

THE CHOIR OF
KING'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE



BRUCKNER
MASS IN E MINOR
MOTETS

Academy of St Martin in the Fields
Sir Stephen Cleobury



THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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BRUCKNER

MASS IN E MINOR

MOTETS

The Choir of King's College, Cambridge
Academy of St Martin in the Fields
Henry Websdale & Dónal McCann *Organ Scholars*
Sir Stephen Cleobury *conductor*



CD

57:06

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

1	ECCE SACERDOS MAGNUS <i>WAB 13 (1885)</i>	6:04
	MASS NO. 2 IN E MINOR <i>WAB 27 (1882)</i>	
2	I Kyrie	5:43
3	II Gloria	6:50
4	III Credo	7:58
5	IV Sanctus	2:42
6	V Benedictus	4:48
7	VI Agnus Dei	3:55
8	TOTA PULCHRA ES <i>WAB 46 (1878)</i>	4:48
9	VIRGA JESSE <i>WAB 52 (1885)</i>	3:17
10	LOCUS ISTE <i>WAB 23 (1869)</i>	2:38
11	AVE MARIA <i>WAB 6 (1861)</i>	3:05
12	CHRISTUS FACTUS EST <i>WAB 11 (1884)</i>	5:18

SHADES OF THE PAST IN BRUCKNER'S SACRED MUSIC

'A modern-day Palestrina'. This was the verdict of Max Auer, author of a 1927 study of Bruckner's church music and founding president of the International Bruckner Society. Many of the composer's contemporaries saw his sacred music as steeped in earlier traditions; they noted – and, on occasion, mocked – his intense piety, his unswerving devotion to the Catholic Church. But can we reasonably view the creator of nine stylistically progressive symphonies, the musician who worshipped at the shrine of Wagner, as a reincarnation of the paradigmatic composer of Renaissance church music?

Much of Bruckner's life was spent in the service of the church. In fact, he claimed to have grown up on church music. His earliest surviving work, written before he entered his teens, was a setting of *Pange lingua*; the last motet, *Vexilla regis*, was composed in 1892, not long before his death. The half-century that divides these two pieces was filled with a long sequence of sacred compositions including at least eight masses, two requiems and forty shorter works, almost all based on liturgical texts.

Bruckner's career as composer of sacred works

played out against a revival of interest in early music. In Catholic lands this found a focus in Cecilianism, a reform movement whose goal was to restore the dignity of church services after a period of perceived enfeeblement. As the leading Cecilian, Franz Xaver Witt, put it in an 1865 tract, this goal would be achieved only by a return to Gregorian chant and by emulating the counterpoint of Renaissance masters, Palestrina above all. Like the Nazarene school of painters, the Cecilians sought to restore a lost connection between art and religion. The objectives of Witt, and of the Cecilian Society he helped found in 1869, were soon recognised by Pope Pius IX: in a breve entitled 'Multum ad movendos animos', issued in 1870 during the First Vatican Council, the church authorities effectively took charge of sacred music.

Bruckner – like Liszt, who anticipated many of the Cecilians' ideas – was not unsympathetic to the cause. However, he – like Liszt – struggled with the fundamental conundrum at the heart of Cecilianism: how to reconcile an artist's need for renewal with the Cecilians' negation of historical development. Bruckner's compositions for the church reveal this tension. Many respect Witt's ideals: melodic lines frequently allude to plainchant, and the counterpoint is clearly informed by Palestrina (though recent scholarship has tended to view Bruckner's studies with the great theorist Simon Sechter and his exposure to Venetian polychoral music in Sankt Florian Monastery as more significant). On occasion, Bruckner was willing, when circumstances required, to write in a highly circumscribed quasi-Cecilian style –

one purged of all accidentals and most forms of dissonance.

Bruckner enjoyed close friendships with some of the major players in the Cecilian movement – most notably, Ignaz Traumihler, dedicatee of four works and a hard-liner in matters of style. He was even awarded an honorary diploma by the Cecilian Society of Linz. Yet, in an unguarded moment, Bruckner is supposed to have labelled Cecilianism ‘an illness’. He also reputedly told the Archbishop of Prague: ‘Palestrina – that makes me happy! [...] But the Cecilians are nothing! Nothing! Nothing!’ For their part, the Cecilians were wary of great composers. They rejected Liszt’s *Missa Choralis* (1865), despite its unusually chaste style, and when Witt included Bruckner’s 1868 setting of *Pange lingua* in one of his publications, he edited out a dissonance, without permission, and to the understandable exasperation of the composer. At times it seemed as though something of a police state prevailed in Cecilian circles: in some 3,300 reviews published between 1870 and 1906 in the *Fliegende Blätter für katholische Kirchen-Musik*, the verdict of the Cecilian Society on virtually every new piece of German and Austrian sacred music was promulgated. Churches were expected to take note.

It is hard at first to draw a clear line between ***Ecce sacerdos magnus*** and Palestrina. The motet begins with an uncompromising open fifth and, throughout, there are violent harmonic shifts, often of a tertiary nature. Dynamics range widely and rapidly, creating moments of high drama – most memorably when the trebles rise to a top B flat, a twice-repeated gesture that gives *Ecce*

sacerdos a rondo-like structure. The scoring, too – eight-part choir, three trombones and organ – is unusually opulent for a motet, though it almost certainly reflects the text, a responsory associated with the entrance of a bishop. However, the instrumental parts, as in many Cecilian compositions, tend to reinforce rather than complement the voices. And there are other hints of reformist practices: the ‘Gloria patri’, for example, starts with a fragment of Gregorian chant presented by all voices in rhythmically fixed form. Like *Virga Jesse*, *Ecce sacerdos* was written in 1885 to mark the centenary of the diocese of Linz. However, the premiere took place in 1912, shortly after the motet’s first publication.

The **Mass in E minor**, by way of contrast, shows the most sustained engagement with Cecilian principles in Bruckner’s longer compositions. It was commissioned by Franz Joseph Rudigier, Bishop of Linz, to mark the completion of the Votive Chapel of the city’s New Cathedral. Bruckner had a strong attachment to Linz. He served as Organist of the Old Cathedral from 1855 to 1868, and he was deeply committed to the building project, having written a festal cantata, *Preiset den Herrn*, to mark the laying of the foundation-stone in 1862. Rudigier was impressed enough by Bruckner’s Mass to award the composer an honorarium of 200 Gulden and a burial place in the new building. The latter, however, proved worthless: the dedication of the cathedral, the largest in Austria, did not take place until 1924, almost three decades after Bruckner’s death.

The E minor Mass was composed in 1866 and

premiered in September 1869. The first performance took place on the square outside Linz Cathedral, circumstances that explain the scoring for eight-part choir and an ensemble of fifteen wind instruments: oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and trombones. This combination suggests the genre known as *Militärmesse*, and for the premiere Bruckner used instrumentalists from one of Linz's military bands as well as three vocal ensembles. The new work appears to have taxed the singers. One member of the Frohsinn male-voice choir, of which Bruckner was director, reported that it took them weeks to learn the Mass: 'during the dog-days of August the men and their female counterparts patiently endured what must have been more than twenty rehearsals in the muggy hall, with Bruckner conducting in his shirt-sleeves'. Their efforts were clearly rewarded: years later, Bruckner recalled the day of the premiere as 'the most magnificent of my entire life'. Characteristically, he continued work on the score for some fifteen years, and a second version was performed in October 1885 in Linz's Old Cathedral to mark the centenary of the bishopric. This too was revised before publication, which took place in 1896, the year of Bruckner's death.

The various movements of the E minor Mass are differentiated in style. The Kyrie lies at one extreme; largely *a cappella*, and with optional brass interventions presumably intended to support the choir's tuning, it comes closest to Cecilian ideals. The more vigorous sections of the Gloria and Credo, with their distinctly non-vocal arpeggios, repeated chords and swirling counterpoints, look

back to the quasi-operatic orchestral masses of the Viennese Classical tradition, one of the genres repudiated by die-hard Cecilians. The Agnus dei lies somewhere in the middle: it reuses material from the Kyrie, but presents it in more Romantic attire. Most remarkable is the Sanctus, which references Palestrina's *Missa brevis*, first published in 1570. In both works, the opening of the movement is built on a pattern of falling thirds and descending scales. However, the greater number of parts in Bruckner's setting allows him a spectacular series of overlapping entries that could never have been imagined by his Renaissance predecessor. A modern-day Palestrina at work?

As with the Mass in E Minor, ***Tota pulchra es*** was dedicated to Rudigier and, like *Locus iste*, it was first performed in the Votive Chapel of Linz's New Cathedral. The premiere, in June 1878, marked the 25th anniversary of Rudigier's enthronement as Bishop. The distribution of resources – four-part choir and organ plus a solo tenor voice – is curious though not atypical of its age. As with many Cecilian-inspired works, large sections are performed *a cappella*. Apart from offering some support to the solo tenor, the organ serves largely to gild material otherwise found in the choir. The motet starts modestly with the Gregorian intonation known as the *Kreuzmotiv* (cross-motif), to which the choir responds with the same material in harmony. The process is repeated. At the words 'Tu gloria Jerusalem' the scale of the motet becomes clear: full organ enters with a sequence of root-position chords suggestive of Liszt in clerical vein, and Bruckner continues with a characteristic

chain of suspensions. The main elements of the setting are now clear, but the composer retains some surprises – not least, a remarkable slide into D flat at the mention of Mary’s mercy. Some writers claim the motet is in Phrygian mode; others see it as an example of Aeolian mode. Bruckner certainly liked to draw on church modes – as he put it in a lecture, ‘they have something mystical about them’ – but the truth is that *Tota pulchra es* uses several modes and, in addition, advanced chromatic harmony. The final cadence is, in fact, an amalgam of tonal and modal; moreover, it is an exact transposition of the final cadences of the E minor Mass’s Kyrie and of the motet *Christus factus est*.

Virga Jesse, for four-part unaccompanied choir, was composed in September 1885 at the end of a summer vacation spent in Sankt Florian. It was written to mark the centenary of the Linz diocese and was a present for Ignaz Traumihler, director of the monastery’s choir. Originally programmed for performance in Linz alongside the E minor Mass (with which it shares tonality), the motet was premiered in Vienna. The performance took place on 8 December 1885, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception – a fitting date as it was Pius IX’s 1854 decision to raise the Immaculate Conception to the status of dogma that inspired Rudigier’s plans for a new cathedral in Linz. As one might expect, the motet’s text is Marian. However, it is also appropriate to the Advent season during which the Feast of the Immaculate Conception falls. Like the almost contemporary *Christus factus est*, *Virga Jesse* captures the essence of Bruckner’s style within the briefest of spaces. With

its incomplete triads, suspensions and references to both the Phrygian mode and the Dresden Amen, the first phrase seems rooted in early music. However, the opening is restated immediately in the mediant, a quintessentially nineteenth-century progression. Bruckner packs many more harmonic derailments into the motet’s remaining seventy bars. Miraculously, the return to the home key, for an extended major-mode meditation on ‘Alleluia’, is entirely persuasive.

Like the E minor Mass, **Locus iste** was composed to mark the opening of the Votive Chapel of Linz’s New Cathedral; indeed, the text is part of the proper for a *Kirchweih* (a mass of ‘church dedication’). And, like the E minor Mass, *Locus iste* exemplifies the composer’s uncertain relationship with the Cecilians. The motet has extended passages of simple diatonic writing that, in terms of resources, seem not very different from the music of the reformers. However, it has an emotive power that far transcends the Cecilians’ bloodless compositions. *Locus iste* derives much of its effect from sequential patterns that nod towards Wagnerian practice. The first two phrases, for example, are repeated immediately one tone higher – an anticipation of the more radical opening of *Virga Jesse*. Later, sequential repetitions, both rising and falling, are used to more obviously dramatic effect. As with much of Bruckner’s music, silence too plays a vital role: the final phrase of the motet is preceded by a five-beat pause that, to be fully effective, requires an acoustic such as that of Linz Cathedral.

The setting of **Ave Maria** heard here is the second of two for choir. (A third version for solo

voice and piano, organ or harmonium also survives.) Bruckner uses the form of the Ave Maria that was approved by Pius V in 1568: two extracts from St Luke's Gospel combined with a prayer. Unusually, however, he draws attention to 'Jesus', a word not included by all composers, presenting it in three increasingly powerful statements that suggest the growing presence of Christ in Mary's womb. With the exception of the trebles, all the vocal parts subdivide, sometimes more than once. It is not clear why the top part alone remains undivided. Was this a reflection of the make-up of the choir that gave the first performance in 1861 in Linz's Old Cathedral? (During the nineteenth century many Austrian churches restricted the participation of women in services, leading to a general shortage of female voices.) Or did Bruckner intend the unassuming treble part to represent Mary herself? Initially, the music is homophonic, with typically Brucknerian blocks of sound surely inspired by Venetian *cori spezzati* (divided choirs). It is only at the start of the prayer section ('Sancta Maria') that the composer moves into imitative mode, with hints of a canon on the words 'ora pro nobis'. The motet ends with a simple Amen, set in the traditional way as a plagal cadence.

Bruckner wrote three settings of ***Christus factus est***, a text associated with Maundy Thursday. The version heard here is for four-part *a cappella* choir in Bruckner's favourite key, D minor. The motet was premiered in the Chapel of Vienna's Hofburg in 1884, and it was dedicated to the priest Oddo Loidol, a former pupil to whom Bruckner also dedicated *Locus iste*. In the space of only eighty

bars Bruckner offers a conspectus of his style. 'Obediens' uses a long chain of suspensions reminiscent of Cecilian-inspired *Os justi*. The penultimate statement of 'Quod est super' – there are eight in total – features a canon at the seventh, suggesting Bruckner's counterpoint studies with Sechter. The harmonisation of 'Propter quod' appears to allude to Wagner's *Parsifal* which opens, like this passage, in A flat major; here Bruckner, like the recently deceased Wagner, combines the *Kreuzmotiv* with a statement of the Dresden Amen. The motet's devastating climax is reached by rising chromaticism resolved after a terrifying pause by a sequence of adamantine chords – surely the passage in Bruckner's motets that comes closest to Wagner's mature style.

For many, Bruckner's œuvre is made up of nine fixed stars, the numbered symphonies, orbited by lesser bodies. One could, however, argue that sacred works such as those presented here take us to the heart of Bruckner, man and musician. Many of the pieces were commissioned; most are *Gebrauchsmusik*, in the sense that they served specific liturgical purposes. However, all reflect the composer's deep commitment to his faith. Bruckner planned to dedicate his final, unfinished symphony to his 'dear God'. The same dedication could stand at the head of any of the pieces heard on this CD, the final recording of Sir Stephen Cleobury, another faithful servant of the church, whose legacy is a lasting ornament to King's College, Cambridge.

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TEXTS

① ECCE SACERDOS MAGNUS

Ecce sacerdos magnus,
qui in diebus suis placuit Deo.

Ideo jurejurando fecit illum Dominus
crescere in plebem suam.
Benedictionem omnium gentium dedit illi
et testamentum suum confirmavit
super caput ejus.

Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto:
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,
et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

MASS NO. 2 IN E MINOR

② I. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Behold a great priest,
who in his days pleased God.

Therefore, by an oath, the Lord made him
increase among his people.
He gave him the blessing of all nations,
and confirmed his covenant
upon his head.

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.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

3 II. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.
Laudamus te, Benedicimus te,
Adoramus te, Glorificamus te,
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex cælestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe;
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus;
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe,
cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

4 III. Credo

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem cæli et terræ,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium:
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
Et ex Patre natum ante omnia sæcula,
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
Genitum non factum,

Glory be to God on high,
And in earth peace, goodwill towards men.
We praise thee, we bless thee,
We worship thee, we glorify thee,
We give thanks to thee for thy great glory,
O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father almighty.
O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the
Father, have mercy upon us.
For thou only art Holy, thou only art the Lord;
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art Most High, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

I believe in one God,
The Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible:
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
Begotten not made,

consubstantiallem Patri:
 per quem omnia facta sunt;
 Qui propter nos homines,
 et propter nostram salutem descendit de cælis.
 Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
 ex Maria Virgine: et homo factus est.
 Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato:
 passus, et sepultus est.
 Et resurrexit tertia die
 secundum Scripturas,
 Et ascendit in cælum,
 sedet ad dexteram Patris.
 Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
 iudicare vivos et mortuos:
 cuius regni non erit finis.
 Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
 Dominum, et vivificantem,
 Qui ex Patre Filioque procedit,
 Qui cum Patre et Filio
 simul adoratur, et conglorificatur,
 qui locutus est per Prophetas.
 Et in unam sanctam catholicam
 et apostolicam ecclesiam.
 Confiteor unum baptisma
 in remissionem peccatorum.
 Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum.
 Et vitam venturi sæculi.
 Amen.

5 IV. Sanctus

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

being of one substance with the Father:
 by whom all things were made;
 Who for us men,
 and for our salvation came down from heaven.
 And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
 of the Virgin Mary: and was made man.
 And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate:
 he suffered, and was buried.
 And the third day he rose again
 according to the Scriptures,
 And ascended into heaven,
 and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.
 And he shall come again with glory
 to judge both the quick and the dead:
 whose kingdom shall have no end.
 And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
 the Lord and giver of life,
 Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
 Who with the Father and the Son together
 is worshipped and glorified,
 who spake by the Prophets.
 And I believe in one holy catholic
 and apostolic church.
 I acknowledge one baptism
 for the remission of sins.
 And I look for the resurrection of the dead,
 And the life of the world to come.
 Amen.

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

6 V. Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

7 VI. Agnus Dei

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

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us;
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us;
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, grant us thy peace.

8 TOTA PULCHRA ES

Tota pulchra es Maria
Et macula originalis non est in te.
Tu gloria Jerusalem
Tu lætitia Israel
Tu honorificentia populi nostri.
Tu advocata peccatorum.
O Maria! Virgo prudentissima.
Mater clementissima.
Ora pro nobis.
Intercede pro nobis
ad Dominum Jesum Christum.

Thou art all fair, Mary
And the original stain is not in thee.
Thou art the glory of Jerusalem.
Thou art the joy of Israel.
Thou art the honour of our people.
Thou art the advocate of sinners.
O Mary! Virgin most wise.
Mother most clement.
Pray for us.
Intercede for us
with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 VIRGA JESSE

Virga Jesse floruit:
Virgo Deum et hominem genuit:

The rod of Jesse hath blossomed:
a Virgin hath brought forth God and man:

pacem Deus reddidit,
in se reconcilians ima summis.
Alleluia.

God hath restored peace,
reconciling in Himself the lowest with the highest.
Alleluia.

10 LOCUS ISTE

Locus iste a Deo factus est
inæstimabile sacramentum,
irreprehensibilis est.

This place was made by God
an inestimable mystery;
it is irreproachable.

11 AVE MARIA

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

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

12 CHRISTUS FACTUS EST

Christus factus est pro nobis obediens
usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.

Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum
et dedit illi nomen,
quod est super omne nomen.

Christ became obedient for us unto death,
even to the death, death on the cross.

Therefore God exalted Him
and gave Him a name
which is above all names.



STEPHEN CLEOBURY: AN APPRECIATION

On 22 November 2019, the feast day of Saint Cecilia, patron saint of music and musicians, Stephen finally gave up the unequal struggle. Among the concerns that occupied him during his final days was to complete the final edit of this, his last recording. Another was to listen to the whole of Wagner's Ring cycle. Meanwhile, messages of appreciation and solidarity arrived from every corner of the musical world. This was the support team in action, a formidable network of singers, orchestral players, conductors, composers, recording producers and engineers, librarians, and scholars that Stephen had gathered around him over the decades. Writing shortly afterwards, his Cambridge colleague and fellow choral-conductor, Edward Wickham, noted that 'the intensity of relationships, forged in the heat of musical performance, the tenacity of impressions made by teacher upon pupil often from an early age, serve to create sodalities of composers and performers whose instincts are as entrained as they are subtle'. At King's that process begins in the choir school every morning, continues through the afternoon rehearsal, and comes to fruition in

the evening service. This daily sequence of intense preparation culminating in public performance critically depends upon the musicality, tenacity and skill of a single individual, qualities which were so clearly in evidence during the thirty-seven years that Stephen occupied the post of Director of Music. As Wickham went on to observe, the composers and performers that he nurtured in the course of this time coalesced into a distinctive approach, even perhaps constituting a 'school', that 'is surely amongst the most extensive in this or any other field of musical life'. While it is true that many of those who sang in the Choir or served as Organ Scholars have gone on to follow careers in opera houses, cathedrals, and concert halls throughout the world, so too have many of the other students who participated in the College's rich musical life. The composer Thomas Adès recalls the 550th Anniversary Concert in the Chapel, when he played the Emperor Concerto in the first half and the timpani in the second. It was also thanks to Stephen's readiness to encourage all forms of serious music-making that the Dante Quartet, co-founded by Krysia Osostowicz (who had studied in King's), spent seven years as Quartet-in-Residence. Subsequently this model was extended to a similar arrangement with Andreas Scholl who spent three years attached to King's and who, alongside other world-class singers such as Bryn Terfel, Christopher Purves, and Gerald Finley, regularly performed in the series *Concerts at King's*.

In the case of the Chapel, it was never a matter of merely keeping the show on the road. From the beginning, the incorporation of new music into

both the *Procession for Advent* and the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* proceeded hand-in-hand with an expansion of the repertory sung during the daily services. When Stephen took up his post in 1982, the tradition that he inherited largely consisted of the established corpus of Victorian and Edwardian Anglican cathedral music, combined with sixteenth and seventeenth-century Catholic liturgical masses and motets and the music of the confessionally-troubled William Byrd spanning the divide. The resulting mix, not dissimilar to the practices of cathedral choirs throughout the land, was hard to dislodge, but modifications could be made, and Stephen gradually but cautiously set about making them. In this he was greatly helped by the Provost of King's, the philosopher Bernard Williams, whose enthusiasm for music and, above all, opera provided vital friendship and encouragement, and the keen approval and encouragement of the Dean of Chapel, John Drury.

Another significant feature in the process of gradual and cautious change was his interest in the music of a number of living composers whose music is united by a minimalist approach to composition allied to strongly held religious beliefs. One of the earliest manifestations of this was the choice of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt to write a new carol, *Bogoróditse Dyevo* for the Christmas Eve service in 1990. This was an ambitious move. Pärt was then one of the most commercially successful and acclaimed living composers, and building upon the experience of working with him Stephen continued to champion his music as well as that of John Tavener, who like Pärt had converted to

Orthodox Christianity. Tavener's later style displays an interest in clear, transparent textures, achieved through the unashamed use of tonality and wide vocal registers to produce an austere effect that has been termed 'holy minimalism'. The approach was shared by both composers not only in name, but also in the choice of simple harmonies and often unadorned melodies often strongly influenced by the chant traditions of the Eastern Church. A similar journey, turning away from the radical modernism of serialism and extreme dissonance, had also been made by the Polish composer Henryk Górecki; this too aroused Stephen's curiosity and admiration. These stands come together in *ikos* (EMI Classics), a remarkable recording devoted to choral works by all three composers; it includes Tavener's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis 'Collegium Regale', which King's had commissioned some years earlier.

Part of the impetus to explore new or unfamiliar music came from Stephen's time as Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers. The story is told of his first rehearsal with this seasoned body, ready to test the mettle of any new conductor, but perhaps particularly one who had arrived from the organ loft. Faced with a moment of uncertainty in the score a hand shot up (it belonged to Judith Bingham), but before her question could even be formulated, Stephen had answered: 'It's an A natural'. The rapidity and accuracy with which he could identify mistakes, the sensitivity of his musical ear, and the sheer efficiency of his well-paced rehearsal technique was legendary. The composer Michael Zev Gordon, who worked with him on a

number of occasions in relation to performances of his own compositions, has called him 'the perfect exemplum... of the craftsman-musician'. Importantly, the experience of working with a professional choir of adult singers expanded Stephen's repertorial horizons, and fed into his work in Cambridge.

This also fits into a historical pattern of exploration. When Stephen took up his post at Westminster Cathedral in 1979, the first Anglican to hold the position, little in his previous experiences could have prepared him for the quite different demands of Catholic liturgy and ceremonial. Realising that his knowledge of Gregorian chant and its place in the liturgy was inadequate, Stephen applied himself to serious study of the repertory and its uses. By the time that he arrived at King's, his three years' exposure to Western chant traditions, practised under the benign gaze of Cardinal Basil Hume, had grown into a genuine enthusiasm that he then put into practice. Crucial to the process was the advice and encouragement of Mary Berry, an Augustinian Canoness Regular and authority on the performance of Gregorian chant, who lived in Cambridge. (Years afterwards Stephen would still recommend her two complementary handbooks, *Plainchant for Everyone* and *Cantors*, as the best introductions for anyone interested in the subject.) The study and performance of chant in its liturgical context remains an important aspect of Stephen's musical legacy at King's; there is probably no other church establishment in the Anglican world where the Propers of the Mass are still sung in Latin. A lifelong interest in chant is reflected in yet another ambitious recording,

Gregorian Chant (EMI Classics), to which it is entirely devoted.

Equally dramatic in its reverberations was the early decision to introduce new music into the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. In this context most of the initiatives of his two immediate predecessors had been concentrated on arrangements of some of the best known carols and the addition of descants. If, as John Rutter has said, the publication of these 'changed the whole sound of Christmas for everybody who sings', Stephen went on to change it for the millions of listeners all over the world who tuned in to the live broadcast on Christmas Eve. Beginning with Lennox Berkeley in 1983, a new carol was now commissioned every year. Some of the composers approached were at the start of their careers, others were already well established, but all those who wrote responded to the challenge enthusiastically in a striking variety of different forms and styles, which made the service more open and ecumenical. In addition to new works by his Cambridge colleagues Alexander Goehr and Robin Holloway, and pieces by others prominent in British musical life such as Richard Rodney Bennett, Jonathan Harvey, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Peter Maxwell Davies, Stephen commissioned newly-written carols by less familiar names: the American Stephen Paulus, the Swiss Carl Rütti, the Australians Brett Dean and Carl Vine, and the Finn Einojuhaní Rautavaara. Two King's alumni, Judith Weir and Thomas Adès, accepted invitations to compose new pieces: Adès with the plaintive harmonies of his *Fayrfax Carol*, and Weir with

Illuminare, Jerusalem, whose gentle evocation of the simplicity of the nativity made it a favourite for frequent inclusion in the service. Through such commissions, sophisticated contemporary music was brought into the homes of the millions of listeners for whom the essence of the Christmas carol was its reassuringly familiar evocation of an arcadian, Dickensian, or boisterously rustic medieval past. In 2003, Harrison Birtwhistle contributed *The Gleam*, which requires the performers to stamp their feet. The reaction to such unexpected sounds was not always favourable. One caller to the BBC's *Feedback* programme trenchantly expressed the view that 'whoever was responsible for the choice of the new carol should be locked up in a dark room and never let out'. It was also largely through the carol service that a number of other pieces achieved a wide currency, none more so than John Tavener's beautifully crafted unaccompanied setting of William Blake's poem *The Lamb*. Written in just a single afternoon in 1982 for his nephew Simon's third birthday, its popularity was partly due not only to its eloquent simplicity but also to its frequent appearance on Christmas Eve. It certainly travelled widely, even as far as Paolo Sorrentino's Oscar-winning film *La grande bellezza* (2013), where it takes its place in the soundtrack alongside an eclectic assemblage of music by Pérotin, Bizet, Poulenc, and Górecki.

To the Procession for Advent and the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, the two main set-piece occasions of the annual cycle, Stephen added a third element, the Easter Festival. At the heart of the conception was the annual performance of

one of the Bach Passions. Another decisive move was the performance, enthusiastically sanctioned by the composer's widow, of Frank Martin's monumental oratorio *Golgotha*. Scored for five soloists, orchestra, organ, piano and mixed choir, this exemplified a determination to bring works that were rarely heard in Cambridge, and which often required large forces, to the Cambridge public. An equally spectacular example was a performance of Messiaen's *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine*, largely drawn from local resources together with the country's only professional player of the ondes martenot. This was one of the high points of Stephen's long involvement with the Cambridge University Musical Society, but in addition to his performances with many university and college ensembles he also worked with, among others, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Britten Sinfonia, the English Chamber Orchestra, and the Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra. The BBC Concert Orchestra was a regular participant in the Easter Festival; it appeared under Stephen's baton for the last time on Good Friday 2019, in a performance of Verdi's *Messa da requiem*.

To a greater extent than any previous holder of the post, and probably more than any choir director of a comparable institution, Stephen spent much more of his time on tour and in the recording studio. As Stephen Johns, who for many years worked with him as a record producer at the Abbey Road studios recalls, 'recording was an essential part of the diet of the choir, and this was crucial in the desire to set up the King's label when

the major record companies retreated'. From the early 1990s there had been a distinct change of pace, with the choir now producing two or even three recordings a year, and as time went on there was a distinct broadening of both the recorded repertory and associated performance practices. Collaborations with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Britten Sinfonia became more frequent, but it was above all the presence of the Academy of Ancient Music, whose activities were co-ordinated from its Cambridge office on the other side of King's Parade, that facilitated exploration of the possibilities of historically-informed performance. All this came together in the integrated objective of single-minded dedication to carefully prepared and meticulously rehearsed music-making, an objective now firmly embraced

by his King's successor (and former organ scholar) Daniel Hyde. This was pursued in a wide variety of contexts, from the *Easter Festival* to the recording studio, but ultimately it was invested in the daily routine of choral singing, which Stephen regarded as the best possible use of mind, heart and voice. For throughout his many-sided career as teacher and performer, he firmly believed in the sentiment of the memorable couplet prefaced to William Byrd's *Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs*. Quoted by Stephen to generations of choristers, it epitomises a passionately held belief:

*Since singing is so good a thing,
I wish all men would learn to sing.*

Iain Fenlon



CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

It was during my schooldays that the music of Bruckner and Mahler began gradually to be received with the attention that had long been its due here in the UK. I think I may have heard the Bruckner *Mass in E Minor* at the Three Choirs Festival at around the time I was studying Mahler's First Symphony as an A-level set work. I certainly heard it during my time as a student in Cambridge when David Willcocks conducted it with the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS). George Guest, under whom I was then Organ Student at St John's College, had by then also introduced the motets of Bruckner into his repertoire. To experience these in the context of Gregorian chant, as we did then, made a real appreciation of them and their own source of inspiration possible, and I am forever grateful for this.

It has, therefore, been an enormous pleasure to record the E minor Mass and a number of the motets for this disc. The presence of the organ and three trombones in the chapel made the inclusion of *Ecce sacerdos magnus* a must.



Apart from the grandeur, nobility and expressivity of the music here, there is a resounding authenticity about the creative process that made these works pass through a composer who was a deeply devout catholic, and for whom there were virtually no complications on that front for us to take into account. This is not to criticise others, for we are the fortunate inheritors of a huge corpus of sacred and liturgical music from all eras. It is, for me, however, the directness of the connection here between text and conviction about the text that speaks so movingly.

Stephen Cleobury, September 2019

ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields is one of the world's finest chamber orchestras, renowned for fresh, brilliant interpretations of the world's greatest orchestral music.

Formed by Sir Neville Marriner in 1958 from a group of leading London musicians, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church in November 1959. Through unrivalled live performances and a vast recording output – highlights of which include the 1969 best-seller Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and the soundtrack to the Oscar-winning film *Amadeus* – the Academy gained an enviable international reputation for its distinctive, polished and refined sound. With over 500 releases in a much-vaunted discography and a comprehensive international touring programme, the name and sound of the Academy is known and loved by classical audiences throughout the world.

Today the Academy is led by Music Director and virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell, retaining the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductor-less ensemble which has become an



Academy hallmark. Under Bell's direction, and with the support of Leader/Director Tomo Keller and Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia, the Academy continues to push the boundaries of play-directed performance to new heights, presenting symphonic repertoire and chamber music on a grand scale at prestigious venues around the globe.

Complementing a busy international schedule, the Academy continues to reach out to people of all ages and backgrounds through its Learning and Participation programmes.

To find out more about the Academy of St Martin in the Fields please visit **www.asmf.org**, or connect with the orchestra on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

ECCE SACERDOS MAGNUS

Trombones

Becky Smith
Andrew Cole
Joe Arnold

MASS NO. 2 IN E MINOR

Oboes

John Roberts
Rachel Ingleton

Clarinets

Fiona Cross
Sarah Thurlow

Bassoons

Meyrick Alexander
Richard Skinner

Horns

Timothy Brown
Joanna Hensel
Stephen Stirling
David Horwich
Clare Lintott

Trumpets

Mark David
William O'Sullivan

Trombones

Matthew Gee
Matthew Knight
Joe Arnold

SIR STEPHEN CLEOBURY (1948–2019)

Director of Music (1982–2019)



For over 35 years, Sir Stephen Cleobury was associated with one of the world's most famous choirs, that of King's College, Cambridge. He complemented and refreshed his work in Cambridge through the many other musical activities in which he engaged throughout the world.

At King's, he sought to enhance the reputation of the world-famous Choir, broadening considerably the daily service repertoire, commissioning new music from leading composers and developing its activities in broadcasting, recording and touring. He introduced the highly successful annual festival, *Easter at King's*, from which the BBC regularly broadcasts, and, in its wake, a series of high-profile performances throughout the year, *Concerts at King's*.

From 1995 to 2007 he was Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers, following which he became Conductor Laureate. Since 1983 he was closely involved in the Cambridge University Musical Society, one of the UK's oldest music societies, where he nurtured generations of young talent. He retired from CUMS in 2016, becoming Conductor Laureate.

Beyond Cambridge he held many prestigious posts in tandem with his position at King's. Until 2008 he was a member of the Royal College of Organists, of which he had also been President. He was President of the Incorporated Association of Organists, of the Friends of Cathedral Music, and of the Herbert Howells Society; he was also Chairman of the IAO Benevolent Fund. He was knighted in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to choral music and retired subsequently in September 2019 after 37 years in the post of Director of Music at King's College.

Sir Stephen died in York, to which he had recently moved, on St Cecilia's Day, 22 November 2019, following a long illness. The news of Stephen's death was received with great sadness by so many around the world who had worked with him, learned from him, or had simply been touched by his music.

THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

King's College was founded in 1441 with six 'singing men' and 16 choristers, who were to be poor boys 'of a strong constitution and an honest conversation'. Five centuries later, the Choir comprises 16 boys (Choristers) and 16 men (Choral and Organ Scholars).

The boys, aged between nine and thirteen, are educated across the river at King's College School, a thriving and famously happy school to some 420 girls and boys. The Choristers are selected at audition based on musical potential and, of course, a love of singing. When they join, they spend up to two years in training as 'probationers', after which they join the full Choir.

The men are all undergraduates at the University, who have attained the necessary academic requirements to become undergraduates at Cambridge. Known either as Choral or Organ Scholars, they study many different academic subjects, from music to modern languages to natural sciences. Find out more by searching "King's College Choir".

Choristers

Year 8 (ages 12-13) Jack Bowley, George Hill

Year 7 (ages 11-12) Aiken Anderson-Jané,
Philip Curtis, Elliot Hasler, Leo McNiff,
Charlie Nicholson, Joshua O'Neill, Julius Sirringhaus

Year 6 (ages 10-11) Titus Gleave,
Alexi Kokkinos-Everest, Vladimir Pantea,
Leo Ratnasothy, Charles Sheldon

Probationers (ages 9-10) Sebastian Gray,
Morgan Hayes, Samuel Hodson,
Oliver Howard-Jones, Julian McNiff,
Asker Moeller-Jensen

Altos George Gibbon, Salim Jaffar,
Jacob Partington, Joseph Zubier

Tenors Maxim Meshkvichev, James Micklethwaite,
Protik Moulik, Christopher Nehaul ²

Basses Sam Aldersey-Williams, Charlie Baigent,
William Crane, Josh Geddes, Trojan Nakade,
Joel Robson, Christopher Winkless-Clark

Organ Scholars Henry Websdale ¹, Dónal McCann ³

Director of Music Sir Stephen Cleobury

¹ Organist, track 1

² Soloist, track 8

³ Organist, track 8

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Engineer Arne Akselberg

Assistant Engineers James Kiln & Benjamin Sheen

Mastering Simon Kiln & Simon Gibson

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Consultant Claire Long

Label management Benjamin Sheen

www.kingscollegerecordings.com

www.kings.cam.ac.uk

