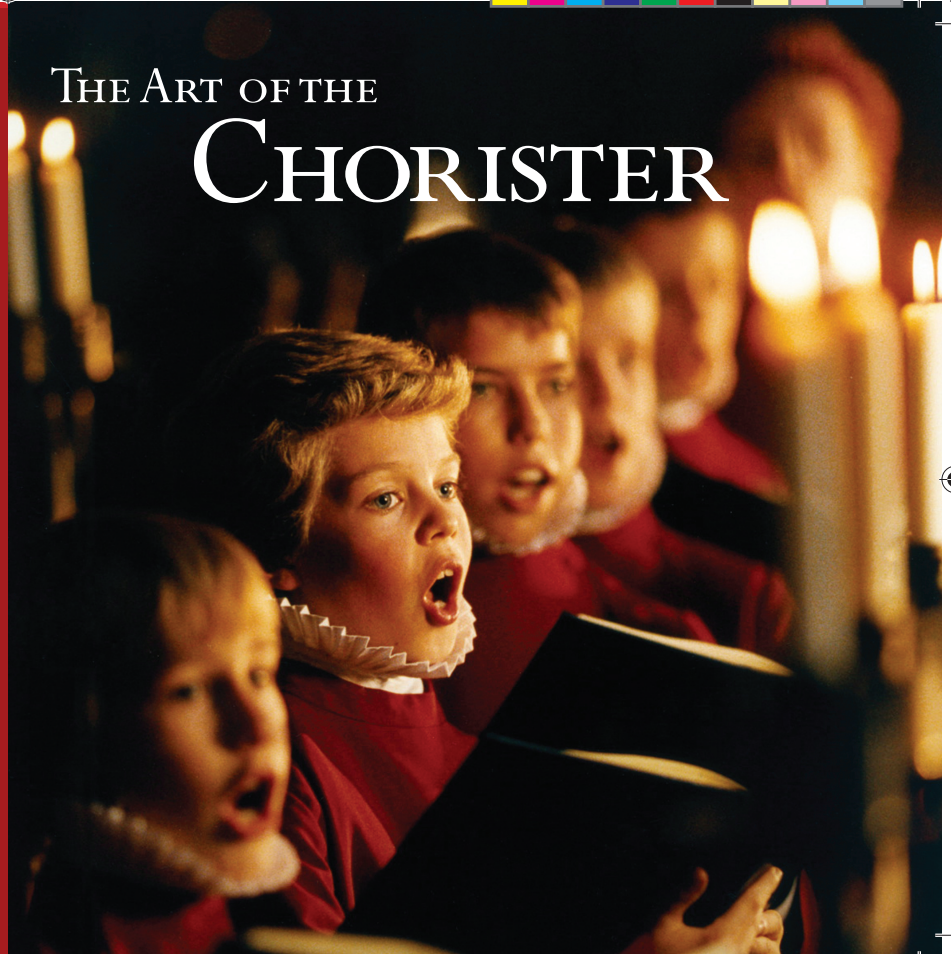




THE ART OF THE CHORISTER



www.newcollegechoir.com



The Art of the Chorister

New College choristers minus cassocks and ruffs

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 1* | Felix Mendelssohn, <i>Laudate pueri</i> / arr. E. Higginbottom
(trio – Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones, Robert Brooks) | 6'25 |
| 2 | François Couperin, <i>Lauda Sion</i>
(first treble: Otta Jones; second treble: Henry Jenkinson) | 6'08 |
| 3 | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, <i>Ave Maria</i> , K.554 | 2'01 |
| 4* | Felix Mendelssohn, <i>Veni Domine</i> / arr. M. Hall
(trio – Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones, Robert Brooks) | 3'41 |
| 5* | John Ireland, <i>Ex ore innocentium</i> / arr. M. Hall | 2'58 |
| 6 | Thomas Tallis, <i>Audivi vocem de caelo</i>
(solo quartet: Otta Jones, Henry Jenkinson, Robert Brooks, William Hewstone) | 4'43 |
| 7 | Henry Purcell, <i>O dive custos</i>
(first treble: Henry Jenkinson; second treble: Otta Jones) | 6'12 |
| 8† | Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, <i>Stabat Mater</i>
(first treble: Henry Jenkinson; second treble: Otta Jones) | 3'50 |
| 9† | Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, <i>Sancta Mater</i>
(first treble: Henry Jenkinson; second treble: Robert Brooks) | 5'35 |
| 10* | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, <i>Seid uns zum zweiten Mal willkommen</i>
(Terzetto from <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> , K.620)
(trio - Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones, Robert Brooks) | 2'04 |
| 11† | Johann Sebastian Bach, <i>Schlummert ein</i> , BWV 82
(solo treble: Otta Jones) | 8'37 |
| 12 | Jehan Alain, <i>Ave Maria</i> | 1'57 |
| 13* | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, <i>Laudate Dominum</i>
(from <i>Vesperae solennes de confessore</i> , K.339) (solo treble: Otta Jones) | 4'31 |

* accompanied by Collegium Novum String Ensemble

† accompanied by Collegium Novum Baroque Strings





New College Choristers

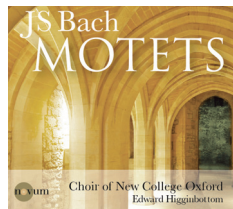
Since New College choristers have been around for over six hundred years, you might be forgiven for thinking that everything about their lives is very traditional. Happily this is not the case: being a chorister these days is cutting-edge, and traditions are only as long as the memory of the oldest chorister, a mere five years. The Choir does not rely on a static repertoire, or indeed on a fixed way of doing things. Both change in response to challenges, circumstances, and personnel. The choristers are recruited from Oxford and its immediate environs, and are dayboys at New College School, which stands cheek by jowl with the College. In recent years the choristers have sung in many places around the globe, and recorded on average two CDs a year, most famously the best-selling *Agnus Dei*. They are well known for their forthright and colourful sound, and their ability to eat strange food when on tour. **Edward Higginbottom** spends much of his time trying to keep up with them.

Collegium Novum is an ensemble of varying character and size (depending on the repertoire) with which the Choir performs accompanied music. It draws its players from a pool of leading exponents in the early music field, as well as modern instrumentalists.

To find out about **New College Choir**, its activities at home and abroad, its recordings, and to purchase CDs online, please go to

www.newcollegechoir.com

Also on the Novum label:



Foreword by Edward Higginbottom

This recital provides a snapshot of New College trebles in the year 2005/06, all sixteen of them - in fact only fifteen, because Matthew had early voice-change. That's the way it is with boys, which might make you think that training boys' voices was a pointless exercise: clearly no future in it. Exactly the reverse is true. Training boys to sing is one of the most rewarding jobs you can have, though time is not on your side: if all goes well, after three to four years you can expect to have a young musician able to perform alongside adults without feeling the need to compensate for youth and inexperience, as you might do in an orchestral environment, and certainly would do in a premier-league football team. And then in less than two years it's all over. Experience, of course, is the one thing a chorister doesn't lack, given that he sings in public several times a week (five evenings a week at New College). Nor does he lack flexibility and the ease to move around a vast repertoire (what other musician by the age of thirteen has performed, to concert standard, several *hundred* works ranging across five centuries?). Part of the joy of leading children on this journey of discovery is that it offers such riches; also such a training in discernment: the ability to tell the moderately good from the good, and the good from the amazing. Without any prompting on my part, choristers naturally prefer to sing Bach and Mozart, raising a cheer when we get out their music. They are of course right; children do not need to be served pap in order to enjoy themselves. But to possess this music they must be able to sing it well, and that doesn't mean simply accurately; it means with a vocal technique and musicianship that conveys the score's beauty. Individualising this process is crucial. Choristers may look as though they are singing as a pack, but they are singing as individuals, as soloists, some of them already confidently self-reliant, others (the younger ones) having that ambition. They must also be fluent sight-readers. This skill emerges as a result of constantly singing different music (in a week at least ten different works). Choristers are the exact



opposite of puppets on strings: they know how to do the job themselves, and they need to be able to do precisely that, with freedoms that are sometimes dangerous, but always exhilarating. The adage of technique giving freedom could not be truer. What continues to astonish me in my work is that a child can teach us adults how to energise *our* work, commit ourselves to a task, and succeed. This doesn't mean that New College choristers are prematurely aged, or have been deprived of their childhood. What it does mean is that our ideas of childhood and the talents that children can cultivate can be hopelessly limited. The chorister experience brings with it immense educational advantages, balances both sides of the brain, introduces children to beauty, teaches discipline and commitment, and assists in keeping in good health. I can't think why we are not all doing this, even those who might prefer to kick a football around, something our choristers are also doing a lot of the time.

This programme of music for treble voices is eclectic not only in its variety of repertoire but also in its contexts, from church, to theatre, to music room. It begins with music by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), one of his op.39 motets for high voices, **Laudate pueri** [1], followed a little later by another from the set, **Veni Domine** [4]. The original keyboard accompaniment has been arranged for string sextet, giving arguably greater colour and depth to the texture. Whilst Mendelssohn demonstrates his contrapuntal technique in both settings, as befits the 'church' style, he introduces a more intimate and expressive style in the solo trios which form the emotional heart of each work.

François Couperin (1678-1733) stands a long way from this idiom, but his easy-going 'petit motet' for the Elevation, **Lauda Sion** [2], brings us within the broader currents of 18th-century music: two treble voices exchange short and elegant responses, interspersed with longer phrases predominantly in thirds. The middle section of the da capo structure presents two discrete solos. Couperin's style, suffused with telling dissonances, reveals what Wilfrid Mellers called a 'voluptuous purity'. The motet dates

The Choristers

Robert Brooks, Otta Jones, William Ford, William Hewstone, Henry Jenkinson, Jake Mitson, Matthew Clarke, Jonathan Moloney, Lewis Spring, Humphrey Thompson, Richard Whittington, Sebastian Cox, Nathaniel Hess, James Swash, Oscar Talbot (accompanied by the clerks of New College Choir).

Organists

Nicholas Wearne, David Newsholme

Collegium Novum String Ensemble

Natalia Lomeiko, Thomas Gould, Hayley Wolfe (violins), Nicholas Bootiman, Maya Rasooly (violas), Oliver Coates, Ashok Klouda, Anna Mowat (cellos), Stacey Watton (double bass)

Collegium Novem Baroque Strings

Margaret Faultless (*leader*), George Crawford (violins), Trevor Jones (viola), Gabriel Amherst (cello)

Director

Edward Higginbottom

Engineer and Producer

Adrian Hunter

Recorded in New College Chapel on 19/20 March and 10 July 2006.

Acknowledgements:

New College Choir would like to thank Marty Sieve and Colleen Shannon for their generous support of this project, and Philip Sayer for the cover photograph.

Cover photo ©Philip Sayer 2006



11. Schlummert ein

Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen, fallet sanft und selig zu. Welt, ich bleibe nicht mehr hier. Hab' ich doch kein Theil an dir, das der Seelen könnte taugen. Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen, fallet sanft und selig zu. Hier muss ich das Elend bauen, aber dort werd' ich schauen süßen Frieden, stille Ruh'.

from the cantata *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82)

Sleep, heavy lids; close, soft and blest. World, I remain here no longer. I have no further part to play useful to the soul. Sleep, heavy lids; close, soft and blest. Here must I misery build; there will I enjoy sweet peace and quiet rest.

12. 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.

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.

13. Laudate Dominum

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, laudate eum omnes populi: quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius et veritas Domini manet in saeculum.

Psalm 117:1-2.

O praise the Lord all ye nations: praise Him all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.

from the 1690s when Couperin, in his twenties, but already one of Louis XIV's royal organists, was absorbing Italianate influences. Knowing Couperin's association in the 1690s with the exiled Jacobite Court at St. Germain-en-Laye, the work may have served the liturgy in James II's private chapel.

In a somewhat neglected corner of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's contribution to sacred music stand several canons. Mozart (1756-1791) wrote them at the stage in his life when he was studying the contrapuntal techniques of the baroque masters (notably Handel and Bach). The canon **Ave Maria** (K.554) [3] is beautifully conceived. The vocal line has a telling range (from top f^{''} to bottom b flat), and allows the individual strands to emerge effectively when all voices are in. In this performance, four separate entries are made. **Laudate Dominum** [13] has never been neglected, being one of the most well-known and well-loved movements from Mozart's sacred output (the *Vesperae solennes de confessore*, K.339). Its gentle barcarole movement, supported by string arpeggiation, has an effortless flow. And the introduction of chorus towards the end sets off the solo voice to perfection.

The same boy trebles who sang this music in Austrian chapels and cathedrals were also the boys who sang in Mozart's great Singspiel *Die Zauberflöte* (K.620). Their contribution comes to a head in the trio **Seid uns zum zweiten Mal willkommen** [10], in which the 'drei Knaben' encourage Tamino and Papageno to partake of a meal. Their singing, though light and airy - as if the boys were spirits - gives voice to the religious undercurrent to the work, suggesting that these children are no mere mortals. When heard in their choir stalls in some grand ecclesiastical setting, they might set off the same thought . . .

Ex ore innocentium [5] by John Ireland (1879-1962) is a setting of an English text (despite its Latin title) by Bishop How, a prominent figure in the Anglo-Catholic



movement at the end of the 19th century. The words come close to the sentimental, though perfectly in tune with their times. As with the Mendelssohn motets, a string sextet arrangement of the keyboard accompaniment lends depth and colour, allowing the natural expressivity of the vocal line to emerge more strongly. It is indeed Ireland's great gift for expressive melody that most deeply charges the work.

We stay with English choral music for the next two works, by Thomas Tallis (1505-1585) and Henry Purcell (1659-1695). Tallis' solo responsory **Audivi vocem de caelo** [6], a text for Matins on the feast of All Saints, is scored for four-part polyphony interspersed with plainchant, the polyphonists taking the sections of the texts accorded to the solo singers in the responsorial psalmody. From the rubrics of the Sarum liturgy, the liturgy in use in England before the Reformation, we know that a group of boys mounted the altar steps to perform this chant, here transformed by Tallis into four separate interweaving vocal lines. On All Hallows (the eve of All Saints) there was also a tradition in Henry VIII's household to have this responsory sung in the King's privy chamber, by boys from the Chapel Royal. Royal connections are also found in Henry Purcell's **O dive custos** [7], a work which is explicitly scored for 'trebles', and headed 'Elegy on the Death of Queen Mary'. Purcell was unusually affected by the Queen's death, with whom he obviously enjoyed a better relationship than with the unmusical King William. The Elegy falls into three sections, a quickly flowing duet forming the middle movement, the two outer sections richly wrought recitatives. Written in 1694, this music shows the composer at the height of his powers, underlining the tragedy of his premature death in the following year.

If Tallis and Purcell were hugely influential figures within the sphere of English music, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) influenced the whole course of 18th-century music on mainland Europe. His setting of *Stabat Mater*, written at the end of another all-too-short life, became a 'standard', published throughout Europe during the course

8. Stabat Mater

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Iuxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat Filius.

*At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.*

9. Sancta Mater

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

*Holy Mother! Pierce me through;
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.*

Verses from the sequence for the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

10. Seid uns zum zweiten Mal willkommen

Seid uns zum zweiten Mal willkommen, ihr
Männer in Sarastros Reich! Er schickt, was man
euch abgenommen, die Flöte und die Glöckchen
euch. Wolt ihr die Speisen nicht verschmähen, so
esst, trinket froh davon! Wenn wir zum dritten
Mal uns sehen, ist Freude eures Mutes Lohn!
Tamino Mut! Nah ist das Ziel! Du Papageno!
schweige still! still! still! schweige still!

*Welcome again, you men, into Sarastro's kingdom.
He returns what was taken away, the flute and the
bells. Would you refuse to eat? Partake, and drink
freely! When we see each other for the third time, joy
will be your reward. Tamino, courage! The goal is
near. You, Papageno, remain silent.*

from *Die Zauberflöte* (K.620)



6. Audivi vocem de caelo

Audivi vocem de caelo venientem: Venite omnes
virgines sapientissime. Oleum recondite in vasis
vestris, dum sponsus advenerit. Media nocte
clamor factus est. Ecce sponsus venit.

Matthew 25:6

*I heard a voice from heaven saying: Come all ye wise
virgins. Fill your lamps with oil, ready to greet the
bridegroom. At midnight a cry arose: Behold the
bridegroom comes.*

7. O dive custos

O dive custos Auriacae Domus,
Et spes labantis certior imperi;
Orebus adversis vocande,
O superum decus in secundis!

Seu te fluentem pronus ad Isida
In vota fervens Oxonidum chorus,
Seu te precantur, quos remoti
Unda lavat properata Cami,

Descende coelo non ita creditas,
Visurus aedes praesidiis tuis,
Descende visurus penates
Caesaris et penetrali sacrum.

Maria musis flebilis occidit,
Maria gentis deliciae breves,
O flete Mariam, O flete Camoenae,
O flete Divae! Flete dea moriente.

Henry Parker

*O guardian God of the house of Orange
and certain hope of our faltering royal line;
O God whom we summon in troublous times,
O celestial glory in good fortune!*

*Whether it be the choir of Oxonians,
recumbent on the banks of the flowing Isis,
or those who are bathed by the rushing waters
of the distant Cam, who call upon thee,*

*Descend from heaven to see the house
not entrusted thus to your keeping,
Descend to see the household Gods of Caesar
and the sacred recess.*

*Mary is dead, lamented by the muses,
brief joy of your people,
O mourn for Mary, people of Cambridge.
O weep goddesses. Weep for a goddess dying.*

of the century, and seen by composers as various as Bach and Mozart as an exemplar of Italian economy of means, strength of expression, elegance of line, and force of harmony. The work has been a staple of the repertory for high voices ever since. Two movements are extracted here, the first, **Stabat Mater** [8] exhibiting Pergolesi's dramatic use of instrumental gesture against the vocal and *durezza e ligature* style of tied dissonance; the second **Sancta Mater** [9] more refined, and designed to exploit the individual voices of the duo texture. In these performances, solo voices are used, as was likely to have been the case in Pergolesi's day.

Schlummert ein [11] by J.S.Bach (1685-1750) is the most arresting of the arias from his solo bass cantata *Ich habe genug* (BWV 82). However, a version in Anna Magdalena's musicbook scores it for high voice. Here it is among three or four such consoling songs reflecting the domestic circumstances in which the Bach family lived, often confronted by death, and seeking support in such texts and music. The circumstance of domestic performance reduces the aria's accompaniment to keyboard. In this recording the string texture of the cantata version has been reinstated, transposed into the G major of Anna Magdalena's transcription.

Jehan Alain (1911-1940) was one of France's most intriguing composers at work between the world wars. Mostly known for his highly original compositions for organ, he wrote also a number of very simple unpretentious liturgical settings, **Ave Maria** [12] being one of these. It provides a very different view of the text from Mozart's (which in any case is partial): an air of mystery surrounds the music, as it surrounds the wonderful Cistercian abbey church at Valloires for which it was written.

© Edward Higginbottom, 2010



1. Laudate pueri

Laudate pueri Dominum: laudate nomen Domini. Sit nomen Domini benedictum: ex hoc nunc et usque in saecula. Beati omnes qui timent Dominum, qui ambulant in viis eius.

Psalm 113:1-2 ; Psalm 128:1

Praise the Lord, ye children: praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth, and for evermore. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.

2. Lauda Sion

Lauda Sion Salvatorem
Lauda ducem et pastorem
In hymnis et canticis.

*Sion, lift up thy voice and sing:
Praise thy saviour and thy king,
Praise with hymns thy shepherd true.*

Sit laus plena, sit sonora,
Sit jucunda, sit decora
Mentis jubilatio.

*Let the praise be loud and high:
Sweet and tranquil be the joy
Felt today in every breast.*

Ecce panis angelorum,
Factus cibus viatorum:
Vere panis filiorum,
Non mittendus canibus.

*Lo! bread of the angels broken,
For us pilgrims food, and token
Of the promise by Christ spoken,
Children's meat, to dogs denied.*

Bone pastor, panis vere,
Jesu, nostri miserere:
Tu nos pasce, nos tuere:
Tu nos bona fac videre
In terra viventium.

*Jesu, shepherd of the sheep:
Thou thy flock in safety keep,
Living bread, thy life supply:
Strengthen us, or else we die,
Fill us with celestial grace*

Sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi

3. Ave Maria

Ave Maria.

Hail Mary.

4. Veni Domine

Veni Domine et noli tardare! Relaxa facinora plebi tuae et revoca dispersos in terram tuam. Excita Domine potentiam tuam et veni ut salva nos facias.

Come Lord and wait no longer. Assuage the suffering of your people. Call the dispersed to return to your dwelling. Reveal your power O Lord, and come to save us.

Alleluia verse for 4th Sunday in Advent

5. Ex ore innocentium

It is a thing most wonderful,
Almost too wonderful to be,
That God's own Son should come from heav'n,
And die to save a child like me.

But even could I see him die,
I should but see a little part
Of that great love, which like a fire
Is always burning in his heart.

And yet I know that it is true:
He chose a poor and humble lot,
And wept, and toiled and mourned, and died.
For love of those who loved him not.

And yet I want to love thee Lord;
O light the flame within my heart,
And I will love thee more and more,
Until I see thee as thou art!

I sometimes think about the Cross
And shut my eyes, and try to see
The cruel nails and crown of thorns,
And Jesus crucified for me.

Bishop W. W. How