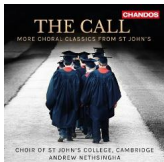


Choir of St. John's College - The Call: More Choral Classics (2015)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 15 June 2017 12:20 -

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1. John Ireland: *Greater love hath no man* 2. Douglas Guest: *2 Anthems for Remembrance*
3. Hubert Parry: *Songs of Farewell No. 1. My soul, there is a country* 4. Roxanna Panufnik: *The Call* 5. Felix Mendelssohn: *Hear My Prayer* 6. Felix Mendelssohn: *O for the wings of a dove*
7. Hubert Parry: *I was glad when they said unto me, Op. 51, "Psalm 122"* 8. Charles Villiers
Stanford: *3 Latin Motets, Op. 38 Beati quorum via* 9. John Tavener: *Song for Athene*
10. Charles Villiers Stanford: *Morning, Communion & Evening Services in B-Flat Major, Op. 10*
Te Deum laudamus 11. William Henry Harris: *Holy is the true light* 12. Jonathan Dove: *Missa Brevis*
13. Gioachino Rossini: *O salutaris hostia* 14. Felix Mendelssohn: *3 Kirchenmusiken, Op. 23 No. 2. Ave maria, BWV B19*
15. Herbert Howells: *A Spotless Rose* 16. Ernest Bullock: *Give Us the Wings of Faith* 17. Hubert Parry: *And did those feet (arr. J. Wicks for choir and organ)*
Xavier Hetherington tenor Theodore Platt baritone Augustus Perkins Ray bass-baritone
Alexander Tomkinson treble Maximilian Boorman treble Joel Branston treble Oliver Brown
treble Alexander Simpson counter-tenor Thomas Lilburn counter-tenor John Clapham tenor
Oliver Morris bass Augustus Perkins Ray bass-baritone Edward Picton-Tubervill organ
Wilhelm Taubert gewidmet Alison Martin harp Choir of St John's College, Cambridge Andrew Nethsingha director

The choral pieces brought together on *The Call* range widely, from ceremonial works associated with affairs of state to intimate compositions addressing moments of great personal significance. The composers are similarly diverse. They include an English composer of Polish extraction (Panufnik), an Italian who spent most of his life in Paris (Rossini), an Irish and a German composer who became leading lights in English music (Stanford and Mendelssohn). However, all the works recorded here have one thing in common: all are considered quintessential to the Anglican choral tradition.

Anybody with deep affection for the more noble anthems of the Anglican tradition will need no excuse to grab a copy of this tasty selection, especially so when it features performances of such tasteful restraint. You only need sample Oliver Browne's unaffected treble in 'O for the

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wings of a dove' or Xavier Hetherington's ethereal tenor in the Ave Maria to know that Andrew Nethsingha has musical integrity at the heart of these performances. --- Gramophone

I suppose King's College Choir will always be the most 'starry' of the Cambridge choirs, variable though their standards have been over the years. In fact, their great rivals, St. John's, have always been just as good, often better, and can boast a long tradition of inspirational directors, including Herbert Howells, Robin Orr and David Hill. The latest in this distinguished line is Andrew Nethsingha, who has put together for this CD a splendid programme of choral works from the past 150 years or so, designed not only to 'showcase' this fine choir, but also to provide a satisfying musical experience. Many of the pieces are quite short independent items, though there are one or two more substantial works, notably Mendelssohn's Hear My Prayer and Stanford's Te Deum Laudamus, both of which are nicely judged to add a little heft.

John Ireland's deeply felt motet Greater Love hath no man makes a great opening track, powerfully emotional and illustrating the strength of this choir in all four sections. This number, like several of the others, features solos taken by choir members, and all are done with confidence and style.

I won't go through every single track, but rather shall mention some particularly striking aspects of the various pieces. Mendelssohn's motet Hear my Prayer is memorable for the lovely singing of treble Oliver Brown. His intonation and phrasing, as well as his characterisation of the various sections, would all be praiseworthy in a professional singer three times his age. Quite exceptional.

Many will recall Tavener's Song for Athene from Princess Diana's memorial service, when it briefly introduced a note of chilling dignity into the general vulgarity. Nethsingha draws as near perfect a rendition from his singers as is humanly possible; worth hearing the disc for this alone. A couple of tracks along we have the thrilling Gloria from Jonathan Dove's Missa Brevis. The singing has a powerful rhythmic impact, but the most striking feature is the organ playing of Edward Picton-Turbervill, who coaxes sounds of great brilliance from the St. John's chapel organ. Did I catch the tones of a glockenspiel in the last few bars of this? If indeed so, the percussionist remains anonymous. We should be told.

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The 'title' track, so to speak, is Roxanna Panufnik's little anthem The Call, a setting of words by George Herbert - probably best known in the context of Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs. Add to that perennial favourites such as Parry's Jerusalem and I Was Glad, Howells' A Spotless Rose, Rossini's O salutaris hostia and Stanford's Beati Quorum Via, and you have a disc which has something for almost every lover of top quality choral music and performance. My only reservation concerns the recording of the organ. It is fine when playing loudly; but when soft, it becomes a rather indistinct and vague muttering. This is a tough one for recording engineers, because they are often at the mercy of the acoustic of the building itself, and this problem afflicts so many church-based recordings. It doesn't blight too seriously what is otherwise an outstanding issue. ---Gwyn Parry-Jones, musicweb-international.com

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