

This evening we present some of the finest British unaccompanied choral music of the last four centuries. The programme was inspired by the opening piece, Jonathan Dove's *Wellcome, all wonders in one sight!* and the same sense of spiritual awe is a common theme in all of tonight's choral music. The Tudor period is represented by the timeless polyphony of Tallis and Byrd, and the nineteenth century by the exquisitely crafted music of Stanford. From the early twentieth century we have the rich modal harmonies of Vaughan Williams' superb Mass setting, whilst from more recent times Tavener's mystical hymn and Dove's anthem make an interesting contrast of styles. An instrumental interlude is provided by Finzi's rhapsodic set of pieces for clarinet and piano.

Wellcome, all wonders in one sight!

Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

Jonathan Dove is one of Britain's most prolific composers of opera and theatre music. His musical style is influenced by the minimalism of Steve Reich, John Adams and Philip Glass, and by more traditional techniques.

Wellcome, all wonders in one sight! was composed in 1990, and is a setting of lines from *An Hymne of the Nativity, sung as by the shepherds*, by the 17th century metaphysical poet Richard Crashaw. A particular feature of the piece is its insistent, lilting repetition of the words 'wellcome, wonder' around which the text is woven in warm, lyrical vocal lines that Dove instructs to be sung 'with awe'.

Wellcome all wonders in one sight! Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter, day in night, Heaven in Earth, and God in man!
Great little one whose all-embracing birth
lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.
We say thee in thy balmy nest, bright dawn of our eternall day.
We say thine eyes breake from their East and chase the trembling shades away.
We saw thee and we bless the sight, we saw thee by thy own sweet light.
To thee, meek majesty! soft King of simple graces and sweet loves,
Each of us his lamb will bring, each his paire of silver doves;
Till burnt at last in fire of thy faire eyes, our selves become our owne best sacrifice.

- *Richard Crashaw (1613-1649)*

Three motets

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 – 1924)

1. Beati quorum via
2. Coelos ascendit hodie
3. Justorum animae

Following the death of Purcell in 1695, English music went into a long period of decline that was not reversed until the late 19th century. Of the many musicians who helped to bring about the English musical renaissance it was Charles Stanford and Hubert Parry who were arguably the most influential. Largely thanks to their untiring work as composers, teachers, performers and administrators, British music once more began to attract widespread acclaim in the world's concert halls. This re-awakening had already begun with Elgar's rise to prominence, and now continued with a whole new generation of talented composers, of whom the leading figure was Vaughan Williams.

As a teacher of composition, Sir Charles Stanford was without equal. A list of his many pupils at the Royal College of Music reads like a *Who's Who* of early twentieth-century British music: Vaughan Williams, Ireland, Holst, Coleridge-Taylor, Howells, to name only a few of the most well-known. Stanford was a prolific and highly regarded composer himself, with seven symphonies and five concertos to his name, as well as numerous other major compositions, but most of these works fell into neglect after the First World War. New musical horizons had been opened up by Debussy, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and others. Stanford's music was firmly rooted in the formal Austro-German tradition of the nineteenth century, and no longer seemed relevant to a traumatised post-war world looking to the future, not the past, for reassurance.

Stanford's church music, on the other hand, has consistently retained its pre-eminent position. At a time when mediocrity prevailed he swept away many of the tired conventions, bringing in a freshness and vitality not heard since Purcell's day, and enriching the repertoire with a succession of fine anthems, motets and settings of the morning and evening canticles that immediately became central pillars of our cathedral choir repertoire, and have remained so to this day.

The *Three motets, Op.38* for unaccompanied choir date from around 1892, the year in which Stanford gave up his post as organist of Trinity College, Cambridge. They are dedicated to his successor, Alan Gray, and the college choir, and are amongst the finest of his choral compositions.

Justorum animae is in three short sections. The outer two reflect the contemplative nature of the first and last part of the text, whilst the central section is a vivid depiction of malevolence - 'Et non tanget illos tormentum malitiae'. The text is from the Book of Wisdom.

*Justorum animae
in manu Dei sunt,
et non tanget illos tormentum mortis.
Visi sunt oculis insipientium mori,
illi autem sunt in pace.*

The souls of the righteous
are in the hand of God;
there shall no torment or malice touch them.
In the sight of the unwise they seem to die,
but they are in peace.

Coelos ascendit hodie is an Ascensiontide motet, scored for double choir, and makes much use of dramatic interplay between the two choirs. The superb final 'Amen' grows ever outwards from one single note, concluding on a vibrant eight-part chord.

*Coelos ascendit hodie
Jesus Christus Rex gloriae:
Sedet ad Patris dexteram,
Gubernat coelum et terram.
Iam finem habent omnia
Patris Davidis carmina.
Iam Dominus cum Domino
Sedet in Dei solio:
In hoc triumpho maximo
Benedicamus Domino.
Laudatur Sancta Trinitas,
Deo dicamus gratias,
Alleluia. Amen.*

Today Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,
has ascended into the heavens.
He sits at the father's right hand,
ruling heaven and earth.

Now are all of David's songs fulfilled,
now is the Lord with his Lord.
He sits upon the royal throne of God
in this his greatest triumph.
Let us bless the Lord;
let the Holy Trinity be praised,
Let us give thanks to the Lord,
Alleluia! Amen.

Beati quorum via is in six parts, with divided sopranos and basses, and is meditative in character. Effective use is made of contrasting the three upper and three lower voices, and the piece is rightly regarded as one of Stanford's most exquisite unaccompanied compositions. The text is taken from Psalm 119.

*Beati quorum via integra est,
qui ambulant in lege Domini.*

Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord.

Five bagatelles

Gerald Finzi (1901 – 1956)

1. Prelude
2. Romance
3. Carol
4. Forlana
5. Fughetta

A series of tragedies profoundly affected Finzi in his early years. His father died just before his eighth birthday, and by the time he was eighteen he had lost his three elder brothers and his much-loved music teacher, killed in action. This dreadful sequence of events, and the appalling losses of the First World War that formed the backdrop to his adolescence, gave Finzi an acute awareness of the

impermanence of life, confirmed with grim finality when at the age of fifty he discovered that he was dying of leukaemia. These experiences to a large extent account for the elegiac tone of much of his music.

In addition to his songs and choral music, which comprise about two-thirds of his output, Finzi produced some fine instrumental works, of which the *Five Bagatelles* are amongst the most popular. Three of them – *Romance*, *Carol* and *Forlana* – were completed in 1941. Finzi later added the *Prelude* and the *Fughetta* in response to requests from his publisher, Leslie Boosey.

The busy *Prelude*, the longest piece in the set, reminds us that Bach was one of a number of influences on Finzi. Its energetic counterpoint is perhaps reminiscent of the master's two-part inventions. A graceful *Romance* is then followed by *Carol*, a simple, hymn-like piece which began life nearly twenty years earlier as a musical gift for Herbert Howells' daughter, Ursula. The title of the next movement, *Forlana*, refers to a 17th-century Venetian folk dance. As its title suggests, the *Fughetta* is contrapuntal in style, and provides a lively and lighthearted finale to the suite.

Finzi himself was rather self-deprecating about the Bagatelles, describing them as 'mere trifles'. Composers are not always the best judges of their own work, though, and in her excellent biographical study of Finzi, Diana McVeagh gives a far warmer assessment: 'The Bagatelles are very accomplished; seldom had Finzi been so fluent and inventive.'

Hymn to the Mother of God

John Tavener (1944 – 2013)

Though John Tavener's creativity was firmly rooted in his faith, his music nevertheless appeals to a wide range of listeners, many of whom do not necessarily relate to contemporary music or hold any particular religious beliefs. Tavener first attracted serious attention with his dramatic cantata *The Whale*, based on the biblical story of Jonah, which was premiered in the London Sinfonietta's inaugural concert in 1968. Having long been a staunch Catholic, in 1977 Tavener converted to the Russian Orthodox Church, whose theology and mysticism now became his principal inspiration.

The *Hymn to the Mother of God*, written in 1985, is a setting of verses from the Liturgy of St Basil, sung on the saint's feast day. It calls for two choirs singing in canon. The result is a haunting and intense sound world.

In you, O woman full of grace,
the angelic choirs, and the human race,
all creation rejoices.

mystical paradise,
and glory of virgins.

O sanctified temple,

In you, O woman full of grace,
all creation rejoices. All praise be to you.

Magnificat in Bb

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 – 1924)

For many years Stanford and Parry enjoyed a close friendship, but in 1917 growing tensions in their relationship reached breaking point, a cause of great sorrow to Stanford in particular. His wife managed to facilitate some degree of reconciliation between the two men, but things were never quite the same again. In 1918, as a peace-offering and a token of his admiration for his colleague, Stanford composed the *Magnificat in Bb, Op.164* for unaccompanied double chorus. Sadly, Parry died the same year and instead the work became his memorial. It bears the following poignant dedication: 'This work, which death prevented me from giving Charles Hubert Hastings Parry in life, I dedicate to his name in grief.'

Stanford had already set the *Magnificat* text numerous times in English, for liturgical use. This Latin version is a late work, intended primarily for the concert hall. It is conceived on a large scale, with eight vocal parts throughout and in six sections that reflect the character of each part of the text. As one might expect in an unaccompanied work for double choir, there is much use of imitation and antiphonal effects in the *Magnificat*. Stanford was Musical Director of the Bach Choir for seventeen years, and was thoroughly familiar with Johann Sebastian's choral music, so it is not surprising that this work is infused with the spirit of Bach's motets, particularly *Singet dem Herrn*. There is also a similarity with Bach's own *Magnificat*, Stanford's energetic introductory flourish recalling the initial theme of that masterpiece.

The lively figurations of the extended opening are followed by a fanfare-like idea for 'Quia fecit'. This in turn gives way to vivid antiphonal exchanges for 'Fecit potentiam'. The third section, beginning 'Esurientes', brings a change of mood with gently lilting pastoral music alternating between the upper and lower voices of the two choirs. The brief fifth section, 'Sicut locutus est', abruptly raises both the tempo and the intensity, reaching an imposing climax with an exhilarating top B flat for the Choir 1 sopranos. As with Bach's *Magnificat*, so here for the 'Gloria' Stanford now recalls the initial thematic idea, bringing this impressive work to a spirited and jubilant close.

*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus
in Deo salutari meo. Quia respexit
humilitatem ancillae suae.
Ecce enim ex hoc beatum me
dicent omnes generationes.*

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my
Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness
of his hand-maiden.
For behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.

*Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est
et sanctum nomen ejus.*

*Et misericordia ejus a progenie in
progenies timentibus eum.*

*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo
dispersit superbos
mente cordis sui.*

*Deposuit potentes de sede
et exaltavit humiles.*

*Esurientes implevit bonis
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus
misericordiae suae.*

*Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.*

*Gloria patri et filio
et spiritui sancto
sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

For he that is mighty hath magnified me
and holy is his Name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him
throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm
he hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their
seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his
servant Israel

As he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed, for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever
shall be, world without end. Amen

INTERVAL

Mass in G minor

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958)

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Sanctus and Benedictus

Agnus Dei

At the beginning of the 20th century Vaughan Williams was the leading figure of the English musical renaissance, and for some fifty years he remained one of the most influential figures in the musical life of this country. In his mission to liberate English music from the Austro-German tradition that had dominated European music since the time of Beethoven, and to establish a truly English musical style, Vaughan Williams drew on a number of sources of inspiration,

foremost amongst which were English folksong and Tudor polyphony, particularly the music of Tallis and Byrd.

The *Mass in G Minor* was completed in 1921, and is dedicated to the composer's great friend Gustav Holst and his Whitsuntide Singers. It is scored for unaccompanied double choir and four soloists. The *Mass*, which Vaughan Williams intended for liturgical as well as concert use, is loosely modelled on the polyphonic masses of William Byrd and others. The distinguished organist and choirmaster Richard Terry, himself an important figure in the wider story of the English musical renaissance, directed its first liturgical performance at Westminster Cathedral, after which he wrote enthusiastically to the composer, "*It is the work one has all along been waiting for. In your individual and modern idiom you have really captured the old liturgical spirit and atmosphere.*"

This fusion of old and new is the key to the work's impact. Its antecedents are the modal harmonies and imitative polyphony of sixteenth century English music, re-imagined through Vaughan Williams' own rich harmonic language, and greatly dramatized by the juxtaposition of sparse single lines with brilliant choral climaxes. He had already explored these techniques to telling effect in his seminal *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910), which is similarly scored for double string orchestra and solo quartet.

The *Mass in G minor* was undoubtedly a landmark in English choral music. It was the first substantial unaccompanied setting of the Mass to be written in an unmistakably English style since the time of Tallis and Byrd. It is entirely appropriate, then, that in this evening's concert we intersperse the movements of the mass with a motet by each of those two great Tudor composers whom Vaughan Williams so much admired.

Mass in G minor: Kyrie and Gloria

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy upon us,
Christ, have mercy upon us,
Lord, have mercy upon us

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra pax hominibus
Bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
Adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,

Glory be to God on high,
And in earth peace,
good will towards men.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
we worship Thee, we glorify Thee.
We give thanks to Thee
for Thy great glory.
Lord God, heavenly King,

*Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.*

*Qui tollis peccata mundi
Miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Suscipe deprecationem nostrum,
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
Miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus Altissimus.*

*Cum Sancto Spiritu
In gloria Dei Patris. Amen*

God the Father Almighty.
Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father

Thou that taketh away the sins of the world
have mercy upon us.
Thou that taketh away the sins of the world
receive our prayer.
Thou that sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy,
Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art most high

with the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

O sacrum convivium

Thomas Tallis (1505 – 1585)

During a period of considerable religious turmoil, when the official state religion switched back and forth between Catholicism and Anglicanism, with dangerous consequences for anyone caught on the wrong side, Thomas Tallis and William Byrd produced a significant body of exceptionally fine music for whichever denomination was in power, whilst at the same time remaining true to their own Catholic faith. They were both distinguished members of the Chapel Royal, which at that time was not a physical chapel but a permanent body of clergy and musicians who travelled with the monarch to sing the services in whichever palace they were resident. In 1575 Queen Elizabeth granted Tallis and Byrd a monopoly on the printing and selling of music. Despite being known to be dissident Catholics their status was such that they were nevertheless permitted to publish several collections of Latin sacred music.

From 1543 until his death Tallis served in the Chapel Royal under four monarchs: Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth. He is the most important English composer before Byrd. The communion motet *O Sacrum convivium*, published in the first book of *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575, is one of Tallis's most profound compositions, its effortless polyphony inspired by the mystery of the Eucharist.

*O sacrum convivium,
in quo Christus sumitur:
Recolitur memoria passionis eius:
Mens impletur gratia:
Et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur..*

O sacred banquet,
in which Christ is received.
The memory of his passion is recalled:
The mind is filled with grace:
And a pledge of future glory is given to us.

Mass in G minor: Credo

*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem
omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum et ex Patre
natum ante omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero.
Genitum non factum consubstantialem
Patri, per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines et propter
nostram salutem, descendit de coelis.*

*Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria Virgine; et homo factus est.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub
Pontio Pilato, passus et sepultus est.*

*Et resurrexit tertia die secundum
scripturas. Et ascendit in caelum, sedet
ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus
est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos,
cujus regni non erit finis.*

*Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum
et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque
procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus
est per prophetas. Et unam sanctam
catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.*

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord, Jesus Christ
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all worlds.
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God.
Begotten, not made, being of one substance
with the Father, by whom all things were made.
Who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven.

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.
He also suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.

And the third day he rose again according to the
scriptures. And ascended into heaven and sits at
the right hand of the Father. And he will come
again in glory to judge both the living and the
dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord the
Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and
the Son. Who with the Father and the Son
together is worshipped and glorified,
who spoke through the prophets. And I believe
one holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Alleluia. Ascendit Deus

William Byrd (1543 – 1623)

Without doubt William Byrd ranks as one of our very greatest composers, and the first in England to acquire a truly international reputation. He was born in Lincoln in 1543 and died in 1623 at the great age of eighty. A pupil of Thomas Tallis, he became Organist of Lincoln Cathedral in 1563, and in 1572 was appointed Organist of the Chapel Royal, a post he held jointly with Tallis.

From the beginning of his career Byrd wrote Latin sacred music, despite the strict prohibition on such pieces being used in church. In fact he intended these Latin motets and settings of the mass as a resource for the small groups of singers who worshipped in secret in the private chapels of Catholic households.

In 1575, the year that the Queen granted a licence to Tallis and Byrd, they published their first collection of motets, the *Cantiones Sacrae*. This was only three years after Byrd had been sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, when he had been required to declare not only his allegiance to the Queen as monarch and head of the Church, but also his rejection of 'all foreign jurisdictions ... and authorities'. Byrd's unswerving commitment to his Catholic faith was in direct contravention of this oath, and for the rest of his life he steered a precarious path between these conflicting loyalties. He managed to avoid persecution, however, thanks to the immense regard in which he was universally held and the protection afforded by his many influential friends.

Byrd wrote prodigiously in a wide range of forms, and his music stands apart from that of his English contemporaries in its intensity, rhythmic complexity and unflinching inspiration. *Alleluia. Ascendit Deus* is a motet for Ascension Day from his second book of *Gradualia*, published in 1607.

*Alleluia. Ascendit Deus in iubilatione,
et Dominus in voce tubæ. Alleluia.
Dominus in Sina in sancto,
ascendens in altum, captivam duxit
captivitatem. Alleluia.*

Alleluia. God is gone up with a shout:
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Alleluia.
Our Lord is in Sina, in the holy place.
Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led
captivity captive. Alleluia.

Mass in G minor: Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis Deo.*

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis Deo.*

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the
Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Dona nobis pacem.*

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of
the world, have mercy upon us.
Grant us thy peace.