

The Cherwell Singers

present

Victoria & *Albert*

Andrew Bennett	tenor
Timothy Wakerell	organ
James Brown	conductor

Saturday, 7th December 2019
Exeter College Chapel, Oxford

Programme

Music by Felix Mendelssohn

Veni Domine, Op 39/1

How Lovely are the Messengers
(from *St Paul*, Op 36)

Ave Maria, Op 23/2

From Sechs Sprüche, Op 79:

Im Advent, Op 79/5

Weinachten, Op 79/1

Am Neujahrstage, Op 79/2

(*Organ Solo*)

Sonata 3i, Con moto maestoso, Op 65/3

There shall a star from Jacob come forth
(from *Christus*, Op 97)

Hark the Herald Angels Sing
(tune from *Festgesang*, WoO9, arr. Mack Wilberg)

Interval

If we believe that Jesus died
Ascribe unto the Lord

Sir John Goss
Samuel Sebastian Wesley

(*Organ Solo*)

Offertory in B flat

Henry Smart

Benedictus, Op 34ii
Lord, thou art God

Sir Edward Elgar
Sir John Stainer

Andrew Bennett
Timothy Wakerell
James Brown

tenor
organ
conductor

Victoria & Albert

2019 is the bicentenary of the birth of both Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert. As keen music lovers and amateur musicians themselves, the royal couple befriended composer Felix Mendelssohn on his visits to London, and even made music with him. Several entries in their diaries reflect their mutual admiration. To mark this the Cherwell Singers will perform some of Mendelssohn's Advent and Christmas choral music to reflect the season in which the concert will be presented. Forming the other half of our programme will be larger scale choral works written during significant years in Victoria's long reign, including her two jubilee years of 1887 and 1897. Works by Wesley, Goss, Stainer and Elgar will be included in this section of the concert. Performed in the suitably Victorian setting of the chapel of Exeter College, and accompanied on the organ by Timothy Wakerell, we hope you enjoy this evening marking this anniversary of the royal couple who continue to capture our imagination and interest today.

James Brown

Notes

Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn Batholdy (1809-1847) was born in Hamburg, the son of a banker, Abraham Mendelssohn, who renounced his Judaism and was baptised. Subsequently Abraham took the surname Batholdy from his brother in law, explaining to Felix that "There can no more be a Christian Mendelssohn than there can be a Jewish Confucius". However, Felix didn't like the change and so kept the name Mendelssohn, but in public using the name Batholdy alongside it in deference to his father.

Mendelssohn was a prodigy, giving his first public concert at the age of 9, and having his first music published at the age of 13. The writer Goethe even compared his early performances favourably with those of the young Mozart, whom he had also heard. He wrote his well-known *Octet* at the age of 16, and this is considered a fully mature work.

The Mendelssohn family at first considered Felix's sister Fanny to be the most musical of their children, but as a woman she was not allowed to make

a career of it. In fact Felix himself was also discouraged from making it a career until it was clear that he was determined to do so.

Mendelssohn travelled widely - hence works like his *Scottish* and *Italian* Symphonies and the *Hebrides Overture*. In 1835 he was appointed to a position in Leipzig, where he lived until his death. But he also maintained strong links with Britain, visiting the country many times, and editing Handel oratorios and Bach's organ music for British publishers. He also performed and conducted, and he wrote his oratorio *Elija* for the 1846 Birmingham Triennial Music Festival.

The music of Bach was a particular interest of Mendelssohn's. Even before he moved to Leipzig he had in 1829 conducted the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* since the composer's death.

Mendelssohn was a prolific composer in all the main genres. Tonight we are performing a number of his sacred choral works appropriate for this season, and you will hear part of an organ sonata. These choral works vary from a modest 3-part chorus for ladies voices (*Veni Domine*) to a setting in eight parts with at one point an 8-part semi-chorus making sixteen parts in all (*Ave Maria*). The chorus *There shall a star from Jacob come forth* is the only completed chorus of his unfinished oratorio *Christus*, which he was working on when he died.

Meetings with Victoria and Albert

Mendelssohn first met Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace in 1842 (he'd met Prince Albert shortly before). Victoria described the meeting in her diary:

"....He asked us to give him a theme upon which he could improvise. We gave him 2, 'Rule Britannia', & the Austrian National Anthem. He began immediately & really I have never heard anything so beautiful, the way in which he blended them both together & changed over from one to the other, was quite wonderful as well as the exquisite harmony & feeling he puts into the variations, & the powerful rich chords, & modulations, which reminded me of all his beautiful compositions. At one moment he played the Austrian National Anthem with the right hand, he played 'Rule Britannia' as the bass, with his left! He made some further improvisations on well-known tunes & songs. We were all filled with the greatest admiration. Poor Mendelssohn was quite exhausted when he had done playing."

The next meeting was three weeks later, and Mendelssohn wrote about it in a letter to his mother:

"Prince Albert sent for me on the Saturday at half past one so that I could also try his organ before I left England. I found him by himself; but while we were talking, in came the Queen dressed quite informally. She was just saying that she had to leave for Claremont in an hour's time, when she looked round and exclaimed, 'Heavens, how untidy!' – for the wind had scattered some sheets of music from a large portfolio all over the room and even among the organ pedals. Down she got on hands and knees and started picking them up... I begged the Prince to begin playing me something, so that I could boast of it in Germany. He played a chorale by heart, with the pedals – and so charmingly, precisely and accurately that it would have done credit to a professional... Meanwhile the Queen, who had finished what she was doing, came and joined him, listening with pleasure. Then it was my turn, and I began with the chorus from St. Paul, 'How lovely are the messengers.' Before I had come to the end of the first verse they both began singing the chorus, and Prince Albert managed the stops so cleverly for me...that I was quite enchanted.

Victoria wrote of the same meeting:

"Mendelssohn came to take leave of Albert, previous to his returning to Germany, & he was good enough to play for us, on Albert's organ, which he did beautifully. As he wished to hear me sing, we took him over to the large room, where, with some trepidation, I sang, accompanied by him, 1st a song which I thought was his composition, but which he said was his sister's, & then one of his beautiful ones, after which he played to us a little. We thanked him very much & I gave him a handsome ring as a remembrance."

They also met on several other occasions. Victoria and Albert attended the second London performance of *Elija* in April 1847, and their last meeting was in May 1847, just six months before Mendelssohn's death. During that last meeting the Queen said to Mendelssohn: *"You have given me so much pleasure; now what can I do to give you pleasure?"* He replied that he would love to see the royal children playing in their nursery. As a father himself, he was very pleased to accompany the Queen, as she later reported, *"all the while comparing notes with him on the homely subjects that had a special attraction for them both."* After his death Victoria wrote:

"We read & played that beautiful 'Lied ohne Worte,' which poor Mendelssohn arranged [for piano duet] & wrote out himself for us this year. To feel, when one is playing his beautiful music, that he is no more, seems incomprehensible!"

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

Come, Lord, and do not delay.
Come and free Thy people from
their misdeeds, and bring back the
dispersed to your land.
Raise up, Lord, Thy power and
make us safe.

(from a late tenth-century manuscript in the abbey of St. Gall)

How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace;
To all the nations is gone forth the sound of their words.

(Romans x 15, 18)

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostri.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou among women.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.

(Luke i 28, 42)

Im Advent (*In Advent*)

Lasset uns frohlocken, es nahet der Heiland, den Gott uns verheißen.
Der Name des Herrn sei gelobet in Ewigkeit. Halleluja!

*Let us rejoice, the redeemer is coming, whom the Lord has promised.
The name of the Lord be praised for ever. Halleluja!*

Weinachten (*Christmas*)

Frohlocket, ihr Völker auf Erden, und preiset Gott!
Der Heiland ist erschienen, den der Herr verheißen.
Er hat seine Gerechtigkeit der Welt offenbaret. Halleluja!

*Rejoice, ye people of the earth, and praise God!
The redeemer is come, whom the Lord has promised.
He has revealed his justice to the world. Hallelujah!*

Am Neujahrstage (*On New Year's Day*)

Herr, Gott, du bist unsre Zuflucht für und für.
Ehe denn die Berge worden, und die Erde und die Welt erschaffen worden, bist du
Gott von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Hallelujah!

*Lord, God, you are our refuge for evermore.
You are our God from age to age, from before the mountains were made, and the
lands and the world were created. Hallelujah!*

There shall a star from Jacob come forth, and a sceptre from Israel rise up, and dash in pieces princes and nations.

(Numbers xxiv 17; Psalm ii 9)

As bright the star of morning gleams,
So Jesus sheddeth glorious beams
of light and consolation!
Thy Word, O Lord,
Radiance darting, Truth imparting,
Gives salvation;
Thine be praise and adoration!

(Philipp Nicolai, 1597, tr. W Bartholomew, 1852)

Hark! The herald-angels sing “Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled”
Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim “Christ is born in Bethlehem”

Hark! The herald-angels sing “Glory to the new-born king”

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a Virgin’s womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hark! The herald-angels sing “Glory to the newborn King”

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing “Glory to the new-born king”

(Charles Wesley, et al)

Victorian Church and Cathedral Music

In 1904 the German critic Oscar Adolf Hermann Schmitz described Britain as “the land without music”. This was probably meant to refer to the plain fact that since Purcell (or arguably Handel) Britain had produced no composers who stood on the world stage. But however good the symphonies of Cipriani Potter (1792-1871) might be, for instance, there is no doubt that they have failed to achieve world recognition!

But music there certainly was. This was the era of huge choral spectacles, sometimes even conducted by Mendelssohn – the oratorios of Handel and then Mendelssohn, and the passions of Bach were performed by vast numbers of players and singers in town halls up and down the land, with great success, and Elgar notably produced works to continue this tradition. Where orchestras could not be found, large “symphonic” organs provided

the accompaniment; and these were also used to bring the latest orchestral works to the people in transcription.

And what of church and cathedral music in this period? In the twentieth century the “English Cathedral Tradition” was often invoked, with the implication that this had been carried forward to us unbroken from Tudor times. However, this was not really the case. In the nineteenth century, while parish church congregations were belting out hymns from *Ancient & Modern* with gusto, music in the cathedrals and colleges was in a parlous state. Boys there were, to sing treble (not always well), but the lower parts of the choir were provided by vicars choral and lay clerks, often appointed as a sinecure, and commonly with no dedication to the task and little talent when they deigned to appear. But remarkably composers continued to write for their choirs as if they were worthy of the music. And while not all of this music is great, some is very good and well worth continuing to sing.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century some musicians made a start towards improving matters. **Sir John Goss** (1800-1880) at St Paul’s Cathedral was an early example, with his pupil **Sir John Stainer** (1840-1901) providing training for the choir. Frederick Ouseley (1825-1889) founded St Michael’s College, Tenbury, to provide both training and a good example for other choirs. The provision of training for those who wanted to sing, and gradual changes in the manner of their appointment at cathedrals and colleges eventually led to the new “tradition” which reached its full flowering first at King’s College, Cambridge in the 1920s.

The composer in the second part of this concert who had to struggle most with the conditions described was **S. S. Wesley** (1810-1876), who had one of his big anthems first performed at Hereford Cathedral by a choir of trebles and one bass - the dean’s butler! Goss and Stainer were contributing to the improvements, and **Sir Edward Elgar** (1857-1934) came on the scene late enough to benefit from the improvements already taking place.

The anthems in this part of the concert are all associated with major events during Queen Victoria’s reign.

Goss wrote *If we believe that Jesus died* for the funeral in 1852 of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, who had been one of Queen Victoria’s most important advisors in the early part of her reign.

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.
Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

(1 Thess. iv 14, 18)

SS Wesley was the pre-eminent English composer of anthems in his time. *Ascribe unto the Lord* was composed in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition which was one of Prince Albert's most notable projects.

Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people : ascribe unto the Lord worship and power.

Ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his Name.

Let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King : and that he shall judge the people righteously.

Let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Sing to the Lord, and praise his Name : be telling of his salvation from day to day, and his wonders unto all people.

As for the gods of the heathen, they are but idols.

Their idols are silver and gold : even the work of men's hands.

They have mouths, and speak not : eyes have they, and see not.

They have ears, and hear not : noses have they, and smell not.

They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, and walk not : neither speak they through their throat.

They that make them are like unto them : and so are all such as put their trust in them.

As for our God, he is in heaven : he hath done whatsoever pleased him.

The Lord hath been mindful of us, and he shall bless us : he shall bless the house of Israel, he shall bless the house of Aaron.

He shall bless them that fear the Lord : both small and great.

Ye are the blessed of the Lord : you and your children.

Ye are the blessed of the Lord : who made heaven and earth.

(*Psalm 96 vv. 7-10, 2,3, 5; Psalm 115 vv. 4-8, 3, 12-15*)

Henry Smart (1813-1879) was a highly respected composer during this period, but little of his music is performed these days other than the hymn tune *Regent Square* and a number of organ pieces. His *Offertory in B flat* is from a book of twelve pieces suitable for use in services.

Elgar's *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* was written for chorus and orchestra for the Hereford Three Choirs Festival in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel : for he hath visited, and redeemed his people;
And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us : in the house of his servant David;
As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets : which have been since the world began;

That we should be saved from our enemies : and from the hands of all that hate us;
 To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers : and to remember his holy Covenant;
 To perform the oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham : that he would give
 us;
 That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies : might serve him without
 fear;
 In holiness and righteousness before him : all the days of our life.
 And thou, Child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest : for thou shalt go before
 the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people : for the remission of their sins,
 Through the tender mercy of our God : whereby the day-spring from on high hath
 visited us;
 To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death : and to guide
 our feet into the way of peace.
 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
(Book of Common Prayer, 1662)

Stainer's ***Lord, Thou art God*** was written in 1887 for Queen Victoria's
 Golden Jubilee, while Stainer was briefly organist of St Paul's Cathedral,
 where he had succeeded his teacher, Sir John Goss.

Lord, Thou art God : now therefore let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy
 servant, that it may be before Thee for ever; for Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall
 be blessed for ever.

The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me :

He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God,

And He shall be as the light of morning when the sun riseth, even as a morning
 without clouds. Even as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining
 after rain.

The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers, Let Him not leave us, nor
 forsake us, that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in His ways and to
 keep His commandments. That all the people of the earth may know the Lord is
 God; there is none else. Amen.

O Lord save the Queen : And mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee.

God save our gracious Queen,

Long live our noble Queen,

God save the Queen!

Send her victorious,

Happy and glorious,

Long to reign over us,

God save the Queen!

*(1 Chron. xvii 26, 27; 2 Sam. xxiii 2-4;
 1 Kings viii 57, 60; Book of Common Prayer; anon)*

Biographies

Andrew Bennett tenor

Born in Yorkshire, Andrew Bennett studied Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh and singing with Amand Hekkers in Glasgow. During this time he sang in the choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, making numerous broadcasts on BBC Radio and Television, Classic FM, and other international stations. Whilst in Scotland, Andrew appeared with Ludus Baroque and the Dunedin Consort. After a time as a freelance singer in London, Andrew became a Lay Clerk in the Choir of New College, Oxford. When not busy with the choir in Oxford or performing with them elsewhere on tour, he frequently sings in London, and is a deputy at many notable London churches and at St Paul's Cathedral. In addition to choral singing he enjoys performing as a soloist and recent engagements have included Monteverdi *Vespers*, Mozart *Requiem*, and Handel's *Alexander's Feast*.

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 (Priority 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. He is also a tenor lay clerk in the choir of New College.

James has given recitals in the UK, USA, Belgium and Switzerland, and appeared on both BBC radio and television. He also performs solo classical piano recitals for Cunard, P&O, and Fred Olsen cruise lines.

James has been conducting the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Christy Callaway-Gale
Stephanie Gilroy
Rhiannon Lovell
Elina Screen
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Marie Thebaud-Sorger
Lucy Watson
Eve-Marie Wenger

Tenor

Josh Crolla
Jack Lovell
David Read
Alistair Sterling

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Francesca Donellan
Elizabeth Kreager
Anna Orłowska
Joanna Poulton

Bass

Toby Blundell
Benjamin Breyer
Paul Hodges
Iain McLean
Jonathan Mapley
Tom Robinson

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