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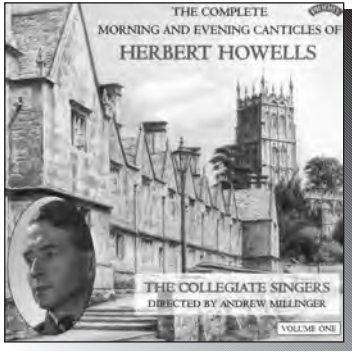

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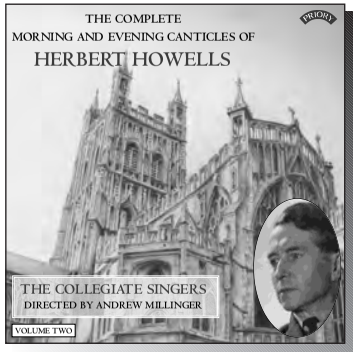

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was an instant hit with audiences in London and elsewhere, and the early First Piano Concerto, a student work, had been conducted by Stanford himself at Queen's Hall. Musical commentators of the day had marked Howells as a coming man - no less an authority 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 (The Latin Nunc Dimittis and the Salve Regina were recorded on the second CD in this series). 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 unshakeable 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

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.

This is his fourth recording for Priory.

suggests a more confident age than our own, and which Howells emulates only in his earliest 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

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 première 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, of which the first three are already available. 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 second volume appeared in Radio 3's 'round up' of the best choral releases of 2001.

The Singers have been fortunate over the years to work with many fine organists, including those of the Abbey and St Paul's. They are trained and directed by Andrew Millinger, but have also sung under Martin Baker, Brian Kay, Andrew Lumsden, Martin Neary 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.

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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 HERBERT HOWELLS SOCIETY

This recording has been made with
financial assistance from the
Herbert Howells Society,
using funds raised principally by members of its
North American branch.

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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'We need particularly anthems for men's voices, accompanied or unaccompanied, and for any combination from AATTBB to ATB... If this suggestion does not appeal to you, perhaps you might consider the setting of the canticles... The tendency nowadays is for composers either to write easy services for Village and Parish choirs, or too elaborate ones for masses of voices for special occasions. The Cathedrals, therefore, fall between two stools. We can rarely find services for SATB accompanied or unaccompanied, of sufficient breadth and lasting merit to bear constant repetition in the general list. Modern services (Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis) for men's voices are almost unprocurable.'

Note that Bullock is here making more or less the same point that Milner White made a decade earlier. The situation had evidently not improved much in the intervening years. Howells had himself contributed to the 'village choir' market - as his 1924 set on volume 2 of this series shows. He composed this setting for male voices and organ in 1935, dedicating it to Bullock, so it is reasonable to suppose that even though between three and four years had elapsed since Bullock's plea, it was written at his behest. So another marker was placed along the road that was to take Howells into cathedral music in a big way. But it was still to be another decade before he finally embarked on his great late series of liturgical works.

Howells originally wrote the work for tenors and basses. As time went on the preference of cathedral choirs tended increasingly towards men's voice settings which included parts for the adult male altos. Howells' service remained in the repertoire at Westminster Abbey, but in 1977 Dr John Buttrey, then a member of the choir, approached the composer requesting permission to make an arrangement of it for altos, tenors and basses. Howells was amenable to this idea, and expressed himself pleased with the result when he eventually heard it sung in Westminster Abbey. Subsequently, other choirs and organists expressed interest in performing the new version so, having carefully established that the composer was happy with the arrangement, Oxford University Press agreed to publish the revised version in 1981. Buttrey's arrangement is used in this recording.

Buttrey's addition of an alto line naturally alters the texture of the work. The original vocal parts are re-distributed across all three voices and Buttrey also made changes to the organ part in order to maintain the textural consistency of the piece. This suggests that although his arrangement is now the preferred version so far as cathedral and collegiate choirs are concerned, it should be regarded as a supplement, rather than a replacement, for Howells' original.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for St Paul's Cathedral

Howells himself wrote the sleeve-note for the first recording of this setting, made for ARGO in 1967 by David Willcocks and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. It is worth reproducing in full here, not only because it says virtually all that needs to be said, but also as a representative example of Howells' prose style; a style as rich in its way as the music it introduces:

'Of the series of canticle-settings offered to people and places, this is the most extended in scale. With the great spaces of St Paul's Cathedral in mind, as well as the acoustical problems Dr John Dykes Bower [organist of St Paul's Cathedral] had experienced during our training in Gloucester Cathedral, the nature of the setting would be acutely influenced. Prolonged "echo", notable in St Paul's, would dictate a less rapidly changing harmonic rhythm than would be feasible in many less-reverberant buildings. So it is that in this setting harmonic and tonality changes are deployed in more leisured, more spacious ways. Climaxes are built more slowly. But with these conditions there goes a heightened volume of sound, and a tonal opulence commensurate with a vast church.'

Proof positive that Howells tailored his settings specifically for the buildings in which they were to be sung? Well there may be a scintilla of doubt because Howells' 1951 diary seems to refer to three settings currently on the go, and there is some confusion between them. St Paul's and Worcester are there, but there is also a reference to a setting for York Minster that cannot otherwise be identified. Did it become either the St Paul's or Worcester settings? We can't tell, but York Minster is also a large building with a generous acoustic.

These musicological quibbles aside, this work certainly seems perfectly suited to the grand acoustical space of Wren's masterpiece. It is certainly the biggest boned, the most expansive of all Howells' settings, and amply justifies its reputation as one of the best of his works. The Magnificat sets off vigorously and confidently, without organ preamble, and hardly seems to look back, ever sweeping forward, with just an easing of the pace at the beautiful 'He remembering his mercy' section, before the Gloria sweeps all before it. The Nunc Dimittis, though quiet, is also expansive, and builds to a fine climax on 'and to be the glory of his people Israel'. The Glorias to both canticles, given the right choir in the right acoustic with the right organ, can seem positively cataclysmic.

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January 2002

St Augustine's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis

In August 1967, Derek Williams, then organist of St Augustine's Church, Edgbaston, Birmingham, wrote to Howells, asking if he would accept a commission for a work for his church choir, leaving it to the composer to choose his text. Howells agreed, and it was apparently his own decision to send a setting of the Evensong canticles, rather than an anthem or motet. In the notes to the Dallas and Hereford sets on this disc, I refer to Howells' sense of frustration at the failure of his later settings to be taken into the regular repertoires of the choirs for which they were written. The fact that the St Augustine's set was completed in draft within three weeks of Howells' acceptance of the commission may suggest that Howells had simply finished off work already in hand, or at the very least been contemplating another setting. Perhaps this is another 'Durham' set that never quite happened.

This is the only Evensong set that Howells composed for an English parish, rather than cathedral or college, choir. If he was hoping that it might stimulate a new market for his late style, then he was to find that in the latter part of the twentieth century, the parish choir was a much less stable institution than it might once have been. Clearly the St Augustine's choir must have been of a high standard in order to contemplate approaching a composer of Howells' reputation in the first place (the vocal writing makes absolutely no concessions in this regard), but a letter from the organist to Howells written in 1971 tells a tale all too familiar to those who have devoted time and energy to parish music. In late 1967, the musical life of the church apparently had undergone radical change, and in spite of hopes that matters might improve it was clear that there was little chance that a choir capable of performing such a difficult work would be available for the foreseeable future. The work was returned to the composer, with the implication that it might be offered elsewhere. Howells did not reassign the set however, and it was eventually sung for the first time at St Augustine's in the autumn of 1980. It remained unpublished until after the composer's death in 1983.

Curiously, like the Dallas setting, this work was associated with the failing health and eventual death of a member of Howells' own family. His brother Leonard died on 4 September, and Howells' diary entry says everything necessary: 'Beloved Leonard died at 5pm. Began and finished A flat Nunc Dimittis - strange coincidence'.

Dallas Canticles

In a sequence of settings, the majority of which were written for the great English cathedral and collegiate foundations, one is somewhat surprised, perhaps even a little nonplussed, to come across the title Dallas Canticles. This slight sense of incongruity is hardly helped by the fact that for most British people the name Dallas conjures up memories either of a popular 1980s American soap opera, or of the city where John F Kennedy was assassinated, if not both. In point of fact there is a link between the Kennedy murder and Howells: Take him, earth, for cherishing, (1964) was commissioned and composed in the president's memory. A decade or so later however, there is no such extra-musical connection, and the prosaic truth is that Howells wrote this set because he was asked to do so by Larry Palmer, a distinguished American organist, and Director of Music at St Luke's Episcopal Church in Dallas. Palmer had been offered a sum of money by the widow of David Stretch, a local philanthropist and patron of the arts, to commission a choral work to be dedicated to her husband's memory. There was by this time a growing number of Howells devotees among American Episcopalians (the Anglican communion in the States), and his works were often performed where the requisite choral forces could be mustered. It is a measure of the esteem in which he was held on that side of the Atlantic that a commission such as this one could be considered, and interesting that it should so readily have been accepted. This was to be Howells' last setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis.

References in Howells' correspondence to his intention to compose a set for Durham Cathedral as part of his ongoing series for English cathedrals lead one to wonder if perhaps the Dallas Canticles (and possibly the St Augustine's set, also on this disc) diverted music that might otherwise have been heard at St Cuthbert's shrine. Of course, a commission is a commission, but in the late 1960s and 70s there seemed to be a disinclination on the part of English cathedral organists to take the later Howells settings into their repertoires, and perhaps there is just a hint that Howells himself was a little exasperated with this state of affairs (I allude to this in the notes for the Hereford set). Why not write a setting for someone who really wants it?

Howells worked on this setting between 28 and 31 March 1975, and his diary records that it was completed on 12 April. His wife Dorothy was terminally ill at this time and the diary also records his anxiety at the gravity of her condition. Perhaps this concern is reflected in the restlessness of the music, although it has to be said that the Dallas Canticles are very much in the readily identifiable late style that Howells had carved out for himself - rich and

complex both in harmony and rhythm. The writing out of the fair copy manuscript was delayed both by Dorothy's worsening health, and his daughter Ursula's injuries in a car accident. Dorothy died on 22 June, and medical advice forbade Howells from travelling to the USA to hear the first performance, which was given in St Luke's Church on 19 October 1975.

An innovation in the Magnificat, found nowhere else in Howells' many settings, is the repetition of the opening words, sung by a solo soprano just before the Gloria. On the other hand, the 'blues' chord on D, juxtaposing F sharp and F natural, leading into the Gloria is identical with that which closes the Nunc Dimittis of Howells' first post-war setting, the Collegium Regale of 1945.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Cathedral Church of Hereford

With the composition of the Hereford service in 1969, Howells had provided canticle settings for all three of the Cathedrals of his beloved Three Choirs Festival, a mini-series that began with Gloucester in 1946, Worcester following in 1951. We know that this set was offered to Hereford rather than commissioned: Richard Lloyd, organist of the Cathedral in 1967, informed the present writer in 1998 that Howells had been talking about making a setting for Hereford for some years previously. The work was first sung at an Evensong in May 1970, and repeated in August at the Three Choirs Festival, held that year in Hereford.

A letter from Howells to his publisher, Novello, concerning this setting survives and provides an insight into Howells' own intentions, and to an extent his frustrations. I have already quoted a passage from it in the general introduction to these discs, showing that Howells himself planned his series of cathedral settings, without waiting to be commissioned in each case. The real purpose of the letter however, was to protest at the way in which Novello seemed to be dragging their feet over getting the Hereford service into print. Reading between the lines, it seems that the publisher was becoming increasingly reluctant to engrave yet another Howells setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis. It is worth bearing in mind that the Winchester, Chichester and Sarum services had all been published a year earlier in 1968, so it is perhaps not surprising that the management at Novello were becoming twitchy about adding yet another so soon - especially if sales of the earlier sets had been slow (none was to achieve a permanent place in the repertoire). Howells' letter contains a veiled threat to take 'Hereford' elsewhere ('... I find it unthinkable to send the Hereford Service - and those settings planned for York and Durham - to any other publisher...') He later noted in his diary in May 1970 that Novello had reversed their decision, but he still had to wait another two years for publication.

The 'Winchester' Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis

This setting is one of four, composed over a relatively short space of time in 1966 and 1967. Together with the 'Sarum' and Chichester sets, it completes a trio of works for the Southern cathedrals, whose joint modern festivals mirror the much longer established Three Choirs Festival of Howells' beloved Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford. The fourth setting of 1966/67, for St Augustine's Church, Edgbaston, is also on this disc.

None of these three Southern settings has become established in the cathedral repertoire in the way that the earlier settings for King's College, Cambridge, Gloucester and St Paul's Cathedrals did, and they are regarded by some commentators as less inspired, more reliant on Howells' superb polyphonic technique to maintain their momentum, than on the white heat of inspiration. Perhaps Howells had really said everything he had to say in respect of these oft-set texts, and was running on auto-pilot. Yet these works all have their particular characteristics and the Winchester set is no exception. In this case, it seems to be a greater indebtedness to the influence of plainsong. The opening of the Magnificat is a long passage for trebles, whose melismas seem rooted in florid medieval chant. This is not to deny the chromatic sophistication which is such a trademark of Howells, but simply to analyse the overall shape of the melodies with their reliance on thirds and fourths. This sense seems to inform the whole work. The start of the Nunc Dimittis picks up the triplet rhythm of the Magnificat's opening, and the trebles' first phrase picks out the notes of a standard plainsong psalm tone, its subsequent melismas seeming to revolve around a reciting note. This is not to say that Howells is indulging in deliberate archaicisms however: the harmony produced by the interweaving of parts is as chromatic and softly dissonant as ever. And the startling final cadences are pure Howells: the Magnficat's A major is approached by way of B flat minor (!), whereas the same route in the Nunc Dimittis culminates in a fortissimo C major.

Aware of, even obsessed as he was by, human mortality, Howells noted on the manuscript that he completed this work on 7 March 1967 'The morrow of Kodály's death'. If it seems a little odd that Howells should be so moved by the death of a composer whose musical and personal spheres were so remote from his own, then it should be noted that the two men had met during a visit by Kodály to London in the 1960s, and that Howells kept a letter from the Hungarian among his papers (now in the library of the Royal College of Music).

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.

The items recorded are published mainly by Novello/ Music Sales; details are given below.

Novello have issued booklets of most of the settings published by them, grouping them as follows:

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 B minor Service is also published by the Church Music Society.

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

All of the above booklets have been edited by David Hill, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Winchester Cathedral, Musical Director of the Bach Choir and recently appointed Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge from September 2003.

The services recorded are also available individually as separate leaflets from Novello:- Winchester: Nov Cat 29 0410; Hereford: PCB 1461; St Paul's: Nov Cat 29 0295. The St Augustine's Service is available only as a separate leaflet: Catalogue No. NOV 29 0528.

The Men's Voices Service (in the ATB version arranged by Dr John Buttrey) is published by Oxford University Press: S 514 ISBN: 0-19-351 656 - X.

The Dallas Canticles are published by Aureole Editions. It is distributed by MorningStar Music Publishers, 1727 Larkin Williams Road, Fenton, MO 63026, USA. Tel: 001 800 647 2117. Copies may be ordered through reputable music shops, e.g. Boosey & Hawkes.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in B minor

This setting stands out from the main series of Howells' post-war canticle sets in being composed, not for a particular choir or church, but for a special occasion. Howells was a well-loved and respected Vice-President of the Church Music Society, and when the Society celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1956, Howells wrote these canticles in B minor especially for the Jubilee Festival Service in Westminster Abbey, completing them right at the end of 1955. At the Jubilee service itself, on 17 May 1956, the music was sung by the Abbey Choir, directed by Sir William Mckie. This makes the CMS canticles one of several works written with Westminster Abbey in mind, reinforcing Howells' close association with that great church. In fact it is one of four sets of evening canticles written for the Abbey Choir; the others being the set for men's voices of 1935 which can be heard on this disc, another composed in 1941 (in volume 1), and the set 'For the Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster' written in 1957 (in volume 2), a year after the B minor set, and almost certainly as a direct result of its success, and popularity with the choir. In a letter of thanks to Mckie following the CMS Jubilee service, Howells refers to his plan to write a 'Westminster Abbey Service'.

This is a set that has been rather overshadowed by the big 'named' services that precede it by only a few years, and it deserves to be much better known and more frequently performed. It possesses every bit of the power and the serenity of the more well-known settings, and is utterly characteristic of Howells' mature style. Moreover it is slightly less taxing from a singer's point of view, and would therefore, perhaps with the New College set, be a good choice for a choir reluctant to tackle one of the bigger settings.

Originally published by Novello in 1956, it was reprinted by the Church Music Society to celebrate the centenary of Howells' birth in 1992.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for Men's Voices (ed. John Buttrey)

I have already written of Eric Milner White's perception in divining as early as 1920 that Howells had the potential to revitalise English cathedral music. He was by no means the only figure to discern this latent gift. In 1931, Ernest Bullock, then organist of Westminster Abbey, wrote to Howells with a proposition:

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 St Paul's Cathedral, have sung many times in Southwark Cathedral, and 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

commissioned. However, Howells' letters and diaries reveal that the choice of dedicatees and 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 astringent 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).

SOPRANO 1	ALTO 1	TENOR 1	BASS 1
Sarah Bradley	Angela Edward	Michael Dempsey	David Brook
Dotty Elliott	Fay Hessey	James Higgins	John Drewery
Lucy Field	Pam Johnson	Paul Houston	John Kirvan
Jane Gordon Clark	Tricia Larkin	Barry Johnston	David Millinger
Phillippa Lay	Penny Lloyd	Richard Swift	Robin Pegna
Szilvia Komaromi	Anne Raikes		Richard Prince
Alison Peasgood			Bruce Saunders
Kate Skilbeck			Jonathan Saunders
Valerie Thompson			
Gillian Weber			

SOPRANO 2	ALTO 2	TENOR 2	BASS 2
Elizabeth Brown	Lynette Levitt	Brian Elliott	Theo Allen
Marion Gaskin	Jenny Millinger	Damien Hall	Robert Ascott
Joyce Horn	Liz Parkes	Neil Malcolm	Malcolm Elliott
Kate Kingan	Ros Saunders	John Peasgood	Jonathan Kingan
Judith Hilton	Christine Wightman	Handley Stevens	Douglas Padgham
Marianne Laker			
Marion Padgham			
Jenny Rogers			
Patta Tolputt			
Jan Whittle			

at the age of nine in 1935. This was a tragedy that left him completely frozen at the time, and 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

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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 B/TEC Higher National Diploma in Graphic Design, he was the first student to take up a specialism in Archaeological Illustration offered within the course, and also gained Licenciate Membership to the Association of Archaeological Illustrators and Surveyors. He has contributed illustrations to numerous publications, exhibitions and catalogues, most notably for the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum, London.

Hans Rashbrook has also produced a wide variety of work in colour and graphite pencil, pen and ink, gouache and watercolour, predominantly featuring portraiture and architectural landscapes. Through his interests in campanology and choral music he has developed a special interest in churches and cathedrals, and this had led him to receive commissions from the York Guild of Bellringers and from Priory Records.

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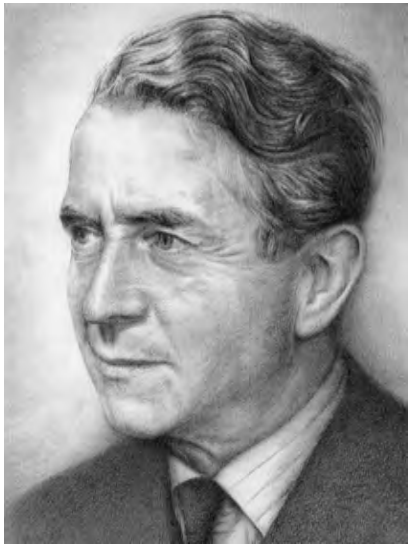

THE COMPLETE MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES OF HERBERT HOWELLS (1892-1983)

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 nearly twenty 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

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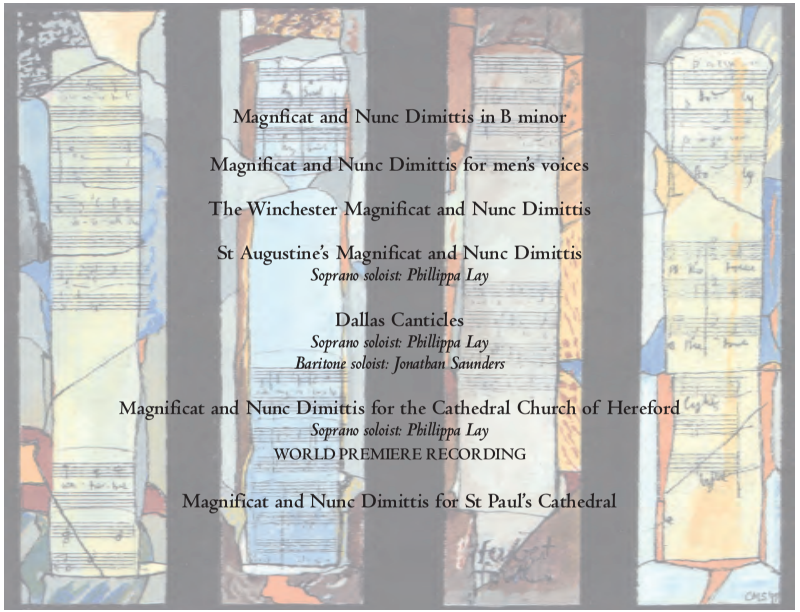
THE COMPLETE MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES OF HERBERT HOWELLS (1892-1983)

Volume Three



Magnficat and Nunc Dimittis in B minor

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for men's voices

The Winchester Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis

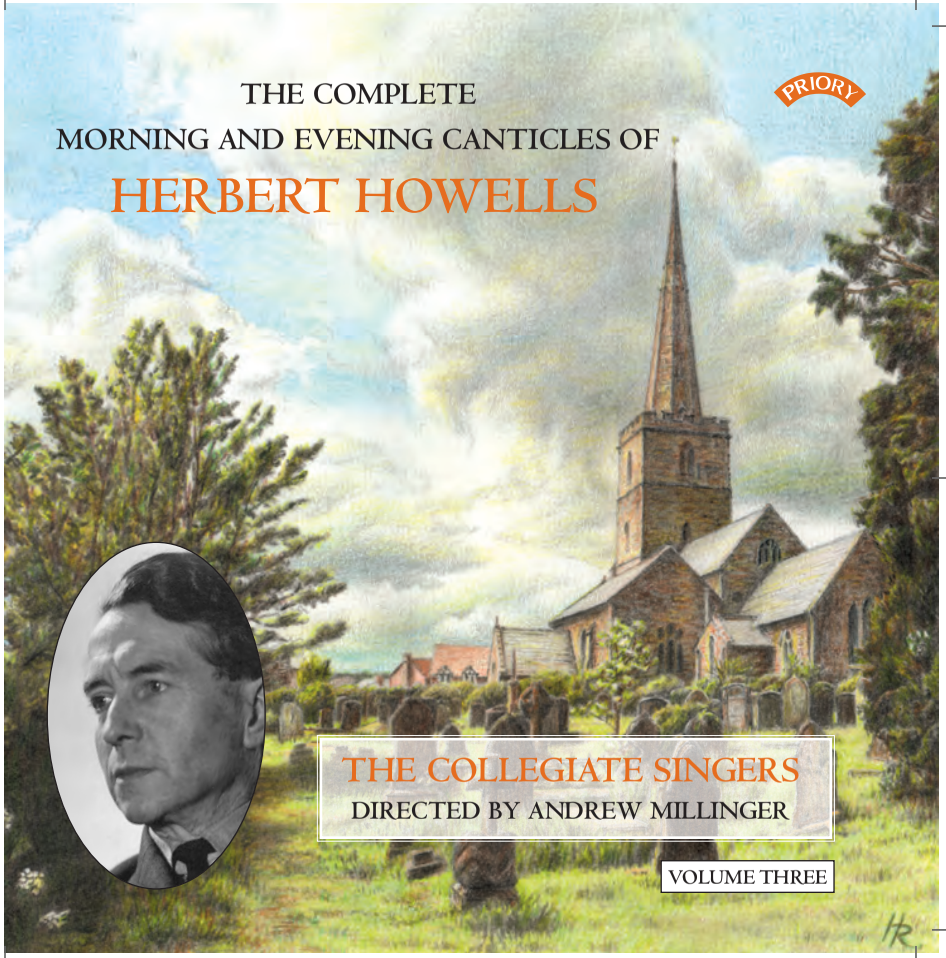
St Augustine's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
Soprano soloist: Phillippa Lay

Dallas Canticles
Soprano soloist: Phillippa Lay
Baritone soloist: Jonathan Saunders

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Cathedral Church of Hereford
Soprano soloist: Phillippa Lay
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for St Paul's Cathedral

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



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THE COLLEGIATE SINGERS CONDUCTED BY ANDREW MILLINGER (VOLUME 3)

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

Volume Three

The Collegiate Singers
conducted by Andrew Millinger with
Richard Moorhouse (organ)

Magnficat and Nunc Dimittis in B minor (1955)

1. Magnificat [5:32]
2. Nunc Dimittis [3:27]

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for men's voices (1935)

3. Magnificat [6:03]
4. Nunc Dimittis [3:00]

The Winchester Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (1967)

5. Magnificat [7:06]
6. Nunc Dimittis [3:26]

St Augustine's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (1967)

7. Magnificat [7:04]
8. Nunc Dimittis [4:17]

Dallas Canticles (1975)

9. Magnificat [5:55]
10. Nunc Dimittis [3:40]

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Cathedral Church of Hereford (1969)

11. Magnificat [5:43]
12. Nunc Dimittis [3:42]

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for St Paul's Cathedral (1951)

13. Magnificat [6:36]
14. Nunc Dimittis [4:51]

TOTAL PLAYING TIME [71:29]

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