

# CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

*Kristina Boerger*

*Artistic Director*

PRESENTS

*La Contenance Angloise:*

A Millennium of English  
Choral Music



Sunday, November 9, 2008—4 P.M.  
Oratory Church of St. Boniface  
11 Willoughby St.  
Brooklyn, New York

Saturday, November 15, 2008—8 P.M.  
St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church  
87th Street and West End Avenue  
New York, New York

# CERDDORION

## SOPRANOS

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Judith Cobb  
Bonny Hart  
Amy Litt  
Cathy Markoff  
Ellen Schorr  
Wendy See

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Linnea Johnson  
Myrna Nachman  
Nora Ryan  
Melissa Tombro  
Kristina Vaskys  
Gretta Wren

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Jeff Lunden  
Steve Parkey  
Eddie Rubeiz  
Chris Ryan  
Marty Silverberg

## BASSES

John Dennison  
Ian McGullam  
Dean Rainey  
Dale Rejtmar  
Tom Samiljan  
Larry Sutter  
Jeff Thomas  
Michael Weinstein-  
Reiman

Nathaniel LaNasa, Conducting Apprentice

For further information about Cerddorion,  
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# *La Contenance Angloise*

Tapissier, Carmen, Cesaris  
Na pas longtemps si bien chanterrent  
Quilz esbahirent tout paris  
Et tous ceulx qui les frequenterrent;  
Mais oncques jour ne deschanterrent  
En melodie de tels choisis –  
Ce mont dit qui les hanterrent –  
Que G. Du Fay et Binchois.  
Car ilz ont nouvelle pratique  
De faire frisque concordance  
En haulte et en basse musique  
En fainte, en pause, et en muance.  
Et ont prins de la contenance  
Angloise et ensuy Dunstable  
Pour quoy merueilleuse plaisance  
Rend leur chant joyeux et notable.

Tapissier, Carmen, Cesaris  
not long ago sang so well  
that they astonished all Paris  
and all who came to hear them.  
But the day came when they did not discant  
such finely wrought melody –  
so those who heard them told me –  
as G. Dufay or Binchois.  
For these have a new practice  
of making a lively consonance  
both in loud and soft music,  
in feigning, in rests, and in mutations.  
They took on the guise  
of the English and follow Dunstable  
and thereby a marvelous pleasingness  
makes their music joyous and remarkable.

—*Martin Le Franc, 1442*

## *The Program*

### **Spanning the Medieval**

Alleluia: Dominus dixit	Sarum chant
Sumer is icumen in	Anonymous, 13th c.
Quam pulchra es <i>Jeff Lunden, Eddie Rubeiz, Chris Ryan</i>	John Dunstable (ca. 1390–1453)
<b>In the Favor of the Queen</b>	
Audivi vocem de caelo	Thomas Tallis (1505–1585)
Ne irascaris Domine/Civitas sancti tui	William Byrd (1543–1623)

### **The Baroque Master**

Lord, How Long Wilt Thou Be Angry?  
Henry Purcell  
(1659–1695)

❖❖❖ *Pause* ❖❖❖

### **English Music Revived**

There is Sweet Music  
Edward Elgar  
(1857–1934)  
*Chorus prepared by Nathaniel LaNasa,  
Conducting Apprentice*

### **Vox Populi**

Linden Lea  
Ralph Vaughan Williams  
(1872–1958)

I Love My Love

Gustav Holst  
(1874–1934)

The Three Ravens

*Soloist: Dean Rainey, 11/09  
John Dennison, 11/15*

E. T. Chapman  
(1902–1981)

❖❖❖ *Pause* ❖❖❖

### **The Modern Giant**

Hymn to Saint Cecilia  
Benjamin Britten  
(1913–1976)  
*Kate Ashby, soprano  
Wendy See, soprano  
Judith Cobb, alto  
Eddie Rubeiz, tenor  
John Dennison, bass*

# CERDDORION

NOW IN ITS FOURTEENTH SEASON, CERDDORION is one of New York's most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of 28 mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing a range of styles from the ancient to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group's interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion has performed with other acclaimed artists. Past collaborations include: the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener's all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Avery Fisher Hall (with the Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London's Temple Church); appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; and opera performances with the early-music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal.

In 2006, Cerddorion presented at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association three works commissioned for the group's tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release of the first commercial recording featuring Cerddorion: *A Handful of World* (on the Tzadik label) is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion's performance of Bielawa's *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and premiered by Cerddorion in 2004. And the CD *To Every Thing There Is a Season*, an anthology of compositions and arrangements by Yumiko Matsuoaka, featuring the women of Cerddorion on "Skye Boat Song," was released just a month ago.

## *Kristina Boerger*

An accomplished singer, conductor, and choral arranger, Kristina Boerger received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter and holds the doctorate in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Illinois. She lectures in music history at Barnard College and teaches choral conducting at the Manhattan School of Music.

Selected as the 2008 Outstanding Choral Director of the Year by the New York State chapter of the American Choral Directors Association, Dr. Boerger is in her ninth season as Artistic Director of Manhattan's Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble, with which group she has commissioned works from several New York composers. Having served for two years as Music Director of New York's AMUSE, she was recently appointed Associate Conductor of the Collegiate Chorale.

Dr. Boerger has appeared as guest conductor of the Chicago Children's Choir, the Kalamazoo Bach Festival, the University of Illinois Chamber Singers, and the Schola Cantorum of Syracuse, among others. She has also served as guest conductor, adjudicator, and clinician in several U.S. cities, in Quebec City, and in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Her work in the 1990s as founding director of AMASONG: Champaign-Urbana's Premier Lesbian/Feminist Chorus, is the subject of the documentary film *The Amasong Chorus: Singing Out*, which after touring festivals in the United States and worldwide has enjoyed repeated broadcast on PBS.

As a singer in a variety of styles, she has appeared on stage and on disc with the King's Noyse, Rocky Maffit, the Tallis Scholars, Early Music New York, Vox Vocal Ensemble, Bobby McFerrin, Alarm Will Sound, and Urban Bush Women. She is a member of the acclaimed early-music ensemble Pomerium and of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble.

## *Program Notes*

Welcome to a concert tracing the development of English choral music from ancient liturgical chant through the Modernism of Benjamin Britten. In earlier ages, England's separation from the Continent sometimes retarded her adoption of the latest musical fashions. For example, the part-song craze that throughout the 16th century supported so many composers and music publishers in Italy and France did not catch on in England until the 1588 publication by Nicholas Yonge of *Musica Transalpina: Italian Madrigals English'd*. On the other hand, the geographical, religious, and political singularity of England supported the emergence and development of several distinctive contributions to the Western canon. And as one might expect, northern France often served as a point of stylistic transference between Britain and the rest of the Continent.

Our program begins with selections from two of the most significant houses of worship in Medieval England. The plainsong *Alleluia: Dominus dixit* comes from the *Missa in gallicantu*, which is the first Mass of Christmas from the **Sarum Rite**. Sarum chant is a unique body of liturgical plainsong developed at Salisbury Cathedral and fully separate from the Roman Rite that was in more general use, not only on the Continent but also as brought to England by Frankish monks. Gradually, the Sarum use prevailed over the Roman liturgy throughout the British Isles, even influencing the Anglican liturgy as this took shape in the 16th century. The origins of the Sarum Rite are attributed to Saint Osmund of Normandy, who, upon his appointment in 1078 as first bishop of Salisbury, combined local Norman liturgical traditions with Anglo-Saxon variants of the Roman Rite. In fact, a comparison of the Sarum liturgy with that of the cathedral in Rouen yields strong similarities between the two. In general, the Sarum Rite is more elaborate than the Roman, often involving as many as four ministers—priest, deacon, subdeacon, and acolyte—and the procession to and censing of all altars in the sanctuary.

Present-day visitors to Salisbury Cathedral, one of the towering architectural achievements of England, will find it situated in the town also known as New Sarum and now serving an Anglican, not a Catholic, diocese. The building was consecrated in 1258 as the relocation of the original settlement of Salisbury, some two miles north, in Old Sarum. It is in this latter hill-fort town, originally populated at least as early as 3000 B.C., where one may visit the ruins of the cathedral built for Osmund's bishopric.

Our second offering comes from Reading Abbey, which was established in 1121 by King Henry I and settled by an order of monks from Cluny. Reading's first abbot was Hugh of Amiens, later appointed archbishop of Rouen. Because of its royal patronage, Reading became a favored pilgrimage site and one of the most significant and opulent religious houses. A Reading manuscript from about 1250 is the source of the beloved *rota* ("round") *Sumer is icumen in* (see below).



The song's Middle English text celebrates the coming of the warmer seasons. Its creator is anonymous, and although the music sounds like a folk song, it may also be one learned musician's representation—in a surpassingly complex form—of local folk traditions. The melody is written out once, with instructions in Latin for performing it in canon (round); a four-part texture is commonly practiced here, though the melody could admit of as many as 12 separate entrances. Underneath this melody is a short and repeating *pes* ("foot"), a kind of harmonic ostinato that is itself designed to be sung in two canonic parts. This is the earliest written example of harmony in more than four parts.

The distinctive feature of the harmony that results when the canons are realized together is the omnipresence of chords that we call *triads*; such chords, composed of two stacked intervals of a third, are the basis of what we recognize today as Western harmony. But at the time, the orthodox music theory taught in the monasteries and cathedral schools—particularly those of France, where polyphonic harmony was most importantly developed—emphasized the "perfect" Pythagorean intervals of the fourth and the fifth. This is the very reason why so much Medieval harmony sounds alien to the unseasoned listener: the thirds that our ears want to hear are for the most part avoided. That the vernacular, folksy *Sumer* is shot through with them suggests that while elite musicians were scribbling away at their thorny, open consonances, the common people of the English countryside had long since discovered the joys of harmonizing in thirds.

Visitors to the grave of Henry I at Reading Abbey will find themselves touring a partially restored ruin. The Abbey was demolished in 1538 under Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries and plundered for its stones, glass, and lead. Recent superpositions on the site include a Roman Catholic Church and a jail.

We now jump ahead to the close of the Medieval style period and to the career of **John Dunstable (ca. 1390–1453)**, perhaps the first English composer to earn international recognition. A highly educated man, Dunstable was lauded for his contributions not only to composition but also to astronomy, astrology, and mathematics. Contrary to the Medieval convention for composers, Dunstable was not a cleric, though he had a long association with Saint Albans Abbey. He is believed to have spent several years in the service of John, Duke of Bedford, who was the fourth son of Henry IV and the brother of Henry V. John also served as Regent of France and governor of Normandy during the English occupation of France and the 100 Years War; it is most likely this association that afforded Dunstable the opportunity—rare for a composer—to cross the Channel. While abroad, he added a plot of land in Normandy to his properties in Cambridgeshire, Essex, and London. His subsequent patrons included the Dowager Queen Joan and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the fifth son of Henry V.

The Late-Medieval aesthetic dominating the years of Dunstable's youth evinces a preoccupation with structural cleverness, mathematical symbolism, and linguistic complexity—ingenious inventions that the cognoscenti can recognize on the page but that can typically never be perceived by the ear. Later, as the Renaissance style developed, composers shifted their concern from what can be *seen* as *clever* to what can be *heard* as *communicative*. With the rising humanism that characterized the period, composers developed an increasing capacity to relate the *sound* of

their music to human *experience*, using melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture to create sonic analogies to the words they were setting. Dunstable's motet *Quam pulchra es*, from about 1430, is a bellwether of the emerging Renaissance style.

Remarkably, *Quam* is freely composed to express in musical sound the emotions and sensations expressed in its text. This is to say that—breaking with the tradition of the late-Medieval motet—it adopts no *a priori* structural scaffolding of preexisting liturgical melody (*cantus firmus*) or recurring rhythmic patterning (*isorhythm*). Dunstable's interest in the very intelligibility of the text is proven by his setting the same language in all three voice parts, whereas the recent vogue in the motet had been to place a different poem in each line. Furthermore, Dunstable takes care to align the syllables among all three parts in synchrony to ensure their clarity. He uses rhythm with a new freedom, virtually halting the metered passage of time in the middle of the piece at the lover's entreaty, *Veni* ["Come"]. The very sounds on the lips, tongue, and teeth of the unusual vowel-consonant chain of *ibi dabo tibi* are given a correspondingly distinctive rhythmic setting.

But the most significant of all unique features in this motet is its harmony, which is dominated by thirds. This certainly caught the notice of commentators on the Continent. In 1442, the poet Martin le Franc praised Binchois and Dufay for following Dunstable in adopting this *contenance angloise* ("English character"). In 1477, the composer and music theorist Johannes Tinctoris remarked that only the music written in the most recent 40 years was worth *hearing*. He was referring to music of the new Burgundian school, the first phase of the central practice of polyphony in Renaissance Europe. And he credited Dunstable as the inspiring "wellspring and origin" of this style.

Neither Tinctoris nor Dunstable could have anticipated the developmental path of triadic harmony that continued without rupture until the 1920s—nor that the majority of music listeners in the West even today would concur that nontriadic music is not "worth hearing."

The poignancy of late-Renaissance polyphony rests on its infusion of triadic harmonies with expressive dissonances—for example, a *c* in one part sung against a *d* in another. These little conflicts etch the independence of the vocal lines and propel them to resolution, outward to new conflict, and into resolution once again. Music of the English polyphonists features an especially plangent type of dissonance not characteristic in sacred music elsewhere: the *simultaneous relation* is the sharp dissonance between one version of a pitch in one voice and an altered version of that pitch in another (for example, a *c* against a *c-sharp*, or a *b-flat* against a *b-natural*). To exemplify English polyphony in the mature Renaissance, we offer Latin motets from England's most significant composers of church music. Both **Thomas Tallis (1505–1585)** and his younger colleague **William Byrd (1543–1623)**, Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal, served a government whose official religion oscillated between Catholicism and Anglicanism during their careers under a succession of monarchs (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth I, and James VI). Though they composed adeptly for services in either tradition, both were Catholics at heart. Nonetheless, they together earned the favor of Queen Elizabeth I, who in 1575 gave to them a 21-year, exclusive patent for the printing and publication of music.

Tallis composed his *Audivi vocem de caelo* for the Sarum service at Matins on All Saints' Day. In the Sarum rite, the boys singing the treble lines would have represented the lamp-bearing virgins by holding candles and by facing the altar until the virgins' exclamation: *Ecce*. This motet sets the first word of the text in four-part polyphony, but the two phrases that follow are sung to their original Sarum chant. Polyphony returns for two more sections, during which the Scriptural verse is completed. The motet then concludes with a restatement of the last phrase of chant. We will perform this final phrase after a practice that arose in England in the 15th century. *Faburden* was a technique of harmonizing chant by following it at a parallel fourth higher in one voice and a parallel third lower in another. The result is a chain of *triads* in first inversion! It is notable that this practice—and a related practice in northern France called *fauxbourdon*—developed during Dunstable's lifetime. I confess to having toyed a bit with faburden's rules for creating a cadence; because the chant here is interspersed with polyphony whose modal final is *d*, I force a conclusion based on that pitch rather than following the rules to a final chord based on *g*.

William Byrd almost certainly began his musical career as a boy chorister in the Chapel Royal under the tutelage of Thomas Tallis during the reign of Mary Tudor. In reaction to the Protestant austerity characterizing the reign of her predecessor Edward VI, "Bloody Mary" fostered a climate of extravagance for Latin Church music, importing the greatest musicians from the British Isles, the Low Countries, and Iberia. This atmosphere of musical creativity and mastery was the crucible for Byrd's compositional inventiveness, as well as for his unshakeable Catholic convictions. Byrd was only 18 when Mary died and was succeeded by her Anglican sister Elizabeth, an event that marked the beginning of Byrd's 12-year absence from the Chapel Royal. In 1572, however, he was named a Gentleman of the Chapel, where he worked for more than 20 years as a singer, composer, and organist. His prolific record of publications includes numerous volumes of music for both Catholic and Anglican services, as well as secular pieces for vocal and instrumental performance. In 1593, he moved with his family to a rural town, devoting himself to the composition of service music for the many apostate chapels that had sprung up throughout the countryside. During this time, Catholic observance was considered an act of treason, punishable in some cases by death; that Byrd was never prosecuted for apostasy testifies to the great favor he had earned of the Queen by his immense talent.

Byrd's motets abound with reference to the Babylonian captivity, his analogy to the exiled status of his faith. Motets on the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem are favored for performance during Holy Week, and *Ne irascaris Domine/Civitas sancti tui* is (along with Tallis's Lamentations setting) among the most beloved of these. The second half of this motet is a lament on the desolation of the ruined holy city. Byrd's reiterations of the words "Jerusalem" and "desolata" stand as clear and poignant examples of the polyphonic technique of *points of imitation*. Here, the five voice parts enter one after another on the same word, each part carrying the same basic melodic contour as the voice before it; some voices begin on the same pitch, while others answer at different pitch levels. To make the resulting harmony come out well, small adjustments are made; for example, where the first voice may have started a phrase with an ascending fifth, an answering voice may have an ascending fourth instead. But what we have in these points is,

essentially, a sophisticated descendant of the technique of generating harmony by *rota*, as seen in *Sumer is icumen in*.

**Henry Purcell (1659–1695)**—arguably the greatest English composer between William Byrd and Benjamin Britten—began his career as a boy soprano in the Chapel Royal and never left the musical service of the church. At the age of 20, he replaced his teacher John Blow as organist of Westminster Abbey, a post he retained until his death. Shortly after earning this post, he also became composer and organist of the Anglican Chapel Royal under the reign of Charles II, serving in coming years the reigns of James II and William and Mary. He also distinguished himself as a composer of music for public entertainment, one great success of such being his 1692 *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day*. Among the most famous pieces he wrote at court are his odes for the birthday of Queen Mary and the service music for her funeral, which took place in the first days of 1695. His own funeral took place later that year, in Westminster Abbey, where, in the presence of the choirs of the Abbey and the Chapel Royal, this great middle-Baroque composer was buried near the organ he had played for 16 years.

The anthem *Lord, How Long Wilt Thou Be Angry?* reflects the Baroque Purcell's study and extension of the best Renaissance polyphonic practices: voices enter successively in long-reaching points of imitation, outlining triads and disrupting them with dissonant tones that must be resolved. However, the expanded harmonic palette of the new style period is in full evidence by the 12th measure of music: before the final voice has finished its first phrase, Purcell has managed to employ all 12 chromatic tones then available in the Western pitch system. Like virtually all music in the 17th century, the Baroque anthem was typically performed with the harmonic support of *basso continuo* instruments, organ at the least. Furthermore, it was common to feature the full chorus in alternation with verses in reduced texture; with continuo instruments playing, these verses could be carried by solo singers. The instrumental line supplied for this anthem, however, is a mere *basso seguente*: it follows the vocal material without adding anything that is not already present there. And the reduction of texture in the verse subtracts only the top two lines from the total five, leaving three voices singing simultaneously; therefore, triadic harmony can be created among them without the support of instruments. These features make this anthem ideal for a *cappella* performance when practical needs so dictate.

Strictly speaking, the death of Purcell marked the start of a 200-year lacuna in the succession of great English composers, though in 1727 the German-born G. F. Handel became a naturalized British citizen, conducting the remainder of his career from London. An avid student of Purcell's music in particular, Handel wrote many works solidly in line with English style and tradition, including several verse anthems and his own *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day*.

**Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)** was born outside Worcester, the fourth of seven children supported modestly on the earnings from their father's work as a piano tuner and music dealer. The young Elgar played organ and piano but adored his violin playing above all. Lacking the funds for a strong music education, he taught himself music theory. He was active as a singer and accompanist with the Worcester Glee Club, also arranging and composing for them. His first gainful music post, which he accepted at age 22, was as bandmaster at the Worcester and

County Lunatic Asylum. He developed his craft and built his local reputation by writing choral music for the many amateur choral music festivals in the English Midlands. It was not until 1899, when Elgar was 42 years old, that a composition of his—the *Enigma Variations*—at last earned him international recognition, as well as putting England back onto the map of birthplaces of great Western composers.

Eight years later, Elgar published his eight-part choral setting of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *There is Sweet Music*, whose text reflects his own, strongly musical experience of nature. In this piece, an early experiment in bitonality, the choir is halved: tenors and basses sing the first couplet, in G major, followed by sopranos and altos on the same text but in A-flat major. This separation is maintained throughout most of the piece, with the half-choirs taking turns on phrases of text and alternating between one key center and an adjacent one. Remarkably, all voices align in time and on the same chord at the phrase that begins with the word *music*: "Music that brings sweet sleep..." For the next 14 bars, both choirs sing together on the same triads; still, their parts are notated in two different, enharmonic keys, so that, for example, what appears as an *a-natural* in the low choir is spelled as a *b-double-flat* in the high choir. This maintains the conceit of a quasi-bitonality. Of course, music in fully committed bitonality—and then atonality or pantonality—would take the international stage only a few years after this piece's publication.

Though Elgar would be England's first, long-awaited composer-hero of the Modern era, it cannot be said that he created for her a specific, national compositional style. Such was never his aim. He was heavily influenced by Wagner and Strauss, and he went on record as being frankly allergic to the music of his country: "English music is white—it evades everything." It fell to two younger composers of Elgar's generation to create music that was identifiably English.

**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)** and **Gustav Holst (1874–1934)** enjoyed divergent but overlapping careers. Both studied at the Royal College of Music, and both contributed extensively to the 20th-century renaissance of English music. Lifelong friends, they played their works-in-progress for each other's criticism. They studied together the Socialist works of William Morris and admired the evocation of the *vox populi* in the poetry of Walt Whitman, sometimes choosing the same verses for setting. Holst's works typically met with less immediate success than those of Vaughan Williams; in the face of bad press, Vaughan Williams was often Holst's sole supporter, claiming that the lasting value of his friend's music lay beyond the capacity of the contemporary public to appreciate. Large works reflecting Holst's fascination with Eastern spirituality or his experiences traveling in Algeria tended to fall on deaf or scandalized ears in the British concertgoing elite. Meanwhile, Vaughan Williams's prolific composing in absolute forms, on English themes and texts, or in other familiar Western genres earned him consistent accolades and material support.

Both composers developed a particular body of work that responded successfully to English nationalism. It was Vaughan Williams who packed up his democratic, egalitarian ideals and wandered the countryside listening to local singers perform folk songs and carols. These he notated and subsequently shared with Holst; the composers used these melodies in arrangements and also as influences on their own free invention. Resisting the Germanic dominance of the

late-Romantic era's extreme chromaticism and also the atonality of Schoenberg's school, these men developed a tonal practice based on the modal scales of English folk song.

Vaughan Williams's very first publication, *Linden Lea*, is a clear imitation of English folk style, though the music is original to him and the poem was written in Dorset dialect by William Barnes (1801–1886). The poem—which Vaughan Williams uses in translation to the Queen's English—extols the virtues of country living over the airless, greedy existence in the cities. The music is direct and simple. The poem's three stanzas are set almost identically to one another, and the harmony adheres nearly exclusively to the seven tones provided by the scale of the original melody; in all voice parts, the seventh degree is flatted only twice per stanza, the first degree is raised twice per stanza, and the fourth degree is raised a total of two times—once in the first stanza, and once in the last. This piece is unmistakable as a paean to the culture of the common man and woman living on English soil. Far from common himself, Vaughan Williams was recognized in his time as the greatest English composer since Purcell and was buried near him in Westminster Abbey.

The source tune for Holst's *I Love My Love* was collected in Cornwall by G. B. Gardiner. Its poem opens with a reference to one of Holst's favorite activities. Though he was never robust in health, he was a prodigious hiker, walking daily and covering vast expanses of countryside in several European nations. The narrator in the ballad begins: "Abroad as I was walking...." The story about Nancy and her sailor is told here in five stanzas plus a coda. The melody is in the Dorian mode, a scale common in folk music of the British Isles (and also the first of the church modes in Gregorian chant). Holst keeps the same pitch center throughout, but he makes inventive use of changes in texture and tempo to communicate the narrative arc.

*The Three Ravens* is also a ballad in Dorian mode. Our arrangement is by **E. T. Chapman (1902–1981)**, who, like Vaughan Williams before him, studied at Cambridge with Irish composer Charles Wood. Despite his recognized gift for choral composing and arranging, Chapman made his career as a schoolmaster. The first known printed source for "The Three Ravens" was made by a prominent English composer whose interest in the folk songs of his land predated Holst and Vaughan Williams by 300 years. Thomas Ravenscroft's 1611 publication entitled *Melismata* is a compendium of part-songs divided into the following chapters: "Covrt Varieties," "Citie Rovnds," "Citie Conceites," "Covntrie Rovnds," and "Covntrie Pastimes." Our "Rauens" are found in the last category, rendered in four-part harmony. (It is worth noting that Ravenscroft's earlier compendium *Pammelia* contained 100 *catches*, "roundly" testifying to the durability of that tradition represented centuries earlier by *Sumer is icumen in*.) Chapman's elaborate harmonization is even more inventive than Holst's. The tune migrates freely among the parts, sometimes in transposition; there are frequent fluctuations in tempo and shifts in texture; and the full chromatic scale of 12 pitches is used.

The text of "The Three Ravens," with its knight, hawks, hounds, and "fallow doe," seems rife with Medieval symbols. One level of interpretation reads it as a moral tale of faithfulness in romantic love: so virtuous was the knight that all creatures around him protect his corpse from the ravens until the doe—symbolizing his pregnant lover—buries his body at last, at the cost of

her own life. Religious readers have proffered the story as an allegorical lesson in Christian virtue, faith, and reward. Interpreters of both opinions point to a Scottish derivative, "The Twa Corbies" ("The Two Crows"), as providing the cautionary tale to prove the moral. In this coarser version, the hawks, hounds, and doe are about other business, and so the crows ravage the knight's corpse, as if to say: "this is what happens to the immoral man." For a refreshing and contrary view of both poems from a rather Wiccan—or Buddhist—perspective, visit: [www.twocrows.co.uk/twa\\_corbies.html](http://www.twocrows.co.uk/twa_corbies.html).

If the poem of "The Three Ravens" has challenged our understanding, we shall be at least equally dumbfounded by W. H. Auden's text in the *Hymn to Saint Cecilia* by **Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)**.

Britten was the first great English composer to be born after 1900, and he is now regarded as one of the towering composers of the century. But during his career, a mutual distrust sometimes marred his relationship with the English cultural elite. For his part, he viewed the English musical mainstream as smug, mediocre, and cliquish—which its commentators rather proved by their suspicion of his compositional agility, his cosmopolitanism, and his love of the work of such un-English composers as Gustav Mahler, Igor Stravinsky, and Alban Berg. He was also in his time subject to dismissal on the grounds of his homosexuality and his pacifism.

Britten's collaboration with Auden began in the early 1930s and continued throughout the decade. When in 1939 Auden emigrated to the United States, Britten and his life-partner, the tenor Peter Pears, followed for a period of three years. Britten wrote the *Hymn to Saint Cecilia* between 1940 and 1942, having long intended to compose an ode to the patron saint of music. He was familiar with the long English tradition of composing such odes (including the Purcell and Handel contributions mentioned earlier); furthermore, his birthday was on her feast day, November 22. When Auden sent Britten his poem in 1940, he included advice on how Britten might become a better artist, an act that extinguished Britten's will to collaborate with him.

According to legend, Saint Cecilia was a Roman martyr of the third century who since childhood had been in communication with an angel of God. As a noblewoman, she was forced to marry, but she did so only on condition of maintaining her virginity. It was not for this that she was killed, however, but for giving all her possessions to the poor, against the direct order of the local prefect. When he tried to burn her at the stake, the flames would not scald her, so she was beheaded instead. Among all the very indirect language of Auden's poem are some conventions belonging to the tradition of Cecilian odes. There is an invocation to the muse, which begs her to "appear in visions to all musicians" for their inspiration. Also typically, various instruments find mention in the poem—in this case, trumpet, drum, violin, flute, and the organ at which Cecilia is often depicted in iconography.

As Britten and Pears were leaving the United States to return to England in 1942, customs officials confiscated all of Britten's manuscripts, on the suspicion that they contained coded military information. On the voyage home aboard the M.S. Axel Johnson, Britten reconstructed

and then finished the manuscript. The piece now holds its place as one of the most beloved in the unaccompanied choral repertoire.

Of all that we might say about this wonderful music, it seems especially fitting tonight to point out the durability of time-worn English harmonic techniques that resurface here. In the opening section of the piece, the voices that carry the full text (alto, soprano II, soprano I) declaim Auden's entire first paragraph in nothing but triads. The second section ("I cannot grow...") is merely an elaborated round in three parts. And in the final section, the phrase "O trumpets that unguarded children blow"—the point of climax for the entire piece—is delivered in the treble voices in a chain of parallel triads in first inversion, the same harmonic texture as the 15th-century *faburden*.

Thank you for enjoying with us tonight *La contenance angloise*.

—*Kristina Boerger*

## *Texts*

### **Alleluia: Dominus dixit**

Alleluia: Dominus dixit ad me,  
Filius meus es tu:  
Ego hodie genuite. Alleluia!

*Alleluia:* The Lord hath said to me:  
Thou art My Son,  
This day have I begotten Thee. Alleluia.

### **Sumer is icumen in**

Sumer is icumen in,  
Lhude sing cuccu!  
Groweth sed and bloweth med  
And springth the wde nu,  
Sing cuccu!  
Awe bleteth after lomb,  
Lhouth after calve cu.  
Bulluc sterteth, bucke uerteth,  
Murie sing cuccu!  
Cuccu, cuccu.  
Wel singes thu cuccu;  
Ne swik thu nauer nu.

Summer has come in,  
Loudly sing, Cuckoo!  
The seed grows and the meadow blooms  
And the wood springs anew,  
Sing, Cuckoo!  
The ewe bleats after the lamb  
The cow lows after the calf.  
The bullock stirs, the stag farts,  
Merrily sing, Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo.  
Well you sing, cuckoo;  
Don't you ever stop now.

### **Quam pulchra es**

Quam pulchra es et quam decora,  
carissima in deliciis.  
Statura tua assimilata est palme,  
et ubera tua botris,  
caput tuum ut carmelus,  
collum tuum sicut turris eburnea.

How beautiful and fair you are, my beloved,  
most sweet in your delights.  
Your stature is like a palm-tree,  
and your breasts are like fruit.  
Your head is like Mount Carmel  
and your neck is like a tower of ivory.

Veni dilecte mi; egrediamur in agrum  
et videamus si flores fructus parturierunt,  
si floruerunt malapunica.  
Ibi dabo tibi ubera mea.

Come, my beloved, let us go into the fields  
and see if the blossoms have borne fruit,  
and if the pomegranates have flowered.  
There will I give my breasts to you.

Alleluia.

Alleluia.

**Audivi vocem de caelo**

Audivi vocem de caelo venientem:  
venite omnes virgines sapientissime;  
oleum recondite in vasis vestris  
dum sponsus advenerit.  
Media nocte clamor factus est:  
ecce sponsus venit.  
Oleum recondite in vasis vestris  
dum sponsus advenerit.

I heard a voice that came from heaven:  
come, all ye wise virgins;  
take oil in your vessels  
until the bridegroom shall come.  
At midnight there was a cry made:  
behold, the bridegroom cometh.  
Take oil in your vessels  
until the bridegroom shall come.

**Ne irascaris Domine**

Ne irascaris Domine satis  
et ne ultra memineris iniquitatis nostrae.  
Ecce respice  
populus tuus omnes nos.

Be not very angry, O Lord,  
and remember no longer our iniquity:  
behold, see  
we are all thy people.

Civitas sancti tui  
facta est deserta.  
Sion deserta facta est,  
Jerusalem desolata est.

The city of thy sanctuary  
is become a desert,  
Zion is made a desert,  
Jerusalem is desolate.

—Isaiah, 64: 9-10

**Lord, How Long Wilt Thou Be Angry?**

Lord, how long wilt thou be angry?  
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire forever?  
O remember not our old sins,  
but have mercy upon us, and that soon,  
for we are come to great misery.  
Help us, O God of our salvation,  
for the glory of thy name;  
O deliver us, and be merciful  
unto our sins, for thy name's sake.  
So we that are thy people  
and the sheep of thy pasture  
shall give thee thanks for ever,  
and will always be showing forth thy praise  
from one generation to another.

**There is Sweet Music**

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;  
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.  
Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

—*Alfred Lord Tennyson*

**Linden Lea**

Within the woodlands, flowery gladed,  
By the oak tree's mossy moot,  
The shining grass-blades, timber-shaded,  
Now do quiver under foot;  
And birds do whistle overhead,  
And water's bubbling in its bed,  
And there for me the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves that lately were a-springing  
Now do fade within the copse,  
And painted birds do hush their singing  
Up upon the timber tops;  
And brown-leaved fruit's a-turning red,  
In cloudless sunshine, overhead,  
With fruit for me, the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster  
In the air of dark-roomed towns,  
I don't dread a peevish master;  
Though no man need heed my frowns,  
I be free to go abroad,  
Or take again my homeward road  
To where, for me, the apple tree  
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

—*William Barnes*

### **I Love My Love**

Abroad as I was walking, one evening in the spring,  
I heard a maid in Bedlam so sweetly for to sing;  
Her chains she rattled with her hands, And thus replied she:  
“I love my love because I know my love loves me!”

“O cruel were his parents who sent my love to sea,  
And cruel was the ship that bore my love from me;  
Yet I love his parents since they're his although they've ruined me:  
I love my love because I know my love loves me!”

“With straw I'll weave a garland, I'll weave it very fine;  
With roses, lilies, daisies, I'll mix the eglantine;  
And I'll present it to my love when he returns from sea.  
For I love my love, because I know my love loves me.”

Just as she sat there weeping, her love he came on land.  
Then hearing she was in Bedlam, he ran straight out of hand.  
He flew into her snow-white arms, and thus replied he:  
“I love my love, because I know my love loves me.”

She said: “My love don't frighten me; are you my love or no?”  
“O yes, my dearest Nancy, I am your love, also  
I am return'd to make amends for all your injury;  
I love my love because I know my love loves me.”

So now these two are married, and happy may they be  
Like turtledoves together, in love and unity.  
All pretty maids with patience wait that have got loves at sea;  
“I love my love because I know my love loves me.”

### **The Three Ravens**

There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
Down a down, hey down, hey down.  
They were a black as black might be,  
With a down.  
The one of them said to his mate.  
“Where shall we our breakfast take?”  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

Down in yonder green field,  
Down a down, hey down, hey down.  
There lies a knight slain under his shield,  
With a down.  
His hounds they lie down at his feet  
So well they do their master keep.  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

His hawks they fly so eagerly  
Down a down, hey down, hey down.  
No other fowl dare him come nigh,  
With a down.  
Down there comes a fallow doe  
As heavy with young as she might go.  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

She lifted up his bloody head,  
Down a down, hey down, hey down.  
And kissed his wounds that were so red,  
With a down.  
She got him up upon her back  
And carried him to earthen lake.  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

She buried him before the prime,  
Down a down, hey down, hey down.  
She was dead herself ere even-song time,  
With a down.  
God send every gentleman  
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a loved one,  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

—*Thomas Ravenscroft*

## Hymn to St. Cecelia

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.

—*W. H. Auden*

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