RECORDING *Charterhouse School Chapel, Surrey*
9-11 July 2016
RECORDING PRODUCER *Adrian Peacock*
BALANCE ENGINEER *Neil Hutchinson*
EDITING *Paul McCreesh, Adrian Peacock, David Hinitt*

All recording and editing facilities by Classic Sound Limited, London

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CD SERIES CONCEPT AND DESIGN *www.abrahams.uk.com*
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WINGED LION

Silence & Music

GABRIELI CONSORT

PAUL McCREESH

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THE BLUE BIRD
1910

Charles Villiers Stanford

Mary Coleridge (1861-1907)

The lake lay blue below the hill,
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still,
A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last,
The sky beneath me blue in blue,
A moment, ere the bird had passed,
It caught his image as he flew.

THERE IS SWEET MUSIC

1907

Edward Elgar

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

SILENCE AND MUSIC

1953

Ralph
Vaughan Williams

Ursula Wood
(1911-2007)

Silence, come first: I see a sleeping swan,
wings closed and drifting where the water leads,
a winter moon, a grove where shadows dream,
a hand outstretched to gather hollow reeds.

The four winds in their litanies can tell
all of earth's stories as they weep and cry,
the sea names all the treasure of her tides,
the birds rejoice between the earth and sky.

Voices of grief and from the heart of joy;
so near to comprehension do we stand
that wind and sea and all of winged delight
lie in the octaves of man's voice and hand,
and music wakes from silence, where it slept.

THE SUMMER IS COMING

1965

Herbert Howells

Bryan Guinness (1905-1992)

The summer is coming over the hills.
The milk of the blackthorn is bursting and spills;
all day the cuckoo in County Mayo
breathes like a flute as he flits high and low.

Dark is the turf, and grey is the stone,
and sad is the sky for the wild geese gone.
But the gleaming coat of the grass begins
under the golden brooch of the whins.

The black boats walk on the silver strand,
like beetles that go on the edge of the land;
the black boats tilt on the western waves;
black heifers stand over the old green graves.

The summer is coming over the sea,
and lights with soft kisses on you and on me.
All day the cuckoo in County Mayo
breathes like a flute as he flits high and low.

The summer is coming over the hills.
The milk of the blackthorn is bursting and spills;
all day the cuckoo in County Mayo
breathes like a flute as he flits high and low.

BRIGG FAIR
1906 REV 1911

Percy Grainger

Traditional

It was on the fifth of August, er the weather fine and fair,
unto Brigg Fair I did repair, for love I was inclined.
I rose up with the lark in the morning, with my heart so full of glee,
of thinking there to meet my dear, long time I'd wished to see.
I took hold of her lily white hand, O and merrily was her heart:
'And now we're met together, I hope we ne'er shall part.'
For it's meeting is a pleasure, and parting is a grief,
but an unconstant lover is worse than any thief.
The green leaves they shall wither and the branches they shall die
If ever I prove false to her, to the girl that loves me.

BUSHES AND BRIARS

1908

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Traditional

Through bushes and through briars I lately took my way;
all for to hear the small birds sing and the lambs to skip and play.
I overheard my own true love, her voice it was so clear,
'Long time I have been waiting for the coming of my dear.
Sometimes I am uneasy and troubled in my mind,
sometimes I think I'll go to my love and tell to him my mind.
And if I should go to my love, my love he will say nay,
if I show to him my boldness, he'll ne'er love me again.'

THE WINTER IS GONE

1912

Ralph
Vaughan Williams

Traditional

The winter is gone and the summer is come,
The meadows are pleasant and gay,
The lark in the morning so sweetly she sings,
And sweet smells the blossom of May.

Young Johnny the ploughboy comes whistling along
With his horses, to follow the plough;
The blackbirds and thrushes sing in the green bush,
And the dairy maid milking her cow.

He took the fair maid by her lily white hand,
On the green bushy bank they sat down;
Then he placèd a kiss on her sweet ruby lips,
A tree spread its branches around.

It was early next morning he made her his bride,
Their vows in the church for to pay,
So bells they did ring, and the bride she did sing,
As he crowned her the queen of the May.

THE TURTLE DOVE

1924

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Traditional

Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone,
And leave you for a while;
If I roam away I'll come back again,
Though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear,
Though I roam ten thousand miles.

So fair thou art, my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I;
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till the stars fall from the sky, my dear,
Till the stars fall from the sky.

The sea will never run dry, my dear,
Nor the rocks melt with the sun,
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till all these things be done, my dear,
Till all these things be done.

O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove,
He doth sit on yonder high tree,
A-making a moan for the loss of his love,
As I will do for thee, my dear,
As I will do for thee.

THE GALLANT WEAVER

1995

James MacMillan

Robert Burns
(1759-1796)

Where Cart rins rowin to the sea,
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree,
There lives a lad, the lad for me,
He is the gallant Weaver.
(I love my gallant Weaver.)

Oh I had wooers aught or nine,
They gied me rings and ribbons fine,
And I was feared my heart would tine,
And I gied it to the Weaver.
(I love my gallant Weaver.)

My daddie sign'd the tocher-band
To gie the lad that has the land,
But to my heart I'll add my hand,
And give it to the Weaver.
(I love my gallant Weaver.)

While birds rejoice in leafy bowers;
While bees delight in op'ning flowers;
While corn grows green in simmer showers,
I love my gallant Weaver.

WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?

1995

Jonathan Dove

Traditional

O Robin? ... Cock Robin? …

Who killed Cock Robin?
I, said the Sparrow, with my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin.
Who saw him die?
I, said the Fly, with my little eye,
I saw him die.
Who caught his blood?
I, said the Fish, with my little dish,
I caught his blood.
Who'll make the shroud?
I, said the Beetle, with my thread and needle,
I'll make the shroud.
Who'll dig his grave?
I, said the Owl, with my pick and shovel,
I'll dig his grave.
Who'll be the parson?
I, said the Rook, with my little book,
I'll be the parson.
Who'll be the clerk?
I, said the Lark, if it's not in the dark,
I'll be the clerk.

Who'll carry the link?
I, said the Linnet, I'll fetch it in a minute,
I'll carry the link.
Who'll be chief mourner?
I, said the Dove, I mourn for my love.
Who'll carry the coffin?
I, said the Kite, if it's not through the night,
I'll carry the coffin.
Who'll bear the pall?
We, said the Wren, both the cock and the hen,
We'll bear the pall.
Who'll sing a psalm?
I, said the Thrush, as she sat on a bush,
I'll sing a psalm.
Who'll toll the bell?
I, said the Bull, because I can pull,
I'll toll the bell.

All the birds of the air fell a-sighing and a-sobbing
when they heard the bell toll for poor Cock Robin.

THE THREE RAVENS
1902 REV 1949

Percy Grainger

Traditional

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
And they were black as they might be,
With a down.
Then one of them said to his make:
'Where shall we our breakfast take?'
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

Down in yonder greene field,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
There lies a knight slain under his shield;
With a down.
His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they can their master keep;
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

His hawks they fly so eagerly,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
There is no fowl dare come him nigh,
With a down.
But down there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might go,
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

O she lifts up his bloody head,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
And kissed his wounds that were so red,
With a down.
She gat him up upon her back,
And carried him to earthern lake,
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

She buried him before the prime,
Down a down, hey down, hey down,
She was dead herself ere evensong time.
With a down, derry derry derry down down.
Now God send ev'ry gentleman
Such hounds, such hawks and such a leman.
With a down, derry derry derry down down.

THE EVENING PRIMROSE
1950

Benjamin Britten

John Clare
(1793-1864)

When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night;
Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty he possesses.
Thus it blooms on while night is by;
When day looks out with open eye,
'Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

ALL THE FLOWERS OF THE SPRING
1923

Peter Warlock

John Webster
(c.1580-c.1632)

All the flow'rs of the spring
Meet to perfume our burying;
These have but their growing prime,
And man does flourish but his time.
Survey our progress from our birth -
We are set, we grow, we turn to earth.
Courts adieu, and all delights,
All bewitching appetites!
Sweetest breath and clearest eye
Like perfumes go out and die;
And consequently this is done
As shadows wait upon the sun.
Vain the ambition of kings
Who seek with trophies and dead things
To leave a living name behind,
And weave but nets to catch the wind.

owls (an epitaph)
1907
Edward Elgar
Edward Elgar
(1857-1934)

What is that? ...Nothing;
The leaves must fall, and falling, rustle;
That is all:
They are dead, as they fall,
They are dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ...Nothing.

What is that? ...Nothing;
A wild thing hurt but mourns in the night,
And it cries
In its dread, till it lies
Dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ...Nothing.

What is that? ...Ah!
A marching slow of unseen feet,
That is all:
But a bier, spread with a pall,
Is now at the foot of the tree;
All that could be is said.
Is it ...what? ...Nothing.

REST

1902

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth.
Lie close around her, leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs,
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir;
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

INTERVIEW Paul McCreesh in conversation with conductor, broadcaster and lecturer, Jeremy Summerly.

You are well known among conductors for your particular concern for the expression of the text. Is it fair to say that what attracts you most about choral music is the words?

Yes, that's true. I love poetry as much as the infinite possibilities of the human voice; for me, the best choral music is that which truly expresses the emotional content of the text. I'm frankly bored by so much of today's choral 'mood music'. I'm especially passionate about the colouring of words when I work with choirs, and I try to encourage singers not to be shy of really engaging in the emotional world of the piece. I suppose I'm consciously fighting that tendency of many British choirs to put technical considerations as the destination rather than the starting point. I come to this music as a generalist rather than a 'choral specialist'. If you conduct an Elgar part song having conducted the symphonies and *The Dream of Gerontius*, as I have, then it inevitably alters your perspective.

How can you compare a four-minute part song with a 50-minute symphony?

Well, of course there are many differences, but I think that the choral miniatures we have chosen have the same kernel of genius as large-scale symphonic works. The attraction of working with a really good part song is its concision and I think the best of this repertory is absolutely some of the finest music of the 20th century. But there is a lot of distinctly average choral music; we need to be selective. I'm looking for music that has a focused intensity.

So then, 'highly polished gems of secular choral music from 1902 to 1995'.

Perhaps not the greatest title for a recording – and I sense a note of cynicism! It's harder to assemble a meaningful and logical programme in the part song and folk song repertory – you don't have the potential to 'sermonise' in quite the same way as you can within sacred music, but all of the pieces here do have a certain depth. Singers frequently tease me about my love of slow, funereal music; I admit that even here there is a little bit of that.

You've opened with one of the most cherished part songs of the early 20th century, Stanford's 'The Blue Bird'. However, you present the top line as Stanford intended, with a group of sopranos, unlike so many performances these days which give the top line to a soloist.

Of course it's far, far harder to sing that line with five singers, but using a soloist doesn't just distort the piece technically; there's also something emotionally different about it. Only twice in my life have I observed that brilliant flash of light as a kingfisher darts down a river, or along a lakeside. For Coleridge it seems to be a metaphor; those occasions when we see something in nature which connects very deeply with something within ourselves – a moment of understanding, of self-realisation, or perhaps a feeling of loss or an intimation of mortality. It is a very simple poem which is simply set, but connects with something rather profound. I'm sure that's why this song remains the masterpiece it is.

Vaughan Williams dedicated 'Silence and Music' 'to the memory of Charles Villiers Stanford and his Blue Bird'.

Vaughan Williams's piece is a homage, using the same technique of the soprano part being detached from the rest of the choir; for the poet, his wife Ursula, such detachment represents the idea of stillness and silence, and a dreamlike world from which music emerges. For me, nature and the countryside are truly food for my soul, both uplifting and humbling; and I often think we need to experience real silence if we're truly to understand music.

Elgar's own homage to the music in nature is a piece of great harmonic daring: Walford Davies described 'There is sweet music' of 1907 as 'opening up new possibilities in music' with its high voice/low voice texture defined by two different keys.

It did indeed open up new possibilities, for instance in Elgar's First Symphony, which appeared shortly afterwards and is composed around two disparate key centres. But there is a natural quality to Elgar's musical process which means that you wouldn't necessarily notice the specific harmonic technique responsible for the sound world. For all the poetic elegance, Elgar is certainly much more of a musical revolutionary than people often realise.

And of course it is so incorrigibly Elgarian, in the same way that, a few years later, Howells became recognisably Howellsian. You've included one of Howells's rarer forays into the secular world.

Yes, I particularly love 'The summer is coming'. It's full of all those gloriously rich Howells harmonies, but also wonderfully pictorial; you can imagine the bird darting around the lush pastureland as the cows graze by the sea – a perfect vision of Ireland! I'm sure had Howells written more large-scale music, we might revere him more, yet his music has such personality.

You've chosen a group of folk song settings, starting with Percy Grainger's arrangement of 'Brigg Fair', a song that he transcribed in Lincolnshire in 1905 and set for tenor soloist and mixed voices.

It's a very fine setting, and fairly well known. I think very few composers were able to arrange folk song and yet preserve the honesty and naturalness of the form: Grainger, for all his undoubted eccentricities, was one; Vaughan Williams another. Both 'Brigg Fair' and 'The winter is gone' have all the joy of a sunny day and the thrill of nascent love. But as always, the joy of love is soon tainted by the fear of rejection and loss, in both 'The Turtle Dove' – another classic – and 'Bushes and Briars'.

There's a sort of delicious melancholy in these pieces, isn't there? Grainger's other work 'The Three Ravens' is bleaker still…

Yes, I love that melancholy. Do you know the wonderful Grainger quotation, 'The object of my music is not to entertain, but to agonise… it is the contrast between the sweet and the hard that is heart-rending'? It's a great description of 'The Three Ravens'; a bleak folk tale, open to many levels of interpretation. In

this piece I often think of the Tasso/Monteverdi *Combattimento*, which shares the same motives of baptism and death and much thinly-veiled eroticism. I love the sardonic and sarcastic use of the folk refrain 'with a down, derry derry derry down down', and the final ironic couplet seemingly mocking the whole of the chivalric tradition; but at the same time Grainger paints such a tender faux-medieval picture. Utterly mad, and utterly inspired – that's Grainger!

It's the only accompanied piece on the recording; not, as you might expect, by a piano or a harp, or even an organ, but a harmonium.

As always with Grainger, there are a number of 'elastic' scoring possibilities – to use his phrase; five clarinets are another option, but Grainger especially liked the harmonium, and we found a fine French instrument. For me, the instrument has echoes of music as if heard through a chapel door, or a local band of singers with a concertina inside a pub!

The two newest pieces on the recording are fascinating. Both date from 1995, yet they are so very different from each other. James MacMillan's 'The Gallant Weaver' is an entirely Scottish creation – MacMillan is irrepressibly Scottish, isn't he? As of course was the poet Robert Burns.

Yes… about as Scottish as it gets. It's another parable of love lost – Burns in pastiche folk mood – but it's also about the transience of life and passion (as are all McCreesh recordings in the end!). And this is surely MacMillan at his most approachable, isn't it? What he does with his melody is profoundly beautiful – never suffocating the music with too much cleverness, or indeed too much love.

By contrast, Jonathan Dove takes one of the simplest folk songs you can imagine and makes of it by far the most virtuosic piece on the album.

Well, we had to prove we could sing some fast music. 'Who killed Cock Robin?' is at first sight rather flashy. It's certainly very difficult, but as with all of Jonathan's music, if you dig deep you always find real content. As with 'The Three Ravens', the text is fascinating and there is much debate about what it might mean. The setting is mainly a light-hearted, vocal *tour de force* – but right at the end a final mock lament allows a little emotion to tug at your heartstrings.

This wouldn't be a representative recording of 20th century secular choral music without featuring the music of Benjamin Britten.

Actually, I almost didn't include any Britten at all. I toyed with the idea of including a whole group of pieces by Britten, but then I thought that might disturb the idea of working with small units. In the end I settled for 'The Evening Primrose', my favourite of the *Flower Songs*. Britten is one of those few composers who wrote complicated music in order to make it sound simple, rather than the other way round. His setting of 'The Evening Primrose' is instinctively as beautiful and delicate as the flowers themselves, and as always with Britten, the mystery of darkness creates a very strong response.

This song leads to a final group of settings that are part of a more reflective world. You start with Warlock's very rarely heard 'All the flowers'.

Oh yes! This is the piece I had most fights about: the singers found it both bizarre and incomprehensible, but I'm glad I stood my ground. It's of course

very difficult, highly chromatic, and often particularly dissonant. Like Grainger, Warlock was a highly unconventional man. I think he captures the mood of this rather dark Jacobean poem on the transience of life rather brilliantly, with a quite amazing intensity. So let me ask *you*, Jeremy, have you ever managed to love this piece?

Wholly and unconditionally. 'All the flowers' was written in 1923, and it's my contention that none of that genre of choral music written over the last 40 years which focuses on clusters (as so much recent choral music does) would have been written without its existence. What I particularly like about this recording is that much of the oldest music that you've chosen is so highly influential and original – Elgar's 'There is sweet music' of 1907, Stanford's 'The Blue Bird' of 1910, and this fabulous Warlock part song.

Isn't it marvellous that so many of these composers, who were not necessarily 'world names' of the 20th century, were doing things that were nevertheless part of the vanguard of musical change? And so many of them with such a keen understanding of musical colour.

Elgar's 'Owls', subtitled 'An Epitaph' is another example of just that. Elgar wrote both the text and the music in Rome on New Year's Eve of 1907; it wasn't commissioned by anyone, nor was it the suggestion of a publisher. Elgar clearly had a profoundly personal reason for writing it, even to the extent of penning the poem itself. Yet he said that 'it is only a fantasy and means nothing'. That's nonsense isn't it?

Complete nonsense. There's more than one enigma in Elgar. This piece is such a strange world of darkness, of stillness, of eerieness, and of incipient nightmares. When you listen to nature, it is on one level completely aleatoric, but on another you get the feeling that just maybe there is a grand plan, and I'm not talking about religion here, but about science. These birds can communicate in a way that we don't understand – maybe that's why we regard owls as wise! And Elgar got the meat of his musical ideas from nature, on his daily walks and bicycle rides. For me, 'Owls' is a statement of the great unknowing: what are we? Why are we here?

I've heard you be a little bit dismissive of Christina Rossetti's poem 'Rest'. But to my mind, not only is it an extraordinarily powerful statement of 19th century metaphysics, but Vaughan Williams's 1902 setting of it is devastatingly fine.

No, I'm not rude about the poem, but it's that style of expression that I can find a little bit sentimental and cloying.

But I don't think Vaughan Williams sets it in a sentimental way.

I agree. Vaughan Williams pushes the poem away from that sentimental tendency. Indeed it is a quite wonderful piece because it encapsulates the Christian idea of resurrection, but its starting point is with the world of nature embracing the body, a beautiful poetic concept, later taken up in Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* and the great motet *Take him, earth, for cherishing*. This piece does move me, amazingly so; it's as powerful, in its way, as the funeral march in Elgar's Second Symphony. Different means, different scope and different context, of course, but the same response to our mortality.

Without making too much of it, I'd like to suggest that sometimes you're dragged into a cappella music almost against your will; but once there, you immerse yourself in it and love it in spite of yourself.

Yes, I fully recognise what you're alluding to. I am still a little bit of an outsider, as almost all the people with whom I perform this repertory have often grown up fully within the English choral tradition, many from a very early age. That's not my background, and though I greatly respect that tradition, I come from the wrong side of the tracks. For all my life's work with choirs, I am still primarily an orchestral conductor…

And yet…

The truth is I dearly love this music – well, the best of it anyway! I am really so passionate about singing, and the repertory is an amazing part of our heritage. I do wish we could share it a little bit more widely; it's such a part of our British culture, and I believe every child, of every faith and colour, should sing! In the end there is nothing like working with a great *a cappella* choir. It can be such a powerful and yet intimate experience, so different from orchestral conducting.

What comes across to me, in listening to your shaping of the pieces on this recording and in talking to you about your work on this project, is how respectful you are of your singers and of the fact that in most cases they are, unlike yourself, insiders. You take off the conductor's mask and you say, 'come on, I know you sing so much of this music every day, but let's just see where we might go'. At the same time, you're not shy to demand they take risks, or to push the singers out of their comfort zone.

Yes, and it's even more than that. With these singers I'm so privileged to have a real Rolls-Royce of a choir. It handles beautifully, and if I'm put in charge of driving it, I'm going to make the most of it! All the same, I know it's about giving people confidence to find new things; you can't really bully singers. Ten years ago, I didn't have the relationship with a group of singers that I have now. It's about being demanding, but trying not to get in the way. It's also a two-way process: believe me, I'm pushing myself as much as I'm pushing them!

GABRIELI CONSORT

Gabrieli are world-renowned interpreters of great vocal and instrumental repertoire spanning from the renaissance to the present day. Formed as an early music ensemble by Paul McCreesh in 1982, Gabrieli has both outgrown and remained true to its original identity. Over 30 years, the ensemble's repertoire has expanded beyond any expectation, but McCreesh's ever-questioning spirit, expressive musicianship and a healthy degree of iconoclasm remain constant features and continue to be reflected in the ensemble's dynamic performances. Its repertoire includes major works of the oratorio tradition, virtuosic *a cappella* programmes of music from many centuries and mould-breaking reconstructions of music for historical events. Above all, Gabrieli aims to create inspirational and thought-provoking performances which stand out from the crowd.

At the heart of Gabrieli's activities today is the development of a pioneering education initiative: its young singers scheme, Gabrieli Roar. Gabrieli works extensively with teenagers from across the UK in intensive training programmes, providing support and encouragement for youth choirs with high levels of aspiration, with an emphasis on working in areas of low cultural provision. There is a particular focus on the oratorio repertoire and many Gabrieli Roar singers have taken part in professional recordings and performances for such prestigious promoters as the BBC Proms. Helping young singers to excel, develop their confidence in their own abilities and nurture a love of choral music, Gabrieli Roar is uncompromising in its commitment to enriching people's lives through music.

Gabrieli has long been renowned for its many award-winning recordings created during a 15 year association with Deutsche Grammophon. In 2010, Paul McCreesh established his own record label, Winged Lion, which has already released eight extremely diverse recordings underlining Gabrieli's versatility and McCreesh's breadth of vision: *A Song of Farewell* (English choral repertoire from Morley and Sheppard to Howells and MacMillan); *A New Venetian Coronation 1595* (revisiting their famed 1990 recording of music by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli); *Incarnation* (an inspiring sequence of Christmas music ancient and modern); a recreation of the first performance of Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* and four spectacular large-scale oratorio recordings made in conjunction with the National Forum of Music, Wrocław: Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Britten's *War Requiem* and Haydn's *The Seasons*.

Paul McCreesh has established himself at the highest levels in both the period instrument and modern orchestral fields and is recognised for his authoritative and innovative performances on the concert platform and in the opera house. Together with the Gabrieli Consort & Players, of which he is the founder and Artistic Director, he has performed in major concert halls and festivals across the world and built a large and distinguished discography both for Deutsche Grammophon and more recently for his own label, Winged Lion.

McCreesh is well known for the energy and passion that he brings to his music-making and guest conducts many major orchestras and choirs, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Konzerthausorchester, Bergen Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, Polish National Radio (NOSPR) and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. The larger choral repertoire, such as Britten's *War Requiem*, Brahms' *German Requiem*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Elgar's The *Dream of Gerontius* and Haydn's *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, features increasingly in his work. He has established a strong reputation in the field of opera conducting productions of Handel, Gluck, Mozart and Britten at leading European opera houses.

He was Artistic Director of the Wratislavia Cantans Festival Wrocław, Poland from 2006 to 2012 and was Director of Brinkburn Music in Northumberland, UK from 1993 to 2013. From 2013 to 2016 he held the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor at the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon.

GABRIELI CONSORT

SOPRANO

Zoë Brookshaw
Jessica Cale
Susan Hemington Jones
Charlotte Mobbs
Bethany Partridge
Hannah Partridge

ALTO

Lucy Ballard
Mark Chambers
David Clegg
Kim Porter

TENOR

Jeremy Budd
Guy Cutting
Tom Kelly
George Pooley

BASS

Richard Bannan
William Dawes
Robert Evans [3]
William Gaunt
Jimmy Holliday
Stephen Kennedy [3]

TENOR SOLO

Robert Murray [1]

BARITONE SOLO

Neal Davies [2, 3]

HARMONIUM

Tim Roberts [3]
Harmonium by Mustel No. 311 (1880)

[1] *Brigg Fair*
[2] *The Turtle Dove*
[3] *The Three Ravens*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Gabrieli's many loyal supporters, notably Steve Allen, Richard & Sandra Brown, John & Mary Cryan, Alan Gemes, Lucilla Kingsbury Joll and Peter Saile, without whose support projects such as this would not be possible. I am also grateful to David Clegg for his help in developing this programme, to Adrian Peacock and Neil Hutchinson for their expert engineering and editing, and to Mike Abrahams for bringing a keen eye and big heart to his design, as always.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A few weeks after making this recording I began walking Wainwright's famed 'Coast to Coast' walk across the north of England, from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire. It's a tough 200 mile challenge, with much climbing, but it's also an inspiring trek through some of England's most wonderful countryside. Whilst my head is always full of music, on this walk I heard many a 'silence more musical than any song' which touched me as profoundly. So many of the works on this recording were inspired by the unique beauty of the British landscape, and the photographs in this booklet were taken on that walk: Whitecliffe Wood near Richmond; Ennerdale Water; Haweswater Beck packhorse bridge; Stonesdale sunset; Oddendale limestone pavement; Riggindale from Kidsty Howes; Upper Swaledale near Keld; near Raisbeck and Orton Scar.

Paul McCreesh

Paul McCreesh & Winged Lion's award-winning recordings

Haydn *The Seasons* 1801

"...McCreesh's fresh new translation animates the top-class solo singing, while the massed choruses blow the roof off. Glorious." The Observer

"...thrillingly catches both the work's bucolic exhilaration and its invocations of the sublime... for sheer sonic splendour it's in a class of its own." Gramophone

GRAMMY NOMINATED 2016

Handel *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* 1740

"...Paul McCreesh's superb Gabrieli Consort & Players present this… with flair, a pristine sense of style and infectious energy..." The Times

"...Handel lovers can hardly fail to enjoy the mingled finesse and hedonistic delight of this new recording..." Gramophone

Incarnation

An inspiring sequence of music medieval and modern for Christmas including works by Dove and Leighton, and culminating in Britten's virtuosic choral masterpiece, *A Boy Was Born*

"...When you're on a roll, you're on a roll... bold and imaginative programming... genuinely challenging and different..." BBC Music Magazine

WINGED LION signum CLASSICS GABRIELI NFM NATIONAL FORUM OF MUSIC

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARD 2014

Britten *War Requiem* 1962
"...a choral sound of airy, pure brilliance... his orchestra is wonderfully articulate... the profundity and coherence of McCreesh's reading sets a new standard for this work..." BBC Music Magazine

DIAPASON D'OR DE L'ANNÉE 2013

Mendelssohn *Elijah* 1846
"...The sound is massive when required, but the articulation is never unwieldy and there is delicacy too... this is a triumph..." Gramophone

GRAMOPHONE AWARD 2013

Andrea & Giovanni Gabrieli *A New Venetian Coronation* 1595
"...a marvellous achievement... never less than enthralling..." The Independent
"...a hugely charismatic and colourful coronation... McCreesh's new take on his classic recording is a triumph and even more vivid than the first..."
International Record Review

A Song of Farewell, Music of Mourning and Consolation
British *a cappella* repertoire including Howells' sublime *Requiem*
"...a superlative, unmissable issue..." BBC Music Magazine
"...Gorgeously melancholic... beautifully sung..." The Times

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARD 2012

Berlioz *Grande Messe des Morts* 1837
"Certainly not for the faint-hearted either in terms of its enormous scale or its spectrum of powerful, visionary expression. The impact is overwhelming... McCreesh has achieved something quite out of the ordinary..." Gramophone