THE MUSIC OF KING’S
CHORAL FAVOURITES FROM CAMBRIDGE

Stephen Cleobury
THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

For more than half a millennium, King's College Chapel has been the home to one of the world's most loved and renowned choirs. Since its foundation in 1441 by the 19-year-old King Henry VI, choral services in the Chapel, sung by this choir, have been a fundamental part of life in the College. Through the centuries, people from across Cambridge, the UK and, more recently, the world have listened to the Choir at these services. Today, even people who aren't able to attend services in the Chapel have heard King's Choir, thanks to its many recordings and broadcasts, and the tours that have taken it to leading international concert venues around the world. Despite its deep roots in musical history, the Choir has always been at the forefront of technological innovation, and records exclusively on its ‘impeccable’ own label.
THE MUSIC OF KING’S

The Choir of King’s College, Cambridge
Stephen Cleobury conductor
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Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Cantate Domino, SV 293 (1620)

Claudio Monteverdi spent the last thirty years of his life directing the music at the basilica of St Mark’s, Venice, and keeping very much alive the splendid musical tradition made famous by the Gabrieli family a generation earlier. The six-part motet Cantate Domino is among those published by his pupil Giulio Cesare Bianchi of Cremona. The text conflates words from Psalms 95 and 96 and Monteverdi’s music is appropriately dance-like and joyous from the start, but at the words ‘Quia mirabilia fecit’ (‘he hath done marvellous things’) the music becomes solemn, as if struck with awe. The composer replicates the sounds of angelic harps by creating a percussive effect with the ‘ps’ and ‘ch’ consonants in the text.

Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654)
Puer natus in Bethlehem (1620)

As Kapellmeister at Halle, Scheidt worked under difficult conditions, which included the Thirty Years’ War (which left him in post but without pay), disputes with the clergy (which resulted in his losing his position), and plague, which claimed the lives of his four surviving children. His music represented a new north German style resulting in large part from the effects of the Reformation, and standing in contrast to the Italian style of his contemporary, Monteverdi, whose Cantate Domino was published in the same year.

The text ‘Puer natus in Bethlehem’ forms the introit for the Eucharist on Christmas morning. The 13th-century melody would have been as well known to Scheidt’s audience as other tunes such as In dulci jubilo and Resonet in laudibus, which have remained popular to this day. Here the text has been elaborated and the lightly buoyant setting by Scheidt conveys the joy of the birth of Christ.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525/6-1594)
Magnificat primi toni a8 (c.1588)

Palestrina was the Italian master of polyphony par excellence. Quite as admired in his own day as he is now, his influence extended across Europe and his output includes at least 104 Masses. The eight-voice Magnificat primi toni was written for the papal choir in the late 1580s. The Sistine Chapel’s layout precluded a physical separation of the choirs, as was possible, for example, in St Mark’s, Venice, so here Palestrina employs different combinations of his eight voices to express different sections of the text. The music alternates between two equal choirs until the words ‘Omnes generationes’ (‘All generations’) at which point
all eight voices are employed together. Then Mary's words: 'Gaudete, viri Israel, misericordia Domini est in generationibus nostris' (For he that is mighty hath magnified me...) are sung by a quartet of the two treble lines, an alto and a tenor, drawn from both choirs, the two top lines anglingly echoing each other at the words 'et benedicat vos' (And may he be with you). Then the six lower voices sing the words: 'Et misericordia also a progress in... Somnium autem' (And his mercy is on them that fear him...). The remainder of the text is shared by the alternating choirs.

This Magnificat was added to the papal choir's repertories over twenty years after the Council of Trent's injunction which directed that. The whole plan of singing in musical modes shall be constituted not to give simply one but in such a way that the music is clearly understood by the listeners as drawn to the desire of heavenly harmonies. In the contemplation of the joys of the blessed. Paulacius took the injunction as he understood it and thus makes much use of homophony, enabling the text to be heard more clearly than its complex counterpoint.

Antonio Lotti (1667-1769)
Crucifixus a 6

Lotti's famous eight-part Crucifixus comes from a larger work, the Crisostomo in F for choir and orchestra, which is itself part of a complete Mass setting. The manuscript of the Mass was discovered in Dresden, although it was probably originally composed in Venice, where Lotti spent all of his career apart from the two years (1712-1718) he spent in Dresden, where he wrote a number of operas. This Mass from the Crisostomo became popular in the 19th century after it was published in an 'Umbrella' collection of sacred music entitled Stumblin von der Geburt Christi. The text of the Credo is drawn from the works of the 16th century famous composers, such as those of Byrd (1543) and Purcell (1659). In Purcell's own version there is very little synthesis, a lament. The word 'smeared' - 'smeared' - is repeated again and again, as it is here in the Crisostomo. In fact, in the words 'Gioiello' are heard only once. Himself unconventional in terms of religious belief, even agnostic, Purcell put into his Requiem what he described as 'a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest.' He said that he uses death 'as a happy deliverance, an escaping towards the joy that lies beyond, rather than as a painful experience.'
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Novi centri corpus, 1791 (1789)

The summer and autumn of 1791 saw Constanza Mozart taking the waters at Baden, to which she returned with the couple's son, Carl, the following summer. She was in poor health and in an advanced state of pregnancy. The local choirmaster, Anton Stoll, was a close confidant of Mozart, and helped out in practical ways, including finding a small apartment for Constanza to live in. Mozart, in return, lent Stoll music and helped out with the preparation of concerts, and in late May 1791 sent the choirmaster his forty-sixth work of genius: setting the 17th-century hymn, Ave Maria corpus, in time for it to be performed at the dedication of the new abbey church on the Feast of Corpus Christi. Constanza died on that sacred work was still in Baden when her husband died in Vienna that December.

Euchar Franck (1622-1690)
Pens aegleous (1679)

With Pens aegleous we stay with music, appropriate to Corpus Christi Day, since the words are from the penultimate chapter of the matter. Hymn Jesus Salerni, written by St Thomas Aquinas specifically for the Feast of Corpus Christi. Franck set these words as a duet in 1679 and interpolated his Pens aegleous as a common anthem between the Salerni and the Agnus Dei of the Mass a treo voce, which he had written twelve years earlier.

Hubert Parry (1848-1918)
My soul, there is a country (1904)

Parry's lifelong love of the music of Bach, Mendelssohn and Beethoven found expression at the very end of his life in his Songs of Farewell. By the time he set himself to the task he was Principal of the Royal College of Music and his country was at war with Germany, a tragedy that he felt on a personal artistic level. As he said to his students at Christmas 1914:

I have been a quarter of a century and more a pro Rege. I cared too much for their music and their philosophers and authors, and knew it was a sin to be surrounded with such sacred works as the problems of more brutal violence and material aggression.

Even as he spoke, many of his most brilliant students were leaving to serve with the British Army, and Parry was all too aware that his great talent would be wasted on the battlefields of northern France. E. J. Holmes, Arthur Benjamin, Ivor Gurney, George Butterworth, A. D. Harris, George Dyson, Arthur Bliss and Ralph Vaughan Williams were among those who joined up. By April 1915, Parry was so upset about news of deaths that he almost broke down as he once again addressed the RCM students. Parry, also like many other composers of the period had taken leave of religion, found inspiration in the words of the King James Bible and in

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Frank Martin (1890-1974)
Agnus Dei (Mass for Double Choir) (1928)

Whereas composers such as Faure and Pärt dealt lightly to institutional religion, Frank Martin, the son of a Catholic minister in Germany, felt differently. "To my mind," he wrote, "when dealing with a religious work of art, everything...ought to be subordinated to the inner conviction to express one's faith convincingly." For Martin, the composer's own genius in itself detracted from a religious composition. That Martin's music is not better known even today is due to his intense hyper-critical self-scrutiny. The first four movements of the Mass for Double Choir were completed in 1932. The Agnus Dei being written with the express intention to be performed by a professional choir. The text is a matter between God and myself...I felt that a personal expression of religious belief should remain secret and hidden from public opinion.

Morley Launblen (b. 1943)
O magnum mysterium (1994)

Morley Launblen's O magnum mysterium was commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and overnight launched its composer's career. At its premiere the music director Paul Salamunovich told his audience "Until now, Vittoria's O magnum mysterium has been the most beautiful and well-received setting of this text. I predict that will change after tonight." The popularity of the piece in the UK is in no small way due to its many performances at Carol from King's, the annual televised service broadcast by the BBC.

Stephen Paulus (1949-2014)
The Road Home (2000)

The Road Home was written in response to a commission from the Dale Warland Singers who specifically asked for a short folk-type choral arrangement. The simple pentatonic tune that Paulus found was published originally in The Southern Harmony Songbook of 1832 under the name "The Lonesome Blind". Paulus commissioned new words from the poet Michael Dennis Brown whose text compares the universal theme of home with the specific experience of talking with the blind. The Road Home is the only piece of music Paulus wrote in response to a request. He sent a letter to Steinbach asking him to write a piece for The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's (Angels, Jesus in 1996).

Traditional, arr. Stephen Clevenger (b. 1944)
Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace was first published in 1779 with words by the Englishman John Newton (1725-1807). His back story was a remarkable one; a procured sailor in the Royal Navy, a deserter, and subsequently a sailor on board a slave. No matter the career began with the divine promise he wrote about the captain for the crew to sing (the captain thought him the most profane man he had ever encountered). During a near encounter with death, during a storm at sea, he offered the words
'Lord have mercy upon us'. Having survived, he underwent a conversion. He continued in the silk trade (about which he never changed his views); and eventually turned to a career as a layman. The Archbishop of York refused to ordain him, but the Bishop of Lincoln took an interest and Newton was appointed Curate of Osney, within the parish. He succeeded the year William Cooper. Together they started to write hymns, including Amazing Grace, which they eventually published as Hymn tunes in 1779. Amazing Grace remained an obscure hymn in England, but became popular in the United States during the Protestant revival of the early 19th century. It was sung in many different tunes until 1835, when it was set to the now familiar tune named New York.

American Folk Song, arr. James Rees (1930-2014)

"Shenandoah"

The American folk song "Oh Shenandoah" or "Across the Wide Missouri" dates from the early 19th century, when it was sung by Canadian and American fur traders who negotiated the Missouri River in canoes. In the words "O Shenandoah, I hear your people calling, Oh Shenandoah, I hear your people calling!" there is a possible association with the foot chief of the Confederacy of northern New York, who is sometimes called "O Shenandoah). The song also has an association with the sea, spread internationally as sailors recited between storms, and by the 1870s it was being included in books of sea shanties. In 1902 the Englishman Alfred Mason Williams included it in his Studies in Folk Song and Popular Song as a good specimen of a baseline chord.

Chinese Traditional

"Nu Li Hua" (The Jasmine Flower Song)

The popular Chinese folk song "Nu Li Hua" (Jasmine Flower Song) dates back to the Song dynasty of the Ming dynasty in the 18th century. It has been associated with the custom in the southern Yangtze delta of giving Jasmine flowers. As is typically the case with Chinese music, it uses the pentatonic (five-scale) scale.

This has long been the most recognised Chinese song throughout the world. In his book, Travels in China of 1844, the British diplomat Sir John Barrow described it as one of the most popular songs in China. In 1958, Puccini used it in Turandot, and more recently it has been sung at many occasions, including the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and, more controversially, played on protesters' mobile phones during the 2011 pro-democracy protests in China, known as the Jasmine Revolution, which resulted in the song being censored in China.
CONDUCTOR’S NOTES

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Stephen Cleobury has for over 35 years been associated with one of the world’s most famous choirs, that of King’s College, Cambridge. His work at King’s has brought him into fruitful relationships with many leading orchestras and soloists, among them the Philharmonia Orchestra, the AAM, Britten Sinfonia, the OAE, and the BBC Concert Orchestra. He complements and refreshes his work in Cambridge through the many other musical activities in which he engages throughout the world.

At King’s, he has sought to enhance the reputation of the world-famous Choir, broadening considerably the daily service repertoire, commissioning new music from leading composers and developing its activities in broadcasting, recording and touring. He introduced the highly successful annual festival, Easter at King’s, from which the BBC regularly broadcasts, and, in its wake, a series of high-profile performances throughout the year, Concerts at King’s.

From 1995 to 2007 he was Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers and since then has been Conductor Laureate. Since 1983 he has been closely involved in the Cambridge University Musical Society, one of the UK’s oldest music societies, where he has nurtured generations of young talent. He retired from CUMS in 2016, becoming Conductor Laureate.

Beyond Cambridge he continues to be in demand as a conductor, organist, adjudicator and leader of choral workshops. Until 2008 he was a member of the Royal College of Organists, of which he is a past President. He has been Warden of the Solo Performers’ section of the Incorporated Society of Musicians and President of the Incorporated Association of Organists; he is currently Chairman of the IAO Benevolent Fund, which seeks to support organists and church musicians in need. He is President of the Friends of Cathedral Music and of the Herbert Howells Society. He was appointed CBE in the 2009 Queen’s Birthday Honours. King’s College announced in 2018 that Stephen would retire in September 2019 after 37 years in post.

www.stephencleobury.com
King’s College was founded in 1441 with six ‘singing men’ and 16 choristers, who were to be poor boys ‘of a strong constitution and an honest conversation’. Five centuries later, the Choir comprises 16 boys (Choristers) and 16 men (Choral and Organ Scholars).

The boys, aged between nine and thirteen, are educated across the river at King’s College School, a thriving and famously happy school now comprising some 420 girls and boys. The Choristers are selected at audition based on musical potential and, of course, a love of singing. When they join, they spend up to two years in training as ‘probationers’, after which they join the full Choir.

The men are all undergraduates at the University, who have attained the necessary academic requirements to become undergraduates at Cambridge. Known either as Choral or Organ Scholars, they study many different academic subjects, from music to modern languages to natural sciences. Find out more by searching “King’s College Choir”.

**Choristers**
- **Year 8 (ages 12-13)** Thomas Alban, Joseph Hall, Alfred Hopkins, George Sheldon
- **Year 7 (ages 11-12)** Jack Bowley, Samuel Cates, Lev Godar, George Hill, Samuel Trueman
- **Year 6 (ages 10-11)** Aiken Anderson-Jané, Philip Curtis, Elliot Hasler, Leo McNiff, Charlie Nicholson, Joshua O’Neill, Julius Sirringhaus

**Altos**
- George Gibbon, Daniel Henderson, Salim Jaffar, Jacob Partington, Joseph Zubier

**Tenors**
- Jack Goulder, Julius Haswell, James Micklethwaite, Protik Moulik, Christopher Nehaul

**Basses**
- Charlie Baigent, Will Crane, Jimmy Holliday, Zac Moxon, Timothy Murphy, Trojan Nakade, Stephen Whitford, Barney Wolstenholme

**Organ Scholars**
- Henry Websdale (tr. 2, 6, 7, 10, 12)
- Dónal McCann (tr. 1, 4, 5, 9, 17)
- Richard Gowers (tr. 18)

**Director of Music**
- Stephen Cleobury

*Track 5 soloist* Joseph Hall
*Track 11 soloists* George Hill and James Micklethwaite
*Track 12 soloist* Thomas Alban
*Track 16 soloist* Marcus McDevitt
*Track 17 soloist* James Micklethwaite
All tracks recorded at 96kHz 24-bit PCM in the Chapel of King’s College, Cambridge, by kind permission of the Provost and Scholars, 25 April & 28 July 2017, and 10-11 January & 23-24 April 2018.

Producers Benjamin Sheen, Simon Kiln *
Editors Benjamin Sheen, Simon Kiln *
Engineers Benjamin Sheen, Jonathan Allen *
Assistant Engineer Stefano Civetta *
Mastering Benjamin Sheen
Language Coach Gao Zhang *

* Track 18

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