

THE CHOIR OF



ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE

EASTERTIDE EVENSONG
NETHSINGHA



EASTERTIDE EVENSONG

1	My beloved spake	Julian Anderson (b.1967)	[5.19]
2	The Preces	Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)	[1.27]
3	Psalm 12	John Goss (1800-1880)	[3.23]
4	Psalm 13	Charles Hylton Stewart (1884-1932)	[2.56]
5	Psalm 14	Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)	[4.10]
6	The First Lesson	Hosea 13 vv. 4-14	[1.48]
7	Magnificat Gloucester Service	Herbert Howells (1892-1983)	[6.47]
8	The Second Lesson	1 Corinthians 15 vv. 50-end	[1.48]
9	Nunc Dimittis Gloucester Service	Herbert Howells	[4.38]
10	The Apostles' Creed		[1.02]
11	The Responses	Kenneth Leighton	[7.10]
12	Dum transisset Sabbatum (I)	John Taverner (c.1490-1545)	[7.37]
13	The Prayers		[2.10]
14	Finale (Symphonie VI)	Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)	[6.43]
Total timings:			[57.07]

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
JAMES ANDERSON-BESANT ORGAN TRACKS 1, 3-5, 14
GLEN DEMPSEY ORGAN TRACKS 7 & 9
ANDREW NETHSINGHA DIRECTOR

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EASTERTIDE EVENSONG

Our first live Evensong album was *Ash Wednesday*, marking the beginning of the forty-day penitential season of Lent. This precedes Holy Week, a commemoration of the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion. Our second live Evensong album is taken from the next great season of the Church's Year, Eastertide. This celebration of Jesus's resurrection also initially spans forty days, taking us up to Ascension Day, and culminates on the fiftieth day with the Feast of Pentecost. *Ash Wednesday* featured a *cappella* music, reflecting the old tradition of using no organ from Ash Wednesday until the Gloria of the Easter Vigil – a sort of musical fast. Conversely, most of the repertoire in the present service has organ accompaniment.

Evensong is a service which takes place each evening in Cathedrals and College Chapels. Simon Reynolds has written:

Evensong is becoming recognised and valued as a precious gift. It is meeting the need that many people feel for a reflective space in their lives. Its fusion of music, words and silence seems to meet the desire of those who yearn for the time and space to ponder life's deepest questions – and

to do so at their own pace. It is worship 'without strings.'

John Drury, former Dean of King's Cambridge and Christ Church Oxford, has said:

We need to do two things in order to enter into the spirit of these services. First, we have to be patient and relaxed enough to allow a long tradition to have its say. Then we should allow our own thoughts and feelings to become closer to us than life outside usually allows.

Mark Oakley, our own Dean here at St John's, has described Evensong as *poetry in motion*.

Our cover image is the *Glory Window* of the interfaith *Chapel of Thanksgiving* in Dallas. The spiral ceiling contains one of the largest horizontally-mounted windows in the world, made up of seventy-three panels designed by Gabriel Loire at his workshop in Chartres. Loire used 22 millimetre thick slabs of glass which are much stronger and thicker than Medieval stained glass. The window is inspired by Psalm 19, *The heavens are telling the Glory of God*. The Chapel's website gives the following description, which seems to me a fitting analogy for the joy of Easter after the tribulations of Lent and Holy Week:

As the spiral continues inwards and upwards, the colours become warmer and brighter until reaching the centre where 60 feet above the floor the panels give way to a circle of beaming yellow light. Loire meant this progression to express life with its difficulties, its forces, its joys, its torments, and its frightening aspects. Bit by bit, all of that gives way to an explosion of gold where the summit is reached.

In 2012, *Choirbook for the Queen* was published to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Accession. It comprises forty-four anthems, all of which had been composed during the decade since the Golden Jubilee. *My beloved spake* by **Julian Anderson** was included in this collection, along with works by Jonathan Harvey and John McCabe which feature on previous St John's albums. In publishing works by many of the finest composers of the day, *Choirbook for the Queen* aspired to emulate *The Eton Choirbook*, compiled half a millennium earlier. Anderson's soft and lilting anthem was composed for a wedding, performed by singers from the London Philharmonic Choir of which Julian was a member. The text, from the *Song of Songs*, has been set by many composers, including Henry Purcell and Patrick Hadley. Its evocative poetry, redolent of new life and Spring is often sung during Eastertide.

Kenneth Leighton was a student at The Queen's College, Oxford, where Anderson's anthem was later to be premiered. Leighton's childhood experience as a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral had been profound:

This is perhaps why I respond emotionally to Christian subjects and texts. [...] it is the instinctive and emotional aspects which matter most and I don't think one has to be an intellectually convinced Christian in order to write good church music.

After a relatively traditional initial training, Leighton went to Rome where he made a prolonged study of Bartók, Berg, Dallapiccola and Hindemith. In the 1950s he produced several works of serialism, but not of the kind that Schoenberg would have written; he had been inspired by the 'perfect and supple means of expression' shown in the 12-note technique of Italian composers. Leighton had a formidable intellect, spending most of his career at Edinburgh University including 18 years as Reid Professor of Music; yet he insisted that in his music 'there is always a strong underlying lyrical feeling, no matter how intellectual the form'.

Leighton composed Preces and Responses for his close friend Dennis Townhill and the choir of St

Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh in 1964. His large scale *Mass* was written in the same year. It is very easy to underestimate the difficulty of writing a successful set of Responses; the number of composers from the last 350 years who have managed the task as well as Leighton can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The concision, choral textures, and responsiveness to the words are all masterly. Above all, Leighton has an innate sense of the numinous. The first choral utterance softly germinates from a single pitch, reminding us how all liturgy grows out of silence. Leighton also knows how to leave sung prayers hanging in the air, just as the scent of incense lingers. Such intimations of eternity form the essence of good liturgical music-making.

Having contributed to around eight thousand services of Evensong, I still love the way that almost every one has a different combination of readings, prayers, and music. Some texts are the same every day. The readings are chosen on a two-yearly cycle. The prayers may respond to topical issues. Anthems are often chosen according to the liturgical season. The choice of psalms is determined by a monthly cycle; numbers 12, 13 and 14 are allocated to the second evening of the month. I think of these as a suite of three movements – full of internal

contrast, but bound together as a unit. Psalm-singing demands the greatest sophistication from any Anglican choir; I will write more about this art-form for our next album, which is to be devoted entirely to psalms. As in *Lieder*, one's character and tone-colour need to be continually responsive to changes in the emotion of the text; in psalms some thirty singers need to think and feel as one.

The writing of good psalm chants is another underestimated skill. The three composers here were all masters of their craft. **John Goss** was Organist of St Paul's Cathedral for thirty-four years, succeeding Mozart's pupil Thomas Attwood. Goss wrote some of the most-loved hymn tunes, such as *Praise my soul, the King of heaven*. If I were allowed the psalm chants of just one composer on my desert island, it would be **Charles Hylton Stewart**. His father was Organist at Chichester Cathedral; Charles followed his example when he served as Organist at Rochester Cathedral for fourteen years. He was appointed Organist at St George's Windsor shortly before his untimely death at the age of forty-eight, but it was his two years as Organist of Chester Cathedral that created his connection to St John's. George Guest was both a chorister and, briefly, Sub-Organist at Chester;

he brought many Hylton Stewart chants with him to St John's. The final psalm chant is by **Charles Villiers Stanford**, whose career began as Organist at Trinity College, Cambridge, before moving on to the Royal College of Music. Stanford's impressive roster of pupils included Holst, Howells and Vaughan Williams.

Herbert Howells wrote some twenty settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis. The *Gloucester Service* was written in 1946, shortly after he had served as Acting Organist at St John's during the war. In 2020, during the first Covid lockdown, Patrick Allies organised a *World Cup of Evensong Canticles* on social media. I'm told it was followed by fewer people than the football version, but readers will be pleased to know that the Howells *Gloucester Service* won, defeating the same composer's *Collegium Regale* in the final. During the tournament I enjoyed a description by the baritone Sam Evans:

The Gloria of Howells Gloucester is a wondrous thing of beauty. It's like a day on the desert sands. It begins with a blazing sunrise, and the heat of the day builds with shimmering haze on the horizon. Eventually dusk arrives and night falls, revealing a starlit canopy above.

In the booklet for our album *Magnificat* I have written at length about the music and its relationship to the building for which it was composed (pp.10-12 of [Lead.me/mag1](#)). In fact that album was recorded just ten days before the present live performance. As Michael Tilson Thomas has said: 'When you make a recording and finish it, you know tomorrow would be the perfect day to go back and start from the beginning.' All the music on this Evensong album was broadcast live on Radio 3; nothing beats the adrenaline of such an occasion, and the inexorable build up of the Nunc Dimittis that day particularly sticks in my memory.

Much of the beauty of Evensong comes from the incomparable poetry of the *Book of Common Prayer* (B.C.P.), compiled and written under the oversight of Thomas Cranmer. **John Taverner** was an exact contemporary of Cranmer, though he died before the B.C.P. was created. The enduring appeal of Evensong is aided by the fact that we can interpolate musical items which Cranmer would not have expected – a French organ voluntary, for example, or a motet sung in Latin. Use of Latin is what Cranmer was generally seeking to avoid, but after nearly five-hundred years the framework of Evensong can withstand such treatment. It's worth noting that



An excerpt of John Taverner's *Gaude plurimum* from a bassus partbook possessed by St John's College. This partbook and its tenor companion held by Cambridge University Library, both created c.1524-33, are among the earliest surviving original sources of Taverner's music. They were possibly made in East Anglia for the private Chapel of Thomas Fiennes, 9th Baron Dacre.

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Cranmer commissioned a Latin translation of the B.C.P. in 1551 in order to make it accessible to other Reformers around Europe. In 1560, following Elizabeth's 1559 Act of Uniformity, a Latin version (*Liber precum publicarum*) was provided for the universities. Nowadays it is hard to imagine Evensong fully in Latin!

In 1526, Taverner became the first *Informator Choristarum* at Cardinal College, Oxford, newly founded by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and now known as Christ Church. Indeed Taverner founded the College Choir itself that year. Most of Taverner's works were settings of Latin texts from services of the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. Two partbooks here at St John's and in Cambridge University Library are probably the earliest sources for Taverner's sacred music. At the start of his career, plainsong was the most common liturgical music; polyphony was employed relatively little, being used to highlight texts and occasions of special significance. Hugh Benham has explained that initially:

Taverner, like earlier composers, supplied polyphony only for sections that the liturgy allotted to soloists [...however,] when he set the choral parts of Dum transisset Sabbatum, a respond apparently without a history of polyphonic

treatment, he was belatedly acknowledging that polyphony now belonged to choirs at least as much as to soloists.

Younger composers like Tallis and Sheppard followed Taverner's example. The text *Dum transisset Sabbatum* was prescribed to be sung every day of Easter Week and on the first six Sundays of Easter. Taverner set this text twice, each time using the plainchant in long notes in the tenor. Comparing the two responsories gives a fascinating insight into Taverner's technique. Peter Phillips has written:

In the end the two settings, though structurally identical, offer quite different interpretations of the possibilities. Yet they both conjure up the same rhapsodic atmosphere, the same sense of space, the same sense of repose from the noisy and insistent world we live in.

Taverner's sumptuous five-part texture spans a range of three octaves.

Charles-Marie Widor was given a one-year 'provisional' appointment as Organist at the great church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris in 1870. He stayed for sixty-three years! Indeed the church has had only four Organists in the past 150

years. Widor developed a genre of symphonies for solo organ, later to be continued by Louis Vierne and Marcel Dupré. Widor performed the premiere of the sixth of his ten organ symphonies at the opening recital of the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Palais du Trocadéro in 1878. 'The modern organ is essentially symphonic,' he said. 'For this new instrument we must have a new language and a different ideal from that of scholastic polyphony.'

After the tranquility of Anderson and of the prayers, and after Taverner's depiction of the three women arriving at Jesus's tomb on Easter morning, what better music to celebrate the Resurrection than the unbridled joy of Widor? This *Finale* is one of the most exuberant works in the repertoire – and quite a tour de force for our organ scholar in his first live radio broadcast here! I remember jokingly trying to dissuade James from using the *Trompeta Real* in the closing bars – but I like to give our musicians freedom, and he was right to ignore me!

Andrew Nethsingha



The choir in rehearsal for the Evensong featured in this recording, 2nd May 2018

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

1 My beloved spake

Julian Anderson (b.1967)

My beloved spake and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,
the flowers appear on the earth,
the time of the singing of birds is come.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
And come away!
This is my beloved,
And this is my friend.

Song of Songs 2 vv. 10-13, 16

2 The Preces

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

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.*

Praise ye the Lord.
The Lord's Name be praised.

The Book of Common Prayer

3 Psalm 12

Chant: John Goss

1. Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly
man left : for the faithful are minished
from among the children of men.
2. They talk of vanity every one with his
neighbour : they do but flatter with their
lips, and dissemble in their double heart.
3. The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips :
and the tongue that speaketh proud things;
4. Which have said, With our tongue will we
prevail : we are they that ought to speak,
who is lord over us?
5. Now for the comfortless troubles' sake of
the needy : and because of the deep sighing
of the poor,
6. I will up, saith the Lord : and will help
every one from him that swelleth against
him, and will set him at rest.

7. The words of the Lord are pure words :
even as the silver, which from the earth is
tried, and purified seven times in the fire.

8. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord : thou shalt
preserve him from this generation for ever.

9. The ungodly walk on every side : when
they are exalted, the children of men are
put to rebuke.

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.

4 Psalm 13

Chant: Charles Hylton Stewart

1. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for
ever : how long wilt thou hide thy face
from me?
2. How long shall I seek counsel in my soul,
and be so vexed in my heart : how long
shall mine enemies triumph over me?
3. Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God :
lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.

4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed
against him : for if I be cast down, they that
trouble me will rejoice at it.

5. But my trust is in thy mercy : and my heart
is joyful in thy salvation.

6. I will sing of the Lord, because he hath
dealt so lovingly with me : yea I will praise
the Name of the Lord most Highest.

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.

5 Psalm 14

Chant: Charles Villiers Stanford

1. The fool hath said in his heart : There is
no God.
2. They are corrupt, and become abominable
in their doings : there is none that doeth
good no not one.
3. The Lord looked down from heaven upon
the children of men : to see if there were
any that would understand and seek
after God.

4. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable : there is none that doeth good no not one.
5. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues have they deceived : the poison of asps is under their lips.
6. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness : their feet are swift to shed blood.
7. Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known ; there is no fear of God before their eyes.
8. Have they no knowledge, that they are all such workers of mischief : eating up my people as it were bread, and call not upon the Lord?
9. There were they brought in great fear, even where no fear was : for God is in the generation of the righteous.
10. As for you, ye have made a mock at the counsel of the poor : because he putteth his trust in the Lord.

11. Who shall give salvation unto Israel out of Sion? : When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people, then shall Jacob rejoice and Israel shall be glad.

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.

6 The First Lesson

Hosea 13 vv. 4-14

But since your days in Egypt I have been the Lord your God; you do not know any god but me, any saviour other than me. I cared for you in the wilderness, in a land of burning heat. They were fed and satisfied, and, once satisfied, they grew proud, and so they deserted me. Now I shall be like a panther to them, I shall prowl like a leopard by the wayside; I shall come on them like a she-bear robbed of her cubs and tear their ribs apart, like a lioness I shall devour them on the spot, like a wild beast I shall rip them up.

I have destroyed you, Israel; who is there to help you? Where now is your king that he may save you, in all your cities where are your rulers? 'Give me a king and princes,' you said. I gave

you a king in my anger, and in my wrath I took him away.

Ephraim's guilt is tied up in a scroll, his sins are kept on record. When the pangs of his birth came over his mother, he showed himself a senseless child; for at the proper time he could not present himself at the mouth of the womb. Shall I deliver him from the grave? Shall I redeem him from death?

7 Magnificat Gloucester Service

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

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

and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen
his servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.

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

Luke 1: 46-55

8 The Second Lesson

1 Corinthians 15 vv. 50-end

What I mean, my friends, is this: flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, the perishable cannot possess the imperishable. Listen! I will unfold a mystery: we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet-call. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise imperishable, and we shall be changed. This perishable body must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal with

immortality. And when this perishable body has been clothed with the imperishable and our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won!' 'O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and sin gains its power from the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear friends, stand firm and immovable, and work for the Lord always, work without limit, since you know that in the Lord your labour cannot be lost.

9] Nunc Dimittis Gloucester Service

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Lord now lettest thou 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.

Luke 2: 29-32

10] 'The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried,
He descended into hell;
The third day he rose again from the dead,
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father
Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Catholick Church;
The Communion of Saints;
The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.

11] The Responses

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Our Father,
which art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil. Amen.

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.
And grant us thy salvation.

O Lord, save the Queen.
And mercifully bear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy Ministers with righteousness.
And make thy chosen people joyful.

O Lord, save thy people.
And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.
Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but
only thou, O God.

O God, make clean our hearts within us.
And take not thy holy Spirit from us.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the
unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant
unto thy people, that they may love the thing
which thou commandest, and desire that which
thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry
and manifold changes of the world, our hearts
may surely be fixed, where true joys are to be
found; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good
counsels, and all just works do proceed: Give
unto thy servants that peace which the world
cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to
obey thy commandments, and also that by thee
we being defended from the fear of our enemies
may pass our time in rest and quietness; through
the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;
and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils
and dangers of this night; for the love of thy
only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

The Book of Common Prayer

*Collects: The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, the
Collect for Peace, and the Collect for Aid against all Perils*

12 Dum transisset Sabbatum

John Taverner (c.1490-1545)

Dum transisset Sabbatum,
Maria Magdalene et Maria
Jacobi et Salome
emerunt aromata
ut venientes ungerent Jesum.

Alleluia.

Et valde mane
una sabbatorum veniunt
ad monumentum
orto iam sole.

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.
Alleluia.

Mark 16 vv. 1-2

*When the Sabbath was past,
Mary Magdalene and Mary
the mother of James and Salome
bought sweet spices
that they might come and anoint Jesus.
Alleluia.*

*And very early in the morning
the first day of the week,
they came unto the sepulchre
at the rising of the sun.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
Alleluia*

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Numbers indicate soloist credits for each track

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. 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 who follows 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 around 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 Judith Bingham, Julian Anderson, Anna Semple, Katrina Toner, Ignacio Mañá Mesas and Cecilia McDowall. Each term, the Choir is joined by its period instrument

ensemble St John's Sinfonia to perform Bach Cantatas in a liturgical setting.

The Choir brings the 'St John's Sound' to listeners around the world through its weekly webcasts (available at www.sjchoir.co.uk). The Choir has also live-streamed video broadcasts of Chapel services on Facebook, in association with Classic FM. In addition to regular radio broadcasts in this country and abroad, the Choir releases multiple recordings each year. In May 2016 the College launched its 'St John's Cambridge' recording label (in conjunction with Signum Classics). Since then 13 Choir albums have been released. These include single composer albums of Jonathan Harvey (BBC Music Magazine Award winner), Ralph Vaughan Williams and Michael Finnissy,

the latter of which was a finalist in the 2021 Gramophone Awards. There have also been two 'Magnificat' albums of varied Evensong Canticles, an anthem compilation *Locus Iste*, masses by Poulenc and Kodály, a live anthology *The Tree*, and seasonal albums for Advent, Christmas and Ash Wednesday.

The Choir also performs concerts outside of Cambridge and tours internationally each year. Recent destinations have included the USA, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong and Singapore. It also performs regularly in the UK, with venues including Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Royal Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall, London.



The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge 2017-18

JAMES ANDERSON-BESANT

Since September 2021, James Anderson-Besant has been the Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, where he acts as the principal accompanist to the Cathedral's liturgy and works with the Director of Music, Timothy Noon, to train the choristers. He also directs the St Peter's Singers, the Cathedral's auditioned voluntary choir, and is active as a freelance organ recitalist and conductor.

Prior to this, James was Organ Scholar, then Assistant Organist, at St John's College Cambridge, where he graduated in 2020 with a first-class degree in Music. With the College Choir he accompanied services, broadcasts, recordings and tours under the direction of Andrew Nethsingha, and also assisted in the training of the choristers. James has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and his playing for St John's appears on the recent acclaimed releases *Pious Anthems & Voluntaries*, *Ash Wednesday*, and *Advent Live – Volume 2*. From 2020-21 he also supervised Cambridge music students in counterpoint and keyboard skills.



© James Beddloe

At university, James organised and directed performances of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *St John Passion*. He has also directed the St John's Sinfonia in a Bach Cantata evensong. James recently gave organ recitals at King's, Queens' and St John's Colleges as well as Truro and St Albans Cathedrals, and looks forward to upcoming engagements at Stockholm Cathedral and Trinity College, Cambridge. He won second

prize at the 2019 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition, and was also Organ Scholar for the Charles Wood Summer School and Festival in Armagh under David Hill. James has held other Organ Scholar positions with the Cathedral Singers of Christ Church, Oxford, and at Gloucester Cathedral, and his organ teachers have included James Brown and Stephen Farr.

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 took a share in accompanying and directing the choir's daily services and assisted in the



© Louis Marlowe

training of the choristers; he played for events attended by the 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 responsibility for conducting the Basilica's various choirs and ensembles. During this time he studied with Jacques van Oortmessen.

Glen then spent four years as Organ Scholar at St John's College, Cambridge under Andrew Nethsingha, where he accompanied the Choir in the daily services, as well as for its busy schedule of tours, broadcasts and recordings; he also assisted in the training of the Choir. Gordon Stewart and Ann Elise Smoot were 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 College, including a three-year collaboration with Michael Finnissy. After graduation Glen took up the roles of Assistant Director of Music at Ely Cathedral and Organist at King's Ely, where he plays the famous 1908 Harrison and Harrison organ, directs the Ely Cathedral Octagon Singers and teaches the boy choristers and pupils at the school. He is also active as a freelance organist, conductor and teacher.

ANDREW NETHSINGHA DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

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 helped to set up the recording label, 'St John's Cambridge', in conjunction with Signum Classics. The first release on this label, *DEO* (music by Jonathan Harvey), was a 2017 BBC Music Magazine Award winner. Six recent albums have been 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine.

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.



© James Reddoo

Andrew's concerts conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra have included: Mahler's *8th Symphony*, Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Kingdom*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Duruflé's *Requiem*. He has also worked with: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players,

Britten Sinfonia, Orchestra of St Luke's (New York), Aarhus Symfoniorkester, and BBC Concert Orchestra. Venues have included the BBC Proms, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Verbier Festival, Tokyo Suntory Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin, and Singapore Esplanade.

Acknowledgements

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Dover, based on 1879 Hamelle (Widor)
Faber and The Canterbury Press (Anderson)
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Recorded live in St John's College Chapel, Cambridge, UK on Wednesday 2nd May 2018

The Apostles' Creed and the Prayers were recorded in the same location on Wednesday 6th March 2019 and Thursday 11th November 2021 respectively.

Post-Production – Matthew Bennett
Vocal Consultant – David Lowe
Reader for the First Lesson – Manal Patel
Reader for the Second Lesson – Samuel Moore
Dean (Prayers) – The Rev'd Canon Mark Oakley
Project Manager – James Beddoe

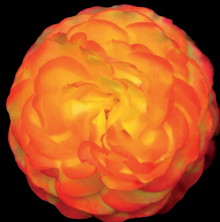
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AWARD-WINNING RECORDINGS FROM THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Latest Release ***The Tree*** SIGCD691

An album of live performances that presents a range of choral textures conducted by three St John's Directors of Music, building from a single treble line to a massed choir and congregation of hundreds at our 2019 Reunion Evensong.

Gramophone
Editor's Choice ***Magnificat 2*** SIGCD667

"These are inspirational performances, music wonderfully shaped and words unflinchingly invested with meaning" *Opera Today*

"A package that no lover of the Anglican choral tradition will want to miss" *BBC Music Magazine*

"They're on cracking form right now... there's that sort of earthy ferocity that is totally exhilarating... the control, the pianissimo and the clarity this recording brings is magnificent" *BBC Radio 3 Record Review*

"This choir's singular qualities – responsiveness, sophistication of line and texture and a chameleonic stylistic acumen that never loses sight of its own core, identifying sound – are all in play here" *Gramophone*

Advent Live - Volume 2 SIGCD661

"It is a real album, the mystery and expectation of Advent coursing through a repertoire that never stoops below this ensemble's judicious idea of what constitutes high-quality music, whatever the century... The qualities of the choir hardly need repeating" *Gramophone*

"The fantastic balance of anthems, hymns and organ music leaps out in this arresting, fabulously performed Advent programme" *BBC Music Magazine*

Gramophone
Editor's Choice

Michael Finnissy – *Pious Anthems & Voluntaries* SIGCD624

★★★★★ "The sequence maintains a powerfully communicative grip..."

The choir makes the music sound as lived-in as Byrd or Howells"

BBC Music Magazine

Finalist (Contemporary)
Gramophone Awards 2021

"Essential listening" *Planet Hugill*

BBC Music Magazine
Choral & Song Choice

★★★★★ "Exquisitely beautiful, sensual music" *Choir & Organ*

"An 84-minute work that might well change your listening life" *Classical Music*

Top Ten Recording
of the Year Europadisc

"This is some of the most compelling music written for the 'English choral tradition' in many years... the results are infinitely rewarding" *Europadisc*

Ash Wednesday SIGCD605

"The malleable, sensitive trebles have what seems to me an unparalleled ability to invest text and phrase with meaning" *Gramophone*

"It's the most glorious, glorious music making" *BBC Radio 3, Record Review*

„Vor allem das *Miserere mei, Deus* von Allegri und Byrds überwältigende Motette *Ne Irascaris, Domine* gehen unter die Haut, genau wie das zum Schluss erklingende *e-Moll Präludium für Orgel* von Johann Sebastian Bach" (Above all, the *Miserere mei, Deus* by Allegri and Byrd's overwhelming motet *Ne Irascaris, Domine* get under the skin, as indeed does Johann Sebastian Bach's *Prelude in E minor*, heard at the end) *Südwest-Presse* (Germany)

★★★★★ "Exceptionally satisfying. Bravo. Bravissimo" *AllMusic*

Gramophone Editor's Choice **Magnificat** SIGCD588
"extreme perception of blend (vowel and timbre), words and phrasing; a true ensemble" *Gramophone*

★★★★★ "A fascinating hour's music" *Choir & Organ*

« Superbe. Les petits trebles sont en grande forme » *Diapason (France)*

"A finely calibrated sense of tone colour. Don't miss it" *Limelight (Australia)*

Gramophone Editor's Choice **Locus Iste** SIGCD567
★★★★★ "a glint of sunlight, inspired and inspiring" *BBC Music Magazine*
"Beautifully captured" *BBC Radio 3, Record Review*

"This disc really soars" *Gramophone*

Advent Live SIGCD535

"Under Andrew Nethsingha's inspired direction, the choir has retained its renowned clarity, flamboyance and readiness to take risks" *Gramophone*

"Sung with typical St John's verve and character, this superbly programmed collection will take your Advent listening in unexpected, but entirely apposite, directions" *BBC Music Magazine*

BBC Music Magazine Choral & Song Choice **Vaughan Williams – Mass in G Minor** SIGCD541
★★★★★ "Formidably attractive" *BBC Music Magazine*

"Director Andrew Nethsingha shapes a performance of profound dignity and power, beautifully sung by this always impressive choir" *The Guardian*

"The choral recordings that St John's College Choir have released on this label so far have been uniformly excellent, and this is another golden string to add to their bow" *MusicWeb International*

Poulenc | Kodály | Janáček – KYRIE SIGCD489
"The treble voices of St John's bring an ineffably poised gravity... a signal virtue of this new recording is the moulded caress of every luscious harmony in what are predominantly homophonic works" *Gramophone*

"These two contrasting masses and Janáček's *Lord's Prayer* (Otče náš) are sung with characteristic 'European' ripeness of tone and precision by the choir of St John's College" *The Observer*

★★★★★ "...a superb reading from Nethsingha and his forces... Throughout, the choir sing with their justly famed blend and perfect intonation. An essential disc..." *Choir & Organ*

Christmas with St John's SIGCD458

"Under Nethsingha, St John's Choir rides high among the Cambridge colleges... Nethsingha's programming is eclectic while retaining a 'traditional' core" *The Sunday Times*

"A fine showcase of a choir on the top of its form" *planethugill*

"proving yet again, they are as good as it gets" *Classic FM*

"it's a sign of how classy and successful a programme has been compiled, that Michael Finnissy's John the Baptist fits so well into the weave of Christmas with St John's" *Gramophone*

"showcases a choir and its director who are currently in very fine fettle indeed." *MusicWeb International*

"a meticulously sung carol collection from the always classy choir of St John's... shimmering tone clusters and delicious suspensions" *The Guardian*

"an evocatively sung collection...glowing with devotional joy, wonder and a kaleidoscope of colours and emotions" *Choir & Organ*

BBC Music Magazine
Award Winner

Jonathan Harvey – DEO SIGCD456

★★★★★ “ecstatic...the Choir tackles it all with confidence and clarity”

The Observer

Gramophone
Editor's Choice

★★★★★ “characterful yet authoritative performances of which they can be
justly proud” *Choir & Organ*



© James Beddoe

*The choir is welcomed by students at Raffles Girls' School, on a tour to Singapore a short while before this recording was made.
29th March 2018*

KYRIE
POULENC | KODÁLY | JANÁČEK
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



PIOUS ANTHEMS & VOLUNTARIES
FINNISSY | NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



DEO | HARVEY
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



MAGNIFICAT
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



LOCUS ISTE
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



CHRISTMAS WITH ST JOHN'S
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



ADVENT LIVE
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
MASS IN G MINOR
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



ASH WEDNESDAY
NETHSINGHA

THE CHORUS OF
ST JOHN'S
CAMBRIDGE



A BBC recording