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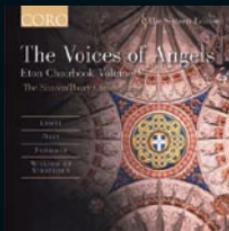
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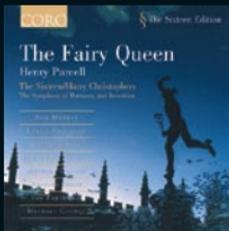
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CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

Blest Cecilia

Britten Choral Works 1

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

REJOICE IN THE LAMB

HYMN TO ST. CECILIA

ANTIPHON

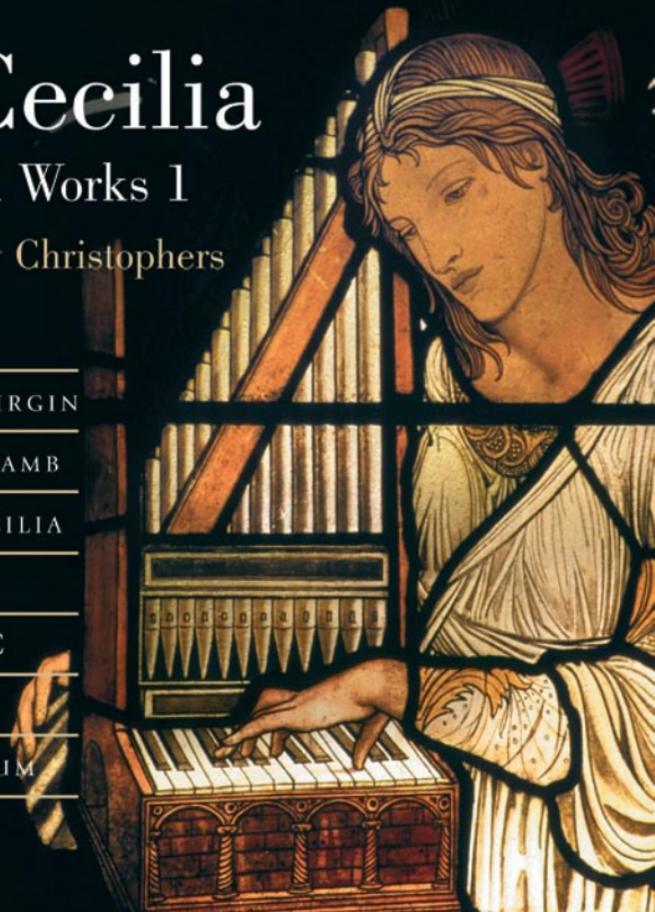
TE DEUM IN C

JUBILATE DEO

FESTIVAL TE DEUM

Made in Great Britain

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO



§ The Sixteen

Blest Cecilia

Soprano

Fiona Clarke, Libby Crabtree,
Ruth Dean, Micaela Haslam,
Carys Lane, Rebecca Outram,
*Sophie Daneman, *Nicola Jenkin,
*Nicola-Jane Kemp

Alto

Deborah Miles-Johnson,
Philip Newton, Christopher Royall,
Nigel Short, *Helen Templeton,
*Caroline Trevor

Tenor

Simon Berridge, Philip Daggett,
Neil MacKenzie, Matthew Vine,
*Peter Burrows,
*Duncan MacKenzie,
*Nicolas Robertson

Bass

Simon Birchall, Robert Evans,
Timothy Jones, Jeremy White,
*Michael Bundy, *Roger Cleverdon

Organ

Margaret Phillips

*HYMN TO ST. CECILIA ONLY

In December 1977, as a member of the choir of Westminster Abbey, I sang at Britten's memorial service; the *Antiphon* was the anthem and Walter Hussey, who commissioned *Rejoice in the Lamb*, gave the Address. I never had the privilege of meeting Benjamin Britten but I felt I knew him through his music. It had taken England many centuries to produce such a distinctive musical personality.

Indeed there would be many that would agree with me that he was the first of such stature since Henry Purcell.

Having sung most of the works on this disc as a boy chorister and as a rather indifferent tenor, I found it most refreshing to look over these scores from a conductor's viewpoint. I am always astounded how years of misguided interpretation lead to the composer's intentions being flagrantly ignored and then termed "tradition" but I didn't really expect it in performances of more recent composers' works. And so it was doubly refreshing to attempt to be faithful to Britten's requests.

His music is never easy but it is always challenging for performers, be they singers or instrumentalists. However, and take note all budding composers, he never sets impossible tasks!



Harry
Christophers,

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Britten was above all a composer for the voice. If choral music is not quite as central to his output as opera or solo song, it nonetheless occupies a consistently important place, from the work that first made him famous, *A Boy was Born*, to his last completed composition, *Welcome Ode* (he was working on another choral piece, *Praise We Great Men*, when he died). In his operas and in his orchestral song cycles, Britten was something of a pioneer, creating a national tradition for opera where none properly existed. In his choral music, on the other hand, he was working within an established tradition; for voices in chorus, from amateur madrigal groups to cathedral choirs, have always been the foundation of British musical life, and the masterpieces of British music, at least before the twentieth century, have mostly been choral. Britten's own choral music grows naturally out of these past traditions, to which he was strongly attached and of which he had a deep knowledge. Its novelty and freshness results from Britten's brilliantly imaginative response to the texts he chose to set (choices which were always original and inventive) and especially his exploitation of their dramatic potential.

Hymn to the Virgin was written in 1930 when Britten was a schoolboy and revised for publication in 1934. He had found the text in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, which he had received as a school prize. The writing for eight-part unaccompanied choir is antiphonal throughout, a semichorus of soloists echoing each of the main choir's phrases. The hymn was sung at Britten's funeral service in

Aldeburgh Parish Church. *A Hymn of St. Columba*, for four-part choir with organ, starts off with firm unison writing, like both the *Festival Te Deum* and the *Jubilate*. It was composed in 1962 to celebrate the 1,400th anniversary of Columba's voyage from Ireland to Iona off the west of Scotland. *Hymn to St. Peter*, which shares the counterpoint of English and Latin with *Hymn to the Virgin*, was written for the quincentenary of the Church of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, in 1955. The words are from the Gradual of the Feast of St Peter and St Paul, and the music is based on the plainsong 'Tu es Petrus', which is sung at the end, to its Latin text, by a solo soprano, while the chorus chants the same words in English.

In the *Antiphon*, which Britten wrote for the centenary of St Michael's College, Tenbury, the first lines of George Herbert's poem, 'Praised be the God of Love / Here below / And here above', suggested to him three types of contrasting music: a florid unison phrase for the first line, deep pianissimo triads for 'Here below' and a soprano solo for 'And here above', which Britten directs to be sung if possible from a gallery. This antiphonal writing continues throughout, with a final repeated alternation of a high F major 'one' and a low ascending 'two', which come together in the last bar.

The early *Te Deum* of 1934, very much in C major, is a straightforward piece, obviously written with due regard for the capabilities of the church choir (St Mark's, North Audley Street in London) who commissioned it. Britten set the *Jubilate Deo*

text in 1961 at the request of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who had suggested that he should write some music for St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle: this was the only piece that resulted. Britten designed it to follow his 1934 *Te Deum*, with which it shares the key of C major and a central, more contemplative middle section, in E major in the *Jubilate*, in A in the *Te Deum*.

Britten's last collaboration with W.H.Auden was in his setting of three linked poems, **Hymn to St. Cecilia*, completed as the composer sailed back from America in 1942. All three settings draw on the luminous major-third relationships and the melodic shapes summarized in the closing invocation they share, 'Blessed Cecilia'. The broad sweep of the first poem gives way to nervous delicacy in the central scherzo, 'I cannot grow', but its pattering scales become a heavy undertow in the last and most complex setting. Minor tonality progressively darkens until the sudden release of 'O dear white children', where Britten moves into that A major with sharpened fourth that colours many of his most visionary contexts. The innocence is destined to be smirched, but the potently isolated solo lines, realizing vocally Auden's instrumental images, achieve a brave moral in the trumpet's 'O wear your tribulation like a rose'. A final refrain dissolves to a distant radiance the cycle's opening music.

The *Festival Te Deum*, Britten's second setting of this text, was composed in 1944 for the centenary of St Mark's Church, Swindon. One can imagine the choir's first shocked reaction on opening of the score and seeing the vocal parts

were written in a succession of changing metres - 5/8, 7/8, 4/4 - quite independent of the organ's constant 3/4. Closer inspection, however, would have revealed that the apparent difficulties had practical solutions: Britten always challenged his performers, but never set them impossible tasks. Much of the choral writing of the *Te Deum* is in unison, and recalls the hymn settings from the 'Sunday Morning' scene in *Peter Grimes*: Britten was scoring the opera while he was composing the *Te Deum*.

Rejoice in the Lamb is one of the most engaging and delightful of all Britten's choral works. It dates from 1943, and was commissioned by the vicar of St Matthew's Church, Northampton, Walter Hussey, for the 50th anniversary of the church's consecration. Mr Hussey had already commissioned a Madonna and Child from Henry Moore and a mural from Graham Sutherland, and was to continue his enlightened patronage of the arts when he became Dean of Chichester Cathedral. *Rejoice in the Lamb* sets part of the long poem *Jubilate Agno* by the 18th-century poet Christopher Smart, written while he was confined to an asylum suffering from a form of religious mania. Smart called his poem 'My Magnificat'; he has the mystic's vision of the unity of all creation in God, albeit from a strangely-angled perspective. He appealed to Britten both as an outsider and as an innocent. Britten set the text as a miniature Purcellian cantata in ten short sections.

Notes by Peter Evans* and David Matthews.

1 A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

1930, REV.1934. TEXT: ANON. C.1300

Of one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella,

Brighter than the day is light
Parens et puella:

I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia,

That I may come to thee, Maria !

All this world was forlorn

Eva peccatrice,
Till our Lord was yborn
De te genetrice.

With 'ave' it went away
Darkest night, and comes the day
Salutis;
The well springeth out of thee.
Virtutis.

Lady flow'r of ev'rything
Rosa sine spina
thou bare Jesu, Heaven's King
Gratia divina:

Of all thou bear'st the prize,
Lady Queen of paradise
Electa:
Maid mild, mother es
Effecta.

2 A HYMN OF SAINT COLUMBA

1962. ATTRIB. TO ST COLUMBA (521-597)

ENGLISH SETTING BY JOHN ANDREWES

Regis regum rectissimi
Prope et dies domini,
Dies irae et vindicate,
Tenebrarum et nebulae,
Regis regum rectissimi.

Diesque mirabilium
Tonitruorum fortium.
Dies quoque angustiae,
Maeroris ac tristitiae.
Regis regum rectissimi.

In quo cessabit mulierum
Amor et desiderium
Nominumque contentio
Mundi hujus et cupido.
Regis regum rectissimi.

3 HYMN TO ST. PETER

OPUS 56A 1955

Thou shalt make them Princes over all the earth:
They shall remember thy name, O Lord;
Thou shalt make them Princes.
Instead of thy fathers, Sons are born to Thee:
Therefore shall the people praise Thee, Alleluia.

King of kings and of lords most high,
Comes his day of judgement nigh:
Day of wrath and vengeance stark,
Day of shadows and cloudy dark.
King of kings and of lords most high.

Thunder shall rend that day apart,
Wonder amaze each fearful heart.
Anguish and pain and deep distress
Shall mark that day of bitterness.
King of kings and of lords most high.

That day the pangs of lust will cease,
Man's questing heart shall be at peace;
Then shall the great no more contend
And worldly fame be at an end.
King of kings and of lords most high.

[4] ANTIPHON

OPUS 56B 1955. GEORGE HERBERT

Praised be the God of Love,
Here below and here above,
Who hath dealt his mercies so
To his friend and to his foe:
That both grace and glory tend
Us of old and us in th'end.
The great shepherd of the fold

Us did make for us was sold.
He our foes in pieces brake,
Him we touch and Him we take.
Wherefore since that he is such,
We adore and we do crouch.
Lord, thy praises should be more,
We have none and we no store.
Praised be the God alone,
Who hath made of two folds one.

[5] TE DEUM IN C

We praise Thee, O God,
We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord
All the earth doth worship Thee,
The Father everlasting.
To Thee all Angels cry aloud
The Heav'ns and all the Powers therein.
To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim
Continually do cry,
Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth!
Heav'n and earth are full of the majesty
Of Thy Glory.
The glorious company of the
Apostles praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the
Prophets praise Thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.

The Holy Church throughout the world
doth acknowledge Thee
The Father of an infinite majesty.
Thine honourable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man,
Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness
of death,
Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heav'n
to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God
In the Glory of the Father.
We believe that Thou shalt come to be
our judge.
We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants,
Whom Thou hast redeemed with
Thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints
in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save Thy people and bless
Thine heritage.
Govern them and lift them up for ever.
Day by day we magnify Thee, and we worship
Thy name ever world without end.
Vouchsafe O Lord to keep us this day
without sin.

O Lord have mercy upon us,
O Lord let Thy mercy lighten upon us,
As our trust is in Thee.
O Lord in Thee have I trusted,
Let me never be confounded.

[6] JUBILATE DEO (Psalm 100)

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands,
Serve the Lord with gladness
And come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God:
It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves,
We are his people and the sheep of this pasture.
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise;
Be thankful unto Him, and speak good of
His Name.
For the Lord is gracious and His truth endureth
From generation to generation.
His mercy is everlasting.
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.

7 HYMN TO SAINT CECILIA

OPUS 27. 1942. W.H. AUDEN

I

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased
their pain.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

II

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like
a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear white children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.

O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.

O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.

That what has been may never be again.

O flute that throbs with the
thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.

O bless the freedom that you never chose.

O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.

O wear your tribulation like a rose.

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

8 FESTIVAL TE DEUM

SEE TEXT FOR TE DEUM IN C

REJOICE IN THE LAMB

OPUS 30. FROM 'JUBILATE AGNO'
CHRISTOPHER SMART

9 CHORUS

Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues;
give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb.
Nations, and languages, and every Creature,
in which is the breath of Life.
Let man and beast appear before him,
and magnify his name together.
Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter,
bind a Leopard to the altar,
and consecrate his spear to the Lord.
Let Ishmael dedicate a Tyger,
and give praise for the liberty
in which the Lord has let him at large.

Let Balaam appear with an Ass,
and bless the Lord
his people and his creatures
for a reward eternal.

Let Daniel come forth with a Lion,
and praise God with all his might
through faith in Christ Jesus.

Let Ithamar minister with a Chamois,
and bless the name of Him,
that clotheth the naked.

Let Jakim with the Satyr bless God in
the dance.

Let David bless with the Bear –
The beginning of victory to the Lord –
to the Lord the perfection of excellence –
Hallelujah from the heart of God,
and from the hand of the artist inimitable,
and from the echo of the heavenly harp in
sweetness magnificent and mighty.

10 SOPRANO SOLO

For I will consider my Cat Jeffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God,
duly and daily serving him.

For at the first glance of the glory of God
in the East he worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body
seven times round with elegant quickness.
For he knows that God is his Saviour.
For God has blessed him in the variety of
his movements.

For there is nothing sweeter than his peace
when at rest.

For I am possessed of a cat, surpassing in
beauty, From whom I take occasion to bless
Almighty God.

11 ALTO SOLO

For the Mouse is a creature of great
personal valour.

For – this a true case – Cat takes female mouse –
Male mouse will not depart,
but stands threat'ning and daring.
...If you will let her go, I will engage you,
as prodigious a creature as you are.

For the Mouse is a creature of great
personal valour.

For the Mouse is of an hospitable disposition.

12 TENOR SOLO

For the flowers are great blessings.
For the flowers have their angels even the
words of God's Creation.

For the flower glorifies God and the root
parries the adversary.

For there is a language of flowers.
For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ.

13 CHORUS

For I am under the same accusation with
my Saviour –
For they said, he is besides himself.

For the officers of the peace are at variance
with me,
and the watchman smites me with his staff.

For Silly fellow! Silly fellow! is against me, and
belongeth neither to me nor to my family.

For I am in twelve HARSHIPS, but he that was
born of a virgin shall deliver me out of all.

14 RECITATIVE (BASS SOLO) AND CHORUS

For H is a spirit and therefore he is God.
For K is king and therefore he is God.
For L is Love and therefore he is God.
For M is musick and therefore he is God.
For the instruments are by their rhimes.
For the Shawm rhimes are lawn fawn moon
boon and the like.

For the harp rhimes are sing ring string and
the like.

For the flute rhimes are tooth youth suit
mute and the like.

For the Bassoon rhimes are pass class and
the like.

For the dulcimer rhimes are grace place
beat heat and the like.

For the Clarinet rhimes are clean seen and
the like.

For the trumpet rhimes are sound bound
soar more and the like.

For the TRUMPET of God is a blessed
intelligence and so are all the angels
in HEAVEN.

For GOD the father Almighty plays upon the
HARP of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases and
the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man by
a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.

CHORUS

Hallelujah from the heart of God,
and from the hand of the artist inimitable,
and from the echo of the heavenly harp in
sweetness magnificent and mighty.

Producer: Mark Brown; Arthur Johnson (track 7 only).
Engineer: Mike Hatch, with Mike Clements (tracks 1-3, 6, 8).
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Edward Burne-Jones dated 1874, located in the Bell Chapel,
Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

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