



PRESS RELEASE

Swingle Singers to premiere new setting of Tippett Spirituals

World renowned a cappella group the Swingle Singers will premiere a new setting of Michael Tippett's spirituals, composed by the conductor of London Adventist Chorale Ken Burton.

Commissioned by award-winning London choir Chantage, Ken Burton has composed interludes to create a seamless link between the five spirituals – breathing the spirit of modern day gospel into Tippett's iconic composition. Chantage and the Swingle Singers will premiere this groundbreaking composition on 18 March at the Union Chapel in London.

The idea was conceived by Chantage's musical director James Davey who says, "Chantage has often performed these spirituals but I've always felt that, taken out of the context of the whole oratorio, they can feel disjointed. I had the idea to commission a set of interludes to create a smooth flow between the five spirituals, incorporating flavours of Tippett's oratorio and modern spiritual styles, and I'm delighted that Ken Burton has agreed to write them for us and to unite this well-loved set of spirituals."

The Spirituals, arrangements of existing spirituals emanating from the United States, are part of Tippett's most widely known and performed work, *A Child of our Time* which was completed 70 years ago in 1941, just two years after the declaration of war on Germany and draws on many sources for inspiration including African spirituals.

A representative from the Tippett Estate says, "Tippett would have been delighted with this idea. He loved gospel choirs and wanted the Spirituals to be sung in that way, not in an 'English' way. One of his earliest and most profound memories is of hearing Bessie Smith singing."

The Swingle Singers: "We are overjoyed to be involved in this inventive new addition to Tippett's famed Spirituals. Working with Chantage will be a wonderful opportunity in itself but to premiere with them the brand new sections designed and written by Ken Burton is an honour. We are thrilled to be working with Ken Burton and Chantage again in this artistic endeavour."

Ken Burton says, "Having had the opportunity to watch, work with, and be impressed by both Chantage and the Swingle Singers, I consider it a great honour to make a creative contribution to their most excellent musical traditions. Spirituals have a universal and perennial relevance; beautiful and

enchanting, they are the cry of a heart yearning for freedom; they are truly soul music. The interludes will continue to be that voice crying out.”

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About the Swingle Singers

The Swingle Singers are an international a cappella phenomenon. For over four decades, the unmistakable sound of "Swingle singing" has defined the art form: virtuosic vocal agility and blend demonstrated by their signature close-microphone technique, combined with high-level entertainment that has thrilled audiences around the globe. The latest lineup of young and talented voices represents the group's transformation from pioneering classical/jazz crossover artists to contemporary vocal super-group. Their repertoire encompasses classical, jazz, Latin, pop and rock, all accompanied by their own vocal rhythm section. The Swingle Singers have performed all across the UK, America, Asia, and virtually every country in Europe, have released over 50 recordings, and have won five Grammy Awards.

www.swinglesingers.com

About Ken Burton

Ken Burton is principal conductor of award winning London Adventist Chorale and musical director and conductor of the Croydon SDA Gospel Choir. Ken Burton's musical activities are experienced world-wide through performances, broadcasts, his books and recordings. His music brings together the formal training, the lifelong experience in free and improvised music, and musical skills which include extemporisation, complex harmonisation, and perfect pitch. Underpinning this is his faith.

www.kenburton.com

About Chantage

Chantage is one of the UK's leading amateur choirs, formed in 1999 and is now well known as a stylish and energetic young chamber choir. Chantage won the BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year competition in 2006, recorded live with Elbow at Abbey Road Studios in 2009 and is frequently featured on Classic FM and BBC radio.

www.chantage.org

