



O MY PEOPLE

antiphon

Directed by Matthew Cann



MusicSpoke

including choral works by
SANDERS | WHITACRE | ELGAR | GRIER

THE MUSIC

"With its delicate canopies of alabaster, and sculptures wrought in bold relief, its inlay of choice marbles, its redundancy of costly stones, and its attendant angel figures, it enshrines a multitude of ideas well harmonizing with its place and purpose." Thus is described the reredos of Exeter Cathedral, only feet away from the space where this recording was captured, and upon which is depicted a celebrated scene of the Ascension of Our Lord. How fitting it is, therefore, that this choral programme begins with one of the most arresting and buoyant pieces written for the Ascension: *The Lord goes up with shouts of joy*, from the pen of polymath musician, Francis Grier. In a swinging 6/8 metre, Grier's depiction of a paraphrase text based on Psalm 47 immediately invites the listener into the drama of the Ascension. The use of cross-rhythms and accents, together with very particular choral textures spanning a wide tessitura, is coloured further by the internal repetition of the syllables in the word 'Alleluia', perhaps recalling glossolalia.

Eric Whitacre's setting of Octavio Paz's haunting text *A Boy and a Girl* immediately presents an effective use of whole-tone motion and of the dissonance of the interval of a 2nd. Within a tonal framework, the occasional appearance of certain chromaticisms underscores the interest of the text, while all the time Whitacre's musical language (for which he has enjoyed an impressive rise to fame) is unmistakable. The sensuousness and sensuality of his choral writing has appealed hugely to contemporary audiences and choirs alike.

Written in the warm key of D flat major, Matthew Cann's beautifully serene and contained setting of the Compline Responsory *In manus tuas* is made up of individual cell phrases that develop using an additive process, with the tension of dissonance always being resolved back to the home key. This motet dates from 1999 and was first broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 from Norwich Cathedral in 2003.

Part of the appeal of this recording has been the opportunity to showcase new works, and to promote works by contemporary composers. The first of the two pieces by Exeter composer Graham Keitch, *O nata lux*, celebrates an ecstatic text for the Feast of the Transfiguration. Keitch's expansive musical language unfolds with effective dialogue between choral textures of varying sizes, and, while one senses the world of medieval monophony is never far away, the piece is shot through with richness of sound and a keen ear to the text.

Central to the act of penitence on Good Friday afternoon in the Western Church, and significant in the Eastern Church also, the 'Impropria', or Reproaches, are formed of a sequence of macaronic (Greek and

Latin) texts that were codified in medieval times. They recall the spirit of the psalmist in Psalm 22, and the great diaspora cry of Exodus, the weight of the Hebrew canon resting on Jesus in his salvific act of being crucified. The text contains the Trisagion, the theology of which reminds us of the human confusion of the Atonement: how great is God, even, and because of, sending his Son to die for humankind. The musical setting by John Sanders draws the emotive power of the text to the fore, and is an essay in contrasts of dynamic and texture. First published in 1993 (yet firmly established in the Gloucester repertoire from the mid/late 1980's, during which time Sanders was Organist and Master of the Choristers at Gloucester Cathedral) his English setting of the *Reproaches* has gained, rightfully, a favourite and much-loved place in the world-wide Anglican choral tradition.

'The Enigma I will not explain – its dark saying must be left unguessed' – thus wrote Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) about his orchestral work *Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma')* Op.36. The origins of the work have a charming account: on the evening of 21 October 1898, Elgar improvised a melody at the piano which he then embellished according to his perception of the personality traits of his friends. On the evening of 19 June 1899, the world heard the resulting set of variations, played by the Hallé Orchestra under the baton of Hans Richter, each variation dedicated in Elgar's words 'to my friends pictured within.'

From this touching set of personal movements comes Nimrod, a miniature that, within seconds, succeeds to encapsulate and express that world of Edwardianism, where restraint appears to be in perfect balance with feeling. The movement is dedicated to Elgar's 'dearest and truest friend' Augustus Johannes Jaeger ('Jäger' is the German for 'hunter', and the 'mighty hunter before the Lord' in the Book of Genesis is, of course, Nimrod). Beautifully described by Elgar scholar Diana McVeagh as being 'among Elgar's most impassioned utterances, a great-hearted melody', Nimrod is heard here in an arrangement by John Cameron, setting the *Lux aeterna* text that forms the communion Proper from the Mass for the Dead.

We return again to the work of Antiphon's director, Matthew Cann, whose setting of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, dates from 2012. The inscription of the dedicatee's identity of each canticle reminds us of Elgar's method of using initials only, making the dedication ultimately personal. The *Magnificat* is dedicated to Great Gran (Myrtle Mortimore), and the *Nunc dimittis* to a former member of Exeter Cathedral Choir, Phil Hobbs. A plainsong-inspired melody, rooted in the Lydian mode, sets the odd-numbered verses of text, while a fauxbourdon texture is used for the even-numbered verses. To modern ears, the raised fourth degree of the scale becomes a consistent aural 'hook' in both movements, while its descending, semitonal counterpart forms a strong contrary motion with the bass voice. Particularly effective is the close weave of the soprano and alto quartet at 'He remembering his mercy',

and the dramatic harmonic shift at the Gloria Patri.

Graham Keitch's *O sacrum convivium* was written in 2013. The piece is a tableau that unfolds with the text, making use of textures ranging from plainsong-inspired monody to sumptuous eight-part chording. The richness of the writing is further heightened by a considerable dynamic range. The text, assigned in the Roman tradition as the *Magnificat antiphon at Vespers for the Feast of Corpus Christi*, is thought to have originated with St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). The words celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist where the human concept of taking bread and wine at the mortal Last Supper is transfigured into a spiritual oneness - the 'sacred banquet' - with the life, death, flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

While not a liturgical text, Linda Gregg's *Fishing in the Keep of Silence*, set to music by Paul Carey, marries God and nature, and specifically Tomales Bay in Marin County, California, famous for its natural beauty and oyster fishing. A graduate of Yale University, Carey is a wide-ranging musician and clinician (who is published by Oxford University Press among others), whose compositions are known for their warmth of expression. This quality can certainly be heard in this work, where the stillness of the text is mirrored so carefully and effectively.

African-American spirituals have long been a source of inspiration for composers and arrangers. The themes, so often inexorably tied to the very essence of the human condition, are intensified by melodies that seem to come from the ground of our being. Married in evangelical Christian zeal, this combination is a potent force of expression that seems unaffected by time. Erik Meyer's *I want Jesus to walk with me*, from his *Three African-American Spirituals*, dates from 2011, and it sets a spiritual that comes from the cry for freedom from slavery in the 19th century. Meyer's setting treats the modality of the melody with a combination of 'blue' chromaticism and gentle rhythmic drive, and he successfully captures a Gospel spirit in this attractive arrangement.

Digby Mackworth Dolben's life was tragically cut short when he drowned at the age of nineteen. His personality struck a somewhat Brideshead-esque note: he was an intellectual Romantic who challenged social mores, a youth with indeterminate sexual orientation, and a young man of Protestant formation who developed an attraction to the extrovert outward symbol and action of the High Church Movement. Arguably it is through the encouragement of his cousin, Robert Bridges, that Dolben achieved literary attention, and, for one untouched by the wealth of adult human experience, his carol-poem *Flowers for the Altar* shows both a literary command and a deep theological reasoning. Jesus' journey from the manger to the cross (the sacrificial altar, adorned in churches with flowers) is unified by one thing: love. The words are beautifully set by Eric William Barnum, who is currently the Director of Choral Activities

at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, and who received his doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Washington in Seattle. Dating from 2009, *Flowers for the Altar* was a special commission for Timothy Campbell and the Coro Vocal Artists, Tucson.

First published in 1707, the famous hymn *When I survey the wondrous Cross* by Isaac Watts has become an established part of the tradition of Christian song across many denominations. Watts's hymnody is rooted in the evangelical passion of his Nonconformist formation, and gave rise to his writing many hundreds of hymns. His theology in this text transcends many doctrinal differences, and unites the living presence of Christians as heirs of salvation in the Passion; indeed, it is one of the most powerful texts on the Passion that places Christ's human suffering alongside our own ('Then I am dead to all the globe, and all the globe is dead to me.') Yet, the universal glory of the Passion unfolds in the final stanza, and the instruments of death and pain are themselves transported by their proximity to the Lord ('wondrous cross', 'or thorns compose so rich a crown'.) This is not an easy text to set musically, but, in the hands of Edgar Day, who was assistant organist of Worcester Cathedral from 1912-1962, the wealth of the words is amplified by a heartfelt and rich musical setting.

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1. The Lord goes up with shouts of joy

The Lord goes up with shouts of joy,
While trumpets all his triumph tell;
With him humanity is raised
Above angelic worlds to dwell. Alleluia.

He sits with God at his right hand,
Who is the Lord of everything;
The Father's glory is his own;
Christ Jesus, all creation's King. Alleluia.

And when he comes again in might,
To raise us on that splendid day,
We shall be gathered up to him,
And every tear be wiped away. Alleluia.

O God our Father, hear our prayer,
With Christ, our Lord, your only Son,
Send forth the Spirit of your love
To live in us and make us one. Alleluia.

2. A Boy and a Girl

Stretched out on the grass
a boy and a girl.
Savouring their oranges, giving their kisses
like waves exchanging foam.

Stretched out on the beach,
a boy and a girl.
Savouring their limes, giving their kisses
like clouds exchanging foam.

Stretched out underground,
a boy and a girl.
Saying nothing, never kissing,
giving silence for silence.

*Octavio Paz, 1914-1998
Translated by Muriel Rukeyser*

3. In Manus Tuas

In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.
Redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.
In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.

*Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.
For thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.
Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*

4. Lux aeterna

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
Quia pius es.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
Lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Let perpetual light shine upon them, O Lord,
With your saints for ever,
For you are merciful.*

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
Let perpetual light shine upon them.*

5. The Reproaches

O my people, what have I done to you? How have I
offended you? Answer me!

I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom,
but you led your Saviour to the cross.

Holy is God! Holy and strong! Holy immortal One,
have mercy on us.

For forty years I led you safely through the desert
I fed you with manna from heaven
and brought you to a land of plenty
but you led your Saviour to the cross

What more could I have done for you?

I planted you as my fairest vine,
but you yielded only bitterness:
When I was thirsty you gave me vinegar to drink,
and you pierced your Saviour's side with a lance.

I opened the sea before you,
but you opened my side with a spear.
I led you on your way in a pillar of cloud,
but you led me to Pilate's court.

I bore you up with manna in the desert,
but you struck me down and scourged me.
I gave you saving water from the rock,
but you gave me gall and vinegar to drink.

I gave you a royal sceptre,
but you gave me a crown of thorns.
I raised you to the height of majesty,
but you have raised me high on a cross.

6. O nata lux

O nata lux de lumine,
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare clemens supplicum
Laudes precesque sumere.

Qui carne quondam contegi
Dignatus es pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici
Tui beati corporis.

*O Light born of Light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
with loving-kindness deign to receive
suppliant praise and prayer.*

*Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
for the sake of the lost,
grant us to be members
of thy blessed body.*

7. Fauxbourdon Magnificat

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.

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 showed 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.

8. Fauxbourdon Nunc dimittis

Lord now lettest thy servant depart in peace:
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people.

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

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.

9. O sacrum convivium

O sacrum convivium!
in quo Christus sumitur:
recolitur memoria passionis eius:
mens impletur gratia:
et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur. Alleluia.

*O sacred banquet!
in which Christ is received,
the memory of his Passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future glory to us is given. Alleluia*

10. Fishing in the Keep of Silence

There is a hush now while the hills rise up
and God is going to sleep.
He trusts the ship of Heaven
to take over and proceed beautifully
as he lies dreaming in the lap of the world.
He knows the owls will guard the sweetness
of the soul in their massive keep of silence,
looking out with eyes open or clos'd over
the length of Tomales Bay that the herons
conform to, whitely broad in flight,
white and slim in standing. God, who thinks about
poetry all the time, breathes happily as He
repeats to Himself: There are fish in the net,
lots of fish this time in the net of the heart.

Linda Gregg

11. I want Jesus to walk with me

I want Jesus to walk with me;
I want Jesus to walk with me;
all along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
when my heart is almost breaking,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trouble, Lord, walk with me;
In my trouble, Lord, walk with me;
when my head is bowed in sorrow,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

12. Flowers for the Altar

Tell us, tell us, wondrous Jesu,
What has drawn Thee from above
To the manger and the altar,
Tell us Jesu.

Tell us, tell us, holy shepherds,
What at Bethlehem you saw.
'Very God of Very God
Asleep, asleep amid the straw.'

Tell us, tell us, all ye faithful,
What this morning came to pass
At the awful elevation
at the Canon of the Mass.
'Very God of Very God,
By whom the worlds were made,
In silence and helplessness
Upon the altar laid.'

Tell us, tell us, wondrous Jesu,
What has drawn thee from above
To the manger and the altar,
All the silence answers...
Love, O God of Love. Tell us.

Digby Mackworth Dolben

13. When I survey the wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts

ANTIPHON

Formed in 2011, Antiphon has made Buckfast Abbey in Devon its most regular home for concerts and recitals. Initially, Antiphon performed three concerts a year, meeting on the day of the concert to rehearse and then perform. Today, the choir's home is Exeter and concerts are given in the Cathedral as well as at Buckfast Abbey. Members of the choir comprise both full and part-time singers, many professional. Under its present Director, Matthew Cann, the choir now meets on a regular basis and enjoys performing a wide ranging repertoire of old and new music. Their reputation is well known and critically acclaimed in the West Country and beyond.

More information may be found at www.antiphon.uk

Soprano: Izzie Clarey (soloist, track 12), Carole Dobson, Tina Guthrie, Catherine Luke, Denise Kehoe (soloist, track 1), Josie Walledge (soloist, track 7), Elle Williams

Alto: Rachel Bennett, Antonia Brooke, Clare Bryden, Anna-Rose Harris, Rachel Howells, Lucy Rigby

Tenor: Jason Bomford, Michael Graham (soloist, track 8), Jonathan Harris

Bass: Freddie Crowley, David Davies, Charlie Hughes (soloist, track 7) Tony Kehoe, Richard Mitchell, Julian Sutton

MATTHEW CANN

Matthew Cann was educated at The King's School, Gloucester. Whilst there, he was a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral, progressing to head chorister under the direction of Dr John Sanders. Matthew took part in the first performance and broadcast of the Sanders *Reproaches* and as head chorister, gained the experience in singing in the famous Three Choirs Festivals that took place in Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford. His further education took him to Colchester to study piano and voice where he gained a first in piano performance. After Colchester he went to Oxford where he gained his post-graduate teaching diploma in secondary music.

Once his education was finished, he became a Lay Clerk at Norwich Cathedral, as well as teaching piano and being an examiner for the Royal School of Church Music. He has been a Lay Vicar of Exeter Cathedral Choir since September 2006 and is a piano and singing teacher at Exeter School. During his time at Gloucester, Norwich and Exeter Cathedrals he has been involved in numerous television appearances, radio broadcasts, tours and recordings. He has sung in front of Royalty and through those choirs worked with such prominent composers as the late John Taverner and Arvo Pärt. He writes mainly for unaccompanied choir and has had his anthem *In manus tuas*, (featured on this recording) broadcast on BBC Radio 3. As well as directing Antiphon, he has been a guest conductor for Buckfast Abbey Choir, The St. Peter's Singers of Exeter Cathedral and Exeter Cathedral Choir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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antiphon O MY PEOPLE

1. The Lord goes up	FRANCIS GRIER (b. 1955)	5:33
2. A Boy and a Girl	ERIC WHITACRE (b. 1970)	4:37
3. In manus tuas*	MATTHEW CANN (b. 1972)	3:12
4. Lux aeterna (arr. John Cameron)	EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)	4:03
5. The Reproaches	JOHN SANDERS (1933-2003)	10:21
6. O nata lux*	GRAHAM KEITCH (b. 1955)	4:30
7. Fauxbourdon Magnificat*	MATTHEW CANN (b. 1972)	4:30
8. Fauxbourdon Nunc dimittis*	MATTHEW CANN (b. 1972)	2:22
9. O sacrum convivium*	GRAHAM KEITCH (b. 1955)	6:17
10. Fishing in the Keep of Silence*	PAUL CAREY (b. 1964)	6:56
11. I want Jesus to walk with me*	arr. ERIK MEYER (b. 1980)	2:43
12. Flowers for the Altar*	ERIC WILLIAM BARNUM (b. 1979)	4:29
13. When I survey the wondrous Cross	EDGAR DAY (1891-1983)	5:22

* world première recording

TOTAL TIME : 64:56

Recorded at 24-bit 192KHz

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