

Mass of the Children

Mass of the Children was written in response to an invitation to compose a new work for a concert during the American Choral Directors' Association national convention in New York in February 2003. Rutter's larger-scale choral works have been relatively few – the *Gloria*, the *Requiem*, and the *Magnificat* are the most often performed - but each one has a distinct character. *Mass of the Children* represents something new in the composer's work insofar as it was conceived with an integral role for a children's choir alongside an adult mixed choir, two soloists, and orchestra. The role of the children's choir is to add a further dimension to the traditional Latin Mass sung by the adult choir, sometimes commenting, sometimes amplifying the meaning and mood.

The Mass text itself (a *Missa Brevis*, that is to say a mass without a Credo section) is mainly sung by the adult choir or the soloists. The children sometimes sing the Latin- for example at the *Christe eleison*, the opening of the *Gloria* and at the *Benedictus*- but elsewhere they and the two soloists sing specially chosen English texts which in some way reflect upon or illuminate the Latin. The work opens with two verses from Bishop Thomas Ken's morning hymn for the Scholars of Winchester College, and it closes with the children singing his evening hymn with Tallis' timeless melody, as the adults intone the traditional *Dona nobis pacem*, a prayer for peace. This creates a framework (from waking to sleeping) within which other texts and moods appear in kaleidoscopic succession, like events in a day or landmarks in a life.