of commonplace melody and harmony.

In 1887, Stainer conceived the novel idea of writing music for Passion Week that was well within the reach of village choirs. The librettist, W. J. Sparrow-Simpson (1859 – 1952), was the son of a colleague at St Paul's, and the first performance was at St Marylebone Parish Church in London. *The Crucifixion* was not only well received, but has outlived almost all church choir music of its period, becoming a great popular favourite in the teeth of astoundingly harsh judgements by some critics and historians. The qualities that have endeared it to many generations are those that Stainer had consciously cultivated as a happy medium between contrapuntal elaboration and melodramatic tone-painting.

Stainer was writing at a time when Bach's *Passions* had been only recently introduced to the British oratorio public, and had at last dislodged Handel from his place as the unquestioned master of sacred choral music. *The Crucifixion* followed the Lutheran Passions in several respects. Never an oratorio, it was a 'Meditation', designed to form an integral part of an Anglican service, using the normal resources of choir and organ, and bringing in the congregation in several simple hymns (though Stainer composed new tunes where Bach had adapted ones already well known).

The libretto alternates biblical prose narrative with newly composed verse expressing a Christian's response to the successive events. This procedure was never used by Handel, but comes directly from Bach oratorios.

Stainer, however, plays down the dramatic elements of the passion story, which in any case were not his forte, especially those that dwell on Christ's physical agony; Christianity had become more humane in the intervening 150 years. The words 'scourged him' are given no musical illustration. Instead, Stainer depicts Jesus in Gethsemane as a pathetic man, begging for the sympathy of his followers. Perhaps the key of C-sharp minor is meant to embody the sharpness of death, but this would hardly affect the listeners or even the participants. The expressive song 'Could ye not watch with me' is in varied strophic form with chorus. The highest note is skilfully reserved for the word 'agony' in the last verse, and the voice then descends to the depths of woe.

After a dramatic recitative comes the most ambitious number, *Processional to Calvary*, described as if by a Christian bystander. One hears Christ and his followers approaching during the long organ introduction in A minor: first a quiet march which will be the recurring theme of the rondo structure, then (moving to the major mode) a lyrical melody accompanied by repeated chords, lieder style. The chorus enters during the next statement of the rondo theme with a peremptory 'Fling wide the gates!', and although there is no mention of gates in the biblical account, the repeated cry is an effective way of integrating this movement, with echoes as if the order was being passed from soldier to soldier. The 'gates' theme merges into the rondo theme and passes through various keys before the tenor solo returns to the lyrical theme, in the remote key of A flat major: 'How sweet is the grace of His sacred Face'. Here the bystander catches a glimpse of the divine countenance as Jesus passes by, while the

dotted rhythms of the marchers recede into the background. This idea, perhaps suggested by the 'Reconnaissance' in Schumann's *Carnaval*, is rather beautifully expressed by Stainer here, but inevitably the insistent chorus march breaks into the dream ("Then on to the end"), and finally recedes into the distance, towards Calvary.

The crucifixion itself is described in a short chromatic recitative. The reaction comes in the first and best of the congregational hymns, 'Cross of Jesus', a truly stirring tune which has become a standard in many hymnals. *The Majesty of the Divine Humiliation* is a bold experiment in free-form construction, held together by a flexible 'motto' theme. It suffers from an impossibly wide range of emotion, inherent in the mystery of the crucifixion, where the humiliation of Jesus is seen as a triumph; Stainer feels compelled to express this with blaring organ chords at the end, which jar against the prevailing mood of sympathy with the sufferings of the human Jesus.

The 'quartet or chorus' that follows, *God so loved the world*, is the one choral movement using biblical words, and as such it is precisely one of those simple anthems in which Stainer excelled — and indeed it quickly became well known when it was separately published in that form. It is self-sufficient; it can be, and often is, sung unaccompanied. The simple ternary structure with coda is easily grasped. Stainer, a master of biblical word setting, happily emphasises 'so' in the opening phrase, and also uses musical accent to reinforce the antithesis: 'God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' The return of the title phrase at the end of the coda with subdominant harmony is not original, but it is nowhere more moving in its effect.

All but one of the remaining four hymns are in trochaic metre, which gives them a certain sameness. The main movements dwell on some of the last words from the Cross, each of which is first stated in a choral recitative. The duet *So Thou liftest Thy divine petition* is disturbingly emotional, using a harmonic system we now associate with Wagnerian myth rather than Christian feeling; indeed faint echoes of *Tristan* can be heard. This is relieved by a dactylic hymn 'Jesus, the Crucified, pleads for me'. The scene of the two malefactors returns to more matter-of-fact description.

After 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?', Sparrow-Simpson invokes famous words from the Old Testament: Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? (Lamentations 1:12), which return to the prevailing message of the work, one of rebuke for humanity's indifference to Christ's sacrifice. The same phrase is subtly adapted as a refrain in the last extended chorus, *The Appeal of the Crucified*. The death of Christ is set in comparatively plain harmony, and at last in unaccompanied recitative, before the hymn *For the love of Jesus* rounds off the work.

Stainer's deeply felt Meditation can still have a telling effect in the context for which it was designed, a parish celebration of Christ's Passion. To appreciate it in concert or recorded form requires a conscious historical effort to overcome ingrained prejudices against things Victorian – prejudices which are themselves now completely out of date.

— *Nicholas Temperley*



## *Biographies*

The **FLEISCHMANN CHOIR** was founded in November 1992. Initially called the Cork School of Music Symphony Orchestra Chorus, it sang in public for the first time on 22 April 1993 when it gave a concert with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in Cork's City Hall to mark the opening of the 40th Cork International Choral Festival. The programme was of music by Aloys Fleischmann – one of the founders of the Festival – who had died the previous year. Shortly after this concert, and with the permission of the family, the choir was renamed in memory of the man who did so much to further the cause of choral music and choral singing in Ireland. From 1992 to 2013, the choir was led by founder-conductor Dr Geoffrey Spratt (former Director of the Cork School of Music and founder-conductor of the Irish Youth Choir and Canticum Novum). In 2013, Conor Palliser was appointed conductor; and since September 2022, the choir has been under the direction of Tom Doyle.

The Fleischmann Choir has achieved an enviable reputation for fulfilling its mission to perform the large-scale repertory for choir and orchestra. Past concerts have included Söderman's *Andeliga sånger*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Vaughan Williams' *Towards the Unknown Region*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Dvořák's *Te Deum*, *Stabat Mater* and *Mass in D*, Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality*, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, Honegger's *Christmas Cantata*, and Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. In addition, the choir has accepted invitations as diverse as 'Songs of Praise' for the BBC, backing Johnny Logan during the Eurovision Song Contest broadcast by RTÉ from Millstreet, Co. Cork, and singing with Niamh Kavanagh for her RTÉ Christmas Show from Cork Opera House. The choir tours regularly with past performances in Como, Italy, and Cologne, Germany.

Wexford tenor, **EAMONN MULHALL** trained at the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio in London. He has performed with many theatre companies, opera houses and music festivals including productions of *Peter Grimes* at La Fenice in Venice, *Amadeus* at the National Theatre in London, *Salomé* and *La cenerentola* for Wexford Festival Opera, *Dorian Gray* at Slovak National Theatre, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and a staged *Messiah* for English National Opera, the world première of James MacMillan's *Clemency* at ROH2 Covent Garden and for Scottish Opera at the Edinburgh Festival, Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* for Capella Cracoviensis in Kraków, *After Dido* at The Young Vic in London; *Tristan und Isolde*, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *Acis & Galatea*, *Fidelio*, *Eithne*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Carmen* for Irish National Opera. His recordings include Victor Herbert's *Eileen*, Jerome Kern's *Roberta* and John Metcalf's *Under Milk Wood: An Opera*.

In concert performance he has appeared at the Prague International Spring Festival, Royal Albert Hall London, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Festivale Musica sull'Acqua at Lago di Como, Italy, and with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra and Irish Baroque Orchestra.

Future engagements include Liszt's *Petrarch Sonnets* with pianist Sam Armstrong at the National Concert Hall in Dublin, *Werther* on tour in Ireland with Irish National Opera and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Barcelona.

Irish baritone **BRENDAN COLLINS** began his training at the Cork School of Music under Robert Beare graduating with BMus (Hons.) in Performance, then a PGDip (Hons.) in Performance from the DIT

Conservatory in Dublin, and in 2007 he was granted a scholarship to study at the Opera Studio of Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels under renowned bass-baritone José van Dam. In 2005, he was one of only twelve Irish singers to take part in the first Wexford Festival Young Artists programme under tenor Dennis O'Neill. He has also studied privately or in masterclasses with Ildebrando d'Arcangelo, Sir Thomas Allen, Robert Dean, Susanna Eken, Veronica Dunne and John Elwes.

As a soloist, Brendan has performed across Ireland, the UK, Europe, the Middle East, China and America. Opera engagements include Irish National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera Theatre Company, NI Opera, Longborough Festival Opera, Anna Livia Festival, Opera Collective Ireland, Cork Operatic Society, Regents Opera and Iford Opera. His repertoire of nearly seventy operatic roles include the title role in *Gianni Schicchi*, Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Germont (*La Traviata*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Alfio (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Paolo Albani (*Simon Boccanegra*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Pietro de Wissant (*L'Assedio di Calais*), Jupiter (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*), Elviro (*Xerxes*), Aeneas (*Dido & Aeneas*), Fiorello (*The Barber of Seville*), Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*) and Count Gil (*Il segreto di Susanna*) amongst others.

A regular performer on the concert platform, Brendan's repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah* (Pro Cathedral, Dublin) and *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne* (St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin); Mozart's *Requiem* (National Concert Hall, Dublin), *Vespers* (Kajetanekirche, Salzburg), *Coronation Mass* (St Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna), *Mass in C minor* (Ulster Hall, Belfast) and *Spatzenmesse* (Westminster Cathedral, London); Haydn's *Creation Mass* (Clonard Monastery, Belfast) and *Nelson Mass* (St Finbarr's Cathedral, Cork); Fauré's *Requiem* (St Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent);

Schubert's *Mass in G* (St Nicholas, Galway); Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* (Cork City Hall); Orff's *Carmina Burana* (National Concert Hall, Dublin); Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (Wexford Opera House); and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels).

Highlights include debuts at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and in the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in *Billy Budd* under Sir Andrew Davis, his New York debut at the Brooklyn Academy of Music under Sir Mark Elder, his Swiss debut at Opéra de Lausanne under Monica Huggett, his debut at the Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg in Donnacha Dennehy's *The Last Hotel*, and his Chinese debut in concert at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre under maestro Henry Shek.

A graduate of both UCC and MTU Cork School of Music, **TOM DOYLE** is highly sought after as a musical director and pianist in Cork City and its environs. With a keen interest in both musical theatre and opera, Tom's credits as musical director have included *The Stalls* (Ulysses Theatre Company & Cork Midsummer Festival), *Pubcrawl: the Musical* (Chattyboo Productions), *American Idiot* (CIT Musical Society), *Songs for a New World* (Hibernian Ensemble), *The Opera Director* based on Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor*, *The Last Five Years* (Scruffy Duck Productions), *Ragtime* (UCC Dramat) and *[title of show]* (UCC Dramat).

As a choral enthusiast, Tom has had the pleasure of working with the Blackpool Parish Choir, Mayfield Gospel Choir, Cork ETB Youth Choir, the workplace choirs at Musgraves and Cork County Council, Munster Rugby Supporters Club Choir, Cantate, the choir at Presentation Secondary School Ballyphehane, the Wilcollane Singers, and the Cork Garda Male Voice Choir. From 2008 - 2015, Tom conducted the UCC Choral Society, helping to produce the ever-popular 'Carols by

Candlelight' in the Honan Chapel as well as winning several awards at international competitions in Ghent, Verona and Olomouc.

An accomplished pianist and répétiteur, Tom has worked with many singers including the late Cara O'Sullivan, Majella Cullagh, Mary Hegarty, Emma Nash, and Jean Wallace, as well as ensembles such as Irish Youth Opera and Cork Operatic Society. In 2015, Tom was invited as guest conductor for the Cork Concert Orchestra's *Mozart to Morricone* concert series; and in early-2022, he was appointed conductor of the University of Limerick Orchestra.

Tom is the acting Conservatoire Coordinator at MTU Cork School of Music where he also lectures in conducting and directs the 100-strong Fleischmann Choir.

**JAMES TAYLOR** began his musical education as a cathedral chorister at Southwell Minster, UK. He graduated with an honours BMus from Huddersfield University in 1998 and an MA in 1999, completing his postgraduate studies in 2006 at McGill University, Montreal, specialising in organ and harpsichord. He has held church music posts at Ripon Cathedral (UK), Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, New Zealand, and Christchurch Cathedral, Montreal. He has performed concerts across Canada, the United States, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and New Zealand, and has participated in numerous television and radio broadcasts as a soloist and accompanist.

James is a lecturer in music at MTU Cork School of Music, teaching organ and harpsichord, analysis, harmony, counterpoint and historical performance practice. He also conducts the award-winning vocal ensemble Madrigal '75 with whom he has toured Italy, Scotland, Switzerland and Spain.

# FLEISCHMANN

## **Sopranos**

Marjorie Brennan  
Regina Broderick  
Claire Brosnan  
Mairéad Casey  
Marrita Clifford  
Kate Coppinger  
Hilary Coughlan-  
Piskorski  
Teresa Coughlan  
Deirdre Deasy  
Leona Duffy  
Julia Foerster  
Michèle de Foubert  
Mairéad Gallagher  
Anne Godfrey  
Ann Harrington  
Susan Hickey  
Shauna Keane  
Sinead Kelleher  
Lisa Lee  
Liz Lynch  
Polly Magee  
Margaret Murphy  
Niamh Murray  
Fionn Ní Chatháin  
Deirdre Ní Drisceoil

Sinead Nolan  
Huma O'Malley  
Sinead O'Neill  
Patricia O'Sullivan  
Kay Scoutts O'Mahony  
Noreen Spillane  
Marie Sprott  
Marcella Twomey  
Rosie Twomey  
Tanja Vucinic  
Katherine Walsh  
Denise White  
Anna Yamamoto

## **Altos**

Christine Allan  
Dorothy Barry  
Mari Byrne  
Aoife Coyne  
Jane Daly  
Anne Donnelly  
Mary Phil Giltinan  
Barbara Keating  
Patricia Kelly  
Laura Lagerqvist  
Mary Lisson  
Maeve Long

Caroline Long-Nolan  
Judith Macklin  
Yvonne Manning  
Jane McCarthy  
Maria Mummelthey  
Bernadette Murray  
Dearbhail O'Callaghan  
Anne O'Connor  
Maria O'Donovan  
Patricia O'Gorman  
Clare O'Shea-O'Neill  
Clíona O'Sullivan  
Linda Roberts  
Sheila Robinson  
Isabelle Sheridan  
Alison Smyth  
Ita Teegan  
Maryia Vasiljeva  
Anna Xaubet-Piferrer

## **Tenors**

Jim Cashman  
Brian Collins  
Margaret Crowley  
Gerard Cummins  
Patrick Fitzpatrick  
Edmund Hogan

# CHOIR SPRING 2023

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Dan Mulcahy

Terence Murphy

Brian O'Connor

Seumas O'Donovan

Nevan O'Driscoll

Proinnsias O'Keeffe

Ann-Marie O'Sullivan

David Shine

Geoffrey Spratt

David Sprott

## **Basses**

Willie Beechinor

Paul Cussen

Justin Donnellan

Eamonn Fleming

Colm Gleeson

Justin Finbarr Healy

Anthony Malone

Declan Murphy

Steven O'Brien

Sean O'Flynn

John Cornelius Ryan

Paul Scannell

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Dr Geoffrey Spratt

## **Conductor**

Tom Doyle

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