

Havergal BRIAN

COMPLETE CHORAL SONGS, VOLUME ONE

Joyful Company of Singers
Ascolta
Peter Broadbent
Finchley Children's Music Group
Grace Rossiter

HAVERGAL BRIAN Complete Choral Songs, Volume One

| | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | <i>Shall I compare thee to a summer's day</i> (Shakespeare; SATB; 1903) | 2:24 |
| 2 | <i>Soul Star</i> (Helena Bantock; orig. Philip Marston; SATB; 1906) | 3:41 |
| 3 | <i>Come o'er the sea</i> (Thomas Moore; SATB; 1907)* | 2:57 |
| 4 | <i>Lullaby of an Infant Chief</i> (Sir Walter Scott; SATB; 1906) | 2:30 |
| 5 | <i>Ah! County Guy: Serenade for equal voices</i> (Sir Walter Scott; SS; 1919) | 2:39 |
| 6 | <i>Violets</i> (Robert Herrick; SSA; 1914) | 2:28 |
| 7 | <i>Fair Pledges of a Fruitful Tree</i> (Robert Herrick; SA; 1919)* | 2:06 |
| 8 | <i>Grace for a Child</i> (Robert Herrick; SA; 1914) | 1:07 |
| 9 | <i>A Song of Willow</i> (Shakespeare; SSA; 1914) | 1:39 |
| 10 | <i>And will he not come again?</i> (Shakespeare; SSAA; 1914) | 2:26 |
| 11 | <i>Ye spotted snakes</i> (Shakespeare; SSAA; 1914) | 2:48 |
| 12 | <i>Fear no more the heat of the sun</i> (Shakespeare; SATB; 1919)* | 2:56 |
| 13 | <i>Under the greenwood tree</i> (Shakespeare; SSA; 1919) | 1:54 |
| 14 | <i>Full fathom five</i> (Shakespeare; SSAA; 1921)* | 1:44 |
| 15 | <i>Come away, death</i> (Shakespeare; TBarB; 1925) | 2:24 |
| 16 | <i>The Blossom</i> (William Blake; unison; 1914) | 0:51 |
| 17 | <i>The Fly</i> (William Blake; unison; 1914) | 1:12 |
| 18 | <i>The Little Boy Lost</i> (William Blake; SA; 1914) | 1:07 |
| 19 | <i>The Little Boy Found</i> (William Blake; SA; 1914) | 1:05 |
| 20 | <i>Piping down the Valleys Wild</i> (William Blake; unison; 1914) | 1:54 |
| 21 | <i>The Chimney Sweeper</i> (William Blake; unison; 1914) | 2:55 |
| 22 | <i>The Little Black Boy</i> (William Blake; unison; 1914) | 4:37 |

Four Choral Songs from *Prometheus Unbound* (Shelley; SATB; 1937–44)

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|------|
| 23 | From Unremembered Ages | 1:55 |
| 24 | The Path | 4:59 |
| 25 | There the Voluptuous Nightingales | 3:27 |
| 26 | There those Enchanted Eddies | 2:55 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------------|
| 27 | <i>Spring – sound the flute</i> (William Blake; SA; 1914) | 1:31 |
| 28 | <i>Summer has come, Little Children</i> (Gerald Cumberland; SA; 1914) | 2:33 |
| 29 | <i>Goodbye to Summer</i> (William Allingham; SSA; 1914) | 2:19 |
| 30 | <i>Blow, Blow thou Winter Wind</i> (Shakespeare; SATB; 1925) | 1:52 |
| | | TT 70:59 |

Joyful Company of Singers 1–4 15 23–26 30

Ascolta 6 9–14 21–22

Gavin Roberts, piano 9–15 21–22

Christine Hankin, flute 29

Imogen Barford, harp 29

Peter Broadbent, conductor 1–4 6 9–15 21–26 30

Finchley Children's Music Group 5 7 8 16–20 27–29

John Evanson, piano 5 7 8 16–20 27–29

Grace Rossiter, conductor 5 7 8 16–20 27–29

FIRST RECORDINGS
*FIRST DIGITAL RECORDINGS

HAVERGAL BRIAN: COMPLETE CHORAL SONGS, VOLUME ONE

by John Pickard

Until recently, the gradually emerging recognition of the English composer Havergal Brian (1876–1972) has tended to focus on his symphonies. He wrote 32 numbered exemplars:¹ the first, the gigantic *Gothic Symphony* (1919–27) is the largest symphony ever performed, with the last 21 symphonies coming from an astonishing burst of late creative activity between the ages of 80 and 92. Yet Brian came to the writing of symphonies relatively late, his early career being devoted to cantatas, orchestral tone-poems, solo songs and a large number of choral songs, or ‘partsongs’, as they are often called – an inaccurate term in Brian’s case, since several of the songs are not in ‘parts’ but are for unison voices. Brian wrote over 80 choral songs, possibly even more since the scores of some twenty others, known to have been completed, have vanished. That leaves 62 extant works for various choral combinations, some unaccompanied, some with piano, some for mixed voices, some for upper voices or unison voices. Most of the works for upper or unison voices were primarily written for children’s voices, and some also double as solo songs.

By far the larger part of the choral songs come from two main phases of activity, the first around 1905–6, when Brian was starting to establish himself as one of the most promising British composers of the younger generation, the second from a longer period spanning the years either side of the First World War. It is significant that most of the songs from this later period were written for women’s or children’s voices, reflecting the departure for military service of male choristers throughout the land. A third, less concentrated phase can be identified around the 1920s and 1930s, with about a dozen choral songs dotted around this period. By this time, Brian’s

¹ In 1967 Brian removed the first he composed, the four-movement *A Fantastic Symphonic* of 1907–8, from his symphonic canon; its slow movement and scherzo were long since lost and have never been performed.

musical language had undergone a drastic shift towards more dissonant harmony and a preoccupation with highly chromatic polyphony.

The songs from 1905–6 were undoubtedly written with the major English choral festivals in mind. During the thirty years before the First World War these competitive events, mainly concentrated in the north of England, attracted thousands of amateur singers each year. The Lancashire seaside town of Morecambe hosted the most important of the festivals, its exceptionally high musical standards encouraging many leading composers of the day to write new works for the various classes of choral competition that the festival promoted. None was more impressed than Dr (soon to be Sir) Edward Elgar, who declared in a letter quoted in the July 1903 edition of *The Musical Times* that ‘Some day the Press will awake to the fact, already known abroad and to some few of us in England, that the living centre of music in Great Britain is not in London but somewhere farther North’.²

It was Elgar who recommended Brian’s setting of Shakespeare’s Sonnet No. 18, *Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day* (1903) [1], for performance at the 1905 meeting of the Morecambe Festival. The work scored such a success that it was set as an official test-piece the following year in the prestigious Challenge Shield category, where a choir from Barrow was victorious, with choirs from Blackpool and the Isle of Man coming second and third, respectively. It is easy to see the attraction of the work for ambitious amateur choirs, its melodious freshness and harmonic unpredictability offering challenge and reward in equal measure, and why Elgar, whom Richard Strauss had recently acclaimed ‘the first English progressivist’,³ should have seen Brian as his natural heir at this time.

Among the many composers writing works for the Morecambe Festival, two, Joseph Holbrooke (1878–1958) and Granville Bantock (1868–1946), were especially dear to Brian. In later years, when Brian was living in obscurity and penury, Bantock was virtually his only close friend. Brian’s attachment to the Bantock family is reflected in the dedication of several of the choral songs to individual family members. In the case of *Soul Star* (1906) [2], the text seems to have been compiled by Bantock’s wife, Helena,

² Letter to Canon Gorton, organiser of the Morecambe Music Festival, published in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 44, July 1903, p. 460.

³ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, Oxford University Press, London, 1984, p. 369.

and derived from a poem by Philip Bourke Marston (1850–87). Brian's setting begins as a rocking lullaby in $\frac{6}{8}$, but takes an unexpected turn midway, with a change to $\frac{3}{4}$, the introduction of new musical material and a series of surprising tonal shifts from the opening E major to C major and then F major, before a return to the opening.

In both his solo and choral songs, Brian took care in the choice of texts and generally aimed high (which is often more than can be said of Elgar). Shakespeare, Shelley, Blake and Herrick were favourite sources, accounting for about half the texts of the extant choral songs. Elsewhere, in common with most English art-songs of the period, his preference tended towards the English Romantic poets. The Irish writer, singer, satirist and political activist Thomas Moore (1779–1852), author of *Come o'er the sea* (1906) [3], was something of an exception. He is perhaps best remembered today for the collection of *Irish Melodies* he published between 1807 and 1834, including 'The Last Rose of Summer', which Brian went on to parody in the Prologue to his opera *The Tigers* (1916–30).

The Celtic connection continues with *Lullaby of an Infant Chief* [4] and *Ah! County Guy* [5], the only settings Brian made of the poetry of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). *Lullaby* is written for unaccompanied mixed voices and comes once again from 1906. It begins and ends as a conventional lullaby, its chromatic passing notes rather cloying in their sentimentality. But, as so often with Brian's songs, the central section springs a surprise. Marked 'sharp and hard', for a few bars the music is startlingly brutal in its evocation of the bugles, bows and blades guarding the slumbering infant chief, before it returns to the calm of the opening.

Most of Brian's choral songs date from around 1914 and 1919, so that very few are for mixed voices. The outbreak of war instantly depleted British choirs of tenors and basses, and, it should be added, many altos, too, since choirs at the turn of the twentieth century often contained as many male altos as female ones. The male altos were invariably young and, of course, they went off to war, too. Composers like Elgar and Brian quickly turned to writing for upper voices only. In Elgar's case, he also arranged some of his earlier songs to suit upper voices. All of Brian's choral songs were published, mainly by the London-based music publisher Augener & Co., which had been taken

over by the German publisher Schott & Co. in 1910 but was expropriated at the outbreak of the First World War. Although Brian's songs were issued in printed copies, nothing at all is known of their subsequent performance history. It is possible that some of the songs never received performances and that these recordings are their world premieres.

Apart from three songs for mixed voices, the rest of Brian's choral output from around the First World War is scored for divided or unison upper voices (there were at least three songs for male voices only, but they have been lost). Some of the songs are in three or four vocal parts and divide roughly equally between those with piano accompaniments and those without. The unison and two-part songs always have piano accompaniments, and it is into this last category that *Ah! County Guy* falls. Described in the score as a 'serenade for equal voices', the song was composed in 1919 and published in 1922. Scott's poem comes from his 1823 novel *Quentin Durward*, where it appears as a pastiche of a Renaissance lute-song. Brian may have first encountered it in a setting made by Sir Arthur Sullivan in 1867.

Brian was especially fond of the poetry of Robert Herrick (1591–1674). In addition to the three settings presented here, he set three more Herrick poems as solo songs and a further two for female voices and orchestra (the *Two Herrick Songs* of 1912 – a third one dating from that year is lost). *Violets* [6] dates from 1914 and is set for three-part female choir with piano. The song is notable both for the delicate overlapping of the two upper voice parts in an almost instrumental fashion, and for the intricate writing of the piano accompaniment. In general, Brian's piano-writing, though original and effective, is often extremely demanding to play, featuring sudden wide leaps and awkward passagework requiring unusual pianistic dexterity. It is possible that the piano-writing may have fallen outside the capabilities of many choral accompanists at the time the songs were composed. *Violets* was dedicated to Bantock's daughter Myrrah, though whether she was aware of the fact or not is questionable: despite the forty-year friendship of Brian and her father, Brian merits only two extremely cursory mentions in the biography she wrote of her father.⁴

⁴ *Granville Bantock: A Personal Portrait*, Littlehampton Book Services, Worthing, 1972.

Of the remaining Herrick settings, *Fair Pledges of a Fruitful Tree* [7] comes from 1919, the year Brian began writing the *Gothic Symphony*, but this two-part setting for sopranos and altos retains the more conventional harmonic style of *Violets*, its simple directness lending it well to children's choir, as presented on this recording. The same is true of *Grace for a Child* [8], written for the same forces, but dating from 1914. In the purest C major, with not a single accidental note in sight, this setting is perhaps the simplest thing that Brian ever composed, and yet its twin lines are in their way as artfully contoured as anything he ever wrote, and the final imitative 'Amen' is touching in its simplicity.

As with his early Shakespeare setting, the next seven songs likewise show elements of Brian the choral composer at his best. Unlike *Shall I Compare Thee*, though, these settings are all drawn from verses in Shakespeare's plays. The first three, all for upper voices, date from 1914. *A Song of Willow* [9] sets Desdemona's song from Act 4, Scene 3, of *Othello*, though the words are not entirely Shakespeare's own: they were adapted from a folk-ballad. *And will he not come again?* [10] sets one of Ophelia's songs from Act 4, Scene 5, of *Hamlet*, also based on a folk-ballad. Here, uniquely among the choral songs, Brian employs the Purcellian device of a ground-bass in the accompaniment (the same repeated figuration – in this case, five notes). The ground-bass is strictly observed in the two verses but migrates to the top of the piano in the choruses and deviates slightly from the formula. *Ye spotted snakes* [11] sets the lullaby from Act 2, Scene 2, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here, Brian divides his unaccompanied sopranos and altos into four parts to produce one of his most delightful choral songs – a worthy complement to the more famous version by Felix Mendelssohn.

The next two Shakespeare songs date from 1919 and are more complex in content. *Fear no more the Heat of the Sun* [12] sets for unaccompanied mixed choir the funeral dirge from Act 4, Scene 2, of *Cymbeline*, the stoical words drawing from Brian some of his finest choral music. The central section, more tortured in its chromaticism, offers a striking anticipation of some of the choral writing in the Te Deum second part of the *Gothic Symphony*. In cheerful contrast, *Under the greenwood tree* [13], the words taken

from Act 2, Scene 5, of *As You Like It*, shows Brian at his most quirkily unpredictable. The calm, pastoral mood established at the opening is violently (even gleefully) shattered at the words 'Come hither!' and the music twists and writhes in its chromatic knots before eventually escaping (just in time), and calm is restored.

More complex still are the last two Shakespeare songs presented on this album. Both appear to stand apart from main groups of Brian's choral songs, *Full fathom five* [14] dating from 1921 and *Come away, death* [15] from 1925. In fact, at least nine further songs from around this period are missing (their titles are known, but the music is lost), giving the inaccurate impression that Brian's output of choral songs was on the wane while he laboured at orchestrating the *Gothic Symphony*. *Full fathom five* for four-part upper voices and piano sets the famous words from Act 1, Scene 2, of *The Tempest* with an eerily imaginative touch. With its combination of chromatic polyphony, a preponderance of augmented triads (a Brian obsession up to the mid-1920s) and occasional incursions of common chords to stop it tilting over into complete atonality, the work comes closer than perhaps any of his other songs to the choral world of the *Gothic Symphony*. The piano writing also feels more independent than in his previous songs, and closer to the world of the *Four Miniatures* for solo piano (1918–20). One can only speculate as to whether this stylistic development continued in the lost songs from this period. It is possible that it did, since another extant choral song, *Come away, Death*, from 1925, is if anything even more radical in its harmonic asperity. Setting Feste's song from Act 2, Scene 4, of *Twelfth Night*, this work is unique among Brian's surviving choral songs in its scoring for male voices only: tenors and two-part basses, with piano accompaniment. The fierce opening, with its tight, imitative writing and thorny dissonance, is only gradually tempered. Although the piece is written throughout with an E major key-signature, this key is established only in the final two bars, and even then, it is barely resolved. Heard together, these two songs approach the harmonic world of Schoenberg more directly than perhaps anything else that Brian composed. They certainly feel experimental in nature.

William Blake (1757–1827) was the poet to whom Brian turned for musical setting more frequently than any other. He made fourteen choral settings, five of which double

as solo songs, plus three separate solo songs. All the Blake choral settings use verses from the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789–94), all are written for upper voices and most are designed to suit both adult and children's voices. The first seven songs presented on this album demonstrate that versatility. *The Blossom* [16], *The Fly* [17], *The Little Boy Lost* [18] (another Bantock family dedication – this time to Helena, Bantock's wife), *The Little Boy Found* [19] and *Piping down the Valleys Wild* [20] are all set with a directness and simplicity ideally suited to children's voices, though the first two songs in particular have especially tricky piano accompaniments. The following songs, *The Chimney Sweeper* [21] and *The Little Black Boy* [22] are performed here by adult singers, reflecting their more advanced emotional and musical complexity.

There is no direct evidence of Brian's political affiliations, but considering the rebellious views of some of his literary heroes, Blake and Shelley, not to mention the anarchic, fiercely anti-war attitude of his first opera, *The Tigers*, for which he wrote his own scenario and libretto, one may draw one's own conclusions. In an interview given near the end of his life, he certainly recalled his shock at the casual racism directed towards his friend the composer and conductor Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1880–1912), who was of mixed race.⁵ In *The Chimney Sweeper*, Brian meets Blake's heart-rending account of the horrors of child labour with music that is at first apparently naive, but which grows more troubled before returning to the mock-innocence of the opening for the excoriatingly sarcastic final line of the poem.

Blake was a passionate abolitionist and, although he did not live to see the Slavery Abolition Act become law in 1834, his was a prominent voice in the rising tide of opposition to slavery. It is in this context that one should read *The Little Black Boy*. This highly complex poem plays with the double-meaning of the words 'black' and 'white' as signifiers both of race and of notions of relative moral purity – except that Blake audaciously reverses what would have been expected polarity in the late eighteenth century: here, the little black boy stands closer to God than the little white boy does and he will use his body to shield the white boy from the burning radiance of God's

⁵ Conversation between Brian, Robert Simpson and Jeffrey Anderson, recorded in early 1969, reproduced in Jürgen Schaarwächter (ed.), *HB: Aspects of Havergal Brian*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1997, p. 109.

love until such time that the white boy has learned to bear it. A more radical statement from this period could hardly be imagined. Brian's setting for unison voices responds to the challenge of the text with enormous delicacy and musical sensitivity, combining a recurring 'habanera' rhythm in the accompaniment with an almost Schubertian ambiguity of minor and major modes throughout. The song is like nothing else in Brian's output and ranks among the finest of his short vocal works.

Late in 1937, at the age of 61, Brian embarked on the biggest project of his life, a four-hour-long setting of the first two acts of the four-act lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* of Percy Shelley (1792–1822). Including a two-year hiatus around the outbreak of the Second World War, this vast work occupied Brian for almost seven years, until September 1944. It can be discussed only provisionally, since the full score was lost many decades ago. All that remains is the 273-page manuscript vocal score, with the orchestral part reduced to two or three staves, and a list of the enormous orchestral forces required – not quite on the scale of the *Gothic Symphony*, but certainly the size of the huge *Symphony No. 4, Das Siegeslied* (1932). A double chorus is also required, plus two semi-choruses and no fewer than 25 separate solo vocal parts (though some doublings of roles would be possible). Without the full score, a complete performance is impossible, and even if that were to reappear, the vocal parts alone are of such difficulty and length as to present a near-insurmountable challenge to performers.

Nevertheless, a few tantalising glimpses of the work can be experienced in the four passages Brian wrote for semi-chorus, each essentially a self-contained choral song. Three of them, 'From unremembered Ages' [23], 'The Path' [24] and 'There those enchanted Eddies' [26], are written for unaccompanied voices, each using a slightly different choral configuration. 'From unremembered Ages' is in five vocal parts, splitting the sopranos in two. It comes from Act 1, where the setting for this Chorus of Spirits is 'a ravine of icy rocks in the Indian Caucasus. Prometheus is bound to the precipice. Panthea and Ione are at his feet. Time: night. During the scene, morning slowly breaks.' 'The Path' sets part of Act 2, Scene 2: 'a forest, intermingled with rocks and caverns. Asia and Panthea pass into it. Two young fauns are sitting on a rock, listening.' Here the writing is mainly in four parts, with occasional splitting of lines, the chromaticism of this setting posing

a fearsome challenge to unaccompanied voices. From the same scene, ‘There those enchanted Eddies’ is also in four parts, but with no splitting this time and a slightly more forgiving harmonic style. Uniquely among Brian’s choral songs, ‘There the voluptuous Nightingales’ [25] (again from Act 2, Scene 2) includes important parts for flute and harp, lending gorgeous colour to the ecstatically soaring vocal writing. Here, the chorus is confined to sopranos and altos, split into four parts.

After completing *Prometheus Unbound* in 1944, Brian’s musical interest in Shelley was by no means finished. In 1951 he turned to Shelley’s gruesome verse-drama *The Cenci* (1819) for his third opera.⁶

The last four songs on this album are grouped here to make an informal sequence following the seasons of the year from spring to winter. The first three all date from 1914. *Spring – sound the flute* [27] is another Blake setting, this time for three-part upper voices with piano accompaniment and is one of Brian’s most uninhibitedly cheerful settings. *Summer has come, Little Children* [28] sets words by Brian’s friend Gerald Cumberland – real name Charles Frederick Kenyon (1879–1926) – the author, poet and journalist whose libretto *The Vision of Cleopatra* had been set by Brian in 1907 as part of a competition to compose a large-scale cantata. This charming song is notable for its central section, which not only changes pace from the opening but features highly effective close imitation between the two overlapping vocal parts. *Goodbye to Summer* [29] uses words by the Irish poet Walter Allingham (1824–89) and continues the cheerful mood. This song is one of several that bear dedications to Brian’s children, in this case Denis, his fifth child from his first marriage, to Isabel Priestley. Like *Come away, Death, Blow, blow thou winter wind* [30] is another Shakespeare setting from 1925. The harmonic language of this unaccompanied song for mixed voices is correspondingly more complex than the other songs in this sequence, but there is a breezy vigour to the setting of words from Act 2, Scene 7 of *As You Like It*. It provides a striking illustration of how far Brian’s musical language had developed since the 1903 Shakespeare setting that opened this album.

⁶ A recording of the complete work has been issued by Toccata Classics, on TOCC 0094.

John Pickard is a composer, with six symphonies and six string quartets to his credit, as well as many other works for orchestra, voices and chamber ensemble. Over thirty of his orchestral, choral and brass works have been recorded by BIS Records. In 2021 his BIS album The Gardener of Aleppo, played by the Nash Ensemble, won the prestigious Gramophone Contemporary Award. Toccata Classics has issued three albums devoted to his music, including one with the String Quartets Nos. 1 and 5. John Pickard is currently Professor of Composition at the University of Bristol, UK, where he has worked since 1993. Between 2004 and 2016 he was General Editor of the Elgar Complete Edition. He is also an authority on the music of Havergal Brian, writing widely on the composer and editing many of his scores for performance.

Peter Broadbent is one of Britain's leading choral conductors, whose experience ranges from brass bands to large-scale choral works, opera and musicals. In addition to his work with Joyful Company of Singers since its creation in 1988, he has conducted the London Mozart Players, the chamber orchestra Divertimenti, the English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Southern Sinfonia, the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, Apollo Voices and the BBC Singers, broadcasting frequently on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. Engagements outside the UK include concerts with the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra and Kodály Chorus in Hungary, a broadcast with the National Chamber Choir in Dublin and a European tour with the World Youth Choir in 2006. He gives workshops and masterclasses throughout Europe, and as the first Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors he helped to instigate and develop choral-conducting courses.

In 2007 he was presented with the Pro Cultura Hungarica Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture for his services to Anglo-Hungarian relations and in 2017 was presented with the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. He was awarded an MBE in the 2022 New Year's Honours for his service to music.

One of the leading amateur chamber choirs in the UK, **Joyful Company of Singers** is known for its virtuosity and intensity of spirit, as well as for an astoundingly wide repertoire, ranging from the sixteenth century to the present day, including many first performances.



Formed in 1988 by Peter Broadbent, JCS first came to prominence when it won the Sainsbury's 'Choir of the Year' competition in 1990. Since then, it has maintained its profile in the musical world, winning an impressive list of national and international competitions, leading to many invitations to perform. Concert appearances include most of the leading UK festivals, and the choir has performed in numerous concert tours in Europe, broadcasting in many countries as well as on the BBC and Classic FM.

JCS has recorded over 25 albums for a number of labels and with various conductors, including Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* on Nimbus, 'beautifully characterized and shaped by Peter Broadbent' (*International Record Review*). The JCS recording of the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* under Richard Hickox was listed in April 2024 by *Gramophone* magazine as one of the top twenty recordings of the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

JCS also instituted a Youth Fund to encourage the development of young conductors, singers and composers, in recent years including its first-ever Composer-in-Association, Zoe Dixon.

Ascolta was formed by Peter Broadbent as an occasional recording and concert group made up of professional and semi-professional singers. Its first album was of works by Ferenc Farkas for Toccata Classics (rocc 0296), where the reviewer for MusicWeb International felt that 'Peter Broadbent, no stranger to Hungarian music, directs them with imagination and control'.

Born in London, **Grace Rossiter** is a choral conductor, composer and arranger. A champion of youth music, she has been Artistic Director of the Finchley Children's Music Group since 2001. She has prepared the choir for conductors who include Marin Alsop, Martyn Brabbins, Colin Davis, Kurt Masur and Mark Wigglesworth.

Her work with FCMG includes large-scale events such as singing with Madonna at Wembley for Live Earth, and staged productions with the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, English National Opera and the Rambert Dance Company. FCMG has an ongoing commitment to the commissioning of new works for children's voices, and as such, she has conducted numerous world premieres with the group. Recent projects with have included the world



premiere of Christian Mason's *The Singing Tree* with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Neue Vocalisten Stuttgart; the world premiere of *The Innocents* by Patrick Hawes with Voces8; and recordings of settings by Iain Farrington with the Aurora Orchestra.

She gave the premiere of Kerry Andrew's *No Place Like*, conducting the 'Ten Pieces' Children's Choir at the BBC Proms. She is Deputy Chorus Director of the BBC Symphony Chorus and Musical Director of Finchley Choral Society. She has worked closely with Voices of the River's Edge, born out of the BBC Proms Youth Choir Academy, with whom she conducted the premiere of Kristina Arakelyan's *Whin Lands* at the BBC Proms at The Glasshouse. She often guest-conducts the BBC Singers, for which she has also composed and arranged music.

Founded in 1958 to give the first amateur performance of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde*, **Finchley Children's Music Group** is a highly versatile group of choirs for young people aged 4 to 18. FCMG frequently performs in the major concert-halls in London and abroad, alongside leading professional ensembles, among them the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, BBC Singers and Voces8, with repertoire ranging from the Britten *War Requiem* and Mahler Symphony No. 8 to Louis Andriessen's *La Commedia* and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

Championing contemporary music for children's voices, FCMG has commissioned works by such composers as Judith Bingham, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and James Weeks, as well as premiering works by Luciano Berio, Bob Chilcott, Michael Finnissy and Alec Roth. FCMG often records for radio, film and TV, the music including *Laudes Animantium* by Kenneth Leighton with Londinium, Prokofiev's *Winter Bonfire* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, works by Ian Farrington with the Aurora Orchestra and Judith Weir's *Storm* with the BBC Singers and members of BBC SO for 'BBC Ten Pieces', and it has provided children's choruses for English National Opera under the baton of its President Martyn Brabbins (who is also the President of the Havergal Brian Society), for the National Theatre and for Madonna at Wembley.

www.fcmg.org.uk

Texts

❶ *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day*

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And ev'ry fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course
untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his
shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this, gives life to thee.

Sonnet 18

❷ *Soul Star*

Helena Bantock (1886–1961)

from Philip Bourke Marston (1850–87)

Where morning is creeping
You journey afar
God wakes you from sleeping
Oh! soul of a star

Two spirits are weary of loving alone
From high dreaming of heaven
They call you mine own

Then listen

Ah listen, come sweet do not fear
The soft dawn dew's glisten
And love calls you here
And love calls you here

❸ *Come o'er the sea*

Thomas More (1478–1535)

Come o'er the sea,
Maiden with me,
Mine through sunshine, storm, and snows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same, where'er it goes.
Let fate frown not, so we love and part not;
'Tis life where thou art, 'tis death w[h]ere thou
art not.

Then come o'er the sea,
Maiden with me,
Come wherever the wild wind blows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same where'er it goes.

Was not the sea
Made for the Free,

Land for courts and chains alone?
Here we are slaves,
But, on the waves,
Love and Liberty's all our own.
No eye to watch, and no tongue to wound us,
All earth forgot, and all heaven around us.
Then come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me,
Mine through sunshine, storm, and snows;
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same, where'er it goes.

❏ *Lullaby of an Infant Chief*

Walter Scott (1771–1832)

Oh hush thee, my baby, thy sire was a knight,
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright;
The woods and the glens, from the towers
 which we see,
They all are belonging, dear baby, to thee.

O fear not the bugle, though loudly it blows,
It calls but the warders that guard thy repose;
Their bows would be bended, their blades
 would be red,
Ere the step of a foeman drew near to thy bed.

O hush thee, my baby, the time soon will come
When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet and drum;
Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while you
 may,

For strife comes with manhood, and waking
 with day.

❏ *Ah! County Guy*

Scott

Ah! County Guy, the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea,
The orange flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark his lay who thrill'd all day
Sits hushed his partner nigh,
Breeze, bird, and flower confess the hour,
But where is County Guy?

The village maid steals through the shade,
Her shepherd's suit to hear;
To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high-born Cavalier.
The star of Love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky,
And high and low the influence know,
But where is County Guy?

❏ *Violets*

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

Welcome, maids of honour
You do bring
In the Spring
And wait upon her.

She has virgins many,
Fresh and fair;
Yet you are
More sweet than any.

You're the maiden posies
And so graced
To be placed
'Fore damask roses.

Yet, though thus respected,
By and by
Ye do lie,
Poor girls, neglected.

❏ *Fair Pledges of a Fruitful Tree*
Herrick

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past,
But you may stay yet here a-while
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good-night?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth,
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves where we
May read how soon things have

Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride
Like you, a-while, they glide
Into the grave.

To Blossoms

❏ *Grace for a Child*
Herrick

Here a little child I stand
Heaving up my either hand,

Cold as paddocks though they be,
Yet I lift them up to Thee,
For a benison to fall
On our meat and on us all!

Amen.

❏ *A Song of Willow*
Shakespeare

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow
Her head on her bosom, her hand on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmured
her moans,
Sing willow, willow, willow
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the
stones
Sing willow, willow, willow.

Othello, Act 4, Scene 3

[10] *And will he not come again?*

Shakespeare

And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead:
Go to they deathbed:
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow;
all flaxen was his poll.
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan;
God ha' mercy on his soul.

Hamlet, Act 4, Scene 5

[11] *Ye spotted snakes*

Shakespeare

Ye spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy Queen:
Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby;
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby,
lullaby, lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legged spinners hence:

Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm, nor snail, do no offence.
Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby;
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby,
lullaby, lullaby, lullaby.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 2, Scene 2

[12] *Fear no more the heat of the sun*

Shakespeare

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task has done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou are past the tyrant's stroke:
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak.
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan:

All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

Cymbeline, Act 4, Scene 2

13 Under the greenwood tree

Shakespeare

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet birds throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither!

Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun
And loves to live i' the sun
Seeking the food he eats
And pleased with what he gets
Come hither, come hither, come hither!

Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.
As You Like It, Act 2, Scene 5

14 Full fathom five

Shakespeare

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Hark! now I hear them, Ding-dong, bell.

The Tempest, Act 1, Scene 2

15 Come away, death

Shakespeare

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid:
Fly away, fly away, breath
I am slain by a cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew
O prepare it!
My part of death no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown,
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be
thrown:
A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

Twelfth Night, Act 2, Scene 4

16 The Blossom

William Blake (1757–1827)

Merry, merry sparrow!
Under leaves so green
A happy blossom

Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow.
Near my bosom.
Pretty, pretty robin!
Under leaves so green
A happy blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty robin,
Near my bosom.

*Songs of Innocence and of Experience
Shewing the Two Contrary States
of the Human Soul, 1794*

[17] *The Fly*

Blake

Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art thou not
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing,

If thought is life
And strength and breath
And the want
Of thought is death:

Then am I
A happy fly
If I live,
Or if I die.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

[18] *The Little Boy Lost*

Blake

Father, Father, where are you going
Oh, do not walk so fast
Speak father, speak to your little boy
Or else I shall be lost.

The night was dark no father was there
The child was wet with dew.
The mire was deep, & the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

[19] *The Little Boy Found*

Blake

The little boy lost in the lonely fen
Led by the wandering light
Began to cry but God, ever nigh,
Appeared like his father in white.

He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,
The little boy weeping sought.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

[20] *Piping down the valleys wild*

Blake

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

‘Pipe a song about a lamb!’
So I piped with merry cheer.
‘Piper, pipe that song again.’
So I piped: he wept to hear.

‘Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!’
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

‘Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read,’
So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Ev’ry child may joy to hear.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

[21] *The Chimney Sweeper*

Blake

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue

Could scarcely cry ‘Weep! weep! weep! weep!’
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There’s little Tom Dacre, who cried when his
head,
That curled like a lamb’s back, was shaved; so
I said,
‘Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your
head’s bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white
hair’.

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a fright!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and
Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins, and let them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing,
they run,
And wash in a river, And shine in the sun

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy,
He’d have God for his father, and never want joy

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy
& warm:

So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

22 *The Little Black Boy*

Blake

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but oh! my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

Look on the rising sun: There God does live,
And gives his light, And gives his heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men
receive.

Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face,
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learned the heat to
bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice,
Saying, 'Come out from the grove, my love &
care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.'

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me,
And thus I say to little English boy

When I from black and he from white cloud
free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Fathers knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.
Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Four Choral Songs
from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

23 'From Unremembered Ages'
From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought;
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:

Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!
‘Chorus of Spirits’, Act 1, Scene 1

㉔ ‘The Path’

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven’s wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel blown anew,
And bends and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone;
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon,
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne’er unite;
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

‘Semichorus of Spirits’, Act 2, Scene 2

㉕ ‘There the Voluptuous Nightingales’

There the voluptuous nightingales
Are awake through all the broad noon day;
When one with bliss or sadness fails,

And through the windless ivy boughs,
Sick with love, droops dying away
On its mate’s music panting bosom;

Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;

When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake surrounded flute,
Sounds o’er-flow the listener’s brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

‘Semichorus of Spirits’, Act 2, Scene 2

㉖ ‘There those Enchanted Eddies’

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon’s mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;

As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain
thaw;

And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion
Attracts, impels them; those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they

Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey;
And so they float upon their way,
Until still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying; as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

'Semichorus of Spirits', Act 2, Scene 2

[27] *Spring – sound the flute*
Blake

Sound the flute!
Now 'tis mute!
Birds delight,
Day and night
Nightingale
In the dale
Lark in sky
Merrily
Merrily, merrily to welcome in the Spring.

Little boy
Full of joy
Little girl
Sweet and small
Cock does crow,
So do you;
Merry voice
Infant noise
Merrily, merrily to welcome in the year.

Little lamb
Here I am
Come and lick
My white neck
Let me pull
Your soft wool
Let me kiss
Your soft face
Merrily

Merrily, merrily we welcome in the year.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

[28] *Summer has come, little children*
Gerald Cumberland (1879–1926)

Summer has come, little children,
Come with her smiling face;
The flow'rs are awake in the meadows,
Heaven is here in this place.

The warm, gracious winds now blow,
Clouds sail across the blue,
And a thousand sweet birds are singing
To the sun, and sky, and you.

And each day, as you play, little children,
There will come from the warm, moist ground,
All the treasures the earth is storing,
All the richness that lies earth bound.

And the sun and the wind together
Will make glad both the earth and sky,
And no sadness will come till Winter
When trees and the sunshine die.

Yet fear not the cold of the Winter;
The trees they are not dead;
And the birds that fly far Southwards
Will return when the Winter's fled.

The sunshine has gone to some far land
To gladden some other shore;
Our turn will come round little children,
And flow'rs will spring up once more.

29 Goodbye to Summer

William Allingham (1824–89)

Good-bye, good-bye to Summer!
For Summer's nearly done;
The garden smiling faintly,
Cool breezes in the sun;
Our thrushes now are silent,
Our swallows flown away,
But Robin's here, in coat of brown,
With ruddy breast knot gay.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
Robin singing sweetly
In the falling of the year.

Bright yellow, red, and orange,
The leaves come down in hosts;
The trees are Indian Princes,
But soon they'll turn to ghosts;
The scanty pears and apples,
Hang russet on the bough;
It's Autumn, Autumn, Autumn late,

'Twill soon be Winter now.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
And well away! my Robin,
for pinching days are near.

The fireside for the cricket,
The wheat stack for the mouse,
When trembling night-winds whistle
And moan all round the house.
The frosty ways like iron,
The branches plumed with snow,
Alas! in Winter, dead and dark,
Where can poor Robin go?
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
And a crumb of bread for Robin,
His little heart to cheer.

'Robin Redbreast', *Songs, Ballads and Stories*,
George Bell, London, 1877

30 Blow, blow, thou winter wind

Shakespeare

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho! sing heigh-ho!
unto the green holly.

Most friendship is feigning,
most loving mere folly.
Then, heigh-ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.

Heigh-ho! sing heigh-ho!
unto the green holly.
Most friendship is feigning,
most loving mere folly.
Then, heigh-ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly!

As You Like It, Act 2, Scene 7

The Havergal Brian Society exists to promote public knowledge of the work of William Havergal Brian (1876–1972) and to support and sponsor its publication, performance and recording. The HBS, which enjoyed the distinguished patronage of Sir Adrian Boult until his death in 1983, was founded informally in 1974 by Martin Grossel and James Reid Baxter. With the clarification of its principal aims and objectives, a more formal structure was established in 1977, and charitable status was granted in 1978. Membership has continued to grow, and is now global.



Aims and Objectives

1. To act as an information source about the composer and his music, both for the general public and for musicians
2. To promote and sponsor recitals, concerts and recordings of Brian's music
3. To advise and assist prospective performers in their choice of works and in the acquisition of performing materials
4. To publish original material on Brian and his music
5. To gather as much information as possible on the whereabouts of Brian's missing scores, most importantly the full score of *Prometheus Unbound*

To join the Society, please write to membership@havergalbrian.org.

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