

The State College Choral Society



NEWSLETTER

July 2005

SING FOR YOUR SUPPER

POTLUCK PICNIC & SING ALONG

Sunday, July 24, 2005 4:00 p.m.
Pat Daniel's house, 117 Sara Way
(directions & map on last page of this newsletter)

John Rutter *Magnificat*

Jan Miller directing

Asa Carns at the piano

What to bring: music, lawn chair, salad or dessert to share, BYOB, card table if you have one, friends who can sing/prospective tenors or other parts

Provided: hamburgers & hot dogs, iced tea, tableware

Please let Janet know if you plan to attend, so we'll know how many to plan for!

Pre-Registration Night

Monday, August 29, 2005 7:00 p.m.
Oakwood Presbyterian Church

Pick up music, pay registration, and get ready for another great season!

More info to come in registration packets to be mailed in August

SCHEDULE CHANGE

Since plans for taking *Voices of the Holocaust* on the road to New York, Philadelphia, or Washington have not fallen into place as hoped, we have decided to do a formal recording session of the piece in conjunction with a reprise performance in State College. A tour of the piece is still possible at a future date, but it will not happen this season.

Performing and recording *VoH* will be in addition to the two concerts announced by Russ at the Year End Banquet. in May. This, our 57th season, promises to be an exciting one with collaborations with our sister musical groups in the community. The schedule for 2005-06 is now as follows:

John Rutter *Mass of the Children*
 Concert with Pennsylvania Centre Orchestra
 Sunday, November 13, 2005 3:00 p.m.
 Pasquerilla Spiritual Center

Sheridan Seyfried *Voices of the Holocaust*
 Recording Session: Saturday, December 10, 2005
 Concert: Sunday, December 11, 2005 3:00 p.m.
 Pasquerilla Spiritual Center

Sir Michael Tippett *A Child of Our Time*
 Concert with Nittany Valley Symphony
 Tuesday, April 11, 2006 7:30 p.m.
 Eisenhower Auditorium

State College Choral Society Fifth Annual

Yard Sale



Saturday, August 27, 2005 9:00 AM - ???
769 Westerly Parkway

The Choral Society Annual Yard Sale helps to offset SCCS operating expenses. Here's how you can help:

DONATIONS: Bring clean new or used clothing, books, house wares, furniture, toys, and sports equipment, to 769 Westerly Parkway Friday, August 26 anytime between 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

VOLUNTEER: We need people to 1) price and sort items on Friday, 2) set up early Saturday morning, 3) serve as sales people during the sale, and 4) clean up and dispose of leftovers at the end of the sale. Sign up to work at Sing for Your Supper on July 24th or e-mail Janet at jhaner@adelphia.net.

A Child of Our Time

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Michael Tippett was approaching maturity as a composer, he also became aware of the social injustices caused by the Depression. For a period he went to work with unemployed miners in the North of England. For some years afterwards, he also conducted an orchestra made up of theatre and cinema musicians thrown out of work with the arrival of “talkies” (i.e. films with soundtracks). Tippett sensed, too, the likely consequences of the rise of Nazism in Central Europe and of Stalinism in Russia. His first instincts were to become politically involved. He took part in Labour party rallies and, briefly, joined the Communist party, leaving after he failed to convert his party branch to Trotskyism.

Gradually, he came to feel that he must at some stage express his solidarity with the deprived and the downtrodden through his work as a composer. At first he considered writing an opera based on the 1916 Easter Rebellion in Ireland. This had potential for Easter symbolism—an avowal of hope for a new springtime. Soon, though, he realised that the work gestating inside him was one of contemplation, obviating the need for stage action.

In 1938, the shooting of a German diplomat in Paris by a young Polish Jew, made desperate by the Nazi persecution of his race in general and his family in particular, led to one of the most terrible pogroms of Jews—the infamous Kristallnacht of 9 November. Tippett shared in the public horror which this aroused, feeling inwardly also that he must respond with a composition which, as it turned out, was to be his first major public statement as an artist.

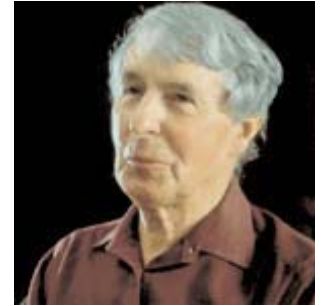
Having become friendly with the poet T. S. Eliot, he asked him if he would write the libretto. Eliot agreed to consider the project on condition that Tippett prepared a scenario for him, showing the shape and character of each movement and sketching in his own ideas about the text. This the composer did, taking as his model the Bach *Passion* and Handel's *Messiah*. He thus laid out the basis for a three-part oratorio, using standard baroque methods, such as recitative for narration, and arias and ensembles culminating in negro spirituals. The spirituals were the best twentieth-century counterpart he could find to the Lutheran chorales of Bach's time,

embodying texts and music of an inherently universal significance. Eliot studied the scenario in detail but then advised Tippett to write the text himself, as any words from Eliot would probably overwhelm the music. Tippett accepted his advice and, ever after, wrote his own libretti.

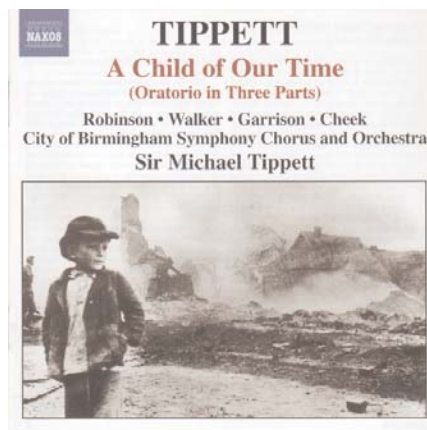
Tippett took his title for the work from a novel by the anti-Nazi writer, Odon von Horvath, *Ein Kind unserer Zeit* (1938), but nonetheless planned the work so that it would not be too tied to the specific events which had sparked it off. Thus, Part I of the work “deals with the general state of oppression in our time. Part II presents the particular story of a young man's attempt to seek justice by violence and the catastrophic consequences; and Part III considers the moral to be drawn, if any.” This progression from the general to the specific and back again is signalled by the naming of the soloists—who are just soprano, alto, tenor and bass in Parts I and III—as Mother, Aunt, Boy and Uncle in Part II.

The opening chorus and alto solo give us a view of the world as if from another planet, after the manner of the “Prologue in Heaven” from Goethe's *Faust*: though another influence upon this initial section was the film, *Green Pastures* (1936), where “De Lawd” is looking down from heaven at the world he has created. *Green Pastures* also suggested the style of singing (its soundtrack featured the Hall Johnson Choir) necessary for the spirituals, which proved to be highly apposite in rounding off each section of the work. Seasons metaphors, too, play their part. “The world turns on its dark side. It is winter” at the start, is complemented by “The moving waters renew the earth. It is spring” at the end.

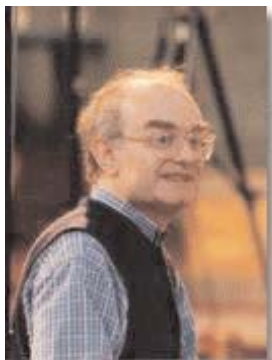
Tippett began writing *A Child of Our Time* on the day war broke out—September 1939—and completed it two years later. But its first performance was not until 1944, when it was conducted by Walter Goehr at Aldephi Theatre, London. Since then it has become a part of the choral repertory worldwide and there are six recordings of it currently available.



Sir Michael Tippett



Mass of the Children



John Rutter

Though he is perhaps best known for his carols and other short pieces, John Rutter also has a number of large-scale works for chorus and orchestra to his name. Most of these received their first performances in the United States, where Rutter is a frequent visitor, writing regularly for American choirs and conducting performances of his own music. The

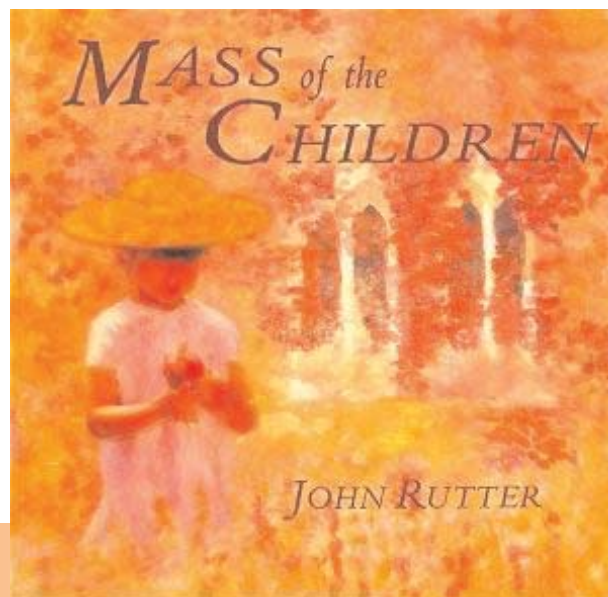
Mass of the Children received its première in Carnegie Hall, New York, in February 2003, and the first UK performance followed a month later in Guildford Cathedral, the composer conducting on both occasions. The work is scored for adult mixed choir, children's choir, soprano and baritone soloists and orchestra. The *Mass* is a *Missa Brevis*—a Latin Mass without a Credo—in five movements. Several additional English texts are also included, and these form a progression from waking to sleeping that runs through the work as a counterpart to the liturgy of the conventional Mass text.

The piece does not begin immediately with the Kyrie Eleison but, in keeping with the 'waking to sleeping' theme, opens with the children's choir singing lines from Bishop Thomas Ken's fine morning hymn, 'Awake, my soul, and with the sun,' written in about 1674 for the scholars of Winchester College. After the Kyrie comes an exuberant Gloria featuring energetic, unequal rhythms that are typical of Rutter at his liveliest, and then a complete change of mood is introduced with the gently lilting harmonies of the Sanctus and Benedictus. The Agnus Dei text is divided between the fourth and fifth movements, with the first part being followed by William Blake's moving poem, 'The Lamb,' sung by the children's choir. The final movement begins with two prayers by John Rutter, for the baritone and soprano soloists, based on verses by Lancelot Andrewes and St Patrick. The *Mass* now returns to the poetry of Bishop

Ken. In one of Rutter's most inspired passages the beautiful evening hymn, 'Glory to thee, my God, this night' is sung by the children to the sublime melody of Tallis's Canon whilst the adults chant 'Dona nobis pacem' (Grant us thy peace). Finally the choirs are joined by the soloists, and the combined voices gradually bring the work to its peaceful conclusion.

The idea of combining a children's choir with an adult one is of course nothing new, but most of these works tend to treat the young voices as a subsidiary musical resource. In his *Mass of the Children*, however, the composer has given the children's choir a central part to play. It is they, not the adults, who are heard at the very outset, and their role throughout is integral to the overall concept of the *Mass*. As always with Rutter, the music is beautifully written for the voices and superbly orchestrated. His skilful writing for soloists, choirs and orchestra and his sensitive interweaving of the various Latin and English texts has resulted in one of his finest and most moving works.

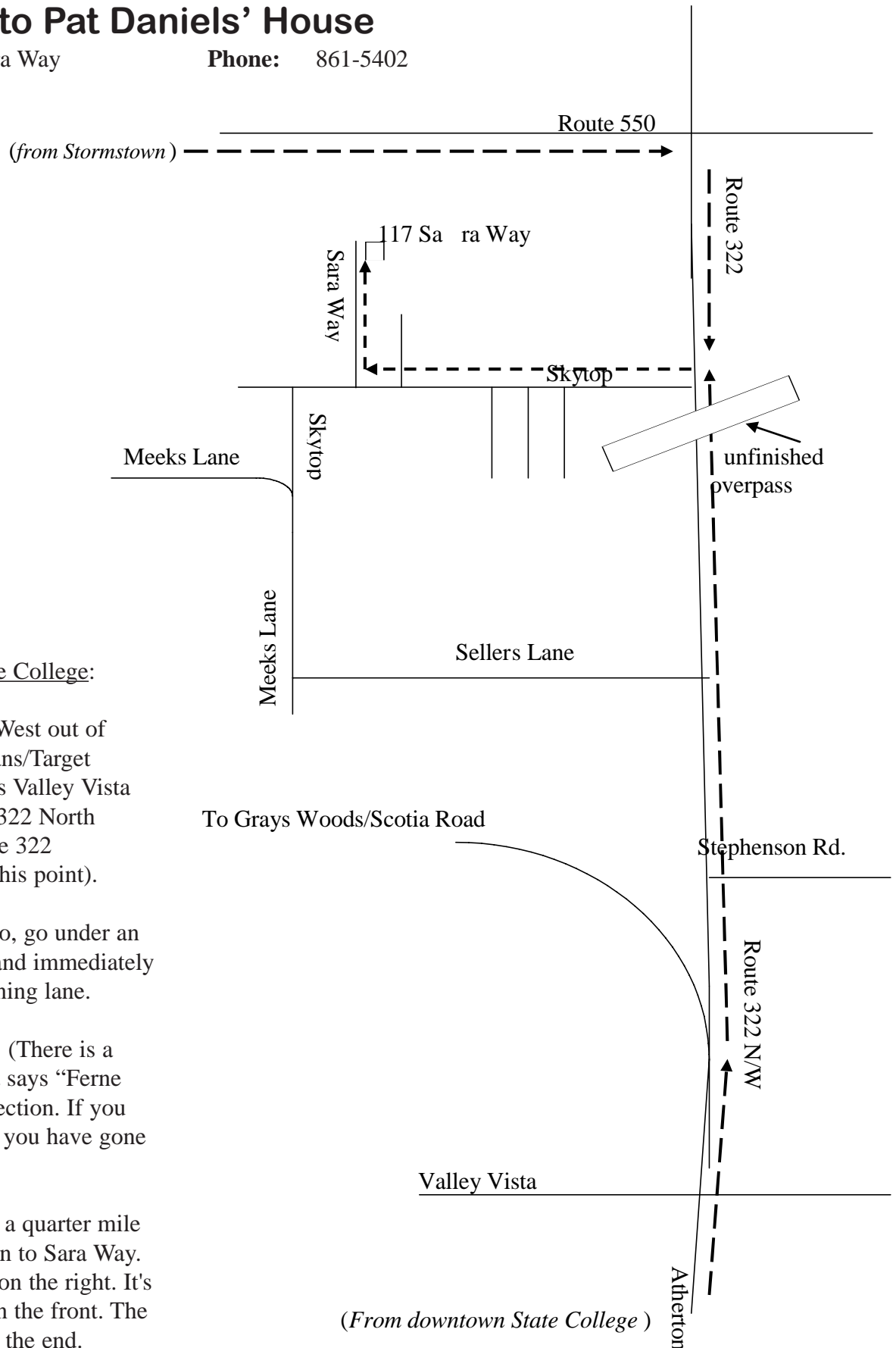
John Bawden
Musical Director
Fareham Philharmonic Choir



Directions to Pat Daniels' House

Address: 117 Sara Way

Phone: 861-5402



From Downtown State College:

Take Atherton North/West out of town, past the Wegmans/Target shopping center. Cross Valley Vista and merge right onto 322 North (Alternatively, take the 322 Expressway north to this point).

Continue a mile or two, go under an unfinished overpass, and immediately get into the center turning lane.

Turn left onto Skytop. (There is a development sign that says "Ferne Hollow" at this intersection. If you make it to Route 550, you have gone too far.)

Go up the hill, maybe a quarter mile more, and turn right on to Sara Way. 117 is the fifth house on the right. It's white, with porches on the front. The driveway has lights at the end.

(From downtown State College)