THE CHOIR OF STJOHN'S CAMBRIDGE MAGNIFICAT 4 NETHSINGHA

MAGNIFICAT 4

	Anna Semple (b. 1997)			Adrian Cruft (1921-1987)	
_ 1	Nunc Dimittis	[7.47]		Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis	
	Judith Weir (b. 1954)			Collegium Regale	
	Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis		9	Magnificat	[3.22]
	St John's Service *		10	Nunc Dimittis	[2.37]
2	Magnificat	[3.39]		Herbert Howells (1892-1983)	
3	Nunc Dimittis	[3.09]		Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis in E (19	935)
	I			for Tenors & Basses	
	Jonathan Dove (b. 1959)		11	Magnificat	[6.18]
	Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis St John's Service *		12	Nunc Dimittis	[3.09]
4	-	[5.57]		Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-192	14)
5	_ 0	[3.54]		, ,	· · *)
	Nuite Diffittis	[3.54]	13	Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis in G Magnificat	[4.26]
	Herbert Howells (1892-1983)		14	Nunc Dimittis	[4.39]
	Te Deum			Nuile Dimitus	[4.37]
	Collegium Regale			Herbert Murrill (1909-1952)	
6	Te Deum	[8.50]		Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis in E	
	Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (b. 1971)		15	Magnificat	[4.07]
	Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis		16	Nunc Dimittis	[2.58]
	King's College Service			Piers Connor Kennedy (b. 1991)	
7	_ 0 0	[4.06]		Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis	
8	_ 0	[2.58]		Worcester Service	
		1	17	Magnificat	[4.45]
			18	Nunc Dimittis	[3.01]
* (Commissioned for the College Choir			Total timings:	1.09.32]

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE GEORGE HERBERT ORGAN | ALEXANDER SEMPLE VIOLIN TRACK! | ANDREW NETHSINGHA DIRECTOR

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CONDUCTOR'S REFLECTIONS

For the last volume of my Magnificat series with St John's College Choir we include a number of contemporary pieces. Piers Connor Kennedy was a member of the Choir early in our partnership with Signum. Anna Semple was recently a student at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Joanna Forbes L'Estrange was the founder of our all-women a cappella group at St John's, 'Aguila'. Every volume of this series has included a work written for St John's; the present album contains two such commissions, by Judith Weir and Jonathan Dove. Each of the four volumes has included one of the twenty settings of the Evening Canticles written by Herbert Howells. I believe that this is the first recording of the original version of Howells in E (written for tenors and basses, but subsequently adapted by John Buttrey to include altos). It is the first of four settings by Howells that received first performances in Westminster Abbey, another having appeared on Volume 3. On this occasion we also include the most famous setting by Howells of a morning canticle. At the centre of the album is a group of three contrasting works all written for King's College, Cambridge. These are followed by an iconic work by Howells' teacher, C.V. Stanford.

It is now six years since we recorded the first volume of the Magnificat series - it has been created before and after the pandemic. The choice of works in Volume One had an autobiographical slant - all composers were associated with places where I had worked or studied. For this final volume I am pleased to include a particular favourite of mine, Murrill in E, which featured in my late father's wonderful Argo recording 'Sing joyfully'. That recording was chosen as Critics' Choice in Gramophone magazine in 1965. The reviewer, Geoffrey Cuming, described it as 'the most attractive post-Stanford setting I have yet come across, completely avoiding the Anglican smugness that Vaughan Williams so much disliked.' I hope listeners might feel smugness to be absent in some other tracks as well! The series ends as it began, revelling in the extraordinary variety of approaches which composers have taken to two timeless texts - the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis.

This is the last of my own recordings to be released at St John's. My successor, Christopher Gray, is already doing extraordinary work in taking the Choir to a new level. I want to say an enormous thank you to all who have supported me in the series of Signum recordings at St John's. It is not possible to name everyone here, but both

Deans of Chapel have been very great advocates of the recordings - Duncan Dormor and Mark Oakley - as have two College Masters, the late Sir Christopher Dobson and Heather Hancock. We wish Mark Oakley well as he embarks on his exciting new chapter as Dean of Southwark. When we started off with the Jonathan Harvey recording in 2015 it was an extraordinary privilege to begin a long partnership with two of the giants of the recording industry - Chris Hazell and Simon Eadon. I also owe a huge amount to Matthew Bennett and Dave Rowell. Steve Long and his team at Signum have been incredibly supportive - never saying 'no' to repertoire, however outlandish, and endlessly tolerant when I keep missing deadlines. Of course there are many generations of Choristers, Choral Scholars and Organ Scholars to thank, alongside Fellows and Staff of the College and the College School. Many have contributed articles and programme notes to the booklets, including another illuminating piece from Andrew Hammond in the present volume. My thanks go to George Herbert for his superb notes on the music of this album, and for the generous words in his last paragraph. People have worked very hard in the Choir Office to make it all possible. James Beddoe coordinated the production of many of our recordings, and

he has more recently been succeeded by Joseph Hancock. Above all I want to thank Caroline Marks. As the indefatigable and self-effacing Choir Administrator, Caroline has been at the heart of the Choir's life for longer than anyone since the great George Guest. Caroline is hugely loved and admired by all who have been associated with St John's College Choir. She has recently taken her well-deserved retirement in which we wish her good health and happiness. I dedicate this final recording to Caroline, with thanks and admiration.

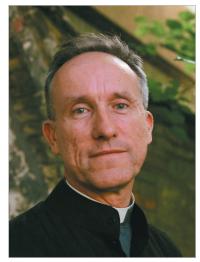
Andrew Nethsingha

THE CANTICLES

If the psalms are the arteries of Evensong, the canticles are the lungs. This is not an image to be laboured, but it is a vital reminder that the daily liturgy of the Church has a dynamic life. It is not a static, fixed thing, whatever the intentions of Cranmer and his Elizabethan successors. The structure may be fixed – and in a rigorously simple way. Cranmer snarled wittily in the Prologue to the Book of Common Prayer about the Catholic edifice of daily prayer: many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found

out. But what his structure allows is scripture to do what it does. It allows it because it is almost wholly built on biblical texts, used directly or by inspiration. And scripture being scripture, it will not be hemmed in or held back by any human imposition or artifice, even when constructed by an Archbishop of Cranmer's literary genius. Those who experience the beauty and discipline of established liturgies are immersing themselves in the full spectrum of the Bible's power: there is encouragement and challenge, joy and fear, conviction and mystery, story and poetry. There is very limited scope for choosing your favourite bits to suit your theological predilections: and especially when the canticles are simply compulsory!

Indeed, at Evening Prayer—'Evensong' when sung—while the psalms and Bible readings vary daily, usually according to a pre-determined order or 'lectionary', the canticles remain, unchanging. Cranmer re-worked the older services (or 'offices', as they are known in Church terminology) of Vespers and Compline (the evening and night offices) combining them into one. The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were the principal canticles at Vespers and Compline, respectively. Bringing them together in one service of Evening Prayer providentially gave a particular critical mass to the new office. They are 'gospel canticles',



The Rev'd Andrew Hammond

Bible texts rendered into liturgical song-form and with the pre-eminence of being from the gospels. That is why we customarily stand up for them.

There were canticles aplenty in the traditional daily offices, drawn from across the Old and New Testaments, and they were used in sequence with the daily provision of psalms. But the

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gospel canticles—the Benedictus in the morning and the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in the evening—remained constant. Cranmer retained these, though with alternatives. In the Evening those are the Cantate Domino (Psalm 98) and Deus Misereatur (Psalm 67), which have lived on in said Evening Prayer rather than in composed settings for Evensong. At Morning Prayer, as well as the Benedicitus there are three other canticles: the Benedicite, the Te Deum laudamus and the Jubilate. Of these the Benedicite is perhaps the least often said or sung, if only because of its length and repetitive text. Interestingly the Benedictus has not achieved the sine qua non status of the evening gospel canticles.

A setting of the Te Deum is included on this recording. The Te Deum is an emphatically powerful song of praise, and not a biblical text. It is a Christian hymn from no later than the fourth century of the Church, and so began its life in Latin. Over the centuries it has been used not just in the daily office, but as a stand-alone central text of any special liturgy of praise and thanksgiving: say in response to a victory in war or a royal birth. Something of this kind is happening at the end of Act 1 of Puccini's 'Tosca', for example. It has inspired many musical settings, some as concert pieces of considerable magnitude.

Essays written for the previous St John's Choir 'Magnificat' recordings by Rowan Williams, Mark Oakley and Lucy Winkett all give fascinating interpretive insights into the texts of the two canticles. You can find them online if you do not have the recordings - yet! Among other things they note in the two canticles the beautiful contrasts between a holy woman and a holy man, between a very young, pregnant country-woman and a very old priest of the Jewish Temple. They also note the very different characteristics of the two canticles: the Magnificat with its clarion, revolutionary passion and the Nunc Dimittis with its gently content relinquishing of this life. A shout and a sigh, perhaps.

For Christians you might also say that the canticles tell us something about how to live and how to die. Both stories are from the earliest chapters of Luke's gospel; but their resonance, their meaning, their application reaches through the succeeding narrative and into the life of the Church and of every individual Christian. Mary's song moves from astonishment at the privilege which has come upon her, to a clear-eyed vision of what that tells us about God's demands of human living. It harks back to the prophets' denunciations of hard-hearted, legalistic religious observance: no amount of sacrifices can make

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up for disregarding the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger. And it harks forward to a similar prophetic challenge in Jesus' teaching.

Then Simeon's song, with crystalline brevity, recognises what this tiny child will mean: a light for the whole world, and glory for the Israel who gave him to the world. That light and glory are only achieved at the other end of Jesus' earthly story, in his death and resurrection, his glorification. It is in the light of that glory that we can live well enough to die well. At every Evensong we wait to hear that climactic word 'glory', sung with whatever coruscation of colours the composer's twist on the kaleidoscope has yielded.

The Rev'd Andrew Hammond Chaplain, St John's College

MUSICAL NOTES

The *Magnificat* recording project offers a unique window into the daily liturgical life of St John's College Choir which it is difficult for other albums, with the possible exception of *The Psalms*, to achieve. Throughout this album series, we have surveyed many of the core works of the Anglican repertoire, and we continue that

pattern here, but *Magnificat 4* looks ahead more than its predecessors. Half of the composers who feature here are living, and we hear canticle settings by female composers for the first time. As we expand our repertoire further into the twenty-first century, we hope to show that the canticles show no sign of becoming stale, but that they continue to live and grow in musicians' minds.

SEMPLE - NUNC DIMITTIS (2020)



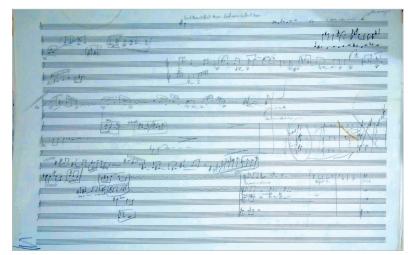
Anna Semple.

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Alexander Bu

Semple wrote her imaginative, atmospheric Nunc Dimittis for The Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, when it was Choir and Organ magazine's New Music partner institution. In Psalm 150 we are encouraged to 'praise Him upon the strings and pipe', and so we do with Semple's inclusion of a violin part - played here by her brother Alexander, a bass in our Choir.

The music begins with a poised, searching violin solo. Discussing the haunting treble solo in Sir Michael Tippett's Nunc Dimittis for St John's, George Guest wrote: 'is it too fanciful to suggest that Simeon conceived [the words], was too weak to utter them, but that they were plucked out of his brain (by an angel), and articulated?'. In Semple's setting, the violin seems wordlessly to play a similar role: perhaps through its big



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Composer's manuscript sketches. With thanks to Anna Semple.

upward jumps we see Simeon's soul leaping out of his dying body, dancing to its destination.

Semple uses aleatoric, or chance-based, composition. She writes boxes with a number of pitches within them, and instructs the singers to perform them in any order or rhythm. At other times, she sets a line of text under a single note, indicating that it should be delivered quickly and independently of other singers, 'like a whisper'. There is an almost Pentecostal effect as the texture builds from a lone tenor intoning 'Lord' to all singers chanting out of time with each other. The shimmering sonorities Semple invites make the Chapel alive; the sound appears to emanate from the walls of the building.

This recording session was the first to include girls in the treble line, and we recorded one boy and one girl singing the final high treble notes. I wonder how many listeners will be able to tell with certainty which take we used in the end.

WEIR - ST JOHN'S SERVICE (2011)

Judith Weir was spurred on in this commission for the College's 500th anniversary by Tippett's St John's Service, which was written for the 450th. Weir's setting is amazingly original, despite using



Judith Weir.

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apparently simple means. Robin Holloway, Weir's composition teacher at Cambridge, wrote that her music is 'made up of very spare, beautiful images, precise and delicate'.

She begins with an uncomplicated texture with the unusual sonority of two parts in interlocking

octaves. Each canticle is in one simple metre and does not change time signature, but her use of rhythm is unpredictable, with hemiola effects and alternation between duplet, triplet and dotted quavers. She fills her scores with detailed, highly effective dynamics. Weir returns to E flat major at the end of every main section of the Magnificat, except for the final cadence before the Gloria, which is in C major, and the final 'Amen', which she sets to a sparse open fifth over C

The Nunc Dimittis is texturally and harmonically rich, with altos and basses both dividing in the Gloria. Like the Magnificat, the piece concludes on a soft bare fifth, this time over A. In each Gloria, the music folds in on itself: Weir allows the music to surrender to the silence that follows, which is then picked up by the next piece of spoken liturgy. Herein lies the quality of selflessness to which the best church music aspires.



First pages of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis from Judith Weir's St John's Service. With thanks to Judith Weir.



DOVE - ST JOHN'S SERVICE (2022)

I recently worked with a composer who said that the mark of a good composition teacher is that their students don't sound like each other: Robin Holloway taught both Weir and Dove, but these two sets of canticles contrast in most ways! Dr Kamal and Mrs Anna Ahuja, who commissioned these canticles, are loyal supporters of the Choir. This setting is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Sir Christopher Dobson, Master of St John's College from 2007-2019, who was a beloved member of College and hugely supportive of the Chapel and its music.

Dove's brief was to write a set of canticles that would be lively, popular amongst singers, and that would not demand lots of practice, such that cathedral choirs with little rehearsal time could use it. The glistening chordal opening creates a musical 'halo' like Jesus' recitatives in J.S. Bach's St Matthew Passion. The fizzing organ ostinato and dancing vocal lines that follow are similar to the Gloria from Dove's Missa Brevis. Much like the Gloria, the Magnificat becomes calmer and smoother in the middle ('he hath filled the hungry'), before the final section returns to the lively music of the opening. The Nunc Dimittis is based on the same 2+2+3 ostinato as the

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Jonathan Dove.

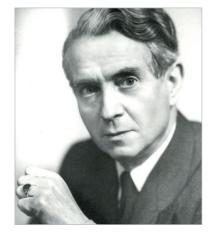
Magnificat, but at a slower tempo and without constant quaver movement. The lilting rhythm and the rich, slow-moving harmony of this canticle rock Simeon into his rest. Reversing the structure of the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis reaches a very loud climax at 'and to be the glory of Thy people Israel', before returning to a gentle lullaby for the Gloria.

HOWELLS - TE DEUM COLLEGIUM REGALE (1944)

Whilst he was Acting Organist at St John's during World War 2, Herbert Howells was challenged by the Dean of King's College, Eric Milner-White, to write a Te Deum. He met the task, and his famous evening canticles for King's followed shortly after. This precipitated a creative period of canticle-writing that saw his settings for Gloucester and St Paul's Cathedrals, amongst many others. Milner-White wrote to Howells: 'By these last two services of yours [the settings for King's and Gloucester], I personally feel that you have opened a wholly new chapter in Service, perhaps in Church, music. Of spiritual moment rather than liturgical.'

The composer had an uncanny ability to respond to architecture musically. In his notes for *Magnificat 1*, Andrew Nethsingha describes how walking through Gloucester Cathedral and experiencing the light from the Great East Window is 'perfectly replicated in the soaring arches' of Howells' Gloucester Service. This Te Deum vividly realises the grand sweep of King's College Chapel, the glistening quality of light from its windows, and the spaciousness of its high fan-vaulted ceiling. Long, broad unison

melodies, cresting higher and higher peaks with each successive phrase, run throughout the piece. The *piano* treble line in 'Vouchsafe, O Lord' hangs high in the air like incense over the low organ notes. A tidal harmonic and dynamic build, that could only be by Howells, leads us into the blazing sunlight of the final declaration 'let me never be confounded'.



Herbert Howells. Image kindly provided by the Herbert Howells Society. Howells appears in this image wearing the ring bequeathed to him by his teacher at the Royal College of Music, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.



First page of Howells' Te Deum (Collegium Regale). By kind permission of the Herbert Howells Trust. Made available by King's College, Rowe Music Library (manuscript 52).

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FORBES L'ESTRANGE - KING'S COLLEGE SERVICE (2019)

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange's setting was commissioned by Ben Parry for King's Voices, the mixed-voice chapel choir at King's College. Throughout this setting Forbes L'Estrange reveals her gift for melody, a musical parameter which has been undervalued by some musical commentators in the last few decades. In the rehearsal process, Andrew described how certain composers write tunes which encourage musicians to sing in a particularly warm, expressive way. The opening lines of Forbes L'Estrange's canticles have this effect, and were a good vehicle for honing the Choristers' sound. She sets 'scattered the proud' quasionomatopoeically: each voice part enunciates its 'T' at different times over four quavers. Her setting is appealingly undemonstrative, and the lilting syncopations in the organ part are reminiscent of Dyson's Evening Service in F.

These rhythms return in the Nunc Dimittis, though they are now funereal: slow and in the relative minor key. A plaintive tenor and bass melody precedes SATB singing over a circle of fifths; the inevitability of this harmonic sequence is reassuring and consolatory, as one might hope



Joanna Forbes L'Estrange.

funeral music to be. She sets 'and to be the glory' in a musical sequence, the second iteration lower and softer than the first; the music turns in on itself before the Gloria returns to the lyrical opening of the Magnificat.

CRUFT - COLLEGIUM REGALE (1970)

Adrian Cruft's canticles for King's College, part of his large corpus of sacred music, were preceded by an earlier setting from the early 1960s. Cruft, a professional double-bassist, studied with his father Eugene, one of the leading bassists of his generation, though his earliest musical training was as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, where he was two years David Willcocks' junior. Willcocks later became Director of Music at King's College, in which role in commissioned Cruft's Collegium Regale canticles.

The striking opening organ gesture pithily encapsulates the essence of what is to follow. The four-note pedal motif runs through both canticles from beginning to end. The semitone intervals of the four pedal notes are answered by bitonal chords in E flat and D. This unusual gesture is a challenging gambit compared to more lyrical, consonant settings, and emphasises the revolutionary character of the text. Bitonal interjections in the organ punctuate the Magnificat and Glorias. Cruft's training with Rubbra and Gordon Jacob and the influence of other British composers, in particular Holst's use of bitonality, run through the work.



Adrian Cruft

Each composer finds a different way to structure the text. Cruft, who sang these words every day as a chorister, highlights the parallel between 'and his mercy is on them that fear him' and 'he remembering his mercy' with fluid polyphony.

Fritz Curzon/Arena

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The false relations in the Nunc Dimittis point to the importance of Tudor polyphony to his musical imagination - he was a chorister during the Tudor music revival.

Although the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians describes Cruft's style as traditional and straight-forward, compared to other sacred music his musical language is rather less standard.

HOWELLS - SERVICE IN E (1935)

This setting of the canticles is one of Howells' earliest. It was dedicated to Ernest Bullock, then Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, where Howells' ashes lie next to Stanford's and Vaughan Williams'. Howells was one of Andrew's predecessors at St John's, and taught the late Lucian Nethsingha at the Royal College of Music.

In this setting for tenors and basses, Howells experiments with the musical language that would eventually define his most well-known settings. We hear gradual harmonic builds, his characteristic dotted rhythms, and lyrical, modal melodies. The work is rather fragmentary, with substantial gaps between sections which are uncommon in his mature settings. Howells

expands and contracts the choral texture sensitively to complement the text, creating an unusual, expressive sound world of luscious divisi harmony at 'shall call me blessed' and 'Abraham and his seed for ever'. The canonic beginning of the Nunc Dimittis is sinuous and dark. We see Howells experiment with the large-scale crescendo structure which we hear in his St Paul's Service Nunc Dimittis (amongst others) later in his career: Howells builds unremittingly to the Gloria, where he reinvents the melodic material of the opening canon in confident unison.

STANFORD - SERVICE IN G (1902)

The Musical Times wrote that Stanford never adhered to the compositional school that tried to make voices work like instruments; this Magnificat is a clear example. The treble soloist soars above the intricate, rippling organ part which would be at home in a Schubert song.

In the opening verses of the Magnificat, the soloist sings the sections in the first person whilst the chorus responds with the third person text. Many settings of the Magnificat revert to full choir after a few verses of treble solo or upper voices only, but this setting keeps the treble soloist distinct throughout: Mary's voice rings



Charles Villiers Stanford

out above all the rest. This setting suggests the atmosphere of an intimate Evensong service with a small congregation: our treble soloist sings gently to himself, whilst the rest of us simply eavesdrop.

Stanford's Nunc Dimittis, in its simplicity and tranquility, is uniquely beautiful. The bass melody is perfectly balanced in its arch shapes. After Simeon's final dying words, the choir then repeats his opening plea, recontextualised now as a prayer for his soul from those by his side. In the Gloria, a tender lullaby in triple-time, Simeon is carried away by floating angels. The same device used by Howells to portray the grandeur of King's College Chapel, a unison melody, is used by Stanford in a totally different way to invite a precious quality of weightlessness. By the Gloria we are no longer on Earth, but instead join the departed Simeon's soul in Paradise.

MURRILL - SERVICE IN E (1946)

Herbert Murrill began his career as Organ Scholar at Worcester College, Oxford. After graduating, he worked as a school teacher and choirmaster, before leaving to take up work as Music Director of the Group Theatre in London, where he worked with notable creative figures like W.H. Auden and Benjamin Britten. He worked at the BBC from 1936, becoming Head of Music in 1950 before his premature death to cancer in 1952. Andrew chose this setting for his final service of Evensong at St John's.

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Herbert Murrill. Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders of material reproduced in this product. We would be pleased to rectify any omissions in subsequent editions of this electronic product should they be drawn to our attention.

Murrill takes us flowingly and concisely through an array of moods and characters: from the confidence of the opening and the fragility of

'and holy is his name', to the prayerfulness of he remembering his mercy'. Some composers who do not often write liturgical music fall short when it comes to pacing the text. Murrill's Nunc Dimittis is masterfully structured, without being attention-seeking. After a sweeping opening, the organ begins to smoulder, leading us to C major for 'to be a light to lighten the Gentiles', before building yet further to 'and to be the glory' in E major. The unwinding of the music as Murrill repeats 'Thy people Israel' returns us to the prayerful atmosphere of the start, before unleashing a rejoicing Gloria. This first-rate structure appears simple, yet is difficult to achieve - it is easy to underestimate the skill involved in writing an excellent set of canticles.

KENNEDY - WORCESTER SERVICE (2015)

Piers Connor Kennedy wrote this setting whilst he was a Choral Scholar at Worcester Cathedral. Kennedy describes the 'dark, moody intimacy' of the Quire at the Cathedral as the atmosphere he seeks to evoke. There is a quality of timelessness in Kennedy's music as he paints a picture of 'clouds passing over the moon' (his words). His simple melodies and unfussy six-part homophony are reminiscent of plainchant, as is



Piers Connor Kennedy.

the use of Latin and the rhythmic flexibility of his oscillations between triplet and duplet quavers. Regular rests, which Kennedy said should have a feeling of latent movement flowing through them, give the music a meditative rhythm; each vocal phrase after a rest feels like a new verse of a

psalm. Kennedy understands the subtle beauties that different spacings of chords can provide: the stressed first syllable of the word 'meo' ('my') is a six-note chord with a glimmering cluster at the top, whilst the unstressed second syllable is set more thinly. Kennedy's setting inspires a real feeling of worship and understatement; there is not one moment in these canticles where either he or the singers show off. It is clear that the feeling of daily liturgy and sacred spaces is under his skin. His music, like Weir's, evaporates into the liturgical silence that follows.

Kennedy's setting brings Andrew Nethsingha's body of recordings with St John's College Choir to a characteristically humble close: when I asked what organ voluntary Andrew would like for his final service at St John's, he did not opt for a flashy toccata as some might, but rather for Bach's short, quiet chorale prelude Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier. He taught all of us lucky enough to be his pupils that no individual is more important than the liturgy we serve. As Mark Oakley, our former Dean, put it, Andrew's creativity 'never points back at himself'; rather, 'he wants the music to pray, to voice the human heart'. Andrew inspires music and kindness in those who work with him. and has shown generations of his pupils at St John's just how transformative daily sung liturgy

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can be. It is difficult to overstate the gratitude which all who have worked with Andrew have for him, and impossible to guess the number of lives he has touched with his gifts here.

George Herbert

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

MAGNIFICAT

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his hand-maiden For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name. And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations. He hath 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 bath 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

NUNC DIMITTIS

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

TE DEUM

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord

All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting.

To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein.

To thee cherubin and seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory. The glorious company of the apostles praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee. The noble army of martyrs praise thee. The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee:

the Father of an infinite majesty; thine honourable, true and only Son; also the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people and bless thine heritage. Govern them and lift them up for ever.

Day by day we magnify thee; and we worship thy name, ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our

O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded

Traditional prayer c. 4th century

trust is in thee.

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ALSO AVAILABLE



SUBITO SIGCD486

"The appeal here, quite aside from some excellent playing, is in the way the programme has been planned... Julia Hwang is a model of expressive purity in the solo part [of The Lark Ascending] while Charles Matthews provides her with an appropriately stilled accompaniment"

Gramophone



DIE SCHÖNE MÜLLERIN

"This is often a beguiling — and well-recorded — album. The countertenor's fans need not hesitate, and adventurous Schubertians might well also want to seek it out for a fresh perspective on this familiar work"

Gramophone

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE 2021 - 2022

CRUFT, FORBES L'ESTRANGE, HOWELLS, KENNEDY, MURRILL, SEMPLE, STANFORD, WEIR

Trebles

Felix Bamford Ingrid Birchall Arthur Cobb Amelia Crichton-Stuart Angus Crichton-Stuart Ioshua Davidson George Ducker 7 Nicholas Garcia Gabriel Gritten Martha Gritten Caspar Johnson Kevin Ke Charles Lipscomb Kieran McGurran Lucas Nair-Grepinet 7,13 Ivan Popov Samuel Smith Montague Tatnell Aiden Wee

Altos

Altos
Alasdair Austin
Francis Bamford
Richard Decker ⁷
Hannah Dienes-Williams ⁺
Alec D'Oyly
Guy James ⁺
Thomas Lilburn ⁺
Hamish McLaren ⁺

Tenors
James Gant

Joseph Hancock ¹⁰ Hamish MacGregor Euan O'Connor Carlos Rodríguez Otero Louis Watkins ⁺ Joseph Wicks ⁺

Basses

Gregory Bannan ⁺ Thomas Butler Alexander Hopkins ¹⁴ David McIntyre Henry Montgomery Oliver Morris ⁺ Alexander Semple ⁸ Max Todes George Vines

Herbert Howells Organ Scholar

George Herbert

Junior Organ Scholar Alex Trigg

- This organist was playing for the recording
- * Deputy singer for some tracks Numbers indicate soloist credits for each track

THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE 2022 – 2023

Trebles

Aiden Wee

Ingrid Birchall Arthur Cobb Amelia Crichton-Stuart Angus Crichton-Stuart Nicholas Garcia Gabriel Gritten Martha Gritten Caspar Johnson Kevin Ke Charles Lipscomb Kieran McGurran Samuel Smith Montague Tatnell ⁴

Altos

Alasdair Austin Olivia Hawkins Alice Hilder-Jarvis Alice Markham Matthew Monaghan

Tenors

James Gant Joseph Hancock Theodore Horch Garbhán McEnoy Carlos Rodríguez Otero ⁴

Basses

Jonathan Hatley David McIntyre John Moore Henry Montgomery Alexander Semple ⁴ Max Todes

George Butler

Assistant Organist

George Herbert

Herbert Howells Organ Scholar Alexander Robson

* This organist was playing for the recording Numbers indicate soloist credits for each track



The Choir in December 2022 after the final recording session with former Director of Music, Andrew Nethsingha.

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THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE. CAMBRIDGE

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 Christopher Gray who follows a long line of eminent Directors of Music, recently Dr George Guest, Dr Christopher Robinson, Dr David Hill, and Andrew Nethsingha.

The Choir is made up of around 20 Choristers and Probationers who are educated at St John's College School and around 16 adult altos, tenors and basses who are members of the University of Cambridge. The Choir's primary purpose is to enhance the liturgy and worship at daily services in the College Chapel. The Choir has a diverse repertoire spanning over 500 years and is renowned for championing contemporary music by commissioning new works. Recent collaborating artists have included Jonathan Dove, Iain Farrington, David Nunn, Helen

Grime, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Judith Bingham, Julian Anderson, Anna Semple, Katrina Toner, Ignacio Mañá Mesas and Cecilia McDowall. The Choir also enjoys joining 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 webcasts, available at www.sicchoir.co.uk. It has also livestreamed 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 recordings each year. In May 2016 the College launched its 'St John's Cambridge' recording label in conjunction with Signum Classics. Since then 17 Choir albums have been released, including single composer albums of music by Jonathan Harvey (BBC Music Magazine Award winner), Ralph Vaughan Williams and Michael Finnissy, two of which were shortlisted for Gramophone Awards. In addition to these albums, there have been a further three Magnificat albums of varied Evensong Canticles, an anthem compilation Locus Iste, masses by Poulenc and Kodály, a live anthology The Tree, a Psalms collection, and seasonal albums for Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday and Eastertide.

The Choir also performs concerts outside of Cambridge and tours internationally each year. Recent destinations have included the USA, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Denmark, 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.

GEORGE HERBERT Organ

George was born in Manchester in 2001, and his passion for music was kindled in earnest when he became a chorister at Manchester Cathedral. He joined Chetham's School of Music at this time too, where he studied the trumpet after leaving the Cathedral Choir. George spent four years at St John's College, Cambridge, first as Organ Scholar studying Music and German, and latterly as Assistant Organist. George lives in London, and works as Assistant Director of Music at His Majesty's Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace and as Deputy Organist at Westminster Abbey, alongside a diverse portfolio as a pianist, singer and animateur. He recently accompanied soprano in a new album for Signum Classics. In 2023 he won the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. George



George Herbert.

works regularly with the Royal Academy of Music, Kantos Chamber Choir and Tenebrae, and has enjoyed recent engagements with the Gabrieli Consort the Royal Northern College of Music and English National Opera. George is a passionate environmentalist, and wrote his final undergraduate dissertation on

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1980s East German environmental and foreign policy. From September 2024 he will be the Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford.

ALEXANDER SEMPLE VIOLIN

Alexander began playing the violin at the age of four with his teacher Jana Simms, before being accepted as a member of The Royal College of Music, Junior Department. Here, he studied under Ruth Palmer and then Dr. Felix Andrievsky, co-leading the Symphony Orchestra and winning the Freda Dinn and Ida Mabett String Prize following his string quartet's victory in the Chamber Music Competition. He has performed as a chamber musician, soloist and with orchestras in the UK's biggest venues, including the Royal Albert Hall, the Elgar Room (RAH), the Purcell Room (Southbank Centre), and St John's Smith Square. Alexander holds an undergraduate degree in Music from St John's College, Cambridge, where he spent three years as a Choral Scholar with the College Choir. He now sings as a Bass/Baritone Lay Clerk for St John's and hopes to pursue a career as a singer.



Alexander Semple.

ANDREW NETHSINGHA FORMER DIRECTOR OF MUSIC ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Performing in North America, South Africa, the Far East, and throughout Europe, Andrew Nethsingha was Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge from 2007 to 2022. He has released 30 albums with the Choir of St John's. 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. Eight recent albums have been 'Editor's Choice' in Gramophone Magazine. Pious Anthems & Voluntaries (music by Michael Finnissy) was runner-up in the Contemporary category of the 2021 Gramophone Awards. His announcement that St John's College Choir would start to include male and female voices, both adults and children, was hailed by Classic FM as "one of the 10 defining classical moments of 2021."

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,



Andrew Nethsingha.

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.

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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.

In January 2023 Andrew moved to a new post as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey. He directed the music for the Coronation of King Charles III and Oueen Camilla.

Acknowledgements

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









BBC Music Magazine Choral & Song Choice

> Choir & Organ Choral CD Choice

New Millennium SIGCD750

**** (Performance & Recording) "The album gives a remarkable overview of contemporary choral trends... The choir's musicianship is superb and its vocal balance perfectly calibrated; the textures vibrant and the sensuous beauty of the St John's Sound is expertly captured... A valuable addition to the choral library" BBC Music Magazine

***** "This superlative album represents Andrew Nethsingha's exploration of contemporary music during his 15 years as director of music at St John's College, Cambridge... the sequence is beautifully planned and feels seamless" Choir & Organ

"This generously filled disc...offers the richest spectrum of contemporary liturgical and organ-writing one could wish for, with some delightful surprises along the way...A resoundingly rewarding release with first-rate notes by Martin Ennis. Heartily recommended."

Gramophone

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Gramophone Editor's Choice Magnificat 3 SIGCD742

Gramophone Award Shortlist (Choral) September 2023 "What a wonderful performance: the dynamics, the contrasts, the utter confidence of the singing... Excellent solos, boys in great fettle, acoustic well-captured. It's a fine series, this: anyone who's ever sung or loved this kind of Anglican church music should be impatient for more"

BBC Radio 3 Record Review

"This ongoing series has not only been a beautifully prepared and sung tribute to the Anglican canticle tradition, but also to Andrew Nethsingha's brilliant leadership of music at St John's" *Gramophone*

Gramophone Critics' Choice & Editor's Choice

The Psalms SIGCD721

"The diction of the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge is so exquisitely perfect that one can take dictation from it, yet there is absolutely no sense of metronomic stiffness... Choral singing at this level of perfection can never be taken for granted" *Fanfare*

"Nethsingha and the Choir of St John's clearly recognise the importance of these liturgical poems-in-music: the performances here are evidence that they are guided by the principle that everything — metre, emphasis, lyricism, momentum, dynamics and clarity — plays an equally crucial role"

The Sunday Times

Europadisc Easter Highlight

Eastertide Evensong SIGCD707

***** "The results are extremely fine, with much attention to musical detail, clear diction, impeccable tuning and a well-balanced choral blend" *Choir & Organ*

"Nethsingha is his own man and absolutely his own musician, which is why his choir continues to evolve and lead" *Gramophone*

"For all devotees of choral evensong, this is an indispensable dise" Opera Today

The Tree SIGCD691

"The whole thing is a beautifully realised tribute to the history of the choir and its hope for the future" *BBC Record Review*

"[A] well-crafted and beautifully sung disc" BBC Music Magazine

***** "The outstanding quality of the singing and playing is the reason to buy this recording. Even something as straightforward as Stanford's 'A song of Wisdom' is given a ravishing performance" *Choir & Organ*

Gramophone Editor's Choice

Magnificat 2 SIGCD667

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

"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

Finalist (Contemporary) Gramophone Awards 2021

BBC Music Magazine Choral & Song Choice

> Europadisc Top Ten Recording of the Year

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

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

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

"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

**** "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)

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*

Poulenc | Kodály | Janáček – KYRIE SIGCD489

***** "...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

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

"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

> Gramophone Editor's and Critics' Choice

Jonathan Harvey - DEO SIGCD456

***** "ecstatic...the Choir tackles it all with confidence and clarity"

The Observer

★★★★ "characterful yet authoritative performances of which they can be justly proud" Choir & Organ



MAGNIFICAT 4

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THE CHOIR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE George Herbert Organ | Alexander Semple Violin Andrew Nethsingha Director

