

The music of
Gabriel Fauré

(1845 - 1924)



performed by

The Cecilian Singers

under the direction of

John Bryan

&

The Barbados Chamber Orchestra

John Burnett (organ)

Raymond Maughan (baritone)

Wayne Thorne (flute)

at

St. Mary's Anglican Church

Sunday June 4th, 2000

at

6.00 pm

The music of
Gabriel Fauré

(1845 - 1924)

Messe Basse pour voix de femmes (1906)

Kyrie (Sharon Highland - soprano)

Agnus Dei

Tantum ergo, Op. 65 No. 2 (1894)

Ave Maria (1871)

Cantique de Jean Racine, Op. 11 (1865)

Sicilienne, Op. 78 (1898)

Flautist - Wayne Thorne

Requiem, Op. 48 (1887)

Introït et Kyrie

Offertoire (Raymond Maughan - baritone)

Sanctus

Pie Jesu (Amanda Fields - soprano)

Agnus Dei

Libera me (Raymond Maughan - baritone)

In paradisum

Biography

The youngest of six children, Gabriel Urbain Fauré was born on May 12th, 1845 in the southern French town of Pamiers to Toussaint and Marie Fauré. His musical predilections were apparent from an early age when it was found that he could improvise on the local church harmonium and a piano. But at first, his parents didn't really pay much attention to their son's newly found interest. Music was simply a harmless diversion and so he was sent to regular school like everyone else. Finally, one of his teachers noticed his talent and recommended that he be sent to the Niedermeyer school of religious music in Paris.

After leaving school in 1865 at the age of 20, Gabriel Fauré was for the next few years organist at the church of St. Sauveur in Rennes. In August of 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out and Fauré was enlisted into the First Regiment of the Imperial Light Infantry as a messenger. Between battles he liked to give impromptu recitals to his friends while they stayed in the abandoned buildings outside Paris. When the war ended, Fauré returned to Paris and found work as second organist at the church of St. Suplice. His job was to accompany the choir while the main organ was used by Charles-Marie Widor. Sometimes, during the services, the two of them would play 'dueling organs' by improvising themes and 'tossing' them back and forth.

In 1877, the choirmaster position became available at the Madeleine. With the influence of Camille Saint-Saëns (senior piano teacher at the Niedermeyer school) and Charles Gounod, Fauré was appointed and worked there for almost twenty years (1877-1896.) Even though the church was one of the most important Paris churches after Notre Dame and gave Fauré some prestige, there were in fact many drawbacks. Among these was the fact that the job at the Madeleine didn't pay well. Approximately 3000 francs per year and the money he received from his compositions was a pittance. So, in order for him to survive, Fauré spent a great deal of time traveling all over Paris to give piano and harmony lessons. Time that could have been better spent on composition if only he had had the means.

The majority of Fauré's religious music was written for services held at the Madeleine; however, he did write some while at the Niedermeyer school, most notably the *Cantique de Jean Racine*. This piece of choral music, written in 1865 and dedicated to César Franck, is similar in mood to the Requiem but perhaps even more melodic. Fauré won first prize in composition for it despite not following the rules completely. The *Messe Basse pour voix de femmes* represents Fauré at his most practical. Written in conjunction with the French composer and organist André Messager during a holiday in Normandy in 1881, the *Messe Basse* was composed for the modest forces of a local church. When revising the score in 1906 Fauré adapted the violin and harmonium accompaniment for organ, at the

same time cutting the *Gloria* and replacing Messager's *Kyrie* with one of his own. The final version of the *Messe Basse* is one of the few existing settings of the mass for female voices and organ.

Besides numerous motets and a mass for liturgical use, there's no question that Gabriel Fauré's best known choral work is the *Messe de Requiem*. Written between 1887 and 1890, the *Requiem* was written not for the death of his father, but as another experiment in Fauré's endless quest to write music that was new and different. Even so, the *Requiem* does convey his own personal feelings and attitudes about death. Fauré's compositions in the fields of theatre, opera, and orchestral music are probably least known.

For years he desperately wanted to write an opera but could never find a libretto to his liking. In the 1890s however, he found another path to the stage by writing incidental music for plays. *Shylock*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Prométhée* were all great successes in France at the time; and except for a few pieces derived from these works (most notably '*Sicilienne*' from *Pelléas et Mélisande* heard today in Fauré's transcription for flute and piano) they have all just about been forgotten today. Without a doubt, Fauré's favorite instrument was the piano. He used it in almost all of his chamber music, all of his songs, and everything else he wrote usually began as a score for piano. His musical expressiveness came from his fluency at the piano. The early style of Fauré's chamber music tended to reflect the time in which it was written: flowery, romantic writing but with a classical style which Fauré had learned in school. Fauré's later, more sophisticated period (1906-1924,) shows the final stages of his musical evolution. His music is simplified to its most important elements and more defined. There are dissonances in his music but not as much as the younger generation of composers.

The last two decades of Gabriel Fauré's life were marked by his steady rise to fame, his increasing health problems, and the new love in his life. After serving as choirmaster for nineteen years, he became organist at the Madeleine in 1896. In the same year he also became Professor of Composition at the Paris Conservatoire.

In 1905 Fauré left his job at the Madeleine to begin work as director of the Paris Conservatoire, the most prestigious music position post in France. In 1902, at the age of 57, Fauré began to notice hearing problems. Even before 1902, he had suffered from dizziness and migraines stemming in part, from overwork. With the gradual decline of his hearing there was also a change in the way he heard sounds. As it got worse, he could no longer use his piano to test out his works and going to performances actually became a painful experience for him. His late works were thus written almost entirely without help from the piano. He never heard any performance except what he could imagine in his head. In Fauré's last years, his increasing hearing and health problems made it almost impossible for him to

perform his job at the Conservatoire properly, a job that required him to judge music performances. Somehow, out of respect for the man, the extreme state of his hearing difficulties remained a secret, except among a few people, until Fauré's retirement in 1920. After a few years of illness during which he composed the brilliant and serene Piano Trio (1922) and the String Quartet (1924,) his final composition, Fauré passed away quietly on November 4th, 1924, from pneumonia. He was given a state funeral at the Madeleine and his Requiem was played.

Translations

Tantum Ergo

Bend we low before Thee praising,
Wondrous myst'ry, God expressed,
Light illumines darkened ageing;
Newer rite made manifest.
Faith surpassing, hope enduring,
Senses failing, hearts assuring.

To the Father and to his Son
Praise and songs of joy divine,
Laud and honour, might and wisdom,
Blessing be for ever Thine,
Also to the Holy Spirit,
Equal, Holy, One in merit. Amen.

Ave Maria

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
You are blessed amongst women,
And blessed is Jesus, the fruit of your womb.
Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Cantique de Jean Racine

Word of God, equal to the Most High,
our sole hope,
Everlasting light of earth and heaven,
We break the silence of the peaceful night:
Divine Saviour, cast your eyes upon us!
Pour on us the fire
of your powerful grace;
That all hell may fly at the sound of your voice;
Banish the sleep of a weary soul
That leads it to forget your laws!
O Christ be favourable to this faithful people
Now assembled to praise you;
Receive the songs that they offer to your immortal glory;
And may they go forth filled with your gifts!

Introit et Kyrie

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.
You shall be praised, Lord, in Sion, and paid tribute in Jerusalem.
Hear my prayer; all flesh shall come before you.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Offertoire

O Lord Jesus Christ, king of glory,
deliver the souls of the dead from the pains of hell
and from the depths of the pit.
O Lord Jesus Christ, king of glory,
deliver the souls of the dead from the mouth of the lion,
lest hell seize them and they fall into darkness.
Lord, sacrifices and prayers of praise we offer:
accept them for those souls whose memory we celebrate today:
make them, Lord, from death pass to life,
as once you promised Abraham and his seed.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Pie Jesu

Gentle Jesus, grant them eternal rest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest eternal.
Let eternal light shine upon them, Lord, with your saints for ever,
because you are merciful
Eternal rest grant them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Libera me

Deliver me, Lord, from eternal death on that dreadful day,
when heaven and earth are moved, when you will come to judge the world by fire.
I tremble and am afraid, I fear the trial and the wrath to come.
That day, day of wrath, of calamity and misery, a great and very bitter day.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

In paradisum

May the angels lead you into paradise; at your coming may the martyrs receive you
and lead you into the holy city of Jerusalem .
May the chorus of angels receive you and with Lazarus once poor may you have
eternal rest.

THE PERFORMERS

The Cecilian Singers, a mixed choir of twenty-three (23) voices, has been performing since 1971 and has pleased audiences in Canada, U.S.A., Wales, Germany and the Caribbean. The group was founded and directed by Doris Provençal who passed the baton of directorship over to John Bryan in 1999.

John Bryan is a school teacher, organist & choirmaster of St. Michael's Cathedral and the current Director of The Cecilian Singers. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from The University of The West Indies and a Bachelor of Music Degree in Organ Performance from the University of Toronto.

John Burnett is Credit Manager at Gildan Activewear and the organist & choirmaster of St. Mary's Anglican Church.

Raymond Maughan is a medical doctor, a former member of the Cecilian Singers and a student of Doris Provençal

Wayne Thorne is a graduate of Berkeley College of Music where he studied with Wendy Rolfe. He is a teacher and performer.

The Barbados Chamber Orchestra is the sole classical orchestra of its kind in Barbados with an objective of satisfying the needs of the many classically trained musicians who love to play the music. The present orchestra is a result of structural changes that were made to its predecessor - the Barbados Symphonia, which in itself was born out of the Barbados Strings. President of the Orchestra is violinist Mike Williams and it is led by violinist Erwin Brathwaite.

