

# **English Choral Music**

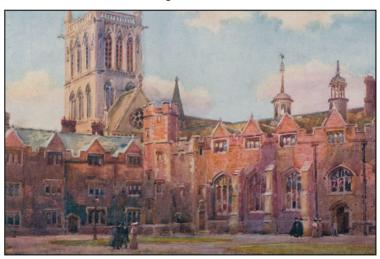


# **ELGAR**

## **Sacred Choral Music**

Ave Maria • Give unto the Lord • Te Deum & Benedictus

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge Christopher Robinson



## Edward Elgar (1857-1934) Sacred Choral Music

Edward Elgar was born near Worcester, in the West of England, in 1857. His father was a piano-tuner, organist, violinist and eventually a shopkeeper, and it was from him and from his own private study that Elgar acquired much of his musical training. As the son of a tradesman and a Catholic he had social and religious obstacles to overcome, and in this his wife, nine years his senior and the daughter of an Indian army general, was of the greatest assistance. He at first made his living as a freelance musician, teaching, playing the violin and organ, and conducting local amateur orchestras and choirs. His first real success away from his own West Country was in 1897 with his Imperial March, written for the royal jubilee celebrating sixty glorious years of Queen Victoria. His reputation was further enhanced by the socalled Enigma Variations of 1899. The oratorio The Dream of Gerontius, which followed in 1900, later became a staple element in British choral repertoire. His publishers Novello had not always been particularly generous in their treatment of him, but he came to rely on the encouragement of the German-born Augustus Johannes Jaeger, a reader for the firm, who found in Elgar's music something much more akin to the music of his native country.

Public recognition brought Elgar many honours, his position sealed by the composition of music for the coronation of King Edward VII. He was awarded honorary doctorates by universities old and new and in 1904 received a knighthood. Further honours followed and finally, in 1931, a baronetcy. Acceptance, as represented by the musical establishment of the country, was confirmed by the award of the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 1925. Elgar's work had undergone significant changes in the later years of the 1914-18 war, evident in his Cello Concerto of 1919. His

wife's death in 1920 removed a support on which he had long relied, and the last fourteen years of his life brought a diminishing inspiration and energy in his work as a composer, although he continued to appear as a conductor in both the concert-hall and recording studio. He died in 1934

In his early years in Worcester Elgar had been closely involved with the music of St George's Church, where his father served as organist, and therefore with the Catholic liturgy. It was for St George's that Elgar wrote early settings of Tantum ergo, Salve Regina, and Domine salvam fac. In 1885 he took over from his father as organist, but was not happy with the position and had little good to say of the choir. His work in the West Country as a violinist, conductor and organist continued until his marriage in 1889 and his attempt the following year to establish himself in London.

Elgar's first settings of the hymn O salutaris hostia. for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, date from about 1880. The setting in F major, included in a compendium of such works issued in 1898, is for choir and organ and is in the simple style favoured in Catholic worship for many years. The same might be said of the other settings, the first, an Ave verum, published in 1902, with three more such works issued in 1907. The Ave. verum itself was originally a setting of the burial service Pie Jesu, written in memory of William Allen, the Catholic Worcester lawyer for whom Elgar had briefly worked as a fifteen-year old, before music seemed to offer a possible profession. The composer arranged the work for publication in 1902 with solo and choral verses in alternation. The Ave Maria, the second of the group, dedicated to the wife of his Worcester friend and choirmaster with him at St George's, Hubert Leicester, is more musically substantial. It is followed by the

Marian Ave maris stella, dedicated to the Benedictine Canon Dolman of Hereford. A treble soloist starts the work, the opening invocation echoed by the choir in a motet that, still in relatively simple terms, offers a subtler musical version of the longer text.

In 1891 Elgar and his wife decided to leave London. where he had had no immediate success, moving now to Malvern from where he involved himself once more in the musical life of the region, while enjoying more time for composition. It was the Hereford Cathedral organist George Robertson Sinclair who commissioned Elgar's Te Deum and Renedictus for the Three Choirs Festival of 1897, canticles performed at the opening service. The work was dedicated to Sinclair. Scored for choir and orchestra or organ, the Te Deum is introduced by a characteristically Elgarian Allegro maestoso, leading to the emphatic declaration of the choir, We praise Thee, O Lord. There is a change of mood at the words The Holy Church throughout all the world, a phrase that is repeated in different voices, leading to a dynamic climax, followed by changes of key and rhythm at When Thou tookest upon Thee. The original F major is restored over a dominant pedal at When Thou hadst overcome. The familiar motif of the choral opening is heard again, and a great climax is succeeded by a hushed plea for mercy, a strong statement of trust in the Lord, and a gentle prayer for salvation, before the final postlude. The Renedictus seems to start in A minor before F major is re-established. The final triumphant doxology is introduced by the return of the organ to the Allegro maestoso of the first canticle, assuring the thematic unity of the two canticles.

Elgar's first oratorio was *The Light of Life*, its original title *Lux Christi* replaced at the publisher's insistence, to avoid possible religious prejudice. The work was based on biblical texts assembled by Edward Capel Cure, who had served as an Anglican curate in Worcester and, as an amateur cellist, played chamber

music with Elgar. The new work was a commission for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival and had its first performance in the cathedral in 1896. After revision it was played again at the festival in 1899. The work deals with the story of Christ's healing of the blind man, as recounted in the Gospel of St John. The first of the two numbers included here opens the oratorio, after the initial instrumental *Meditation*. Seek Him that maketh the seven stars is for four-part male chorus, representing Levites in the Temple Courts. The voice of the blind man is heard outside the Temple, returning once more in supplication, before the Levites complete their prayer. Light of the World is the final G major chorus, in a confident style well suited to the cathedral conventions of the day.

The oratorio *The Apostles* was completed and first performed in 1903. Elgar had long had the idea of writing such a work, dealing with the calling of the apostles. The work came in response to a commission from Birmingham, and the theme was continued three years later in *The Kingdom*. He prepared the texts himself, taking some advice from Canon Charles Gorton and others. *The Spirit of the Lord* is the prologue to *The Apostles*, often performed as an anthem. It sets the tone of what is to follow, while introducing various motifs later to be associated with the Church and with Christ. The words of the prologue are taken from Isaiah.

In 1909 the Elgars spent some time in Italy, staying at the villa of a friend near Florence. Here the composer recovered his spirits, after a period in which he had felt in need of recuperation. He was able to think further about his Violin Concerto and his Second Symphony, and wrote, during his stay, a setting of Rossetti's translation of a poem by Dante's friend Guido Cavalcanti. This brief meditation on mortality becomes a more extended and moving unaccompanied part-song, a work of considerable power. It was first performed in Hereford in September in the same year and was

dedicated to his publisher at Novello, Alfred Littleton.

By 1911, the year of George V's coronation, for which he wrote the offertory setting of a verse from *Psalm V, O hearken Thou*, Elgar was fully established as a composer of importance. The work was also published in a Latin version, *Intende voci orationis meae*. The organist at the coronation, Walter Alcock, assistant to the Westminster Abbey organist Sir Frederick Bridge, draws attention, in his introduction to the published music of the service, to the 'many striking progressions' and the final cadence, in a work that he aptly describes as one of 'reverent supplication'.

Elgar completed his setting of *Psalm XLVIII* in 1912, dedicating it to Armitage Robinson, former Dean of Westminster and now Dean of Wells. He had first met Robinson some years earlier in Alassio and was indebted to him for theological and historical suggestions for the oratorios *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. The psalm was first performed in Westminster Abbey in July 1912 and is described as 'an anthem for the foundation or commemoration of a church, or for general use'. It is scored for a six-part choir and bass

solo. Splendid dramatic use is made of contrasted vocal registers in the opening section. There is an abrupt change of mood and key at the words For, lo! the kings assembled themselves, and a quasi recitative section leads to the bass solo We have thought on Thy loving kindness. Upper and lower voices answer each other in Let mount Zion be glad, and the opening forms the basis of the confident final section.

The setting of Psalm XXIX was written in 1914 for the Sons of Clergy Festival at St Paul's Cathedral. It is dedicated to Sir George Martin, who had succeeded Stainer as organist at St Paul's in 1888. The powerful opening is apt for the occasion, mounting in triumph at the words The God of glory thundereth. The cedars are dramatically broken, the wilderness shaken and the forests stripped bare, before the meditative tranquillity of the Temple and the following return to the majesty of the opening. The psalm ends with the serenity of the blessing of peace.

Keith Anderson

## The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge



St John's College was founded in 1511 and is one of the Colleges of the University of Cambridge. The College Choir, which has a world-wide reputation for its unique sound and for the quality of its music-making, has had as its main duty since the 1670s the singing of the daily services in the College chapel during the University Term. The Services follow the Church of England Cathedral Tradition with Evensong six times a week and a Sung Eucharist on Sunday mornings.

The all-male Choir consists of fourteen Choral Students and seventeen Choristers. The Choristers are appointed at Voice Trials, which take place regularly, and are educated at St John's College School, which is situated at the edge of the College grounds. The School now educates some 440 boys and girls up to the age of

thirteen. There is intense competition for places, not only for the financial rewards in terms of scholarships, but also for the unique musical training which the Choristers receive. The ages of the Choristers range from nine to thirteen years and they are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the School as well as the Choir. There are also four Probationers who begin their training at the age of eight and join the choir as vacancies arise. The alto, tenor and bass parts are taken by Choral Students who are admitted as undergraduates to the College to study a variety of subjects. Choral Students very often become professional singers and many have been awarded scholarships by the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music. Apart from its liturgical commitments, the Choir gives a number of concerts each year both in the United Kingdom and overseas. Recent tours have taken the Choir to Australia, South Africa, Canada, the United States, Holland, Belgium, Sweden and Japan.

The repertoire of the Choir stretches from the fifteenth century to the present day. Many highly acclaimed recordings have been made and these are available world-wide. The Advent Carol Service, the Lent Meditation, and Evensong on Ash Wednesday (when Allegri's *Miserere* is sung) are broadcast annually on BBC Radio 3. This is the choir's sixth recording in an English Choral Music series on the Naxos label. The series, including discs of Howells (Winner of the Cannes Classical Award 2001), Britten (nominated for a Gramophone Award 2000), Tavener (nominated for a Classical Brit Award and a Gramophone Award 2001), Rubbra (nominated for a Gramophone Award 2001) and Walton (nominated for a Gramophone Award 2002), has sold 150,000 copies to date. Many composers have written for the Choir, including Tippett, Howells, and Langlais; more recently works have been commissioned from Francis Grier, Andrew Gant, John Tavener and Judith Bingham.

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## Christopher Robinson CVO, CBE

Christopher Robinson retired as Organist and Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge, in 2003 after twelve years' service. His expertise as a choral and orchestral conductor is well known following his time at St John's, and previously at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (1975-91) and at Worcester Cathedral (1963-74), where the Three Choirs' Festival provided opportunities to plan programmes, conduct large-scale repertoire, and commission new works. He was conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir from 1977 to 1997 and City of Birmingham Choir from 1964 to 2002. He was then the longest serving regular conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and has conducted most of the other major British orchestras. Throughout his career he has contributed steadily to the record catalogues, culminating in the widely acclaimed English Choral Music series of ten discs for Naxos.

## St John's College Choir, 2003/2004

#### Trebles

Theo Bamber

Quintin Beer

James Budgett

Hugh Bushell

Charlie Cornish

Charife Cornisi

Thomas Curran

Benjamin Durrant \*

Joseph Gardom

James Geidt

Julian Gregory

Joshua O'Connor

Jonson Owen-Jones

William Pargeter

Thomas Welham

#### Altos

William Cartwright-Hignett

Peter Crawford

Lester Lardenove

Timothy Scott

#### Tenors

Michael Anderson

Allan Clayton §

THOMAS FAIK

Stephen Shorter

Andrew Staples

#### Rasses

James Birchall

Nicholas Charlwood

Ronan Collett †

George Humphreys Reuben Thomas

#### Organ

Jonathan Vaughn

- \* Soloist in Ave maris stella (4)
- † Soloist in Great is the Lord (9)
- § Soloist in Seek Him that maketh the seven stars (12)

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#### 1 Give unto the Lord (Psalm XXIX)

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: it is the Lord that ruleth the sea.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars: yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. Yea, the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire

Yea, the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, and strippeth the forests bare.

In His temple doth everyone speak of His glory. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The Lord sitteth above the water-flood: and the Lord remaineth a King for ever. The Lord shall give strength unto His people: the Lord shall give the blessing of peace.

### 2 Ave verum corpus

Ave verum corpus, natum ex Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine.

Cujus latus perforatum vere fluxit sanguine; esto nobis praegustatum, mortis in examine.

O clemens, O pie, O dulcis Jesus, Fili Mariae

#### 3 Ave Maria

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

#### 2 Hail true body

Hail true body, born of the Virgin Mary, that truly suffered, sacrificed on the cross for man.

Whose pierced side truly flowed with blood; be for us a foretaste in the trial of death.

O clement, O merciful, O sweet Jesus, Son of Mary.

## 3 Hail Mary

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

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#### 4 Ave maris stella

Ave maris stella, Dei Mater alma, atque semper Virgo, felix caeli porta. Ave maris stella!

Sumens illud Ave Gabrielis ore, funda nos in pace, mutans Hevae nomen. Ave maris stella!

Solve vincla reis, profer lumen caecis, mala nostra pelle, bona cuncta posce. Ave maris stella!

Monstra te esse matrem, sumat per te preces, qui pro nobis natus, tulit esse tuus.

Virgo singularis, inter omnes mitis, nos culpis solutos, mites fac et castos.

Vitam praesta puram, iter para tutum, ut videntes Jesum, semper collaetemur. Ave maris stella!

Sit laus Deo Patri, summo Christo decus, Spiritui Sancto,

#### 4 Hail, star of the sea

Hail, star of the sea, gentle Mother of God, yet ever Virgin, happy gate of Heaven. Hail, star of the sea!

Receiving that 'Ave' from the mouth of Gabriel, confirm us in peace, changing the name of Eve. Hail star of the sea!

Loose the chains of sinners, bring light to the blind, push aside our ills, ask for us all good things.

Show thyself the mother, let Him receive prayers through thee who was born for us, born your Son.

Rare Virgin, gentle above all, free us from our faults, make us gentle and pure.

Grant us a pure life, make ready a safe journey, that, seeing Jesus, we may rejoice together for ever. Hail star of the sea!

Praise be to God the Father, glory to Christ the highest, to the Holy Spirit,

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tribus honor unus Amen Ave maris stella!

one honour to three Amen Hail star of the sea!

### 5 O hearken Thou (Psalm V)

O hearken Thou unto the voice of my calling, my King, and my God, for unto Thee will I make my prayer.

#### 6 Te Deum

We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee.

the Father everlasting.

To Thee all Angels cry aloud;

the Heavens and all the Powers therein

To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim

continually do cry:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,

Heaven and earth are full of the

Majesty of Thy Glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.

The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee

The holy Church throughout all the world

doth acknowledge Thee,

the Father of an infinite Majesty;

Thine honourable, true, and only Son:

also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man.

Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.

When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,

Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God,

in the Glory of the Father.

We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants,

whom Thou hast redeemed with

Thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints,

in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save Thy people,

and bless Thine heritage.

Govern them, and lift them up for ever.

Day by day we magnify Thee:

and we worship Thy Name,

ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin

O Lord, have mercy upon us.

O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us,

as our trust is in Thee

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted.

let me never be confounded

#### 7 Benedictus

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He hath visited and redeemed His people; and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of His servant David: as He spake by the mouth of His Holy Prophets. which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hands of all that hate us Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, and to remember His Holy Covenant: to perform the oath which He sware to our forefather Abraham. that He would give us: that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies. might serve Him without fear.

And Thou Child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways. to give knowledge of salvation unto His people. for the remission of their sins. through the tender mercy of our God. whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited usto give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace. 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.

### 8 O salutaris hostia

O salutaris hostia, quae caeli pandis ostium: bella premunt hostilia, da robur, fer auxilium.

in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Uni trinoque Domino sit sempiterna gloria, qui vitam sine termino nobis donet in patria. Amen

## 8 O saving victim

Amen

O saving victim, who opens the gate of Heaven: the attacks of the enemy oppress, grant strength, bring help.

To the one and threefold Lord be eternal glory, may He grant us life without end in our own land. Amen

#### 9 Great is the Lord (Psalm XLVIII)

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.

in the mountain of His holiness

Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north,

the city of the great King.

God hath made Himself known in her palaces for a refuge.

For, lo! the kings assembled themselves,

they passed by together;

they saw, then were they amazed:

they were dismay'd, they hasted away;

trembling took hold of them there.

pain as of a woman in travail.

as with the east wind

that breaketh the ships of Tarshish.

As we have heard so have we seen

in the city of the Lord of hosts,

in the city of our God.

God will establish it for ever

We have thought on Thy loving kindness,

O God, in the midst of Thy temple;

as is Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Let mount Zion be glad,

let the daughters of Judah rejoice.

because of Thy judgements.

Walk about Zion and go around about her,

tell the towers thereof mark ve well her bulwarks,

consider her palaces,

that ve may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever:

He will be our guide even unto death.

Amen

#### 10 The Spirit of the Lord (from The Apostles)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. because He hath anointed me to preach

the Gospel to the poor: He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted

to preach deliverance to the captives.

and recovering of sight to the blind,

to preach the acceptable year of the Lord:

To give unto them that mourn a garland for ashes. the oil of joy for mourning.

the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

that they might be called trees of righteousness. the planting of the Lord,

that He might be glorified.

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud.

and as the garden causeth the things

that are sown in it to spring forth;

so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise

to spring forth before all the nations.

#### 11 Go song of mine

### (Guido Cavalcanti, tr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti)

Dishevell'd and in tears, go, song of mine,

To break the hardness of the heart of man: Say how his life began

From dust, and in that dust doth sink supine: Yet, say, th'unerring spirit of grief shall guide

His soul, being purified,

To seek its Maker at the heav'nly shrine.

## [12] Seek Him that maketh (from The Light of Life)

Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.

The Lord is His name.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever Who hath made great lights.

for His mercy endureth for ever.

The sun to rule the day:

the moon and stars to govern the night:

for His mercy endureth for ever.

Seek ye Him.

I look for Thee, O Lord, my soul doth wait for Thee before the morning watch I pray. My soul doth wait for the Lord. Hear my voice, from the deep I call, O hear my voice.

Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, who hath made great lights.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever.

O Lord, my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast heeded me and brought my soul from out of hell, and turned my heaviness to gladness. The darkness is no darkness with Thee. The night is clear as day

Seek Him that maketh the seven stars. The Lord is His name. Seek ye Him.

## 13 Light of the World

Light of the World, we know Thy praise The angels and archangels raise. And all the host of Heav'n More worthily than our faint hymns. Whose jarring sound that glory dims, Which God to Thee has giv'n. But Thou didst not disdain to take Our lowly estate or e'en to make The tomb Thy resting place. So Thou might bring into our night The dawn of Thine eternal Light. To shine upon our face. Nor death, nor hell, nor sin is Lord. But Thou O Son of God Thy word is now our sov'reign law. Therefore we thank Thee and we pray Thy Light may shine unto the Perfect Day On us for evermore

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**ELGAR:** 

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Elgar's sacred choral music possesses the same innate qualities so admired today in his orchestral music, namely an unerring sense for musical development and drama allied to a glorious ear for melody. This collection follows him from early settings for the Catholic liturgy, such as the three Opus 2 anthems written after he had succeeded his father as organist at St George's in Worcester, right through to his heyday as the Empire's bestknown composer, commissioned to write powerful settings such as Give unto the Lord for St Paul's Cathedral in 1914. Great is the Lord of 1912 is considered his sacred masterpiece.

## Edward **ELGAR**

(1857-1934)

## **Sacred Choral Music**

1 Give unto the Lord (Psalm XXIX), Op. 74	7:52	8 O salutaris hostia 9 Great is the Lord	2:53 9:39
2 Ave verum corpus, Op. 2, No. 1	2:44	(Psalm XLVIII), Op. 67	<b>7.</b> 37
<b>3</b> Ave Maria, Op. 2, No. 2	2:45	10 The Spirit of the Lord	6:53
4 Ave maris stella, Op. 2, No. 3	4:03	is upon me (from The Apostles)	
5 O hearken Thou, Op. 64	3:33	11 Go, Song of Mine, Op. 57	4:44
6 Te Deum laudamus, Op. 34, No. 1	11:01	2 Seek Him that maketh the seven stars (from The Light of Life, Op.	6:45 . 29)
<b>7</b> Benedictus, Op. 34, No. 2	7:03	13 Light of the World (from The Light of Life, Op. 29)	4:26

## Jonathan Vaughn, Organ

## Choir of St John's College, Cambridge • Christopher Robinson

Recorded at St John's College Chapel, Cambridge, from 8th to 10th July, 2003 Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd.) • Engineer: Eleanor Thomason Post-Production: Andrew Walton • This recording has been recorded at 24bit resolution Booklet Notes: Keith Anderson • Publishers: Novello and Company Ltd. Cover Image: St. John's College, Cambridge, 1907 by William Matthison (Mary Evans Picture Library)



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