

The Cherwell Singers

present

Kodaly *Laudes organi*

*and other works in celebration
of the organ and of St Cecilia*

Susan Jiwey

soprano

Timothy Wakerell

organ

James Brown

conductor

Sunday, 17th March 2019

Chapel of New College, Oxford

Programme

With Pipes of Tin and Wood	Alan Higbee
Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565 (<i>organ solo</i>)	J. S. Bach
The Lost Chord (<i>soprano solo</i>)	Arthur Sullivan
A Hymn for St Cecilia	Herbert Howells
Feast Song for St Cecilia	Bernard Rose
A Hymn for St Cecilia	Malcolm Archer

Interval

Laudes organi	Zoltán Kodály
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Performers

Susan Jiwey	soprano
Timothy Wakerell	organ
James Brown	conductor, piano

“With pipes of tin and wood”

The organ has played a vital supporting role as the accompanying instrument of choice in many a Cherwell Singers concert over the years. This term we turn the spotlight on the instrument itself, as the choir sings its praises and that of history’s first recorded player of the organ, Saint Cecilia.

The main work of the concert is Kodaly’s *Laudes Organi*, a pæan to the organ, and ably demonstrating its power, tone, and flexibility while fully integrating the chorus in a programmatic setting of the early mediæval text. It was written in 1966, and the organ of New College Chapel also dates from this decade, and with its spiky, bright and forward tone is the ideal partner for Kodaly’s music. Indeed, the Cherwell Singers have chosen New College Chapel as the venue for this concert of music about the organ to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the current organ in the chapel.

Many images depict the Roman martyr Saint Cecilia playing the organ, and so it seems fitting also to pay tribute to her in three hymns to her by three English composers also from the twentieth century: Herbert Howells, Bernard Rose, and Malcolm Archer.

Finally, the organ gets its chance to steal the show in this concert with a performance by organist Timothy Wakerell of New College of the most famous organ piece of all time by the greatest composer for the instrument, the *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* by J. S. Bach.

James Brown

The Organ

The organ is the most impressive of all musical instruments. It is generally the largest; and even in its smallest forms it is the most complicated, while large organs were the most complex machines made by man until the Industrial Revolution. It is also the only instrument which gives the feet the ability to play a melodic line on a par with the hands.

Some of the very oldest surviving playable musical instruments are organs – the Basilica of Valère in Sion, Switzerland has a working organ dating from 1435, though like any instrument of such antiquity it has inevitably had some repairs and replacement parts along the way! Further back, in the 10th century it is recorded that Winchester Cathedral had an organ of 400 pipes which could be heard throughout the city.

Organs vary in size from vast instruments in cathedrals or large public halls (those in the Albert Hall and Liverpool Anglican Cathedral each have almost exactly 10,000 pipes), to small “chamber” organs used for continuo in baroque music. Rare now, but common in the past, are tiny “portative” and “regal” organs which can be played while being carried.

Composers throughout history have written for the organ. Although Bach is the best-known example, Byrd, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, and Brahms all wrote for the instrument, and it has a healthy 20th century repertoire as well.

In spite of a history of music going back to Tavener, Byrd, and Gibbons, in Britain the organ’s association with the church meant that it was vulnerable. During the Commonwealth, the Puritans destroyed *all* the organs in Britain – in contrast to the many ancient instruments surviving in continental Europe, not a single British organ pipe has survived from before that time.

Britain was also the only place where the feet were not given their own keyboard to play on, so the instruments built from the Restoration up till the mid-Victorian era were all later rebuilt to bring them into line with continental practice and naturally also the current romantic ideal. As a result, it was realised during the rise of the authenticity movement that no British organs were truly suitable for baroque music, particularly that of Bach; and so from the mid-1960s, many new instruments were built in a more classical style, and the organ in this chapel, built by Grant, Degens and Bradbeer, was an early and highly influential example.

St Cecilia



St Cecilia was a Roman martyr of the second century. According to the story, despite her vow of virginity, she was forced by her parents to become married to a pagan nobleman named Valerian. During the wedding, Cecilia sat apart singing to God in her heart, and for that she was later declared the patron saint of musicians. When the time came for her marriage to be consummated, Cecilia told Valerian that watching over her was an angel of the Lord, who would punish him if he sexually violated her but would love him if he respected her virginity.

The legend of Cecilia's martyrdom says that after being struck three times on the neck with a sword, she lived for three days, and asked the pope to convert her home into a church. Although Cecilia is associated with a variety of instruments, she is most often pictured sitting at a chamber organ, or holding a portative organ as in the stained-glass window by Edward Burne-Jones shown opposite.

Notes and Words

Alan Higbee (1955-) is a church organist and freelance musician residing near Cleveland, Ohio. His setting of *With pipes of tin and wood* is an exuberant celebration of the pipe organ and its role in the church. The colourful accompaniment supports and illuminates the text's references to the structure and operation of the organ. The piece won first prize in a choral competition held in 2006 sponsored by the First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth, Texas.

With pipes of tin and wood¹ make known the truth each star displays:
creation is a field that's sown with seeds of thanks and praise.
Articulate with measured sound the song that fills all things
for even atoms dance around and solid matter sings.

With pipes of tin and wood restart the fire the prophets knew
and fan the flame within the heart to do what God would do.
Pull out the stops² that train the ear – the strings, the flute and reed³ -
to listen and more subtly hear God's call through human need.

With pipes of tin and wood repeat the music danced and played
to welcome home and warmly greet the prodigal who strayed.
Let healing harmonies release the hurts the heart compiles
that God through music may increase the grace that reconciles.

With pipes of tin and wood disclose that song the world has blurred,
the hymn of life and love that flows from God's renewing word.
Then boldly open wide the swell⁴ and with a trumpet call,
announce the news we thirst to tell: that Christ is Lord of all.

Thomas Troeger (1945-) from Borrowed Light.

¹ Most organ pipes are made of an alloy of tin and lead (tin alone is too brittle), though copper or zinc may be used occasionally; many organs contain some pipes made of wood as well.

² The "stop" mechanism stops the air reaching some ranks of pipes, enabling different sounds to be selected; the word is also used for the rank of pipes controlled, and the control knob.

³ Pipes can produce a range of timbres. Those called "flutes" are wide pipes with a pure tone, like a recorder (their construction is similar, too); "strings" are made the same way, but are narrow and have a slight rasping edge like a stringed instrument; "reeds" are made with a vibrating metal reed, similar to the bamboo reed of a clarinet, and can be made to imitate woodwind and brass instruments.

⁴ Often some pipes are in a box with shutters to vary the amount of sound released – here at New College those shutters are visible and, unusually, made of glass.

It is hardly necessary to say that **J. S. Bach** (1685-1750) was the greatest and most famous composer for the organ of all time. But we should remember that he also wrote a great amount of equally important choral and instrumental music.

His *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* BWV 565 is in turn the most famous of his organ works. It was written fairly early in his career, although since no autograph survives we can't be sure when. Bach often rearranged older pieces for different instruments, and some scholars believe that this work was based on a piece for solo violin – a conjectural reconstruction of which has been recorded. The piece has also attracted later arrangements, for piano, orchestra, and even electric guitar. Like much of Bach's music, it survives these changes virtually unscathed.

Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) is best known for his comic operas; however, he also wrote music in a number of other genres. He composed his setting of *The Lost Chord* in 1877 at the bedside of his brother Fred during Fred's last illness. The lyric was written in 1858 as a poem by Queen Victoria's favourite poet, Adelaide Anne Procter. The song was immediately successful, and became particularly associated with the American contralto Antoinette Sterling, with Sullivan's close friend and mistress, Fanny Ronalds, and with the British contralto Clara Butt. Sullivan was proud of the song and later noted: "I have composed much music since then, but have never written a second *Lost Chord*."

Seated one day at the organ,
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the noisy keys.
I know not what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music,
Like the sound of a great Amen.
It flooded the crimson twilight,
Like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on my fevered spirit
With a touch of infinite calm.

It quieted pain and sorrow,
Like love overcoming strife;
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.
It linked all perplexèd meanings
Into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence
As if it were loth to cease.
I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
That one lost chord divine,
Which came from the soul of the organ,
And entered into mine.

It may be that death's bright angel
Will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in Heav'n
I shall hear that grand Amen.

Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-64)

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)

Dr Bernard Rose (1916–1996) was associated with Oxford University from 1939, and from 1957 till 1981 held the post of Informator choristarum at Magdalen College. Rose was a scholar, as well as being a composer whose output has been concerned with liturgical music, much of which has become standard cathedral repertory.

The *Feast Song for Saint Cecilia*, with words by Gregory Rose, the composer's son, was composed for the 1975 Festival of Saint Cecilia which was held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in London. With its refrain, set for treble soloist by the composer, the poem is reminiscent of Auden's *Hymn to Saint Cecilia* set by Britten. Here Rose sets the words carefully, drawing out the natural rhythms and painting the text in the most captivating manner.

When the sun with great flashes of grandeur breaks over the edge of the earth,
Cecilia, nine trumpets blazing at her side, glides over sea and land,
rousing great organs and voices to join in song.

Sing precious music to the Creator, sing as this great Saint sang in her heart.

When midday heat beats on working heads, Cecilia,
with strings and horns stirs the will in man and urges him to do great things.

Sing precious music to the Creator, sing as this great Saint sang in her heart.

When cool evening breezes calm weary folk inviting them to rest, Cecilia,
plucking harp strings entreats flutes to play lulling her people to calm rest.

Sing precious music to the Creator, sing as this great Saint sang in her heart.

Gregory Rose (1948-)

Malcolm Archer (1952-) has been Organist and Director of Music at Wells Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral, London, and Winchester College.

His setting of *A Hymn for St Cecilia* uses the same words by Ursula Vaughan-Williams given above as were set by Howells. But in contrast to Howells's straightforward somewhat rhapsodic setting, Archer's work is more energetic, evoking the changing moods explored within the text with music by turns joyous and reflective and leading to an ecstatic conclusion.

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) grew up in rural Hungary where he had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the rich traditions of native folk music that played such an important part in his musical life. With little formal training, he learned piano, violin, viola and cello and began writing music. At the Franz Liszt Academy of Music he met Bela Bartók, who became a lifelong friend and collaborator, and he and Bartók began a serious effort to collect and archive Hungarian folksong. Kodály was also an innovator in primary music education and strove to make music an integral part of the school curriculum.

Laudes organi (*In Praise of the Organ*) was commissioned by the American Guild of Organists and premiered at its 1966 national convention. It would be the last piece that Kodály composed. Rather than a solo organ work, Kodály wrote a work for chorus and organ with a text taken from a 12th century Latin poem. While the text reads somewhat like a manual of organ instruction, it is not clear if the poem was meant to be taken literally, figuratively, or even humorously. It could just as easily refer to singing, and this ambiguity probably appealed to Kodály. The poem was annotated with note names for each syllable of the text, making this one of the earliest notated scores, and Kodály draws on that original melody for much of the thematic material in *Laudes organi*.

The organ provides a long, imposing, majestic prelude as well as several interludes. Kodály gives the organ prominence, explaining, “The choir sings comments to the playing of the organ...The thought was given by the old Latin words: listen to the different possibilities of sound on the organ.” Kodály takes advantage of the opportunities for tone painting that the text provides, and ends the work with a magnificent fugue based on the original melody. Toward the end of the fugue, there is an additional verse, almost like a postscript. It is a prayer for Guido d’Arezzo, the 11th century monk who developed solfège and the use of hand gestures to indicate the solfège syllables, which are both important components of the Kodály teaching method.

Audi chorum organicum
instrumentum musicum
modernorum artificum
documentum melicum
canentem ludere amabiliter
ludentem canere laudabiliter
docens breviter,
leniter utiliter,
dulciter, humiliter.

Listen to the chorus of the pipes,
the musical instrument
of modern artists,
a paragon of melody
playing sweetly and lovingly
and singing laudably,
sounding economically,
gently, beneficially,
pleasantly, and humbly.

Ideo persuadeo
hic attendere
jubeo commoneo
haec apprehendere,
mentifigere humiliter.

I advise you
to pay attention to it
and entreat you
to embrace it
with humble attention.

Musice! Milites
te habiles
Usum exercites
artem usites
habilem corpore
te prebeas
facilem pectore
te exhibeas

Musician! you must be
like a warrior.
Exercise your training
and practise your art
show the skill
of your body
and the readiness
of your mind.

Follibus provideas
bene flautes habeas.
Istare prætereas
diligenter caveas.
His præhabitis
sonum elice
doctis digitis
modum perficere
neumis placitis.

Gravis chorus succinat
qui sonorus buccinat
vox acute concinat
choro chorus succinat
diafonico modo
et organico.

Nunc acutas moveas
nunc ad graves redeas
modo lyrico
nunc per voces medias
transvolando salias,
saltu melico
manu mobile,
delectabili, cantabili.

Tali modulo,
mellis æmulo
placens populo;
qui miratur et lætatur
et cantatur et laudatur
Deo sedula
qui regnat in sæcula.

Huius artis præceptor
secum Deus det Guidoni
vitam æternalem.
Fiat, Amen.

See to the bellows
and keep them inflated.
Avoid slacking,
watch out for that.
When you have prepared
then draw out the sound
with nimble fingers,
perform the melody
with pleasing sounds.

The deep voices below
which sound sonorously
are in dialogue with the high voices;
choir and counterchoir
singing through the gamut
in an instrumental melody.

Now play high
and now play low again
in a lyrical manner;
through the middle pitches
leap as though flying,
melodiously
with a supple hand,
pleasing and tuneful.

With such modulations,
sweet as honey,
please the listeners
who marvel and rejoice,
and sing and praise
God zealously,
who reigns in eternity.

To the master of this art,
Guido, may God grant
eternal life.
So be it, Amen.

Biographies

Susan Jiwey soprano

Susan Jiwey graduated with distinction from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She is winner of the Prix Bernac for Best Singer at the Ravel International Academy and has specialised in singing lead roles with small professional companies in the UK, France and Spain.

Her busy professional stage career includes Mimi *La Bohème* in the Olivier award-winning production for OperaUpClose where she has performed the role in successful runs at the Ravenna Festival, Soho Theatre and Charing Cross Theatre. She has also sung Rosalinde *Die Fledermaus* for Opera de Bauge, Donna Elvira *Don Giovanni* with Opera Vera and Westminster Opera, Violetta *La Traviata* for Iford Festival Opera and *Madam Butterfly* for New Devon Opera. She is an experienced oratorio soloist and has recently appeared as soloist in *Messiah*, Teatro Calderon, Valladolid and Dvořák's *Te Deum* with Wimbledon Choral Society.

Please see www.susanjiwey.com for more information.

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, with whom he tours to the USA later this month. He also performs solo classical piano recitals for P&O and Fred Olsen cruise lines, and in January 2019 he was the classical solo pianist on the Queen Mary 2.

James has been conducting the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Christy Callaway-Gale
Stephanie Gilroy
Janet Johnson
Elina Screen
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Gayle Walker
Eve-Marie Wenger

Bass

Steve Allen
Paul Hodges
Iain McLean
Jonathan Mapley
Tom Robinson

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Francesca Donnelan
Elizabeth Kreager
Alison Le Cornu
Lizzy Newton
Anna Orlowska
Joanna Poulton

Tenor

Josh Crolla
Jack Lovell
David Read
Alistair Sterling

If you are interested in joining us please contact James Brown at:
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