

The Cherwell Singers

present

Orlando Gibbons

Anthems and other works

James Brown conductor

Steven Grahl organ and piano

Patrick Dunachie countertenor

Sunday, 20th March 2016

Chapel of St Peter's College, Oxford

Programme

Full anthem: Almighty and everlasting God

Verse anthem: O all true faithful hearts

Full anthem: O Lord in Thy wrath

Second Service, Magnificat

Organ Solo: A Fancy in Gamut flatt

Second Service, Nunc Dimittis

Full anthem: O clap your hands

Interval

Verse anthems: This is the record of John

See, the Word is incarnate

Hymn: Song 13

Piano solo: Hymn-tune Prelude on Song 13 **R Vaughan Williams**

Hymn: Song 22

Organ solo: On a Theme of Orlando Gibbons, Song 22 **C V Stanford**

Hymn: Song 46

Organ solo: Prelude on Song 46 **Peter Dickinson**

Madrigals: Dainty fine bird

The Silver Swan

Patrick Dunachie

Steven Grahl

James Brown

countertenor

organ and piano

conductor

Orlando Gibbons

Anthems and other works

This term the Cherwell Singers pays tribute to one of Oxford's greatest sons and one of the foremost English composers of the early seventeenth century – Orlando Gibbons.

Born and christened in Oxford to a musical family, he sang as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge, and later went on to become organist at the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey.

Gibbons was one of the most versatile composers of his time, and we have tried to reflect this in the variety of types of composition we are featuring in our concert. Thus we include examples of his verse anthems (including probably the best known, *This is the record of John*), full anthems (including the eight-part *O clap your hands*, first performed in Oxford), service music for the relatively new office of evensong, and madrigals (including the much loved *The Silver Swan*)

Once again we are joined by Organist of Peterborough Cathedral, Steven Grahl, who will be playing a keyboard work by Gibbons as well as variations on Gibbons song tunes by later composers such as Vaughan Williams and Stanford. All three keyboard instruments in St Peter's College chapel will be played by Steven, including the new Nicholson chamber organ of 2012.

The countertenor soloist tonight is Patrick Dunachie, who is newly appointed to the King's Singers and a former member (like Gibbons) of the choir of King's College, Cambridge.

The famous Canadian pianist Glenn Gould named Gibbons as his favourite composer and compared him to Beethoven. We hope you also will enjoy this opportunity to explore the riches of the music of this local master of his craft.

James Brown

Notes

Orlando Gibbons was born in 1583 at Oxford. He sang in the choir of King's College, Cambridge - where his older brother was then Master of the Choristers. His second brother, Ellis, showed promise as a composer, but died young.

After taking a degree of Bachelor of Music at Cambridge, he held positions as Organist of the Royal Chapel, as keyboard player in the privy chamber of the all-important court of Prince Charles, and finally as organist at Westminster Abbey (a post later held by his son, Christopher).

He died an early death in 1625 at Canterbury, while Charles I and his court were awaiting the arrival of his new Queen, Henrietta Maria, from Dover. To scotch panicky rumours that he had died of the plague, an autopsy was performed, which showed that he had suffered a large stroke.

Style

Gibbons's music provides a link between the Tudor period and the early Baroque. He overlaps with the elderly William Byrd, and some of his early keyboard music was published in *Parthenia* alongside Byrd's. He also stands at the end of the great English polyphonic tradition, writing at least fifteen substantial polyphonic anthems. In this aspect of his writing he has often been compared with Palestrina.

But he also developed new forms, bringing the more modern "verse anthem" to its peak. In the verse anthems in particular he moved on from the word painting of individual words which his predecessors had used to applying it to whole phrases, as would become commonplace in the following baroque period.

It is also possible to note some foreshadowing of Purcell's techniques, both in subtlety of rhythm, and in word setting - notably in the handling of feminine endings.

But Gibbons was not just a choral composer. He produced many madrigals and solo songs, together with important collections of string fantasies and keyboard works, both for harpsichord and organ.

Full Anthems

Gibbons came after the alternation of Protestant and Catholic worship that Byrd and Tallis had to navigate, and thus all his anthems are in English. The three full anthems we perform this evening are varied in their nature. They would have been performed unaccompanied; the use of instruments in church was not yet allowed, except for the organ to a restricted extent.

Almighty and everlasting God is a four-part setting of straightforward words requiring no special techniques to make its point.

Oh Lord, in Thy wrath is in six parts, and reminds us that the modern division of the voices into four parts was not always the norm.

O clap your hands together is in eight parts, and in the second section of the anthem these are used against each other as two four-part choirs. This anthem was performed at the ceremony when Gibbons received his honorary Doctorate of Music at Oxford, and may have been written as a qualifying piece for it.

Verse Anthems and Service Music

The idea of alternating solo sections with sections for the full choir originated with Byrd, but reached its finest flowering in the verse anthems of Gibbons. Fifteen survive, and fragments attest to the composition of almost as many more. Naturally, the solo parts require accompaniment, which would by the normal rules have been on the organ. Many of the anthems, however, have surviving viol parts, and it is supposed that these would have been used for devotional performances in the home. However, it is known that the Chapel Royal had a chest of viols, and so we may conjecture (in the absence of further evidence) that the rules might have been broken there.

O all true faithful hearts is an exhortation to thanks for the recovery of the King from illness. When it was published in the nineteenth century, the editor, Sir Frederick Gore Ousley, supplied words by a friend of his to make it of more general liturgical use, and so it is now more commonly known as *O Thou the central orb*. The choruses in this anthem repeat the same music rather than being distinct, and the Amen forms a distinct section.

Gibbons wrote two settings of the canticles that have come down to us. His *Second Service* is written in the manner of a verse anthem, with alternating verse and full sections. The choice of voices varies according to the words, but not the supposed singer – the *Nunc Dimittis* has soprano solos, for instance.

This is the record of John is perhaps the best known of Gibbons's verse anthems. Unlike most of them, it has a single soloist throughout, who has some particularly athletic moments.

See, the Word is incarnate is one of the most elaborate verse anthems. Its many verse sections all feature different selections of voices. In this case, the Amen runs on continuously from the last section rather than being separate.

Keyboard Music

As a keyboard player, Gibbons was noted after his death as “the best finger of that age”. His keyboard music, though, is generally more serious and less showy than that of his predecessor, Byrd. His organ music is often in the form of “fantasies”, possibly designed to introduce anthems, and sometimes for a two-manual “double” organ. *A Fancy in Gamut flatt*, however, is for a smaller “single” organ.

“Songs”

In 1623, George Wither's *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (1623) was published. Gibbons provided 17 tunes for this volume, with names in the form “Song nn”; some of them are linked to multiple hymns, not all of which fit the

tunes equally well! The hymns are generally very long, and so we are just singing two verses of each. Many of these tunes remain in common use today, but as only the melody and a bass line were provided by Gibbons, other parts have been added by modern editors. Because these tunes are so widely used, they have naturally been used as the basis of other works, several of which we present tonight.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was neither religious nor atheist, but maintained a “cheerful agnosticism”. This did not get in the way of his doing much work for church music, not least by editing the music of the *English Hymnal*. His *Hymn-tune Prelude on Song 13* was written in 1930 for the pianist Harriet Cohen. Sir John Betjeman said of it: “It’s deeply part of us; thank God it’s there”.

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was an Irish composer and professor of music at Cambridge University. Although he wrote music in most genres, he is best remembered for his contributions to Anglican church music, which are still widely performed. His piece *On a Theme of Orlando Gibbons, Song 22* is one of a set of six preludes and postludes, three of which use themes by Gibbons.

Peter Dickinson (1934-) has a strikingly original approach to organ music, which the composer himself has described as “far from the English cathedral tradition”, reflecting a background that is not typical of British organists or composers during the twentieth century. Like Stanford, he wrote preludes for organ using several Gibbons hymn tunes, of which *Prelude on Song 46 by Orlando Gibbons* is one; these are early works which remain unpublished.

Madrigals

Gibbons marks the last flowering of the madrigal tradition, and his madrigals are generally serious or sad. The title page of his one collection of madrigals published in his lifetime notes that they may alternatively be performed on viols.

Biographies

Patrick Dunachie countertenor

Patrick was a chorister at Hereford Cathedral, and subsequently a choral scholar at King’s College, Cambridge. He currently sings as a lay clerk in the choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, but has recently joined the King’s Singers – which was a childhood ambition of his.

He also teaches and undertakes freelance work with various choirs and consorts, and as a soloist. He has sung as a soloist at the Three Choirs Festival and the BBC Proms, as well as with groups including Ex Cathedra and The King’s Consort, and he has also prepared many performance editions of music from different countries and periods.

Steven Grahl organ and piano

Steven Grahl took up the post of Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral in September 2014. Prior to this, he spent seven years as Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford, an appointment which he combined with the position of Organist & Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London. Steven was appointed Principal Conductor of the Guildford Chamber Choir in 2006.

A prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Royal Academy of Music, Steven gained the Limpus (highest mark) and Dixon (improvisation) prizes in his FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion. In 2010, Steven was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM), an award offered to past students of the Academy who have distinguished themselves in the music profession and made a significant contribution to it in their particular field. He is currently a Junior Fellow in Choral Direction at Birmingham Conservatoire, and until recently held the post of Chairman of the Association of Assistant Cathedral Organists. Steven was an interpretation finalist in the International Organ Competitions at St Albans (UK) in 2011, and in Dudelange (Luxembourg) in 2013.

James Brown conductor

James Brown is a pianist and organist based in Oxford whose work takes him all over the world. A former organ scholar of Girton College, Cambridge University, he did further organ study at the Geneva Conservatoire of Music with Lionel Rogg.

He is currently Organist of the historic University Church of Oxford, and combines this with work as a classical pianist for the Fred Olsen and Swan Hellenic cruise lines. With the latter he appears as accompanist to opera singers and classical instrumentalists for formal concerts on board, and in 2016 travels to destinations varying from Bermuda to St Petersburg. Musicians he has played with include the singers Sarah Connolly, Rodney Clarke and Ed Lyon as well as the trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins.

As an organist he has given recitals in the UK, USA, Belgium and Switzerland and appeared on BBC television and radio as well as on several CD recordings.

He also sings as a tenor lay clerk in the internationally acclaimed boys and men choir of New College, Oxford.

James has conducted the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Becky Dowson
Janet Johnson
Vanessa Moir
Jozefina Shestani
Rhiannon Stubbs
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Lucy Watson

Tenor

Jeremy Bryans
Simon Fisher
Guy Peskett
David Read
Mike Smith
David Sutton

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Rachel Bryans
Katherine Butler
Elizabeth Kreager
Lizzie Newton
Anna Orlowska
Joanna Poulton

Bass

Dominic Hargreaves
Paul Hodges
Pierre Illien
Simon Jones
Jack Lovell
Iain Maclean
Jonathan Mapley
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

Next Concert

“Feel the Spirit”

A celebration of African-American music

Sunday, 26th June 2016, 7:30pm
The Grove Auditorium, Magdalen College

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