

THE CHOIR OF



ST JOHN'S  
CAMBRIDGE

LOCUS ISTE  
NETHSINGHA



# LOCUS ISTE

1	<b>Faire is the heaven</b>	William Harris (1883-1973)	[6.06]
2	<b>Sing my soul, His wondrous love</b>	Ned Rorem (b. 1923)	[2.45]
3	<b>God is gone up</b>	Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)	[4.39]
4	<b>Hymn to the Virgin</b>	Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)	[4.10]
5	<b>Justorum animae</b>	Charles V. Stanford (1852-1924)	[3.56]
6	<b>The Lamb</b>	John Tavener (1944-2013)	[4.13]
7	<b>Seek him that maketh the seven stars</b>	Jonathan Dove (b. 1959)	[6.54]
8	<b>Salve Regina</b>	Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	[4.40]
9	<b>Jesu, grant me this, I pray*</b>	Christopher Robinson (b. 1936)	[3.07]
10	<b>O vos omnes*</b>	Alex Woolf (b. 1995)	[6.21]
11	<b>Jubilate in C</b>	Benjamin Britten	[2.32]
12	<b>Locus iste</b>	Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)	[3.41]
13	<b>Adam lay ibounden*</b>	Giles Swayne (b.1946)	[5.14]
14	<b>Cherubic Hymn</b>	Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)	[5.10]
15	<b>Blest pair of sirens</b>	Hubert Parry (1848-1918)	[10.22]
	Total timings:		[73.51]

\* World Premiere Recording

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE  
GLEN DEMPSEY ORGAN  
\* LAURA VAN DER HEIJDEN CELLO  
ANDREW NETHSINGHA DIRECTOR

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## CONDUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

*Locus iste a Deo factus est*

This album celebrates the 150th anniversary of the consecration of St John's College Chapel. In choosing the repertoire I have selected 15 pieces - one from each of the ten-year periods since the consecration. The recording includes an anthem by one of my distinguished predecessors, a motet by one of our recent student composers and the cello-playing of a current undergraduate, surely one of the finest musicians of her generation. By happy coincidence this is also the choir's 100th disc, a milestone in a long journey since George Guest's iconic first recording 'Hear my prayer' for Argo was released in 1959. That was also the year in which George and Nan were married. Nan's Memorial Evensong took place just a few weeks before this disc was recorded. I would like to dedicate this recording to the memory of Nan Guest (1930-2018), with thanks for the six decades of support she gave to the College Choir. Without her, George Guest could not have achieved the miracles that he did.

In the 32 years since I first made music in this Chapel, I have gradually come to think of it

as a perfect place for liturgical choral singing. Former chorister and choral scholar Sir Simon Keenlyside has pointed out that one is better able to hear one's own singing here than in many other choral settings; this is advantageous for good vocal technique. Martin Cullingford once wrote of the way in which, as a member of the congregation, the Chapel 'seems to enfold and embrace you.' The eminent acoustician, Sir Harold Marshall, has explained to me that the sense of an enveloping acoustic comes from lateral sound not from frontal sound; hence the aural effect created by the shape of our Chapel. The softest singing always projects, loud music from the choir stalls can be heard clearly at any tempo. The narrow walls create an intimacy of communication between singer and listener, the height of the ceiling prevents the sound from feeling boxed-in, the shape of the apse imparts a bloom to the sonority, and the Ante-Chapel offers resonance and space. It seems that George Gilbert Scott certainly understood acoustics! However Frank Salmon, in his excellent essay on the Chapel architecture, explains that the choice of a wooden ceiling came initially more from considerations of colour than from acoustical thinking, so perhaps there was an element of good fortune.

The architecture and materials of the *Concertgebouw* in Amsterdam (my favourite concert hall!) impart a warmth and glow to the sound of its orchestra; I believe that St John's College Chapel, built 19 years earlier, has a not dissimilar effect on choral singing. Scott's architecture has had a profound influence on the sound and character of the choir here; we now look forward to embarking on the next hundred albums in this place!

Andrew Nethsingha

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## PROGRAMME NOTES

This anniversary celebration of music from St John's opens with *Faire is the Heaven* (1925), Sir William Harris's masterpiece and one of the best-loved works in the Anglican repertoire. At various points in his career, Harris held appointments in London, Lichfield and Oxford. However, he is usually remembered today for the nearly thirty years he spent as Director of Music of St George's Chapel, Windsor, when he served as piano teacher to the young princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret. *Faire is the Heaven* predates Harris's arrival in Windsor by some eight years, but like a later

anthem, *Bring us, O Lord God*, it is set in D flat major for double choir without accompaniment. The words are taken from Edmund Spenser's *An Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*, first published in 1596. Harris selected lines from three stanzas of a poem over forty stanzas in length. The editing is subtle – so much so that a casual reader might not realise lines have been omitted – and a structure is created that lends itself to ternary treatment: Spenser's 'Cherubins' and 'Seraphins' are assigned a faster section in the middle, and Harris engineers a memorable return to the home key for the final section of the anthem.

Writing in *The New Yorker*, Alex Ross labelled Ned Rorem 'an elegant anomaly among American composers'. Rorem's early career might suggest the exact opposite. After studies in the United States with, among others, Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, he set off, like so many American composers before him, for France. However, a journey scheduled to last three months was extended to nine years, and in France Rorem developed an 'austerely lyrical Franco-American style' (Ross) that back home seemed anomalous or, at least, dated – an impression compounded no doubt by Rorem's very long career. *Sing, my soul,*

*his wondrous love* was composed in the South of France in the summer of 1955, but the music, a largely homophonic setting of an 1841 hymn from the Protestant Episcopal Church, is more likely to evoke memories of the Quaker services Rorem attended as a child. Like many hymn-tunes, *Sing, my soul* falls into rigorously observed two-bar phrases. Rorem's artistry can be observed in his subtle reharmonisations of a hymn tune that is itself developed, with individual notes frequently displaced by an octave.

The words of *God is gone up* are taken from the *Preparatory Meditations* of Edward Taylor, a Leicestershire-born poet who emigrated to the United States in 1668 and ended up spending almost sixty years as physician and pastor of a remote community in Massachusetts. Taylor forbade publication of his poetry, which came to light only in 1937. Finzi appears to have been particularly attracted to the *Meditations*: both *God is gone up* (1951) and an earlier anthem *My lovely one* (1946) draw on this collection. In *God is gone up*, Finzi, a highly discerning reader of poetry, used two of the seven stanzas of Taylor's 'Twentieth Meditation'. The chosen words are set in an ABA form, with the outer

sections dominated by fanfare-like figures in both voices and organ; the middle section, by way of contrast, is expressive in tone. Curiously, in Taylor's poem the reflective stanza precedes the hymn of praise; the ternary structure of the anthem is thus entirely Finzi's invention. The composer translates Taylor's scrupulously observed ten-syllable lines into musical prose of striking fluidity: the music fluctuates frequently between duple, triple, sometimes even quintuple metres. *God is gone up* was written for the St Cecilia's Day Service at St Sepulchre-Without-Newgate in London. The text, with its frequent references to music, was doubtless chosen with both occasion and venue in mind: famously, St Sepulchre's contains a Musicians' Chapel.

The earliest version of Benjamin Britten's *Hymn to the Virgin* was composed on 9 July 1930, while the composer was still a schoolboy. The text, which dates from about 1300, was taken from Quiller-Couch's *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250–1900*, which Britten had received as a school prize, and the anthem was apparently composed while he was confined to bed in the school sanatorium. Denied manuscript paper during his illness, Britten wrote the original on writing

paper. *Hymn to the Virgin* was revised before the first performance in 1931, in which Britten's mother sang alto solo; later, in 1934, it was transposed down a semitone for publication. Britten divides his singers into two groups: the main body of the choir sings mostly in English while a smaller group (either a semi-chorus or a solo quartet, according to the composer) interjects shorter phrases in Latin. The first two stanzas are set to similar music; in the third stanza Britten initially abandons the call-and-response pattern of the opening pages, though antiphony is restored towards the end. To modern eyes and ears, the *Hymn* appears to be in A minor; however, individual lines and cadences, with their recurrent references to the Phrygian mode, suggest pre-tonal practices. Britten retained a soft spot for this youthful work, and it was one of two pieces performed at his funeral on 7 December 1976.

'Justorum animae' is one of Stanford's *Three Latin Motets*, Op. 38. The motets were probably composed in the late 1880s; at least, records survive of 'Justorum animae' having been performed at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1888 and 1892. Publication, however, was delayed until 1905, when the collection appeared

with a dedication to Alan Gray, Stanford's successor as organist of Trinity College. Stanford took the text, a reflection on the fate of the departed, from the third chapter of the Book of Wisdom. Like the other two motets of Op. 38, 'Justorum animae' is in a type of ternary form. However, the reprise brings back the opening music over sustained bass notes, and the material is also decorated with a simple but strikingly effective descant. The middle section uses related melodic patterns, but moves into the minor to reflect the words 'torment' and 'malice'.

Few pieces of church music from the last half-century have been performed as widely and as frequently as John Tavener's *The Lamb*, a setting of one of the best-loved poems from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1776). As well as appearing on countless church music-lists, *The Lamb* was performed at the Millennium Dome's opening ceremony on 31 December 1999; it featured as background music to Paolo Sorrentino's film *La grande bellezza* (perhaps helping it win the Best Foreign Language Film award at the 2014 Academy Awards); it has even been a set work on an A Level syllabus. *The Lamb's* appeal surely lies in its simplicity: much of the music

is in one or two parts, and when all four voice parts sing together, they move in rhythmic unison. Yet this apparent simplicity masks some ingenious constructivist principles that hint at Tavener's early modernist leanings. Many of the work's duets involve parts moving in contrary motion, and pairs of lines are often set as original and retrograde versions of the same pitch-row. According to the composer, *The Lamb* 'came to me fully grown and was written in an afternoon [in 1982] and dedicated to my nephew Simon for his 3rd birthday'.

An alumnus of the University of Cambridge – he studied composition with Robin Holloway – Jonathan Dove has written a wide range of music, including more than a dozen operas. His particular affinity for choral music has long been noted, and he is now among the most frequently performed of living English composers. *Seek him that maketh the seven stars* (1995) was written for the annual service of the Friends of the Royal Academy of Arts in St James's, Piccadilly. Dove chose the text, from Amos and the Book of Psalms, because he thought the words particularly appropriate for artists. As he noted, the setting starts with 'a musical image of the night sky, a repeated organ motif of twinkling stars that sets the choir

wondering who made them'. Throughout the anthem, the singers return to the words 'Seek him', starting in 'devotional longing', as Dove expressed it, but 'eventually released into a joyful dance, finally coming to rest in serenity'.

Francis Poulenc, though brought up a Catholic, lost his faith as he entered adulthood. He returned to the Church in 1936, following a pilgrimage to the Black Virgin of Rocamadour; this was linked to the death of Pierre-Octave Ferroud, a fellow composer who was decapitated in a motoring accident. Poulenc described himself as 'religious by deepest instinct and by heredity'; others, according to music critic Claude Rostrand, saw in him a divided personality – half monk, half delinquent ('le moine et le voyou'). Rostrand's comments were stimulated by what he saw as Poulenc's tendency to flip between frivolous neoclassical idioms and more deeply engaged writing. Like most of Poulenc's music for unaccompanied choir, *Salve regina* springs from the period of renewed faith that followed the crisis of 1936. It dates from 1941, a dark time for both France and Poulenc who, as a homosexual with sympathies for banned composers, was viewed with suspicion by the Nazis. Though the anthem's mood suggests

the 'monk', Poulenc's music owes much to neoclassicism: most phrases consist of isolated blocks of sound, inspired almost certainly by the cellular approach pioneered in works like Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920).

Christopher Robinson has enjoyed a distinguished career in the service of the Anglican church, holding positions at Worcester Cathedral, St George's Chapel, Windsor and, until his retirement in 2003, St John's College, Cambridge. *Jesu, grant me this, I pray* was written in memory of John Porter, Assistant Organist at Windsor; it was composed some months after Porter's tragically early death in 1985. The text, a translation by Sir Henry Williams Baker of a seventeenth-century Latin text, was originally published in the first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861), edited by Baker. The words are frequently sung to Orlando Gibbons's Song 13. Robinson's version makes no explicit reference to this melody, though it retains the essentially strophic (and homophonic) approach one might expect of a hymn-based anthem. That said, stanzas flow easily one into the next, with the transitions eased by Robinson's characteristically sensitive harmonies and by a

series of variants of the three-note motif announced by the trebles at the very start of the anthem.

In recent years Alex Woolf has been recognized as a rising star: he won the BBC Composer of the Year in 2012 and came to wider media attention in 2018 with his 'NHS Symphony'. He has also written for Sir James Galway and the London Symphony Orchestra. Woolf studied at St John's, graduating in 2016 with a double First. While at College he sang in St John's Voices, and he has retained a strong interest in choral music, with some twenty works for this genre in his catalogue. *O vos omnes* (2016) was written for the Choir of St John's, and the text can be traced back to the Book of Lamentations, where it appears as part of a lament for the destruction of Jerusalem. It is usually encountered today in the context of the Tenebrae Responsories for Holy Saturday. The text has been set many times, perhaps most famously by Vittoria (twice) and Gesualdo. Woolf's scoring of the motet, for men's voices only, captures some of the darkness associated with the text's history. The music contrasts passages of imitation with, at times, knotty harmonic writing. Particularly striking, however, is Woolf's decision to preserve pure F major harmony for

the words 'Si est dolor'; rarely can pain have been expressed so cogently through pure harmony.

In July 1934 Benjamin Britten, then twenty years old, composed a *Te deum* in C major for the choir of St Mark's, North Audley Street, London. He followed it later the same year with a *Jubilate* in E flat, thereby completing the traditional pairing of Anglican canticles. However, the latter was never released – it was first published only after the composer's death, in 1984 – so, to most of his contemporaries, Britten's C major *Te deum* seemed incomplete. Almost three decades later, at the request of the Duke of Edinburgh, Britten made good his 'omission', producing the *Jubilate* in C major heard here. Though composed for St George's Chapel, Windsor, the canticle was first performed in Leeds Parish Church in October 1961. The sparseness of texture is typical of Britten's later style. Voice parts are often in pairs – with hints of heterophony (divergent versions of the same melody), a feature of the eastern music Britten encountered during this period. Though the music's tone is generally buoyant, some of the word-setting is reminiscent of Stravinsky's 'alienating' practices, found most notably in the *Symphony of Psalms*. 'Be thankful unto him', for example,

is set not as a hymn of praise, but in a whisper over a long organ chord. History doesn't record the Duke's reaction.

Bruckner's *Locus iste*, one of the most celebrated of nineteenth-century motets, was composed in 1869 to mark the opening of the Votive Chapel in the new Cathedral of Linz, where Bruckner had served as Cathedral Organist from 1855 to 1868. It is particularly appropriate to this disc, as the new Chapel of St John's College, Cambridge was dedicated in the same year, 1869. The text is part of the proper for a *Kirchweih* (a mass of 'church dedication'). The music, a succinct illustration of Bruckner's harmonic mastery, hints at the composer's uncertain relationship with the Cecilians, who argued for a return to the purity of Gregorian chant. Bruckner's motet has extended passages of diatonic writing that, in terms of resources, seem not very different from Cecilian music; however, *Locus iste* has an emotive power that far transcends the Cecilians' bloodless compositions. It derives much of its effect from rising sequential patterns that nod towards Wagnerian practice. As with much of Bruckner's music, silence plays a vital role: the final phrase of the motet is preceded by a five-beat pause that, to

be fully effective, requires an acoustic such as that of Linz Cathedral – or, indeed, St John's College Chapel.

Once described by *The Times* as 'the most accomplished choral composer in Britain', Giles Swayne, as befits a student of Olivier Messiaen and Harrison Birtwistle, has been an innovator in many genres. His *Cry* combined voices and electronics; its companion-piece *Havoc* features a 'continuo group' of celesta, marimba, Baroque harp and theorbo. Although Swayne clearly delights in experimentation, he has always been determined to communicate with his audiences. Messiaen, he once argued, was 'one of the few post-war composers who [...] succeeded in moulding a living musical identity out of the grey language of post-serial atonality'. In his setting of the traditional text, 'Adam lay ybounden', Swayne reveals a compositional voice that is both innovative and urgent. The work is scored for two choirs, a solo cello that often broods in its lowest registers, a bass soloist and a solo treble who makes a cameo appearance towards the end. In fact, this was not the first piece by Swayne to pair voices and cello: the reworked version of *Stabat mater* is similarly scored, and *The silent land* is set for cello and forty-part choir. In

*Adam lay ibounden* the voices change approach frequently, sometimes singing lyrically, sometimes in a whisper, sometimes percussively – evoking perhaps the West African music that was so influential on Swayne's development; at times, they seem to hover on the verge of chaos. *Adam lay ibounden* was commissioned by Andrew Nethsingha and first performed at the 2009 Advent Service at St John's College.

'Hymn to the Cherubim' is probably the most frequently performed section of Rachmaninov's *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, Op. 31, a sequence of twenty movements. 'St John Chrysostom' is the title given in the Russian Orthodox Church to the Eucharist-like liturgy used on weekdays and on most Sundays. 'Not for a long time have I written anything with such pleasure', Rachmaninov commented on completing the work. *The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* was performed shortly afterwards, in November 1910. It thus predates by some five years the composer's only other significant piece of liturgical music, the *Vespers*, Op. 37. Rachmaninov had long been interested in Russian Orthodox music, and during his teens had even attended classes in Moscow with Stepan Smolenski, one of the leading figures in the field. Though the *Liturgy* contains no chant

material, the simplicity of the harmony – the score of the 'Hymn' contains only a handful of accidentals – reflects this interest. Not everyone approved. Alexander Kastalsky, Director of the Moscow Synodal Choir, whom Rachmaninov had consulted during composition of the work, objected to certain 'subjective' elements in the music and, remarkably, performance in church was banned owing to the work's 'spirit of modernism'.

The CD concludes with Parry's *Blest pair of sirens*, commissioned to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and dedicated to the members of the Bach Choir and their conductor Charles Villiers Stanford. It was first performed in London's St James's Hall and, according to Parry, was received 'quite uproariously'. The text is taken from John Milton's ode *At a solemn music*, in which the poet describes the rapture experienced on listening to sacred music. The ode will have been familiar to many musicians from Handel's *Samson*, where four lines are used (in slightly varied form) for the aria 'Let the bright Seraphim'. Parry's setting is constructed in a form reminiscent of a Baroque concerto, with 'orchestral ritornellos' framing contrasted vocal sections. The sense of continuity provided by this form was perhaps

prompted by Milton's first sentence, which runs to no fewer than twenty-four lines. The opening of *Blest pair of sirens* refers – consciously or otherwise – to the first bars of Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* (the syncopated descending bass-line is the most obvious clue). However, Parry's elegant part-writing, above all in the eight-part sections, suggests close study of Brahms's music, notably the *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*, Op. 109. Parry, like his younger contemporary Elgar, forged a distinctively English amalgam from the music of the two German masters, his style informed by exposure to Stanford's oeuvre and other English sacred music. A pivotal figure in the English Musical Renaissance – he devoted much of his energy to teaching, and counted Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bridge and Ireland among his pupils – Parry was probably the most widely admired composer of his day. Stanford once went so far as to maintain he was the greatest English composer since Henry Purcell, a claim largely based, one must suspect, on 'his' work, *Blest Pair of Sirens*.

© Dr Martin Ennis  
Cambridge  
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## THE COLLEGE CHAPEL

This one hundredth recording by the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, happily coincides with the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the College's "new" Chapel on 12 May 1869. The Victorian building, designed by the great Gothic Revival architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott, replaced a relatively modest Tudor chapel which was itself a rebuilding of that of the thirteenth-century Hospital of St John, suppressed when the College was founded in 1511. Although some in the 1860s argued for the retention of this now historic chapel, it had long been a desire of the College to replace it with a building that better reflected the size and wealth of St John's within Cambridge University, as well as its royal status as a foundation of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII. In 1687 the College had a plan for a new Chapel drawn up but did not act upon it. A century later, major remodelling of First Court, to include a new Chapel, only got as far as the re-facing of the Tudor red-brick south side with a Georgian stone frontage. Thus it fell to the later nineteenth-century Master, William Bateson, to put into effect this long-cherished ambition.

The immediate trigger, however, for the bold decision to rebuild was that evangelical spirit so characteristic of mid-nineteenth-century muscular Victorian Anglicanism. In May 1861, the Commemoration Sermon was preached by the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, William Selwyn, an alumnus of the College. Perceiving the moment to be one of historic change, Selwyn took the opportunity of the seventh Jubilee of the College's foundation to describe its great evangelist members of the past and to plead "we must have men like these, and more in number". The achievement of this renewed mission, Selwyn believed, had to be supported by the raising of "a Chapel more worthy of our College."

Subscriptions were raised and, in 1862, Scott was approached without competition for a design. His solution to fitting a larger Chapel into the existing First Court was ingenious. By abutting a transept onto the end of the Hall block the new building could be placed north of the old Chapel – which could therefore continue to serve the College during the construction period. The model is that of Merton College, Oxford, where the nave was never built. Merton was also the model for the niches placed on the buttresses



© By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge

Old and New Chapels in 1869

between the windows, into which Scott placed statues of famous persons connected with the College, as well as for the varied tracery of the windows themselves – although Scott went one better in producing different tracery for every window in the south and north flanks. The design for the Chapel of St John's was also recognised at the time as bearing close

resemblance to that of the smaller Exeter College, Oxford, which Scott had built a few years previously – and both share a generic source in King Louis IX's Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, with its short but high proportions and eastern chevet. Scott, however, defined the overall style in Cambridge as late thirteenth-century Decorated, "the best variety of pointed architecture" as he described it, justifying his choice by reference to fragmentary remains of the chapel of the Hospital of St John that he found on site.

As at Exeter College and Paris, Scott initially proposed a flèche (small spire) for St John's, but the "princely gift" from one alumnus of a massive tower was accepted with alacrity by both College and architect alike in 1864, notwithstanding that the building's foundations had already been constructed by then. Although the source for the tower was Pershore Abbey (on the restoration of which Scott was advising at the time), he again adduced an Oxford example – this time of Magdalen College – to argue that a large tower would not dwarf the surrounding buildings. It is a matter of opinion as to how true this was and is but, at a height of 163 feet, Scott's tower certainly gave St John's a



dominant feature in the Cambridge skyline and, indeed, one that is visible the moment one enters the county of Cambridgeshire from the south on the A10 road.

The Chapel was built in Ancaster Stone offset by red Mansfield stone colonettes, with especially fine decorative carvings around its principal, south-west doorway by Farmer and Brindley. The building has been authoritatively described as “without a rival” when it comes to the “display of Victorian ecclesiastical art in Cambridge” and this becomes even clearer once one is inside. The great variety in colour and composition of the different stones used for colonettes and capitals, mostly from British and Irish quarries, would provide a demanding examination paper for a geologist. The rich sanctuary floor, designed by Burlison and Grylls, adopts an Italian Renaissance style with its beautiful inlaid scenes from the Old Testament and Zodiac. Whilst the sixteenth-century wooden stalls were transferred from the old chapel (the most notable of a number of features carefully preserved by Scott), Rattee and Kett were commissioned to double their number with Victorian stalls that are full of entertainment in the misericord and spandrel carvings. Above this the painted



Over stall Monkey with Cymbals by Rattee and Kett

windows, mostly narrating New Testament stories, are almost all by Clayton and Bell and paid for by donations from alumni. At the springing of each rib of the vault are Farmer and Brindley’s sculpted figures of apostles. Finally, the timber vault received a scheme painted by Clayton and Bell, in which gold-ground figures representing the Christian

centuries from the second to the nineteenth are surrounded by decorative scrollwork.

The painted ceiling was a substitute for Scott’s initial intention to gain colour through the use of varied woods, the architect having realised that a stone vault would not only have added cost but also unacceptably increased the already stretched height to length ratio of the building. Perhaps it was inadvertent, then, that the space thus produced – whilst proving difficult for the spoken word – was ideal for choral music, with an acoustic which offers satisfying reverberation but without significant echo. St John’s had had a “surpliced choir” and an organist since the early seventeenth century, but it was not until the early nineteenth century that a choir school was established. This was a joint venture with the adjacent Trinity College and the Organist from 1833 to 1856, Thomas Attwood Walmisley, was similarly a joint appointment. His successor, George Garrett, was, however, contracted solely to St John’s. The peripatetic tradition of men singers rushing between St John’s, Trinity and even King’s and Jesus Colleges on Sundays came to its end, and the distinctive identities of the respective colleges’ choirs began to form.

Dr Garrett’s ambitions for St John’s can be read in the College’s decision to commission for its new Chapel a large organ from Hill & Son, suitable for the Victorian choral tradition, as well as in the immediate foundation in 1869 of a Voluntary Choir, using undergraduates to supplement the existing boys and lay clerks. Then, thanks to a benefaction, Garrett was able to recruit the first student Choral Scholars in 1889, bringing to an end dependence on ageing lay clerks alongside the boys. Thus, by the turn of the century, the choral tradition still so characteristic of St John’s College today had been set in place.

It is, perhaps, ironic, that this historic development took place against a background quite different from the religious regeneration so fervently wished for by William Selwyn in 1861. By the time of the new building’s consecration eight years later, the College had abolished fines for non-attendance at chapel, the University having earlier dropped its requirement that students should be practising Anglicans. Bitter division had sprung up between Fellows whose religious views were biblically conservative and those who were trying to embrace new scientific thinking, as a result of which no regular



sermons were preached inside the new Chapel for its first nine years. None the less, the building provided the College with something it had previously lacked – a large and magnificent space in which a significant part of the community could come together. It is regularly filled by students of all faiths and none for the services of matriculation and graduation that mark the beginning and end of their time at the College, as well as by the boys and girls of the College School for services that include Ascension Day, after which

the Choir sings from the top of the tower in annual fulfilment of a challenge about audibility given by a Fellow to the then Organist, Cyril Rootham, in 1902. It would be hard to conceive today of St John's College, Cambridge, without the great Victorian Chapel that is now so closely connected with its traditions.

Dr Frank Salmon, FSA  
 President of St John's College, Cambridge, 2015-19  
*An extensive series of images illustrating this essay can be viewed at [sjchoir.co.uk/listen/releases/locus-iste](http://sjchoir.co.uk/listen/releases/locus-iste)*



The Tower from Castle Mound

### 1 FAIRE IS THE HEAVEN

Faire is the heaven, where happy soules have place,  
 In full enjoyment of felicitie,  
 Whence they doe still behold the glorious face  
 Of the divine, eternall Majestie...

Yet farre more faire be those bright Cherubins  
 Which all with golden wings are overdight,  
 And those eternall burning Seraphins,  
 Which from their faces dart out fiery light;  
 Yer fairer than they both, and much more bright,  
 Be th' Angels and Archangels which attend  
 On God's owne person, without rest or end.

These then in faire each other farre excelling  
 As to the Highest they approach more neare,  
 Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling  
 Fairer than all the rest which there appeare,  
 Though all their beauties joynd together were:  
 How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse  
 The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?

*"A Hymne of Heavenly Beauty"  
 in Four Hymns, by Edmund Spenser  
 (1552–1599)*

### 2 SING, MY SOUL, HIS WONDROUS LOVE

Sing, my soul, his wondrous love,  
 Who, from yon bright throne above,  
 Ever watchful o'er our race,  
 Still to man extends his grace.

Heaven and earth by him were made;  
 All is by his scepter swayed;  
 What are we that he should show  
 So much love to us below?

God, the merciful and good,  
 Bought us with the Saviour's blood,  
 And, to make our safety sure,  
 Guides us by his Spirit pure.

Sing, my soul, adore his Name;  
 Let his glory be thy theme:  
 Praise him till he calls thee home,  
 Trust his love for all to come.

*Anonymous, c.1800*

### 3 GOD IS GONE UP

God is gone up with a triumphant shout:  
 The Lord with sounding trumpets' melodies:  
 Sing praise, sing praise, sing praise, sing praises out,

Unto our King sing praise seraphic-wise!  
Lift up your heads, ye lasting doors, they sing,  
And let the King of Glory enter in.

Methinks I see Heaven's sparkling courtiers fly  
In flakes of glory down, him to attend,  
And hear heart-cramping notes of melody  
Surround his chariot as it did ascend:  
Mixing their music, making every string  
More to enravish, as they this tune sing.

*Edward Taylor (c.1646–1729)*

#### 4 A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

Of one that is so fair and bright,  
*Velut maris stella,*  
Brighter than the day is light,  
*Parens et puella:*  
I cry to thee, thou see to me,  
Lady, pray thy Son for me,  
*Tam pia,*  
That I may come to thee.  
*Maria!*

All this world was forlorn  
*Eva peccatrice,*  
Till our Lord was y-born  
*De te genetrice.*  
With ave it went away

Darkest night, and comes the day  
*Salutis;*  
The well springeth out of thee.  
*Virtutis.*

Lady, flow'r of everything,  
*Rosa sine spina,*  
Thou bare Jesu, Heaven's King,  
*Gratia divina:*  
Of all thou bear'st the prize,  
Lady, queen of paradise  
*Electa:*  
Maid mild, mother  
*es Effecta.*

*Anonymous, 13th century*

#### 5 JUSTORUM ANIMAE

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

*The souls of the just are in God's hand,  
no torment will touch them.*

*In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to be dead,  
but they are at peace.*

*Wisdom 3 vv. 1–2a, 3b*

#### 6 THE LAMB

Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?  
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice?  
Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee.  
He is called by thy name,  
For He calls Himself a Lamb.  
He is meek, and He is mild;  
He became a little child.  
I a child, and thou a lamb,  
We are called by His name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

*William Blake  
(1757–1827)*

#### 7 SEEK HIM THAT MAKETH THE SEVEN STARS

Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion  
and turneth the shadow of death into the morning.  
Alleluia, yea, the darkness shineth as the day,  
the night is light about me.  
Amen.

*Amos 5 v. 8  
Psalm 139 v. 12*

#### 8 SALVE REGINA

Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae,  
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve,  
ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae,  
ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes  
in hac lacrimarum valle.

Eja ergo, advocata nostra,  
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exsilium hostende ostende,  
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis virgo Maria.

*Hail Holy Queen, Mother of mercy,  
hail our life, our sweetness and our hope!  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve,*

*to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.*

*Turn, then, O most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy towards us  
and after this our exile  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus,  
O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary.*

*From one of the four Breviary anthems  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

#### **9 JESU, GRANT ME THIS, I PRAY**

Jesu, grant me this, I pray,  
Ever in thy heart to stay;  
Let me evermore abide  
Hidden in thy wounded side.

If the evil one prepare,  
Or the world, a tempting snare,  
I am safe when I abide  
In thy heart and wounded side.

If the flesh, more dangerous still,  
Tempt my soul to deeds of ill,  
Naught I fear when I abide  
In thy heart and wounded side.

Death will come one day to me;  
Jesu, cast me not from thee:  
Dying let me still abide  
In thy heart and wounded side.  
Amen.

*Anonymous Latin, 17th century  
Tr. H.W. Baker (1821-77)*

#### **10 O VOS OMNES**

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,  
attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus,  
attendite, universi populi, et videte dolorem meum,  
si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?  
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.  
Behold, all ye people, and see my sorrow,  
if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.*

*Responsorial for Matins of Holy Saturday*

#### **11 JUBILATE DEO**

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands:  
serve the Lord with gladness, and come  
before his presence with a song.  
Be ye sure 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.  
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,

and into his courts with praise;  
be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.  
For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting:  
and his truth endureth from generation to  
generation.  
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.

*Psalms 100*

#### **12 LOCUS ISTE**

Locus iste a Deo factus est;  
inaestimabile sacramentum,  
irreprehensibilis est.

*This place was made by God;  
an inestimable mystery,  
it is irreproachable.*

*Gradual of the Mass  
for the Dedication of a Church*

#### **13 ADAM LAY IBOUNDEN**

*Deo gracias!*  
Adam lay ibounden,  
bounden in a bond:

Four thousand winter  
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple,  
an apple that he took,  
as clerkès finden  
written in theirè book.

Nè haddè the apple taken been,  
the apple taken been,  
Nè haddè never our lady  
a-been heavenè Queen.

Blessèd be the time  
that apple taken was!  
therefore we moun singen  
Deo gracias!

*Anonymous, 15th century*

#### **14 CHERUBIC HYMN**

Иже Херувимы тайно образующе,  
и животворящей Троице  
трисвятую песнь припевающе,  
всякое ныне житейское  
отложим попечение.  
Яко да Царя всех подыдем,  
Ангельскими невидимо  
дориносима чинми.  
Аллилуиа.

Eezhe kherooveemi Tighna obrazooyushche,  
 Ee zheevotvoryashchay Troytse  
 treesvyatooyu pyesn preepye vayushche,  
 Fsyakoye ninye zhityayskoye  
 Otlozhim popyechayneeye.  
 Yako da Tsarya fsyekh podimymem,  
 Angyelskeemee nyevedeemo doreenoseema  
 cheenmee.  
 Aleeluiya.

*Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim,  
 and who sing the thrice-holy hymn  
 to the life-creating Trinity,  
 and now lay aside  
 all the cares of this life;  
 that we may receive the King of All,  
 who comes invisibly borne by the angelic host.  
 Alleluia.*

*Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*

#### 15 BLEST PAIR OF SIRENS

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heavens joy,  
 Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,  
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,  
 Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,  
 And to our high-raised phantasy present  
 That undisturbed song of pure consent,  
 Ay sung before the sapphire-coloured throne

To Him that sits thereon,  
 With saintly shout and solemn jubilee;  
 Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,  
 Their loud, uplifted angel-trumpets blow,  
 And the cherubic host, in thousand quires,  
 Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
 With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,  
 Hymns devout and holy psalms  
 Singing everlastingly:  
 That we on earth with undiscording voice  
 May rightly answer that melodious noise;  
 As once we did, till disproportioned sin  
 Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
 Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
 To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed  
 In perfect diapason, whilst they stood  
 In first obedience, and their state of good.  
 O may we soon again renew that song,  
 And keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long  
 To his celestial consort us unite,  
 To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.

*John Milton  
 (1608–1674)*

## THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

### Trebles

Felix Bamford  
 William Buttery <sup>4</sup>  
 Alan Chen  
 Jaylen Cheng  
 Adam Chillingworth  
 George Ducker  
 Lewis Cobb <sup>13</sup>  
 Alfred Harrison  
 Harry L'Estrange  
 Toby L'Estrange  
 James Lewis  
 Jonathan Mews  
 Lucas Nair-Grepinet  
 Ewan Tatnell  
 Philip Tomkinson  
 Thomas Watkin

### Counter Tenors

Daniel Brown <sup>4</sup>  
 Hugh Cutting  
 Richard Decker  
 Jack Hawkins

### Basses

James Adams <sup>13</sup>  
 James Conway  
 Matthew Gibson  
 Simon Grant  
 Piers Kennedy <sup>4</sup>  
 William O'Brien  
 James Quilligan

*Numbers indicate soloist credits  
 for each CD track*

### Tenors

Michael Bell  
 Benedict Flinn  
 Gopal Kambo <sup>4</sup>  
 Henry Laird  
 Louis Watkins

**Herbert Howells  
 Organ Scholar**  
 Glen Dempsey

**Junior Organ Scholar**  
 James Anderson-Besant

**Director of Music**  
 Andrew Nethsingha



The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge is one of the finest collegiate choirs in the world, known and loved by millions from its broadcasts, concert tours and recordings. This is the Choir's 100th album to be released. Founded in the 1670s, the Choir is known for its distinctive rich, warm sound, its expressive interpretations and its breadth of repertoire. Alongside these musical characteristics, the Choir is particularly proud of its happy, relaxed and mutually supportive atmosphere. The Choir is directed by Andrew Nethsingha following a long line of eminent Directors of Music, recently Dr George Guest, Dr Christopher Robinson and Dr David Hill.

The Choir is made up of around 20 Choristers and Probationers from St John's College School and 15 Choral Scholars who are members of St John's College, its primary purpose being to enhance the liturgy and worship at daily services in the College Chapel. The Choir has a diverse repertoire spanning over 500 years of music. It is also renowned for championing contemporary music by commissioning new works, including recent compositions by Joanna Ward, Lara Weaver, Cecilia McDowall, and the College's Composer in Residence Michael Finnissy. Each

term the Choir sings Bach Cantatas liturgically with St John's Sinfonia, its period instrument ensemble. This Bach series is now entering its second decade.

The Choir brings the 'St John's Sound' to listeners around the world through its weekly webcasts (available at [sjchoir.co.uk](http://sjchoir.co.uk)). The Choir's first video live-stream took place in May 2018 with Classic FM on Facebook. It was watched over 80,000 times during the subsequent fortnight. In addition to regular radio broadcasts in this country and abroad, the Choir usually makes two CD recordings each year. In May 2016 the College launched its new 'St John's Cambridge' recording label (in conjunction with Signum Classics) on which the Choir has released the BBC Music Magazine Award winning recording of Jonathan Harvey's music: *DEO; Christmas with St John's; KYRIE* (works by Poulenc, Kodály and Janáček); *Mass in G minor* (works by Vaughan Williams); and *Advent Live* (a collection of live recordings from the Advent Carol Services, broadcast each year by the BBC).

The Choir also maintains a busy schedule of concerts and tours internationally twice

a year. Recent destinations have included Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, the Netherlands, Singapore and the USA. It also performs regularly in the UK, with venues including Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Royal Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall, London.

## GLEN DEMPSEY

Born in Suffolk in 1994, Glen's formative musical experiences were centred around the English choral tradition - as a chorister in St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds and later in the choirs of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. Organ lessons with Michael Nicholas led to his being awarded a scholarship as a répétiteur to study at the Purcell School of Music. During this time Glen performed in all the major concert halls of London as a soloist and chamber musician on the organ and piano, and also conducted at the Wigmore Hall.

In 2013 Glen was appointed Organ Scholar at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. In this role he was responsible for accompanying and directing the choir's daily services and for training the choristers, as well as for playing at many events attended by the



© Louis Marlowe

British Royal Family. Alongside his organ studies with Ann Elise Smoot he maintained a varied performance profile as organist, conductor and tenor.

During the academic year 2014/15 he resided in the Netherlands and was the Assistant Organist of St Nicholas's Basilica, Amsterdam. Under the mentorship of Michael Hedley,

Glen accompanied the majority of the choral services in the Basilica, as well as having had responsibility for conducting the Basilica's various choirs and ensembles. During this time he studied with Jacques van Oortmerssen.

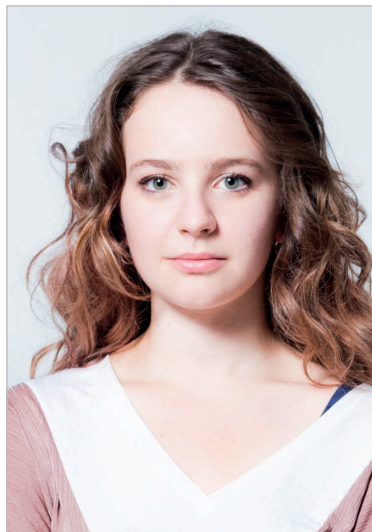
Glen became Organ Scholar at St John's College, Cambridge in October 2015, where he accompanies the choir in their busy schedule of daily services, tours, broadcasts and recordings, and assists in the training of the choristers. Gordon Stewart and Ann Elise Smoot have been his organ teachers. Glen's interest in contemporary music has been developed through premiering several choir and organ and solo organ works at St John's; by the end of his Scholarship he will have given the first performances of five new works by the College's Composer-in-Residence, Michael Finnissy.

## LAURA VAN DER HEIJDEN

Winner of the 2012 BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition, Laura van der Heijden has been making a name for herself as a very special emerging talent, captivating audiences and critics alike with her imaginative interpretations and probing musicianship.

2018 marked the global release of Laura's critically acclaimed debut album "1948", featuring Russian music for cello and piano with pianist Petr Limonov. It won the 2018 Edison Klassiek Award, broadcast live on national TV in the Netherlands. The CD has been hailed as a "dazzling, imaginative and impressive" debut recording.

Laura was born in England to Dutch-Swiss parents and gave her first public performance at the age of 9. Since 2008 she has been a student of the renowned British-Russian cellist Leonid Gorokhov, and participates regularly in masterclasses by David Geringas, Ralph Kirshbaum and Miklós Perényi. She is currently in her final year studying for her Bachelor's Degree in Music at St John's College, Cambridge, while also maintaining a busy concert diary.



© Chris Glong

Laura has performed with leading orchestras such as the Philharmonia, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, the Hallé Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, and the English Chamber Orchestra. She has given her debuts in Holland, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, and

in Australia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis.

Other highlights include a recital with Fazil Say at Zürich Tonhalle, a performance of Schumann's cello concerto at Kings Place in London, a UK tour with IMS Prussia Cove, as well as her debut with the Argovia Philharmonic, and at Wigmore Hall in a BBC lunchtime recital.

Chamber music is immensely important to Laura. She has collaborated with Tom Poster, Huw Watkins, Petr Limonov, Matthew MacDonald, and Krzysztof Chorzelski and regularly participates in international chamber music courses and festivals.

Laura plays a late 17th-century cello by Francesco Rugeri of Cremona, on generous loan from a private collection. She is an Ambassador for both the Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts and Brighton Youth Orchestra.



## ANDREW NETHSINGHA

Performing in North America, South Africa, the Far East, and throughout Europe, Andrew Nethsingha has been Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge since 2007. He has helped to set up the new recording label, 'St John's Cambridge,' in conjunction with Signum. His first disc on the new label, *DEO* (music by Jonathan Harvey), was a 2017 BBC Music Magazine Award winner.

Andrew Nethsingha was a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, under his father's direction. He later studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won seven prizes, and at St John's College, Cambridge. He held Organ Scholarships under Christopher Robinson at St George's Windsor, and George Guest at St John's, before becoming Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He was subsequently Director of Music at Truro and Gloucester Cathedrals, and Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival.

Andrew's concerts conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra have included: Mahler's 8th Symphony, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Britten *War Requiem*, Brahms *Requiem*, Elgar's *The*



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*Dream of Gerontius* and *The Kingdom*, Walton *Belshazzar's Feast*, Poulenc *Gloria* and Duruflé *Requiem*. He has also worked with: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia, Orchestra of St Luke's (New York), Aarhus Symfoniorkester, BBC Concert Orchestra. Venues have included the BBC Proms, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Verbier Festival, Tokyo Suntory Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin and Singapore Esplanade.



The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge 2017-2018

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