

An aerial photograph of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, England, taken during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The large, ornate dome of the cathedral is prominent on the left side of the frame. The rest of the cathedral's complex, with its many spires and Gothic-style windows, stretches across the middle and right. The city of Oxford is visible in the background, with its dense collection of buildings and trees. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues.

Even song from Oxford

Featuring University Composers

Christ Church Cathedral Choir Oxford
Stephen Darlington

alto

Evensong from Oxford

1	Charles Hubert Hastings Parry: <i>Chorale Prelude for organ "Christe redemptor omnium"</i>	3:51
2	Sydney Watson: <i>How Sweet the Name of Jesus</i> (text: John Newton)	5:48
3	Bernard Rose: <i>Versicles and Responses</i> (text: traditional)	1:24
4	Frederick Gore Ouseley: <i>Psalm 12</i>	3:46
5	Walter Parratt: <i>Psalm 13</i>	3:02
6	Thomas Armstrong: <i>Psalm 14</i>	5:03
7	<i>First Lesson - Book of Haggai: 2, 6-9</i>	0:47
8	John Stainer: <i>There's a Wideness in God's Mercy</i> (text: Frederick William Faber)	1:52
9	Parry: <i>The Great Service – Magnificat</i> (text: traditional)*	8:48
10	<i>Letter of Paul to the Ephesians: 2, 10-22</i>	0:47
11	Parry: <i>The Great Service – Nunc Dimittis</i> (text: traditional)	3:53
12	<i>Creed</i>	0:53
13	Rose: <i>Responses, Lord's Prayer and Collects</i> (text: traditional)	6:55
14	William Henry Harris: <i>Bring us, O Lord God</i> (text: John Donne)	4:22
15	<i>Prayers</i>	1:33
16	Basil Harwood: <i>Let All the World</i> (text: George Herbert,)	1:49
17	William Walton: <i>Coronation Te Deum</i> (text: traditional)	10:45
18	<i>The Grace</i>	0:12
19	Rose: <i>Responses & Dismissal</i> (text: traditional)	0:29
20	Kenneth Leighton: <i>Paeon</i>	4:48

Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford

Stephen Darlington, *conductor*

Clive Driskill-Smith, *organ*

* **Adrian Lowe**, *cantor* • **Justin Lewis-Anthony**, *precentor*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Since the founding of the University in 1167, Oxford has been at the forefront of English musical life. Institutions such as the three choral foundations, Christ Church, New College and Magdalen College, the Holywell Music Room and the Sheldonian Theatre have attracted many of the world's great performers and composers to the city. Uniquely among the colleges, Christ Church, founded by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in 1525 and re-founded by Henry VIII in 1532, is home to the cathedral, and has long been a thriving centre for liturgical music. The college has witnessed much political and social change such as the English reformation, the civil war, when Charles I made Oxford his capital (and Christ Church his royal home), and the ordination of women priests and the relaxation of rules prohibiting lay catholic canon professors. Nevertheless, throughout all, the choir has remained at the heart of worship in the Cathedral. This recording presents a selection of music by a variety of composers, all of whom flourished in Oxford. Several have specific Christ Church links, and other colleges represented are Exeter, Keble, Magdalen, New, Trinity, the Queen's and Worcester colleges as well as the Heather professors. The choice of music has been confined to the 18th and 19th centuries and all the composers represented here were influential in the musical world of the nation as a whole in their time. In fact their music lives on in Cathedral worship today, and has contributed incalculably to the wealth and diversity of a musical culture which lies at the core of the Anglican tradition.

Sir (Charles) Hubert Parry (1848-1918) was a schoolboy at Eton, and given musical training at neighbouring St. George's Chapel, Windsor, achieving the BMus in 1866, before going up to Exeter College to read law and modern history. Subsequently he became one of the country's most distinguished composers and academics. First as professor of musical history at the newly founded Royal College of Music, then its director, then between 1900-8 Heather professor of music at Oxford. He received honorary doctorates from both Oxford and Cambridge, was knighted in 1898 and was made a baronet in 1902. As a composer he is perhaps best known for *Jerusalem*, some of the characteristics of which may be found in the two works recorded here.

Christe Redemptor Omnium, Op 18b (set 1, no.6), is one of a series of organ chorale preludes set by Parry. This particular work is best

described as a cantus firmus chorale in which the melodic phrases are interspersed with separate interludes, which are freely composed without significant reference to the surrounding chorale melody, and often contrapuntal in nature. The chorale melody can be found in the top part. *The Great Service in D* (1883), was the second set of canticles that Parry composed. For its time it was very ambitious in style. In the magnificat particularly, Parry applies a symphonic approach to musical development, although trademarks of the Victorian church style remain much in evidence.

Sydney Watson (1903-91) also followed a traditional path into cathedral music, having studied at the Royal College of Music, and Keble College. He was organist at New College from 1933-8, before moving to Winchester College and then to Eton College, where he was Precentor. He also taught from 1946-71 at the Royal College of Music, and became tutor and lecturer in music at Christ Church in 1956. He was awarded an OBE following his retirement from there in 1970. The manuscript of *How Sweet the Name of Jesus* was found lying beside Watson's bed after his death. It was undated and hitherto unknown. It received its first performance at Watson's memorial service in Christ Church. Setting the well-known words of John Newton, he adopts a sensitive and delicate hymn-like approach, showing a striking and poignant response to the text. This is the first recording.

Bernard Rose (1916-96) studied at the Royal College of Music before going up to St. Catherine's College, Cambridge as organ scholar. He moved to Oxford in 1939 to become organist of the Queen's College, before serving with distinction in the war. He was a lecturer in the faculty of music from 1946, conducting the premiere of Vaughan Williams' *An Oxford Elegy* in 1949, and was made an official fellow of Queen's in 1954. Next year, he took the DMus, and two years later became fellow, organist and Informator Choristarum at Magdalen, where he remained until his retirement in 1981. As an editor, Rose's speciality was the choral music of Thomas Tomkins. He was also active as a composer and is best known for this setting of the *Preces and Responses*, one of several that he wrote. It is justly famous for its fluidity of invention and wonderfully singable lines, as well as its rich sonorities which result from the five-part texture. To those familiar with the tintinnabulation of Oxford, the chimes of Magdalen tower can be heard in the treble line of the response "And make thy chosen people joyful".

The recitation of *Psalms* is a tradition which can be traced back thousands of years; biblical scholars even allow the possibility of some originating from the Old Testament court of King David. Their diversity of expression is extreme, and, whilst study has shown some categorisation of type to be possible within the general corpus, their original specific liturgical function is unknown. The psalms prescribed for the second evening, *Psalms 12 and 13*, belong to the most common category within the psalter, that of the individual lament. Often these open with a call to God, followed by a full lament and a plea for help, sometimes finishing with hope for the restoration by God of former happiness. One of the most passionate outpourings of grief in the psalter, *Psalms 14* is exilic in origin, lamenting the state in which Israel finds itself, and looking for the return to the promised land. "When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people". The chanted psalms have long been given a specific role in western liturgy, and so-called Anglican chant has attracted many church music composers since the reformation.

Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley (1825-89) came up to Christ Church in 1843, graduating in 1846 and receiving the DMus in 1854. In 1855 he was elected professor of music at Oxford, and appointed precentor at Hereford Cathedral, later being awarded the Lambeth LLD. Between 1871-6 his revision of the examination system at Oxford significantly raised standards. During these years, he was a sought-after organ consultant working closely with Henry Willis and supervised the building of instruments at the Sheldonian, Wells, Temple Church, Llandaff, Hereford and Crystal Palace. In 1856 he founded St. Michael's School in Tenbury, as his contribution to the revitalising of English church music, a venture which attracted the great musicians of the day including Stainer, Parry and Elgar. For 130 years, St. Michael's was a "Victorian cleric's romantic dream" including Eton collars and daily matins, which lasted there until 1976. Since the closure of the school, the Ouseley Trust has distributed over £1 million in grants for scholarships to support Anglican choral liturgy.

Sir Walter Parratt (1841-1924). In 1872, Parratt (a friend of Ouseley) succeeded Stainer as Informator Choristarum at Magdalen College, and graduated with BMus in 1873. He was organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor and senior professor of the organ at the Royal College of Music. In 1892 he was knighted and made organist to Queen Victoria, and the following year, Master of the Queen's music. He was given

honorary doctorates by Oxford, Cambridge and Durham, and from 1908-18, was Heather professor of music at Oxford in succession to Parry. He was awarded the MVO, the CVO and KCVO.

Sir Thomas Armstrong (1898-1994) studied at the Royal College of Music, winning awards before going up to Keble College, where his studies were interrupted by service in World War I. He took the Oxford DMus, and was organist at Exeter Cathedral and St. George's Windsor, before becoming organist at Christ Church Cathedral in 1933. He was a lecturer at the University from 1933-55 until he left to become principal of the Royal Academy of Music, and was knighted in 1958.

Sir John Stainer (1840-1901). Blind in his left eye after an accident at the age of five, Stainer was a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral. He came up to Christ Church in 1859, and graduated with BMus, in 1860, when he became Informator Choristarum at Magdalen. Whilst there, he graduated with BA, DMus and MA. In 1872 he succeeded Goss as organist of St. Paul's Cathedral and soon gained a position as one of the foremost musicians, scholars and composers of his day. He was knighted in 1888 but subsequently resigned from St. Paul's, his eyesight failing (having been hit by a fives ball when visiting Ouseley's Tenbury school). He returned to Oxford to be professor of music in 1889. His collection *Christmas Carols New and Old* was responsible for reviving the singing of carols in England. The hymn, *Come thou long expected Jesus*, to words by Charles Wesley (1707-88), is inseparably associated with Stainer's melody, *Cross of Jesus*.

Sir William Harris (1883-1973) gained his FRCO at 16 and won an organ scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied organ and composition. After a period as assistant organist at Lichfield Cathedral, Harris became organist at New College in 1919, and in 1921, professor of organ and harmony at the Royal College of Music. He was made organist at Christ Church in 1929, and moved to St. George's Windsor in 1933. Harris was awarded CVO in 1942 and KCVO in 1954. He is best known for his double choir settings such as *Faire is the Heaven*, to words by Spencer, and *Bring us, O Lord God*, to a prayer by John Donne. Donne's text inspires a rich and expressive homophonic setting which perfectly reflects the words. The climax at "the habitation of thy glory" is wonderfully realised after an approach which is calculated to perfection.

Basil Harwood (1859-1949) won a scholarship to Trinity College, to read classics and modern history, and took the BMus in 1880. He

became organist of Ely Cathedral in 1887, and later Christ Church in 1892, where he combined his duties with being precentor at Keble College. His compositions were predominantly for ecclesiastical use, his setting of *O how glorious is the kingdom being* his best known work, together with the *Canticles in A flat*. He had a lifelong devotion to hymnody; indeed many of his anthems and organ works incorporate hymn tunes, and his tune *Luckington* to George Herbert's poem *Let all the world*, has achieved universal popularity as the tune most associated with these words.

Sir William Walton (1902-83) became a chorister at Christ Church at the age of ten, and was admitted to the college as an undergraduate four years later. In later life he maintained his link with Christ Church, writing *The Twelve* for the choir in 1965 where it was premiered by Sydney Watson and the *Jubilate Deo*, in 1972, premiered by Simon Preston, with Stephen Darlington at the organ. This was written to accompany the Coronation Te Deum, commissioned for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in Westminster Abbey on 2nd June, 1952. Originally scored for full orchestra and organ, Simon Preston and Mark Blatchly arranged the work for choir and organ, allowing it to be more easily performed liturgically. The music combines considerable exuberance with moments of great intensity; eg the ATTB quartet at "holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth" and the six part writing for upper voices at "praise thee".

Kenneth Leighton (1929-88) was a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral before going up to the Queen's College, where he read classics as well as studying composition with Bernard Rose. Leighton was made a fellow and lecturer in music at Worcester College in 1968, took the DMus in 1970 and, later that year, was appointed Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh. The *Paeon*, Leighton's title for the organ piece recorded here was originally an ancient Greek choral hymn in praise of Apollo who was given the name *Paian*. The term has been used by modern composers (including Howells) to mean a triumphant, and exultant work. The piece calls for a bright sound and the use of mixtures throughout. The introduction and coda follow a similar pattern of cascading notes and clusters before leading into a middle section of angular writing with jagged rhythms. This section gradually builds up in volume and texture becoming more frenetic until a full finale to the section. The theme starts again, at a slower tempo, and the coda reprises the opening material but with a growing improvisatory

approach. The piece tumbles and cascades to its conclusion, growing in volume again until the characteristic final chord with its striking sharpened 4th.

Notes by John Cotton

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Although **Christ Church Cathedral Choir** is 500 years old, it is justly famous for the youthfulness of its sound and its daring and adventurous musical programming. Unique in the world as both Cathedral and College choir, the intimate acoustic of its musical home, Oxford's 12th-century Cathedral, has given it a relationship with early sacred music and the rhythm and vigour of contemporary idioms which is second to none. Throughout its history, the Choir has attracted many distinguished composers and organists, from its first director, John Taverner, appointed by Cardinal Wolsey in 1526, to William Walton in the 20th century. In recent years, the Choir has commissioned and recorded works by composers such as Sir John Tavener, William Mathias, Robert Saxton and Howard Goodall.

There are 12 men and 16 boys in the Choir along with 2 Organists. The boys are selected for their musical ability and attend Christ Church Cathedral School. Of the men, six are professionals, and six are undergraduates. The Cathedral is renowned for training many of the country's leading organists. As well as their daily services in the Cathedral, the Choir's reputation inevitably leads to a busy annual programme of concerts and overseas tours. The Choir has many award-winning recordings to its credit and works with several international orchestras and soloists. The astonishing versatility of this Choir has given them a strong media profile. They have appeared on all the major TV channels, including Howard Goodall's Bafta award-winning series *Big Bangs* for Channel 4, hailed as 'one of the finest choirs on Earth'. This collaboration with Goodall has also led to the choir singing his TV and film themes for *Mr. Bean* and *The Vicar of Dibley*. Whether Cardinal Wolsey would have envisaged so illustrious a future for his new foundation back in the sixteenth century is another matter!

"Anyone who hears the Choir senses that every member is singing from the heart. That is what gives it such impact and intimacy. I don't believe in suppressing individuality. I encourage each singer to create his own musical line, and it is my job to harness and harmonise them all."

– Stephen Darlington

Stephen Darlington is one of the country's leading choral conductors. Since 1985 he has been Director of Music at Christ Church, Oxford, where he is also an Associate Professor. Previously Stephen was Master of the Music at St. Alban's Abbey and Artistic Director of St. Alban's International Organ Festival. He has established Christ Church as an acknowledged centre of academic musical excellence, and maintained the highest choral traditions of the Church of England in the Cathedral. His outstanding strength is in his performances of choral music of the sixteenth century and of modern sacred music. An extensive discography, comprising over fifty CDs, includes several award-winning recordings. From 1998 to 2000 Stephen was President of the Royal College of Organists. He is currently Choragus of the University of Oxford, and one of only two Oxford Doctors of Music in the Music Faculty. He has recently been awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music and appointed as a Lay Canon of Christ Church.

Christ Church Cathedral Choir and Stephen Darlington are represented by Val Fancourt Music Management (www.valfancourt.com)

Clive Driskill-Smith MA MPhil FRCO ARCM is one of the leading organists of his generation. He studied with David Sanger and won the Calgary International Organ Competition in 2002. He performs throughout Europe, North America, Asia and Australia; in the UK he has played at the BBC Proms, the Royal Festival Hall, Symphony Hall and Bridgewater Hall, and in the US he has played at Regional and National Conventions of the American Guild of Organists. His CDs have received critical acclaim and his performances have been broadcast worldwide. Clive plays at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and teaches at the Royal Academy of Music.

Alto ALC1349

5055354413490

Recorded in Christ Church Cathedral, March 2002

Producer: **Richard Tanner**

Engineer: **Lance Andrews**

Cover image: "Radcliffe Camera Oxford Skyline" © **Tevjan Pettifer**

Design produced by **Imergent Images Ltd**

Reissue producer for Alto Records: **Robin Vaughan**

Digital edition produced by **Gene Gaudette, Urlicht AudioVisual**

© 2002, Griffin & Co.

©&© 2017, Musical Concepts. All rights reserved.

Digital edition ©&© 2017, 2025, Musical Concepts. All rights reserved.

Released under license from Griffin & Co.

No part of this sound recording and its component audio, text, or graphics files may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, or shared electronically in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, file sharing, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, contact the publisher, using the subject line "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.

**Musical Concepts
c/o ALTO Distribution
Magnus House
8 Ashfield Rd
Cheadle SK81BB, UK**

alto