



*Carols and Canticles*



WALTER HALL  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1994  
3:15 p.m.

# CAROLS and CANTICLES

DANIEL TAYLOR, countertenor

BENJAMIN BUTTERFIELD, tenor

BRETT POLEGATO, baritone

STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA, piano

and

THE ELORA FESTIVAL SINGERS,

conductor, NOEL EDISON



On November 22 falls the feast day of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. So it is inevitable that The Aldeburgh Connection should be drawn anew to the music of Benjamin Britten, who was born on St. Cecilia's Day. Today's concert includes three of his Canticles, for solo voices and piano, together with the *Hymn to St. Cecilia* and other choral works. The centenary of the birth of Peter Warlock falls this year, so we are also performing some of his carol settings (and one by Herbert Howells). (Britten and Peter Pears were keen advocates of twentieth-century English song, and performed and recorded several songs by Warlock and Howells.) We are delighted to be performing with the Elora Festival Singers and Noel Edison, having given many concerts with them in their home festival.

On September 7, 1994, the death occurred suddenly of Eric Crozier, one of our Honorary Patrons. Together with Britten and Pears, he was a founder of the Aldeburgh Festival and was a distinguished librettist and stage-director: his masterpiece is the libretto of *Albert Herring* and he directed the premières of *Peter Grimes* and *The Rape of Lucretia*. With his wife, Nancy Evans, he was a close friend and supporter of The Aldeburgh Connection. We dedicate this concert to his memory.



Beauty, thou scene of love (Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, 1683)

(Christopher Fishburn)

Henry Purcell (1659-95)

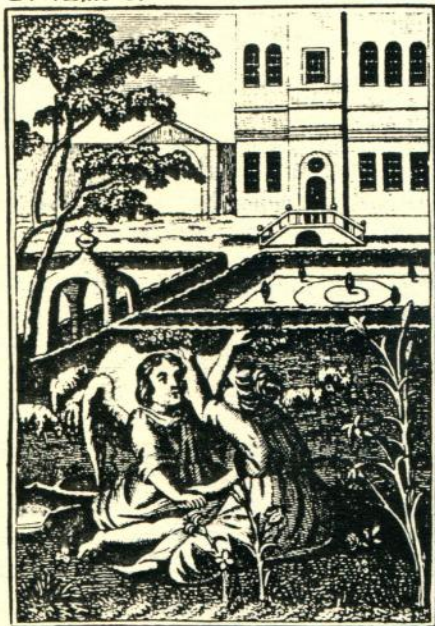
This is the closing scene of Purcell's Ode. The jubilant exclamations of 'Io! Cecilia' with which it ends evoke images of Roman or Greek ritual, dying away in the distance as the music drops down into the bass clef.

Canticle I: My beloved is mine (Francis Quarles) (Op. 40)

Benjamin Britten (1913-76)

One of Britten's greatest enthusiasms was for the music of Purcell and it manifested itself in a number of works from the 1940's. This, the first of five Canticles composed between 1947 and 1974, was partly inspired by Purcell's *Divine Hymns*, settings of spiritual texts typically broken up into several linked sections. There is no connection with the liturgy of the church; on the other hand, this Canticle is a setting of a poem (from Quarles's *Emblemes* of 1635) which is in turn based on words from the book of *Canticles* or the *Song of Solomon*: 'My beloved is mine and I am his.' The soul speaks of its relationship with God in quasi-amorous terms, familiar from much seventeenth and eighteenth century writing and from the cantatas of J.S. Bach. Also, as Humphrey Carpenter says, 'Canticle I seems to be, as no other work had yet been, a happy celebration of the composer's relationship with Pears.'

(Please see next page for Quarles's poem from the edition of 1635)



Johnson sc.

CANT. II. XVI.

*My beloved is mine, and I am his ; He  
feedeth among the Lillies.*

**E**V'n like two little bank-dividing brookes,  
That wash the pebbles with their wanton streames,  
And having rang'd and search'd a thousand nookes,  
Meet both at length, in silver-brested Thames ;  
Where, in a greater Current they conjoyne .  
So I my Best-Beloveds am ; so He is mine.

Ev'n so we met ; and after long pursuit,  
Ev'n so we joy'n'd ; we both became entire ;  
No need for citric to renew a Suit,  
For I was Flax, and he was Flames of fire :  
Our firm united soules did more than twine ;  
So I my Best-Beloveds am ; so He is mine.

If all those glittering Monarchs that command  
The servile Quarters of this earthly Ball,  
Should tender, in Exchange, their thrones of land,  
I would not change my Fortunes for them all :  
Their wealth is but a Counter to my Coyne ;  
The world's but theirs ; but my Beloved's mine.

Nor Time, nor Place, nor Chance, nor Death can bow  
My least desires unto the least remove ;  
Hee's firmly mine by Oath ; I, His, by Vow ;  
Hee's mine by Faith ; and I am His by Love ;  
Hee's mine by Water ; I am His, by Wine ;  
Thus I my Best-Beloveds am ; Thus He is mine.

He is my Altar ; I, his Holy Place ;  
I am his Guest ; and he, my living Food ;  
I'm his, by Pœnitence ; He, mine by Grace ;  
I'm his, by Purchase ; He is mine, by Blood ;  
Hee's my supporting Elme ; and I, his Vine ;  
Thus I my Best-Beloveds am . Thus He is mine.

He gives me wealth : I give him all my Vowes :  
I give Him songs ; He gives me length of dayes ;  
With wreathes of Grace he crownes my conqu'ring browes ;  
And I, his Temples, with a Crowne of Praise,  
Which he accepts as an everlasting signe,  
That I my Best-Beloveds am ; that He is mine.

## Hymn to St Cecilia (W.H. Auden) (Op. 27)

Britten

Britten spent the years 1939-42 in North America. It was the reading of an article by E.M. Forster on the East Anglian poet George Crabbe which persuaded him to abandon any idea of permanent residence and to return to England. In a burst of creativity on the voyage home, he completed *A Ceremony of Carols* and the *Hymn to St. Cecilia*. (The first drafts of the latter were confiscated by customs officials in Halifax and had to be reconstructed from memory!)

Britten had long wanted to write something in honour of St Cecilia — his birthday saint. W.H. Auden provided the words, which refer (quite appropriately) to the composer as well as to the saint. Auden had developed an almost avuncular attitude to Britten, and was fond of analysing him and telling him the direction his life should take.) There are three sections, each ending with the same words:

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
 To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
 Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
 Composing mortals with immortal fire.

The first section is full of surprising *double-entendres*, suggesting that in music the aesthetic is combined with the personal, even the erotic. A central scherzo presents a naive 'Peter Pan' image of the composer: 'I cannot grow;/I have no shadow to run away from,/I only play.' In the final section, Auden seems to address Britten personally: 'O hang the head,/Impetuous child with the tremendous brain.' Music's struggle between reason and passion is depicted: the choral soloists exhort us to *cease* that struggle (i.e. surrender to passion): 'O bless the freedom that you never chose,/O wear your tribulation like a rose.' The overall joyfulness of the *Hymn to St. Cecilia* implies that Britten understood and accepted Auden's message.

## Evening Hymn (William Fuller)

Purcell, realised by Britten

The 250th anniversary of Purcell's death, in 1945, was the occasion of a large number of celebratory concerts. At one of these, in the National Gallery, London, on November 23, were performed a number of Britten's newly completed realisations of Purcell songs, in which the simple figured bass is fitted out as an elaborate piano accompaniment. This, one of *Three Divine Hymns* from *Harmonia Sacra*, is unusual in consisting of one continuous movement, built over a repeated ground bass.

## Shepherd's Carol (W.H. Auden)

Britten

In 1941-42, Auden wrote for Britten the libretto of *A Christmas Oratorio: For the Time Being*. But Britten, dismayed by its enormous length, set only two fragments, of which this is one. The artless words, not Christmassy at all, have this refrain: 'O lift your little pinkie and touch the winter sky./Love's all over the mountains where the beautiful go to die.' Auden told a friend that he had in mind the fingers of chubby angels that decorate baroque churches!

## Rosa Mystica (Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Britten

In 1939, on arrival in the USA, Britten sketched a group of settings of Hopkins, entitled A.M.D.G. (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam — to the greater glory of God). They seem not to have been performed until 1984, eight years after the composer's death. This is one of the more extended numbers.

"The Rose is a mystery" — where is it found?  
Is it anything true? Does it grow upon ground?  
It was made of earth's mould, but it went from men's eyes,  
And its place is a secret, and shut in the skies,  
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine  
Find me a place by thee, Mother of mine.

But where was it formerly? Which is the spot  
That was blest in it once, though now it is not?  
It is Galilee's growth; it grew at God's will  
And broke into bloom upon Nazareth Hill.  
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine  
I shall look on thy loveliness, Mother of mine.

Tell me the name now, tell me its name:  
The heart guesses easily, is it the same?  
Mary the Virgin, well the heart knows,  
She is the Mystery, she is that Rose.  
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine  
I shall come home to thee, Mother of mine.

Is Mary that Rose, then? Mary, the Tree?  
But the Blossom, the Blossom there, who can it be?  
Who can her Rose be? It could be but One:  
Christ Jesus, our Lord — her God and her Son.  
In the Gardens of God, in the daylight divine  
Show me thy Son, Mother, Mother of Mine.

## Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac (Op. 51)

Britten

This setting of a scene from one of the medieval Chester Miracle Plays was made early in 1952 for the touring concerts of Britten's English Opera Group. The fusion of play, cantata and operatic scena is of staggering mastery.

At the opening, the voice of God is depicted by two voices not quite in unison. (Sir Michael Tippett calls this 'one of the wonderful things in Ben's music.') God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son. As father and son set out on their journey, they sing a duet which Britten later used in the *War Requiem* (in the setting of Wilfred Owen's bitter rewriting of the Bible story). Abraham is forced to admit what the boy must undergo; after Isaac's tranquil acceptance of his fate, dramatic tension rises almost unbearably over a slow funeral march until God intervenes with a tremendous thunder crash. Because of Abraham's piety, Isaac is reprieved; the two voices sing a joyful *Envoi* — 'Such obedience grant us, O Lord!'

## INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the Torel Room

Benedicamus Domino (*anon.*)

Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

This robust and joyful celebration of the Virgin birth is a setting of a Latin poem from the fifteenth century. It was composed in 1918.

A spotless rose (*anon.*)

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Howell's setting of fourteenth century words also dates from 1918. There was no love lost between Howells and Warlock, who described the former's music as 'effete pseudo catholicism'. Howells, however, in 1971 said of Warlock: 'I had an enormous respect for a lot of his stuff, and for his mind.'

Balulalow (*Wedderburn*)

Warlock

Soprano solo: Stephanie Kramer

In 1919, Warlock set this sixteenth century Scottish translation of a carol by Luther. Along with *Tyrley, tyrLOW* and *The Sycamore Tree*, it made up *Three Carols* which Vaughan Williams conducted at the Bach Choir's 1923 Christmas concert in London.

Tyrley tyrLOW (*anon., c. 1500*)

Warlock

Bethlehem Down (*Bruce Blunt*)

Warlock

In December, 1927, Warlock and his poet friend Blunt were both hard up; they therefore agreed to collaborate on a carol, in the hope of raising a little cash. Within a few days, *Bethlehem Down* was completed, sent off to London, and on Christmas Eve it appeared in *The Daily Telegraph*. Blunt later write: 'We had an immortal carouse on the proceeds and decided to call ourselves 'Carols Consolidated'. It is one of the composer's most beautiful and original compositions.

Canticle IV: Journey of the Magi (*T.S. Eliot*) Op. 86

Britten

Seventeen years elapsed between the composition of Canticle III (*Still falls the rain* for tenor, horn and piano) and Canticle IV (1971). Like Canticle V (*The Death of Saint Narcissus* for tenor and harp), it is a setting of an allusive Eliot poem, whose style and tone are markedly different from any words which Britten had set previously. *Journey of the Magi* is suffused with doubt and equivocation in its depiction of the Three Kings' journey to Bethlehem. The opening lines are taken from a sermon of the early seventeenth century divine, Lancelot Andrewes; later, we hear of the distractions and disillusionments that might cause the Kings to abandon their quest. An exotic texture is created by the combination of countertenor, tenor and baritone, speaking with one voice, as it were, or completing one another's sentences. When, against all expectations, they find the Child, at Eliot's resonant word 'satisfactory', Britten introduces in the piano the plainsong antiphon *Magi videntes stellam* — a sudden vision of divine grace. The Kings cannot recapture the radiance of that moment; indeed, they are altogether unsure as to what they found at the end of their journey. But, when they have finished singing, the piano postlude raises the possibility of hope.

(please see next page for text)

'A cold coming we had of it,  
 Just the worst time of the year  
 For a journey, and such a long journey:  
 The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
 The very dead of winter.'  
 And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
 Lying down in the melting snow.  
 There were times we regretted  
 The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
 And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
 Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
 And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
 And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
 And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
 And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
 A hard time we had of it.  
 At the end we preferred to travel all night.  
 Sleeping in snatches,  
 With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
 That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,  
 With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
 And three trees on the low sky.  
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
 Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
 And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
 But there was no information, and so we continued  
 And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
 Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
 And I would do it again, but set down  
 This set down  
 This: were we led all that way for  
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
 With an alien people clutching their gods.  
 I should be glad of another death.



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If you enjoyed today's performance, why not subscribe to the series? Brochures are available in the lobby. Simply send in today's ticket stub along with \$45 or \$33 seniors/students (GST is included) to the address below, and your tickets will be mailed to you. Single tickets (\$20/\$15) may also be purchased in advance from:

The Aldeburgh Connection, 56 Fulton Avenue  
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Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; the rest must be raised through donations, grants and corporate funding. You may become a **Patron** by donating \$100 or more; \$35 or more (\$50 or more for dual membership) will qualify you to become a **Friend**. You will receive information on our activities, and all donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes. Other donations and suggestions for corporate sponsorship will also be gratefully received. Your support is vital in helping to ensure the continuation of these concerts.

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Aldeburgh is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic directors Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata have visited and worked there for many summers, as have many of the singers appearing with The Aldeburgh Connection.

The Elora Festival Singers, under its conductor Noel Edison, is a professional chamber choir, formed in 1980 as the principle ensemble for The Elora Festival. During each Festival season the Singers participate in numerous concerts with both national and international artists, championing repertoire from all periods of music as well as newly commissioned works by such composers as Gary Kulesha, Ruth Watson Henderson, Srul Irving Glick, Eric Robertson and John Beckwith. The Singers are frequently heard on CBC, and have appeared at the International Choral Festival in Toronto, and at Alice Tully Hall in New York City. In the winter, the Singers can be heard during their winter series in Elora as well as in other centres.

*Members of the Elora Festival Singers: Lois Francis, Stephanie Kramer, Sarah McPherson, Tannis Sprott, Catherine Robertson, Susan Suchard, Richard Cunningham, Carol Anne Feldstein, Rhonda Graham Bastian, Valerie Nunn, Margaret Terry, Brian Emery, Jerald Fast, Marcus Kramer, Robert Phillips, Neil McLaren, John Pepper, Alec Tebbutt, John Tute*

Daniel Taylor performs a wide ranging repertoire from medieval chant to contemporary song; he is much sought-after for performances of Baroque opera and oratorio. Recent engagements include Handel's *The Ways of Zion* in Holland with the Netherlands Chamber Choir and Radio-Chamber Orchestra, *Israel in Egypt* in Germany and Spain with the Kammerchor Stuttgart and *Messiah* with the Dallas Symphony. Canadian performances this season have included Bach's *St John Passion* in Montreal, *B minor Mass* with the Vancouver Cantata Singers, the *Christmas Oratorio* and *Magnificat* with Tafelmusik, and Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Quebec Symphony. He will be heard later this year in Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus* with La Bande Baroque, and in the *Christmas Oratorio* in Winnipeg. He has recorded Biber's *Music for Vesper* on R.E.M, Patriquin's *Child of Mary* for Polygram, Bach's early cantatas and Schutz's *Musikalische Exequien* for Koch International, and will record Jommelli's *La Didone abandonata* with Frieder Bernius and Kammerchor Stuttgart for Sony.

Benjamin Butterfield's recent operatic roles have included *Così fan Tutte*, *Don Pasquale*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Eugene Onegin* for Pacific Opera Victoria, *Martha* with Opera in Concert, *Le Comte Ory* with the COC, and *Dido and Aeneas* with Opera Atelier. He is much in demand as a concert soloist by leading Symphony Orchestras and choirs across Canada; highlights have included Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with Tafelmusik, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* at the Berkeley Festival, appearances at the Lameque International Baroque Festival, and the role of the Evangelist in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the Vancouver Bach Choir. Upcoming performances

include Tamino with the New York City Opera and Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht* at Carnegie Hall with the New York Oratorio Society, and a series of recitals in Montreal for Le Chateau Ramezay. Mr Butterfield also appears on The Aldeburgh Connection's soon-to-be-released CD of music by Schumann, Brahms and John Greer.

**Brett Polegato** made his European debut this season in the title role in Opera d'Avignon's *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, conducted by Marc Minkowski. Recent appearances on Canadian operatic stages include Papageno in Vancouver Opera's *The Magic Flute*, in *Die Fledermaus* in Vancouver, and *La Traviata* and *Don Pasquale* in Victoria, and Opera Atelier's *Dido and Aeneas*. He has upcoming engagements with Opera de Nice as Ulbalde in Gluck's *Armide*, and in *La Bohème* with Pacific Opera Victoria and again in *Dido and Aeneas* with Houston Grand Opera. Earlier this year he travelled to Paris, where he workshopped scenes from Lully's *Persée* with the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles. Mr Polegato performs extensively in the concert hall, is in demand as a recitalist, and last season, with Catherine Robbin gave a recital of Fauré songs for The Aldeburgh Connection. He will be on tour this autumn, performing French cantatas with Les Musiciens du Louvre in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland and Czechoslovakia.



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