

The background of the entire page is a sepia-toned photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, a small boat is partially visible on the right. The river reflects the light, and the banks are lined with bare, leafless trees. The overall atmosphere is misty and serene.

Rutter – Bernstein – Tippett - Britten

Choir of Clare College Cambridge

Timothy Brown, *Director*

John Rutter: Gloria
Leonard Bernstein:
Chichester Psalms
Michael Tippett:
Five Negro Spirituals
(Child of Our Time)
Benjamin Britten:
Festival Te Deum &
Rejoice in the Lamb

Griffin

John Rutter: *Gloria*

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|-----|---|------|
| [1] | I. Gloria in excelsis Deo. Allegro vivace | 5:13 |
| [2] | II. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis. Andante | 7:16 |
| [3] | III. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus. Vivace e ritmico | 5:26 |

Leonard Bernstein: *Chichester Psalms*

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| [4] | I. Psalm 108:2 - Psalm 100. Maestoso ma energico | 4:00 |
| [5] | II. Psalm 2:1-4 - Psalm 23:1-6. Andante con moto, ma tranquillo | 5:02 |
| [6] | III. Psalm 131 - Psalm 133:1. Prelude - Peacefully flowing | 8:21 |

Sir Michael Tippett: *Five Negro Spirituals*

- | | | |
|------|--------------------|------|
| [7] | I. Steal Away | 2:55 |
| [8] | II. Nobody Knows | 1:26 |
| [9] | III. Go Down Moses | 2:44 |
| [10] | IV. O By and By | 1:17 |
| [11] | V. Deep River | 3:48 |

Benjamin Britten

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------|
| [12] | <i>Festival Te Deum</i> | 6:54 |
| [13] | <i>Rejoice in the Lamb</i> | 17:22 |

Choir of Clare College Cambridge

Timothy Brown, conductor

with

- [1]-[6] **The Wallace Collection • Richard Pearce, organ**
[5] **Lawrence Zazzo, counter-tenor • Rachel Masters, harp**
[12]-[13] **Jonathan Brown, organ**

In this CD we encounter different 20th Century approaches to Church music: works which return to the language of the Bible but in accessible tones; and celebratory works very much in the rich tradition of British church music.

John Rutter, (b 1945), formerly Director of Music at **Clare College Cambridge** (1975-9) and conductor of the Cambridge Singers, is renowned for his thoroughly approachable and challenging settings of carols and other works for Cathedral choir. *Gloria* is scored for choir and a small instrumental group consisting of 4 trumpets in C, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion and organ. It was commissioned by the Voices of Mel Olson and was first performed in May 1974 in Omaha, Nebraska.

As with *Chichester Psalms* the work is divided into three parts. The introduction consists of drum rolls and spiky fanfares reminiscent of much late twentieth century British celebratory church music. Later the voices fling phrases at each other and pass them on in a joyful outpouring of sound before the jerkiness returns and following some indecision the movement ends on a triumphant note. The mystic and Holstian second movement builds very gradually to a strong climax at *Rex caelestis* which suddenly dissipates into hushed progressions above which the treble solo sings *miserere nobis*. With the third movement we are back in rhythmic mode; an off-beat fugue accompanies the *Cum sancto Spiritu* and continues until the *Amen's* when to brilliant brass fanfares the work concludes much like the ending of the first movement - with joyful progressions to ringing high B flats.

Leonard Bernstein's (1918-90) eclecticism as a composer

was well-known; the composition of successful and innovative Broadway shows and operettas such as *On the town*, *West Side Story* and *Candide* was interspersed with that of concert and vocal works such as *Serenade* and *Songfest* as well as of the three symphonies and other works. He received a number of commissions from various sources, including one from Chichester Cathedral who requested a piece for their 1965 festival. *Chichester Psalms*, set to a Hebrew text, falls into three parts: the first and somewhat percussive movement is taken from Psalms 108 and 100; the second, using Psalms 2 and 23, begins in tranquil mode with sudden angry interruptions before the soloist brings more lasting calm. An anguished organ interlude then introduces the third section marked *Prelude peacefully flowing* when in long lines the choir sing passages from Psalms 131 and 133 drawing the work to a prayerful and serene close.

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In the post war years of the twentieth century, two composers became pre-eminent in the field of British music - Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett. Their careers were to prove almost parallel in many ways but to remain different enough to make them stand out as not only competitors but also as complementary to the spirit of their times. Outsiders and pacifists at a time when such beliefs and their own personal lifestyles were seen as unacceptable and dangerous, they were to revive the choral and vocal traditions of English music and to establish British music as an equal to the music of composers from the European schools after 1945.

The role of the Outsider and the ideas of sacrifice are

important elements in both Britten and Tippett. The supreme example of an Outsider in Britten is the title hero, or more correctly perhaps anti-hero of the opera *Peter Grimes*. For Tippett, it was the young Jewish boy martyr of *A Child of Our Time*. From that oratorio of 1944, Tippett's first major success, the composer was to arrange the set of **Negro Spirituals** included on this disc. In the original context of the oratorio, they are a modern version of the chorales of the Bach *Passions*, offering comment both musical and literary, on the action and on the music. Tippett's idea of inserting these spirituals in the midst of this tragic political work, is nothing less than inspirational, the songs of another oppressed people commenting on the terrors of the Holocaust and the martyrdom of one young boy. Tippett's arrangement of the *Spirituals* recorded here simplifies the original oratorio settings, the soloists where they appear now being members of the choir and the orchestral accompaniments of the original being dispensed with. Although losing their original purpose of commentaries on the action, the five songs have a simple melodic beauty that makes them remain deeply moving. The titles of the five *Spirituals* are: *Steal away, Nobody knows, Go down Moses, O by and by* and finally *Deep River*.

Britten spent part of the Second World War *in exile* in America with the poet W. H. Auden and Britten's life-long friend, the tenor Peter Pears, but he decided to return to England, despite the war in Europe, in 1942 and it is from that period of political insecurity that the two religious works on this disc appear. They are both, not surprisingly, works of a modest character but although predating *Peter Grimes*, they are undoubtedly small masterworks of their

kind.

Completed in 1943 ***Rejoice in the Lamb*** is scored for soloists, chorus and organ. It follows Britten's earlier successes of *A Boy was bom*, *A Ceremony of Carols* and the *Hymn to Saint Cecilia*. The occasion for its first performance came from a commission from William Hussey, the vicar of St. Matthew's in Northampton in honour of the church's fiftieth anniversary. The text of the cantata is taken from the poem *Jubilate Agno* by Christopher Smart, verses rich in imagery, written whilst the author was confined to an asylum as supposedly insane. The cantata is divided into ten sections reflecting the worship of God by all creation. Thus the opening section places man and the animals in the centre of things, praising God. Old Testament figures give praise and a series of three solos follows devoted to the *cat*, the *mouse* and *flowers*. Smart's poetry then identifies his own predicament with that of Christ. The letters of the alphabet figure next before a chorus based on children's games and a final *Hallelujah*, repeated from earlier in the work.

A year later, in 1944, Britten received another commission for a religious choral work: ***Festival te Deum***. This time it came from Saint Mark's church in Swindon and was written for the occasion of that church's centenary. Britten's setting of this oft used text is unusual in several ways; it is relatively short, composed in one main section and begins and ends quietly - quite a contrast to the settings by Haydn, Berlioz or Verdi. That quiet ending is a reflection of the opening and in between there is a central dance-like section.

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Tracks 1-6 recorded in the Chapel of St. John's College, Cambridge, June 1995

Producer: **Tim Handley** • Engineer: **Nicholas Parker**

Tracks 7-13 recorded in St. Matthews, Northampton (the Church which originally commissioned Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb") in 1995

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