

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, March 5, 2023

William Horsley: *There is a green hill far away*
Choir of Liverpool Cathedral, David Poulter

Thomas Weelkes: *Give ear, O Lord*
Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Stephen Darlington
Laurence Cummings, organ

Philip Stopford: *If Ye Love Me*
Utah State University Chamber Singers, Cory Evans

English composer William Horsley (1774-1858) was Organist of the Asylum for Female Orphans from 1802-1854. His tune “Horsley” for the text “There is a green hill far away” dates from 1844. Cecil Frances Alexander wrote this much-loved hymn in 1848. It is published in some 568 hymnals. English composer Thomas Weelkes (1575-1623) composed about 50 anthems of which this five-part anthem dating from 1616 is one. English composer Philip Stopford (1977-) is active as both composer and clinician.

Joao Lourenco Rebelo, *Fratres sobrii*
The Sixteen, Harry Christophers

William Byrd: *Vigilate*
Choir of Liverpool Cathedral, David Poulter

J.S. Bach: *O Lamm Gottes unschuldig*
Wilhelm Krumbach, organ

Portuguese composer Joao Lourenco Rebelo (1610-1661) was the last of his era. From AllMusic.com, “Vigilate is a five-part Latin motet by the renaissance English composer William Byrd (1543-1623). It was published in the Cantiones Sacrae of 1589 and takes its text from Mark 13:35-7, where Christ exhorts his disciples to watch for the end of the world.” The Bach chorale prelude is one of 31 chorale preludes by J.S. Bach that were discovered in a collection at Yale University in the 1980s.

Commentary: The Rev. Dr. Richard Pfaff

John Ireland: *My song is love unknown*
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Sir Stephen Cleobury
Thomas Williamson, organ

George Frideric Handel: *Ach, wie hungert mein Gemute from Brockes-Passion*
Cologne Chamber Choir; Collegium Cartusianum, Peter Neumann

English composer John Ireland wrote the tune for “My Song Is Love Unknown” in 1919 whilst organist of St. Luke’s, Chelsea. The text was written by Samuel Crossman (1623-1683). ChatGPT informs us: “Handel composed his Brockes-Passion for a private performance during the Easter season in 1716. The work was commissioned by the wealthy Hamburg merchant and poet Barthold Heinrich Brockes,

who wrote the libretto based on the Passion story from the four Gospels."

Highmore Skeats Jr.: *Psalm 139, 'O Lord, thou has searched me out'*

Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, Andrew Nethsingha

Glen Dempsey, organ

George Rochberg: *Behold, My Servant*

William Ferris Chorale, Paul French

Herbert Howells: *Saraband (in modo elegiaco)*

Robert Benjamin Dobey, organ

Roosevelt-Schantz organ, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Syracuse, New York

Highmore Skeats, Jr. (1787-1835) was Organist of Ely Cathedral and then Canterbury Cathedral. George Rochberg composed "Behold, My Servant" as a tribute to the memory of President John F. Kennedy. ChatGPT states that "Herbert Howells composed the "Saraband (in modo elegiaco)" for solo piano in memory of his son, Michael Howells, who died in 1935 at the age of nine from spinal meningitis. The piece was written shortly after Michael's death, and it is a deeply personal and expressive work that reflects Howells' grief and sorrow. The "Saraband (in modo elegiaco)" is one of several works that Howells composed in memory of his son, and it is considered one of his most emotionally affecting compositions."

J.S. Bach: *Motet No. 3: "Jesu, meine Freude", BWV 227*

Tafelmusik Chamber Choir and Baroque, Orchestra, Ivars Taurins

The text of "Jesu, meine Freude" is based on a hymn by Johann Franck, and it reflects the theme of Christian redemption through faith in Jesus Christ.

Randall Thompson: *The Peaceable Kingdom*

Schola Cantorum of Oxford, James Burton

ChatGPT writes: "Randall Thompson composed "The Peaceable Kingdom" as a choral work based on the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah, which describes a vision of a peaceful and harmonious world. The piece was inspired by a painting by Edward Hicks, which depicts the same vision of the "peaceable kingdom" as described in the biblical text. Thompson was a devout Christian and drew inspiration from his faith in composing the piece. He saw "The Peaceable Kingdom" as a reflection of his belief in the possibility of human unity and cooperation, and he hoped that the work would inspire listeners to work towards creating a more peaceful and just society.

"The Peaceable Kingdom" is written for SATB choir and is divided into several sections, each with its own musical character and thematic content. The work is known for its lush harmonies, intricate polyphony, and powerful emotional impact. It remains one of Thompson's most popular and frequently performed works."

Dietrich Buxtehude: *Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, BuxWV 146*

Haig Mardirosian, organ

Dobson organ at Sykes Chapel, University of Tampa, Florida

"Dietrich Buxtehude (1637/39 - 1707) was a Danish-German composer, organist, and music teacher

who lived and worked during the Baroque period. He is considered one of the most important composers of his time and is best known for his contributions to the development of the organ chorale and the cantata." Source: ChatGPT

Camille Saint-Saens: *Messe de Requiem, Op. 54*

London Philharmonic Orchestra; Hertfordshire Chorus; Harlow Chorus; East London Chorus, Geoffrey Simon

Tinuke Olafimihan, soprano; Catherine Wyn-Rogers, contralto

Anthony Roden, tenor; Simon Kirkbride, bass

This Requiem was commissioned by the government of France to commemorate the soldiers who died in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

Sir George Dyson: *Hierusalem*

St. Michael's Singers; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Jonathan Rennert

Valery Hill, soprano; Thomas Trotter, organ

ChatGPT writes: "Sir George Dyson composed "Hierusalem" as a choral work in memory of soldiers who died in World War I. The piece was commissioned by the British National Union of Teachers and was first performed in 1922.

Dyson was deeply affected by the human cost of the war and sought to express his grief and sorrow through his music. "Hierusalem" is a powerful and emotionally charged work that reflects the composer's deep sense of loss and his belief in the redemptive power of sacrifice.

The piece is scored for SATB choir and orchestra and features a text based on the biblical book of Lamentations, which laments the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The text is augmented with additional verses that commemorate the fallen soldiers of World War I."

Franz Liszt: *Via Crucis, S. 583*

Tomkins Vocal Ensemble, János Dobra

Dénes Várjon and Ilona Prunyi, piano

ChatGPT notes: "Via Crucis was premiered in 1929, more than 20 years after Liszt's death, and it has since become a staple of the choral and organ repertoire. It is considered one of Liszt's most profound and moving works and is revered for its powerful expression of religious devotion and contemplation."

Henry Purcell: *In Thee, O Lord, Do I Put my Trust*

Tolzer Knabenchor, Gustav Leonhardt

Henry Purcell composed the anthem "In Thee, O Lord, Do I Put my Trust" as a setting of Psalm 31, a prayer of trust and supplication to God. The anthem is scored for four-part choir and string orchestra.