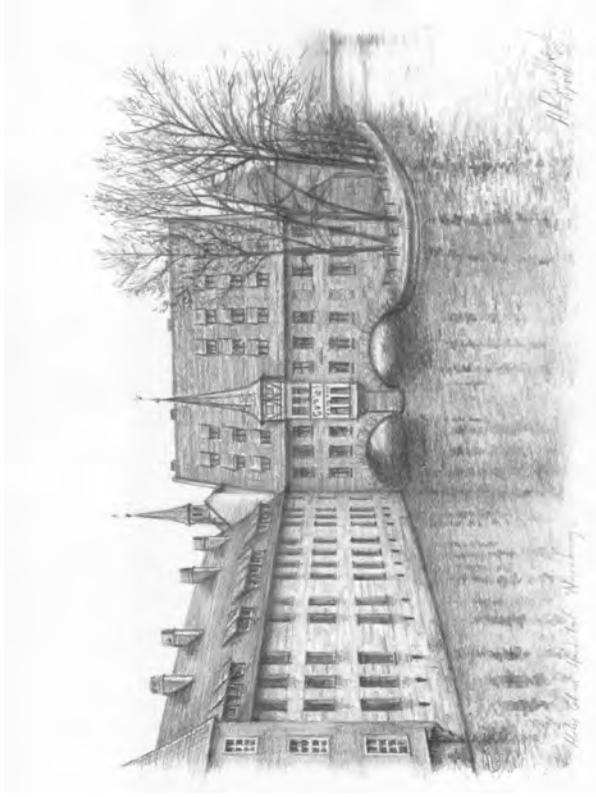


was an instant hit with audiences in London and elsewhere, and the early First Piano Concerto, a student work, had been conducted by Stanford himself at Queen's Hall. Musical commentators of the day had marked Howells as a coming man - no less an authority than W H Hadow described him in 1917 as '.....better able to contribute [to the future of British music] than any man of his age now living'. There is no doubt that Howells was a figure of whom the very highest musical achievements were expected, and the early 1920s saw him adding to his already considerable reputation as an essentially secular composer. Church music had not been ignored of course: his unaccompanied Mass in the Dorian Mode, heard at the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral in 1912, was the first of his works to receive a professional performance and Howells had been encouraged by R R Terry to write several more unaccompanied motets for the Westminster choir. His first professional appointment, in 1917 as sub-organist of Salisbury Cathedral, also seems to indicate leanings towards a career in church music, but this was cut short by serious illness after only a few months. From 1920 his principal source of income was derived from a teaching post at the Royal College of Music. Liturgical music was only one aspect of his musical armoury, and a small one at that. How was it then, that at his death in 1983, his body of church music was so extensive, and his reputation as an ecclesiastical composer so unshakable that, to the post-war generation of listeners, he was known for little else, his contribution to the concert hall all but eclipsed? Although there is no clear-cut answer to this question a number of factors can be considered.

Milner-White's idea did not bear fruit in the short term, but it was clearly not forgotten and surfaced again twenty years later. In 1941 Robin Orr, the organist of St John's College, Cambridge was drafted into the RAF and Howells was asked to deputise for him. Milner-White had been appointed Dean of York that same year, but maintained his Cambridge connections, and the two men renewed their acquaintance. In the intervening years Howells had suffered something of a creative block. His Second Piano Concerto was badly received at its premiere in 1925 and, always hyper-sensitive to criticism of any sort, he quickly withdrew it. Few major works issued from his pen in the late 20s and 30s. His output was confined mainly to miniatures and teaching pieces. There was a real sense of disappointment that his youthful promise had not been fulfilled, and although he was still well-regarded, it was now principally as a teacher. Another important factor was the death from polio of his son Michael at the age of nine in 1935. This was a tragedy that left him completely frozen at the time, and



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settings. Doubt, rather than faith, was beginning to assert itself even in the early years of the century, and by the late 1940s it was the dominant condition of the majority of people. The emphasis of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church, to which Milner-White belonged, and which had been responsible for the revival of choral services in the nineteenth century, was on spirituality rather than rationalism. Howells' ability to capture and express the mystical elements of the texts he set is quite in tune with this ethos, and perhaps more appropriate than the confident assertion of biblical certainties conveyed by the music of his predecessors. Wesley and Stanford had introduced symphonic elements into cathedral music, but Howells had absorbed impressionism as well - the debt in his music to French models has frequently been noted. If Stanford's goal-directed harmony proceeds to its destination, Howells pauses to drink in the view, and dwells on its beauty.

What Howells may have lacked in traditional Christian faith was more than made up for by an aesthetic sense of the tradition for which he was writing. His apprenticeship with Herbert Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral had given him a lifelong love of the language of the Book of Common Prayer and an innate feeling both for architecture and for the sound of voices in resonant spaces. These are at the root of his settings, but there is a less tangible side to cathedral evensong. Patrick Russill has written of the retrospective nature of the office:

'...it is simultaneously nostalgic and hopeful, personal and corporate. In addition to his uniquely evocative exploitation of voices in architectural space, Howells manages to encapsulate not just the ethos of the service, typically progressing from introversion to proclamation, but also to suggest the continuum of tradition - spiritual, cultural and musical - of which the worshipper is a part.'

It has been rightly said that Howells' music appeals to those who prefer incense to sermons, but there are more than purely religious feelings at work. There is invariably a rich strain of sensuousness in the music - Howells was a very sensual man, strongly attractive to women and equally strongly attracted by them. Scarcely surprising then that the music is so sensuous. It is this definitely secular element that adds such piquancy, even ecstasy, to the writing.

Howells himself wrote that each setting was tailored specially for the particular building and choir to which it is dedicated. It has also been widely assumed that each was specially commissioned. However, Howells' letters and diaries reveal that the choice of dedicatees and

ANDREW MILLINGER

Andrew Millinger is a Marketing Manager for one of the companies in the Rio Tinto Group, and has combined a career in industry, frequently travelling all over the globe, with an active musical life. Having started piano lessons at the age of 5, he switched to the organ at 13, and was fortunate to be taught from the age of 15 by Dr John Birch who recently retired as Organist of the Temple Church in London, and as Professor of Organ at the Royal College of Music. He studied Natural Sciences and Economics at Selwyn College, Cambridge, where he accompanied the College Choir in Chapel as well as singing in numerous university and college choirs. He began choral conducting during this period, and acted as accompanist to a number of choirs. On leaving Cambridge, he joined the Bach Choir, in which he still sings. He founded the Collegiate Singers in 1980, when his foreign travels no longer meant being away for weeks at a time. In 1987 he was invited to become the first Secretary of the Herbert Howells Society, working closely first with Simon Preston - its inaugural Chairman - then Dr Martin Neary, and Sir David Willcocks, the Society's President.

RICHARD MOORHOUSE

Richard Moorhouse was born in 1971. He was a chorister at Manchester Cathedral and a student at Chetham's School of Music. At the age of 13 he began to play the organ as a pupil of Gordon Stewart and in July 1992 he graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied with the late Nicholas Danby.

From 1990 to 1992 he was the Organ Scholar at Westminster Abbey and in 1992 he became the Assistant Sub-Organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, a post that he held for over eight years.

In September 2000, he became the Organist and Master of the Choristers of Llandaff Cathedral where he is responsible for all the music in the Cathedral, including the Cathedral Choir (the only professional boys'/men choir in Wales) and the Girl Choristers. In November 2000, he was the musical director for the recording of the I.T.V. programme 'Christmas Glory' which featured not only the Cathedral Choir, but also world famous singers including Roberto Alagna, Montserrat Caballe and Angela Gheorghiu.

Future plans include a choir tour to Singapore in the Summer of 2001 and the installation of a new organ at the Cathedral. This is his third recording for Priory.

Howells' evening services fall into three groups. The first comprises those composed between the wars: in G (c1918), in E flat for unison voices (1924), in E for men's voices (1935), in E minor for men's voices (1941). The second period begins with *Collegium Regale* (1945) and continues with Gloucester (1946), New College, Oxford (c1949), Worcester (1951), St Paul's Cathedral (1951), in B minor for the Church Music Society (1955), Westminster Abbey (1957), St John's College, Cambridge (1957). After a break of nearly a decade the Sarum set (1966) inaugurates the final phase, followed by Chichester (1967), Winchester (1967), St Augustine's, Birmingham (c1968), Hereford (1969), Magdalen College, Oxford (1970), York (1973), Dallas (1975).

As this list suggests, Howells' place as the doyen of English church music composers is unassailable: hardly a week goes by without something of his being heard in one or more of the country's cathedrals, college chapels or larger parish churches. Yet a close examination of what is actually sung shows that this reputation is founded on the frequent performance of a small core repertoire: *Collegium Regale*, the Gloucester and St Paul's services head the list, followed at a distance by St John's, Cambridge, and the G major setting, and occasional performances of the New College set. This leaves a substantial number of settings that are seldom heard, including all of those composed in the 60s and 70s. Performances of some, like the St Augustine's and York services, are very rare indeed. The three most popular settings, those on which Howells' reputation is largely based, were all written between 1944 and 1951. Although there were eleven more services to come, he never again repeated this success. This series of recordings will place those great works, whose reputation is secure, in the context of Howells' complete output of canticle settings. Such a rich repertoire deserves to be known in its entirety.

THE COLLEGIATE SINGERS

The Collegiate Singers were formed in 1980 by Andrew Millinger, and both perform church music and give concerts. The group can be flexible in size, and varies from about 18 to 60, depending on the programme and venue.

Repertoire ranges from pre-Tudor to the present, covering both church and secular music, and including close harmony - some of which has been written specially for the choir. They have made the music of Herbert Howells something of a speciality, and were invited to perform before the composer at a concert to celebrate his 90th birthday in 1982, accompanied by John Scott. The choir gave the European première of Howells' "Washington" Te Deum, and the world première of "Blessed are the dead", both of them performed in Westminster Abbey. They have also been instrumental in encouraging the performance of less well known Howells works by programming them in concerts and in cathedral services. Andrew Millinger has been the Secretary of the Herbert Howells Society since its inception in 1987.

Since 1987, the Collegiate Singers have been based at Westminster Abbey where they regularly deputise for the Abbey Choir. They are frequent visitors to the two other London Anglican Cathedrals, St Paul's and Southwark, but have also sung extensively around the English Cathedrals, and have made a couple of visits to Paris to sing in Notre Dame. Smaller sections of the choir have sung at Livery Dinners in various City of London venues, at the Mansion House, and in the Bank of England. The choir was invited to sing the official televised Service of Remembrance outside Buckingham Palace on VJ Day 1995. In St Paul's Cathedral in November 1995, to a capacity audience which included the Duke of Edinburgh, the choir sang the world première of Malcolm Singer's "Psalms for Today" - which brought the number of world premières performed by the choir in 1995 to three, in a period of just under three months.

The Collegiate Singers have performed in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, making their debut with the Handel Coronation anthems, and in St John's Smith Square, as well as in the Abbey. They have joined with the Abbey Choir for several concerts, notably for a Herbert Howells Centenary concert which included several first performances as well as 'Hymnus Paradisi'. Since 1980, and until recently, they have been performing the annual 'Crisis' Carols Festival in Southwark Cathedral in aid of the single homeless, at which Princess Alexandra has been a visitor on several occasions. In December 1999, they gave their first concert for SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors

but the Archbishop of Canterbury eventually decided against this addition and perhaps thereby set the tone for Howells' setting, which is quiet and meditative, entirely apt for the hushed and excited opening of such a great occasion. The music was first printed in the service book for the coronation itself. The first manuscript draft is dated 'Christmas Day, 1952' and the orchestration (at the coronation it was heard with full orchestral accompaniment) was done by the end of the following March. On this recording the usual organ accompaniment is played.

Words Psalm 84, vv 9 – 10

Behold, O God our defender, and look upon the face of thine Anointed
For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis - Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense

The setting, made in 1970, for the choir of Magdalen College, Oxford and its Informator Choriatarum, Bernard Rose, is one of the most seldom heard of Howells' evening canticle sets. This is not, one suspects, for the same reasons as the neglect of the Chichester service (see the note on that work in this recording), but simply because Howells' harmonic palette became increasingly more and more rich and complex as he approached the last decade of his life, and the music is quite simply hard to sing, and even more difficult to bring off effectively. Perhaps there was also a sense in which choir directors began to wonder why they should embark on learning yet another set of Howells, when they already had such glories as Collegium Regale, Gloucester, St Paul's and St John's in their repertoires. But each setting shows another facet of the diamond, and in the Magdalen canticles, there is a fusion between the generosity and expansiveness of the vocal lines of the earlier works, and the increasingly dense texture of the typically Howellsian 'added note' harmonies. The music moves in new and expressive directions. The pessimism of the Chichester service is transformed into a lush hedonism and both Glorias climax on an exultant chord of the ninth.

Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense was the only work of Howells to be published by Novello in their NovelloChurchMusic series (all the other sets were published in the Parish Choir Book series). This was at the composer's own special request. He wanted it to be a special tribute to the work of Bernard Rose, who was himself general editor of the NCM series.

Dr Paul Andrews is a member of the Herbert Howells Society and was formerly its membership secretary. He worked with the late Christopher Palmer on his book *Herbert Howells: A Celebration* (London: Thames Publishing, 2nd edition, 1996), and his doctoral dissertation was on the music of Howells. Having worked as Music Librarian at Bedford Central Library and Reference Librarian at the Royal College of Music, he is now an ordained minister in the Church of England.

Priory Records and The Collegiate Singers were delighted that Ursula Howells, the composer's daughter, was able to be present throughout the recording sessions, and would like to thank her for her enthusiastic support of the project.

The items recorded are all published by Novello/Music Sales, with the exception of the Unison setting, which is published by Oxford University Press.

Novello are publishing booklets of the Howells' Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis settings, grouping them by area. They are:

The "London" Services: St Paul's, Westminster, B minor [written for the Church Music Society for first performance in the Abbey].
Catalogue No. NOV445000 ISBN : 071198462X

The "Three Choirs" Services : Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester.
Catalogue No. NOV445010 ISBN : 0711984638

The Oxford and Cambridge Services : Collegium Regale, Sancti Johannis Cantabrigiense, New College and Magdalen College. Catalogue No. NOV445032
ISBN : 0711986347

The "Southern Counties" Services :
Chichester, Salisbury and Winchester.
Catalogue No. NOV445021 ISBN : 0711986339

The scores have been edited by David Hill, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Winchester Cathedral, and Musical Director of the Bach Choir.

pastiche of the polyphonic style of the 16th century. Stanford was so impressed with the result that he recommended it to Terry who was in the process both of building up the choir at the cathedral and of researching and re-discovering music of the Tudor period, editing it for performance in the liturgy. Thus it was that Howells' London debut as a composer was made on 24 November 1912, in the liturgical context of a Mass celebrated at Westminster Cathedral. Terry was not just a musical antiquarian however, he was keen to encourage modern composers to contribute settings of liturgical texts which could be sung by the cathedral choir. In response to Terry's encouragement, Howells composed a number of motets between 1913 and 1916, not all of which have survived. Two are presented here (please see note for *Salve Regina* for unaccompanied choir Op. 9 No. 4).

To those who know and love the liturgical and musical traditions of the Book of Common Prayer (and that must de facto include a large number of prospective purchasers of this disc!), 'Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis' seem to belong together as an inseparable musical unit, rather like 'Prelude and Fugue' or 'Minuet and Trio'. To have a setting of the Nunc Dimittis on its own therefore seems like only half a work - where is the Magnificat? The answer to this is that it is only in the liturgy of the Church of England that the two canticles belong together in one service. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, in devising the service of Evensong for the Prayer Book of 1549, essentially produced a conflation of the two Catholic offices of Vespers and Compline, each of which has at its heart a gospel canticle. Magnificat is sung at Vespers; Nunc Dimittis at Compline. Howells was writing for the night office of Compline and his setting of the Nunc Dimittis for double choir was first heard at that service at Westminster Cathedral on Easter Day 1914. The work survives in a manuscript copied out by a cathedral chorister.

Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine,
 secundum verbum tuum in pace:
 Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum:
 Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:
 Lumen ad revelationem gentium,
 et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
 Sicut erat in principio et nunc, et semper,
 et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Chronicle, described Howells' anthems as 'quite the finest by any modern Englishman', making it even more frustrating that some of these works should be lost.

The music of these settings has moved away from the style of Palestrina which Howells was required to imitate in the Mass, and there is a more personal stamp to the language without however, giving very much indication of the mature Howells we hear in the other works on this disc. Perhaps the composer had been looking at the unaccompanied motets of Bruckner (or even those by Stanford), as well as Terry's transcriptions of Tallis and Byrd.

Salve Regina, salve, Mater misericordiae

Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.

Ad te clamamus, exules, filii Hevae.

Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrymarum valle.

Eia ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.

Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.

O clemens : O pia : O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter in Westminster

The Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, commonly known as Westminster Abbey, enjoys within the Church of England, the status of a 'Royal Peculiar'. Coming, as it does, directly under the jurisdiction of the reigning monarch, rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is a place of royal ceremony, of coronations, weddings and funerals of great pomp and circumstance. In the latter part of his life, it became a sort of spiritual home to Howells and he was often to be found there - in the stalls or frequently in the organ loft. As often as not, it was his music that was to be heard. He wrote both sets of canticles for mens' voices for the Abbey and it was where Behold O God Our Defender, included on this disc, was heard for the first time. It also saw the first performances of two post-war sets of evening canticles. The first, composed for the Jubilee Festival of the Church Music Society, was heard in May 1956; it will be included on a later disc in this series. The success of its first performance led directly to an offer of another setting made specially for the Abbey Choir,

A Hymn for St Cecilia

The Worshipful Company of Musicians is an ancient established body, which grew from the London Fellowship of Minstrels, accorded guild status in 1500, and granted a charter and its present name by James I in 1604. Originally a powerful organisation controlling musical activities in London, its present day functions are chiefly in awarding prizes, scholarships and medals. Howells was Master of the Company in 1959-60 and A Hymn for St Cecilia was commissioned by the Company's Livery Club to mark his term of office. The poem was also a commission; from Ursula Vaughan Williams, the composer's widow. Her description of the Hymn encapsulates its mood:

"My St. Cecilia is a girl in one of those magical gardens from Pompeian frescoes, a romantic figure among colonnades and fountains; Herbert's tune takes her briskly towards martyrdom."

Mrs Vaughan Williams has also written that at the first performance, which was given in St Paul's Cathedral in November 1961, the Hymn was sung by members of the Livery Club as they processed up the cathedral's aisle. This is an engaging image, but another account suggests that it was in fact sung by the cathedral choir in their stalls as the Company and clergy did the actual processing. This certainly seems safer from a musical point of view! The delightful descant for the final verse was written as an afterthought, at the request of John Dykes Bower, the cathedral organist.

Words by Ursula Vaughan Williams

Sing for the morning's joy, Cecilia, sing,
in words of youth and phrases of the Spring,
walk the bright colonnades by fountains' spray,
and sing as sunlight fills the waking day;
till angels, voyaging in upper air
pause on a wing and gather the clear sound
into celestial joy, wound and unwound,
a silver chain, or golden as your hair.

Sing for your loves of heav'n and of earth,
in words of music, and each word a truth;
marriage of heart and longings that aspire,
a bond of roses, and a ring of fire.
Your summertime grows short and fades away,
terror must gather to a martyr's death;
but never tremble, the last indrawn breath
remembers music as an echo may.

Through the cold aftermath of centuries
Cecilia's music dances in the skies,
lend us a fragment of the immortal air,
that with your choiring angels we may share,
a word to light us thro' time-fettered night,
water of life, or rose of paradise
so from the earth another song shall rise
to meet your own in heav'n's long delight

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, Gloucester

This justly celebrated work, one of the three best loved and most frequently performed of Howells' canticle settings, followed closely on the success of Collegium Regale, completed in March 1945. The date on the score of the Gloucester service is 6 January 1946 and the place, Lydney, is also recorded. This is important, for the circumstances of the work's composition impart a poignancy to the music. It was written while Howells' mother was dying at the family home in Lydney, where the composer was born and spent his boyhood years. Howells' diary entries for 5 and 6 January record work on a 'Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (F#)'. The full entry for 6 January reads: 'A lovely day with Mother. F# Magn. and N. Dim. finished while talking to her'. Elizabeth Howells died on 26 January, a few months short of her 90th birthday, and although the Gloucester service is not dedicated to her, it is surely not fanciful to find in the beauty and liquidity of its melismas a parallel between the wonder and awe of the country girl from Nazareth, and the astonishment that an ordinary woman from the

Forest of Dean must have felt at having given birth to such a celebrated composer. It is of course entirely appropriate that this setting is dedicated to the cathedral at Gloucester, another potent reminder of Howells' youth and a lifelong source of inspiration. Yet the eventual destination of these canticles is not mentioned in Howells' 1946 diary, and they were not in fact offered to Gloucester Cathedral until April 1947. Perhaps the association with Lydney and his mother prompted the desire to associate this music with that place.

The inspiration that Howells found in architecture has been written about extensively by all his biographers. Howells himself wrote of the ecstasy he felt at seeing light flooding through the great east window of Gloucester Cathedral, the largest in any of the mediaeval cathedrals, and light, lux, luminescence, is at the heart of much of his music. Nowhere is this more true than in this Magnificat's opening: the dovetailing treble lines at 'For behold from henceforth...' with their soft dissonances seem to shimmer in a gently blinding light. The sense of the spaces and massive solidity of the great cathedral are everywhere apparent in this work: nothing is hurried; there is always time for the interplay of its long-breathed lines (which require great stamina from the singers). At first hearing it seems as if both canticles share the same Gloria, but there are subtle differences and two masterstrokes. The first is that after the exaltation of the trebles' top A in the Magnificat's Gloria, Howells has the courage and skill to construct an ending which is quietly ecstatic, rather than simply loud. Secondly, in subtly developing the same music in the Gloria to the Nunc Dimittis, Howells delays the climactic top A, confounding the listener's expectation and making the effect even more spine-tingling. He also allows the choir a quiet, unaccompanied, exquisitely harmonised antiphon before the organ gently takes us into silence as before.

Salve Regina for unaccompanied choir Op. 9 No.4

Compline traditionally ends with the singing of one of the four great Marian Anthems. These are Alma Redemptoris Mater, Ave Regina, Regina Coeli and Salve Regina. Howells set all four texts in 1916 as Four Anthems to the Blessed Virgin Mary Op. 9. As with all the music he wrote for Westminster Cathedral, these anthems remained unpublished and the original manuscripts are lost. Sources for Alma Redemptoris Mater and Ave Regina have not yet come to light, but copies of Regina Coeli and Salve Regina made by Terry's assistant at the cathedral have survived and these anthems, together with the Nunc Dimittis have now been published in editions made by Patrick Russell. Terry, writing in the Westminster Cathedral

Evening Service for Voices in Unison

In 1924, Howells composed a complete set of services (Evensong, Matins and Communion) for voices in unison and organ, published as separate numbers by Oxford University Press in the Oxford Church Music series. The manuscript bears the general title 'Service in E flat' and the whole is dedicated to Howells' first significant teacher, Herbert Brewer of Gloucester Cathedral. There is no suggestion, however that these works were written for or sung by the choir at Gloucester, indeed no indication that they were commissioned by the publisher for the parish in mind at all. It is more likely that they were written with any particular performers choir market at a time when practically every self-respecting church in the country could boast a large boys' and mens' choir. A number of well-known composers, including Vaughan Williams, contributed in this way to the repertoire of choirs which while great in their membership and enthusiasm, were perhaps of relatively limited ability and vision; musically and intellectually unable, if not unwilling, to attempt more demanding settings. There was also something of an evangelical zeal amongst leading musicians of the time to wean choirs off their diet of 'Victorian horrors' by such composers as Stainer (and much, much lesser fry) replacing it with new, bracing, music deriving its melodic contours from folksong, and a rhythmic freedom inspired by the newly re-discovered riches of Tudor church music. The success of this was only ever partial and, as our own age shows only too well, congregations and sadly, clergy have nearly always preferred the saccharine and meretricious in church music.

Howells clearly has a full choir in mind in this setting, since he marks certain passages to be sung by men alone (e.g. 'He hath filled the hungry...') and others by upper voices (e.g. 'And the rich he hath sent...'). Other passages are either marked 'Full' or are full by implication. Provision of a large choir is assumed at the end of the Nunc Dimittis where the upper voices divide into three parts (boys are specified but, as here, the parts can just as effectively be taken by women). Howells makes this optional, conditional on there being sufficient voices. The music of this setting is relatively straightforward; the expansiveness which is an invariable characteristic of much music written to fulfil the aims of the series, occasionally comes dangerously close to a sort of arhythmic meander through the text, but Howells is far too good a composer not to be in control of his material and there are moments of real beauty. Even so, the best that can be said is that this is a good example of 1920s liturgical 'Gebrauchsmusik'. It is seldom heard now, indeed there are probably devotees of Howells who have never known of its existence, but it could usefully be revived in the context for which it was intended so it fully justifies its place in this survey.

an offer that was readily accepted by Sir William McKie, the organist and director of music. McKie's letter acknowledging receipt of the score in March 1957 is full of enthusiasm:

"Your gift yesterday made the day most memorable for me. To see any new [manuscript] for the first time is always exciting - but to be given one written specially for us...! Many many thanks. I could not go into it until late in the evening, so I can't say that I know it yet, but I know it well enough to like it very much, and I hope we will be able to make a good job of it when we first perform it...."

It was first sung in Westminster Abbey on 27 July 1957 during the International Congress of the Incorporated Association of Organists. One of the members of the Collegiate Singers on this recording (Malcolm Elliott, Bass II) had the honour of singing as a treble at that service and remembers McKie bringing Howells into the Song School on a couple of occasions to rehearse the boys in the new setting. It was the first time that Malcolm had met Howells and the composer obviously made an impression. But he became more closely involved with him later in life through his father's close friendship with the composer. Malcolm's father, Raymond, was instrumental in the founding of the Herbert Howells Society in 1987.

This is a setting characterised by textural and harmonic ambiguity, rather than any particularly distinctive thematic material, and the overall effect, particularly when heard in a resonant acoustic, is highly impressionistic. Although the music is rooted in F sharp minor, the first chord is actually of D minor, with a prominent F natural, and the oscillation of these two chords sets up tensions which are only really resolved in the Gloria's final F sharp major chord. It is a hard won resolution for this final chord is approached via the tonally ambiguous route of a progression from D minor, through G major, and E minor in which the tritone between F natural and C sharp has been prominent. Perhaps more than in any previous setting, Howells here shows himself to be the absolute master of harmonic manipulation and expressive contrapuntal dissonance. This is a service in which the listener should try to experience the overall effect of a style which might very aptly be called 'incense-laden', rather than concentrating on incidental detail.

© Paul Andrews
November 2000

Magnificat and *Nunc Dimittis* for the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Chichester. The 1960s was a difficult decade for Howells. His mind was very much taken up with the turbulent international politics of the era; the Bay of Pigs, the start of the cold war, the erection of the Berlin Wall and above all the assassination of the American President, John F. Kennedy became enmeshed with the tragedies and frustrations of his own life, and fuelled something of a late mid-life crisis. Kennedy's death in particular held for Howells a macabre association with the death of his own son Michael, the one death with which he never really came to terms. He felt keenly the same sense of youthful promise for the future, brutally cut short, and through the killing that shocked the world, relived his own tragedy. These preoccupations made their mark on the music written in these years, most notably in the large-scale *Stabat Mater* of 1965 - a setting of the one liturgical text which, in laying bare the feelings, the emotions, the raw pain of a mother watching her son die an excruciating and ignominious death, came very close indeed to territory in which Howells himself was psychologically vulnerable. Something of this seems to have spilled over into his 1967 canticles for Chichester Cathedral. The *Mary of the Magnificat* and the *Mary of the Stabat Mater* are never far apart in this troubled setting. The serenity of the earlier services has evaporated, to be replaced by sharp dissonance (listen to the opening), sinuous, queesting chromatic lines and declamatory statements. The composer seems anxiously to be seeking a certainty that the music refuses to deliver; even the Gloria struggles to surmount this restlessness, and the final *amen* comes to rest on a bare fifth, against which the organ wrenches *A minor* into *A major*, sounding a very hollow praise. Little repose is to be found in the *Nunc Dimittis*. Simeon's tenor solo is as if resigned and exhausted with the struggle to believe in the face of adversity, and the glory of Israel seems forced. Perhaps it's no surprise that this set has not found a regular place in the repertoire - it is too disturbing, too autobiographical, for frequent performance. But the real Howells is here too, and it deserves to be heard.

Nunc Dimittis for unaccompanied choir

Howells' association with Richard Runciman Terry, Director of Music at the then very new Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral (the building was consecrated in 1910) began almost as soon as he arrived in London to take up his scholarship at the Royal College of Music in 1912. He was required by Stanford, as an exercise, to compose a setting of the Mass in a

THE HERBERT HOWELLS SOCIETY



This recording has been made with financial assistance from the Herbert Howells Society.

The society exists to promote the performance, recording and publication of Howells' works. Its President is Sir David Willcocks, Chairman Dr Martin Neary, and the composer's daughter, Ursula, plays an active part in the running of the society. Committee members include John Rutter and John Scott.

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Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Worcester

1950-51 saw Howells working on at least two settings of the evensong canticles - this set for Worcester completed in August 1951 and the St Paul's service in October. It seems likely that the composition of the two works overlapped. Howells noted in his diary that he was working on the St Paul's set over Christmas 1950, and a letter of 6 January 1951 to the composer from David Willcocks, then organist of Worcester, appears to be responding with enthusiasm to the offer of a setting. However, a further diary entry, for 16 August 1951, records the completion of a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for York. Was he working on a third setting, now lost (the service for York recorded in the first volume of this series, did not appear until 1973), or was the Worcester setting originally intended for the Minster? It is impossible to tell, but the confusion adds a revealing gloss to the idea encouraged by Howells himself, that each setting was tailor-made for an individual choir and building, and suggests that the composer's intentions were perhaps more fluid than he liked people to think. It also reinforces the conclusion that, having found a demand for his works in the world of cathedral music, Howells set about constructing his own agenda for a series of settings, and did not wait to be commissioned.

Much of the Worcester Magnificat is characterised by the opening arabesque figure on a solo organ stop (Howells specifies an oboe). This is immediately taken up by the trebles who engage in dialogue with it in music that suggests that Our Lady's response to the Angelic salutation may have involved a fluttering of the heart not found, for example, in the serenity of the Collegium Regale setting of only a few years previously. The plangent sound of the oboe stop sets the tone for the whole work, reappearing in more serene guise in the Nunc Dimittis, and at the opening of the Gloria common to both canticles.

Behold O God Our Defender

Coronations are grand occasions, and music has always played a conspicuous part in their ceremonial. The tradition of commissioning new works from the leading composers of the day was continued for the coronation of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953, and Howells was among those asked to contribute (others included Vaughan Williams and Walton). Howells was approached in early November 1952 with a request to consider writing either an Introit or an Offertorium. The final commission, when it came, was for an Introit to the text from Psalm 84. There was some question as to whether an 'Alleluia' might be included,

and Air Force Association) in the Guards' Chapel in Birdcage Walk, with Joanna Lumley, Peter Barkworth and Jon Snow. Priory Records issued a CD of the choral music of Sir Arthur Bliss recorded by the singers in 1998, which included a number of world premiere recordings. Five CDs of all of Herbert Howells' settings of the Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis (21 in total - surely a record for any composer) and his Morning Canticles are planned for release over the next couple of years. The first volume (released in July 2000) was chosen as one of the "Gramophone" Editor's Choice 'top ten' in the November 2000 edition, and was included in BBC Radio 3's programme of top choral releases of 2000 in December of that year.

The Singers have been fortunate over the years to work with many fine organists, including those of the Abbey and St Pauls. They are trained and directed by Andrew Millinger, but have also sung under Martin Neary, Andrew Lumsden, Martin Baker and John Rutter, and also under Yehudi Menuhin. A section of the choir was conducted by Sir Edward Heath in a special performance of a work written for him by Herbert Howells. The choir is entirely amateur.

SOPRANO 1	ALTO 1	TENOR 1	BASS 1
Sarah Bradley	Angela Edward	Michael Dempsey	John Drewery
Dotty Elliott	Pam Johnson	Paul Houston	John Kirvan
Lucy Field	Fay Hessey	Barry Johnston	David Millinger
Jane Gordon Clark	Liz Parkes	Neil Malcolm	Robin Pegna
Szivia Komaromi	Anne Raikes	Robert Taylor	Bruce Saunders
Charlotte Mahony			Jon Saunders
Alison Peasgood			
Kate Skilbeck			
SOPRANO 2	ALTO 2	TENOR 2	BASS 2
Victoria Clarke	Tricia Larkin	David Boulton	Theo Allen
Judy Day	Jenny Millinger	Brian Elliott	Robert Ascott
Marion Gaskin	Clarissa Poulson	Damien Hall	Malcolm Elliott
Elizabeth Gordon Clark	Ros Saunders	John Peasgood	Mark Hendy
Judith Hillton	Sally Smith	Handley Stevens	Douglas Padgham
Alison Kirvan	Christine Wightman		James Rodley
Marion Padgham			
Jenny Rogers			

the sequence of settings was largely the composer's own and services were more frequently offered than asked for (though they were never turned down). This is true as early as 1946 with the Gloucester Service. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that some services were begun with one foundation in mind, only to end up being given to another. The service for St John's College, Cambridge (1957) is a case in point: diary entries suggest that it was originally intended for Salisbury Cathedral (Salisbury had to wait until 1966). In a letter to his publisher, written in 1969 about the publication of the Hereford service, Howells refers to the series of settings '...[which] I have planned and composed over the past twenty-odd years as a major contribution to music for the English Church. And to complete the series, I am doing settings... for York and Durham.' All this suggests a composer secure in a niche he had carved out for himself, with few competitors of any standing. Durham, alas, never did see its setting - Howells was becoming popular in the USA and in 1975 an actual commission from Dallas, Texas siphoned off his last setting of the Evensong canticles. Towards the end of his life, he was planning a set to a major commission from Washington Cathedral, of which only an incomplete *Te Deum* (later completed by John Buttrey) was written.

Howells' canticles share a sound world, yet each has its individual character. The majority of the Magnificats open with treble voices, sometimes in unison, sometimes in two parts; the majority of the Nunc Dimittis settings open with men's voices, occasionally a solo voice. Long breathed mellifluous lines, reminiscent of plainsong not least in that they frequently decorate the interval of a minor third, interact in subtly dissonant counterpoint in the settings of the late 40s and early 50s. Later in the 60s and 70s textures and harmonies became more astrigent and the statements more declamatory. Harmonies dissolve impressionistically rather than move in a clear-cut way from chord to chord, and the use of the interval of the augmented fourth, particularly against tonic pedal points, to root the tonality paradoxically by threatening to break away from it is a recognisable Howells trademark. Equally individual is the writing for organ - seldom shadowing the voices, but rather weaving its own texture, supporting (and on occasion subverting) the vocal writing, but without doubling it. Howells had a generally low opinion of jazz, but elements of jazz and blues harmony are unmistakable in his own music. A favourite chord consisting of a triad on D in which the major third (F sharp) in the inner texture clashes with the minor third (F natural) at the top unites the organ parts of both the *Collegium Regale* service (at the close of the *Nunc Dimittis*) and the last set of all, the *Dallas Canticles* (at the close of the *Magnificat*).



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Hans Rashbrook's love of drawing and attention to detail developed from an early age, and were broadened through his studies at the School of Art and Design, Swindon College (1983-1987). In attaining his Higher Diploma, he was the first student to take up a specialism in Archaeological Illustration offered within the course, and also gained Licentiate membership to the Association of Archaeological Illustrators and Surveyors. In the 12 years he has worked for the British Museum, Hans Rashbrook has produced illustrations for numerous exhibitions and catalogues, including the Mexican Gallery (1994).

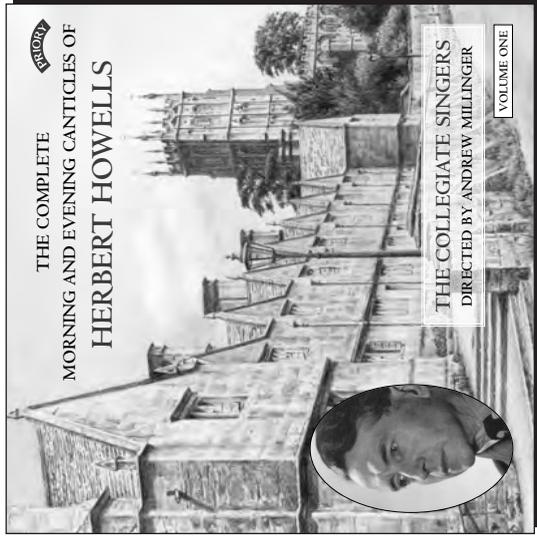
Away from the museum, he has continued to produce a wide range of black and white and colour drawings featuring portraits and buildings. Through his interests in campanology and choral singing, he has specialised in drawing churches and cathedrals, and this had led him to receive commissions from the York Guild of Bellringers and most recently from Priory Records.

continued to affect him deeply for the rest of his life. Most of his later music reflected this loss to a greater or lesser extent, but to suggest that it was purely to find solace for his own grief that he turned to church music would be wide of the mark. It seems from his own comments that Howells was at best an agnostic, and derived little comfort from conventional religion. The boy's death was a factor certainly, but perhaps only one of several, and not necessarily the most important. Towards the end of the war, a meeting between Howells, Milner-White and Boris Ord in Ord's rooms at King's, resulted in the composition of the *Collegium Regale* service for King's College (the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* came first in 1944, the evening canticles following in 1945). It is surely not too fanciful to imagine that Howells, finding himself sidelined as a composer by the musical establishment, and deeply wounded in his private life, had found in his return to active involvement in church music, an outlet for his creativity, an area in which he could make a unique contribution, where his music would be valued and used. In this, the encouragement of churchmen like Milner-White was of critical importance.

Howells composed some twenty settings of the Magnificat and *Nunc Dimittis* in all, of which sixteen fall in the post-war period. While it may not be possible to enquire too closely into the composer's own religious beliefs, it is appropriate to try to explain why Howells should have returned to these texts on so many occasions. Did he always find something new to say? That this is a question that simply would not have occurred to a composer of the renaissance period, from whom new settings of liturgical words were regularly demanded, may be significant and interestingly, Howells said on a number of occasions that he felt himself to be the reincarnation of a lesser Tudor composer. Was he perhaps harking back to an age when the composer's task was to set the words sensitively, but objectively, to allow the music to convey the text, but not necessarily to find new ways of interpreting it every time? Certainly the notion of a composer of Howells' calibre placing his art at the service of the church has echoes of that renaissance principle, and is almost without parallel in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet being able to write music that satisfied a need, and that would be frequently performed, must have been a very significant factor indeed.

The void which Howells' music filled was not just a musical one. Milner-White's intuition that Howells was capable of forging a style in cathedral music for the twentieth century, much as Wesley and Stanford had done for the nineteenth, shows both musical and theological insight. There is a straightforwardness of expression in Stanford's music that suggests a more confident age than our own, and which Howells emulates only in his earliest

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On 2 February 1920, the feast of Candlemas, Herbert Howells' newly published carol-anthem, *A Spotless Rose*, was sung in the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge by the Chapel Choir conducted by the then Director of Music, Dr A H Mann. Afterwards, Eric Milner-White, Dean of Chapel and one of the most perceptive and original theologians in the Church of England at the time, wrote to the composer to congratulate him, and to make a suggestion:

'...We have recently shot out dozens of services etc, & even the minimum that remains is not all up to the lofty standard that we desire here. If ever you feel minded to write a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis - accompanied or unaccompanied - we will put it on at once, gratefully. The Church would profit by a new idiom there!'

Milner-White had found Howells' anthem quite exquisite, and had put his finger on an aspect of its sound-world which, prefiguring Howells' own concerns in the extensive contribution to the repertoire of evening canticle settings he was to make, seems equally prescient: the acoustical properties of the building itself '....where purity of choir, and the wonderful sound-qualities of its spaces added beauty to beauty'.

Prophetic words indeed but, looking back at Howells' career from the perspective of eighteen years after his death, we should resist the temptation to assume that they were the catalyst that inspired him to become the pre-eminent composer of music for the Anglican liturgy in the twentieth century. In 1920 Howells' agenda was rather different. The young composer, who had risen from working-class origins in rural Gloucestershire, whose talent had been spotted at an early age, who had won virtually all the glittering prizes that the Royal College of Music could award, who was Sir Charles Stanford's acknowledged favourite pupil, could hardly be expected to confine himself to a career in church music.

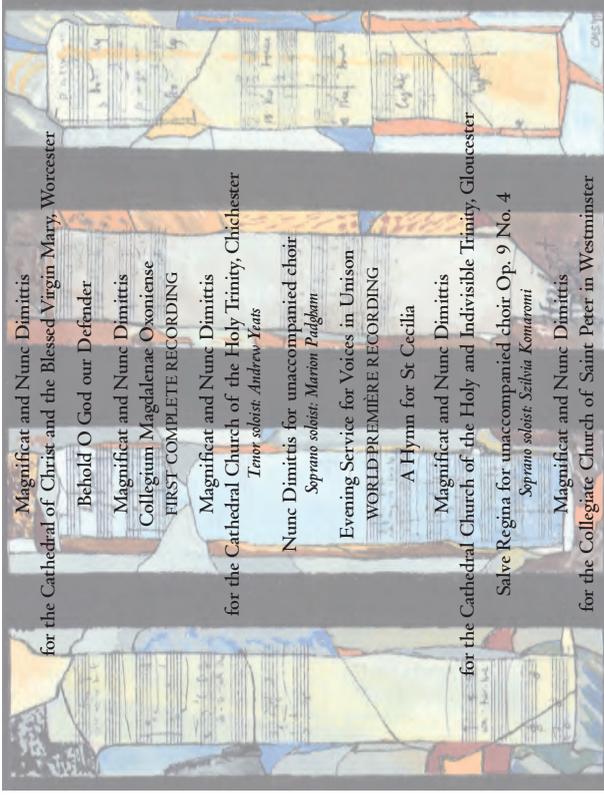
He had indeed composed a setting of the Evensong canticles (the set in G major, c1918, published 1920) but he had principally distinguished himself in the writing of chamber music - his Piano Quartet, Fantasy String Quartet and Rhapsodic Quintet had all won major prizes against stiff competition from established composers. The orchestral miniature Puck's Minuet

- "Gramophone" Editor's Choice November 2000
 - included in BBC Radio 3's programme of top choral releases of 2000
- "Priority's recording is typically excellent." International Record Review
 "This CD bodes well for the remaining discs of the set." BBC Music Magazine
 "The mixed-voice Collegiate Singers... seem to relish every note of this rapturous music."

Church Music Quarterly

**THE COMPLETE
MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES OF
HERBERT HOWELLS (1892-1983)**

Volume Two



Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
for the Cathedral of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Worcester

Behold O God our Defender

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense
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Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
for the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Chichester
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Nunc Dimittis for unaccompanied choir
Soprano soloist: Marion Padgham

Evening Service for Voices in Unison
WORLDPREMIERE RECORDING
A Hymn for St Cecilia

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
for the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, Gloucester

Salve Regina for unaccompanied choir Op. 9 No. 4
Soprano soloist: Silvia Komaromi

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
for the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter in Westminster

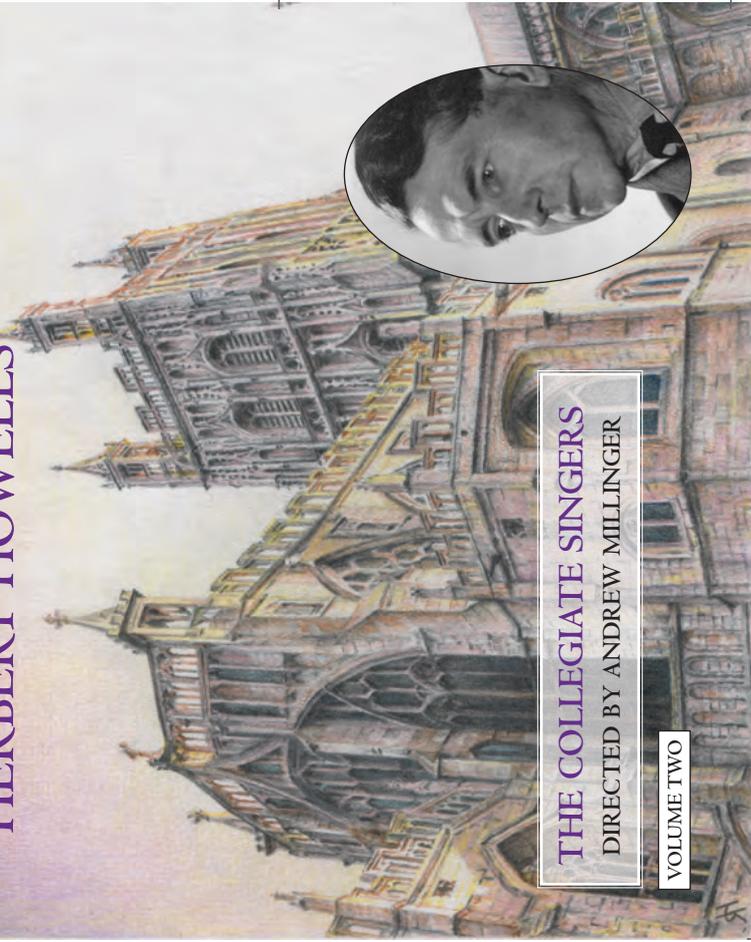
Above: A variation on the design for Herbert Howells' Centenary Window in Gloucester Cathedral

**THE COMPLETE
MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES OF
HERBERT HOWELLS**



THE COLLEGIATE SINGERS
DIRECTED BY ANDREW MILLINGER

VOLUME TWO





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Volume Two

The Collegiate Singers
conducted by Andrew Millinger with
Richard Moorhouse (organ)The Worcester Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis (1951)

1. Magnificat [5:32]
2. Nunc Dimitis [3:18]
3. Behold O God our Defender (1952) [3:27]

The Magdalen College, Oxford
Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis (1970)

4. Magnificat [6:34]
5. Nunc Dimitis [3:53]

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

The Chichester Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis (1967)

6. Magnificat [8:20]
7. Nunc Dimitis * [4:22]
* *Tenor soloist: Andrew Yatts*

8. Nunc Dimitis for unaccompanied choir (1914:) [3:10]
Soprano soloist: Marjion Padgham

Evening Service for Voices in Unison (1924)

9. Magnificat [4:01]
 10. Nunc Dimitis [2:40]
- WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING
11. A Hymn for St Cecilia (1961) [2:58]

The Gloucester Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis (1946)

12. Magnificat [6:29]
13. Nunc Dimitis [4:16]
14. Salve Regina for unaccompanied choir, Op. 9 No. 4 (1916)
[4:21]
Soprano soloist: Sylvia Komarov

Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis for the Collegiate
Church of Saint Peter in Westminster (1957)

15. Magnificat [5:32]
 16. Nunc Dimitis [3:03]
- TOTAL PLAYING TIME [73:26]

A Priory Records Digital Recording

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Digital Editing by Paul Critchton

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Front cover: View of Gloucester Cathedral from a colour pencil drawing
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