

The Cherwell Singers

present

Stanford 100

The Vocal & Choral Music of Charles Villiers Stanford

Maryam Wocial	soprano
Daniel Tate	baritone
Dónal McCann	organ & piano
Tristan Fry	timpani
James Brown	conductor

Sunday, 24th March 2024
Chapel of Mansfield College, Oxford

Programme

How beauteous are their feet (1923)

Beati quorum via, Op 38 No 3
Cœlos ascendit hodie, Op 38 No 2

(Organ Solo:)

Postlude in D minor, Op 105 No 6

A Song of Trust, Op 113 No 2
Purest and Highest

Evening Service in G major, Op 81

Interval

A Song of Wisdom, Op 113 No 6
O! for a closer walk with God
The Blue Bird, Op 119 No 3
Diaphenia, Op 49 No 3

(Piano Solo:)

Three Waltzes, Op 178

Sailing at Dawn, Op 117 No 1
Homeward Bound, Op 91 No 4
Te Deum in B flat major, Op 10

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The Vocal and Choral Music of Charles Villiers Stanford

In the week of the one-hundredth anniversary of his death, the Cherwell Singers present a programme of music by the Anglo-Irish composer, teacher, and conductor, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. Born in Dublin, educated at Cambridge, Leipzig and Berlin, Stanford was one of the founding professors at the Royal College of Music, where he had a long and distinguished career as a composition teacher.

But tonight we focus on his music, which continues to be a staple of the choral tradition of this country. We have tried to show a variety of pieces that by no means fully do justice to his output, ranging from sacred to secular, unaccompanied as well as with organ and piano, English and Latin, and solo works as well as purely choral ones.

Stanford has always been admired for the beauty of his melodic lines, as well the quality of his writing, so we hope you enjoy our humble tribute to this musical figure who did much to lift the musical reputation of this country in the late Romantic era.

James Brown

Notes

Tonight we present works by **Sir Charles Villiers Stanford** (1852-1924).

The mid-nineteenth century was a fallow period in English music; the great thread of creativity which had run from Tallis and Byrd through to Purcell and Handel had faded out, leaving minor figures like Sterndale Bennett (who composed little, but taught at Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music) and S. S. Wesley (who composed almost entirely for the church).

A small group of men born around the middle of the century started the rebuilding of a new English musical tradition – two Irishmen and two Englishmen: the composers Sullivan, Stanford, and Parry, and George Grove, a civil engineer who wrote on music, not least in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Their concern for musical education led to the founding of the Royal College of Music with Grove as Director and Stanford and Parry as Professors of Composition.

Origins and Training

Stanford came from a well-off and musical family in Dublin, and was himself precociously musical. He was sent to Cambridge University to study Classics at Queens College (where he also gained an organ scholarship), and subsequently at Trinity College, where he was appointed organist while still an undergraduate.

While still at Cambridge, Stanford starting going to Leipzig for musical study. He was disappointed in his teacher there, but had better luck in Berlin, where the violinist Joachim recommended that he go, feeling that he learnt more there in three months than in three years at Leizig.

Performing and Teaching

Back in England, Stanford conducted early performances in Britain of Brahms's Requiem and First Symphony. He was an active performer, mainly presenting works in the German tradition, and his own compositions.

At the Royal Academy of Music, which he had helped to found, Stanford, alongside Parry, taught the next generation of composers, including figures like Frank Bridge (who in turn taught Benjamin Britten), Walford Davies, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, John Ireland, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Stanford's teaching was conservative, focussing on the German tradition of Brahms and his predecessors, and he regretted it when his pupils moved towards modernism. He also tended to emphasise the craft of composition. Holst said after his death: "The one man who could get any one of us [his pupils] out of a technical mess is now gone from us."

Composing

Stanford composed music in all the main genres, and in his lifetime it was widely performed. His popular reputation for a long time rested on a view articulated by George Bernard Shaw: on the one hand, there was "Stanford the Celt", whose music was filled with colour, sweeping tunefulness, and passion; on the other, "Stanford the Professor", whose conservatism reined in the former's natural exuberance and was, in effect, dull and foursquare. As Percy M Young wrote: "On occasion his native instincts got the better of him and impelled him to compose music that is little, if any, short of genius". This high quality is most evident in his songs, his part songs, his smaller choral works, and in some of his refined and well-wrought chamber music – which was admired even by his critics during his lifetime.

But, largely as a result of his conservatism, most of his work was later eclipsed by upcoming composers such as Edward Elgar, and by his own

pupils, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst. However, his church music and some songs have continued to be performed regularly, and in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in his music, and a large amount of it has now been recorded.

Percy M Young can have the last word: “[Stanford is] a composer to whom one may return with cultured pleasure”.

The Music

We start the concert with the anthem *How beauteous are their feet* which was published in 1923, just a year before Stanford’s death. Though a late work, it is typical of the many anthems he wrote throughout his life.

How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion’s hill!
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal!
How happy are our ears
That hear this joyful sound,
Which kings and prophets waited for,
And sought, but never found!

How blessed are our eyes
That see this heavenly light
Prophets and kings desired it long,
But died without the sight.
The Lord makes bare his arm
Through all the earth abroad;
Let every nation now behold
Their Savior and their God!

(Isaac Watts, 1674-1748)

Around 1887 Stanford wrote three motets with Latin words, the only such anthems in his output. They were dedicated to his successor as organist at Trinity College, and first performed there. The three works are contrasted in character and the number of parts. We are performing two of the set tonight: *Beati quorum via* and *Coelos ascendit hodie*.

Beati quorum via integra est:
qui ambulant in lege Domini.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way:
who walk in the law of the Lord.

(Psalm 119, v1)

Coelos ascendit hodie
Jesus Christus Rex Glorïae:
Sedet ad Patris dexteram,
Gubernet coelum et terram.
Iam finem habent omnia
Patris Davidis carmina.
Iam Dominus cum Domino
Sedet in Dei solio:

Today into the heavens has ascended
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,
He sits at the Father’s right hand
and rules heaven and earth,
Now have been fulfilled all of
Father David’s songs,
Now God is with God,
He sits upon the royal throne of God

In hoc triumpho maximo
Benedicamus Domino.
Laudatur Sancta Trinitas,
Deo dicamus gratias,
Alleluia. Amen.

In this his greatest triumph,
Let us bless the Lord:
Let the Holy Trinity be praised,
let us give thanks to the Lord,
Alleluia! Amen.

(German, 12th century)

The *Postlude in D minor* is perhaps Stanford's best-known work for solo organ; it is a vigorous piece which alternates minor and major keys.

Stanford wrote a group of six songs for voice and organ, called *Bible Songs*, which were published in 1909. A year later he published six anthems which were settings of hymns, and these were indicated to be sung after each of the Bible Songs – but for some reason they were not published together. It is rare for the couplings to be performed as suggested, but we present two of them tonight: *A Song of Trust* with *Purest and Highest*, and (after the interval) *A Song of Wisdom* with *O for a closer walk with God*.

A Song of Trust

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;
So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth for evermore.

(*Psalm 121*)

Purest and Highest, Wisest and most Just,
There is no truth save only in thy trust,
Thou dost the mind from earthly dreams recall,
And bring thro' Christ to him for whom are all.

Eternal Glory, all men thee adore,
who art and shalt be worship'd evermore.
Us whom thou makest comfort with thy might,
and lead us to enjoy thy heavenly light.

(*Robert Bridges, 1844-1930*)

Stanford's canticle settings in various keys are some of his best-known and well-loved music. Some settings are grand, such as that in B flat, of which we will hear the *Te Deum* later, and some are intimate, like the *Evening Canticles in G*. The *Magnificat* in G has a rippling accompaniment which is often taken to conjure an image of the young Mary (treble or soprano soloist) sitting at a spinning wheel while singing. The *Nunc Dimittis* similarly presents Simeon as a baritone soloist; unusually, at the end the choir repeats the opening words of the canticle.

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever.

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.

(Luke 1 vv46-55; *Book of Common Prayer*)

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

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.

(Luke 2 vv29-32; *Book of Common Prayer*)

(Notes for *A Song of Wisdom* and *O for a closer walk with God* are above)

A Song of Wisdom

I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist.
I dwelt in high places, and my throne is in a pillar of cloud.
Alone I compassed the circuit of heaven and walked the depths of the abyss.
In the waves of the sea and in all the earth, and over every people and nation I got a possession.
With all these I sought rest.
And I took root in a people that was glorified, in the portion of the Lord's own inheritance.
I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress on the mountains of Hermon.
I was exalted like a palm tree on the sea shore, and as a fair olive tree in the plain.
And my branches are branches of glory and grace,
and my flowers are the fruit of glory and riches.
Come unto me, ye that are desirous of me, and ye be filled with my fruits.
For my thoughts are filled from the sea, and my counsels from the great deep.
And I came out as a stream from a river
I said, I will water my garden and will water abundantly my garden-beds.
And lo, my stream became a river, and my river became a sea.

(*Ecclesiasticus 24*)

O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Return, O holy dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

(*William Cowper, 1731-1800*)

The previous music has all been religious, even if not liturgical. But Stanford wrote secular songs as well. Possibly the best-known of these is ***The Blue Bird***, often sung with the soprano part taken by a soloist, though this is not indicated in the score. It provides a fine example of Stanford ending with a cadence which doesn't land on the key chord, adding to the timeless feeling of the piece.

Diaphenia is a setting of an Elizabethan love poem; after setting out his love for the girl, at the end the poet turns it around and asks her to love him. The music of the verses is more subtly varied than might at first appear.

The Blue Bird

The lake lay blue below the hill.
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue.
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.

(Mary Coleridge, 1861-1907)

Diaphenia, like the daffadowndilly,
White as the sun, fair as the lily,
Heigh ho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are belovèd of their dams:
How blest were I if thou would'st prove me.

Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,
Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power;
For dead, thy breath to life might move me.

Diaphenia, like to all things blessèd,
When all thy praises are expressed,
Dear joy, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the spring,
Or the bees their careful king;
Then in requite, sweet virgin, love me!

(Henry Constable, 1562-1613)

The **Three Waltzes** from around 1920 are evocative reminiscences of an earlier age. Look out for allusions to Beethoven's *Für Elise* in the first. The second is full of energy and exuberance; and in the last you will find a good characterisation of contemporary salon music.

Stanford's ***Songs of the Sea*** and ***Songs of the Fleet*** are settings of words by the poet Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938), and capture something of the patriotic spirit of Edwardian Britain. The songs were originally written separately, as the enthusiasm of the singer Harry Plunket Greene (1865-1936) for the first two led Stanford to request further poems from Newbolt.

Newbolt expressed his feelings about his friend Stanford when he wrote:

"He was the most subtly appreciative critic and interpreter of poetry that I ever met with. I always felt that to hear those songs, given as Harry Greene could give them, was to be told secrets about myself, to see my own thought reflected with perfect accuracy but irradiated with the magic lights of a dream."

Tonight we are performing ***Sailing at Dawn*** from *Songs of the Fleet* and ***Homeward Bound*** from *Songs of the Sea* with Stanford's piano version, plus the timpani from the original orchestral scoring to add colour.

Sailing at Dawn

One by one the pale stars die before the day now,
One by one the great ships are stirring from their sleep,
Cables all are rumbling, anchors all a-weigh now,
Now the fleet's a fleet again, gliding towards the deep.

*Now the fleet's a fleet again, bound upon the old ways,
Splendour of the past comes shining in the spray:
Admirals of old time, bring us on the bold ways!
Souls of all the sea-dogs, lead the line to-day!*

Far away behind us town and tower are dwindling,
Home becomes a fair dream faded long ago;
Infinitely glorious the height of heaven is kindling,
Infinitely desolate the shoreless sea below.

Now the fleet's a fleet again, etc.

Once again with proud hearts we make the old surrender,
Once again with high hearts serve the age to be,
Not for us the warm life of Earth, secure and tender,
Ours the eternal wandering and warfare of the sea.

Now the fleet's a fleet again, etc.

Homeward Bound

Swiftly the great ship glides,
Her storms forgot, her weary watches past;
Northward she glides and thro' th' enchanted haze
Faint on the verge her far hope dawns at last.

Thro' sunny mist a-glow,
Like noonday ghosts of summer moonshine gleam -
Soft as old sorrow, bright as old renown,
There lies the home of all our mortal dream.

We end with Stanford's setting of the *Te Deum in B flat* from his canticle settings in that key. This was written in 1879, and set the pattern for the canticle settings in various keys which followed. In 1902 Stanford was asked at short notice to provide a *Te Deum* setting for the coronation of Edward VII, and orchestrated this one for the occasion, adding an opening fanfare which is now always used. He also mentioned in the notes to the service that the piece makes use of Gregorian intonations.

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee: the Father everlasting.
To thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim: continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty: of thy glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles: praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets: praise thee.
The noble army of Martyrs: praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge thee;
The Father: of an infinite Majesty;

Thine honourable, true: and only Son;

Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory: O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son: of the Father.

When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death:

thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come: to be our Judge.

We therefore pray thee, help thy servants: whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy Saints: in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine heritage.

Govern them: and lift them up for ever.

Day by day: we magnify thee; And we worship thy Name: ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day without sin.

O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in thee.

O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

(4th century; Book of Common Prayer)

Biographies

Maryam Wocial soprano

British soprano Maryam Wocial is a Poppy Holden Scholar at the Royal College of Music, where she is studying for a master's degree with Dinah Harris. Maryam previously read Music at Lincoln College, Oxford University.

Whilst based in Oxford, Maryam performed as a solo recitalist at the Holywell Music Room and as a soloist in many venues including the University Church, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Sheldonian Theatre. At Oxford, she made her operatic debut with New Chamber Opera as Lisetta in Haydn's *La Vera Costanza*, and returned in 2023 as Dido in Johann Pepusch's *The Death of Dido* and the soprano soloist in their performance of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. Maryam has also sung with the Schola Cantorum, the Martlet Voices, and the Delius Singers.

In London, Maryam has performed as a solo recitalist at the Handel Hendrix House and as a soloist in several venues including the Royal Albert Hall and the Fairfield Halls. In 2022, she performed with the British Youth Opera in their production of Vaughan-Williams' *Sir John in Love* at Opera Holland Park. She was the winner of the 2023 Oxford and Cambridge Club Music Prize and is their musician in residence for 2023–2024. Since starting at RCM, she has been selected as the soprano soloist for the RCM's 2024 Bach cantata project.

Daniel Tate baritone

Delighted to be rejoining Cherwell Singers again, baritone Daniel Tate can be heard performing regularly in concert and recital across the country. His recent recital programme of English Song from the time of the First World War was performed at Steinway Hall in

New York, St Michael's Highgate in London, on three separate occasions in Oxford, and featured as the opening of a new Oxfordshire concert series initiative, the Akeman Concerts, set up to support musicians and country village churches while emerging from the pandemic.

Daniel currently enjoys an active career in Oxford and London as a professional singer and director. He has sung with New College and Christ Church Cathedral choirs, and many distinguished choirs in London including BBC Singers, Westminster Cathedral, and St Paul's Cathedral. His bespoke vocal group Cantabulous perform regularly at the Oxford and Cambridge Club as the resident musical entertainment, and Daniel is also a founding member of The Davey Consort, based in Dorchester-on-Thames, who sing 16th and 17th century sacred music alongside Gregorian chant.

Daniel also teaches singing, violin, and music theory at leading schools including Bruern Abbey School, and when not singing plays squash for the New College team and performs as the bass guitarist for the blues-funk band Reverend Blue.

Dónal McCann organ & piano

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. Next September he moves to Winchester College as Director of Chapel Music.

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, and organist at St John's College. In 2023 he was appointed Director of Music at Mansfield 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 appeared 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

Sian Cattell
Hester Crombie
Stephanie Gilroy
Judith Homann
Elina Screen
Lucy Watson
Eve Marie Wenger

Alto

Virginia Allport
Elizabeth Kreager
Ann Leggett
Wendy Morris
Anna Orłowska

Tenor

William Harpin
Nathan Mulcock
Simon Murray
David Read
Maks Tobiasiewicz

Bass

David Gillespie
Paul Hodges
Simon Jones
Brian Leach
Simeon Mitchell

If you are interested in joining us, please contact James Brown at:
director@cherwellsingers.org

Next Concert:

The Saint-Sulpice tradition

Music by organists of Église Saint-Sulpice, Paris:

Widor, Dupré and Fauré

Sunday, 16th June 2024, venue tbc

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