

The story behind the *Lazarus Requiem* by Patrick Hawes

In 2004, after the success of his debut album *Blue in Blue*, several record companies were saying to Patrick Hawes “Why don't you write a requiem? Choral Societies are always looking for new material.”

Patrick didn't get writing immediately – a number of requiems were written in 2004; was another needed? Then Andrew Hawes, Patrick's brother and a parish priest, came up with the idea of setting the requiem in the context of the story of Lazarus. So, the *Lazarus Requiem* was born and had its premier in the Cadogan Hall in 2008 with The English Chamber Orchestra, The Tallis Chamber Choir and Conventus (the choir that Patrick originally formed to sing on *Blue in Blue*).

The well-known words of the requiem mass draw fresh meaning from the Lazarus story and the dramatic interaction of the characters: Christ (tenor) as a young man; Lazarus' sisters, Mary (soprano), Martha (mezzo-soprano); Thomas (baritone) and the disciples (semi-chorus). You need to hear the music and words to experience the drama but the following snapshots attempt to paint a picture of the impact of interweaving the requiem with the gospel story of Lazarus.

The Kyrie follows the death of Lazarus – it is a dance of joy as the chorus go on a journey of hope and love with him – after all, Christ assured Mary and Martha that Lazarus' illness was “not unto death”. After expressing doubts, Mary and Martha affirm their belief in Christ, the son of God, so the words of the Offertory, O Domine Christe, carry a vigorous urgency, “Deliver the souls of the faithful departed from the pains of hell.” Patrick represents Christ's tears at the death of Lazarus in a new poem by Andrew with music of great tenderness. The Sanctus then bursts out with a majestic sound followed by a lyrical setting of the Hosanna.

Exeter Philharmonic Choir were inspired by their first rehearsal with Patrick in preparation for the recording of the work at the end of January 2012. He told them the story behind the Lazarus Requiem. And he stressed the importance of the great tradition of British choral societies – ordinary people who come out to sing every week, often on the cold dark winter nights. Patrick always conceived Lazarus for choral societies and when it came to recording the work he needed a choral society to sing the requiem words and a Cathedral Choir for the semi-chorus: who better than Exeter Philharmonic Choir, singing since 1846, and Exeter Cathedral Choir.

So don't miss the live performance of the Lazarus Requiem in Exeter Cathedral, 17th March 2012 - and if you buy the CD which is being launched at the concert, you'll have a permanent record of the work.