

The Esterházy Chamber Choir



Sandy Chenery Director
Nicholas O'Neill Organ

O Sing Unto God

Choral Settings of the Psalms of David

St Michael's Church, Lewes
Saturday 28 March 2008, 7.30 pm

The Choir

Sopranos: Sarah Bridgland, Cesca Eaton, Fran du Corbier, Dilys Goggins, Leanne Holmes, Jancis Ham, Alison Jeffery, Elaine King, Judy Mackerras, Lucy Morgan-Jones, Andrea Thomas, Francoise Towler

Altos: Maria Birch*, Claire Champness, Sarah Jarvis, Denise Jones, Janet Ormerod, Joyce Philips, Grainne Sinclair, Liz Webb, Karen Zeff

Tenors: Michael Bulman, Timothy Burt, Robert Carpenter, John Carroll, John Crossman, Charles King, Thomas Whalley

Basses: John Astbury, John Burns, Chris Dixon, Derek Froud, Mike Lodge, James Pitman, Matthew Spencer, David Thomas

* Language coach

About The Esterházy Chamber Choir

The Esterházy Chamber Choir was founded in 1993 and is based in Lewes, East Sussex. Comprising up to 30 singers from a wide variety of backgrounds, the choir aims to perform to a professional standard whilst remaining firmly rooted in the fine English tradition of amateur music making. The choir's repertoire spans four centuries of sacred and secular music with an emphasis on a *cappella* singing.

New singers are welcomed. Entry is by audition, usually held following one of our regular rehearsals on a Wednesday evening. There is currently a vacancy for a tenor.

To contact the Choir

To support the choir, to audition or to enquire about hiring the choir for weddings and other special events, please email choir@esterhazy.org.uk. To prevent your email from being identified as spam, please include the word **choir** in the subject box.

The Esterhazy Chamber Choir is grateful to Sussex Community Foundation for funding provided through the Government's Grassroots Grants Programme'

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Programme

O clap your hands
Sing Joyfully
Ascendit Deus

Orlando Gibbons
William Byrd
Peter Philips

J'ayme mon Dieu

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck

Jehova, quam multi sunt hostes mei
Robert Carpenter (tenor), David Thomas (bass)

Jauchzet dem herrn

Henry Purcell
Heinrich Schutz

Psalm Prelude (Psalm 23 v 4)

Herbert Howells

Give unto the Lord
I was glad

Edward Elgar
C. H.H. Parry

INTERVAL

(Refreshments will be available during the Interval)

Lobet den Herrn, alle heiden
Gott ist mein hirt

J.S. Bach
Franz Schubert

Pastorale (psalm 23 V.1)

Percy Whitlock

Chichester Psalms

Leonard Bernstein

I Urah, hanevel, v'chinar!
II Adonai ro-I, lo ehsar
III Adonai, Adonai

Andrew Radley Counter-tenor,
Helen Arnold Harp,
Dan Gresson Percussion

The Book of Psalms is one of the most important set of texts for both the Jewish and the Christian faith. Rich in vivid poetic imagery, these texts have provided composers with inspiration over the centuries. This is only to be expected since they were originally written with the idea of musical accompaniment in mind. One has only to call to mind the lines from Psalms 149 and 150, "O sing unto the lord a new song, Praise him in the sound of the trumpet, praise him upon the strings and pipe, or Sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp", to realise that these are words to be sung. From the early years of the Christian church the singing of psalms was an important part of the services of worship and through the ages many composers have chosen to embellish this worship with musical settings of these texts which both help to illustrate the meaning and images and also engage the listener on a more spiritual level.

The psalms cover a wide variety of types - hymns or songs of praise, psalms of thanksgiving, personal laments, laments of a community or nation, to name a few. These are poetic texts but, true to their Hebrew origins, they have neither meter nor rhyme. They do, however, have a very obvious parallel structure within verses. Take for example Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills - O, whence cometh my help?" Or the opening of the lament that is Psalm 130: "Out of the deep have I called unto thee O Lord - Lord hear my prayer." It is this structure which gave rise to the chant-based settings of the psalms. Medieval chant opens each verse with a short intonation, has a long recitation which can be adapted to fit any number of words and is concluded with a short melodic ending. This also bears many similarities with the four-part Anglican psalm chanting. Both of these formulae allow all the psalms to be sung and are most commonly used in services such as morning and evening prayer where the entire psalter is recited as a cycle each month. However, many psalm texts have been set to much more sophisticated music either as a complete psalm, as in Elgar's setting of psalm 29 *Give unto the Lord*, or by selecting only a few verses of appropriate text for meditation on a particular theme as in Peter Philips' *Ascendit Deus* which sets only verse 5 of psalm 47 as motet for Ascensiontide.

Tonight's programme offers musical settings of psalm texts which span nearly 400 years. Gibbons' *O Clap your hands* is a monumental setting of psalm 47. Gibbons had been born into a musical family and from the age of 20 was employed by the Chapel Royal, one of the most distinguished positions for a Church musician of the period. In 1622 Oxford University awarded him the degree of Doctor of Music and Gibbons composed *O Clap your hands* to be performed at the ceremony. Appropriately, it displays Gibbons' mature musical style at its height, exploiting a catalogue of Tudor compositional techniques. The 8-part texture is used to build up imitative entries from a single part to dense contrapuntal writing. It is also used antiphonally to highlight words such as "sing ye praises". William Byrd was also employed by the Chapel Royal. *Sing Joyfully* is one of his later anthems and sets verses 1-4 of psalm 81 for 6 parts. Again, imitative entries building complex textures are contrasted with antiphonal effects such as the treatment of "Blow the trumpet in the new moon".

After a brief spell as a singer at St Paul's Cathedral, Peter Phillips left England to enable him to continue as a Catholic. He settled in Antwerp and worked as a prolific composer of Latin choral music and also as a renowned virginal player. *Ascendit Deus* opens appropriately with a rising triad motif followed immediately by a melismatic figure to paint the word "jublacione". The piece is characterised by this type of imitative word painting and culminates in a joyous triple-time "alleluia". Almost exact contemporaries, Phillips and Sweelinck were acquainted with each other both as performers and composers. Sweelinck frequently based keyboard works on existing vocal music. His keyboard setting of psalm 116 is based on a motet by Claude Goudimel *J'ayme mon dieu*.

As a boy Henry Purcell was a chorister at the Chapel Royal and also received keyboard lessons from Christopher Gibbons, son of Orlando. Purcell would have been very familiar with the verse anthem form which Gibbons had played a significant role in establishing. This form alternates solo sections with full choir passages and it is in this tradition that Purcell composed *Jehova quam multi sunt hostes*, setting the text of psalm 3. Purcell was a successful composer of dramatic music and he employs many of these skills in this sacred work. Particularly successful is the contrast between the opening of verse 4 "Voce mea ad Jehovam clamanti – I did call upon the Lord with my voice" and verse 5 "Ego cubui et dormivi – I laid me down and slept".

Heinrich Schutz studied in Venice with Gabrieli and this unique combination of germanic harmonic and melodic invention coupled with the polychoral techniques developed at St Mark's gives Schutz a very distinctive voice. *Jauchzet dem Herren* sets the text of psalm 100 and extensively employs antiphonal techniques with each musical phrase being introduced by choir 1 and echoed by choir 2.

Herbert Howells wrote his first set of *Psalm Preludes* between 1915 and 1916. In some ways these early works illustrate the influence of his teacher, Charles Stanford, with whom he had studied, at the Royal College of Music in London, but they also bear the hallmarks of his individuality - a reflective style full of harmonic and tonal colour, homophonic and contrapuntal contrasts, the use of rhythm to generate momentum at one moment and to create suspense at another, the subtle use of melodic lines which emerge from the texture, and all within a carefully defined structure.

Edward Elgar's father was the organist of St George's Catholic Church in Worcester and Elgar was closely associated with the music at the this church in his early years. Indeed for a brief time he succeeded his father in 1885. *Give unto the Lord* was composed in 1914 for the Sons of Clergy Festival at St Paul's Cathedral. It is dedicated to Sir George Martin, who had succeeded Stainer as organist at St Paul's in 1888. The powerful opening is apt for the occasion, mounting in triumph at the words 'The God of glory thundereth'. The cedars are dramatically broken, the wilderness shaken and the forests stripped bare, before the meditative tranquillity of the Temple and the following return to the majesty of the opening. The psalm ends with the serenity of the blessing of peace.

Parry taught at the Royal College of Music and was Professor of Music at Oxford from 1900 – 1908. *I was glad* was composed for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902 and has been sung at every coronation since at the arrival of the monarch. Appropriately, the fanfare-like introduction leads to an emphatic entry by the choir. Later there is a double choir exchange, a brief foray to G flat major for “O pray for the peace of Jerusalem”, and a final climactic build to the words “plenteousness within thy palaces”

Bach wrote six motets. They are unusual for the Lutheran liturgy and may have been composed for specific occasions such as funerals where the musical forces would have been augmented. The origins of *Lobet den Herrn* are uncertain. It is the only motet which takes its texts from the psalms, it is also the only one scored for 4 parts and continuo. The piece falls into 3 main sections. It opens with a double fugue where two contrapuntal motifs are worked in dense counterpoint, a more homophonic middle section is then followed by a triple-time imitative “alleluia”.

Schubert resumed work on sacred music in 1818, after a break of some four years, following the conclusion of his C major Mass and a setting in German of the *Stabat Mater*. It was during this period that he moved from his prodigious and apparently effortless youthful styles of work to a more mature and personal form of expression – possibly affected by contracting the condition that was to lead to his tragically early delirium and death. A setting of Psalm 42, in Hebrew, was commissioned from him by the Cantor, Salomon Selzer, for performance at the Seitenstetengasse synagogue in Vienna. The synagogue had been founded two years earlier with the explicit intention of diffusing the historic anti-semitism of the city and Selzer had already impressed Schubert with his performance of *Der Wanderer*. This setting of Psalm 23 *Gott ist mein hirt* dates from the same period, during which Schubert was working on his Mass in A flat.

Percy Whitlock tends to be associated more with the 'concert organ' repertoire than religiously inspired works.. He was a very distinguished recitalist, who spent the last fourteen years of his short life as borough organist at Bournemouth, but he was also much appreciated as a composer of approachable music for the organ. This *Pastorale* comes from a collection of Seven Sketches on verses from the psalms and takes for its subject the first verse of psalm 23.

Leonard Bernstein's popular *Chichester Psalms* were commissioned by Chichester Cathedral for the 1965 Southern Cathedrals Festival, where the work was given its première by the three cathedral choirs of Chichester, Winchester and Salisbury. The work sets a selection of psalms in their original Hebrew (a challenge for any choir) accompanied by organ, harp and percussion. The music is an unusual juxtaposition of styles ranging from the discordant and almost barbaric to some peaceful and lyrical melodies, most notably in the alto solo of the second movement and the gently flowing third movement.

Many thanks to Sandy Chenery for the Programme Notes

Texts and Translations

O clap your hands

O clap your hands together, all ye people
O sing unto God with the voice of melody
For the Lord is high and to be feared for the voice of melody
He is the great King upon all the earth, of all the earth
He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet
He shall choose out an heritage for us,
even the worship of Jacob, whom he loved
God is gone up with a merry noise and the
Lord with the sound of the trumpet
O sing praises unto our God
O sing praises unto the Lord our King
For God is the King of all the earth
sing ye praises with the understanding
God reigneth over the heathen
God sitteth up on his holy seat
For God which is highly exalted, doth defend the earth as it were with a shield
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end
Amen Psalm 47

Sing Joyfully

Sing joyfully to God our strength; sing loud unto the God of Jacob!
Take the song, bring forth the timbrel, the pleasant harp, and the viol.
Blow the trumpet in the new moon, even in the time appointed, and at our feast day.
For this is a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. Psalm 81 vv 1-4

Ascendit Deus

*Ascendit Deus in jubilatione, et Dominus in
voce tubae. Alleluja.
Dominus in coelo paravit sedem suam.
Alleluja.*

God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord
with the sound of trumpet. Alleluia.
The Lord hath prepared his throne in
heaven. Alleluia.

Psalm 47, v.5

Jehova, quam multi sunt hostes mei

1. Chorus

*Jehova, quam multi sunt hostes mei!
Quam multi insurgunt contra me.
Quam multi dicunt de anima mea
Non est ulla salus isti in Deo plane.*

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.
Many there be which say of my soul,
"There is no help for him in God".

2. Tenor solo

*At tu, Jehova, clypeus es circa me.
Gloria mea, et extollens caput meum.*

But thou, O lord, art a shield for me;
my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

3. Chorus

*Voce mea ad Jehovam clamanti, respondit
mihi e monte sanctitatis suæ maximae.
Ego cubui et dormivi; ego expergefeci me;
et dormivi, qui a Jehova sustentat me.*

I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.
I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

4. Bass solo

*Non timebo, a myriadibus populi, quas
circum disposuerint metatores contra me.
Surge Jehova, fac salvum me Deus mi.
qui percussisti omnes inimicos meos
maxilliam, dentes improborum confregisti.*

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me.
Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

5. Chorus

*Jehova est salus, super populum tuum,
sit benedictio tua maxime.*

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord,
thy blessing is upon thy people.

Psalm 3

Jauchzet dem Herrn

*Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt.
Dienet dem Herrn mit Freuden: kommt vor
sein Angesicht mit Frohlocken.
Erkennt, dass der Herr Gott ist: er hat uns
gemacht, und nicht wir selbst, zu seinem
Volk und zu Schafen seiner Weide.
Gehet zu seinen Toren ein mit Danken: zu
seinen Vorhöfen mit Loben. Danket ihm,
lobet seinen Namen.
Denn der Herr ist freundlich und seine
Gnade währet ewig und seine Wahrheit
für und für.*

O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to

Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn und auch dem heiligen Geiste; wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar, und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen.

the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen. Psalm 100

Give unto the Lord

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty,
Give unto the Lord glory and strength,
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name;
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Yea, the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire;
Yea, the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness,
And strippeth the forests bare.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters:
The God of glory thundereth;
It is the Lord that ruleth the sea.

In His temple doth every one speak of His glory.
[Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.]

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation;
The voice of the Lord is full of majesty;
The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars,
Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

The Lord sitteth above the water-flood;
And the Lord remaineth a King for ever;

The Lord shall give strength unto His people;
The Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Psalm 29

I was glad

I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is builded as a city that is at unity with itself.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces.

Psalm 122 vv1-3, 6, 7