

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS ❖ TAVENER ❖ MACMILLAN

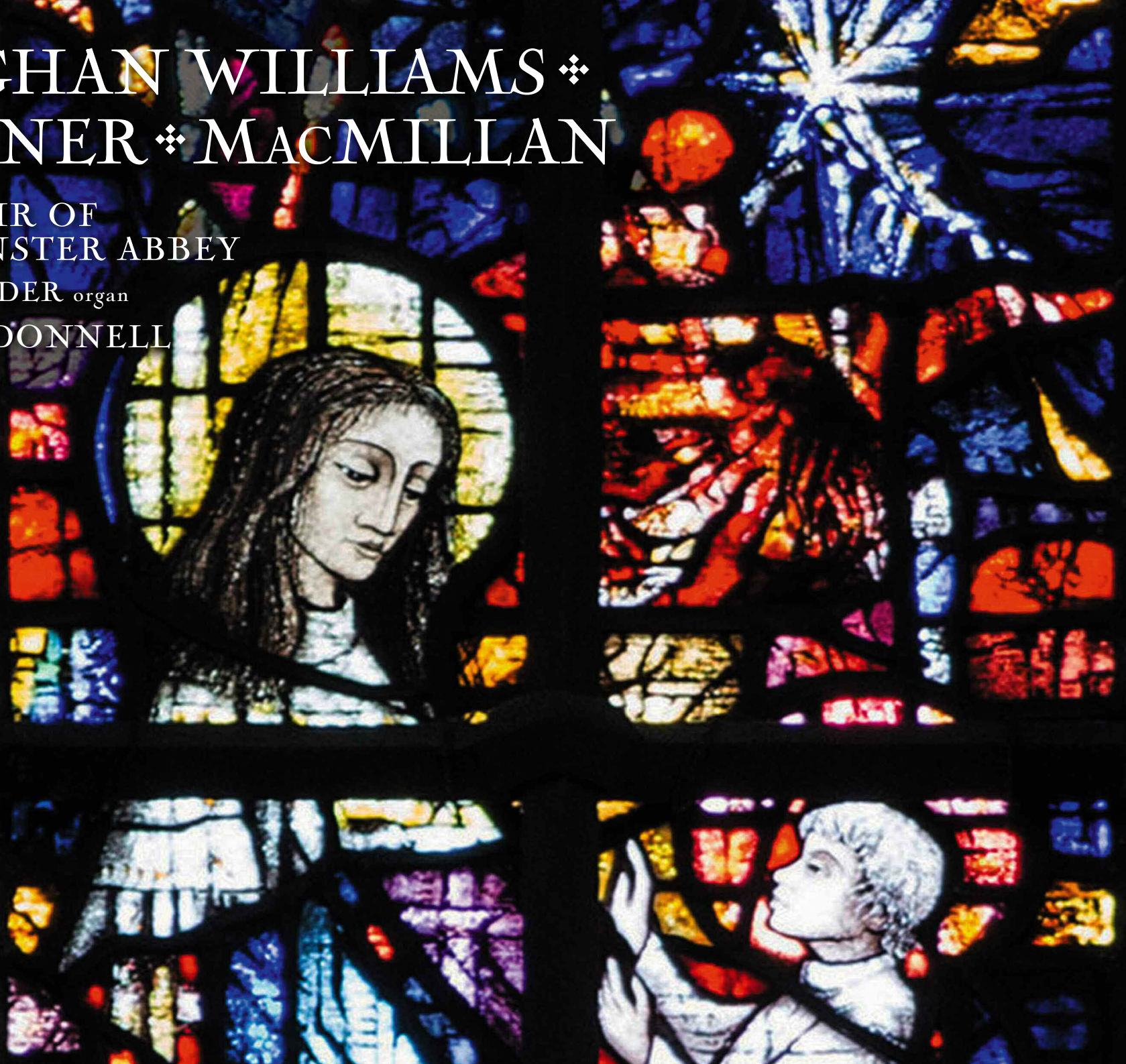
THE CHOIR OF
WESTMINSTER ABBEY

PETER HOLDER *organ*





JAMES O'DONNELL



hyperion



CONTENTS

TRACK LISTING	 <i>page 3</i>
INTRODUCTION	 <i>page 4</i>
SUNG TEXTS AND TRANSLATION	 <i>page 8</i>
PERFORMERS AND CREDITS	 <i>page 12</i>



Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

- Mass in G minor** SATB soli, SATB SATB [23'29]
[1] Kyrie [4'26]
[2] Gloria [4'09]
[3] Credo [6'16]
[4] Sanctus [2'46]
[5] Benedictus [2'23]
[6] Agnus Dei [3'27]
[7] **O taste and see** S solo, SATB, organ [1'38]

Sir James MacMillan (b1959)

- [8] **What man is he that feareth the Lord?** SSAATTBB [6'16]
Mass of St Edward the Confessor SSAATTBB [14'45]
[9] Kyrie [3'04]
[10] Gloria [5'03]
[11] Sanctus & Benedictus [3'36]
[12] Agnus Dei T solo [3'00]
[13] **A special appeal** T solo, SSAATTBB, organ [6'35]
[14] **Who shall separate us?** SSAATTBB [3'03]

Sir John Tavener (1944–2013)

- Magnificat and Nunc dimittis 'Collegium Regale'** SATB divisi [10'37]
[15] Magnificat [7'26]
[16] Nunc dimittis [3'11]
[17] **Song for Athene** SATB divisi [5'50]



WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT of musicology as a discipline at the end of the nineteenth century—emerging hand in hand with the publication of scholarly editions such as the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst* (from 1892) and *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (from 1894), and the instituting of complete editions as part of the ‘musical canon’—a new interest in medieval and Renaissance church music was ignited, especially by the editions of Palestrina, Lassus and Victoria spearheaded by the leading figure of the European Cecilian Movement, Franz Xaver Haberl. Concurrently, in England, a similar fascination was led by such figures as John Stainer, George Ratcliffe Woodward, H E Wooldridge and Charles Wood. A contemporary of Wood’s at Cambridge, Richard Runciman Terry, who for two years was a choral scholar at King’s College, began to discover the beauties of Latin Tudor music after he became a Catholic in 1896. Terry was appointed by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan as the first director of music at the newly constructed Westminster Cathedral, which opened its doors to musical worship in 1903. One of Terry’s prime missions was to sing as much as possible of the golden age of Catholic polyphonic music, and this included as much as he could discover of Byrd and Tallis. But, following the examples of Stanford (a major influence on him during his time at Cambridge), who explored both the old and the new with the Cambridge University Musical Society and the Bach Choir in London, and of other choir directors such as Lionel Benson of the Magpie Minstrels, Terry was keen to commission contemporary works for liturgical use. This spawned a repertoire of Latin music by Stanford (though his Mass settings are lost), Charles Wood, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells and Vaughan Williams.

It was after Vaughan Williams returned from his soldiering in the First World War that Terry commissioned him to write a Mass for the choir. The resulting **Mass in G minor**

was completed in 1921 and dedicated to the composer’s closest friend Gustav Holst ‘and his Whitsuntide Singers’ in Thaxted, Essex. Before it was sung at Westminster, however, it was first performed as a concert piece by the City of Birmingham Choir on 6 December 1922. After its first hearing at Westminster, it soon became an accepted pillar of the repertoire. As Terry once said to the composer: ‘I’m quite sincere when I say that it is the work one has all along been waiting for. In your individual and modern idiom you have really captured the old liturgical spirit and atmosphere.’ Vaughan Williams brought to his score a multiplicity of atavistic influences. Besides the well-tried sixteenth-century elements of imitative counterpoint and modality (as one finds in the Kyrie), the Mass owes much to the spacial dimensions of Venetian antiphony, accentuated by the exchange of music between choir and solo quartet, and one senses a knowledge of already established classics such as Palestrina’s *Missa Papae Marcelli* in the eight-part writing and double-choir repartee, where the imperative of textural contrast is foremost. It is also possible to detect something of the florid polyphony of the Eton Choirbook in passages such as ‘Cum Sancto Spiritu’ in the Gloria and ‘Pleni sunt caeli’ in the Sanctus, and even of older techniques including sequences of first-inversion chords prevalent in English church music of the early fifteenth century (namely at ‘qui venit in nomine Domine’ in the Benedictus), as one finds in the ‘English manner’ of John Dunstaple. The Credo is an especially powerful example of how these techniques combine with the composer’s contemporary triadic juxtaposition (as heard again at the beginning of the Sanctus) and more arresting harmonic progressions (the passage at ‘et homo factus est’ is one of many remarkable successions of harmony which seem suspended between two historical worlds), juxtaposed with those of a more traditional, functional kind. This is particularly striking in the Agnus Dei, where the cohesion



of the Mass is enhanced by a return of the material from the Kyrie (at ‘miserere nobis’).

Taken from Psalm 34: 8, the communion anthem **O taste and see** was commissioned from Vaughan Williams for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and was first sung at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953 at the point in the service where the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh advanced to the steps of the altar for the administration of bread and wine. A simple, modal miniature, set in G major, the anthem is in two short parts, each headed with the innocent invocation of a haunting solo treble.

All four items by Sir James MacMillan on this recording explore choral writing for forces of up to eight parts with and without accompaniment. The *a cappella* motet **What man is he that feareth the Lord?** dates from 2020 and was commissioned by the Lord Burghley 500 Foundation for a Service of Thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of William Cecil, Lord Burghley. A setting of Psalm 25: 11–12 and Psalm 112: 1–6, the text dwells on the themes of godly living, wisdom and a life of righteousness. Written in a continuous through-composed structure, it falls into three sections. The first is formed around an inverted pedal of C sharp, which gradually expands outwards. A central paragraph led by the trebles’ long expansive melodic line, supported by wordless accompaniment, climbs by degrees to a second climax (‘the generation of the faithful shall be blessed’) before the eight-part texture of the motet begins to build from the lower voices. The return of the C sharp pedal signals a recapitulation of the opening material (‘there ariseth up light’) and it is in this tonal area that the motet tranquilly resolves (‘and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance’).

MacMillan’s **Mass of St Edward the Confessor** was commissioned by Thomas and Mia Harding and dedicated to Westminster Abbey Choir School; it is written for

unaccompanied choir and was first sung at Westminster Abbey on 29 June 2022 on the Feast of St Peter. It is to date the latest in a line of Mass settings (two of them congregational) by MacMillan, which include the impressive Mass for Westminster Cathedral (2000); an equally challenging work for Durham Cathedral, the *Missa Dunelmi* (2011); and the *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman*, written for Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to the United Kingdom in 2010. In keeping with the tripartite nature of the Kyrie text, the musical structure is a simple ternary one. The Gloria is constructed out of a contrast of two moods—one of rhythmic dynamism, the other of devotional genuflection. This juxtaposition occurs twice, the second time making a special impression with the exceptionally simple genuflection in G and the concluding ‘Amen’ in a hushed E major. Underpinning the more florid Sanctus is a pedal of B which is concluded by an arresting ‘Osanna’, characterized by its striking augmented-fourth progression, G to C sharp. The more tranquil and archaic Benedictus articulates a more functional route from D minor to G major, but this is in turn theatrically contradicted by the return of ‘Osanna’ which, referring back tonally to the Sanctus, finally resolves into B minor at its conclusion. The three statements of the Agnus Dei, made more insistent by their upward shifts, make reference back to the material of the penitential Kyrie, while the response from the solo tenor (‘miserere nobis’) recalls the embellished treble lines of the Sanctus. In an elaborate eight-part reworking of this idea, the movement subsides into B major with the plea for peace.

A special appeal was composed in 2017 and has been described by the composer as ‘a mini sacred opera’ to commemorate Óscar Romero, the Salvadorean prelate who was shot by an assassin while he was celebrating Mass in 1980. On many occasions Romero spoke out on the radio and at Mass in support of the poor and those oppressed by the government. In February 2015, twenty-five



years after his death, Romero was declared by Pope Francis to be a martyr, and this paved the way for his beatification in May of that year. He was canonized in October 2018. The manner of the anthem is highly unusual in that it takes the form of an appeal by Archbishop Romero to the army and the military leaders who plotted to kill him. The urgency of this request can be heard in the very first strident gesture of the tenors and basses and in the violent demeanour of the organ. The anthem then proceeds almost like a stream of consciousness as the organ seeks to illustrate each petition from the choir. After a bitonal collision of C sharp major and C major, apostrophizing the sixth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill', the text shifts to Psalm 31: 13–14 ('For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."') to embody Romero's tragic fate and martyrdom. The anthem concludes with a return to the more clamorous mood of the opening, deploying an aleatoric accumulation of treble voices in combination with a tirade from the lower voices to articulate Romero's passionate entreaty: 'In the name of God, then . . . stop the repression!'

The unaccompanied anthem **Who shall separate us?**, taken from verses 35, 38 & 39 of chapter 8 of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, was composed during 2011–12. It was specially commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster in preparation for the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II on 19 September 2022 and was sung at the end of the service, before the blessing, by the choirs of Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal under the direction of James O'Donnell. Conceived very much as a solemn prayer and supplication, the anthem's disposition is one of resonant homophony. Added, at the end, is an 'Alleluia' acclamation embarking from F sharp minor, but final resolution comes with the serene affirmation of the anthem's opening tonality, E major, and the quietude of the 'Amen'.

Sir John Tavener's setting of the **Magnificat and Nunc dimittis 'Collegium Regale'** was commissioned by Stephen Cleobury and completed in December 1986 in Katounia, near Limni in Greece. It was first sung in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, on 4 April 1987. Heavily influenced by Russian (and Greek) Orthodoxy to which he converted in 1977 (after a background in Anglicanism), Tavener's music is full of drones and chant coloured by his experience with the Greek and Russian churches. This is especially true of the *Magnificat*, which begins with a supporting pedal in the altos and a chant for the trebles. In response to each verse of the canticle, which increases in intensity, scoring and texture, Tavener includes the Orthodox employment of the troparion to the Mother of God ('Greater in honour than the cherubim'), a musical statement which anchors the piece to D major. Less elaborate chorally than the more effusive *Magnificat*, the *Nunc dimittis* is more characteristically focused on Simeon's solemn prayer of departure.

Song for Athene, sometimes known by its first line of text, 'Alleluia. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest', was completed by Tavener on 11 April 1993. Commissioned by the BBC, the work was composed as a tribute to a family friend, Athene Hariades, who was killed in a cycling accident. Hariades, who taught English and drama at the Hellenic College of London, impressed Tavener with her love of acting, music and poetry after he had heard her read Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey. After her tragic death, the composer was moved to write something which combined elements of the Orthodox funeral service with lines from *Hamlet*. The resulting piece was first published in 1997. The form of the work consists of six monophonic intonations ('Alleluia'), which shift modally from major to minor, using Orthodox texts which function as introductions to words specially contributed by Mother Thekla, an Orthodox nun who lived at the Orthodox Monastery of the Assumption near



Whitby. Tavener always considered her his 'spiritual mother'. The final section of Thekla's text juxtaposes the solemnity of 'Weeping at the grave creates the song', from the Russian *kontakion*, with the joyous promise of the Resurrection ('Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you'), before all recedes to the final, seventh intonation. Throughout the entire 'song', in true Byzantine fashion,

the monophony and choral responses are sustained by a continuous drone (or 'ison'), anchoring the tonality to F major. *Song for Athene* has now probably become Tavener's best-known choral work after it was sung at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, on 6 September 1997 in Westminster Abbey under Martin Neary, as her cortège left the Abbey.

JEREMY DIBBLE © 2023

Mass in G minor RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

treble JAMES TWEEDIE [1][2], BENJI RIMINGTON [3], FREDDIE URSELL BEER [5][6]

countertenor TRISTRAM COOKE [1], ROBIN BLAZE [2][3], DAVID GOULD [5], DAVID MARTIN [6]

tenor GUY CUTTING [1][2], JULIAN STOCKER [2] (intonation) [3], WILLIAM BALKWILL [5][6]

bass STUART O'HARA [1][3], JONATHAN BROWN [2][5][6]

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Gloria in excelsis Deo

et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.

Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.

Gratias agimus tibi 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.

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem,

factorem caeli et terrae,

visibilia omnium et invisibilia.

Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,

Filium Dei unigenitum.

Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.

Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,

Deum verum de Deo vero.

Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri:

per quem omnia facta sunt.

Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem
descendit de caelis.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto

ex Maria virgine: et homo factus est.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Glory to God in the highest

and on earth peace to men of good will.

We praise you. We bless you.

We worship you. We glorify you.

We give thanks to you for your great glory.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God the Father,

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

You who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

You who take away the sins of the world,

receive our prayer.

You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you only are holy. You only are the Lord.

You only are the most high, Jesus Christ.

With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is seen and unseen.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only-begotten Son of God.

Eternally begotten of the Father.

God from God, light from light,

true God from true God.

Begotten, not made, of one being with the Father:

through him all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation

came down from heaven.

And by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate

of the virgin Mary: and was made man.



Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato:
passus et sepultus est.
Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas.
Et ascendit in caelum:
sedet ad dexteram Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
iudicare vivos et mortuos:
cuius regni non erit finis.
Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem:
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur
et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per Prophetas.
Et unam sanctam catholicam
et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum
baptisma in remissionem peccatorum.
Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum.
Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

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

O taste and see RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

organ PETER HOLDER *treble* JAMES TWEEDIE

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is:
blest is the man that trusteth in him.

PSALM 34: 8

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate:
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures.
And he ascended into heaven:
he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
And he shall come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead:
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life:
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped
and glorified; he has spoken through the Prophets.
And I believe in one holy, catholic
and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one
baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead.
And the life of the world to come. Amen.*

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.*





What man is he that feareth the Lord? SIR JAMES MacMILLAN

What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.
His soul shall dwell at ease: and his seed shall inherit the land.
Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he hath great delight in his commandments.
His seed shall be mighty upon the earth: the generation of the faithful shall be blessed.
Riches and plenteousness shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.
Unto the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness: he is merciful, loving and righteous.
A good man is merciful and lendeth: and will guide his words with discretion.
For he shall never be moved: and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

PSALM 25: 11–12; PSALM 112: 1–6

Mass of St Edward the Confessor SIR JAMES MacMILLAN

tenor SIMON WALL ¹²

text as for Vaughan Williams's Mass in G minor (no Credo)

A special appeal SIR JAMES MacMILLAN

organ PETER HOLDER *tenor* MARK DOBELL

ROMERO I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army. Brothers, each one of you is one of us.
We are all the same people. Before any order to kill a man may give, God's law must prevail—'Thou shalt not kill.'

PSALM For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.
But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.'

ROMERO In the name of God, then, in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise up to heaven each day
more tumultuously, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you, in the name of God: stop the repression!

© ÓSCAR ROMERO (1917–1980), translated by JULIAN FILOCHOWSKI
PSALM 31: 13–14

Who shall separate us? SIR JAMES MacMILLAN

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Alleluia. Amen.

ROMANS 8: 35a, 38b–39

Magnificat and Nunc dimittis 'Collegium Regale' SIR JOHN TAVENER



Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden:
for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel.
As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

LUKE 1: 46–55

Greater in honour than the cherubim, and glorious incomparably more than the seraphim;
thou who inviolate didst bring forth God the Word, and art indeed the Mother of God: thee do we magnify.

ORTHODOX HYMN IN HONOUR OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Nunc dimittis

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation;
which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;
to be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

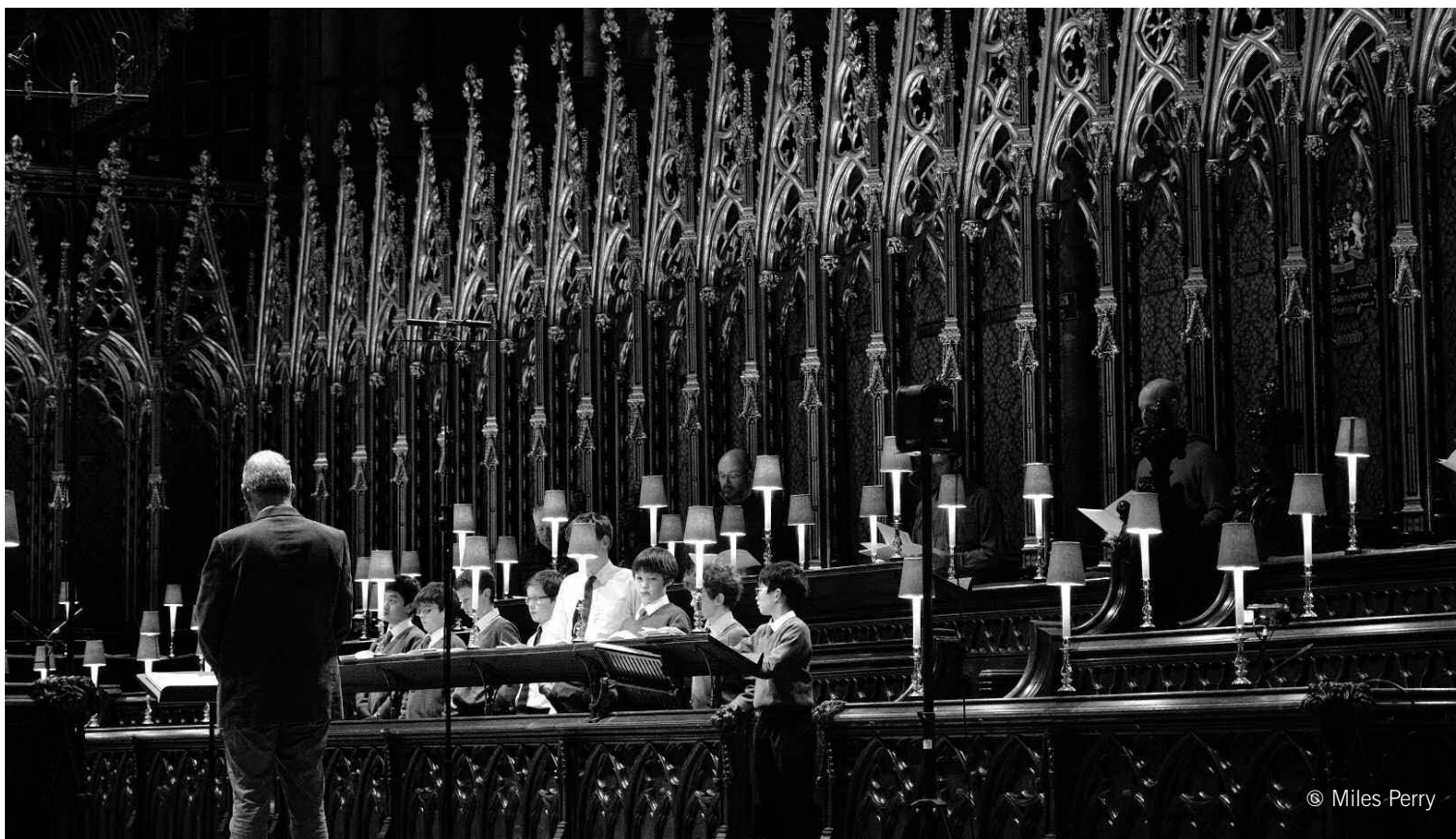
LUKE 2: 29–32

Song for Athene SIR JOHN TAVENER

Alleluia.

May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. Alleluia.
Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom. Alleluia.
Give rest, O Lord, to your handmaid who has fallen asleep. Alleluia.
The choir of saints have found the well-spring of life and door of paradise. Alleluia.
Life: a shadow and a dream. Alleluia.
Weeping at the grave creates the song: Alleluia.
Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you. Alleluia.

compiled by MOTHER THEKLA (1918–2011)
after passages from the Orthodox funeral service and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*



© Miles Perry

The Choir of Westminster Abbey

Organist & Master of the Choristers James O'Donnell *Sub-Organist* Peter Holder

Choristers

Isaac Chapman, William Cook, Caspar Del Mar, Edward Giblin, Edward Harding, Asael Kazibwe, Joshua Kessler, Stephen Oh, James Owens, Abel Phelan Williams, Clevan Phelan Williams, Benji Rimington, Louis Rippon, Barnaby Scholes, Sammy Soonawalla, Arthur Togneri, Gabriel Turner, Ben Tweedie, James Tweedie, Freddie Ursell Beer, Thomas Wilcox, Caleb Yoo

Lay Vicars

alto Robin Blaze, Tristram Cooke, David Gould, David Martin, Simon Ponsford
tenor William Balkwill, Alastair Brookshaw, Guy Cutting, Mark Dobell, Oliver Martin-Smith, Julian Stocker, Simon Wall
bass James Arthur, Jonathan Brown, Julian Empett, Michael Hickman, Robert Macdonald, Timothy Murphy, Stuart O'Hara, Christopher Webb, Laurence Williams



THE CHOIR OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

'James O'Donnell never lets a detail pass or an effect count for nothing; likewise the Westminster Abbey Choir'
(Classic FM Magazine)

'It's difficult to resist the spine-tingling monumentalism of the performance'
(BBC Music Magazine)

'As a beautiful listening experience it is in a class of its own'
(Gramophone)

'A must-have addition to any choral collection' (Choir & Organ)

'Westminster Abbey Choir are on brilliant form here, trebles crisp and alert and lay vicars forthright and muscular' (The Observer)



Recorded in All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London, on 20 & 21 June 2022,
and Westminster Abbey, London, on 27 June (tracks 7, 13, 17) & 7 October 2022 (track 14)
Recording Engineer DAVID HINITT
Recording Producer ADRIAN PEACOCK
Booklet Editor TODD HARRIS
Executive Producers SIMON PERRY, NICK FLOWER
© & © Hyperion Records Ltd, London, MMXXIII

Front illustration: Central east window (2000; detail) designed by Alan Younger (1933–2004)
Henry VII Lady Chapel, Westminster Abbey / © Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Copyright subsists in all Hyperion recordings and it is illegal to copy them, in whole or in part, for any purpose whatsoever, without permission from the copyright holder, Hyperion Records Ltd, PO Box 25, London SE9 1AX, England. Any unauthorized copying or re-recording, broadcasting, or public performance of this or any other Hyperion recording will constitute an infringement of copyright. Applications for a public performance licence should be sent to Phonographic Performance Ltd, 1 Upper James Street, London W1F 9DE

