



FULL OF GRACE

Choral Music by James Woodhall

Cantores Lucis

Directed by James Woodhall

Full of Grace

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1. Full of Grace	7:53
The Damascus Road	
2. I. Murderous Threats	3:01
3. II. I am Jesus	3:18
4. III. Blinded	2:00
5. IV. Ananias's Vision	3:36
6. V. Anania's Answers	1:22
7. VI. A Chosen Vessel	2:45
8. VII. Saul Sees and is Saved	3:54
9. VIII. Saul began to Preach	1:58
10. IX. Saul Speaks	4:46
11. X. The Grace	1:42
 12. The Shepherd's Carol	 5:14
13. Ave Verum Corpus	3:54
14. Ave Maria	2:30
15. Light from Light	7:10

Total Playing Time 55:08

Cantores Lucis

(Tracks 2 - 11, & 14)

Soprano

Anna Greg
Chloe Todd
Emma Price
Rebecca Legg
Fionnuala Marshall
Janet Cameron

Tenor

James Butler
James Bluff
Hugh Legg

Alto

Fiona Muir
Kerry Magee
Sophie Taylor-Denton
Kay Douglass

Bass

Edward Marshall
Alex Goodwin
Edward Henwood

Chamber Choir

(Tracks 1, 12, 13 & 15)

Soprano

Anna Greg
Chloe Todd

Tenor

James Beddoe
James Bluff

Alto

Sophie Taylor-Denton
Katie Macdonald

Bass

Elliot Mercer
Adam Hilton

Directed by James Woodhall

From the Composer

We all need grace. Whether it is a grace period for something owed, social graces, someone gracing us with their presence, or the amazing grace in the famous hymn; the grace of God. I was reflecting on the Angel's greeting to Mary in Luke 1:28 in which she is described as 'full of grace', as is Jesus in John 1:14 when I wrote the title track of this album. 'Full of Grace' (Track 1) has a gentle, memorable melody with warm harmonic shifts. In contrast to these reflective outer sections, there is a joyful and exciting middle section which tells of how the Angels sang to the shepherds.

The account of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus is full of drama and has a wonderful message of hope; that it is never too late to change course, that even if all seems lost or that one has travelled far down a particular path, turning around and starting over is possible. For Issac Watts who wrote the famous hymn, the line 'I once was blind, but now I see' is a powerful metaphor and Saul experiences this literally as he experiences amazing grace; the gift of unconditional love from God. Not what is deserved or earned, but freely given. I have wanted to write a piece based on the passage in chapter 9 of the book of Acts for several years and am glad that I have finally done so.

I have used the text from Acts 9 almost unaltered: 'Murderous Threats' (Track 2) takes words from Acts 9:1-3. The account begins with Saul setting out on a journey intending to find and capture disciples of Jesus. While on the road he suddenly hears a voice calling him. In 'I am Jesus' (Track 3) I added Jesus' own words from John 14:6 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. We hear Saul's words from Acts 9:5 as a duet between the tenor and baritone soloists of Jesus and Saul. In 'Blinded' (Track 4) the choir sing of how Saul loses his sight and those he was with react. 'Ananias's Vision' (Track 5), and 'Ananias Answers' (Track 6), set the words of Acts 9:7-14 in which Ananias hears Jesus tell him to go to Saul and him expressing his understandable reluctance. A tenor solo follows in 'A Chosen Vessel' (Track 7) in which we hear Jesus explaining his purpose in

sending Ananias to Saul. After he does so 'Saul Sees and is Saved' (Track 8) and his sight is restored. Finally from Acts, 9:20 - 21 I set 'Saul Began to Preach' (Track 9). In this number the choir explain the initial reaction of those who first heard the man who only days before was intending harm to them but how many were saved. We finally hear a baritone solo in which 'Saul Speaks' (Track 10), I used verses from Paul's letters to the Galatians (1:3) and Colossians (1:11 - 15) to create his explanation of his experience of receiving the gospel. For the last movement of the piece, I set the wonderful words of what is often referred to as 'The Grace' (Track 11), as seen in Galatians 1:3 - 5.

In 'The Shepherds' Carol' (Track 12) we return to the Christmas story with a beautiful yet haunting piece exploring the revelation of Jesus' birth to the humble members of society. I wrote this text to draw a parallel between the Shepherds' care for their sheep and Almighty God's care for mankind. After a soaring melody in the soprano, later echoed in the tenors, the whole choir is united describing the Angels' song. A final reflective section sees a return of the melody, now reminds us of the ancient prophet's foretelling; Unto us a Son is Born, the Prince of Peace.

'Ave Verum Corpus' (Track 13) and 'Ave Maria' (Track 14) are famous words which have been set by many other composers. Ave Verum Corpus has been attributed to a Pope in the 13th Century, but it is unclear whether it was Pope Innocent the III, IV, V or VI. The Ave Maria is a catholic prayer based on the Angel's greeting in Luke 1:28.

The final track is 'Light from Light' (Track 14) and is my reflection on the light in the darkness, the star that led the magi and Jesus, 'light of the world'. In this piece another soaring melody, accompanied by some dramatic harmonic shifts is heard.

James Woodhall 2025

Biographies

James Woodhall is a composer, conductor and pianist. He graduated from the University of Surrey with a First-Class music degree, specialising in composition and was awarded both of the composition prizes during his studies. An exchange programme with the University of North Texas enabled him to spend a year studying there and he wrote and staged his first musical, as well as having performances of his music given by the University Orchestra. Upon returning to the U.K., he continued to study at Surrey and was awarded a Masters in Composition. James was selected to represent the University at the Park Lane Group's Composer's Symposium and his piece was performed at London's Festival Hall. He has written a great deal of music for the schools he has worked in including choral pieces and musicals. James has also written new musicals which have been staged at the Wycombe Swan, the Speen Festival and the Stables Theatre, Milton Keynes.

James was a finalist in the Berkeley Ensemble's New Cobbet Prize in 2017 and his piece was performed at the Forge in Camden, receiving warm praise from the ensemble and Michael Berkeley. He won the No Dice Collective's Call for Scores and they played his piece 'The Clockwork Crocodile' at the Anthony Burgess Centre in Manchester.

In 2016 he founded the Cold Light Ensemble which he composes for and directs from the piano. This fuses jazz trio with string quartet and their crowdfunded album was released in 2019 after performances at St John Smith's Square and the PizzaExpress Jazz Club in Soho. Recent choral pieces have been sung at Waltham Abbey and by other churches around the UK and as far away as New Zealand and the USA. James' piece 'The Wasteland' was performed at the Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate to launch a new exhibition based on T.S. Elliot's seminal modernist masterpiece. James was a finalist in the Rocky Mountain Chamber Choir's Call for Scores 2023 and their recording of his piece 'When

Darkness Descends' has led to requests for the score from around the world and performances in South Korea, Germany and in the U.S.A.



James Woodhall

Hugh Legg (tenor) sang as a cathedral chorister in Cape Town, trained as an actor and came to London to pursue an operatic and concert career. He has performed as soloist in works by Bach, Handel, Britten, Gounod, Verdi & Puccini among others. In recent years, he has performed numerous song recitals including Schubert's *Winterreise*. Operatic roles include Don Ottavio, Duke of Mantua, Luigi (*Il Tabarro*) and the title roles in Mozart's *Idomeneo* & *La Clemenza di Tito*.



Will Houghton (baritone) studied vocal performance at Southampton University and was a Cantores choral scholar during his time in Southampton. Will gave regular solo performances at venues across the South of England, including Turner Sims Concert Hall, Portsmouth Cathedral, The Lighthouse Poole and Westminster Abbey. Will's solo works have included Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Handel's *Messiah*, Tippett's *Child of our Time*, Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, and Durufle's *Requiem*. Will has performed in a number of BBC Radio broadcasts and participated in tours across Europe and the USA. Will has released many albums with St Albans Cathedral Choir most recently a critically acclaimed album of Bruckner motets making the Editor's Choice for July in Gramophone magazine.

Will continues his love of singing as a lay clerk at St Albans Cathedral choir and works for the NHS in Clinical Systems design as his day job.



Cantores Lucis is a choir made up of family and friends. Specialising in contemporary sacred repertoire and made up of recent graduates of conservatories as well as more established professional singers they have enjoyed singing for this recording.



Acknowledgments

I am so very grateful to the many people who made producing this record possible. First and foremost the musicians who sang so wonderfully and brought the music to life. To Daniel Tigg for his constant support and help, in this case with recording and mixing, but at all times a great friend. Isa Khan who recorded the chamber choir so well and gave great advice. My wonderful Dad, John Woodhall who provided my musical foundation and continues to inspire and support. A group of generous supporters who backed the project financially; Alistair McMeekin, Heather Stanley, Lois Paine, William Chitty, Noel Tredinnick, Alex Cross, Anne Nixon, Roger Chitty, Andrew Chisholm, Nigel Bamping, Sophie Whisker, Stacey Atkins, Marie Towns, Helen Hicks, Ruth Huckle, Charlie Upton, Nick Drew and Norma Howell. Thank you so much. A particular thank you to Adam Hope for recording the piano parts that the choir sang to but also for invaluable encouragement and advice while I was composing. My love for Kathryn, Camille and Arabelle and their love for me is what inspires me to make music and I cannot express in words how much they mean to me, so hope that the music will go some way to expressing this.





Tracks 1, 12, 13 & 15 recorded 3rd July 2023 at St Cuthbert's Church, Earl's Court.

Recording Engineer - Isa Khan.

Tracks 2 - 11 & 14 recorded 2nd September 2023 at St John's Church, Harpenden.

Recording Engineer - Daniel Tigg

Mastering and additional mixing - James Cardell-Oliver

Produced by James Woodhall

Cover painting 'And Everything' by Vicky Goldsobel

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