

SEA CHANGE

Choral Music of Richard Rodney Bennett



The Cambridge Singers
directed by John Rutter

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The choral music of Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012)

The Cambridge Singers
directed by John Rutter
with Sue Dorey (*cello*) and
Charles Fullbrook (*tubular bells*)

Total playing time: 74' 28"

Note: Words credits are given at the end of each text.

1 – 4 SEA CHANGE (17' 05")

Tubular bells: Charles Fullbrook

- 1 The isle is full of noises (3' 06")
- 2 The Bermudas (6' 43")
Tenor solo: Simon Wall
Baritone solo: Sam Evans
- 3 The waves come rolling (3' 37")
- 4 Full fathom five (3' 23")
- 5 A FAREWELL TO ARMS (11' 47")
Cello: Sue Dorey
- 6 A GOOD-NIGHT (2' 36")
- 7 VERSES (6' 31")



Richard Rodney Bennett ©Katie van Dyck

8 – 11 MISSA BREVIS (15' 40")

- 8 1. Kyrie (2' 44")
- 9 2. Gloria (3' 24")
- 10 3. Sanctus (4' 48")
- 11 4. Agnus Dei (4' 26")

12 – 16 FIVE CAROLS (10' 04")

- 12 1. There is no rose (2' 52")
- 13 2. Out of your sleep (1' 38")
- 14 3. That young child (1' 16")
- 15 4. Sweet was the song (2' 40")
- 16 5. Susanni (1' 17")

17 LULLAY MINE LIKING (3' 37")

Soloists: Elin Manahan Thomas, Clare Wilkinson, Ben Breakwell, Sam Evans

18 WHAT SWEETER MUSIC (3' 38")

19 PUER NOBIS (2' 26")

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The Cambridge Singers

Sopranos: Miriam Allan, Susan Gilmour Bailey, Katy Cooper, Grace Davidson, Alice Gribbin, Amy Haworth, Kirsty Hopkins, Charlotte Mobbs, Emma Preston-Dunlop, Elin Manahan Thomas
Altos: Melanie Marshall, Ruth Massey, Tara Overend, Madeleine Shaw, Abigail Smetham, Clare Wilkinson
Tenors: Ben Breakwell, David Brown, Ross Buddie, John Harte, Simon Wall, Christopher Watson
Basses: Gabriel Crouch, Sam Evans, Christopher Gabbitas, Gareth Jones, Andrew Kidd, Jonathan Saunders, Reuben Thomas

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's musical career was so many-sided and prodigious in different genres—concert music, opera, ballet, jazz, and film music—that it is easy to overlook the importance and quality of his choral music. Astonishingly, the present album was the first recorded survey, inevitably only partial, of an outstandingly varied, imaginative and attractive body of work spanning a period of almost forty years.

Born in Kent in 1936 to a writer father and a composer mother, Bennett's precocious gifts as composer and pianist were quickly recognized, leading to a scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music in London and private study with Pierre Boulez in Paris. His was a remarkable generation of British composers, including Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies, Goehr and (by adoption) Williamson, but, like *Les Six*, they are often misleadingly grouped together despite being very different. Bennett was always possessed of a gift for heart-melting, memorable and quintessentially English melody—which found little outlet in 1960s serialism—and an instinctive lyric responsiveness to English poetry (ditto). Perhaps fortunately for the world of choral music, he rather uniquely managed to maintain parallel styles for different genres throughout his career (as did Bach): even when his concert music was serial, his choral pieces were always tonal and tuneful.

To understand the roots of all this, we must look back a decade earlier than the turbulent and much-discussed 1960s. 1953, the year Bennett entered the Royal Academy of Music, was Coronation year, the dawn of the new Elizabethan age. Britons saw in their young queen a reflection of the first Elizabeth, in whose reign the courtly arts of poetry and music so notably flourished. It was hoped

that a new golden age was on the way, with latter-day Shakespeares, Byrds and Dowlands to add lustre to a drab post-war nation. The 1951 Festival of Britain heralded a brief period when the 'high' arts were widely encouraged in education; after the horrors of World War II many felt that the greatness of a civilization lay as much in its poets as in its politicians—a view doubtless fostered at Leighton Park, the Quaker school which Bennett attended as a teenager. Poetry always *mattered* intensely to Bennett, and in his choral writing we find him setting some of the very greatest—Shakespeare, Donne, Marvell and Spenser—alongside slighter but exquisite lyrics by such poets as Herrick, Quarles and the medieval 'anon's. As with so many English composers, poetry was the mainspring of Bennett's vocal and choral music, placing it in a long and honourable tradition from Dunstable to Britten and beyond. Bennett was a successful, formidably skilled cosmopolitan and a master of many styles and sounds—yet, despite having made New York his home in 1979, he never forgot his national roots.

What made him so quintessentially English, and so instantly recognizable, a composer? Two traits: his profound sense of poetry, in the broadest sense . . . and, allied to this, a quality of melodic wistfulness, tinged with yearning for a lost golden age (you can hear it in the cello writing of *A Farewell to Arms*) which, without being explicitly sad, brings a tear to the eye. Once confined to his choral and film music, these Bennett fingerprints became apparent all over his later work. Anthony Burton wrote of his final phase: 'Bennett seems confident and relaxed enough to have settled into a freely tonal idiom . . . this is clearly the music he wants to write now'. Parallel lines *can* converge.

Note: Texts are given as set by the composer, though generally with modernized spelling. They differ slightly, in places, from the originals.

1 – 4 SEA CHANGE

(composed in 1983 for the Donald Hunt Singers, premièred by them at the 1984 Three Choirs Festival)

The opportunity to write for a virtuoso chamber choir called forth perhaps the most ambitious of Bennett's unaccompanied choral works, one which explored new sound worlds to extraordinary and evocative effect. As well as a maritime theme, the texts all share a dreamlike quality of fantasy and illusion, Shakespeare's *Tempest* texts fairly obviously so, Marvell's and Spenser's more obliquely. Marvell's *The Bermudas* recounts the experience of a party of sailors shipwrecked in 1609 on Bermuda while en route from England to Virginia. Believed drowned, the sailors survived several months on the island and eventually continued on to Jamestown where their miraculous story caused widespread amazement, promptly inspiring Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and later, Marvell's poem. Spenser's text, from Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, concerns the allegorical voyage (modelled on Odysseus's) of the knight Guyon and the terrifying sea monsters he encounters during a storm.

These four texts make for a satisfying musical whole. The cycle begins and ends in dreaming, conjured up with a distant bell, multi-divided voices and the use of strange 'artificial' scales which generate eerie bitonal harmonies. Bennett's *Full fathom five* was, curiously, anticipated in these techniques by the aged Vaughan Williams in his similarly luminous and visionary setting of the same words in 1950. The inner movements offer sharp and effective contrasts. *The Bermudas* (Bennett's second setting of this poem, unrelated to an earlier one for chorus and orchestra) is framed by haunting unaccompanied solos, for tenor and baritone respectively. Adjoining these are two hymn-like passages built on plain chords, sung by the thankful mariners, the first of them tranquil, the second more exalted; these in turn frame a flowing, melodious central section, marked *Allegretto amabile*, detailing the abundant bounties of the island. The shape of the whole movement is thus an arch-like ABCBA. The third movement, *The waves come rolling*, is the most startling—a kind of *sprechgesang* scherzo in which pitches are indicated as being approximate, and the composer directs that 'the widest vocal and dynamic range is to be used and the maximum (melo)dramatic effect aimed for'. The mood is violent and nightmarish, and it was a dramatic masterstroke to follow this with the calm, timeless dreaming of *Full fathom five*.

1 The isle is full of noises

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt
not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,

Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show
riches

Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616), from The Tempest

2 The Bermudas

Where the remote Bermudas ride
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat, that rowed along
The listening winds received this song:

'What should we do but sing his praise,
That led us through the watery maze,
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own?
Where he the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs.
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms' and prelates' rage.
He gave us this eternal spring,
Which here enamels everything;
And sends the fowls to us in care,
On daily visits through the air;
He hangs in shades the orange bright,
Like golden lamps in a green night;
And doth in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows.

He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
And throws the melons at our feet;
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice.
With cedars, chosen by his hand,
From Lebanon, he stores the land;
And makes the hollow seas that roar,
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.
He cast (of which we rather boast)
The Gospel's pearl upon our coast,
And in these rocks for us did frame
A temple, where to sound his Name.
Oh! let our voice his praise exalt,
Till it arrive at heaven's vault,
Which then, perhaps, rebounding, may
Echo beyond the Mexique Bay.'

Thus sang they, in the English boat,
An holy and a cheerful note,
And all the way, to guide their chime
With falling oars they kept the time.

Andrew Marvell (1621–78)

3 The waves come rolling

The waves come rolling, and the billows roar,
Outrageously, as they enraged were,
Or wrathful Neptune did them drive before
His whirling chariot, for exceeding fear:
For not one puff of wind did there appear,
That all thereat wax much afraid,
Unwitting what such horror strange did rear.
Eftsoones they saw a hideous host arrayed
Of huge sea monsters, such as living sense
dismayed.

Most ugly shapes, and horrible aspects
Such as Dame Nature self might fear to see
Or shame, that ever should so foul defects
From her most cunning hand escaped be;
All dreadful portraits of deformity:
Spring-headed Hydras, and sea-should'ring
whales,
Great whirlpools, which all fishes make to flee,
Bright Scolopendras, armed with silver scales,
Mighty Monoceroses, with immeasured tails.

The dreadful fish, that hath deserved the name
Of death, and like him looks in dreadful hue,
The grisly wasserman, that makes his game
The flying ships with swiftnesse to pursue,
The horrible sea-satyre, that doth show
His fearful face in times of greatest storm,

Huge Ziffius whom mariners eschew,
No less than rocks (as travellers inform,)
And greedy rosmarines with visages deforme.

All these, and thousands thousands many
more,
And more deformed monsters thousand fold,
With dreadful noise, and hollow rumbling roar,
Came rushing in the foamy waves enroll,
Which seemed to fly for fear, them to behold:
No wonder, if these did the knight appal,
For all that here on earth we dreadful hold,
Be but as bugs to fearene babes withal,
Compared to the creatures in the sea's entrall.

*Edmund Spenser (?1552–1599),
from The Faerie Queene*

*rear=cause; hydras=seven-headed serpents;
whirlpools=whales; scolopendras=centipede-like fishes;
monoceroses=sea-unicorns; the name of death (i.e.
'mors')=morse, or walrus; wasserman=merman;
Ziffius=swordfish; rosmarines=sea-horses; entrall=insides,
entrails*

4 Full fathom five

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made:
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
Hark, now I hear them, ding dong bell.

William Shakespeare, from The Tempest

5 A Farewell to Arms

(composed in 2001 for VocalEssence, Minneapolis USA, première by them in 2002)

This, the last to be composed of the works on the album, juxtaposes two related poems, one Jacobean, the other Elizabethan (inscribed 'to Queen Elizabeth'), on the theme of the old soldier recalling past wars and his present role in time of peaceful retirement—surely relevant in the 1950s when Bennett first encountered these poems as a schoolboy. Peele's helmet-as-beehive image seems to have sparked off Knevet's imaginative catalogue of further examples of swords-into-ploughshares, and whether by design or not the two poems complement each other well: Knevet focuses on the instruments of war, Peele on the soldier himself.

In Bennett's setting a solo cello suggests the central character of the sturdy old soldier looking back over past battles, reflecting on the passing of time and the transience of military glory, youth, and life itself. Solo instrumental writing always appealed to Bennett, and in *A Farewell to Arms* he successfully integrates an eloquent, romantic cello part—Walton's string concertos made an early and deep impression on him—with almost madrigalian vocal writing. There are appropriately retrospective touches: archaic Burgundian cadence figures with their sharpened fourths, echoes of Dowland's lute songs, Purcellian scotch-snap rhythms on the word 'Goddess'. The tightest of motivic unity holds this rich variety of elements together, until the final dying cello *pizzicatos* seem to tell us that the faithful old warrior has drawn his last breath.

I

The helmet now an hive for bees becomes,
 And hilts of swords may serve for spiders'
 looms,
 Sharp pikes may make
 Teeth for a rake,
 And the keen blade, the arch enemy of life,
 Shall be degraded to a pruning knife:
 The rustic spade
 Which first was made
 For honest agriculture, shall retake
 Its primitive employment, and forsake
 The rampires steep,
 And trenches deep.
 Tame conies in our brazen guns shall breed,
 Or gentle doves their young ones there shall
 feed;
 In musket barrels
 Mice shall raise quarrels
 For their quarters: The ventriloquious drum
 (Like lawyers in vacations) shall be dumb:
 Now all recruits
 (But those of fruits)
 Shall be forgot: and the unarmed soldier
 Shall only boast of what he did whilere,
 In chimneys' ends
 Among his friends.

Ralph Knevet (1600–71)

II

His golden locks time hath to silver turned;
 O time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing!
 His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever
 spurned,
 But spurned in vain, youth waneth by
 increasing.
 Beauty, strength, youth are flowers but fading
 seen;
 Duty, faith, love are roots, and ever green.

 His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,
 And lovers' sonnets turn to holy psalms
 A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,
 And feed on prayers which are age's alms:
 But though from court to cottage he depart,
 His saint is sure of his unspotted heart

 And when he saddest sits in homely cell,
 He'll teach his swains this carol for a song:
 'Blest be the hearts that wish my Sovereign
 well,
 Curst be the soul that thinks her any wrong.'
 Goddess, allow this aged man his right,
 To be your beadsman now, that was your
 knight.

Beadsman=humble servant

George Peele (?1558–97)

6 A Good-Night

(composed in 1999 for the 'Garland for Linda' project, première'd the same year by The Joyful Company of Singers at Charterhouse School)

This touching little part-song was one of nine short choral pieces commissioned from different British composers in memory of Linda McCartney, late wife of former Beatle Paul McCartney. Bennett said of his piece: 'I felt at ease with Linda who was always warm and spontaneous. I wanted my work to be a gentle goodbye to a remarkable woman.'

Close now thine eyes and rest secure;
 Thy soul is safe enough, thy body sure.
 He that loves thee, he that keeps
 And guards thee, never slumbers, never sleeps.
 The smiling conscience in a sleeping breast
 Has only peace, has only rest;
 The music and the mirth of kings
 Are all but very discords, when she sings.
 Then close thine eyes and rest secure;
 No sleep so sweet as thine, no rest so sure.

(Francis Quarles, 1592–1644)

7 Verses

(composed in 1964, première'd the same year by the London Recital Group)

Among the earliest of Bennett's choral pieces, these three Donne settings are short without being slight, and many of the elements of his choral style are already evident. The music is carefully and sensitively fitted to the words (a note warns that 'the bar-lines in No. 1 should not interfere with the natural rhythm of the words'); each voice part is shaped with a sure sense of line; clarity of texture sometimes conceals artifice, as with the effortless canonic writing in Nos. 1 and 2; and the sense of the text is eloquently conveyed—all this within a framework of 'reborn tonality' which respects the long tradition of choral music without suggesting pastiche.

I

From needing danger, to be good,
From owing thee yesterday's tears today,
From trusting so much to thy blood,
That in that hope, we wound our soul away,
From bribing thee with alms, to excuse
Some sin more burdensome,
From light affecting, in religion, news,
From thinking us all soul, neglecting thus
Our mutual duties, Lord deliver us.

John Donne (1572–1631, from The Litanie, XVI)

II

Through thy submitting all, to blows
Thy face, thy clothes to spoil, thy fame to scorn,
All ways, which rage, or justice knows,
And by which thou couldst show, that thou
wast born,
And through thy gallant humbleness

8 – 11 MISSA BREVIS

(composed in 1990 for Canterbury Cathedral Choir)

The aptness and attractiveness of this, Bennett's only piece of liturgical music, leads one to wonder why he was not prevailed upon to write more of it. In its concision, motivic integration, and in the rhythmic energy of its Gloria, his *Missa Brevis* owes something to Britten's, yet if there is a precedent for his fresh, pristine invention, it lies more with the church music of Poulenc and his French contemporaries. Canterbury, after all, is closer to France than it is to London. Like Poulenc, Bennett was capable of abrupt mood changes, most notably in the Sanctus movement which, at the Hosanna, unexpectedly launches into a cheeky, rather secular two-four tune which the boy choristers might well whistle, after a solemn opening section which swings slowly back and forth in nine-eight rhythm like

Which thou in death didst shew,
Dying before thy soul they could express,
Deliver us from death by dying so,
To this world, ere this world doth bid us go.

(The Litanie, XX)

III

Hear us, O hear us Lord; to thee
A sinner is more music, when he prays,
Than spheres, or angels' praises be,
In panegyric allelujas.
Hear us, for till thou hear us, Lord
We know not what to say.
Thine ear to our sighs, tears, thoughts gives
voice and word.

O thou who Satan heard'st in Job's sick day,
Hear thy self now, for thou in us dost pray.

(The Litanie, XXIII)

a priest's censer. Yet, when the text calls for it, the music breathes an air of intense devotion, as in the fine *Agnus Dei* where the choir splits into two antiphonal halves to telling effect.

8 1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

(Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.)

9 2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus te propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens,
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus,
Jesu Christe, Cum Sancto Spiritu in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

(Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord. Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.)

10 **3. Sanctus**

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

(Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.)

11 **4. Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

(Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace.)

12 – 16 FIVE CAROLS

(composed in 1967 for Michael Nicholas and the Choir of St Matthew's Church, Northampton)

No survey of Bennett's choral music can overlook his contribution to the repertoire of Christmas carols. Like Vaughan Williams, Holst, Britten, Walton, and numerous other English composers, he had a clear affection for this, the oldest genre of vernacular choral music, not least because of the many lovely texts it offers for musical setting. *The Five Carols* quickly found a place in the repertoire of choirs everywhere, and they have stood the test of time uncommonly well because of their freshness, simplicity, and fidelity to their beautifully-chosen texts.

12 **1. There is no rose**

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu.
Alleluia.

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in little space.
Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in Persons three.
Pares forma.

13 **2. Out of your sleep**

Out of your sleep arise and wake,
For God mankind now hath ytake
All of a maid without any make;
Of all women she beareth the bell.

And through a maidè fair and wise,
Now man is made of full great price;
Now angels knelen to man's service,
And at this time all this befell.

Now man is brighter than the sun;
Now man in heav'n on high shall won;
Blessèd be God this game is begun
And his mother the Empress of hell.

That ever was thrall now is he free;
That ever was small now great is she;

The angels sungen the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gaudeamus.

Then leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.
Transeamus.

(15th century, English)

Now shall God deem both thee and me
Unto his bliss if we do well.

Now man he may to heaven wend;
Now heav'n and earth to him they bend.
He that was foe now is our friend.
This is no nay that I you tell.

Now blessèd Brother grant us grace,
At doomès day to see thy face,
And in thy court to have a place,
That we may there sing thee nowell.

(15th century, English)

14 3. That younge child

That younge child when it gan weep
With song she lulled him asleep.
That was so sweet a melody
It passèd alle minstrelsy.
The nightingalè sang also,

His song is hoarse and nought thereto.
Whoso attendeth to her song
And leaveth the first, then doth he wrong.
(14th century, English)

15 4. Sweet was the song

Sweet was the song the Virgin sang,
When she to Bethlem Juda came,
And was delivered of a son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name.
'Lulla, lulla,
Lullaby, sweet babe', sang she,
'My son, and eke a saviour born,

Who hast vouchsafèd from on high
To visit us that were forlorn:
Lalula, lalula,
Lalulaby sweet babe', sang she,
And rocked him sweetly on her knee.
eke=also

(16th century, English, as adapted by William Ballet,
c.1590)

16 5. Susanni

A little child there is yborn,
Eia, eia, susanni, susanni, susanni.
And he sprang out of Jesse's thorn,
Alleluya, alleluya,
To save all us that were forlorn.

It fell upon the high midnight.
The stars they shone both fair and bright.
The angels sang with all their might.

Three kings there came with their presents,
Of gold and myrrh and frankincense,
As clerkès sing in their sequence.

Now Jesus is the childe name,
And Mary mild she is his dame,
And so our sorrow's turned to game.

Now sit we down upon our knee,
And pray we to the Trinity,
Our help and succour for to be.

(15th century, English)

17 Lullay mine liking

(composed in 1984 for Edward Heath and the Broadstairs Choir)

A composition can be a token of friendship (many of Bennett's pieces were written for friends), and his generosity of spirit is exemplified in this truly lovely little carol, a worthy heir to the tradition of Holst and Warlock. Its dedication to Edward Heath, the former Prime Minister and conductor of an annual Christmas concert in Broadstairs, shows its composer's willingness to write for relatively humble amateurs as well as for skilled professionals. Heath, like Bennett, was born in Broadstairs.

*Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting:
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.*

I saw a fair maiden sitten and sing:
She lulled a little Child, a sweete Lording.

That Eternal Lord is he that made alle thing;
Of alle Lordes He is Lord, of ev'ry King He's King.

There was mickel melody at that Childes birth:
Through the song from Heaven came, they made mickel mirth.

Angels bright they sang that night and saiden to that Child:
'Blessed be Thou and so be she that is both meek and mild.'

Pray we now to that Child as to his Mother dear;
To grant them all his blessing that now maken cheer.

(15th century, English)

18 What sweeter music

(composed in 1968 for Edward Heath and the Broadstairs Choir)

This, an earlier Edward Heath commission, typifies Bennett's care and skill in seeking out good and sometimes little-known texts—characteristic also of Vaughan Williams and Britten. Herrick's poem is extracted from *A Carol for New Yeares Day*, a masque for Charles I with music (now lost) by William Lawes, and it perfectly sums up what carols are about.

What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!
*We see him come, and know him ours,
Who, with his sunshine and his showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honour to this day
That sees December turned to May.
If we may ask the reason, say:
We see him come, &c.

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room
To welcome him. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart:
We see him come, &c.

Which we will give him, and bequeath
This holly and this ivy wreath,
To do him honour who's our king,
And Lord of all this revelling.
We see him come, &c.

What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
(Robert Herrick, 1591–1674)

19 Puer nobis

(composed in 1980 for the Marchioness of Aberdeen and the Haddo House Choral Society)

June Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen, was a dedicated amateur conductor, and Haddo House, her home, was the setting for many musical performances. *Puer nobis*, written at her request for a carol concert, is frankly retrospective in style, recalling with warmth and fondness the best of Stanford's part-songs but still bearing Bennett's own distinctive stamp.

Given, not lent,
And not withdrawn—once sent,
This Infant of mankind, this One
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long;

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green—

Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet.
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He too, Whom we have by heart.

(Alice Meynell, 1847–1922)



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