

# The Cherwell Singers

present

*Bruckner*

*Te Deum*

*and*

**German romantic motets**

**James Brown**

conductor

**Steven Grahl**

organ

Saturday, 23rd March 2013

The Chapel of Keble College, Oxford

# Programme

Geistliches Lied

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Veni Domine

Verleih uns Frieden

Hear my Prayer

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)

*Organ Solo:*

Toccatà and Fugue in D minor, Op 59/5-6

Max Reger  
(1873-1916)

Abendlied

Josef Rheinberger  
(1839-1901)

## Interval

Te Deum

Anton Bruckner  
(1824-1896)

1. Te Deum laudamus
2. Te ergo q̄æsumus
3. Æterna fac cum Sanctis tuis
4. Salvum fac populum tuum
5. In te, Domine, speravi

**Annabel Mountford** soprano

**Tom Hammond Davies** alto

**David Lee** tenor

**Patrick Edmond** bass

**Keith Fairburn** timpani

**Steven Grahl** organ

**James Brown** conductor

# Introduction

Tonight the Cherwell Singers present a programme of music from the German romantic tradition based around the mighty *Te Deum* of Anton Bruckner, first performed in Vienna in 1884. For such a large work we have chosen to hold the concert in the neo-Gothic splendour of Keble College Chapel, which makes an ecclesiastical statement as impressive architecturally as the Bruckner *Te Deum* does musically.

In the week that sees the installation of Pope Francis as the new head of the worldwide Roman Catholic church (not to mention that of a new Archbishop of Canterbury) it seems appropriate to sing one of the grandest settings of the great and ancient hymn of praise of the church, the *Te Deum*, set to music by a devout Catholic believer.

The music in the first half of the concert features some of the most familiar anthems from the leading German composers of the romantic period, as well as an organ solo that fully expresses the confidence and flair of the best of German romantic organ music.

James Brown

## Notes on the music

**Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897) had a lifelong interest in early music, and amongst his generation he was without equal in sophisticated contrapuntal technique. Whether or not he was a believer, he whole-heartedly accepted the Christian ethic and admired and embraced the literature and poetry of the Bible. His musical style was romantic; his nature was introspective, reserved, logical and studious - and these influences are displayed in the motets he wrote over thirty years, and in his other sacred music.

The short accompanied motet, *Geistliches Lied*, is written as a double canon, and has been described as “an astonishing example of Brahms’s concealed mastery”. The austerity of the canon is balanced by the richness of the Amen, with its extended suspensions.

## Geistliches Lied

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauren mit Trauren,  
sei stille, wie Gott es fügt, so sei vergnügt mein Wille!  
Was willst du heute sorgen auf morgen?  
Der Eine steht allem für, der gibt auch dir das Deine.  
Sei nur in allem Handel ohn Wandel,  
steh feste, was Gott beschleußt, das ist und heißt das Beste.  
Amen.

(Anon, 13<sup>th</sup> century)

Do not be sorrowful or regretful;  
Be calm, as God has ordained, and thus my will shall be content.  
What do you want to worry about from day to day?  
There is One who stands above all who gives you, too, what is yours.  
Only be steadfast in all you do,  
stand firm; what God has decided, that is and must be the best.  
Amen

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) was writing sacred music at a time of great change, when the role of music within the Latin liturgy was being questioned. He was dismissive of the archaic style of music written by the Cecilian movement and seems to have been most comfortable within the world of the Lutheran liturgy where Bach was the major influence. That is not to say that there are not some Latin gems in his output as well. In style, Mendelssohn's choral music provides a link between J.S.Bach's late-baroque and Brahms's high-romanticism, and it has a unique appeal: expressive, bright and airy in tone, with a gentle serenity and a rare beauty.

*Veni Domine* is the first of three motets written in Rome by the 17-year-old Mendelssohn for a choir of Italian nuns. It is a pleasantly melodic piece with interesting textures which flow nicely; it is not overtly chorale based.

Veni Domine et noli tardare! Relaxa facinora plebi tuæ, et revoca  
dispersos in terram tuam. Excita Domine potentiam tuam, ut salvos nos  
facias, Veni Domine et noli tardare!

(An Advent antiphon)

Come, Lord, and do not delay! Forgive the wrongdoing of your people,  
and bring back the dispersed to your land. Raise up, Lord, your power to  
save us, Come, Lord, and do not delay!

In 1830 Franz Hauser, a Viennese singer and Bach enthusiast, sent a Lutheran Hymnal to Mendelssohn, who was in Rome on his Grand Tour. This treasury of words and music inspired Mendelssohn to compose many pieces, including this setting of Luther's hymn, *Verleih uns Frieden*, based on mediæval Latin words. The setting was intended to be in canon, but this idea only survives as a certain amount of imitation in the accompaniment.

Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich, Herr Gott, zu unsern Zeiten!  
Es ist doch ja kein Andrer nicht, der für uns könnte streiten,  
Denn du, unser Gott, alleine.

*(Martin Luther, 1483-1546)*

Graciously grant us peace, Lord God, in our times!  
There is indeed none other who could fight for us,  
than you, our God, alone.

The manuscript of *Hear my prayer* has the text in both English and German; however, we know from Mendelssohn's correspondence that the music was composed to the English text. The music itself is simple and straightforward throughout. What is of interest is the great popularity that the piece has always had in England, where it was first performed (with the organ being played by the wife of the librettist). The reason for this is unclear, as there are no obvious special features to account for it; it may simply be that Mendelssohn wrote the piece with English taste in mind.

Hear my prayer, O God, incline Thine ear!  
Thyself from my petition do not hide!  
Take heed to me! Hear how in prayer I mourn to Thee!  
Without Thee all is dark, I have no guide.

The enemy shouteth, The godless come fast!  
Iniquity, hatred upon me they cast!  
The wicked oppress me, Ah, where shall I fly?  
Perplexed and bewildered, O God, hear my cry!

My heart is sorely pained within my breast,  
My soul with deathly terror is oppressed,  
Trembling and fearfulness upon me fall,  
With horror overwhelmed, Lord, hear me call!

O for the wings of a dove!  
Far away would I rove!  
In the wilderness build me a nest,  
And remain there for ever at rest.

*(W Bartholomew, 1793-1867)*

“Have we completely forgotten that the organ is a first-class instrument, not just something for churches?” This lament of **Max Reger** (1873-1916), quoted in a letter, was directed at the ignorance of contemporaries, to whom virtuosity in organ music, even in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, was suspect. Reger, however, possessed a wide knowledge of both baroque and romantic organ music, and was not dismayed by his critics.

Reger probably wrote the *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* shortly after 1900. It is part of a collection of his organ music published shortly after his death, and is less convoluted and more straightforwardly Romantic than many of his works. Although chosen for publication as being technically accessible to a wide range of organists, it is more difficult than it seems on paper, if one is to realize the composer’s intentions convincingly. Many of the very precise tonal and dynamic indications were actually added by the publisher (who was himself an organist) to illustrate rather than define the manner in which it should be performed.

**Josef Rheinberger** (1839-1901) is the only well-known composer from the small country of Lichtenstein, which qualifies him for this program by being German-speaking. He wrote choral music distinguished by masterful constructional technique and by an effective command of counterpoint and formal structures. He also wrote a considerable number of organ sonatas which are still in regular use. His harmony is very much of his time, with its use of chromaticism and altered chords; the melodies are songlike and frequently inspired by Gregorian plainchant.

Perhaps the best-known of Rheinberger’s sacred compositions is his motet for six voices, *Bleib bei uns*, also known as *Abendlied*, which had its origins in a student piece of 1855. The key change at the opening and the imploring melodic line provide examples of the subtle compositional skills which even the young Rheinberger had at his command.

### **Abendlied**

Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden, und der Tag hat sich geneiget.  
(*Luke 24:29*)

Stay with us, for it is nearly evening, and the day is almost over.

In the gospel the meaning is simple and practical; but taken out of context, as also in the hymn *Abide with me* based on the same text, it mutates into something more like “O God, stay with us, for darkness is falling and we are afraid”. Nothing to do with the original meaning, but no matter.

**Anton Bruckner** (1824-1896) started work on his *Te Deum* some time before May 1881, but delayed completing it while he was writing his sixth and seventh symphonies. It wasn't until he was close to finishing the second of these that Bruckner resumed work on his *Te Deum*, completing it in 1884. A melody used for the words “non confundar” (in the final movement) is remarkably similar to the main theme of the second movement of the *Symphony No. 7* which he had just written. The composer dedicated the piece “to God in gratitude for having safely brought me through so much anguish in Vienna”. Although he had earlier criticised Berlioz’s *Te Deum* for not being properly “ecclesiastical”, in part because the performance he attended did not take place in a church, Bruckner’s own *Te Deum* is also of a scale that expands beyond ecclesiastical usage.

When it was first published in 1885, Bruckner was paid 50 gulden, which he described as the only money he ever earned as a composer in the whole of his life. An important difference with Bruckner’s other first publications is that there are few differences between it and the original manuscript, there being no recomposition by the publishers as happened to many other works of his. The *Te Deum* was premiered in the small Musikvereinsaal in Vienna, accompanied on two pianos, and Hans Richter conducted the first performance with full orchestra the next year. After that there were almost thirty more performances within Bruckner’s lifetime. On his copy of the score, Gustav Mahler crossed out the instruction “for chorus, solos, and orchestra, organ *ad libitum*” and wrote “for the tongues of angels, heaven-blest, chastened hearts, and souls purified in the fire!”

After the first performance, even the normally vicious critic, Hanslick, who never forgave Bruckner his espousal of Wagner, was uncharacteristically polite. However, during the Nazi era, Bruckner’s *Te Deum* was ignored in his home country, because it contradicted the Nazi myth that exposure to Richard Wagner’s music had freed Bruckner from his ties to the church.

In the 1890s Bruckner was aware that he might not live to finish his *Symphony No. 9*, and some commentators have suggested that he was considering the use of the *Te Deum* as a finale. It might seem unlikely that Bruckner would have countenanced the use of a piece that is not even in a related key, but a few sketches do survive of a link from the last completed movement making the necessary key change.

1.

Te Deum laudamus: Te Dominum confitemur.

Te æternum Patrem, omnis terra veneratur.

Tibi omnes Angeli: Tibi cœli et universæ Potestates.

Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim, incessabili voce proclamant:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt cœli et terra majestatis gloriæ tuæ.

Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,

Te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus,

Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.

Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia:

Patrem immensæ majestatis;

Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;

Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.

Tu rex gloriæ, Christe: Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.

Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti Virginis uterum.

Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna cœlorum.

Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris.

Judex crederis esse venturus.

2.

Te ergo quæsumus, tuis famulis subveni:

quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

3.

Æterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.

4.

Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuæ.

Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in æternum.

Per singulos dies benedicimus te:

et laudamus nomen tuum in sæculum, et in sæculum sæculi.

Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.

Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.

Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos:

quem admodum speravimus in te.

5.

In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in æternum.

*(Early Christian hymn of praise)*

1.

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.

2.

We therefore pray thee, help thy servants:  
whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

3.

Make them to be numbered with thy Saints: in glory everlasting.

4.

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.

5.

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

## **Annabel Mountford** soprano

British Soprano, **Annabel Mountford** studied at the Royal College of Music International Opera School under Dinah Harris where she obtained her Artist Diploma in Opera. She recently became a Samling Scholar and is represented by Helen Sykes Artists' Management.

Annabel recently made her Glyndebourne Festival Opera debut as First Fairy as well as chorus in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* and 1<sup>st</sup> Bridesmaid (cover) in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She has recently returned from the International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland where she was a semi-finalist.

Annabel Mountford has worked on a number of occasions for English Touring Opera, performing in the roles of Dalinda in Handel's *Ariodante*, Agilea in Handel's *Teseo*, Clizia (cover) in *Teseo* and Soprano Soloist (Nurse 1) (cover) in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. She has also performed the roles of Musetta in Puccini's *La Bohème* for Opera UpClose and Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* for London Youth Opera.

## **David Lee** tenor

David Lee enjoys a multi-faceted musical career, dividing his time between performance and musicology. He is currently engaged in postgraduate research at the University of Glasgow, under the supervision of Professor John Butt, focusing on the music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

David graduated in 2011 from Christ Church, Oxford, where he was a choral scholar, with a first in Music. Following a year as a Lay Clerk in the choir of New College, David now enjoys a busy schedule of solo and ensemble singing, working with groups including the Academy of Ancient Music, Dunedin Consort, Polyphony, Tenebrae, Ludus Baroque, Oxford Camerata and Chapelle du Roi.

This is David's first appearance with the Cherwell Singers.

## **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 this year to the USA, France and the Netherlands as well as participating in broadcasts and recordings. He is also a pianist for the operatic trio Canteremo, and performs with them on the Swan Hellenic Cruise line and has recently completed a five nation tour of South East Asia.

James teaches organ at Abingdon School and New College School and performs regularly with various choirs and choral societies.

James has conducted the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

# The Cherwell Singers

## **Soprano**

Moira Di Salvo  
Penny Jaques  
Janet Johnson  
Alice Stainer  
Stephanie Sumner-Jones  
Zoe Tarrant  
Steph White  
Lucinda Williams

## **Tenor**

Jeremy Bryans  
Iain McLean  
Guy Peskett  
Matthias Range  
David Sutton

## **Alto**

Virginia Allport  
Rachel Bryans  
Katherine Butler  
Helen Maidlow  
Lizzie Newton  
Joanna Poulton  
Sally Prime

## **Bass**

Dominic Hargreaves  
Neil Herington  
Paul Hodges  
Simon Jones  
Jonathan Mapley  
Simeon Mitchell  
Tim Wainwright

The Cherwell Singers is looking to recruit voice members in all parts. If you are interested in joining us please contact James Brown at:

[director@cherwellsingers.org](mailto:director@cherwellsingers.org)

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.

[www.cherwellsingers.org](http://www.cherwellsingers.org)