



St Giles Cathedral
Edinburgh

St Giles at 6

Sunday 27 May 2007

THE SINGERS

conducted by
Donald Halliday

with
Michael Harris *organ*

PROGRAMME

Tibi laus

Peter Philips (1561 – 1628)

Sung in Latin

To thee be praise, glory and thanksgiving for ever, O blessed Trinity. The Father is love, the Son grace, and the Holy Spirit imparts truth, O blessed Trinity. The Father is full of truth, and the Son and Holy Spirit are truth, O blessed Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are of one substance, O blessed Trinity. And the holy renown of your glory is blessed, full of praise and exalted for ever.

Thou wilt keep him

Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810 – 1876)

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.

The darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day.

The darkness and the light to Thee are both alike.

God is light and with Him is no darkness at all.

Oh let my soul live and it shall praise Thee.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for evermore.

Ave Maria

Robert Parsons (1530 – 1572)

Sung in Latin

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Amen.

Gaudeamus omnes

Peter Philips

Sung in Latin

Let us all rejoice in the Lord and keep a festival in honour of St Thomas the Martyr. Let us join with the angels in joyful praise to the Son of God.

Locus iste

Tariq O'Regan (b. 1978)

Sung in Latin

This place was made by God – it cannot be defiled.

Ave verum

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

Sung in Latin

Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered, and was sacrificed on the cross for mankind, whose side was pierced, from which flowed water and blood. Be for us a foretaste of heaven, during our final trial.

Crux fidelis

Stuart Murray (b. 1985)

Sung in Latin and English – first performance

Faithful cross above all other

One and only noble tree

None in foliage, none in blossom,

None in fruit thy peer may be.

Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,

Sweetest weight is hung on thee. Amen.

Panis angelicus

César Franck (1822 – 1890)

Sung in Latin

The bread of angels becomes the bread of man; this bread of heaven does away with symbols. What a marvel! The poor, the servant and the humble may feed on their Lord.

Bread of angels, become the bread of men; the Bread of heaven ends all anticipation.

What a wonder! that a poor and humble servant consumes the Lord. We beg of You, God, One in Three to visit us, as we worship You. By your ways, lead us who seek the light in which You dwell. Amen.

When David heard

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

When David heard that Absalom was slain he went up into his chamber over the gate and wept, and thus he said: My son, my son, O Absalom my son, would God I had died for thee!

Blessed be the God and Father

Samuel Sebastian Wesley

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. Amen.

Programme notes

Peter Philips

Peter Philips began his career as a boy chorister at St Paul's Cathedral in London. He fled England because of Catholic persecution in 1582. After some years in Flanders, Rome and Antwerp Philips became organist to the chapel of Albert VII in Brussels.

Peter Philips was a prolific composer, mostly of vocal and keyboard music. *Tibi laus* and *Gaudeamus omnes* were published as parts of larger collections in Antwerp in 1612 and 1613 respectively. These pieces show little of the English reserve of his contemporaries, and dance with Italian ebullience. The five part *Tibi laus* was written for Trinity Sunday (next Sunday!) and the eight part *Gaudeamus omnes* for the feast of St Thomas the Martyr.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley

Samuel Sebastian Wesley was born in London, the son of the composer Samuel Wesley and grandson of Charles Wesley. As a church musician he progressed through a series of often troubled appointments in Hereford, Exeter, Leeds, Winchester and Gloucester.

Thou wilt keep him is one of the most beautiful anthems ever written for the Anglican church, and glows with an inner fervour. Like many of S S Wesley's anthems it is written in sections (the opening section is sung three times). *Blessed be the God and father* is an extended work in which Wesley, with a confident disregard of convention, infuses the old verse anthem format with theatrical and operatic overtones. It was originally written for an Easter Sunday when only trebles, one bass and organ were available but it is most unlikely that those forces could have done full justice to what Wesley heard in his mind. A gentle choral introduction is followed by a recitative for male voices. A beautiful middle section for trebles exhorts us to *love one another* before the men dramatically remind us of our mortality. A massive (unresolved) chord on the organ heralds the final joyous chorus which has a grandeur Mendelssohn would surely have envied.

Robert Parsons

Little is known of the life of Robert Parsons. He seems to have had an association with the Chapel Royal both as a choir boy and as an adult. Granted a church living in the Midlands, he drowned when he fell into a swollen River Trent in January 1572. A small number of his compositions have survived. His popular *Ave Maria* shows that he was a talented composer and its extended final amen must surely be one of the finest ever written.

Tariq O'Regan

Tariq O'Regan, born in London in 1978, is a rising star in the British contemporary music scene. He was educated at

Oxford University and completed his postgraduate studies at Cambridge, being afterwards appointed Composer in Residence at Corpus Christi College. His compositions have been performed internationally by, among others, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, BBC Singers and Los Angeles Master Chorale. Living in New York since 2004, he has held the Fulbright Chester Schirmer Fellowship in Music Composition at Columbia University and a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship at Harvard.

Tariq O'Regan won the British Composer Award in 2006. He was in Edinburgh earlier this month for a performance of his *Scattered Rhymes* by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir under Paul Hillier in Greyfriars Kirk.

Edward Elgar

Next Saturday (2 June) sees the 150th anniversary of the birth of Edward Elgar. His *Ave Verum* was written as a *Pie Jesu* in 1887 in memory of William Allen, a Worcester attorney, for whom Elgar had worked as a teenager. At the time Elgar was organist at St George's Church in Worcester. Elgar rearranged the piece as an *Ave Verum* in 1902. A simple, beautiful but robust piece in which the words are first sung by the trebles and then contemplated on by the whole choir.

Stuart Murray

Stuart Murray grew up in Lanchester, County Durham. He started composing seriously during his sixth form in Durham Johnston Comprehensive School. While only 17 he was chosen as one of five young composers to take part in the National Youth Orchestra's composers' course, spending a year studying with Paul Patterson and writing for the orchestra. Stuart plays piano and violin, and led the second violins in Young Sinfonia, the youth orchestra of Northern Sinfonia. He has sung with The Singers for the past two years. Stuart is a student at Newcastle University, currently in his final year studying theoretical physics. He will be going to Oxford University for postgraduate study in applied mathematics in October.

Crux fidelis is being performed for the first time tonight, and is dedicated to The Singers. Stuart says:

'I came across Crux fidelis, part of the longer work Pange Lingua (Sing My Tongue), whilst looking for a text to fit some music I had already started writing in 2006. I was immediately struck by both its beautiful imagery and the rhythm of the verse, and as a result decided from the outset to combine the original Latin with an English translation. The piece is basically made up of four contrasting sections; each alternately expressing the mournful and celebratory aspects of Easter, beginning with a unison statement of the simple main theme. The piece was written specially for The Singers and I always had their unique sound in mind when composing it.'

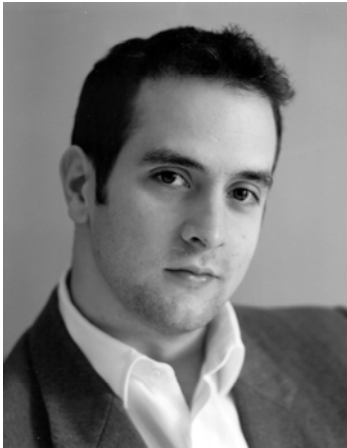


Stuart Murray

César Franck

César Franck was born in Liège in Belgium. His musical studies took him to Paris and the Conservatoire. After a brief return to Belgium, Franck went back to Paris where he spent the rest of his life as a composer and organist. In 1858 he became organist of Saint Clothilde, where he played until his death in 1890.

Franck's elegiac *Panis Angelicus*, written in 1872 originally for tenor, organ, harp, cello and double bass, has become one of the most popular religious compositions ever. It has happily survived performances by almost everyone in almost every conceivable arrangement since then (you'll find over 100 video performances of *Panis Angelicus* on YouTube!). Tonight's arrangement is for four part choir and organ.



Tariq O'Regan

Eric Whitacre

Eric Whitacre is quickly becoming one of the most popular choral composers of his generation in the USA. He had little formal musical training or experience of classical music before going to college, but singing in the University of Nevada choir was to change his life. Eric Whitacre continued his studies at the Julliard School studying composition with John Corigliano.

Whitacre has received composition awards from the Barlow International Composition Competition, the American Choral Directors Association and the American Composers Forum. His first recording, *The Music of Eric Whitacre*, was hailed by The American Record Guide as one of the top ten classical albums of 1997. In 2001, he became the youngest recipient ever awarded the coveted Raymond C. Brock commission by the American Choral Directors Association. *Cloudburst*, a collection of his a cappella music sung by Polyphony, was released by Hyperion in 2006.



Eric Whitacre

When David heard sets words from II Samuel 18, verse 33, a rare example of Eric Whitacre setting a biblical text. It is a substantial work which makes real demands on the performers. The texture of the piece varies from silence (and silence is an integral component here) through single lines to massive, repeated 18 part chord clusters. The full range of the choir is explored, from low Es in the bass line to top Cs in the soprano line. Yet the style is accessible and essentially conservative, and the work provides a moving insight into male grief. Eric Whitacre says:

'Setting this text was such a lonely experience, and even now just writing these words I am moved to tears. I wrote maybe 200 pages of sketches, trying to find the perfect balance between sound and silence, always simplifying, and by the time I finished a year later I was profoundly changed. Older, I think, and quieted a little. I still have a hard time listening to the recording.'

Thank you for supporting this concert. There will be a retiring collection. Please contribute – these concerts can only continue with your support.

THE SINGERS

Sopranos

Venetia Bigley, Kate Bredin, Charlotte Clarke**, Rachel Elliott, Frances Griffiths, Imogen Lambourn, Susanne Longley**, Lindsey Nicholls*, Sarah Robinson, Vicki Thompsett

Altos

Rose Haslam, Ann Hill, Alice Metherell, Beatrice Möller, Alison Rudd, Ellen Thomson, Christiane Wiebe, Gaby Wright

Tenors

Chris Hunwick, Scott McCall***, Mike Oswald, Nico Tyack

Basses

Matthew Dunford, Nick Hudis, Ian King, Steven Locks, Stuart Murray, Ian Wainwright, Jerry Young

* solo, Wesley; ** duet, Murray; *** solo, Whitacre

You can find out more about The Singers at the choir's web site: www.singers.org.uk