

The Cherwell Singers

present

The Platinum Queen

Benjamin Bloor

organ

James Brown

conductor

Sunday, 26th June 2022

Chapel of Keble College, Oxford

Programme

Behold, O God our defender	Herbert Howells
Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace	S. S. Wesley
Rejoice in the Lord alway	Anon (16 th century)
I will not leave you comfortless	William Byrd
<i>(Organ Solo)</i>	
Crown Imperial	William Walton
Zadok the Priest	G. F. Handel

Interval

O Lord, our Governour	Healey Willan
Confortare	George Dyson
All people that on earth do dwell	arr. R. Vaughan Williams
<i>(Organ Solo)</i>	
Greensleeves	arr. R. Vaughan Williams
O taste and see	R. Vaughan Williams
Let my prayer come up	William H. Harris
Festal Gloria in B flat	Charles Villiers Stanford
The National Anthem	arr. James Wilkinson

Benjamin Bloor	organ
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The Platinum Queen

Seventy years ago preparations were underway in earnest for the Queen's forthcoming coronation, and a vital part of that was the choice of music.

Coronations have long provided the opportunity to showcase some of the best choral music of both the past and the present, and the 1953 service was no exception to this.

Thus in our summer concert we present works from previous coronations that were reused in 1953, such as Handel's "Zadok the priest", written for the Coronation of George II, plus Stanford's Coronation Gloria for that of a later George (V) in 1911.

But the 1953 service enabled, more importantly, the commissioning of new works by leading composers of the day, thus ensuring the continued importance of royal patronage to the arts. Therefore in our concert we include several new works provided for the service by Herbert Howells, William Harris, and a representative from the Commonwealth, the Canadian composer Healey Willan.

Organ music from the service will also be performed on the suitably majestic organ of Keble College Chapel, which, some might say, provides the closest setting Oxford offers to Westminster Abbey.

We hope you will enjoy this evening celebrating not only the Platinum Queen, but also the resplendent music performed at her crowning.

James Brown

Notes & Words

The music of the coronation falls into three categories. There is the ceremonial, sometimes, but not always, bombastic in character. Then there is the music which is present as part of the communion service which was combined with the coronation ritual. And finally, new to this coronation, there is music which was included to stand as examples of the best of British music through the ages. Some pieces can be considered under more than one category.

Note that because our concert doesn't provide the context of the coronation ceremonial and the communion ritual, we are not performing our selection of pieces in the order they were used on the actual occasion.

We begin with the introit to the communion service, which followed the ceremonial arrival of the Queen at Westminster Abbey. **Herbert Howells** (1892-1983) wrote *Behold, O God our defender* for this occasion. Howells is particularly notable for the luscious, even sensual, harmonies pervading his works - created by the carefully graded use of discords - and this introit is a fine example.

Behold, O God our Defender, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.
For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

** meaning: "is better than a thousand elsewhere".
(Psalm 84: 9-10)*

Following this we are singing three of the English anthems played during the "Homage" following the actual coronation. The whole group (which included the anthem by Healey Willan later in this program) was planned to represent church music from the time of Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II.

S. S. Wesley (1810-1876) wrote several major and much-loved anthems which are a high spot of English music in the nineteenth century. Most are longer and more elaborate than *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace* whose scale was more suitable for this occasion.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.
The darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day:
The darkness and the light to Thee are both alike.
God is light and with Him is no darkness at all.
Oh let my soul live and it shall praise Thee.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for evermore.
(Isaiah 26:3, Psalm 139:11, 1 John 1:5, Psalm 119:175, Matthew 6:13)

The anthem *Rejoice in the Lord alway* was once thought to be by **John Redford** (c.1500-1547), but this is now known to be incorrect. A more likely attribution, on both date and stylistic grounds, is **Christopher Tye** (c.1505-c.1573). The only source is a keyboard reduction with odd parts of the text indicated, but in versions which can't always be made to fit the music. Tonight we are singing a more modern reconstruction than the one used in 1953. Although after the Reformation church music was supposed to be set simply, with one note per syllable for easy comprehension, composers of the period typically felt that this rule was unnecessary for the word "Amen", which is often set more contrapuntally, as in this case.

Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice.
Let your softness be known unto all men: the Lord is e'en at hand.
Be careful for nothing: but in all prayer and supplication,
let your petitions be manifest unto God with giving of thanks.
And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesu. Amen.
(Philippians 4: 4-7)

I will not leave you comfortless by **William Byrd** (c.1540-1623) is actually one of his Roman Catholic anthems written in Latin: *Non vos relinquam orphanos*. We are singing the English translation that was used in the coronation.

I will not leave you comfortless, Alleluia.
I go, and come again to you, Alleluia.
And your heart shall rejoice, Alleluia.

(John 4: 18)

Crown Imperial by **Sir William Walton** (1902-1983) was written for the coronation of George VI and played again for Elizabeth II – and for some later royal ceremonies. It is a large orchestral piece, very much in the vein of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches – to the extent that some critics have derided it as pastiche. But it is a fine example of the type none the less. It was arranged for organ by Herbert Murrill (1909-1952), with small cuts suggested by Walton himself.

The biblical text about Zadok crowning King Solomon has been used as part of every English or British coronation since that of King Edgar in 973. For the coronation of George II, **G. F. Handel** (1685-1759) wrote four anthems. One of these was ***Zadok the Priest***, to be performed between the communion service (after the Creed) and the coronation ceremony itself. However, at George II's coronation it was sung in the wrong place because the musicians got confused! But it recovered from this indignity, and has been performed at every coronation since then. (Note that because the King in the anthem is Solomon, the word King is not changed to Queen.)

Zadok, the Priest, and Nathan, the Prophet, anointed Solomon King;
and all the people rejoic'd, and said: God save the King, long live the
King, may the King live for ever! Amen! Alleluja!

(1 Kings 1:38-40)

O Lord our Governour by **Healey Willan** (1880-1968) was perhaps to modern eyes a rather token gesture to the musicians of the Commonwealth. Although he is commonly thought of as Canadian, he actually only moved there in his early 30s; he described his provenance as: "English by birth; Canadian by adoption; Irish by extraction; Scotch by absorption". The anthem was written for the coronation, and sets lines from several Psalms. Unlike in *Zadok*, the word King (originally signifying King David) is changed for Queen, making the old text relevant to the occasion.

O Lord, our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the world.
Behold, O God our defender: and look upon the face of thine Anointed.
O hold thou up her goings in thy paths: that her footsteps slip not.
Grant the Queen a long life: and make her glad with the joy of thy
countenance.
Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of heaven: when we call upon thee.
Amen.

(Psalms 8:1, 84:9, 17:5, 61:6, 21:6, 20:9),

Immediately after the placing of the crown on the monarch's head, recent coronations had included a setting by Sir Walter Parratt which included the words "Be strong, and play the man". Clearly this could not be used for the new Queen, and **Sir George Dyson** (1883-1964) was called on to provide an alternative, which he entitled *Confortare*.

Be strong and of a good courage.

Keep the commandments of the Lord, and walk in his ways.

(Deuteronomy 31:6, 11:22)

After the Coronation and the following Homage, the communion service resumed with the Offertory. To mark this transition it was decided in 1953 for the first time to include a hymn, part of which the congregation could join in with. The hymn chosen was *All people that on earth do dwell*, set to the tune *Old Hundredth* in a grandiose arrangement made for the occasion by **Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958). The melody was probably written by Louis Bourgeois (c.1510-1559), and the harmony used by Vaughan Williams for the fourth verse quoted that written in 1621 by John Dowland (1563-1626) for Thomas Ravenscroft's metrical psalter entitled *The Whole Booke of Psalmes*.

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell;
come ye before him, and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is forever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God whom heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.

(Paraphrase by William Kethe of Psalm 100)

No less than four pieces by **Vaughan Williams** were used in the service itself, and in addition his arrangement of *Greensleeves* was among the music played before the ceremony began. He had included the traditional song *Greensleeves* as part of an interlude in his opera *Sir John in Love*, and this interlude, in whole or just the *Greensleeves* part, has in turn been arranged for orchestra and for organ by other hands. The suggestion that Henry VIII wrote the melody is extremely unlikely to be correct.

As well as the two pieces we've already heard, **Vaughan Williams** got two outings at the Creed and Sanctus, which were sung to the settings in his *Mass in G minor*, and a fifth at the Communion itself, for which he wrote the exquisite miniature anthem *O taste and see*. Some people suggested that the use of consecutive fifths and octaves at the ending was deliberately cocking a snook at the establishment – but it was far more likely just an artistic choice, as they were already a common feature in his work.

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is:
Blest is the man that trusteth in him.

(Psalm 34: 8)

At the Gradual (between the Epistle and the Gospel) it was decided to include an anthem for the first time, as part of this service, in several centuries. *Let my prayer come up into Thy presence* was written for the occasion by **William H. Harris** (1883-1973), organist of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle – to which post he had been appointed following a period as organist of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Let my prayer come up into Thy presence as the incense, and let the lifting
up of my hands be as an evening sacrifice. Alleluya.

(Psalm 141: 2)

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) wrote his *Festal Gloria in B flat* for the coronation of George V, and it was performed at each of the coronations following. He subsequently added other movements to make a complete Festal Mass, but only the Gloria has remained well known.

Glory be to God on high,
and in earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
we worship Thee, we glorify Thee,
we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory:
O Lord God, heavenly King;
God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesu Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father:
That takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy;
Thou only art the Lord;
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, 1662)

The origins of both words and music of the *National Anthem* are shrouded in mystery. Considering the tune first, it is not hard to find tunes which have at least a phrase in common with it in the early seventeenth century, such as a dance tune published in 1619 by John Bull (1562-1628), who is as a result often quoted as the originator of the tune. A version of the tune which is close to the modern version was published in 1744 without attribution, and Thomas Arne (1710-1758) made an arrangement of it in 1745 when it was republished with essentially the present text. Curiously, the tune is also used, or has been, in several other countries (aside from Commonwealth countries) for their national anthems or for other patriotic songs; for instance: Liechtenstein, Norway, The United States, the German Empire (until 1918), and Russia (until 1833).

With regard to the words, it is clear that the present form of the first three verses appeared first in 1745, without attribution. Some people view the opening as a translation of 1 Kings, 1: 38-40 (as used in *Zadok the Priest*); but there is also a suggestion that it was a translation of a Latin hymn written for James II. The war-like second verse is now universally omitted, leaving the two verses given below. At various times additional topical verses have been added, or complete rewrites made, but none have gained currency except a verse by William Hickson, several of whose verses were published in *The English Hymnal* (1905); one of these has been used on a few official occasions, most recently at the Queen's Silver Jubilee and at the 2008 Winter Olympics, because it celebrates the brotherhood of nations.

The musical arrangement used at the coronation was a simple one made by Gordon Jacob and introduced by an elaborate fanfare. Tonight we are performing a new arrangement written this year by **James Wilkinson** (1978-), Director of School Music at St George's School, Windsor Castle, who has kindly also made for us the organ arrangement of the original orchestral accompaniment.

The audience is invited to stand and to join in with the second verse:

Thy choicest gifts in store
On her be pleased to pour,
Long may she reign.
May she defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the Queen.

Biographies

Ben Bloor organ

Ben Bloor is the Organist of the London Oratory Church where he accompanies the professional adult choir for weekly Mass and Vespers and oversees the famous Downes/Walker organ. He combines this with a busy freelance recital career and the post of School Organist at Westminster School, where he teaches organ and plays for services in Westminster Abbey.

Previously, he held organ scholarships at Derby Cathedral, St George's Chapel Windsor Castle, New College Oxford and Westminster Cathedral, and was the Assistant Sub-Organist at Rochester Cathedral.

Ben was the winner of the 2012 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition, and a semi-finalist in the inaugural Wadden Sea International Organ Competition held in Denmark in January 2017. He was awarded second prize in the Boston Bach International Organ Competition 2018.

He holds a First-Class Honours degree in Music from the University of Oxford and the Limpus prize for highest marks in the 2013 FRCO examinations. He is a recipient of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medal for his contribution to organ-playing.

Ben is a Junior Fellow of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where he takes organ lessons with Henry Fairs.

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

Hester Crombie
Stephanie Gilroy*
Janet Johnson
Elina Screen
Stephanie Sumner-Jones
Lucy Watson
Eve Marie Wenger

Tenor

Jack Lovell
Matthias Range
David Read
Joshua Crolla

Alto

Virginia Allport
Jenny Ayres
Ann Leggett
Elizabeth Kreager
Wendy Morris
Anna Orłowska
Vanessa Sinclair
Francesca Donellan

Bass

Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Simeon Mitchell

* *Soprano Soloist*

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