

Festival Singers & St Mary of the Angels Choir

Angels Dancing: Choral Masterworks

Directors: Ingrid Schoenfeld & William McElwee

Accompanist: Jonathan Berkahn

Guest conductor: Heather Easting

7.30pm Saturday 27 August 2022

St Mary of the Angels Church, 17 Boulcott Street, Wellington

Programme

I was glad (1902) – Psalm 122
Sir CHH Parry (1848-1918)

Bogoroditse Devo

All-Night Vigil Op. 37 (1915)

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Abendlied (1855) – Luke 24:29
Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901)

Qui habitat (2022) – Psalm 91
William McElwee

Miserere (c. 1630s) – Psalm 51
Gregorio Allegri (c. 1582 – 1652)

Hymn to St Cecilia (1942)

– Text W.H. Auden

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Break

Hail, gladdening light (1919)
John Keble (1792-1866)
Charles Wood (1866-1926)

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen (1990)
(Text 1599)
Jan Sandström

Cantique de Jean Racine
Op. 11 (1865)
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Three Motets (1892)
1. *Iustorum animae – Wisdom 3*
2. *Coelos ascendit hodie – 12th Century Hymn*
3. *Beati quorum via – Psalm 119*
Charles Stanford (1852-1924)

Crucifixus a 8
Missa Sancti Christophori
Antonio Lotti (1667-1740)

Zadok the Priest (1727)
Kings 1:38-40
GF Handel (1685-1759)

About this Concert

*“At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again.”*

In January Ingrid and I met in a sunny living room and hatched a plan to put on a really banging concert together. “We’ve got choirs,” we said, “And I’ve got a church,” I said. Pies were eaten, coffee happened, and we compiled the list of our favourite choral bangers that would later become this concert!

We start with Parry’s anthem *I was glad*, the words sung at the entrance of the monarch at every British coronation since 1625. Parry’s setting for two choirs and orchestra was composed for King Edward VII in 1902.

Then we move to a staple of the Russian orthodox repertoire – *Bogoroditse Devo* from the *All night Vigil*. This movement is based on an original theme imitating liturgical chant, and its asymmetrical shape reaching a great climax with the words “for you have borne the Saviour,” which just as quickly retreats to its initial hush for “of our souls.”

Organist-Composer Josef Rheinberger was 15 years old when he wrote *Abendlied*, which has come to be his most famous choral composition due to its balance of beauty and accessibility. The words are those that the disciples said to Jesus when he returned to them, unrecognized, from the dead.

The Renaissance rejoiced in the effect of extended canons, like Josquin des Prez’s 24-part canon *Qui habitat*. Taking Josquin’s main theme, I composed a work in this style for 12 voices – 3 each of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, each group singing the same material one bar apart. The music moves into a flatter key for the section “so you will not fear night terrors,” and the return to the home key brings about the full complexity of all parts singing together.

Allegrì’s *Miserere* is possibly the most famous single piece of Western Choral music. Never committed to paper, it was learnt by ear and sung yearly at the Good Friday service in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. It sets the whole Psalm 51, alternating between plainchant verses and two contrasting *falsobordone* settings, one sung by a main choir of five voices, and the second by a solo quartet, including the ethereal high soprano part that earned its fame.

Britten wrote his *Hymn to St. Cecilia* during WWII, 1940-1942, around the same time he wrote the *Ceremony of Carols*. St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music, but her feast day is also Britten’s birthday. The piece is in three sections each ending with a refrain. The third section uses word-painting to musically depict the instruments in the text.

Hail gladdening Light is an English translation of the oldest complete Christian hymn, *Phos hilaron*, first written down in the 4th Century. Wood's double choir a capella setting of Keble's translation is core repertoire of the Anglican Evensong service. It's bright, loud opening and closing contrast with the reflective middle section "Now we are come to the sun's hour of rest."

Jan Sandström took Michael Praetorius's 1609 chorale *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* and stretched and reframed it into a contemporary choral smash hit. The St Mary's Choir sings the first hymn verse which is enveloped in a glowing 8-part major-mode haze by the Festival Singers.

Like *Abendlied*, *Cantique* is an early work that turned out to be a masterpiece. Gabriel Fauré was 19 when he set Jean Racine's translation of the hymn for matins *Consorts paterni luminis* for a composition competition at his school. The *Cantique's* combination of a beautiful melody, a flowing triplet accompaniment, and Romantic harmony ensured a hit.

The texts to Charles Villiers Stanford Op. 38 set of *Three Latin Motets* fill three different roles in the Catholic liturgy and are set in contrasting ways. The first, *Justorum animae*, is the Offertory chant from All Souls Day. Stanford sets it in 3 sections, the outer ones reflecting on the peace souls experience in God's hands, while the middle, on the words "tormentum malitiae" express with incisive rhythms and tortured, unstable minor harmony.

Coelos ascendit hodie is a hymn for Ascension from the 12th Century. Stanford sets it for two choirs, singing in triumphant antiphony – each choir's entry overlapping the previous, sometimes with responding cries of "alleluia." In the end, the two choirs come together for a final exultant "Alleluia, alleluia, amen."

The third motet, *Beati quorum via* is a psalm, which Stanford sets for six part choir. Stanford repeats the text twice, building each phrase deliberately. In the repeat of the words, Stanford suddenly slows the movement, leaving chords hanging in the air almost as a meditation.

Lotti's stunning *Crucifixus* for 8 voices is famous for its arresting unprepared dissonances – a new innovation in the Baroque period – that emphasize the suffering of the crucifixion. Like the *Miserere*, it is a favourite at Good Friday.

Just as we opened the concert with a coronation anthem, we close with one. Handel composed *Zadok the Priest* for the coronation of King George II in 1727, and it has been sung at every British coronation since. It is in three sections, the first a rousing broad choral declaration, followed by a rejoicing triple time dance form, before finishing with triumphant exclamations of "God save the King."

William McElwee

I was glad (1902)

Psalms 122: 1-3, 6, 7

I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy Gates,
O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is builded as a city
That is at unity in itself.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem,
They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
And plenteousness within thy palaces.

Bogoróditse Djévo

Rejoice, O God-bearing Virgin – Luke 1:42

Rejoice, O God-bearing Virgin,
Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art Thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb,
for Thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.

Abendlied

Evening Song – Luke 24:29

Abide with us: for it will become Evening,
And the Day is coming to an end.

Qui habitat

Psalms 91

Who dwelleth in the help of the Most High
Shall remain in the protection
of the Lord of the heaven.
And He is my refuge.
He shall shadow you with his wings
His truth will surround you like a shield:
You will not fear the night terror.

Miserere –

Have mercy upon me, O God

Psalms 51

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your great goodness.
According to the multitude of Your mercies
Do away with my offences.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge
my faults: and my sin is ever before me.
Against You alone have I sinned,
and done this evil in Your sight:
That You might be found just when You Speak
And blameless when You judge.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part
You will make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud
of Your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
For You do not desire sacrifice,
or else I would give it;
You do not delight in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.
Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
Then You shall be pleased
with the sacrifices of righteousness,
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
4 Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Hymn to St Cecilia – W.H. Auden

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

II

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where Hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear white children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.
"O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain."
O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.
"That what has been may never be again."
O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.
"O bless the freedom that you never chose."
O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.
"O wear your tribulation like a rose."

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

Hail, gladdening light (1919) – John Keble (1792-1866)

Hail, gladdening Light of his pure glory pour'd
Who is th'immortal Father, heav'nly blest.
Holiest of holies, Jesu Christ, our Lord.
Now we come to the sun's hour of rest,
The lights of ev'ning round us shine,
We hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine.
Worthiest art thou at all times to be sung
With undefiled tongue, Son of God,
giver of life alone.
Therefore in all the world thy glories, Lord,
they own.

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen – Behold, a Rose is growing

Behold a Rose is growing
From a tender root.
As the Ancients sang to us
It comes from Jesse's line.
And it has budded a little flower
In the midst of cold winter
Near the midnight hour.

Cantique de Jean Racine – Hymn of Jean Racine

O Word, equal of the Most High, our sole hope,
Eternal day of the earth and the heavens;
We break the silence of the peaceful night.
Divine Saviour, cast your eyes upon us!

Shed the light of your mighty grace upon us.
Let all Hell flee at the sound of your voice.
Dispel the slumber of a languishing soul
That leads it to forget thy laws!

O Christ, be favourable to this faithful people
Now gathered to bless you.
Receive the hymns that it offers
To your immortal glory
And may it return laden with your gifts.

1. Justorum animae – The souls of the Just

Wisdom 3

The souls of the just are in the hands of God,
And the torment of malice shall not touch them.
To the unwise they seemed to die,
However they are at peace.

2. Coelos ascendit hodie – Today he ascended to heaven

Today Jesus Christ, King of Glory,
Ascends to heaven,
He sits at the right hand of the Father
He governs heaven and Earth, Alleluia!
Now all Father David's song have fulfilment.
Now God with God Sits on God's throne:
In this greatest triumph Let us bless the Lord.
Let the Holy Trinity be praised,
Let us give thanks to the Lord
Alleluia! Amen!

3. Beati quorum via

Psalms 119

Blessed are those who way is whole,
Who walk in the law of the Lord.

Crucifixus

He was also crucified for us under Pontius Pilate:
Suffered, and was buried.

Zadok the Priest (1727)

Kings 1:38-40

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!

Festival Singers

Musical Director: Ingrid Schoenfeld

Accompanist: Jonathan Berkahn

Sopranos: Robyn Bridge,
Heather Easting, Heather Garside,
Anne Neal, Jo Rothbaum, Helen Willberg.

Altos: Karen Espersen, Jan Hamill,
Kenda Kittelty, Wendy Nelson,
Margaret Seconi, Helen Tripp, Rita Urry.

Tenors: Joe Fecteau*, Paul Kilford.

Basses: Jonathan Berkahn, Robert Easting*,
Philip Garside, Alex Jeune,
Ian Livingstone, Brian Patchett.

St Mary of the Angels Choir

Musical Director: William McElwee

Sopranos: Amelia Foster, Anne French,
Demelza Gallen*, Rebecca Greenwood,
Rebecca Stanton*, Kel Sucharitchan.

Altos: Lucy Dobbie, Simon Hernyak*,
Fiona Kelly, Lynley Reid.

Tenors: Karl Bennett, Logan Hunt,
Richard Taylor*

Basses: Ian McElwee, Steve Nightingale,
Bernard Sew*

* *Soloists*

Festival Singers plans for the remainder of 2022

“Rewritten” concert

**Saturday Evening 19 Nov 2022
at Wesley Church, 75 Taranaki Street**

We'll sing music that's been used in one context and then rewritten for another, e.g. JS Bach's *Passion Chorale* that Paul Simon rewrote as *American Tune*.

December 2022

We plan to sing at the Seatoun Carols event at St Christopher's that fundraises for the Wellington City Mission.

And, we may perform a Christmas concert

St Mary of the Angels Choir specializes in Gregorian Chant and Renaissance polyphony

We rehearse every Thursday night and sing on Sunday at 11am. All are welcome.

Contact William McElwee (MD) at
wmcelweemusic@gmail.com

All Saints Vespers Tuesday November 1st 7.30pm

Join us for Solemn Vespers to celebrate the feast of All Saints.

Carols with the Angels Wednesday December 14th 7.30pm

Join us for our annual Christmas concert at St Mary's with the Salvation Army Brass Band

Sing with Festival Singers in 2022 & 2023

We rehearse from
7-9pm on Monday nights
from February to early December
at Newlands Christian Assembly,
126 Newlands Road.

All singers welcome.

Learn a wide variety of sacred
& secular music and really expand your
musical horizons.

Joining is easy. No formal audition is
required. Come to 3 rehearsals without
obligation, to try us out.

We're an affordable choir.

Annual subs are currently \$250 for
adults, (\$225 each for those in the same
household). Full time students pay just
\$100 for a full year.

We know you will make new friends
in our supportive greater Wellington
community choir.

For more details contact:

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Digital Album (2020) \$10



(2015) CD \$15; Digital Album \$10



(2007) CD \$15; Digital Album \$10



(2000) CD \$15; Digital Album \$10