

An oil painting of a crown of thorns. The thorns are rendered in shades of yellow, orange, and brown, with some appearing sharp and others more blurred. Interspersed among the thorns are several flowers in shades of yellow, blue, and white. The background is a textured, light greyish-blue. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber.

**signum**  
CLASSICS

# THE CROWN OF LIFE

Leighton • Clarke • Holst • Darke

Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford  
Owen Rees

# THE CROWN OF LIFE

KENNETH LEIGHTON – *Missa Christi*

and sacred choral works by

REBECCA CLARKE, HAROLD DARKE, IMOGEN & GUSTAV HOLST

[1]	<b>A Hymn to the Trinity</b>	Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)	[3.13]
[2]	<b>O brother man</b>	Harold Darke (1888-1976)	[4.12]
	<b>Missa Christi: Festival Mass *</b>	Kenneth Leighton	
[3]	Kyrie		[2.35]
[4]	Gloria		[3.43]
[5]	Sanctus and Benedictus		[2.42]
[6]	Agnus Dei		[3.28]
[7]	<b>Drop, drop, slow tears</b> (from <i>Crucifixus pro nobis</i> , Op. 38)	Kenneth Leighton	[2.53]
[8]	<b>This have I done for my true love</b> (from <i>Three Carols</i> , Op. 34)	Gustav Holst (1874-1934)	[5.42]
[9]	<b>Nunc dimittis</b>	Gustav Holst	[3.13]
[10]	<b>Out of your sleep arise and wake *</b>	Imogen Holst (1907-1984)	[2.53]
[11]	<b>Ave Maria</b>	Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)	[2.36]
[12]	<b>Blessed is the man that endureth temptation *</b>	Harold Darke	[5.19]
[13]	<b>Ave Maria</b>	Gustav Holst	[4.37]
[14]	<b>He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High</b>	Rebecca Clarke	[6.02]
[15]	<b>Be strong and of a good courage</b>	Harold Darke	[5.35]
[16]	<b>Lord, who hast made us for thine own</b>	Gustav Holst	[4.49]

Total timings: [1.03.33]

\* World Premiere Recording

We continue here the choir's exploration of neglected treasures of the twentieth-century English choral repertoire. At the album's heart lies the premiere recording of Kenneth Leighton's *Missa Christi* – the composer's final large-scale sacred work, completed just months before his death. This complements our last release – *That Sweet City* (SIGCD917, 2024) – featuring the first recording of Leighton's youthful cantata *Veris gratia* of 1950, composed during his student years at Queen's. We juxtapose Leighton's Mass with the sacred works of three composers born in the 1870s and '80s, all of whom studied with Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music – Rebecca Clarke, Harold Darke, and Gustav Holst – together with a hitherto unrecorded piece by Imogen Holst.

Leighton noted in his final composition book that the *Missa Christi* [3] - [6] – subtitled 'Festival Mass' in the autograph score – was to be 'my last setting of the mass'. Commissioned by Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, for its 150th anniversary, the Mass was finished in March 1988 and premiered in June that year. Leighton would complete only one more project – the anthem *The Beauty of Holiness* – before his death in August.

From the anguished opening of the Kyrie [3] to the serene coda of the Agnus Dei [6], Leighton's *Missa Christi* exemplifies the richness of his mature choral craft. These two outer movements – both of which are pleas for mercy – are duly linked through their use of the Phrygian mode, traditionally associated with laments. By contrast, the celebratory Gloria [4] and Sanctus [5] blaze with the brightness of the Lydian mode. The scintillating Lydian-hued rising gesture which opens the Gloria unifies the joyful sections of the movement, and returns triumphantly in the 'amen', while the Sanctus [5] glitters with bell-like brightness from its Lydian raised fourth. The triumphant 'Hosanna' with which it ends is interrupted by a plunging baritone solo, ushering in a subdued contrapuntal setting of the Benedictus which recalls the Phrygian semitones of the Kyrie and anticipates those of the Agnus Dei. At the end of the Agnus the Phrygian semitones brighten to a whole-tone ascent for the culminating 'Grant us peace', and the Mass ends in mystery, the choir falling silent and the organ alone voicing the final prayer.

Leighton's well loved and deeply poignant setting of the hymn *Drop, drop, slow tears* [7] by Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650) ends the cantata *Crucifixus pro nobis* (Op. 38, 1961). The kaleidoscopic

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sound-world of this miniature owes much to the juxtapositions of major chords a third apart, a colouristic device which suggest the influence of Vaughan Williams, in whose music such effects are common: while a student at Queen's Leighton had been introduced to Vaughan Williams by his teacher Bernard Rose. Vaughan Williams died in 1958, two years before Leighton began work on *Crucifixus pro nobis*, and it may be that a homage was intended here. This same harmonic device is used in Leighton's *A Hymn to the Trinity* [1], where it highlights – after the exhilarating opening fanfares – the 'music of concord' apt to praise the triune God; this harmonic progression recurs, again evoking the euphony of song, to conclude the piece's opening paean at 'with cheerful hearts, with pleasant voice'. The rhythmically energised syncopated sections – one of Leighton's trademark styles – and the bell-peals of the final 'amen' featuring echoing soprano parts are in a similar vein to the musical revelry in the Gloria of the *Missa Christi*.

Rebecca Clarke, who was Stanford's first woman pupil, achieved eminence as a viola player, working both in London and in America. Despite the revival of interest in her compositions, her choral music remains little known in comparison to some of her chamber music (particularly the

Viola Sonata and Piano Trio) and songs, and only three of these choral works are sacred, including the two recorded here. The remarkable psalm anthem *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High* [14], for eight-voice choir and soloists, was her first sacred choral work, composed in 1921. Clarke chose a text (Psalm 91) that invited dramatic and graphic treatment, and the musical result – which shows the clear influence of Ernest Bloch – is arresting, powerfully affecting, highly coloured, and haunting, mixing the opulent with the acerbic and bare, and taking the listener far abroad into the world's dangers from the quiet refuge of the opening and closing sections, where the tenor soloist sings of abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty' (at the opening) and of God's promise of deliverance and salvation (at the end). The acerbic and tense qualities of the writing are frequently produced by the use of pedal points with which the upper-voice harmonies clash, the longest series of pedals propelling the extraordinary extended build-up to the work's culmination at 'because he hath known my name', after which the opening tenor solo is recalled to lead the work to a final harmonic equanimity. A fortnight after finishing *He that dwelleth* Clarke made a fair copy of it to show to Gustav Holst (then working at St Paul's Girls' School), together with another psalm setting for voice and piano,

but was dispirited by his response: 'He was very nice, but criticized them very severely. I felt awfully depressed for the rest of the day, but suppose it is good for me.' She never published *He that dwelleth*, and it did not appear in print until a quarter of a century after her death.

In contrast, Clarke's setting of the *Ave Maria* [11] is a subtle miniature. It was composed in 1937, and was the first of her choral works to appear in print. The decision to use only upper voices reflects the Marian text, as does the setting by Gustav Holst which is also on this album. Clarke's music here projects a striking combination of humility and mystery, the latter reflecting the scene of the angelic salutation to Mary, and achieved through harmonic disjunctions, such as those which place quiet emphasis on the name 'Jesus' and on the petition 'ora pro nobis'. Holst's setting of the same text (Op. 9b, 1900) [13] was written early in his musical career when he was working as a trombonist and repetiteur for the Carl Rosa Opera Company. He dedicated the piece 'to the memory of my mother', who had died when Gustav was a young boy. Scored for eight-part female chorus, divided into two choirs, Holst's setting creates a serene flowing tapestry, built from the simplest of (mainly stepwise) lines, while polyphonically rich and nuanced in its textural colours.

It was for his pupils at St Paul's Girls' School that in 1912 Holst composed a setting of Psalm 148 adapted by Frances Ralph Gray, the first High Mistress of the school: *Lord, who hast made us for thine own* [16]. The familiar hymn melody 'Lasst uns erfreuen' (from the *Ausserlesene Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Cologne, 1623) had been arranged – coupled with a different text – for *The English Hymnal* by Vaughan Williams six years previously. Holst worked this tune and text into a majestic and dramatic structure: the first verse is declaimed unaccompanied with unassuming simplicity in octaves, followed by delicately ecstatic chimes of 'alleluia' in sopranos, altos, and tenors decorating the tune in the organ. The tenors and basses burst in upon this scene of quiet rejoicing, displacing its C major with their magisterial E-major declamation of 'Waves, rolling in on ev'ry shore', and this is followed by the bucolic idyll of the upper voices' celebration of the bounties of nature ('Sweet flow'rs that perfume all the air'). Finally, as the sun and stars are invited to join the divine praises in the last verse, the lower voices deliver the melody as a slower cantus firmus underpinning a crescendo of peals in the upper parts, the final 'alleluias' achieving a resplendent grandeur.

Three years later, in 1915, Holst was invited by Richard Runciman Terry, organist of Westminster Cathedral, to compose a setting of the *Nunc dimittis* [9], which was first performed by the Cathedral choir on Easter Day that year. The piece then fell into obscurity until Holst's daughter Imogen edited it for performance and publication in the 1970s. The mastery of architecture and climax evident in *Lord, who hast made us for thine own* is conspicuous here too. Holst emphasises the transition within the *Nunc dimittis* text from the peaceful resignation of an old man welcoming the end of life to his glorious vision of the light of salvation which will be brought by the Christ-child he holds in his arms: the piece moves from the serenely radiant chordal blossoming of the opening word to dynamic antiphony between high and low voices exploiting the magnificent acoustics of the new cathedral, while the polyphonically rich concluding doxology expresses the ritual exultation of Easter Day.

From 1914 Holst had rented a cottage near Thaxted in Essex, and took a strong interest in the music of the parish church, befriending the vicar, Conrad Noel. Holst created a Whitsuntide Festival at the church in 1916, using his London school pupils as performers. It was through Noel that he came across the old Cornish poem *This*

*have I done for my true love* [8], which he set for performance in that first festival, dedicating the setting to Noel. The piece, which has become one of Holst's best known and of which he was particularly fond, was performed at Chichester Cathedral in 1934 when his ashes were buried there. Holst was captivated by the image of sacred dance in this carol text (in which Jesus is himself the narrator, inviting 'my true love to the dance'), devising for it a lilting tune evocative of folksong. The text is likewise representative of many medieval carols in recounting the entire narrative from Christ's birth to his Passion and Ascension.

While Holst's *This have I done* has long enjoyed a firmly established place in the repertoire, the exquisite carol *Out of your sleep arise and wake* [10] by his daughter Imogen, composed in 1968, is recorded here for the first time. Holst took the anonymous fifteenth-century text – one of many carols with a 'nowell' refrain – from *Ancient English Christmas Carols* published in 1914, and the melody is based on the plainsong hymn 'Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus' for the first Sunday in Advent, against which the peals of 'Nowell' punctuating the piece recall the 'alleluias' of her father's *Lord, who hast made us for thine own*.

The music of Gustav Holst and Harold Darke (fourteen years Holst's junior) has frequently been compared through the tightly focused lens of one famous controversy: the question of whose is the finer setting of Christina Rossetti's *A Christmas Carol* 'In the bleak midwinter'. Beyond this, Darke has become best (and somewhat narrowly) known for his Communion setting in F which is a staple of the Anglican repertoire. The three anthems by Darke recorded here reveal a compositional voice of great rhetorical power and imagination. The finest of these works is also the earliest: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation* [12]. This was written in 1916 as a leaving gift from Darke for the choir of St James' Paddington, where Darke had served as organist for five years after graduating from the Royal College of Music, and which he left to take up the post he would hold for the rest of his long career, as organist of St Michael's Cornhill. *Blessed is the man* remains unpublished: the autograph manuscript is preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and the piece has not previously been recorded. Darke uses the phrase that sets the text's opening as a refrain to bind the anthem together, although it is recast on each appearance. The device recalls the periodic occurrences of the 'Warum' motive in the opening section of Brahms's famous motet *Warum ist das Licht gegeben* (with, in both cases,

silence following the initial statement of the opening word, before that word is repeated), and indeed Darke's writing is somewhat Brahmsian in its lyricism, chromaticism, textural richness, and harmonic and tonal mobility in response to the shifting affects of its text, which begins in the troubled world of life's temptations and trials but reaches its first ecstatic high-point at 'the crown of life', which gives this album its title. Darke's teacher Stanford had employed Brahms as a principal model for his students to follow.

The other two anthems by Darke recorded here are a mid-career work from 1935, *O brother man* [2], and a late piece, *Be strong and of a good courage* [15]. The first of these was dedicated to William Harris, a colleague of Darke's at the Royal College of Music and organist at St George's Windsor, while the latter was composed for the golden jubilee of the Diocese of Chelmsford in 1964. *O brother man* sets three verses from a hymn text by the nineteenth-century American Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier. Darke's response to the poem's pleas for an end to servitude and war ('Then shall all shackles fall: the stormy clangor of war's wild music in the earth shall cease') is eloquent and passionate, and the textures – with divisi sopranos, tenors, and basses – are vibrant at

climactic moments such as ‘So shall the wide world seem our Father’s temple’. The opening of *Be strong and of a good courage* reflects the festive occasion for which it was written with stirring organ and choral fanfares. The minor-mode first section of the piece, driven by an organ

quaver ostinato, subsides via an instrumental interlude into a serene major-mode second section, the ending of which (‘be perfect with the Lord our God’) is rendered poignant through Darke’s characteristic mixing of major and minor tonality.

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## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

### 1 A Hymn to the Trinity

Let us now laud and magnify with music of concord  
The Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, one ever  
living Lord.

With tuned notes that sweetly sound to praise our  
heavenly King,

With cheerful hearts, with pleasant voice on this  
wise let us sing:

Glory be to the Trinity, one God and persons three;  
As it is now and ever was, and evermore shall be.  
Amen.

### 2 O brother man

O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother:  
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;  
To worship rightly is to love each other,  
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

Follow with reverent footsteps the great example  
Of Him whose holy work was doing good:  
So shall the wide world seem our Father’s temple,  
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

Then shall all shackles fall: the stormy clangor  
Of war’s wild music in the earth shall cease;  
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,  
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.

J. G. Whittier

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### Missa Christi

### 3 Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.*

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**4 Gloria**

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**5 Sanctus and Benedictus**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

**6 Agnus Dei**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

**7 Drop, drop, slow tears**

Drop, drop, slow tears,  
And bathe those beauteous feet  
Which brought from Heaven  
The news and Prince of Peace:

Cease not, wet eyes,  
His mercy to entreat;  
To cry for vengeance  
Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods  
Drown all my faults and fears;  
Nor let His eye  
See sin, but through my tears.

Phineas Fletcher

**8 This have I done for my true love**

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day,  
I would my true love did so chance  
To see the legend of my play,  
To call my true love to the dance.  
*Sing oh my love, my love, my love,  
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a Virgin pure,  
Of her I took fleshly substance:  
Then was I knit to man's nature,

To call my true love to my dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

In a manger laid and wrapp'd I was,  
So very poor this was my chance,  
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,  
To call my true love to the dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

Then afterwards baptised I was,  
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,  
My Father's voice heard from above,  
To call my true love to my dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

Into the desert I was led,  
Where I fasted without substance:  
The Devil bade me make stones my bread,  
To have me break my true love's dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

The Jews on me they made great suit,  
And with me made great variance,  
Because they loved darkness better than light,  
To call my true love to the dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

For thirty pence Judas me sold,  
His covetousness for to advance;  
Mark whom I kiss, the same do hold,  
The same is he shall lead the dance.  
*Sing oh my love.*

Before Pilate the Jews me brought,  
When Barabbas had deliverance;  
They scourged me and set me at nought,  
Judged me to die to lead the dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

When on the cross hanged I was,  
When a spear to my heart did glance,  
There issued forth both water and blood,  
To call my true love to the dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

Then down to Hell I took my way,  
For my true love's deliverance,  
And rose again on the third day,  
Up to my true love and the dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

Then up to Heav'n I did ascend,  
Where now I dwell in sure substance,  
On the right hand of God that man  
May come into the general dance.  
*Sing oh my love...*

**9 Nunc dimittis**

Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum  
verbum tuum in pace.  
Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.  
Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum.  
Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis  
tuæ Israel.  
Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,  
sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,  
et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,  
according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,  
which thou hast prepared before the face of all people,  
to be a light to lighten the gentiles, and to be the  
glory of thy people Israel.  
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.*

**10 Out of your sleep arise and wake**

*Nowell.*  
Out of your sleep arise and wake,  
For God mankind now hath ytake,  
All of a maid without any make;  
Of all women she beareth the bell.  
*Nowell.*  
And thro' a maiden fair and wise  
Now man is made of full great price;  
Now angels kneelen to man's service;  
And at this time all this befell.  
*Nowell.*  
Now man is brighter than the sun;  
Now man in heav'n on high shall wone;  
Blessed be God, this game is begun,  
And His mother empress of hell.

*Nowell.*  
That ever was thrall, now is he free;  
That ever was small, now great is she;  
Now shall God deem both thee and me  
Unto His bliss, if we do well.  
*Nowell.*  
Now man may to heaven wend;  
Now heaven and earth to him they bend;  
He that was foe now is our friend.  
This is no nay that I you tell.  
*Nowell.*  
Now blessed Brother, grant us grace,  
At Doom'sday to see Thy face,  
And in Thy court to have a place,  
That we may there sing nowell, nowell.  
*Nowell.*

**11 Ave Maria**

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus  
ventris tui Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, Regina cæli, dulcis et pia, O mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus, ut cum electis te  
videamus.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is  
the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Queen of heaven, sweet and holy, O  
mother of God,  
pray for us sinners, that with the saints we may  
see thee.*

**12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation**

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for  
when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of  
life, which the Lord hath promised to them that  
love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I  
am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted  
with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But God  
is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted  
above ye are able; and will with the temptation  
make a way of escape, that ye may be able to  
bear it.

James I:12–13; 1 Corinthians 10:13

**13 Ave Maria**

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus  
ventris tui Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis. Amen

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is  
the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, pray for us. Amen.*

**14 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High**

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust. For he shall deliver me from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shalt cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shall thou take refuge: His truth is a shield and a buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come near thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. For thou, O Lord, art my refuge! Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet.

He hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:  
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.  
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honour him;  
with long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Psalm 91

**15 Be strong and of a good courage**

Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be strong, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Ye have not passed this way heretofore. Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. Let him not leave us, nor forsake us, that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, which he commanded our fathers. That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord our God.

Joshua 1:9, III:4-5; I Kings VIII:57-58, 60-61

**16 Lord, who hast made us for thine own**  
Lord, who hast made us for thine own,  
Hear as we sing before Thy throne. Alleluia.  
Accept Thy children's rev'rent praise  
For all Thy wondrous works and ways. Alleluia.

Waves, rolling in on ev'ry shore,  
Pause at His footfall and adore. Alleluia.  
Ye torrents rushing from the hills,  
Bless Him Whose hand your fountains fills.  
Alleluia.

Earth, ever through the pow'r divine,  
Seedtime and harvest shall be thine. Alleluia.  
Sweet flow'rs that perfume all the air,  
Thank Him that He hath made you fair. Alleluia.

Burn lamps of night, with constant flame,  
Shine to the honour of His name. Alleluia.  
Thou sun, whom all the lands obey,  
Renew His praise from day to day. Alleluia.

Psalm 148, adapted by Frances Ralph Gray



## CHOIR OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

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Matilda Bates  
Hannah Becker  
Amy Chamberlain  
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Anastasia Jones ~  
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Jemima Price ~-  
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Pete Dockrill ~  
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Matt Rogers ~  
Barnabas Sharp  
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\* Solo on track 3

† Solo on track 5

‡ Solo on track 9

§ Solo on track 12

~ Solo on track 14

'An undoubted jewel in Britain's choral scene' (*BBC Music Magazine*), the Choir of The Queen's College Oxford is among the finest and most active university choirs in the UK. Its extensive concert schedule involves appearances across the UK and abroad, including work with the Academy of Ancient Music, the Britten Sinfonia, and the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. It regularly tours

abroad, and concert tours have included China, Taiwan, the USA, Sri Lanka, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, France, the Low Countries, and Germany. The choir's wide-ranging repertoire incorporates a rich array of Renaissance and Baroque music and contemporary works. The group broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio, and during the academic year it provides the music for services in the



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splendid Baroque chapel of The Queen's College. Among its recordings on Signum Classics, *Carols from Queen's* enjoyed nine weeks in the Specialist Classical Charts, was 'Drive Feature Album of the Week' on Classic FM, and was a *Telegraph* Christmas pick; *A New Heaven* and *The House of the Mind* both went straight to no. 1 in the Specialist Classical Chart in their first week of sales; a recording of music by the great Tudor composer John Taverner received a Diapason d'or and was described by *Diapason* as 'a splendid

triumph of English choral art at its best'; and *That Sweet City* was a *Gramophone Critics' Choice* for 2024. Queen's Choir has also recorded for film in the famous Abbey Road Studios, and appears on the Grammy-nominated soundtrack of the Warner-Brothers film *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

[www.queenschoir.com](http://www.queenschoir.com)

[www.instagram.com/queenschoir](https://www.instagram.com/queenschoir)

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## OWEN REES

Owen Rees is both an acclaimed choral director and an internationally recognised scholar of Renaissance music, particularly from Spain, Portugal, and England. He is Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, and Waverley Fellow in Music and Organist (Director of Music) at The Queen's College, and he also directs the ensemble Contrapunctus. His work as a conductor has taken him to many parts of the world, including the USA, China, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands. His recordings have four times been shortlisted for the *Gramophone* Early Music Award, have been selected as Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and Choral and Song Choice in *BBC Music Magazine*, and featured in the '20 Classical Recordings of the Year' 2015 in *The Sunday Times*. His albums with Contrapunctus, Queen's and other choirs, on the Signum, Hyperion, and Avie labels, encompass a remarkably wide variety of choral repertory from the Renaissance to contemporary works. *BBC Music Magazine* recently hailed his interpretations of choral music as 'revelatory and even visionary'. He has brought to the concert hall and recording studio substantial repertoires of magnificent Renaissance and Baroque music, including many



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previously unknown or little-known works, and he has played a leading role in revealing the glories of Portuguese Renaissance polyphony to an international audience. As a scholar, Owen Rees has published widely on many of the foremost Renaissance composers, including Byrd, Josquin, Morales, and Victoria. His award-winning book about the Victoria Requiem was published by Cambridge University Press in 2019.

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