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HEAD SPACE: CANDLELIGHT

The King's Singers



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1	In manus tuas Domine – Plainchant	1.42
2	Christe qui lux es et Dies (I) – Robert White (c. 1538-1574)	4.13
3	Song 13 – Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)	2.20
4	Heyr þu oss himnum à – Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b. 1977)	3.30
5	Song 1 with <i>Jeremy West (cornett)</i> – Orlando Gibbons	5.38
6	Ave Virgo Sanctissima – Judith Bingham (b. 1952)	4.43
7	Song 20 with <i>Jeremy West (cornett)</i> – Orlando Gibbons	3.22
8	Zwei Beter – Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)	4.52
9	O Euchari – Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)	3.08
10	4' 33" – John Cage (1912-1992)	4.33
11	Ave Maria – Robert Parsons (c. 1535-1572)	5.19
12	Song 9 – Orlando Gibbons	2.21
13	Ave Maris Stella – Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)	2.56
14	Salva nos Domine – Plainchant	0.52

Total 49.31

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Notes On

HEAD SPACE: CANDLELIGHT

For many people, choral music has a deep and close association with calmness, reflection, and peacefulness. There is something so innate and ancient about groups of people coming together to create organised sound that it could be said that choral singing is hardwired into us all as a species. Amidst our varied, eclectic and often eccentric output of King's Singers recordings, we have decided to create a series of EP releases named *Head Space* in order to explore unashamedly the connection between choral music and calmness. It seems clear that the trappings of modern life are not always conducive to peace or reflection, so perhaps there is more of a place than ever for using our art-form to encourage it. We hope that listeners to this release (and its successors) will use it as an opportunity briefly to slow down and find a calm mental state despite whatever else may

be happening in their lives or the world.

This first volume in our *Head Space* series is themed *Candlelight*. It takes as its inspiration the ancient church liturgy — the context in which lots of beautiful and reflective choral music has been written. Church music is very close to our hearts as performers, as it was in this tradition that most of us grew up and learned our trade, and in which our group was originally formed. The church service central to this *Candlelight* release is that of compline: the final service of the day in the Catholic rite — performed as darkness descends and night draws in. It's a service which asks God for protection and comfort through the night, and it evolved in a period when getting safely through each night was by no means a given. The service was traditionally full of plainchant melodies: single-line hymns, psalms, responsories and antiphons which

gradually developed, over centuries, into a sacred repertoire which was the uniting soundtrack to an often-disunited church. Some of the most famous of these compline plainchant melodies feature in this recording, helping to create a musical continuum which leads us in and out of other more complex or substantial works.

The first of these is *In manus tuas Domine*, whose text is based on Psalm 31: 'Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit', in which we hear three lower voices chanting together. The final one, which closes the album, is the compline antiphon *Salva nos Domine vigilantes*: 'Save us, O Lord, waking, and guard us sleeping', in which we hear just Julian singing as a solo cantor. Track 2 is the compline hymn *Christe qui lux es et Dies*. Robert White (c. 1538–1574) wrote several settings of this hymn, all of them in the 'alternatim' style which intersperses plainchant and harmonised choral verses. Robert White worked as organist at Westminster Abbey, and Ely Cathedral and was one of the most influential and skilled English composers of his

generation. The simplicity of even the choral verses — comprising only block chords — creates an entrancing effect which would have been perfect for the cathedral or chapel acoustics where it was first performed. In all of these pieces of chant, and indeed in other works on the recording, the pace of music is inherently governed by the patterns and rhythms of breathing, with regular pauses punctuating the sound, allowing time for the cantor to draw breath, allow the echo to disperse, before beginning the next phrase. This breath-led pacing is a running theme through lots of the material on *Candlelight*.

Dotted throughout the track list are four of Orlando Gibbons' (1583–1625) *Song* settings. In 1623 the poet and theologian George Wither published 'The Hymnes and Songs of the Church' – hymn texts for various points of the church calendar. For several of these texts, Gibbons composed two-part music – a melody and bass line – which could be used to sing Wither's texts. Fleshed-out four part versions of these Gibbons compositions have become a staple part of the hymn

repertoire of the Anglican church, and are beloved for their simplicity and beauty. We decided to include four *Songs*, but without words, as musical sorbets in which the beauty of the lines could cleanse the palette with gentle vocalisations and the breathing rhythms inherent in each phrase and each new verse. For two of these – *Song 1* and *Song 20* – we were joined by the cornettist Jeremy West, who adds quasi-improvised obligato lines (constructed by composer Timothy Roberts) which weave in and out of Gibbons’ original melodies with the distinctive character of the 16th century wind instrument.

Anna Thorvaldsdottir’s (b. 1977) hymn, *Heyr þú oss himnum á*, offers a modern expression of the same contemplative ideals found in *Compline*. The Icelandic text, ‘Hear us in heaven’, evokes the theme of nighttime prayer for protection. As with her much-celebrated film and television music, Thorvaldsdottir’s setting responds not with overt emotion but with spaciousness, stillness, and understatement. Long, sustained vocal lines are underpinned by slow-

moving harmonies and subtle shifts in texture. In the context of *Head Space*, it’s gently overlapping, strophic structure encourages a kind of musical mindfulness: expansive, repetitive and slow enough almost to alter the listener’s sense of time. Judith Bingham’s (b. 1952) *Ave Virgo Sanctissima* is a through-composed setting, allowing the text to unfold in a single arc, with a brief reprise of the opening material as the piece draws to a close. Bingham’s work inhabits the same sonic and spiritual space as chant — but here reimagined through a contemporary harmonic lens, and her distinctive octatonic voice. The text is an ancient Latin poean of praise to the Virgin Mary, similar to Edvard Grieg’s *Ave Maris Stella*, and Parsons’ *Ave Maria* that come later on this album. Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) wrote *Zwei Beter* – or ‘Two Prayers’ – for the Hannover Mädchenchor in 1998, setting a parable spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of St. Luke. The zealous and pompous prayer offered by the pharisee, set in a much more simple two- and three-part musical language, sits in stark contrast

to the short prayer of the pub landlord. The landlord admits he is a sinner and asks forgiveness, and is the one who returns home blessed. Pärt’s musical style makes effective use of stillness and silence, with marked moments of pause punctuating sweeping melodic lines or homophonic block textures. The text also has a perfect home on *Head Space*, inviting us – as it does – to accept and live with our imperfection.

O Euchari is a monodic composition by the 12th-century abbess, poet and mystic Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), and it provides a vital link in the arc of this album. It bridges the drama of Bingham or Pärt and the silence of Cage’s *4’33”*, by returning to a single unaccompanied melodic line. The text honours St Eucharis and is full of the rich, visionary imagery typical of Hildegard’s poetry. As the musicologist and conductor Christopher Page notes, Hildegard’s music stretches the musical language of plainchant to its expressive limits, with long phrases, wide intervals, and highly distinctive melodic shapes. *O Euchari* steps outside of the rhythmic

framework of ensemble singing and instead follows the natural cadence of a solo voice. In our performance, countertenors Pat and Eddie combine to create a shared high voice. In the narrative of *Candlelight*, it gently brings the listener back from harmonic complexity into a purer kind of musical contemplation — preparing the ear for the silence that follows. The atmosphere of stillness and consciousness in what we nowadays call mindfulness, is perfectly captured in an experimental work by the American avant-garde composer John Cage (1912–1992): *4’33”*. He wrote it in 1952, and its concept is both groundbreaking but also incredibly simple. The performer makes no intentional sound for the duration of the piece (which may, or may not, be 4 minutes and 33 seconds: indeterminacy was a compositional tool for Cage). Performances of the work often highlight how absolute silence is rarely possible; when performing or listening to the piece, our awareness of the world around us — even of the noises of our own bodies and the buildings we’re in —

become tantamount to music. Whilst live performances of the piece often activate the ears and the eyes of listeners, we hope that in this recording we might activate your imagination too. As you listen, we invite you to be aware that the six of us were standing in candlelight, at nighttime in an otherwise empty church, close to our microphones, as the audio was captured. There is — we hope — a comforting immediacy to the experience of listening, knowing that we were present too in that same period of silence, observing whatever incidental sounds you too may notice. Taking us from silence back into sound is the delicate opening phrase of Robert Parsons' (c. 1535–1572) *Ave Maria* — one of the finest and most famous examples of mid-16th-century English polyphony. It sets the Latin text of the 'Hail Mary' in five-part counterpoint, with each new phrase introduced imitatively across the voices. Parsons spent part of his career as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal (succeeding William Byrd there) before his untimely death by drowning in 1572. The texture of *Ave Maria* is carefully balanced, with each new line emerging

and receding until the unfolding of the final 'Amen' which is surely one of the expressive pinnacles of Elizabethan church music.

Edvard Grieg's (1843–1907) *Ave Maris Stella* is a setting of the Marian hymn 'Hail, Star of the Sea', which dates from the 8th century and was traditionally sung at the service of Vespers (which comes before Compline in the daily cycle). It alternates between rich, low sonorities and floated phrases led by the upper voices, creating a texture that feels both grounding and elevated. Its strophic form demarcates the verses of the text, making it a comfortable bedfellow for the other strophic hymns and songs on this record. For all of us in the group, *Ave Maris Stella* has long been a favourite which we've known since childhood.

Our hope is that, whether you listen to it in order or not, this sequence of music is beautiful in its own right, but also creates an atmosphere and a rhythm which enables a compline-like moment of reflection and calm.

Texts and Translations

In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.
Redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.

*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.*

Christe, qui lux es et Dies, noctis tenebras detegis;
lucisque lumen crederis,
lumen beatum praedicans.

*Christ, who art the light and day,
you drive the darkness of night away;
you are called the light of light,
proclaiming the blessed light.*

Precamur, Sancte Domine,
defende nos in hac nocte;
sit nobis in te requies,
quietam noctem tribue.

*We beseech you, Holy Lord,
defend us this night;
may our rest be in you,
grant us a peaceful night.*

Ne gravis somnus irruat,
nec hostis nos surripiat;
nec caro illi consentiens
nos tibi reos statuat.

*Let not heavy sleep attack,
nor the enemy steal upon us,
nor the flesh consenting to him
place us guilty before you.*

Oculi somnum capiant,
cor ad te semper vigilet;
dextera tua protegat
famulos qui te diligunt.

*Though our eyes may take sleep,
may our hearts ever watch toward you;
may your right hand protect
your servants who love you.*

Defensor noster, aspice,
insidiantes reprime;
guberna tuos famulos,
quos sanguine mercatus es.

*Behold our defender,
restrain those who lie in wait;
guide your servants,
whom you have redeemed with your blood.*

Memento nostri, Domine,
in gravi isto corpore;
qui es defensor animae,
adesto nobis, Domine.

Deo Patri sit gloria,
eiusque soli Filio,
cum Spiritu Paraclito,
et nunc et in perpetuum. Amen.

Heyr þú oss himnum á,
hýr vor faðir, börn þín smá,
lukku oss þar til ljá,
líf eilíft þér erfum hjá,
og að þér aldrei flæmumst frá.

Þitt ríki þróist hér,
það þín stjórn og kristni er,
svo að menn sem flestir,
safnist, Guð, til handa þér,
fegin yfir því fögnum vér.

Síst skarta sönglist má,
sé þar ekki elskan hjá,
syngjum því þýtt lof þá,
Þér, Guð drottinn, himnum á,
Maður rétt kristinn mun þess gá.

En þegar aumir vér,
öndumst burt úr heimi hér,
oss tak þá, Guð, að þér,
í þá dýrð, sem aldrei þver.

Amen, Amen, það eflaust sker.

*Remember us, O Lord,
in this frail body;
you who are defender of the soul,
be present with us, O Lord.*

*Glory be to God the Father,
and to his only Son,
with the Holy Spirit, Paraclete,
both now and evermore. Amen.*

*Hear us in heaven, O God,
loving Father, as we, your small children,
ask for the fortune to receive eternal life,
that we may never stray from your path.*

*May your kingdom grow here,
may your rule and your faith prevail,
so that we, with most people,
may gather, O God, around you,
and with joy give our praise.*

*We cannot give song its full beauty
unless love is present;
so let us sing gentle praise
to you, Lord God in heaven,
as the faithful truly have done.*

*And when our poor souls
depart from this world,
take us, God, to you,
into the glory that never ends.*

Amen, Amen — may this surely be done.

Ave Virgo Sanctissima,
Dei Mater piissima,
maris stella clarissima.
Salve semper gloriosa,
margarita pretiosa,
sicut liliū formosa,
nitens olens velut rosa.

Zwei Beter

Jesus sprach zu einigen,
Die davon überzeugt waren gerecht zu sein
Und die anderen verachteten,
Dieses Gleichnis:

“Zwei Menschen gingen hinauf in den
Tempel, um zu beten.
Der eine war ein Pharisäer,
Der andere ein Zöllner.
Der Pharisäer stellte sich hin und betete also:

‘O Gott, ich danke dir, dass ich nicht bin
wie die übrigen Menschen,
Räuber, Ungerechte, Ehebrecher, oder
auch wie dieser Zöllner da.
Ich faste in der Woche gebe den Zehnten
allem was besitze.’

Der Zöllner aber blieb hinten stehen
Und wagte die Augen nicht zum Himmel
zu erheben,
Sondern er schlug an seine Brust und sprach:

*Hail, most holy Virgin,
most loving Mother of God,
brightest star of the sea.
Hail, ever glorious,
precious pearl,
beautiful as the lily,
shining and fragrant like the rose.*

*And Jesus spake this parable unto
certain which trusted in themselves
that they were righteous, and despised
others:*

*“Two men went up into the temple
to pray; the one a Pharisee,
and the other a publican.
The Pharisee stood and prayed
thus with himself:*

*‘God, I thank thee, that I am not as
other men are, extortioners,
unjust, adulterers, or even as
this publican.
I fast twice in the week,
I give tithes of all that I possess.’*

*And the publican, standing afar off,
would not lift up so much as his eyes
unto heaven, but smote upon his
breast, saying:*

‘Gott sei mir Sünder gnädig!’

Ich sage euch: Dieser ging gerechtfertigt
nach Hause,
Jener nicht. Denn jeder, der sich selbst erhöht,
Wird erniedrigt werden; und jeder, der
sich selbst erniedrigt,
Wird erhöht werden.”

Amen.

O Eucharisti,

in leta via ambulasti
ubi cum Filio Dei mansisti,
illum tangendo
et miracula eius que fecit vivendo

Per os tuum Ecclesia ruminat
vetus et novum vinum,
videlicet poculum sanctitatis.

Nunc in tua clara voce
Filium Dei ora pro hac turba,
ne in cerimoniis Dei deficiat,
sed ut vivens holocaustum ante altare
Dei fiat.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui. Amen.

‘God be merciful to me, a sinner’

*I tell you, this man went down to his
house justified rather than the other:
for every one that exalteth himself
shall be abased; and he that
humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

Amen.

*O St. Eucharisti,
you walked upon the blessed way
when with the Son of God you stayed—
you touched the man
and saw with your own eyes his miracles.*

*For through your mouth the Church
can savour the wine both old and new—
the cup of sanctity.*

*Now in your crystal voice
pray to the Son of God for this community,
lest it should fail in serving God,
but rather as a living sacrifice
might burn before the altar of our God.*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Amen*

Ave, maris stella,
Dei Mater alma,
atque semper Virgo,
felix caeli porta.

Solve vincla reis,
profer lumen caecis,
mala nostra pelle,
bona cuncta posce.

Vitam praesta puram,
iter para tutum,
ut videntes Jesum
semper collaetemur.

Sit laus Deo Patri,
summo Christo decus,
Spiritus Sancto,
tribus honor unus. Amen.

Salva nos, Domine, vigilantes,
custodi nos dormientes,
ut vigilemus cum Christo,
et requiescamus in pace.

*Hail, star of the sea,
nurturing Mother of God,
and ever Virgin,
happy gate of heaven.*

*Break the chains of sinners,
bring light to the blind,
drive away our evils,
ask for all good things for us.*

*Bestow a pure life,
prepare a safe journey,
that, seeing Jesus,
we may ever rejoice together.*

*Praise be to God the Father,
glory to Christ the Most High,
and to the Holy Spirit:
one honor to all three. Amen.*

*Save us, O Lord, while waking,
guard us while sleeping,
that we may watch with Christ,
and rest in peace.*

The King's Singers

Patrick Dunachie countertenor

Edward Button countertenor

Julian Gregory tenor

Christopher Bruerton baritone

Nick Ashby baritone

Piers Connor Kennedy bass

The King's Singers have set the gold standard in a cappella singing on the world's greatest stages for over 55 years. They are renowned for their unrivalled technique, musicianship and versatility, which stem from the group's rich heritage and its drive to bring an extraordinary range of new and unique works, collaborations and recordings to life. The King's Singers' extensive discography has led to numerous awards, including two Grammy Awards, an Emmy Award, and a place in Gramophone magazine's inaugural Hall of Fame.

The King's Singers were officially formed in 1968 when six recent choral scholars from King's College, Cambridge gave a concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. By chance, the group was made

up of two countertenors, a tenor, two baritones and a bass, and the group has stuck to this formation ever since.

In the last few years, the group has recorded a series of diverse, collaborative albums that showcase the huge breadth of their repertoire. One honours two great English Renaissance composers: Thomas Weelkes and William Byrd; another is centred around Romantic music; a third honours 100 years of Disney, with 28 brand-new arrangements of iconic Disney songs; a fourth is a double-album focussed on the group's library of signature 'close harmony' arrangements; and another celebrates the group's extraordinary body of commissioned new music.

Growing the global canon of choral music has always been one of the



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group's key aims, and The King's Singers have now commissioned more than 300 works by many of the most prominent composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. These composers include John Tavener, Joe Hisaishi, Judith Bingham, Eric Whitacre, György Ligeti, Luciano Berio, Krzysztof Penderecki and Toru Takemitsu. All this new music joins their body of bespoke a cappella arrangements, including many by King's Singers past and present.

Alongside their demanding performing and recording schedule – with over 100

concerts worldwide every season – the group leads educational workshops and residential courses across the globe, working with ensembles on their approaches to group singing. To mark their 50th anniversary in 2018, they founded The King's Singers Global Foundation (based in the USA), to provide a platform to support the creation of new music across multiple disciplines, to coach a new generation of performers, and to provide musical opportunities to people of all backgrounds.

Jeremy West

Cornett (tracks 5 & 7)

Since the mid 1970s Jeremy West has been a passionate advocate for the 17th century cornett, playing a lead role in re-establishing it as a virtuoso solo and ensemble instrument. A pioneer in the field of historic brass, Jeremy is a founder member of His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts (1982), one of the leading, and most enduring, ensembles of its kind. He has been Principal Wind Player with the Gabrieli Consort & Players for their earlier repertoire since their foundation (also 1982) and has more than 100 recordings to his credit. In addition to a performing career which spans 50 years and which has taken him to 38 countries across 5 continents, since 1991 Jeremy has directed the instrument-making workshops of the late Christopher Monk, overseeing research, development, reproduction and worldwide distribution for all

instruments in the cornett and serpent families. The workshop supplies the extraordinarily popular resin cornett – which enabled many of today’s top players to take their first steps. CMI has a global market, from New York to New Zealand, Scandinavia to South America.

Jeremy West has held teaching positions at the London Guildhall School of Music & Drama, The Royal College of Music and at The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff where he held the International Chair of Historic Performance. He is also a Musician in Residence at Girton College, Cambridge.

Additionally Jeremy plays Eb alto Saxhorn with the period ensemble Queen Victoria’s Consort, co-founded in 2016 with Andy Kershaw. The group plays on Victorian and Edwardian instruments held by the Kershaw

Collection in settings ranging from concert halls to steam trains.

The often-overlooked historic Eb horn has a modern equivalent. Its haunting, vocal qualities, have enticed Jeremy to play solo horn for The Felling Band, originally a colliery brass band based in Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, in the northeast of England.

He lives with his partner, Susan Smith, in Weardale, County Durham in the Pennines of northern England.





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Zwei beten – Arvo Pärt published by Universal Edition Ag (Wien)

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