

# The Cherwell Singers

present

## *Parry* *and his pupils*

**Timothy Wakerell**

organ

**James Brown**

conductor

Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018

Chapel of Exeter College, Oxford

# Programme

I was glad	Hubert Parry
I know my soul hath power	Hubert Parry
Never weather-beaten sail	Hubert Parry
<i>(Organ solo)</i>	
Adagio in E	Frank Bridge
Long since in Egypt's plenteous lands	Hubert Parry
Hymn to St Cecilia	Herbert Howells

# Interval

O clap your hands	Ralph Vaughan Williams
Prevent us O Lord	Hubert Parry
Ex ore innocentium	John Ireland
<i>(Organ Solo)</i>	
Chorale Prelude on 'Dundee'	Hubert Parry
Expectans expectavi	Charles Wood
Blest pair of sirens	Hubert Parry

Timothy Wakerell	organ
James Brown	conductor

# *Parry*

## *and his pupils*

2018 marks the centenary of the death of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, whom the composer Stanford considered the finest English composer since Henry Purcell. Whether or not others share this view, his influence on later composers is widely recognised, and it is this that the Cherwell Singers celebrate in our summer concert. Vaughan Williams, Ireland, Howells, Bridge, and Wood are just some of the composers who benefited from Parry's teaching, and each of them has a work featured in our programme alongside several works by Parry himself. From his large scale setting of Milton's poem 'Blest Pair of Sirens', which established him as the leading English choral composer of the day, to a couple of the reflective 'Songs of farewell' written at the end of his life, we present a glimpse of his sacred choral writing from the grand to the small scale. Performed in the suitably Victorian chapel of the college where he was an undergraduate between 1867-70, this concert also celebrates Parry's close links with Oxford, where he returned to become Heather Professor of Music from 1900-1908 succeeding John Stainer.

James Brown

## Notes and Words

**Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry** (1848-1918) studied at Exeter College, Oxford, and subsequently became the Heather Professor of Music at Oxford University. In spite of his birth (he was a baronet), he had rather radical politics, which later commentators have often overlooked. Parry held German music and its traditions to be the pinnacle of music, and was a friend of German culture in general. He was in despair when WWI broke out, and during the war he watched a life's work of progress and education being wiped away as the male population, particularly the new fertile generation of composing talent which he had such a large hand in fostering, dwindled.

Parry was taken up by George Grove, first as a contributor to Grove's massive Dictionary of Music and Musicians in the 1870s and 80s, and then in 1883 as professor of composition and musical history at the newly-founded Royal College of Music, of which Grove was the first head. In 1895 Parry succeeded Grove as head of the college, remaining in the post for the rest of his life. He was concurrently Heather Professor of Music at the University of Oxford from 1900 to 1908.

As a teacher, Parry was a major influence on the young composers of his time - a role he shared with Stanford, who also taught at the RSM from its inception. Among the composers not represented in this concert we may mention Gustav Holst, who studied at the Royal College, and Edward Elgar, who learnt much from Parry's articles in Grove's Dictionary.

Parry's anthem ***I was glad*** was written for the coronation of King Edward VII. The request came from the king himself. It was intended to be a new departure in the coronation service, as it provided music for several sections of the ceremony in one piece (the originally interpolated *Vivats* are omitted when not appropriate to the occasion, as tonight)

I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord.  
Our feet shall stand in thy gates: O Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem is built as a city: that is at unity in itself.  
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.  
Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness within thy palaces.

(*Psalm 122*, vv1-3, 6, 7)

***I know my soul hath power*** and ***Never weather-beaten sail*** are nos 2 and 3 of Parry's *Songs of Farewell* - composed during the war (though not

specifically referring to it) and first performed in this chapel. Though they are Parry's own valediction – he died two years after their completion – they can also be seen as his farewell to the rapidly vanishing world of his youth. Common to all the texts are the contrasting themes of the transitory nature of life and the redeeming power of faith. The motets are to a large extent expressions of personal belief rather than orthodox liturgical works.

I know my soul hath power to know all things,  
Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:  
I know I'm one of Nature's little kings,  
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.

I know my life's a pain and but a span;  
I know my sense is mock'd in ev'rything;  
And, to conclude, I know myself a Man,  
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.

*John Davies (1569-1626)*

Never weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore.  
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,  
Than my wearied sprite now longs to fly out of my troubled breast:  
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest.

Ever blooming are the joys of Heaven's high Paradise.  
Cold age deafs not there our ears nor vapour dims our eyes:  
Glory there the sun outshines whose beams the blessed only see:  
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite to thee!

*Thomas Campion (1567-1620)*

**Frank Bridge** (1879-1941) was a violinist, and studied composition under Parry. He quickly established a reputation as a gifted player and conductor, while writing mostly chamber music and songs. In his last two decades, Bridge composed and did some private teaching, his best-known pupil being Benjamin Britten, who was an 11-year-old prodigy when Bridge met him. Although he was not an organist, nor personally associated with the Church, his few pieces for the organ have been among the most performed of all his output. The *Adagio in E* is the best known, and is one of a set of pieces written in 1905.

*Long since in Egypt's plenteous lands* is a ballad from Parry's oratorio *Judith*. Masterfully crafted with vibrant detail, emotion and drama, *Judith* was an overwhelming success in Victorian England, performed by some of that era's greatest musicians. Hans Richter conducted the premiere; C V Stanford conducted the London debut, and Elgar played violin in the orchestra under Parry's own baton in Gloucester. However, in modern times it has been neglected - rarely performed, and never recorded. Only this aria

has become well-known, primarily through its adaptation into the familiar hymn tune *Repton* (Dear Lord and Father of Mankind) by G G Stocks.

Long since in Egypt's plenteous land  
Our fathers were oppressed;  
But God, whose chosen folk they were,  
Smote those who long enslaved them there,  
And all their woes redressed.

The Red Sea stayed them not at all,  
Nor depths of liquid green;  
On either hand a mighty wall  
Of waters clear rose high at His call,  
And they passed through between.

In deserts wild they wandered long,  
They sinned and went astray;  
But yet His arm to help was strong,  
He pardoned them, though they did wrong,  
And brought them on their way.

At last to this good land they came,  
With fruitful plenty blest;  
Here glorious men won endless fame,  
Here God made holy Zion's name,  
And here He gave them rest.

O may we ne'er forget what He hath done,  
Nor prove unmindful of His love,  
That, like the constant sun  
On Israel hath shone,  
And sent down blessings from above.

**Herbert Howells** (1892-1983) grew up in Gloucestershire, where he was deeply affected by his father's bankruptcy. In 1912 he moved to London to study at the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition under Hubert Parry and Charles Wood. Howells blossomed in what he considered the "cosy family" atmosphere of the College.

*A Hymn for St Cecilia*, commissioned by the Livery Club of the Worshipful Company of Musicians to mark Howells's Mastership of the Company in 1959–60, sets a poem in praise of the Patron Saint of music by Ursula Vaughan Williams as a three-verse hymn. The wonderful dancing-on-tiptoe nature of this piece takes its cue from the syncopated first vocal entry and each phrase finds increasingly high notes as the verse goes on, carrying us along on a tide of increasing emotional energy and leaving an impression of being a piece much bigger than its constituent parts.

Sing for the morning's joy, Cecilia, sing,  
in words of youth and praises of the Spring,  
walk the bright colonnades by fountains' spray,  
and sing as sunlight fills the waking day;

till angels, voyaging in upper air,  
    pause on a wing and gather the clear sound  
    into celestial joy, wound and unwound,  
a silver chain, or golden as your hair.

Sing for your loves of heaven and of earth,  
in words of music, and each word a truth;  
    marriage of heart and longings that aspire,  
    a bond of roses, and a ring of fire.  
Your summertime grows short and fades away,  
    terror must gather to a martyr's death;  
    but never tremble, the last indrawn breath  
remembers music as an echo may.

Through the cold aftermath of centuries,  
Cecilia's music dances in the skies;  
    lend us a fragment of the immortal air,  
    that with your choiring angels we may share,  
a word to light us thro' time-fettered night,  
    water of life, or rose of paradise,  
    so from the earth another song shall rise  
to meet your own in heaven's long delight.

*Ursula Vaughan Williams (1911-2007)*

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958) also came from Gloucestershire. Although his family was religious, he soon discarded religion for himself; but his love of the words of the Prayer Book and the Bible was such that he continued to compose for the church throughout his life.

In 1890 he was enrolled as a student at the Royal College of Music where he studied composition with Hubert Parry. He idolised Parry, and recalled in his *Musical Autobiography*:

“Parry once said to me: ‘Write choral music as befits an Englishman and a democrat’. We pupils of Parry have, if we have been wise, inherited from him the great English choral tradition. He has passed on the torch to us and it is our duty to keep it alight.”

*O Clap Your Hands* is typical of Vaughan Williams's ceremonial works for the church. The joyous mood of the text is capitalized upon in a setting of extroverted jubilation which is clearly designed to fill the church with a grand noise in praise of God - one version adds a brass ensemble to the organ!

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.  
For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.  
God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.  
For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.  
God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

*Psalms 47:1-2, 5-8*

***Prevent us O Lord***, a setting of a collect from the Book of Common Prayer, was written and published in 1865 while Parry was still at school at Eton.

Prevent us O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour,  
and further us with thy continual help;  
that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee,  
we may glorify thy holy Name.  
And finally by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***John Ireland*** (1879-1962) entered the Royal College of Music in 1893, where he studied under Parry, and also the organist Walter Parrett. As a composer he was rather conservative, and most of his output is small in scale. He is best known for his chamber music, solo piano compositions, and songs.

Written in 1944 and first sung in Durham Cathedral at an RSCM summer school, ***Ex ore innocentium*** ('Out of the mouths of innocents') takes the form of a through-composed, elegiac song which, on this rare occasion, Ireland chose to couch in the richer post-Romantic palette of his secular music. Ireland's handling of the climax, almost a harmonic catastrophe, on the words 'which, like a fire', and its appositeness to How's words is masterly.

It is a thing most wonderful,  
Almost too wonderful to be,  
That God's own Son should come from heaven,  
And die to save a child like me.

And yet I know that it is true:  
He chose a poor and humble lot,  
And wept, and toiled, and mourned, and died  
For love of those who loved him not.

I sometimes think about the Cross,  
And shut my eyes, and try to see  
The cruel nails and crown of thorns,  
And Jesus crucified for me.

But even could I see him die,  
I should but see a little part  
Of that great love, which, like a fire,  
Is always burning in his heart.

And yet I want to love thee, Lord;  
O light the flame within my heart,  
And I will love thee more and more,  
Until I see thee as thou art.

*Bishop Walsham How (1823-1897)*



Towards the end of his life, Parry composed a number of pieces for organ, including three sets of chorale preludes. The *Chorale Prelude on Dundee* which we hear tonight is from the first set, published in 1912.

The Irish composer **Charles Wood** (1866-1926) was one of the inaugural pupils and the Royal College of Music in 1883, where he studied composition under Parry and Stanford. Subsequently he taught composition at the RCM, where Howells was a pupil, and at Cambridge, where he taught Vaughan Williams. On Stanford's death he succeeded him as Professor of Music at Cambridge. He is best known for his church music, and for his part in reviving renaissance tunes for carols and songs.

*Expectans expectavi* was written in 1919 to words by Charles Hamilton Sorely (1895-1915).

This sanctuary of my soul,  
Unwitting I keep white and whole,  
Unlatch'd and lit, if Thou should'st care  
To enter or to tarry there

With parted lips and outstretch'd hands,  
And list'ning ears Thy servant stands.  
Call Thou early, call Thou late,  
to Thy great service dedicate.

My soul, keep white, and whole.

*Blest Pair of Sirens* 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 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 known for his grand tunes, 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 fugue! 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.

*(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".*

# Biographies

## **Timothy Wakerell**    organ

Timothy Wakerell has held the post of Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford since September 2014 where he accompanies the Chapel Choir in services, broadcasts and concerts. Prior to this he was Sub-Organist of St Paul's Cathedral between 2008 and 2014 and played for important services such as the Funeral of Baroness Thatcher and the Diamond Jubilee Service.

A prize-winning graduate of the Royal College of Music, Timothy also won Second Prize at the 2011 Carl Nielsen International Organ Competition in Odense, Denmark. He has performed throughout the UK and abroad; recent venues include the Marienkirche, Berlin, St Augustin, Paris and St Paul's Cathedral. In 2014 Timothy completed the premiere recording of the 2012 William Drake Organ in the OBE Chapel of St Paul's Cathedral (Priory Records) which features works by J.S. Bach, Buxtehude, Saint-Saëns and Sweelinck.

## **James Brown**    conductor

James Brown was organ scholar of Girton College, Cambridge before doing further study of organ with Lionel Rogg at the Geneva Conservatoire, Switzerland. After two years as Guest Artist in Residence at the First United Methodist Church, Lubbock, Texas, USA, he returned to England where he was Organist of Dean Close School.

In 2006 James moved to Oxford where he is Organist of the historic University Church, and teaches organ at Abingdon and New College Schools as well as pursuing freelance work as an organist and pianist. James has given recitals in the UK, USA, Belgium and Switzerland, and appeared on both BBC radio and television. He is a tenor lay clerk in the choir of New College. He also performs solo classical piano recitals for P&O and Fred Olsen cruise lines, and 2018 sees him performing in the Caribbean, Germany and the Baltic States.

James has been conducting the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

# The Cherwell Singers

## **Soprano**

Helen Duncan  
Rhiannon Lovell  
Vanessa Moir  
Sreya Rao  
Elina Screen  
Stephanie Sumner-Jones  
Gayle Walker  
Lucy Watson  
Jessica Webster

## **Tenor**

Neil Malcolm  
David Read  
Alistair Sterling

## **Alto**

Virginia Allport  
Jennie Ayres  
Francesca Donnellan  
Elizabeth Kreager  
Joanna Poulton  
Anna Orlowska

## **Bass**

Jack Lovell  
Iain McLean  
Jonathan Mapley  
Julian Parkin

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)