

# Great Sacred Music

## Sunday, March 12, 2023

**J.H. Knecht: *God my Father, loving me***  
Choir of Wells Cathedral, Malcolm Archer

**Samuel S. Wesley: *Wash me thoroughly***  
Vasari Singers, Jeremy Backhouse  
Martin Ford, organ; Julia Smith, soprano

**William Byrd: *Miserere mei***  
Cambridge Singers, John Rutter

English priest George Wallace Briggs (1875-1959) wrote the text for the hymn "God my Father, loving me" which is normally sung to the tune "Vienna" by J.H. Knecht (1752-1817). Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876) was the grandson of Methodist preacher Charles Wesley. His anthem "Wash me thoroughly" is a paraphrase of Psalm 51. Tudor English composer William Byrd composed his setting of Psalm 51 sometime between 1589 and 1591, when working for Queen Elizabeth I as a member of the Chapel Royal.

**Herbert Howells: *Salve Regina***  
Choir of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Frank W. Boles

**Anonymous: *Psalm 130***  
Les Witches  
Sebastian Wonner, organ

**Felix Mendelssohn: *Jesu, meine Freude***  
Chamber Choir of Europe; Wurttemberg Philharmonic, Nicol Matt

Herbert Howells composed his setting of the Salve Regina in 1944 for the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. This anonymous setting of Psalm 130 comes from the Manuscript Susanne van Soldt, a music manuscript created in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1599 by a woman named Susanne van Soldt. It contains a collection of keyboard and lute music, as well as vocal pieces and instructional material for singing and playing instruments. The manuscript is significant for a few reasons. First, it is one of the earliest surviving sources of keyboard music from the Netherlands, and provides insight into the musical culture of the time. Second, it is unusual in that it was created by a woman, as very few music manuscripts from this period were created by women. Felix Mendelssohn was 21 years old when he composed his motet "Jesu, meine Freude" for the Berlin Cathedral Choir.

**William Billings: *As the Hart panteth***  
His Majestie's Clerkes, Paul Hillier

**Gabriel Faure: *Four Motets for female voices***  
Cambridge Singers, John Rutter  
John Scott, organ

**J.S. Bach: *Chorale Prelude: Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, BWV 745***

Nicholas Danby, organ

William Billings (1746 - 1800) is regarded as America's first choral composer. Gabriel Fauré composed his Four Motets for female voices, Op. 10, for the ladies' choir of the Rennes Conservatory in Brittany, France. The motets were written in 1887, when Fauré was serving as the director of the conservatory, and they were intended to showcase the talents of the school's female singers. The Chorale Prelude "Aus der Tiefe rufe ich" is a setting of Psalm 130.

**J.S. Bach: *Cantata 54, "Widerstehe doch der Sunde", BWV 54***

Netherlands Bach Collegium, Pieter Jan Leusink

Sytse Buwalde, alto

The German translates as "Withstand firmly all sin". This cantata was first performed in Weimar on March 24, 1715. Simon Crouch comments on ClassicalNet: "An early, short (around twelve minutes) cantata in three movements for solo alto concerning the avoidance of sin and the temptations of Satan. If dominant sevenths over a thumping tonic pedal turn you on, head straight for the first movement. The use of this dissonance is an ingenious and direct portayal of the title. The tune given to the alto is wonderful and I can never resist singing along here! This sounds like a piece that would be quite easy to arrange for voice plus a couple of instrumentalists. I'm surprised that I've never heard it done that way, since the first movement, despite its somewhat old-fashioned portrayal of sin, would make an excellent showcase for a singer. The first movement takes up two-thirds of the cantata and is followed by a recitative and a four part fugal aria in which, unusually, the vocalist takes one of the voices of the fugue. Lots of lovely dissonance too!"

**Commentary: John Whiteside**

**J.S. Bach: *Partita on "Sei gegrusset, Jesu gutig", BWV 768***

Kevin Bowyer, organ

Johann Sebastian Bach's Partita on "Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig" (Hail, gentle Jesus), BWV 768, was likely composed for his own use in church services or for teaching purposes, rather than for a specific individual or occasion. The piece is a set of variations on the chorale melody "Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig," which is a hymn used in Christian worship to honor the Virgin Mary. The variations explore different musical textures and techniques, including fugues, canons, and toccatas, and they demonstrate Bach's mastery of keyboard composition. The piece was likely composed in the early 1720s, during Bach's time as the director of music at the ducal court in Weimar, Germany.

**Robert Hunt: *Stabat Mater***

Blue Heron, Scott Metcalfe

Robert Hunt's setting of the Stabat Mater was likely composed for use in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, where Hunt was a member of the choir in the early 15th century.

**Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber: *Requiem a 15 in A***

Choir and Orchestra of De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Gustav Leonhardt

Marta Almajano, soprano; Mieke van der Sluis, soprano

John Elwes, tenor; Mark Padmore, tenor

Frans Huijts, baritone; Harry van der Kamp, bass

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's Requiem a 15 in A was likely composed for the court of the Prince-Bishop of Salzburg, Maximilian Gandolph von Kuenburg, for whom Biber served as the court chapel master. The Requiem is a large-scale work for choir and orchestra, and it is notable for its use of multiple choirs and soloists, which create a rich and complex musical texture. Biber composed the Requiem in the early 1690s, and it is considered one of his most ambitious and innovative works. The piece was likely performed in the context of the Catholic liturgy, as a musical setting of the requiem mass, which is a service for the dead.

**Johannes Brahms: *For all flesh, it is as grass from A German Requiem, Op. 45***

Boston Symphony Orchestra; Tanglewood Festival Chorus, James Levine

Johannes Brahms found the text "For all flesh, it is as grass" for his A German Requiem in the Bible, specifically in the first epistle of Peter, chapter 1, verse 24. The text reads: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."

*James Whitbourn: Luminosity*

Commotio, Matthew Berry

James Whitbourn composed Luminosity for the University of Sussex, as part of the university's 50th anniversary celebrations in 2011. The piece is a choral work that combines elements of traditional choral music with electronic and ambient sounds, creating a unique and immersive listening experience. The text of Luminosity was written by the poet Kevin Crossley-Holland, and it explores themes of light, nature, and the cosmos. The piece was premiered by the University of Sussex Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by John Traill, and it has since been performed by other ensembles around the world.

**George Frideric Handel: *Chandos Anthem No. 06, "As pants the Hart for cooling streams"***

The Sixteen Choir and Orchestra, Harry Christophers

Lynne Dawson, soprano; Ian Partridge, tenor

Handel's Chandos Anthem No. 6, "As pants the Hart for cooling streams," was likely composed for James Brydges, the Earl of Carnarvon and later the Duke of Chandos. Brydges was a patron of Handel and provided him with financial support and a residence at his country estate, Cannons, where Handel composed several works including the Chandos Anthems. The text of "As pants the hart for cooling streams" is based on Psalm 42, and the piece is scored for choir and orchestra. The Chandos Anthems were written in the early 18th century and were intended for use in the chapel at Cannons, where Brydges held regular services.