

The Cherwell Singers

present

Kodály *Sacred music*

Dónal McCann
James Brown

organ
conductor

Sunday, 19th March 2023
Chapel of New College, Oxford

Programme

Pange Lingua

(Organ Solo:)

Widor: Fifth Symphony, Allegro vivace

Stabat mater

Ave Maria (1898)

Ave Maria (1935)

Evening Song

Interval

Missa Brevis

Introitus *(organ solo)*

Kyrie

Gloria *(organ solo from Organoedia)*

Credo

Sanctus

Benedictus

Agnus Dei

Ite, missa est *(organ solo)*

Dónal McCann
James Brown

organ
conductor

Kodály: Sacred music

This term the Cherwell Singers explores the sacred music of the Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967). A linguist, philosopher, ethnomusicologist and pedagogue, as well as a composer, he left a rich and varied legacy, not least as the creator of the internationally famous Kodaly method of music education.

The major work of the concert will be his *Missa Brevis*, written during the dark days of the Second World War, as well as the lesser known *Pange Lingua*, and the smaller unaccompanied works, *Stabat Mater* and *Ave Maria*.

The setting of New College Chapel, with its 1969 modernist organ, which is ideally suited to Kodaly's music, should provide an atmospheric setting within which to set this particular collection of music, and the several and important organ solo sections will be played by the assistant organist of New College, Dónal McCann.

We hope you will enjoy this evening exploring the religious music of this exceptional musician.

James Brown

Notes & Words

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 Béla 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.

Before 1923, Kodály wrote only eight known choral works, of which one is lost, and only three were published in his lifetime. But from 1923 to his death in 1968 the number of choral works he published was 128, making up about two-thirds of his entire compositional output. It is not clear what caused this apparent change of interest, but there may be a link with the politics of the time. In 1919, during the proletarian dictatorship in Hungary, Kodály, along with his contemporaries Bartók and Dohnányi, was appointed to a new Music Council, and Kodály set about reforming musical education in the country. But the Hungarian Soviet Republic was quickly overthrown, and Kodály was even suspended from his official posts, under investigation, during 1920-21. Perhaps Kodály's concentration at that time on the use of folk music in education brought its predominantly vocal forms to the front of his mind.

In 1923, Kodály (by now rehabilitated), Bartók, and Dohnányi were each commissioned to write a musical work to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the joining of Buda and Pest into the single city, Budapest. Kodály submitted his first major choral work, the *Psalmus hungaricus*, starting the stream of choral music which was to follow for the rest of his life. The majority of these works are secular, but a good number were religious, as we hear tonight.

A feature of Kodály's choral music which sets it somewhat apart from that of his contemporaries like Bartók, Stravinsky, and so on is a certain fluidity of style. A single piece might encompass a variety of styles - plainsong-like melodies, romantic harmonies, twentieth-century discord - and yet combine them into a coherent whole. This can be observed in both tonight's main works, but especially in the *Missa Brevis*. Another feature that is unlike other contemporary composers is his extensive use of the organ - an instrument which is peripheral to the interests of most major composers. Both tonight's main works are strongly integrated with their organ accompaniment, and have substantial solo sections for the instrument as well. This tendency continued to the end of Kodály's life - one of his last works, which the Cherwell Singers performed just a few years ago in this chapel, was *Laudes organi*, which is a setting of an old Latin text in praise of the organ, and which naturally makes extensive use of its possibilities.

Kodály's setting of *Pange lingua*, written in 1929, starts with a substantial organ prelude, which the score notes may be played on its own, or omitted. After the prelude each of the six verses of the hymn is set in a distinctly different manner, until the last verse repeats the music of the first. The third verse is unaccompanied, and it has become common for choirs to perform it alone to the words of the first verse. Kodály had a particular interest in the music of Palestrina, and this movement in particular reflects this in its rhythmic equilibrium, its pattern of note lengths, and the form of its melody. The words of the hymn are attributed to St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Pange, lingua, gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi,
Quem in mundi pretium
Fructus ventris generosi
Rex effudit gentium.

Nobis datus, nobis natus
Ex intacta Vírgine,
Et in mundo conversatus,
Sparso verbi semine,
Sui moras incolatus
Miro clausit ordine.

In supremæ nocte cænæ
Recumbens cum fratribus
Observata lege plene
Cibis in legalibus,
Cibum turbæ duodenæ
Se dat suis manibus.

Verbum caro, panem verum
Verbo carnem efficit:
Fitque sanguis Christi merum,
Et si sensus deficit,
Ad firmandum cor sincerum
Sola fides sufficit.

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui:
Præstet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

Genitori, Genitoque
Laus et jubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio:
Procedenti ab utroque
Compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

Tell, tongue, the mystery
of the glorious Body
and of the precious Blood,
which, for the price of the world,
the fruit of a noble Womb,
the King of the Nations poured forth.

Given to us, born for us,
from the untouched Virgin,
and dwelt in the world
after the Word's seed was scattered.
His inhabiting ended the delays
with wonderful order.

On the night of the Last Supper,
reclining with His brethren,
once the Law had been fully observed
with the prescribed foods,
as food to the crowd of Twelve
He gives Himself with His hands.

The Word as Flesh makes true bread
into flesh by a word
and the wine becomes Christ's blood.
And if sense is deficient
to strengthen a sincere heart
Faith alone suffices.

Therefore, the great Sacrament
let us reverence, prostrate:
and let the old Covenant
give way to a new rite.
Let faith stand forth as substitute
for defect of the senses.

To the Begetter and the Begotten
be praise and jubilation,
greeting, honour, strength also
and blessing.
To the One who proceeds from Both
be equal praise.
Amen.

After graduating from the Conservatory in Budapest, Kodály went to Paris to study for a while with **Charles-Marie Widor** (1844-1937). Widor, as well as being organist of Saint-Sulpice in Paris for 64 years, was also professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire for a time, and subsequently professor of

composition; it could be that his time in Paris strengthened Kodály's interest in the organ. Widor was a prolific composer of music of many types, from solo piano pieces to operas, but virtually none of his music other than the later organ symphonies and a mass is heard today. The organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, with their emulation of orchestral sonorities, inspired a number of composers to write "organ symphonies"; Widor was the most prolific of these, writing ten in all, and the organ solo this evening is the first movement, *Allegro Vivace*, from his *Symphony no. 5 for organ* (from which the well-known *Toccata* comes).

Kodály wrote the original version of his *Stabat mater* in 1898 while a student. The setting was for men's voices, and was not published. However, some fellow students made an arrangement of it for mixed chorus and got that published, originally in Czechoslovakia, and this version is the one most often heard even now. However, some manuscript notes show that in the late 1930s he revisited the work, and as late as 1962 he sent a copy to a priest of his acquaintance. This late copy is again for men's voices, but the harmonies are much changed, and the melody ends on the fifth of the scale rather than the keynote, giving it a modal feel. When this version was published in 1997 the publisher added an arrangement for mixed voices, carefully maintaining the new harmonies. The complete *Stabat mater* poem has twenty verses, and the various versions of Kodály's settings have different smaller selections. Tonight we are using five verses, the first set to the 1898 music, and then alternating the men's and mixed versions of the final setting. The words of the hymn are first found in a Dominican convent in Bologna in the later thirteenth century.

Stabat mater dolorosa
juxta Crucem lacrimosa
dum pendebat Filius.

Cuius animam gementem
contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
mater Unigeniti!

Quis non posset contristari
piam matrem contemplari
dolentem cum Filio?

Quando corpus morietur
fac, ut animæ donetur
paradisi gloria.

The sorrowful mother stood
beside the Cross weeping
while her Son was hanging.

Whose moaning soul
depressed and grieving
the sword has passed through.

O how sad and stricken
was that blessed [woman]
mother of the Only-begotten!

Who could not be saddened
to behold the pious mother
grieving with her Son?

When the body will decay
grant that my soul may be given
the glory of paradise.

While a student in 1898, Kodály also wrote a setting of *Ave Maria* for women with organ and strings accompaniment. However, as with the *Stabat Mater*, he revisited the subject in the 1930s, this time writing in 1935 a completely new work for unaccompanied women's voices. We are performing both settings for you tonight – which is especially appropriate on this Mothering Sunday. The text of *Ave Maria* has no single origin. It is based on two verses from St Luke's gospel, and grew over several centuries, reaching its final form in 1568.

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostræ.
Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blest art thou amongst women,
and blest is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Kodály set many religious texts, but his prime concerns remained Hungarian music, ethnomusicology, and education. He was an indefatigable collector of folksong, the melodies, rhythms, and harmonies of his country's musical inheritance informing all of his compositions. His arrangement of the Northern Hungarian song, *Esti Dal*, or *Evening Song*, has achieved huge popularity through translation into a multitude of languages, and some say it is his best-known work. This is hardly a surprise given the universal theme: a soldier prays for divine protection to see him through another night in a foreign land. The fervent, but necessarily whispered, longing for home, security, and rest is reflected in the music with extraordinary sensitivity. *Evening Song* was written in 1938 in versions for men, women, and mixed chorus (the version we are performing tonight).

Peaceful woods, the dusk descending,
Fragrant now with Summer's ending;
There I rested, and e'er sleeping,
Praying, sought His sweet safe-keeping.

Thus I lay there, silent, praying:
"Lord, I wander ever straying;
Wand'ring through the world, yet knowing
Thou wilt guard me, and my going.

"Let not darkness from Thee hide me,
May Thine angels watch beside me;
Guard us all while we are sleeping,
Safe for ever in thy keeping!"

At the time of World War II Kodály was at the height of his public popularity, and in honour of this, and his retirement from the Academy of Music, 1942 was proclaimed “Kodály Year”. None the less, although he was one of the few prominent musicians to remain in Hungary at this time (Bartók had left for the USA in 1939), Kodály had to keep a low profile, because he and Dohnányi had refused to dismiss Jewish members of their orchestras and choirs in accordance with the anti-Jewish legislation of 1938, and in Kodály’s own case, he had refused to divorce his Jewish wife. In 1942 he and his wife were forced into hiding in the cellar of a Benedictine convent, and it may have been there that he started a substantial organ piece called *Organoedia ad missam lectam* which he certainly finished in 1943 in a mountain resort, where he had been asked to accompany a low mass (i.e. with no choir, just organ) on a harmonium in the local church. The piece falls into eight movements, and anyone sufficiently familiar with the Latin mass can hear how the musical lines fit the words. It is unusual for an organ mass to be tied intimately with the words in this way.

By 1944 Hungary had been occupied by the Germans, and the Red Army was also approaching. Kodály and his wife now took shelter in the basement of the Budapest opera house, and there he reworked his *Organoedia* into a mass for chorus and organ, his *Missa Brevis*, subtitled “in tempore belli”. Unlike Haydn in his mass of the same name, Kodály doesn’t let the war intrude into the music except in a single matter: whereas a “missa brevis” by definition does not in general repeat its text, at the end the words “dona nobis pacem” are repeated many times. In this form the mass was premiered in the cloakroom of the opera house (the main auditorium being unusable) in early 1945, by a choir of opera singers, and with the organ part again played on a harmonium. In 1947 Kodály orchestrated the work, which was first performed in that version at Worcester Cathedral during the 1948 Three Choirs Festival.

The music of *Missa brevis* is highly organised, with thematic links between movements, and whole sections repeated, in a way that suggests that Kodály from the start intended it to be more than just an organ mass to be played in a mountain village. There are even hints of sonata form, though the constraints of the movements of the mass make these somewhat obscure.

It is customary liturgically to omit singing the Gloria during Lent. As we are currently in Lent, we are taking the opportunity to enable you to hear the effect of that movement played in the original organ-only version from *Organoedia*.

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Gloria (organ only, from Organoedia)

Gloria in excelsis Deo

*et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te,*

*gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam
tuam,*

*Domine Deus, Rex cælestis, Deus Pater
omnipotens. Domine Fili Unigenite, Iesu
Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius
Patris,*

*qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui
tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem
nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.*

*Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus, Iesu Christe,*

*cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.*

Credo

*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem
omnipotentem, factorem cæli et terræ,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in
unum Dominum Iesum Christum, Filium
Dei Unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante
omnia sæcula. Deum de Deo, lumen de
lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum, consubstantialem
Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui
propter nos homines et propter nostram
salute descendit de cælis. Et incarnatus
est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et
homo factus est.*

*Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio
Pilato; passus, et sepultus est.*

Glory be to God on high.

*And in earth peace towards men of good
will. 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,*

*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 of the Father,
have mercy on us.*

*For thou only art Holy. Thou only art the
Lord. Thou only art Most High, Jesu Christ,*

*with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the
Father. Amen.*

*I believe in one God, the Father
almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and
of all things visible and invisible. And in
one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of
God, eternally begotten of the Father.
God of God, light of light, very God of
very God. Begotten, not made, being of
one substance with the Father: by whom
all things were made. Who for us men
and for our salvation came down from
heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy
Ghost of the Virgin Mary: and was made
man.*

*And was crucified also for us under
Pontius Pilate; suffered, and was buried.*

et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in cælum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per prophetas.

Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi sæculi. Amen.

Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

Ite missa est (organ only)

Ite missa est.

Deo gratias, da (nobis) pacem. Amen.

And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life: Who proceedeth from the Father and Son. Who with the Father and Son together is worshipped and glorified: Who spake by the Prophets.

And in one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. .

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, give us peace.

The mass is ended.

Thanks be to God; grant us peace. Amen.

Biographies

Dónal McCann organ

Originally from Belfast, Dónal read music at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an academic and organ scholar, and accompanied the choir in daily chapel services, as well as in recordings, broadcasts and extensive tours, including to America and Australia. Prior to this, Dónal was the Andrew Lloyd Webber Scholar at Eton College, where he gained the FRCO with the Limpus Prize, subsequently being nominated for the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. The following year he won the inaugural Dame Gillian Weir Medal at the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition.

Dónal studied piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, and organ with Professor Gerard Gillen at St Mary's Pro Cathedral. He has performed as a soloist with the Ulster Orchestra and the Academy of Ancient Music, and has given many recitals in the UK and abroad.

He is currently Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford.

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, and is appearing as the solo classical artist on the Cunard flagship Queen Mary 2 twice in 2023.

James has been conducting the Cherwell Singers since 2007.

The Cherwell Singers

Soprano

Christy Callaway-Gale
Sian Cattell
Hester Crombie
Stephanie Gilroy
Janet Johnson
Clare Scott-Dempster
Elina Screen
Ciara Williams

Tenor

Joshua Crolla
Jack Lovell
Simon Murray
David Read

Alto

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

Bass

Paul Hodges
John Johnston
Simon Jones
Iain McLean

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

director@cherwellsingers.org

All are welcome, but men's voices especially so.

Next Concert: 25 June 2023

Program and venue to be advised.

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