

PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS, TRANSLATIONS

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart famously described the organ as the “King of Instruments” due to its power, versatility, and array of timbres. After so many years with Elizabeth II on the English throne, it seemed fitting to change the nickname to the QUEEN of Instruments for our program today, which features iconic choral works with organ. This concert program brings together a range of composers and works, spanning over a century of (mostly) Anglican choral music, showcasing the depth and variety of the English choral tradition.

Sir David Willcocks was an English choral conductor, organist, and composer who lived from 1919 to 2015. He started his chorister training at Westminster Abbey and later became the Director of Music at King’s College, Cambridge. He was widely regarded as one of the leading figures in choral music, and his works were celebrated for their beauty, craftsmanship, and accessibility. One of his best-known pieces is his setting of **Psalm 150**, which he composed for the Toronto Children’s Choir. Willcocks weaves a dialogue between the organ and the voices. The work is a joyful and exuberant celebration of praise and thanksgiving, featuring soaring melodies, rich harmonies, and lively rhythms.

English and French choral music has a shared history and stylistic cross-pollination dating back to the 15th Century. **Gabriel Fauré** was a French composer who lived from 1845 to 1924. He was known for his elegant melodies, refined harmonies, and delicate textures, which reflected the style of French choral music of the day. Among his earliest choral works, the **Cantique de Jean Racine** won first prize in composition in 1865, just at the end of Fauré’s years at the Niedermeyer School. While “Cantique” could be translated “Song”, the English “Canticle” accurately evokes the prayer of supplication that is the essence of the work. It has become a staple of the choral repertoire and is frequently performed in churches and concert halls around the world.

Hubert Parry was an English composer and music historian who lived from 1848 to 1918. He was one of the most significant figures in British music of his time, and he helped to establish the English choral tradition as a major force in classical music. One of his most famous works is **I Was Glad**, a coronation anthem that he composed in 1902 for the coronation of King Edward VII. The piece is a grand and majestic celebration of royal power and divine authority, featuring sweeping melodies, majestic harmonies, and a powerful organ accompaniment. It has become one of the most iconic pieces of British choral music, and it is still performed at major state occasions, including coronations and royal weddings.

Benjamin Britten was a British composer, conductor, and pianist who lived from 1913 to 1976. He was one of the most significant figures in 20th-century classical music, known for his eclectic style, his incorporation of folk music, and his intense personal expression. One of his most notable works is **Rejoice in the Lamb**, a cantata for choir and organ, composed in 1943. The piece is based on a poem by the 18th-century writer Christopher Smart and celebrates the glory of God through the voices of various animals and objects, such as cats, mice, flowers, and musical instruments. The music is lively and colorful, featuring dissonant harmonies and unusual rhythms, which are meant to convey the exuberance and joy of the text. *Rejoice in the Lamb* is regarded as one of Britten's most inventive and original compositions, and it has become a favorite of choirs and audiences worldwide.

Another significant work by Britten is his **Missa Brevis**, a short Mass for treble choir and organ, written in 1959. The piece is in five movements, following the traditional structure of the Latin Mass but with a modern twist. Britten employs a variety of textures and techniques to create a powerful emotional impact, from the shimmering harmonies of the Kyrie to the dramatic contrasts of the Gloria and the intricate counterpoint of the Credo. The Agnus Dei, in particular, is notable for its poignant and haunting melody, which has become one of Britten's most recognizable themes.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a British composer and conductor who lived from 1875 to 1912. A composer of Afro-Caribbean heritage, he was one of the most prominent black composers of his time. **Jubilate Deo**, a joyful and uplifting choral piece written in 1899 is based on Psalm 100 and features soaring melodies, vibrant rhythms, and lush harmonies.

Described as 'poignant, ambivalent, quietly devastating music' in the New York Times, **Kerensa Briggs** is an award-winning composer specializing in choral music. Her music has been performed internationally at venues including St Paul's Cathedral and the Sistine Chapel, and is regularly broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and BBC Radio Scotland by ensembles such as The Tallis Scholars and the BBC Singers. **Exodus III** is a haunting and atmospheric exploration of the theme of exile. The music is characterized by its intricate harmonies, shifting rhythms, and two soloists: a baritone singing the part of Moses, and a treble for the voice of God.

Herbert Howells was an English composer and organist who lived from 1892 to 1983. He was known for his rich and complex harmonies, his use of modal melodies, and his deeply expressive style. One of his most famous works is **Like as a Hart**, a setting of Psalm 42 for choir and organ, which he composed in 1941. The piece is a poignant meditation on the longing for God's presence, featuring lush harmonies, soaring vocal lines, and a deeply expressive organ accompaniment. It has become one of the most beloved pieces of English choral music.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was an English composer who lived from 1872 to 1958. He was a central figure in the English nationalist movement in music in the early 20th century and was known for his use of folk music and modal harmonies. His setting of the **Old Hundredth Psalm Tune**, a traditional hymn tune that dates back to the 16th century, is stately, grand, and one of the most often performed choral works still to this day.

John Rutter is a contemporary English composer, conductor, and arranger who is known for his beautiful and accessible choral music. Rutter's music is beloved by choral enthusiasts around the world. **The Lord Bless You and Keep You** is a choral benediction that he composed in 1981. The piece is a gentle and heartfelt benediction, featuring a simple melody, warm harmonies, and a gentle organ accompaniment. It is often performed at weddings, funerals, and other special occasions.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

The text of Gabriel Fauré's "Cantique de Jean Racine" is a French poem written by Jean Racine in 1689. Here is the original French text, followed by an English translation:

French:

Verbe égal au Très-Haut, notre unique espérance,
Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux;
De la paisible nuit nous rompons le silence,
Divin sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux!
Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce puissante,
Que tout l'enfer fuie au son de ta voix;
Dissipe le sommeil d'une âme languissante,
Qui la conduit à l'oubli de tes lois!
Ô Christ, sois favorable à ce peuple fidèle
Pour te bénir maintenant rassemblé;
Reçois les chants qu'il offre à ta gloire immortelle,
Et de tes dons qu'il retourne comblé!

English:

Word equal to the Most High, our sole hope,
Eternal day of earth and heavens,
We break the peaceful silence of night,
Divine Savior, cast your eyes upon us!
Pour upon us the fire of your powerful grace,

That all hell may flee at the sound of your voice;
Dispel the slumber of a languishing soul
That leads it to forget your laws!
O Christ, be favorable to this faithful people
Now gathered here to bless you;
Receive the songs they offer to your immortal glory,
And may they return enriched by your gifts!

Britten's Rejoice in the Lamb
Text by Christopher Smart

Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues;
Give the glory to the Lord,
And the Lamb.
Nations, and languages,
And every Creature
In which is the breath of Life.
Let man and beast appear before him,
And magnify his name together.

Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter,
Bind a leopard to the altar
And consecrate his spear to the Lord.

Let Ishmail dedicate a tyger,
And give praise for the liberty
In which the Lord has let him at large.

Let Balaam appear with an ass,
And bless the Lord his people
And his creatures for a reward eternal.

Let Daniel come forth with a lion,
And praise God with all his might
Through faith in Christ Jesus.

Let Ithamar minister with a chamois,
And bless the name of Him
That cloatheth the naked.

Let Jakim with the satyr
Bless God in the dance,
Dance, dance, dance.

Let David bless with the bear
The beginning of victory to the Lord,
To the Lord the perfection of excellence.

Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah for the heart of God,
And from the hand of the artist inimitable,
And from the echo of the heavenly harp
In sweetness magnificent and mighty.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

For I will consider my cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the living God.
Duly and daily serving him.

For at the first glance
Of the glory of God in the East
He worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body
Seven times round with elegant quickness.
For he knows that God is his saviour.
For God has bless'd him
In the variety of his movements.
For there is nothing sweeter
Than his peace when at rest.

For I am possessed of a cat,
Surpassing in beauty,
From whom I take occasion
To bless Almighty God.

For the Mouse is a creature
Of great personal valour.
For this is a true case--
Cat takes female mouse,
Male mouse will not depart,
but stands threat'ning and daring.
If you will let her go,
I will engage you,

As prodigious a creature as you are.
For the Mouse is a creature
Of great personal valour.
For the Mouse is of
An hospitable disposition.

For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers have their angels,
Even the words of God's creation.
For the flower glorifies God
And the root parries the adversary.
For there is a language of flowers.
For the flowers are peculiarly
The poetry of Christ.

For I am under the same accusation
With my Savior,
For they said,
He is besides himself.
For the officers of the peace
Are at variance with me,
And the watchman smites me
With his staff.
For the silly fellow, silly fellow,
Is against me,
And belongeth neither to me
Nor to my family.
For I am in twelve hardships,
But he that was born of a virgin
Shall deliver me out of all,
Shall deliver me out of all.

For H is a spirit
And therefore he is God.
For K is king
And therefore he is God.
For L is love
And therefore he is God.
For M is musick
And therefore he is God.
And therefore he is God.

For the instruments are by their rhimes,
For the shawm rhimes are lawn fawn and the like.
For the shawm rhimes are moon boon and the like.
For the harp rhimes are sing ring and the like.
For the harp rhimes are ring string and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are bell well and the like.
For the cymbal rhimes are toll soul and the like.
For the flute rhimes are tooth youth and the like.
For the flute rhimes are suit mute and the like.
For the bassoon rhimes are pass class and the like.
For the dulcimer rhimes are grace place and the like.
For the clarinet rhimes are clean seen and the like.
For the trumpet rhimes are sound bound and the like.

For the trumpet of God is a blessed intelligence
And so are all the instruments in Heav'n.
For God the Father Almighty plays upon the harp
Of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases
And the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man
By a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.

Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah for the heart of God,
And from the hand of the artist inimitable,
And from the echo of the heavenly harp
In sweetness magnificent and mighty.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Britten's Missa Brevis

KYRIE

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Et in terra pax

hominibus bonæ voluntatis.

Laudamus te; benedicimus te; adoramus te; glorificamus te.

Gratias agimus tibi

propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,

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 nostram.

Qui sedes ad dextram Patris,

O miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,

tu solus Dominus,

tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.

Cum Sancto Spiritu

in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory be to God in the highest.

And in earth peace

to men of good will.

We praise Thee; we bless Thee;

we worship Thee; we glorify Thee.

We give thanks to Thee

for Thy great glory.

O Lord God, Heavenly King,

God the Father Almighty.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.

Lord God, Lamb of God,

Son of the Father.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy,

thou only art the Lord,

thou only art the most high, Jesus Christ.

Together with the Holy Ghost

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

SANCTUS and BENEDICTUS

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

*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.*

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

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

AGNUS DEI

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

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