



● harmonia
mundi

BENJAMIN BRITTEN
Hymn to St Cecilia

CHORAL DANCES FROM GLORIANA & CHORAL WORKS

RIAS Kammerchor
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BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Choral Works

Choral Works

Choral Dances from *Gloriana* (Opera op. 53, Act II)

Text: William Plomer after Lytton Strachey

1	Time	1'32
2	Concord	2'09
3	Time and Concord	1'21
4	Country Girls	1'08
5	Rustics and Fishermen	0'58
6	Final Dance of Homage	2'04

7	Hymn to St. Cecilia , op. 27	KH, MYK, WH, MH, JPZ	10'41
	<i>Text: W(ystan) H(ugh) Auden</i>		

8	A Hymn to the Virgin	MYK, SL, VA, SD	3'25
	<i>Anthem on Anon. text, c. 1300</i>		

Five Flower Songs, op. 47

Texts: Robert Herrick (1, 2), George Crabbe (3), John Clare (4), Anon. (5)

9	1. To Daffodils	2'08
10	2. The Succession of the Four Sweet Months	1'53
11	3. Marsh Flowers	2'33
12	4. The Evening Primrose	2'32
13	5. The Ballad of Green Broom	2'09

A.M.D.G. (Ad majorem Dei gloriam)

Text: Gerard Manley Hopkins

14	1. Prayer I	2'13
15	2. Rosa Mystica	3'49
16	3. God's Grandeur	2'58
17	4. Prayer II	3'51
18	5. O Deus, ego amo te	1'51
19	6. The Soldier	2'12
20	7. Heaven-Haven	1'25

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Soloists

Sopranos Katharina Hohlfeld (KH), Mi-Young Kim (MYK)

Altos Waltraud Heinrich (WH), Susanne Langner (SL)

Tenors Volker Arndt (VA), Minsub Hong (MH)

Basses Stefan Drexelmeier (SD), Jonathan E. de la Paz Zaen (JPZ)

RIAS Kammerchor, Justin Doyle

Sopranos Friederike Büttner, Katharina Hohlfeld, Alena Karmanova,
Mi-Young Kim, Johanna Knauth, Anette Lösch, Stephanie Petitlaurent,
Natalie Raybould, Inés Villanueva, Dagmar Wietschorke

Altos Ulrike Bartsch, Andrea Effmert, Waltraud Heinrich, Susanne Langner,
Sibylla Maria Löbbert, Hildegard Rützel, Ursula Thurmair,
Marie-Luise Wilke

Tenors Volker Arndt, Joachim Buhrmann, Jörg Genslein, Minsub Hong,
Christian Mücke, Laurin Oppermann, Kai Roterberg, Fabian Strotmann

Basses Christian Backhaus, Stefan Drexelmeier, Janusz Gregorowicz,
Ingolf Horenburg, Andrew Redmond, Johannes Schendel, Klaus Thiem,
Jonathan E. de la Paz Zaen

Parmi les nombreuses œuvres chorales que Benjamin Britten a composées tout au long de sa carrière, celles qu'il écrivit pour voix sans accompagnement – que ce soit sur des textes sacrés, profanes ou dramatiques – ont une vivacité rhétorique qui séduit les chanteurs aussi bien que les auditeurs. *A Hymn to the Virgin* (1930) pour double chœur à quatre voix est la plus ancienne des œuvres choisies pour cet enregistrement. Elle remonte à la dernière période que le compositeur, alors âgé de seize ans, passa à l'école de Gresham, juste avant qu'il ne commence ses études au Royal College of Music de Londres. Britten écrivit ce bref *anthem* alors qu'il se remettait d'un accès de fièvre, et ce fut l'une de ses premières œuvres à être publiées et enregistrées en 1935. Le texte marial anonyme ("circa 1300") fait alterner des vers ou des strophes en anglais avec des commentaires latins plus brefs. Britten met le dialogue en musique de manière animée en le répartissant entre la sonorité plus fournie du chœur I ("Of one that is so fair and bright" / "D'une femme qui est si belle et rayonnante") et les échos plus doux du chœur II ("Velut maris stella" / "Comme l'étoile des mers"), chanté ici par un quatuor de solistes. Ses radieuses harmonies modales, comme celles de la *Messe en sol mineur* de Vaughan Williams (1922), produisent une atmosphère néo-médiévale. Après la tonalité étouffée et pieuse des deux premières strophes, la troisième ("Lady, flow'r of ev'rything" / "Dame, fleur de toute chose") manifeste une énergie croissante par des redoublements plus audacieux qui modifient la sonorité vocale d'ensemble. Cette musique aux allures de prière revient au calme par un doux refrain conclusif.

Les sept poèmes de Gerard Manley Hopkins mis en musique par Britten sous le titre *A.M.D.G. (Ad majorem Dei gloriam)*, furent composés en août 1939 à Woodstock, New York et sur Long Island, au début du séjour de deux ans que le compositeur fit aux États-Unis. Il en dédia l'esquisse au crayon au ténor Peter Pears, dont il était tombé amoureux peu de temps auparavant, et à son ensemble vocal londonien, les Round Table Singers. Le concert prévu à Londres fut néanmoins annulé à cause de la déclaration de guerre, et cette partition ne fut jamais exécutée du vivant du compositeur (elle fut publiée en 1989). Britten avait mis en musique "God's Grandeur" ("La Magnificence de Dieu") pour un programme musical de la BBC en 1938, mais son exploration ultérieure des œuvres du poète victorien coïncida avec d'autres projets sur des textes de poètes non anglais, notamment Rimbaud et Michel-Ange.

L'intérêt porté par Britten à Hopkins doit autant à la vitalité rythmique du poète qu'à son sens religieux complexe. La grâce mélodique qui se déploie tout au long de "Prayer I" ("Prière I") communique une dévotion paisible, tandis que "Rosa Mystica" ("Rose Mystique"), plus élaboré, juxtapose une pédale initiale statique – aux voix masculines – à une séquence de questions pressantes à la manière du rosaire – aux voix féminines. La texture de la musique imagine les questions et les réponses du poète comme formant une seule unité sonore. La façon dont Britten redistribue les vers à l'intérieur des strophes renforce un drame parcouru par une litanie de mots répétés – "Gardens of God" / "Jardins de Dieu", "Mother of mine" / "Ma mère". De manière analogue, dans le troisième mouvement, des rythmes souples président aux répétitions circulaires d'une unique phrase, "with the grandeur of God" ("avec la magnificence de Dieu"). Dans la pièce méditative "Prayer II" ("Prière II"), des redoublements vocaux soigneusement élaborés produisent un éventail de couleurs et une atmosphère de concentration spirituelle intense. Employant seulement des accords majeurs dans "O Deus, ego amo Te" ("Ô Dieu, je t'aime"), Britten pratique une déclamation syllabique tranchée, à l'exception notable d'un "Amen" fervent. Les deux poèmes conclusifs – en mode majeur et mineur respectivement – forment une étude contrastée : "The Soldier" ("Le Soldat"), une des marches ostentatoires parodiques de Britten, répète des mots isolés et fragmente les vers du poème, conférant une dimension dramatique à la densité du texte de Hopkins. Pour "Heaven-Haven" ("Havre céleste"), Britten compose des phrases d'une ampleur élégante et équilibrée : deux duos "rimant" entre eux, pour voix féminines puis masculines.

Britten a achevé en avril 1942 son chef-d'œuvre *a cappella*, *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, sur un texte que W. H. Auden avait écrit pour lui. L'ode d'Auden à la protectrice mythique des musiciens est un triptyque : Britten traite le quatrain final du premier poème ("Blessed Cecilia, appear" / "Bienheureuse Cécilia, apparais") comme un refrain, reliant entre elles les trois parties de l'hymne en un schéma musical évolutif. La composition pour chœur à cinq voix – les sopranos étant divisées en deux groupes – confère une certaine luminosité à la sonorité vocale d'ensemble. L'univers de cette pièce est marqué par de doux rythmes cadencés, comme celui du début où est décrit le pouvoir mythique du chant de la sainte. Les sopranos et les altos (en harmonies parallèles) descendent doucement des hauteurs, avant de remonter en une ascension en miroir vers leur point de départ. La mélodie est répétée avec un équilibre néo-classique évident, l'accord majeur conclusif correspondant aux rimes d'Auden ("psalm" / "psaume" et "calm" / "calme"). Au moment où le poème s'adresse à la sainte elle-même par son nom ("Blessed Cecilia" / "bienheureuse Cécilia"), la mélodie initiale revient, formulée à présent sans le support d'accords, en un geste d'une puissante simplicité.

Britten met en musique la partie centrale du poème d'Auden, à caractère gnomique, sous forme d'un scherzo rapide chanté par les alertes voix supérieures sur un *cantus firmus* plus lent aux voix inférieures. Pour le tableau final ("O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall" / "Ô oreille, dont les créatures ne peuvent vouloir tomber"), il donne un aspect dramatique aux formulations plus métaphysiques d'Auden grâce à des atmosphères changeant rapidement, commençant par l'invocation de la soprano solo, "O dear white children" ("Ô chers enfants blancs"). Auden évoque également certains instruments de musique, procédé rhétorique (emprunté à Dryden) que Britten souligne par quatre solos vocaux : pour alto ("quasi violino"), basse ("timbales"), soprano ("flûte") et ténor ("trompette"), les "fanfares" de ce dernier solo annonçant le refrain conclusif.

Britten écrivit les *Five Flower Songs* (1950) comme un cadeau pour le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de mariage de ses amis Leonard et Dorothy Elmhirst, grands protecteurs des arts et botanistes qui ont créé l'un des plus grands jardins anglais dans leur propriété de Dartington Hall. Réunissant des poèmes élisabéthains et victoriens ainsi qu'une ballade anonyme, Britten crée un type d'"anthologie" poético-musicale qui lui est familière depuis ses œuvres *Serenade* (1943) et *Spring Symphony* (1949). Chacune des mélodies transmet une image et une émotion précises : dans "Daffodils" ("Narcisses") de Herrick, par d'exquis entrelacements momentanés des voix ; dans "Four Sweet Months" ("Quatre doux mois"), par un schéma d'entrées fuguées suivant le calendrier, avec avril, mai, juin et juillet. La "faune restreinte" de "Marsh Flowers" ("des marais") de Crabbe lui inspire davantage d'effets vocaux saccadés et sévères (un cri soudain correspondant aux "piqûres" d'ortie). Dans "Evening Primrose" ("Primevère vespérale") de Clare, Britten privilégie un style de chant polyphonique plus conventionnel, des euphonies plus chaudes encadrant quelques habiles touches harmoniques. L'imitation vocale des cloches de mariage dans la "Ballad of Green Broom" ("Ballade du genêt vert") – un détail nuptial ici bien à sa place – permet de conclure l'œuvre par un finale amusant.

Les *Choral Dances from 'Gloriana'* (1953), composées à l'origine pour la scène du "Masque" dans l'opéra de Britten sur la vie de la reine Élisabeth I^{re}, furent publiées comme une série séparée de six miniatures de concert, peu après la première représentation scénique de l'œuvre. Pour l'allégorie du Temps et de son épouse, la Concorde, le librettiste William Plomer avait adopté un style pseudo-élisabéthain. Tout en évitant le pastiche historique, la musique de Britten privilégie des mélodies simples et des rythmes balançant convenant bien à la danse. Le personnage du Temps lui-même fait son entrée sur une friction animée de rythmes en trois pour deux, celui de la Concorde, avec des progressions plus majestueuses. On entend leur union dans des duos en écho. La mélodie de Britten pour "Country Girls" ("Filles de la campagne"), se rapproche d'une véritable danse folklorique ; sa musique pour "Rustics and Fishermen" ("Paysans et Pêcheurs") reprend une sorte de cris de rue stylisés. Dans la "Final Dance of Homage" ("Danse finale d'hommage"), les échanges mélodiques constants entre les sopranos et les ténors constituent un geste d'un formalisme gracieux et d'une tendresse désarmante.

PHILIP RUPPRECHT
Traduction : Laurent Cantagrel

Among the many choral works Britten composed throughout his career, those for unaccompanied voices – to words sacred, secular or dramatic – speak with a rhetorical élan as appealing to singers as to listening audiences. **A Hymn to the Virgin** (1930) for four-part double chorus is the earliest piece chosen here. It dates from the sixteen-year-old composer's final term at Gresham's school, immediately before taking up a scholarship at the Royal College of Music in London. Britten wrote the short anthem while recovering from a fever, and in 1935 it was among the first of his works to be published and broadcast. The anonymous Marian text ('circa 1300') alternates English lines or couplets with shorter Latin comments. Britten projects the dialogue vividly through an interplay of the fuller sound of Chorus I ('Of one that is so fair and bright') with the softer echoes of Chorus II ('*Velut maris stella*'), sung here by a solo quartet. His radiant modal harmonies, like those of Vaughan Williams's 1922 Mass in G minor, offer a neo-medieval aura. After the hushed and devotional tone in the first two stanzas, the third ('Lady, flow'r of ev'rything') rises in energy as bolder doublings inflect the overall vocal sonority. With its soft closing refrain, this prayer-like music recedes into stillness.

The seven Gerard Manley Hopkins settings entitled **A.M.D.G. (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam)** were composed in August 1939 in Woodstock, New York and on Long Island early in Britten's two-year residence in the USA. He dedicated the pencil sketch to the tenor Peter Pears – with whom he had recently fallen in love – and his Round Table Singers, but a planned London concert was cancelled when war was declared, and the score lay unperformed during his lifetime (it was published in 1989). He had set 'God's Grandeur' for a BBC radio programme in 1938, but his subsequent exploration of the Victorian poet coincided with projects to words of non-English poets, including Rimbaud and Michelangelo.

Britten's interest in Hopkins owes as much to the poet's rhythmic vitality as to his complex religiosity. Where the arching melodic grace of 'Prayer I' conveys untroubled devotion, the elaborate 'Rosa Mystica' juxtaposes a static opening pedal (male voices) with a Rosary-like sequence of urgent questions (female voices). The music's texture reimagines the poet's calls and responses as a single sounding unity. Britten's reordering of lines *within* stanzas, meanwhile, enhances a drama swept on by a litany of repeating words ('Gardens of God', 'Mother of mine'). Similarly limber rhythms govern the circling repetitions of a single phrase, 'with the grandeur of God', in the third movement. In the reflective 'Prayer II', carefully managed vocal doublings offer a range of intense spiritual focus. Using only major chords in 'O Deus, Ego Amo Te', Britten pursues crisp syllabic declamation, with the notable exception of a fervent 'Amen'. The final two poems – in major and minor mode respectively – are a study in contrasts: 'The Soldier', one of Britten's strutting parodic marches, repeats single words and fragments poetic lines, dramatising the density of Hopkins's text. For 'Heaven-Haven', Britten writes phrases of arching elegance and balance: a 'rhyming' pair of duets for female, then male voices.

Britten completed his *a cappella* masterpiece, **Hymn to St. Cecilia**, in April 1942 to a text written for him by W. H. Auden. Auden's ode to the mythic patroness of musicians is a triptych; Britten treats the final quatrain of the first poem ('Blessed Cecilia, appear') as a refrain, binding Auden's three parts into an evolving musical scheme. The scoring for five-part chorus – the sopranos divided – lends a certain luminosity to the overall vocal sound. The world of the piece is also one of gentle lilting rhythms, as at the opening, where the saint's mythic powers of song are described. Sopranos and altos (in parallel harmonies) float gently down from on high, before tracing a mirroring ascent to their starting pitch. With self-evident neo-classical balance, the melody repeats itself, the closing major chords matching Auden's end rhymes ('psalm' and 'calm'). At the moment when the saint herself is addressed by name ('Blessed Cecilia'), the opening melody returns anew, restated now without chordal support, a gesture of powerful simplicity.

Britten sets Auden's gnomic central poem as a fleet scherzo of spritely upper voices over a slower lower-voice *cantus firmus*. For the final panel ('O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall'), he dramatises Auden's more metaphysical utterances through rapidly shifting moods, beginning with the solo soprano's invocation, 'O dear white children'. Auden also invokes specific musical instruments, a rhetorical conceit (borrowed from Dryden) that Britten highlights with four vocal solos: for alto ('*quasi violino*'), bass ('timpani'), soprano ('flute'), and tenor ('trumpet'), the latter's 'fanfares' heralding a closing refrain.

Britten wrote the **Five Flower Songs** (1950) as a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary gift for his friends Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, major patrons of the arts, and botanists who, at their Dartington Hall estate, designed one of the great English gardens. Collating Elizabethan and Victorian poems, along with an anonymous ballad, Britten creates the kind of poetic-musical 'anthology' familiar from his *Serenade* (1943) and *Spring Symphony* (1949). Each song conveys a precise image and emotion: in Herrick's 'Daffodils' by exquisite local interweavings of the voices; in 'Four Sweet Months' through a pattern of 'calendrical' fugal entries for April, May, June and July. The 'constricted fauna' of Crabbe's 'Marsh Flowers' bring forth more angular and astringent vocalisms (a sudden cry matching the nettle's 'stings'). Only in Clare's 'Evening Primrose' does Britten favour a more conventional part-song style, warmer euphony framing some deft harmonic touches. The vocal imitation of wedding bells in the 'Ballad of Green Broom', meanwhile – an apt nuptial detail – rounds out a comic finale.

The **Choral Dances from 'Gloriana'** (1953), originally composed for the 'Masque' scene in Britten's opera on the life of Queen Elizabeth I, were published as a separate set of six concert miniatures soon after the first stage production. For the allegory of Time and his wife Concord, the librettist William Plomer adopted a pseudo-Elizabethan diction. While avoiding historical pastiche, Britten's music favours simple tunes and swaying rhythms suitable for dancing. 'Time' himself appears to a vivid two-against-three clash, 'Concord' in more stately progressions; their union is heard in echoing duets. Britten's tune for 'Country Girls' comes close to actual folk-dance; his 'Rustics and Fishermen' repeat a kind of stylised street cry. In the 'Final Dance of Homage' the constant melodic exchange (from sopranos to tenors) is a gesture of gracious formality and disarming tenderness.

PHILIP RUPPRECHT

Unter den zahlreichen Chorwerken, die Benjamin Britten im Laufe seiner Karriere komponiert hat, entwickeln die Stücke für unbegleitete Stimmen – auf geistliche, weltliche oder dramatische Texte – einen rhetorischen Elan, der Sänger und Zuhörer gleichermaßen anspricht. **A Hymn to the Virgin** (1930) für vierstimmigen Doppelchor ist das früheste Werk auf dieser CD. Es entstand während des letzten Trimesters, das der 16jährige Komponist an der Gresham's School verbrachte, unmittelbar bevor er als Stipendiat ans Royal College of Music in London wechselte. Britten schrieb die kurze Hymne, während er sich von einem fiebrigen Infekt erholte, und sie wurde als eine seiner ersten Kompositionen 1935 veröffentlicht und im Rundfunk ausgestrahlt. Der anonyme marianische Text („um 1300“) alterniert zwischen Zeilen oder Couplets in englischer und kürzeren Kommentaren in lateinischer Sprache. Britten gestaltet den Dialog ausgesprochen lebhaft mittels eines Wechselgesangs zwischen dem volleren Klang von Chor I („Of one that is so fair and bright“) und dem sanfteren Echo von Chor II („Velut maris stella“), der hier von einem Soloquartett ausgeführt wird. Seine strahlenden modalen Harmonien verleihen dem Stück eine neo-mittelalterliche Aura, die an Ralph Vaughan Williams' 1922 entstandene Messe in g-Moll erinnert. Nach dem gedämpft-andächtigen Ton der beiden ersten Strophen gewinnt die dritte („Lady, flow'r of ev'rything“) zunehmend an Energie, indem immer kühnere Verdopplungen das vokale Klangvolumen stärken. Mit ihrem sanften abschließenden Refrain verklingt diese gebetsartige Musik in der Stille.

Die mit dem Titel **A.M.D.G. (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam)** versehenen sieben Vertonungen von Gedichten aus der Feder von Gerard Manley Hopkins entstanden im August 1939 in Woodstock, New York und auf Long Island, also am Beginn von Brittens zweijährigem Aufenthalt in den USA. Er widmete die Bleistiftskizze dem Tenor Peter Pears – in den er sich kurz zuvor verliebt hatte – und seinen Round Table Singers; ein bereits geplantes Konzert in London wurde allerdings wegen des Kriegsausbruchs abgesagt und das Werk kam zu Brittens Lebzeiten nicht zur Aufführung (es wurde erst 1989 veröffentlicht). Er hatte „God's Grandeur“ 1938 für eine Rundfunksendung der BBC vertont, seine weitere Auseinandersetzung mit dem Schaffen des viktorianischen Dichters fiel allerdings in eine Zeit, da er bereits an Projekten mit Texten fremdsprachiger Autoren arbeitete, darunter Rimbaud und Michelangelo.

Brittens Interesse an Hopkins ist dessen lebhaft rhythmischer Sprache ebenso geschuldet wie seiner komplexen Religiosität. Wo die einen Bogen spannende melodische Anmut von „Prayer I“ unbeschwerter Frömmigkeit vermittelt, stellt das kunstvolle „Rosa Mystica“ einen statischen Orgelpunkt in der Eröffnungspassage (Männerstimmen) neben eine rosenkranzartige Sequenz drängender Fragen (Frauenstimmen). In der musikalischen Umsetzung werden die Rufe und Erwidungen der Dichtung als klangliche Einheit dargestellt. Zugleich verstärkt Brittens veränderte Anordnung von Zeilen *innerhalb* einzelner Strophen die von litaneimäßig repetierten Worten getriebene Dramatik („Gardens of God“, „Mother of mine“). Ähnlich geschmeidige Rhythmen dominieren die kreisenden Wiederholungen der einzelnen Phrase „with the grandeur of God“ im dritten Satz. In dem kontemplativen „Prayer II“ bieten sorgfältig gehandhabte vokale Dopplungen eine breite Palette von Klangfarben und eine Stimmung glühenden Bekenntnisses. In „O Deus, ego amo Te“ verwendet Britten ausschließlich Dur-Akkorde und wählt eine knappe syllabische Deklamation – ausgenommen das betont inbrünstige „Amen“. Die letzten beiden Gedichte – das eine in Dur, das andere in Moll gehalten – sind eine Studie der Gegensätze: „The Soldier“, einer von Brittens stolzierenden Parodiemärschen, wiederholt einzelne Worte und fragmentiert Gedichtzeilen; auf diese Weise verleiht er Hopkins' dicht gearbeitetem Text eine höhere Dramatik. Für „Heaven-Haven“ schreibt Britten Phrasen von bogenförmig eleganter Balance – ein „reimendes“ Paar von Duetten für Frauen- und sodann Männerstimmen.

Sein a-cappella-Meisterwerk **Hymn to St. Cecilia**, das auf einem eigens für diesen Anlass geschriebenen Text von W. H. Auden basiert, vollendete Britten im April 1942. Audens Ode an die mythische Schutzheilige der Musiker ist ein Triptychon; Britten behandelt den letzten Vierzeiler des ersten Gedichts („Blessed Cecilia, appear“) als Refrain und verknüpft Audens drei separate Teile zu einem konsekutiv sich entwickelnden musikalischen Konstrukt. Die Besetzung mit fünfstimmigem Chor (mit geteilten Sopranen) verleiht dem vokalen Timbre insgesamt eine erstaunliche Leuchtkraft. Es tut sich in diesem Werk also eine Welt voller sanft melodischer Rhythmen auf, so auch am Anfang, wo die dem Gesang der Heiligen innewohnenden mystischen Kräfte beschrieben werden. Sopran- und Altklänge ergießen sich (in parallelen Harmonien) sanft aus der Höhe, bevor sie sich in spiegelnder Gegenbewegung wieder zu ihrem Ausgangston emporarbeiten. Mit eindeutig neoklassischem Sinn für Balance wird die Melodie sodann wiederholt, wobei die abschließenden Durakkorde Audens Endreimen entsprechen („psalm“ und „calm“). In dem Augenblick, in dem die Heilige selbst beim Namen genannt wird („Blessed Cecilia“), wird die anfangs erklungene Melodie ein weiteres Mal aufgegriffen, diesmal ohne akkordische Unterstützung – eine Geste kraftvoller Einfachheit.

Britten vertont Audens gnomisches mittleres Gedicht als leichtfüßiges Scherzo mit lebhaften Oberstimmen über einem langsameren *Cantus firmus* in tieferer Lage. Für das abschließende Tableau („O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall“) setzt er Audens eher metaphysische Äußerungen mittels schnell wechselnder Stimmungen auf dramatische Weise um, beginnend mit der Invokation „O dear white children“ im Solosopran. Auden ruft zudem spezifische Musikinstrumente auf – ein (von John Dryden übernommenes) rhetorisches concetto, das Britten mit vier Vokalsoli umsetzt: für Alt („quasi violino“), Bass („Pauken“), Sopran („Flöte“) und Tenor („Trompete“), wobei Letztere mit ihren „Fanfaren“ einen abschließenden Refrain ankündigt.

Britten schrieb die **Five Flower Songs** (1950) als musikalische Gabe zum 25. Hochzeitstag seiner Freunde Leonard und Dorothy Elmhirst – großzügige Förderer der Künste und Botaniker, die auf ihrem Anwesen Dartington Hall einen der großartigsten englischen Gärten anlegten. Indem er elisabethanische mit viktorianischen Gedichten und einer anonymen Ballade verknüpfte, schuf Britten die Art von poetisch-musikalischer „Anthologie“, die uns von seiner *Serenade* (1943) und *Spring Symphony* (1949) her vertraut ist. Jedes Lied vermittelt ein präzises Bild verknüpft mit einer spezifischen Stimmung – in Herricks „Daffodils“ durch ein exquisites punktuell Verweben der Stimmen, in „Four Sweet Months“ durch ein Muster „kalendrischer“ fugierter Einsätze für die Monate April, Mai, Juni und Juli. Die „beschränkte Fauna“ von Crabbes „marsh Flowers“ generiert eher kantige und astringierende Vokalismen (ein plötzlicher Schrei korrespondiert mit dem „Stechen“ der Nessel). Lediglich in Clares „Evening Primrose“ favorisiert Britten einen konventionelleren Partsong-Stil – wärmere Wohlklänge umrahmen einige geschicktere harmonische Wendungen. Die vokale Nachahmung von Hochzeitsglocken in der „Ballad of Green Broom“ – ein passendes hochzeitliches Detail – rundet schließlich das komische Finale ab.

Die **Choral Dances from „Gloriana“** (1953), die ursprünglich für die „Masque“ in Brittens Oper über das Leben Königin Elisabeths I. entstanden, wurden schon bald nach der ersten Inszenierung als eigenständige Sammlung von sechs Konzertminiaturen veröffentlicht. Für die Allegorie der „Zeit“ (Time) und ihrer Gattin „Eintracht“ (Concord) wählte der Librettist William Plomer eine pseudo-elisabethanische Sprache. Während er historisches Pasticcio vermied, wählte Britten für seine Musik einfache Melodien und schwingende Rhythmen, die sich zum Tanz eignen. Die Zeit erscheint selbst als lebhafter zwei-gegen-drei Konflikt, die Eintracht in gesetzteren Fortschreitungen; ihre Vereinigung schließlich wird in echohaften Duetten zu Gehör gebracht. Brittens Melodie für „Country Girls“ nähert sich einem veritablen Volkstanz an; sein „Rustics and Fishermen“ wiederholt eine Art stilisierten Straßenruf. Im „Final Dance of Homage“ präsentiert sich der konstante melodische Austausch (zwischen Sopranen und Tenören) als Geste voller anmutiger Förmlichkeit und entwaffnender Zärtlichkeit.

PHILIP RUPPRECHT

Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny Choral Dances from *Gloriana*

1 | Time

Yes, he is Time,
Lusty and blithe!
Time is at his apogee,
Although you thought to see
A bearded ancient with a scythe.
No reaper he
That cries 'Take heed!'
Time is at his apogee!
Young and strong in his prime:
Behold the sower of the seed!

2 | Concord

Concord is here
Our days to bless
And this our land to endure
With plenty, peace and happiness.
Concord and Time
Each needeth each:
The ripest fruit hangs where
Not one, but only two can reach.

3 | Time and Concord

From springs of bounty
Through this county
Streams abundant
Of thanks shall flow.
Where life was scanty,
Fruits of plenty
Swell resplendent
From earth below!
No Greek nor Roman
Queenly woman
Knew such favour
From Heav'n above
As she whose presence
Is our pleasure . . .
Gloriana
Hath all our love!

4 | Country Girls

Sweet flag and cuckoo-flower
Cowslip and columbine
Kingcups and sops-in-wine,
Flower-de-luce and calaminth,
Harebell and hyacinth,
Myrtle and bay, with rosemary between,
Norfolk's own garlands for her Queen.

5 | Rustics and Fishermen

From fen and meadow
In rushy baskets
They bring ensamples
Of all they grow.
In earthen dishes
Their deep-sea fishes;
Yearling fleeces,
Woven blankets;
New cream and junkets
And rustic trinkets
On wicker flaskets
Their country largess,
The best they know.

6 | Final Dance of Homage

These tokens of our love receiving,
O take them, Princess great and dear,
From Norwich, city you are leaving,
That you afar may feel us near.

7 | Hymn to St. Cecilia

I
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.

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

8 | A Hymn to the Virgin

Of one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella:
I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia,
That I may come to thee,
Maria!

All this world was forlorn
Eva peccatrice,
Till our Lord was ybore
De te genetrix.
With ave it went away
Darkest night, and comes the day
Salutis;
The well springeth out of thee
Virtutis.

Lady, flow'r of everything,
Rosa sine spina,
Thou bare Jesu, Heaven's King,
Gratia divina:
Of all thou bear'st the prize,
Lady queen of paradise
Electa:
Maid mild, mother *es*
Effecta.

Five Flower Songs

9 | No.1. To Daffodils

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon:
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to evensong;
And, having pray'd together we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you.
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,

As you, or any thing.
We die,
As your hours do and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again.

10 | No.2. The Succession of the Four Sweet Months

First, April, she with mellow showers
Opens the way for early flowers,
Then after her comes smiling May
In a more rich and sweet array,
Next enters June and brings us more
Gems than those two that went before,
Then (lastly) July comes and she
More wealth brings in than all those three.

April! May! June! July!

11 | No.3. Marsh Flowers

Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root,
Here the dull nightshade hangs her deadly fruit;
On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencil'd flower of sickly scent is seen;

Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume.
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poison'd stings;

In ev'ry chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below:

The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
Partake the nature of their fenny bed.

These, with our sea-weeds, rolling up and down,
Form the contracted Flora of our town.

12 | No.4. The Evening Primrose

When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,

The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night;

Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty he possesses.
Thus it blooms on while night is by.

When day looks out with open eye,
'Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

13 | No.5. Ballad of Green Broom

Broom, green Broom, cutting green Broom . . .

There was an old man lived out in the wood,
And his trade was a-cutting of Broom, green Broom,
He had but one son without thought without good
Who lay in his bed till 'twas noon, bright noon.

The old man awoke one morning and spoke,
He swore he would fire the room, that room,
If his John would not rise and open his eyes,
And away to the wood to cut Broom, green Broom.

So Johnny arose and slipp'd on his clothes
And away to the wood to cut Broom, green Broom,
He sharpen'd his knives, and for once he contrives
To cut a great bundle of Broom, green Broom.

When Johnny pass'd under a lady's fine house,
Pass'd under a lady's fine room, fine room,
She call'd to her maid: 'Go fetch me,' she said,
'Go fetch me the boy that sells Broom, green Broom!'

When Johnny came into the lady's fine house,
And stood in the lady's fine room, fine room,
'Young Johnny' she said, 'Will you give up your trade
And marry a lady in bloom, full bloom?'

Johnny gave his consent, and to church they both went,
And he wedded the lady in bloom, full bloom;
At market and fair, all folks do declare,
There's none like the Boy that sold Broom, green Broom.

A.M.D.G. (Ad majorem Dei gloriam)

14 | No.1. Prayer I

Jesu that dost in Mary dwell,
Be in thy servants' hearts as well,
In the spirit of thy holiness,
In the fullness of thy force and stress,
In the very ways that thy life goes,
And virtues that thy pattern shows,
In the sharing of thy mysteries;
And every power in us that is
Against thy power put under feet
In the Holy Ghost the Paraclete
To the glory of the Father. Amen.

15 | No.2. Rosa Mystica

'The Rose is a mystery' – where is it found?
Is it anything true? Does it grow upon ground?
It was made of earth's mould, but it went from men's eyes,
And its place is a secret, and shut in the skies.
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine,
Find me a place by thee, Mother of mine.

But where was it formerly? Which is the spot
That was blest in it once, though now it is not?
It is Galilee's growth; it grew at God's will
And broke into bloom upon Nazareth Hill.
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine
I shall look on thy loveliness, Mother of mine;
I shall keep time with thee, Mother of mine.

Tell me the name now, tell me its name:
The heart guesses easily, is it the same?
Mary, the Virgin, well the heart knows,
She is the Mystery, she is that Rose.
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine,
I shall come home to thee, Mother of mine.

Is Mary that Rose, then? Mary, the Tree?
But the Blossom, the Blossom there, who can it be?
Who can her Rose be? It could be but One:
Christ Jesus, our Lord – her God and her Son.
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine,
Shew me thy Son, Mother, Mother of mine.

Does it smell sweet, too, in that holy place?
Sweet unto God, and the sweetness is grace;
The breath of it bathes the great heaven above,
In grace that is charity, grace that is love.
To thy breast, to thy rest, to thy glory divine,
Draw me by charity, Mother of mine.

16 | No.3. God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not wreck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell; the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

17 | No.4. Prayer II

Thee, God, I come from, to thee go,
All day long I like a fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.

What I know of thee I bless,
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being and as seeing
Something of thy holiness.

Once I turned from thee and hid,
Bound on what thou hadst forbid;
Sow the wind I would; I sinned:
I repent of what I did.

Bad I am, but yet thy child.
Father, be thou reconciled.
Spare thou me, since I see
With thy might that thou art mild.

I have life before me still
And thy purpose to fulfil;
Yea a debt to pay thee yet:
Help me, sir, and so I will.

18 | No.5. O Deus, ego amo te

O God, I love thee, I love thee –
Not out of hope of heaven for me
Nor fearing not to love and be
In the everlasting burning.
Thou, thou, my Jesus, after me
Didst reach thine arms out dying,
For my sake sufferedst nails and lance,
Mocked and marrèd countenance,
Sorrows passing number,
Sweat and care and cumber,
Yea and death, and this for me,
And thou couldst see me sinning:
Then I, why should not I love thee,
Jesu, so much in love with me?
Not for heaven's sake; not to be
Out of hell by loving thee;
Not for any gains I see;
But just the way that thou didst me
I do love and I will love thee:
What must I love thee, Lord, for then?
For being my king and God. Amen.

19 | No.6. The Soldier

Yes. Why do we all, seeing of a soldier, bless him? bless
Our redcoats, our tars? Both these being the greater part,
But frail clay, nay but foul clay. Here it is: the heart,
Since, proud, it calls the calling manly, gives a guess
That, hopes that, makes-believe, the men must be no less;
It fancies, feigns, deems, dears the artist after his art;
And fain will find as sterling all as all is smart,
And scarlet wear the spirit of war there express.

Mark Christ our King. He knows war,
served this soldiering through;
He of all can handle a rope best. There he bides in bliss
Now, and seeing somewhere
some man do all that man can do,
For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on, kiss,
And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:
Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this.'

20 | No.7. Heaven-Haven (A nun takes the veil)

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail,
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.



Founded nearly seventy years ago, the **RIAS Chamber Choir** (RIAS-Kammerchor) today sets standards in nearly all domains of musical culture – from celebrated historically informed interpretations of the Renaissance and the Baroque, through works of the Romantic era, which not infrequently lead listeners to a new conception of the nineteenth-century sound world, up to the most demanding world premieres, in which the possibilities of contemporary vocal music are sounded out and newly defined. Together with the 'Association of Sponsors and Friends of the RIAS Chamber Choir', it has developed new concert forms and approaches to intermedial music-making in the 'ForumKonzert' series set in unusual locations in Berlin. For some time now, the ForumKonzert series has been more than just an insider's tip – it now enjoys cult status.

Its vanguard musical position has given rise to a sense of cultural and social responsibility which the RIAS Chamber Choir assumes passionately and intensively. 'KlasseKlänge' workshops, school choir mentoring programmes, concert introductions done by students, assistance to students in the DIRIGENTENFORUM or the Academy for Advanced Vocal Study are only a few aspects of an extensive educational and outreach programme. On concert tours through Europe and to important musical centres worldwide, the RIAS Chamber Choir serves as a cultural ambassador of Germany and, with its guest performances, continues the valuable legacy of German choral culture into the twenty-first century.

In short, the RIAS Chamber Choir is 'one of the ten best choirs in the world' (*Gramophone*, 2010).

Leading artistic personalities of the recent past and present have shaped and left their mark on the RIAS Chamber Choir during their principal conductorships. Uwe Gronostay (1972-86) laid the foundations for historical performance practice and developed the chamber choir sound, in equal measure lean and vigorous, which the group exemplifies today. Marcus Creed (1987-2001) achieved the increasing internationalisation of the RIAS Chamber Choir, particularly through the coupling of early and contemporary music. Daniel Reuss (2003-06) placed an emphasis on the classics of the modern repertoire and strengthened connections with cooperating partners at home and abroad. Hans-Christoph Rademann, who took over the post of Principal Conductor in 2007 and held it until summer of 2015, broadened the content and tonal range of expression, devoting particular attention to central German music history of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

Numerous awards and prizes testify to the artistic journey and the high international reputation of the RIAS Chamber Choir: the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik (German record critics' award), the Gramophone Award, the 'Choc de l'Année' in *Classica*, the ECHO Klassik Preis and the Prix Caecilia are only a few of many honours. In 2012 the RIAS Chamber Choir received the 'Nachtigall' honorary prize from the Jury of the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik.

An enduring and fruitful collaboration binds the choir to René Jacobs, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, the Freiburg Barockorchester, and the Munich Chamber Orchestra under Alexander Liebreich. In addition, the RIAS Chamber Choir works with conductors such as Sir Simon Rattle, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Andrea Marcon, Thomas Hengelbrock, Florian Helgath and Ottavio Dantone. Starting with the 2017/18 season, Justin Doyle is Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the RIAS Kammerchor.

The RIAS Chamber Choir is an ensemble of the Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre GmbH (roc berlin). Other partners are Deutschlandradio, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Berlin and the Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg broadcasting company.



Justin Doyle is Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the RIAS Kammerchor, Berlin. He was born in Lancaster, England, and began his musical education as a chorister at Westminster Cathedral, then a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge. He won second prize in the prestigious Cadaqués Orchestra Conducting Competition and was awarded the first Conductor Fellowship with the BBC Singers, with whom he continues to work.

Justin Doyle is a regular guest conductor with Opera North. His other recent engagements have included concerts with the Orchestra of Opera North, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Hallé Orchestra, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, King's Camerata, Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, New London Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Sinfonia of Leeds, and Jersey Chamber Orchestra.

He has been Artistic Director of the Ryedale Festival and Swaledale Festival, and Principal Conductor / Music Director of ensembles such as the University of Manchester Chorus, Haffner Orchestra, Essex Symphony Orchestra and Manchester Chamber Choir. His broad musical tastes have also led him to work with period instrument ensembles, collaborate with musicians from other cultures, arrange folk music from all over the world and conduct live orchestral film scores. He has recently been appointed Guest Professor in Choral Conducting at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler (Berlin), and his previous involvement in musical education includes the directorships of the Young Sinfonia (the youth orchestra of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Sage Gateshead) and Opera North Children's Chorus. In 2018 he works with the young singers of Genesis Sixteen.

Justin Doyle is also in demand as a conductor of opera, in particular the works of Mozart ('an evening of almost unadulterated Mozartian bliss' - *Così fan tutte* / *Opera* magazine), Haydn ('hard to imagine this fizzing piece ever being better done' - *L'Infedeltà delusa* / *The Independent*) and Britten ('Justin Doyle and the Opera North Orchestra work wonders to dispatch Britten's mischievous and miraculous chamber score with pungency and precision' - *Albert Herring* / *The Times*). He conducted Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at Buxton in 2016 ('The Northern Chamber Orchestra under Justin Doyle gave the best performance I've heard from them at Buxton; Doyle brought out the best in them' / *Bachtrack*), returning last year to conduct Britten's *Albert Herring* ('super performance under the baton of Justin Doyle' / *Mark Ronan Theatre Reviews*).

His work as Principal Conductor of RIAS Kammerchor began with a critically acclaimed debut at the new Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin (Monteverdi *Vespers* and *Missa 'In illo tempore'*) and other highlights of this season have included MacMillan, Victoria, Bach and Henze at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Poulenc *Figure humaine* at the Philharmonie Berlin. This year also sees Justin direct the choir in recordings of Britten and Haydn for *harmonia mundi*, concerts throughout Europe and a major tour of Japan. Future engagements away from the RIAS Kammerchor include Purcell *Dido and Aeneas* with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra and Offenbach's *Fantasio* at Garsington Opera.

RIAS Kammerchor – Selection

All titles available in digital format (download and streaming)

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