

The Cherwell Singers

present

‘Sixty years a Queen’

A diamond retrospective of
music from royal occasions
1952-2012

James Brown

conductor

Steven Grahl

organ

Sunday, 1st July 2012
The Chapel of Exeter College, Oxford

Programme

1953: Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

Behold, O God our Defender

Herbert Howells

1960: Wedding of Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones

Psalm 23

Franz Schubert

1972: Silver Wedding of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip

Jubilate Deo in C

Benjamin Britten

~~*1977: Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II*~~

Sorry, mistake! – it was the Vaughan Williams setting in G in that service

Te Deum in C

Benjamin Britten

1986: Wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson

Organ Solo: Imperial March

Edward Elgar

1997: Funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts

Henry Purcell

Interval

1999: Wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones

Ubi Caritas

Maurice Duruflé

2000: 100th birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

The Lord bless you and keep you

John Rutter

2002: Funeral of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

Organ Solo: Prelude in E flat, BWV 552i Johann Sebastian Bach

2002: Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II

Let all the world in every corner sing Ralph Vaughan Williams

2006: 80th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Thomas Weelkes

2011: Wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton

Blest Pair of Sirens

C. Hubert H. Parry

Introduction

The Diamond Jubilee has provided an opportunity to perform much of the grand choral music for royal ceremonial, notably from the coronation service, despite the sixtieth anniversary of the coronation itself not falling until 2013. Rather than concentrating on one event, our concert instead provides a retrospective of music used during the major royal events during the Queen's reign thus far - weddings of members of the royal family, anniversaries, services of thanksgiving (including previous jubilees) and funerals. We present a piece from each of a number of occasions chronologically through the Queen's reign, starting in 1953 with the coronation and ending with the most recent royal wedding in 2011. Many of the pieces will be familiar, and include some of the best loved choral pieces known today. As you'd expect, British composers (such as Britten, Vaughan-Williams, Purcell and Parry) are heavily, but not exclusively, represented.

Organist Steven Grahl joins us once again, and his organ solos will attempt to capture the grandeur of the organs of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral.

We hope you will enjoy this evening in which we take a musical journey through the milestone royal events of the Queen's reign.

James Brown

Sixty years a Queen

In our survey of music used in ceremonial services during the Queen's reign, we will encounter music written for the occasion, music written for a previous occasion but found suitable for use at a later time, and music written with no thought of this kind of use.

We start with music written for the specific occasion. Several composers wrote new music for the Coronation at Westminster Abbey in 1953. Some was naturally bombastic, to suit the scale of the occasion, but much was balanced and thoughtful, as befits a church-based ceremony. **Herbert Howells** (1892-1983) is particularly notable for the luscious, even sensual, harmonies pervading his works - created by the carefully graded use of discords - and this introit, written for the coronation, is a fine example.

Behold, O God our Defender,
and look upon the face of thine Anointed.
For one day in thy courts
is better than a thousand*.

(*Psalm 84: 9-10*)

* *The Prayer Book version omits a word; read as: "is better than a thousand elsewhere".*

We move on to a wedding. Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones were married in 1960 at Westminster Abbey. During the prayers following the marriage itself, this setting of *Psalm 23* by **Franz Schubert** (1797-1828) was sung. Schubert wrote this setting in 1820, not for religious use, but for a friend to use as a test piece for her singing pupils! Although naturally this was originally written to a German translation of the psalm, an English translation was used on that occasion and so we are also performing it in English tonight.

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.
He maketh me to rest in green pastures: He leadeth me beside still waters.
He giveth peace unto my soul: He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through death's dark shadowed valley, yet I will fear no Evil:
for thou art with me still; Thy rod and staff, they comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table for me, in presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil, my cup runneth over.
Thy goodness and thy mercy, they shall ever follow me:
and I shall dwell with God for evermore.

(*Psalm 23*)

As well as forming part of specific events, ceremonies are held to celebrate earlier events and the passage of time. In 1972 the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh celebrated their Silver Wedding with a service at Westminster Abbey. The service included the *Jubilate in C* by **Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976), which had been written a dozen years earlier at the request of the Duke of Edinburgh for use in St George's Chapel, Windsor. The setting shows the simplicity that was one of Britten's hallmarks, the choral writing mainly being in just two parts, doubled by the high and low voices.

O BE joyful in the Lord, all ye lands :
serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves :
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise :
be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.
For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting :
and his truth endureth from generation to generation.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

(*Psalm 119: 33–38*)

In 1977 there was a service at St Paul's Cathedral as part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, ~~which included Britten's *Te Deum in C*~~. **Sorry, mistake! It was the Vaughan Williams setting in G at that service.** This was written much earlier than the *Jubilate in C*, in 1935. None the less, a similar simplicity of writing is apparent, in this case in the use of very simple and static harmonies. Variety is provided by shifting balance and texture, and a dissonant line running through, usually in the organ pedals.

The *Te Deum*, with its talk about the kingship of God, has been used on other royal occasions – such as the Diamond Jubilee service, when a setting by Vaughan Williams was sung.

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

(*St Ambrose and St Augustine, 339*)

1986 brought another royal wedding when Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson at Westminster Abbey. For processions, the organist played two marches by **Sir Edward Elgar** (1857-1934); the *Imperial March* and the *Triumphal March* from the cantata *Caractacus*. Elgar wrote the *Imperial March* for the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, and it clearly conveys the patriotic feeling of the times; this was indeed the piece that first made his name widely known. Over the next two decades Elgar (and Parry, as we will see later) wrote music which seems to encapsulate the grandeur of the expanding empire.

Henry Purcell (1659-1695) made several settings of the funeral sentences which begin the Order for the Burial of the Dead in the Book of Common Prayer, including two of *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*. Purcell's settings of the funeral sentences are often sung at royal funerals but this setting is the only one that was actually written for the funeral of Queen Mary II which they are usually associated with. It is a simple homophonic setting, and yet uniquely Purcellian in its poise, and was performed during the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997 at Westminster Abbey.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts;
Shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayer;
But spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty;
O holy and most merciful saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal,
suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.
Amen

(Burial Service, Book of Common Prayer)

In 1999 Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones were married at St George's Chapel, Windsor. After the lesson, *Ubi caritas* by **Maurice Duruflé** (1902-1986) was sung (it was also sung at the blessing of the wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles in 2005). This is one of a set of anthems based on the Gregorian chant appropriate for the words. Duruflé was a notable perfectionist in his composition, and only published fourteen works with opus numbers, of which the motets are opus 10, written in 1960. This and other settings of these words are often sung at weddings, not least because they are about love.

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor
Exsultemus et in ipso juncundemur
Timeamus et amenus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
Amen.

Where charity and love is, God is there.
We gather as one through Christ's love.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Let us fear and love the living God.
And may we love with a sincere heart.
Amen.

(Fourth-century hymn)

The hundredth birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother fell in the year 2000. The festivities ended with a celebratory service at St Paul's Cathedral, which included *The Lord bless you and keep you* by **John Rutter** (1945-). This anthem was written as a memorial for one of his school teachers, and has become one of his most performed compositions; it is a serene, melodic setting, though unexpected modulations to distant keys convey an expressive urgency.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.
Amen.

(Numbers 6: 24-26)

Eighteen months later, in 2002, the Queen Mother died. The music before her funeral in Westminster Abbey included no less than four pieces by **J S Bach** (1685-1750), and her coffin left the abbey to Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in E flat*, of which we hear the prelude this evening. This prelude opens Bach's collection of music based on a religious theme, published as the third part of his *Clavier-Übung*, and sometimes called his German Organ Mass. The key, which has a signature of three flats, and the division of the piece into three sections are both considered to be explicit Trinitarian references. The collections making up the *Clavier-Übung* were designed as demonstrations of Bach's skills, and so it is also appropriate that in this prelude he combines a variety of styles.

Later in 2002 Britain celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Queen's reign. The celebrations culminated in a National Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral, during which the setting by **Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958) of *Antiphon* by **George Herbert** (1593-1633): *Let all the world in every corner sing* was sung. This setting is taken from Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs* for baritone and chorus, which uses poems by Herbert, and is the only one set for chorus alone (although a version for baritone is also provided).

Let all the world in every corner sing
'My God and King!'
The heavens are not too high
His praise may thither fly
The earth is not too low
His praises there may grow
Let all the world in every corner sing
'My God and King!'

Let all the world in every corner sing
'My God and King!'
The Church with psalms must shout
No door can keep them out
But, above all, the heart
Must bear the longest part
Let all the world in every corner sing
'My God and King!'

(George Herbert)

The 80th eightieth birthday of the Queen fell in 2006, and services of thanksgiving were held at St George's Chapel, Windsor for her real birthday and St Paul's Cathedral for the official birthday. These included the anthem *Gloria in excelsis Deo* by **Thomas Weelkes** (1576-1623), which is a setting of anonymous words in the form of a macaronic carol.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Sing my soul to God the Lord
All in glory's highest key.
Lay the angels' choir abroad
In their highest holy day.
Crave thy God to tune thy heart
Unto praise's highest part.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Amen.

(Anon)

Finally we come to the recent wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, held at Westminster Abbey in 2011. During the signing of the register, the choir sang *Blest Pair of Sirens* by **Sir C Hubert H Parry** (1848-1918), which is a setting of an ode by **John Milton** (1608-1674) called *At a solemn Musick*. The words describe how music can produce a religious rapture in the listener, perhaps even harking back to a performance attended by Milton. The Sirens (taken from Plato's *Republic*) moved the spheres on which heavenly bodies sat, producing music; Voice represents this natural 'music of the spheres', and Verse represents the heavenly order symbolised by the angelic choirs.

The piece has earlier royal connections, as it was originally commissioned by C V Stanford for the London Bach Choir to sing as part of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1887. Parry is now best known for his grand tunes, used on many official occasions, such as *I was Glad*, *Jerusalem*, and the hymn *Dear Lord and Father of mankind*; and *Blest Pair of Sirens* includes its share of such melodies - one of the most extended (to the words: "O may we soon again renew that song") even turns out unexpectedly to be the subject of a fugal passage! The work was influential on both Elgar and Vaughan Williams – who described it as one of the greatest choral works to come out of this island.

As yet another royal connection, Prince Charles is particularly fond of Parry's music, and recently narrated a television documentary on Parry which focused on less known parts of his output, but also included an extended discussion of this work.

(This text is given as Parry set it, with modernised spellings.)

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of heav'n's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixt pow'r employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce.
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent*,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud, uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly;
That we on Earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason†, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long
To His celestial concert us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light.

(John Milton)

** Milton originally wrote 'content'; but Parry used a later reading: 'concent' (often misprinted in programs as 'consent'), meaning harmony or concord of sounds, and thus appropriate here.*

† 'Diapason' is a word of vague meaning relating to the complete range of notes and harmony. Sigmund Spaeth wrote of this passage: "Diapason represents the harmony between Heaven and Earth as consisting of the interval of the octave, in other words, the most perfect concord excepting the unison".

Steven Grahl organ

Steven enjoys a varied career as both organist and conductor. He combines the post of Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford with that of Organist & Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London, and he was acting Director of the New College Choir during Trinity Term 2010. He is a member of the Oxford University Faculty of Music. Since 2006 he has held the Principal Conductorship of the Guildford Chamber Choir.

Recent years have seen performances in America, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, and at numerous prestigious UK venues, such as Westminster Cathedral and St John's Smith Square.

A prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford (where he was Organ Scholar) and the Royal Academy of Music, Steven gained the Limpus (highest mark) and Dixon (improvisation) prizes in his FRCO examination, and he is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion.

James Brown conductor

James was Organ Scholar of Girton College, Cambridge and upon graduating studied organ at the Conservatoire de Musique, Geneva with Lionel Rogg. After two years working as an organist in Texas, James returned to England where he is currently Organist of the University Church, Oxford and a lay clerk in New College Choir, with whom he tours regularly. James currently studies the organ with Stephen Farr.

James has conducted the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Marie Crossland*
Clare Scott-Dempster
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Rebecca Tudor
Judith Ward
Lucy Watson
Steph White
Lucinda Williams

Tenor

Jeremy Bryans
Guy Peskett
Matthias Range
David Sutton
Phillip Booth

Alto

Virginia Allport
Rachel Bryans
Katherine Butler
Gillian Hargreaves
Joanna Poulton
Sally Prime

Bass

Dominic Hargreaves
Neil Herington
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Iain McLean
Jonathan Mapley
Simeon Mitchell

* Soloist in Britten's *Te Deum*.

Please visit our web site to learn more about the choir, and listen to some of our recordings online. Use the web form to register yourself on our email list, to ensure you receive notification and full details of future concerts.

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