Faire is the Heaven

Music of the English Church

The Cambridge Singers
directed by John Rutter

Collegium RECORDS

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Total playing time: 69' 48"
Note: Words credits are given at the end of each text.

Music of the Latin rite

1 Ave Maria (4' 25") Robert Parsons (*d.* 1570)
2 Loquebantur variis linguis (3' 53") Thomas Tallis (*c.*1505–1585)
3 Miserere mei (3' 46") William Byrd (1543–1623)
4 Haec dies (2' 23") William Byrd
5 Ave verum Corpus (3' 39") William Byrd

Music of the Reformation

6 If ye love me (2' 08") Thomas Tallis
7 Hide not thou thy face (1' 15") Richard Farrant (*c.*1525–1580)
8 Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake (1' 53") Richard Farrant
9 O clap your hands (4' 36") Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625)
10 Bow thine ear (4' 08") William Byrd
11 Hosanna to the Son of David (2' 33") Orlando Gibbons

Music of the Restoration

12 Lord, how long wilt thou be angry (4' 08") Henry Purcell (1659–95)
13 Thou knowest, Lord (2' 05") Henry Purcell
14 Hear my prayer, O Lord (2' 28") Henry Purcell

The Anglican revival and the twentieth century

15 Beati quorum via (3' 21") C. V. Stanford (1852–1924)
16 This joyful Eastertide (2' 17") Dutch carol, arranged by Charles Wood (1866–1926)
17 Sing lullaby (3' 06") Herbert Howells (1892–1983)
18 A spotless Rose (2' 45") Herbert Howells
19 What cheer? (1' 18") William Walton (1902–83)
20 O taste and see (1' 16") R. Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
Soprano solo: Mary Seers
21 A hymn to the Virgin (3' 05") Benjamin Britten (1913–76)
22 Jesus Christ the apple tree (2' 31") Elizabeth Poston (1905–87)
23 Faire is the heaven (5' 05") William H. Harris (1883–1973)

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The music

This recording is dedicated to unaccompanied English church music, sung in a building with an acoustic that allows its characteristic sonority to be heard in its full splendour. The twenty-three motets and anthems selected are drawn from three key periods: the Reformation, in the sixteenth century; the Restoration, in the later seventeenth century; and the Anglican revival, which could be said to date from the emergence of the Oxford Movement in the mid-nineteenth century, after which church music gained in importance and quality over almost a century, until the liturgical upheavals of the 1960s overturned the status quo as decisively as had the Reformation four centuries earlier.
Unaccompanied church music was written during all three of these periods, though the purity of the *a cappella* ideal does not withstand too much critical scrutiny in the sixteenth century, when the use of organ and possibly other instruments to double voice parts was very likely widespread. In the seventeenth century, choral music in general was accompanied at least by continuo, but in the three Purcell anthems here included we have a rare homage to the older polyphonic style; these so-called 'full' anthems contrast with the majority of Purcell's church music, which has independent instrumental parts. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century items represent a rediscovery of the Renaissance *a cappella* ideal, which provided the point of departure for new and imaginative writing for unaccompanied choir: the work of such pioneers as Stanford and Wood revived interest in a medium neglected for over two hundred years and paved the way for such later composers as Vaughan Williams, Howells, Britten and Walton, whose church music has so greatly enriched the Anglican repertory.

The location

The Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral, the largest Lady Chapel in England, was begun in 1321 and completed by about 1350. It is virtually a separate structure, standing to the

north side of the cathedral itself and connected to it by a short corridor. Built of stone with large elaborate windows, it measures 100 feet long, 46 feet wide and 60 feet high; the unsupported stone roof represents a considerable feat of medieval engineering. The interior is richly decorated with stone carvings depicting the life and miracles of the Virgin Mary, most of which were sadly vandalized at the time of the Reformation; the floor is bare except for moveable wooden pews. This impressive and beautiful building, a living symbol of medieval devotion to the Virgin, is blessed with an acoustic which, for the singing of *a cappella* polyphony, is very possibly unequalled anywhere in northern Europe. A glorious five-second reverberation miraculously combines with a transparent clarity that allows every strand of a complex texture to be heard, even in quite fast-moving music; the chapel almost seems to sing before the choir begins, and its music certainly continues, to magical effect, long after the last note has been sung. The saying goes that you cannot photograph a ghost, and I had always felt that the unique Ely sound was, in a similar way, impossible to capture on record. But miracles do happen, and my producer Jill White and her sound engineers Peter Sidhom and Neil Murray achieved the impossible with this analogue recording which, digitally remastered, is so evocatively faithful to the sounds I remember hearing as I conducted, that I can almost smell the cold, damp stonework of the chapel and see the pale Fenland sunlight that once or twice broke through the mist of those two October days in Ely.

JOHN RUTTER

The performers

The Cambridge Singers are a young mixed choir of around 28 voices, many of whom are former members of the choir of Clare College, with some tenors and basses drawn from former members of King's, St John's and other Cambridge collegiate choirs. Established in 1981 by their director John Rutter, their recordings range from English part-songs (a *Hi-fi News* Record of the Month) to the Fauré Requiem in its 1893 version (winner of a *Gramophone* magazine award).

Music of the Latin rite

1 **Ave Maria** (Robert Parsons, *d.*1570)
(SAATB)

Little is known about the life of Robert Parsons and not many of his compositions survive. Like most of the eminent musicians of his time, he was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, the organization of 32 men singers and 12 boy choristers whose job it was to provide music at the chapel services in the various royal palaces in and around London whenever the sovereign was present. Parsons wrote music for both the English and the Latin rites, the latter perhaps during the reign of Mary Tudor (1553–8) when England had temporarily returned to Catholicism. *Ave Maria* is probably his best-known work, a motet of appropriately feminine loveliness and radiance. An interesting feature of its structure is that the soprano part of the opening section, which as it were represents the voice of the angel Gabriel, makes a series of six entries, each one beginning one note higher than the one before. The effect is of rising excitement and ecstasy.

> Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui. Amen.
>
> *(Antiphon at Feasts of the Virgin Mary: from Luke 1, v. 28)*

(Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Amen.)

2 **Loquebantur variis linguis** (Thomas Tallis, *c.*1505–1585)
(SSAATBB)

Tallis began his long and distinguished career as organist of the Benedictine Priory at Dover, in the county of Kent where he is believed to have been born. In about 1538 he moved to Waltham Abbey near London, where he was a member of the choir and possibly organist. This post was short-lived: in 1540 the abbey, in common with all England's monastic establishments, was dissolved by order of Henry VIII, and Tallis was forced to seek another job. He moved first to Canterbury to join the cathedral choir there, then in about 1543 to London, where he became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal; he remained associated with the royal household till his death, serving under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary Tudor, and finally Elizabeth I. Tallis wrote some keyboard and consort music, but most of his surviving output is of church music; before the Reformation he wrote Latin pieces, often long and elaborate, but after the Reformation he successfully adapted to the setting of words in a simpler and more succinct style. *Loquebantur variis linguis* is one of the most glorious of his

pre-Reformation motets, built, like so much of the church music up to this time, around a Gregorian chant, which in this case is sometimes heard on its own, sometimes woven into the fabric of the polyphony. The music seems to reflect the incandescent excitement of its Pentecost text.

> Loquebantur variis linguis apostoli magnalia Dei; alleluia.
> Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto, et coeperunt loqui: alleluia.
> Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto: alleluia.
>
> *(Antiphon at Second Vespers for Whit Sunday)*

(The apostles spoke in tongues of the greatness of God: alleluia.
They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak: alleluia.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: alleluia.)

3 **Miserere mei** (William Byrd, 1543–1623)
(SSATB)

Byrd towers above all other English composers of his time; in fact he ranks as one of the greatest English composers of all time. Reputedly a pupil of Tallis, his first appointment, in 1563, was as organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. In 1570 he moved to London to become a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal; he quickly gained royal favour and in 1575 was granted, in partnership with Tallis, a monopoly in music printing which enabled both composers to publish their own work. In 1593 he acquired a country house in Essex and progressively withdrew from London life; after the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603 he is unlikely to have been much involved with the Chapel Royal. Throughout his life he composed prolifically: several volumes of Latin and English church music, three Masses, besides many songs, keyboard pieces and other instrumental music. Despite the Reformation, Byrd never inwardly forsook the Catholic faith, and perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his career is the freedom with which he continued to write and publish Latin church music long after the liturgy for which it was intended had been outlawed by the Act of Uniformity, which imposed the 1549 Book of Common Prayer; possibly the personal favour of Queen Elizabeth saved him from the harsh penalties meted out to recusants at that time. No one knows why Byrd's Latin church music was published: was it a symbol of defiance, or was it meant for the use of Catholics on the continent, or indeed in England, where secret masses were celebrated by groups of recusants in their homes? Most likely it was a musical and religious testament which its composer perhaps hoped would one day adorn Catholic worship if it should ever return in England. *Miserere mei*, one of the most eloquent and deeply-felt of all the Latin motets, was published in 1591. The text is set to music in an inspired combination of block harmony and

expressive polyphony; the final section of the piece, to the words 'dele iniquitatem meam' rises to a passionate climax which subsides, magically, to a calm final cadence.

> Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam: et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.
>
> *(Psalm 51, v. 1)*

(Have mercy on me, God, after thy great goodness: according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.)

4 **Haec dies** (William Byrd)
(SSATTB)

This, one of Byrd's most popular motets, first appeared in 1591 in the third of his published collections of *Cantiones Sacrae*. As befits its Easter text, it is a bubbly, joyful piece, with some witty rhythmic surprises; born somewhat later, Byrd could have written marvellous jazz.

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus; exultemus et laetemur in ea. Alleluia.

(Vesper Antiphon for Easter Day: Psalm 118, v. 24)

(This is the day which the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia.)

5 **Ave verum Corpus** (William Byrd)
(SATB)

One of the most familiar and treasured examples of Byrd's church music, *Ave verum corpus* was included in the *Gradualia* of 1605, a published collection of his Latin motets. The music breathes an air of personal devotion; at the end of the piece Byrd adds 'miserere mei' (have mercy on me) to the official text, setting this heartfelt plea to music of special expressiveness.

> Ave verum Corpus, natum de Maria Virgine:
> Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine:
> Cuius latus perforatum unda fluxit sanguine:
> Esto nobis praegustatum in mortis examine.
> O dulcis, O pie, O Jesu Fili Mariae,
> Miserere mei. Amen.
>
> *(Pope Innocent VI, d. 1342: Sequence hymn for the Feast of Corpus Christi.)*

(All hail, O true Body, of the blessed Virgin born,
Which in anguish to redeem us did'st suffer upon the cross;
From whose side, when pierced by spear, there came forth both water and blood:
Be to us at our last hour the source of consolation.
O loving, O holy, O Jesu, thou Son of Mary,
O have mercy on me. Amen.)

Music of the Reformation

6 **If ye love me** (Thomas Tallis)
(SATB; originally AATB)

This is one of the best-loved examples of Tallis's simplified post-Reformation style which represents the earliest origin of the English anthem. Chordal, hymn-like passages alternate with sections of simple polyphonic imitation which never obscure the clarity of the words; Tallis adheres fairly strictly to the principle laid down by Archbishop Cranmer that composers should set one syllable per note, and he fashions a perfect expressive gem.

> If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.
>
> *(John 14, vv. 15–17)*

7 **Hide not thou thy face** (Richard Farrant, c.1525–1580)
(SATB)

Farrant was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, later becoming Master of the Choristers at St George's Chapel, Windsor, where he organized the choristers into an acting company that presented musical plays for the entertainment of the court. Not many other details about his life are known and very little of his music survives, but *Hide not thou thy face* and the rather similar *Call to remembrance* were among the most popular anthems of their day and have lost none of their appeal. Farrant's interest in acting is reflected in his word-setting, which is specially direct, declamatory and expressive; the composer seems to shake a fist at heaven.

> Hide not thou thy face from us, O Lord, and cast not off thy servants in thy displeasure; for we confess our sins unto thee, and hide not our unrighteousness. For thy mercy's sake deliver us from all our sins.
>
> *(from Psalm 27, v. 10)*

8 **Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake** (Richard Farrant)
(SATB)

There is some doubt whether this favourite little piece was written by Farrant or by another minor Elizabethan composer, John Hilton (*d.* 1608). Like Farrant, Hilton was a cathedral musician who had an interest in the theatre, producing 'boy plays' enacted by young choristers.

> Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake, lay not our sins to our charge, but forgive that is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives: to decline from sin and incline to virtue, that we may walk in a perfect heart before thee now and evermore. Amen.
>
> *(John Bull, Christian Prayers and Holy Meditations, 1568)*

9 **O clap your hands** (Orlando Gibbons, 1583–1625)
(double choir SATB-SATB)

Orlando Gibbons is acknowledged as one of the foremost composers of his period; he wrote some 40 anthems, a variety of other church music, a book of madrigals, and a large quantity of keyboard and instrumental consort music. He was born in Oxford of a musical family, and sang as a boy in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, where later, in 1599, he became a student. In about 1603 he moved to London to become a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. By the time of his death he was senior organist there, and also organist of Westminster Abbey. *O clap your hands* is one of the largest and most festive of Gibbons' anthems, making vivid use of its eight-voice double choir layout. It was first performed in 1622 at a ceremony in Oxford when Gibbons and his friend William Heyther received the degree of Doctor of Music; one source states that Gibbons wrote the piece as a qualifying exercise for the degree. The music certainly offers convincing evidence of Gibbons' impressive compositional skill, and it contains examples of such 'learned devices' as canon which would no doubt have gratified the examiners.

> O clap your hands together, all ye people: O sing unto God with the voice of melody.
> For the Lord is high and to be feared; he is the great King of all the earth.
> He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.
> He shall choose out an heritage for us, even the worship of Jacob, whom he loved.
> God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.
> O sing praises, sing praises unto our God; O sing praises, sing praises unto the Lord our King.

> For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with the understanding.
> God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon his holy seat.
> For God, which is highly exalted, doth defend the earth, as it were with a shield.
> 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. Amen.
>
> *(from Psalm 47)*

10 **Bow thine ear, O Lord** (William Byrd)
(SATBB)

This piece first appeared in Byrd's 1589 collection of *Cantiones Sacrae* to a Latin text, but it was later fitted to the present English translation, probably not by Byrd himself, however. The music shows Byrd's mature style at its most poignantly expressive; his choice of text is believed to be an oblique reference to the plight of the English Catholics and their outlawed faith.

> Bow thine ear, O Lord, and hear us: let thine anger cease from us.
> Sion is wasted and brought low, Jerusalem desolate and void.
>
> *(Psalm 86, v. 1; Psalm 85, v. 4; Isaiah 64, v. 10)*

11 **Hosanna to the Son of David** (Orlando Gibbons)
(SSAATTB)

Like *O clap your hands*, this is a vivid and resplendent anthem for double choir (though with a single bass part, used to especially telling effect near the end); it could well have been written to grace a royal or other ceremonial occasion. The multiplicity of its printed and manuscript sources is indicative of its widespread popularity in the seventeenth century.

> Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the King of Israel. Blessed be the King(dom) that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest places. Hosanna in the highest heavens.
>
> *(based on Matthew 21, v. 9, Mark 11, v. 10)*

Music of the Restoration

12 **Lord, how long wilt thou be angry** (Henry Purcell, 1659–95)
(SSATB)

Purcell, the greatest English composer of the Baroque period, divided his career between the church and the theatre. As a boy he was a Chapel Royal chorister, and at the age of only 20 was appointed organist of Westminster Abbey. In 1682 was added to this the post of organist to the Chapel Royal, for which much of his large output of church music was written. At about this time he began to write music for the London theatre, remaining prolific in this field until his death. Songs, court odes, the opera *Dido and Aeneas*, five 'semi-operas', and some instrumental music make up the rest of his work. *Lord, how long wilt thou be angry* dates from around 1680 when Purcell was still writing in a style influenced by Tudor polyphony, though with a boldness of dissonance and chromaticism that is distinctively his own; his later church music, mostly 'verse anthems' with prominent solo parts and orchestral accompaniments, moved more into line with the international Baroque style of Lully and his Italian contemporaries. Purcell's ability to bring a text vividly to life remained a constant factor in his style and is one of the most remarkable facets of his genius.

> Lord, how long wilt thou be angry: shall thy jealousy burn like fire for ever?
> O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon: for we are come to great misery.
> Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name; O deliver us, and be merciful unto our sins, for thy Name's sake.
> So we, that are thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, shall give thee thanks for ever: and will always be shewing forth thy praise from one generation to another.
>
> *(Psalm 79, vv. 5, 8, 9, 13)*

13 **Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts** (Henry Purcell)
(SATB)

This brief but eloquent anthem, written for the funeral of Queen Mary in 1695, shows Purcell's style at its simplest and most moving. The music, almost all note-against-note without contrapuntal elaboration, unfolds with dignity and pathos.

> Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts: shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains

> of death, to fall from thee. Amen.
>
> *(from the Burial Service, Book of Common Prayer, 1662)*

14 **Hear my prayer, O Lord** (Henry Purcell)
(SSAATTBB)

Hear my prayer, O Lord was discovered in an album written in Purcell's own hand and dated 1682. It is a fragment of an intended longer work; blank pages were left for its completion. Great concentration and intensity are apparent from the very opening, not only in the emotional expression of the text but in the contrapuntal intricacy of the music: Purcell handles eight-voice writing with impressive skill.

> Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee.
>
> *(Psalm 102, v. 1)*

The Anglican revival and the twentieth century

15 **Beati quorum via** (C. V. Stanford, 1852–1924)
(SSATBB)

Stanford, born in Dublin, spent most of his life teaching and conducting at Cambridge University. He studied in Germany, rapidly gaining a reputation in many branches of composition on his return to England; he was appointed Professor of Music at Cambridge at the early age of 35, and held the post till his death. His church music has a valued place in the Anglican repertory, thanks to its tunefulness, superior craftsmanship and convincing sense of structure. *Beati quorum* via was written in 1905 and dedicated 'to Alan Gray [a friend and colleague] and the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge'. The music is gracious and fluent, making imaginative use of a six-voiced texture. The Latin psalm text is primarily a springboard for the music; the piece could be thought of as a miniature symphonic movement for choir.

> Beati quorum via integra est: qui ambulant in lege Domini.
>
> *(Psalm 119, v. 1)*

(Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way: and walk in the law of the Lord.)

16 **This joyful Eastertide** (Dutch carol, arranged by Charles Wood, 1866–1926)
(SATB)

Like Sullivan and Stanford, two other leading figures in the revival of English music which started in the 1880s and gathered strength after 1900, Wood was an Irishman. He taught at Cambridge, becoming Professor of Music on Stanford's death in 1924. As a composer he is remembered chiefly for his beautifully-crafted church music; he also had a gift for choral arranging, of which *This joyful Eastertide* is a simple but well-loved example.

This joyful Eastertide,
Away with sin and sorrow!
My Love, the Crucified,
Hath sprung to life this morrow.

Had Christ, that once was slain,
Ne'er burst his three-day prison,
Our faith had been in vain:
But now hath Christ arisen.

My flesh in hope shall rest,
And for a season slumber;
Till trump from east to west
Shall wake the dead in number.

Death's flood hath lost his chill,
Since Jesus crossed the river;
Lover of souls, from ill
My passing soul deliver.

(G. R. Woodward)

17 **Sing lullaby** (Herbert Howells, 1892–1983)
(SATB)

Herbert Howells is a composer as hard to classify as he is easy to recognize. Despite the influences apparent in his work – Tudor polyphony, the modality of his friend Vaughan Williams, the impressionism of Debussy and Ravel – his style remained individual: subtle and evocatively sensitive, it often has a melancholy flavour strangely akin to the blues. Church music formed an increasingly important part of his work, much of it written for specific cathedral or collegiate choirs. *Sing lullaby*, one of a set of three 'carol-anthems', dates from 1920; the author of the text was a friend of the composer.

Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,
While snow doth gently fall,
Sing lullaby to Jesus
Born in an oxen-stall.

Sing lullaby to Jesus
Born now in Bethlehem,
The naked blackthorn's growing
To weave his diadem.

Sing lullaby, sing lullaby
While thickly snow doth fall,
Sing lullaby to Jesus
The Saviour of all.

(F. W. Harvey)

18 **A spotless Rose** (Herbert Howells)
(SATB)

This, one of its composer's most familiar and well-loved pieces, was written in 1919 and published as No. 3 of the set of 'carol-anthems'. Although it is a fairly early work it bears Howells's unmistakable stamp in its harmonic subtlety, metrical freedom, richness of texture, sensitivity to words, and long-breathed vocal lines.

A spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest maid;
For through our God's great love and might,
The blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

(14th century, adapted)

19 **What cheer?** (William Walton, 1902–83)
(SATB)

Sir William Walton began his musical life as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. His first published composition, *A litany*, was a short anthem written at the age of 16, and from time to time he returned to church music, though the bulk of his output is orchestral. His handful of church pieces are all of high quality. *What cheer?*, a carol written in 1960, represents the exuberant, rhythmic side of his musical personality.

What cheer? What cheer? Good cheer! Good cheer!
Be merry and glad this good New Year!

'Lift up your hearts, and be glad
In Christ's birth,' the angel bade.
'Say each to other, if any be sad:
What cheer?'

Now the King of heav'n his birth hath take,
Joy and mirth we ought to make;
Say each to other, for his sake:
'What cheer?'

I tell you all with heart so free:
Right welcome, welcome ye be to me;
Be glad and merry, for charity!
What cheer?

(from Richard Hill's Commonplace Book, early 16th century)

20 **O taste and see** (R. Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958)
(SATB with soprano solo)

Vaughan Williams was never directly associated with any cathedral or collegiate choir, but his prolific output includes a fair amount of church music. *O taste and see*, one of the last of his sacred pieces, was written for the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The music is of distilled simplicity, with a pentatonic flavour that reminds us of the composer's lifelong interest in folk-song.

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blest is the man that trusteth in him.
(Psalm 34, v. 8)

21 **A hymn to the Virgin** (Benjamin Britten, 1913–76)
(double choir SATB-SATB)

Church music forms only a small part of Benjamin Britten's large output, but it is a valuable part nevertheless: such works as the *Ceremony of Carols* (1942), the *Festival Te Deum* (1944) and the *Missa Brevis* (1959) bear the stamp of his unfailing professionalism, originality, and imagination with the handling of words. *A hymn to the Virgin* (written in 1930 when he was 17 and revised four years later) is among his earliest published compositions. The text, like many other medieval carol texts, is macaronic, that is, it is partly in Latin and partly in the vernacular. Britten seizes on this feature and lays the music out for two choirs, a larger one singing the English lines and a smaller semi-chorus the Latin. The two choirs sing strictly in alternation until the last verse, where they combine to sonorous effect.

Of one that is so fair and bright
  Velut maris stella *(like a star of the sea)*
Brighter than the day is light,
  Parens et puella: *(mother and maiden)*
I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
  Tam pia, *(thou holy one)*
That I may come to thee.
  Maria! *(Mary)*

All this world was forlorn
  Eva peccatrice, *(through Eve the sinner)*
Till our Lord was y-born
  De te genetrice. *(of thee, the mother)*
With *ave* it went away
Darkest night, and comes the day
  Salutis: *(of salvation)*
The well springeth out of thee
  Virtutis. *(of virtue)*

Lady, flower of everything
  Rosa sine spina *(rose without a thorn)*
Thou bare Jesu, heaven's King,
  Gratia divina: *(by divine grace)*
Of all thou bear'st the prize,
Lady, queen of paradise
  Electa: *(chosen one)*
Maid mild, mother es
  Effecta. *(you are proved)*

(Anon., c. 1300)

22 **Jesus Christ the apple tree** (Elizabeth Poston, 1905–87)
(SATB)

Elizabeth Poston's life in music embraced composition, broadcasting, and the editing and arranging of folk-songs and carols. *Jesus Christ the apple tree*, an original setting of a striking and visionary early American text, first appeared in 1967 in *The Cambridge Hymnal* and gained immediate popularity. The music, almost primitively simple and recalling a curious mixture of Satie, Poulenc and the American shape-note tunes, is of haunting beauty.

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
Laden with fruit and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought;
I missed of all; but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil,
Here I will sit and rest awhile:
Under the shadow I will be,
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
It keeps my dying faith alive;
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

(Anon., collection of Joshua Smith, New Hampshire, 1784)

23 **Faire is the heaven** (William H. Harris, 1883–1973)
(double choir SATB-SATB)

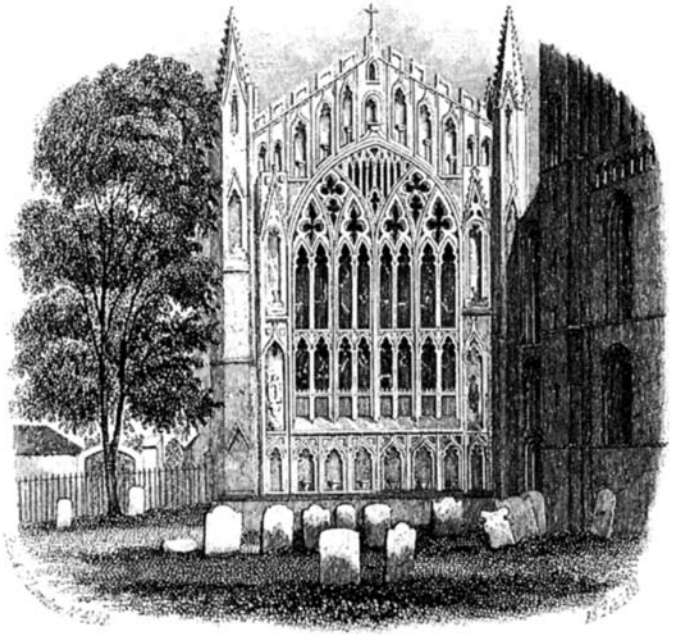
For most of his long life Sir William Harris was a cathedral organist and teacher. From 1933–61 he was organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor; while there he gave piano lessons to the young Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. His published compositions are few, all of them church or organ music. *Faire is the heaven*, written in 1925, is counted his finest work; it remains a cornerstone of the Anglican repertory, beloved by every choir that has ever sung it. It is a spaciously conceived and richly romantic setting for double choir of a fine and little-known text – Harris's inspired choice of texts is characteristic of him – and it seems to evoke with infinite nostalgia the vanished Edwardian England of Harris's own youth: a world where the sun always shone, mellow and golden, through the cathedral windows, where life was secure, leisured and elegant (for the fortunate few) and, above all, where there was no inkling of the cataclysmic World War to come.

Faire is the heaven, where happy soules have place,
In full enjoyment of felicitie,
Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
Of the divine eternall Majestie.

Yet farre more faire be those bright Cherubins,
Which all with golden wings are overdight,
And those eternall burning Seraphins,
Which from their faces dart out fiery light;
Yet fairer than they both, and much more bright
Be th'Angels and Archangels, which attend
On Gods owne person, without rest or end.

These then in faire each other farre excelling,
As to the Highest they approach more neare,
Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
Fairer than all the rest which there appeare,
Though all their beauties joynd together were;
How then can mortalle tongue hope to expresse
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?

(Edmund Spenser, from An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, 1596)



The Lady Chapel, Ely Cathedral
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Collegium RECORDS

COLCD107
Stereo/digital
Made in USA

Recording produced by Jillian White
Recording engineers: Peter Sidhom and Neil Murray
Recorded in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral
by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter
Digitally remastered by the BBC Transcription Recording Unit
from the original analogue recording
Note: This recording, made in October 1982, was originally released
as two albums by Word Records, Inc. It has been re-edited, resequenced
and digitally remastered for this Collegium release.
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COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

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