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CLASSICS



Å NEW HEÅVEN

JAMES MACMILLAN
KENNETH LEIGHTON
GABRIEL JACKSON
CECILIA MCDOWALL

Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford
Owen Rees *director*

A NEW HEAVEN

1	Alpha and Omega	James MacMillan (b. 1959)	[7.22]
2	Bring us, O Lord God	William Harris (1883-1973)	[3.33]
3	Stetit angelus	Rihards Dubra (b. 1964)	[4.40]
4	And I saw a new heaven	Edgar Bainton (1880-1956)	[5.20]
5	Ecce venio cito	Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)	[5.58]
6	I know that my Redeemer liveth	Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951)	[5.29]
7	Seven Trumpets	Toby Young (b. 1990)	[6.33]
8	Bring us, O Lord God	James MacMillan	[5.38]
9	Et vidi angelum	Marco Galvani (b. 1994)	[4.47]
10	Faire is the heaven	William Harris	[4.57]
11	Alleluia, Amen	Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)	[8.23]
12	Hymn to the Creator of Light	John Rutter (b. 1945)	[7.03]
13	The World on Fire	Phillip Cooke (b. 1980)	[3.31]
14	The Seventh Angel	David Bednall (b. 1979)	[5.00]

Total timings: [78.17]

CHOIR OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD
OWEN REES DIRECTOR

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A NEW HEAVEN

The theme of this recording is 'relevation', both divine revelation (particularly the apocalyptic visions of the Book of Revelation) and revelatory visions of earth and heaven. The inspiration for the recording came from the extraordinarily moving and powerful funeral service for a dear colleague of mine, Dr Jackie Stedall, a service devised by Jackie herself shortly before her death, and for which she chose both readings and music. Among the readings were words from Revelation, and 'Jottings' made during her final illness, when the imminence of death revealed to her with heightened clarity the intensity of being alive and the wonder of experiencing the natural world. One of the three pieces we commissioned for the disc is a setting by Phillip Cooke of some of these Jottings. Alongside this vision of 'the world on fire...burning in every moment', the works on the disc encompass the divine radiance which enlightens (Rutter's exquisite *Hymn to the Creator of Light*), and visions of heavenly bliss and eternal life, revealed to us through the words of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets Edmund Spencer and John Donne. The bulk of the pieces on the recording are inspired by the extraordinary visions of John, the

writer of the Book of Revelation, describing the ravaging of the world through divine judgement, the battles between good and evil, and the world's eventual remaking as 'a new heaven and a new earth' in which death and suffering are no more. Two of these works are also new commissions, by Toby Young and Marco Galvani, who was a final-year student at Queen's at the time of recording.

The disc presents two pairs of works which exemplify composers' contrasting responses to a single text. The first such pair – James MacMillan's *Alpha and Omega* and Edgar Bainton's *And I saw a new heaven* – are settings of the passage from the Book of Revelation which provides the title for the recording. The other pair of works, by William Harris and (once again) James MacMillan, set John Donne's vision of the heavenly life after our 'last awakening' at the day of judgement, *Bring us, O Lord God*. The dramatic opening of MacMillan's *Alpha and Omega* [1], a series of monumental choral outbursts each of which ebbs away, evokes John's vision of the 'new Jerusalem' and the passing away of the old created world. This music is recalled to conclude the motet, at the words 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and

the end'. The divided upper voices of the choir usher in the central part of the piece with virtuosic coruscating scales, exuberantly introducing the lower voices' solemn pronouncement, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man'. In Bainton's justly loved treatment of this text, *And I saw a new heaven* [4] (composed in 1928), the vision of the world remade steals in with gentle mystery, the texture woven from independent arching lines in the four voices. The announcement 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men' is presented as a triumphant fanfare for choir and organ, while the final section expresses the end of all tears with poignant intensity.

William Harris's setting of Donne's *Bring us, O Lord God* [2], written in 1959, recalls the sound-world of his famous treatment of Spencer's poetry, *Faire is the heaven* [10], composed more than thirty years earlier. The similarity reflects the parallels between their texts, both visions of heaven's perfection: Harris chose the same key for both works, employed a similarly rich harmonic palette, and scored them for two choirs, which often sing in dialogue, evoking the splendour of the heavenly music. MacMillan's treatment of *Bring us, O Lord God* [8] is (for most of its length,

at least) strikingly different from Harris's, less beatific and more unsettling: the opening attempts hesitantly to get past the opening words 'Bring us', and the unstable harmonic language suggests awe in the face of the mystery of life after death. These doubts are cast aside dramatically at the piece's climax as the choir declaims 'but one equal eternity in the habitations of thy glory and dominion'. The sense of quiet mystery then returns in the final repeated 'amen' (one of several points in the piece where the opening musical gesture is recalled), but at the last chord an unexpected beam of sublime light shines. MacMillan's setting was commissioned by Schola Cantorum of Oxford in memory of Lydia Corfe Press, a member of the choir.

John Rutter composed the double-choir anthem *Hymn to the Creator of Light* [12] in memory of Herbert Howells, and specifically for the dedication of the Howells memorial window in Gloucester Cathedral in 1992. He pays clear homage to Howells' rich and distinctive harmonic language, most obviously in the opening, a vision of the creation of light which builds from a mysterious beginning to an incandescent climax at 'the sun's ray, the flame of fire'. The text is a translation of a prayer by Lancelot

Andrewes (1555–1626), inspired by the opening of Genesis. The middle section of the piece is an energetic dialogue between the two choirs, in which Andrewes's prayer becomes a paean to the revelations provided by God through the Bible. In a masterstroke, Rutter transforms his setting of the final word 'light' of this eulogy into the opening of the hymn 'Light who dost my soul enlighten' (the familiar melody is that of the German chorale 'Schmücke dich'), and this chorale setting, in which the melody is accompanied by the opening motive of the piece, brings the anthem to a peaceful and affecting conclusion anticipating the soul's entry into heaven. In ending thus with a chorale Rutter may well have been inspired by examples among the motets of Bach and Brahms. Cecilia McDowall's *I know that my Redeemer liveth* [6] sets a composite Biblical text familiar from its use in Handel's Messiah: her work was commissioned in 2009, the 250th anniversary of Handel's death, to be performed alongside Brahms' *A German Requiem*. The text is a revelatory vision of our bodily resurrection on the Day of Judgement. From a tranquil opening, the music builds to a radiant climax (highlighted by a sudden shift to a new harmonic realm) at the words 'and in my flesh shall I see God'. The ensuing triple-time

section incorporates a memorable lullaby-like portrayal of 'them that sleep'.

The 'fire of creation' celebrated in Rutter's anthem is at the heart also of the passages from Jackie Stedall's Jottings set by Phillip Cooke in *The World on Fire* [13]. Jackie perceived this as 'not the fire of destruction, but of energy, creation, love', and these words generate the climax of Cooke's setting. Before and after this moment, Cooke presents Jackie's vision with simple directness, creating an atmosphere of attentive stillness and wonder at the smallest details of the natural world, such as 'a quivering leaf' portrayed by the use of a suddenly delicate texture of two solo soprano voices.

Another sublime vision of heaven, this time from the Book of Revelation, is presented in Rihards Dubra's *Stetit angelus* [3], composed in 2005. The image of the angel at the altar holding a golden censer led Dubra to evoke liturgical ritual: to frame the work the tenors sing in the style of plainchant, lending the music the character of ancient and unchanging ceremony, while around this chant the upper voices suggest the rising smoke of the incense with a shifting haze of sound, created by some

singers oscillating between pitches while others sustain their notes. Plainchant is likewise recalled in Gabriel Jackson's *Ecce venio cito* [5], alternating here with the rhapsodic melodies of a soprano soloist repeating the invitation 'veni' ('come'). In the opening section of the work Jackson (as does Dubra) creates the effect of a multitude of voices by asking each singer to intone the text independently, and against this animated susurrations the sopranos sing rapturously of the gifts that the Lord will bring when he comes. The choir then joins together in an awe-filled statement of God's declaration 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end'.

The angels of the Book of Revelation are also responsible for the cataclysmic destruction of the earth. Toby Young writes that his *Seven Trumpets* [7] 'sets a dramatic text from Revelation describing a vision of the apocalypse. After a declamatory opening section, introducing the angels sent to herald man's destruction, the music moves into a fast, dancing passage describing the consequence of each one's judgement. The tone becomes increasingly fragmented and uncomfortable as these consequences turn into ever darker plagues (the sea turning into

blood, great stars falling to the ground, a world in flames) until at its climax, the entire sun and moon are destroyed to leave a world in darkness. A solo voice is heard, crying a last lament for humanity, before a final prayer to God proclaims His greatness, asking for forgiveness and protection against such destruction in our lifetime.'

The works by Kenneth Leighton and David Bednall featured on this disc (both receiving their first recordings) portray the rejoicing of the heavenly host at the Lord's victory and the coming of the kingdom foreseen in Revelation. In Leighton's 'Festival Anthem' *Alleluia, Amen* [11], composed in 1961, a hushed choral opening leads into a baritone recitative punctuated by playful organ interjections which anticipate the exultant and extended musical jubilation to come. The baritone likewise heralds the concluding section of the work, a vast arch beginning and ending in serene statements of a gently rocking motive. Bednall's *The Seventh Angel* [14] opens with the fanfare of the angelic trumpet, and this fanfare punctuates the work: it frames the quiet central section where music of ethereal beauty for high voices and organ presents a vision of the 'sea of glass burning like fire'

beside which sing the host of those who conquered the Beast. The hurling of Satan into the abyss and his chaining there for a thousand years are the subject of Marco Galvani's *Et vidi angelum* [9], of which the composer writes: 'I have tried to depict the particular descriptions of angels within this part of the Bible. Rather than glittering seraphs, the angels of Revelation come down to earth with almighty devastation, and the physical portrayals take the form of powerful enforcers of God's will. In this piece I have incorporated a number of different pitch sources, including harmonic inflections from early Byzantine and Russian Orthodox chant.' The robust forcefulness of the piece's opening invokes the overwhelming and awe-inspiring power about which Galvani writes, while in the second part Satan's capture and chaining is depicted through an accelerating canonic 'pursuit' between the voices, climaxing in a triumphant return of the opening music.

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Dr Jackie Stedall (1950–2014), a much-loved member of The Queen's College, who described the Chapel at Queen's as 'one of my resting places'.

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TEXTS

[1] Alpha and Omega

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, for the former things have passed away.' And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.'

Text: Revelation 21:1–6a

[2] & [8] Bring us, O Lord God

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;

no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitation(s) of thy glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.

Text: John Donne, 1572–1631

[3] Stetit angelus

Stetit Angelus iuxta aram templi, habens thuribulum aureum in manu sua. Et ascendit fumus aromatum in conspectu Domini de manu Angeli.

An Angel stood near the altar of the temple, holding a golden censer in his hand. And the smoke of incense ascended in the sight of the Lord from the Angel's hand.

Text: Revelation 8:3–4

[4] And I saw a new heaven

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,

and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Text: Revelation 21:1–4

[5] Ecce venio cito

Ecce venio cito et merces mea mecum est reddere unicuique secundum opera sua. Ego Alpha et Omega, primus et novissimus, principium et finis. Et Spiritus et sponsa dicunt veni, et qui audit dicat veni, et qui sitit veniat; qui vult accipiat aquam vitæ gratis.

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Text: Revelation 22:12, 13, 17

[6] I know that my redeemer liveth

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep.

Text: Job 19:25–6; 1 Corinthians 15:20

[7] Seven Trumpets

I saw seven angels, which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sing! And the first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire; they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and there was a great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea, which then became blood, and the creatures which were in the sea died. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star, burning as if it were a lamp, and made the water bitter, and the sun was smitten, and the moon and the stars were darkened, and woe is past. The fifth angel sounded, and the sixth angel sounded, and behold woe is past away. The kingdoms are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And he

shall reign for ever and ever. O Lord our God.

Text: Selected and adapted from Revelation 8–12

[9] Et vidi angelum

Et vidi Angelum descendentem de cælo, habentem clavem abyssi, et catenam magnam in manu sua. Et apprehendit draconem, serpentem antiquum, qui est diabolus, et Satan, et ligavit eum per annos mille: et misit eum in abyssum, et clausit, et signavit super illum ut non seducat amplius gentes, donec consummentur mille anni: et post hæc oportet illum solvi modico tempore.

And I saw an Angel, descending from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the abyss and a great chain. And he apprehended the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and he bound him for a thousand years. And he cast him into the abyss, and he closed and sealed it, so that he would no longer seduce the nations, until the thousand years are completed. And after these things, he must be released for a brief time.

Text: Revelation 30:1–3

10 Faire is the heaven

Faire is the heaven,
where happy soules have place
In full enjoyment of felicitie,
Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
Of the Divine Eternall Majestie;
Yet farre more faire be those bright Cherubins,
Which all with golden wings are overdight,
And those eternall burning Seraphins,
Which from their faces dart out fiery light;
Yet fairer than they both, and much more bright,
Be th' Angels and Archangels, which attend
On God's owne Person, without rest or end.
These then in faire each other farre excelling,
As to the Highest they approach more neare,
Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
Fairer than all the rest which there appear,
Though all their beauties joynd together were;
How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?

Text: Edmund Spenser (1552–1599)

11 Alleluia, Amen

Alleluia, Amen. And after these things I heard a
great voice of much people in heaven, saying,
Alleluia, Amen. Salvation, and glory, and honour,
and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, Amen.

Text: Revelation 19:1,4

12 Hymn to the Creator of Light

Glory be to thee, O Lord, Creator of the visible
light, the sun's ray, the flame of fire.
Glory be to thee, O Lord, Creator of the light
invisible and intellectual, That which is known
of God.
Glory be to thee, O Lord, Creator of the light,
for writings of the law, for oracles of prophets,
for melody of psalms, for wisdom of proverbs,
experience of histories, a light which never sets.
God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light.

Text: Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), translated by
Alexander Whyte

Light who dost my soul enlighten;
Sun, who all my life dost brighten;
Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth;
Fount, whence all my being floweth.
From thy banquet let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep its treasure;
Through the gifts thou here dost give us,
As thy guest in heav'n receive us.

Text: J. Franck (1618–77), translated by Catherine Winkworth

13 The World on Fire

[November 2013]

Days glowing on the outside with sunshine,
frost, and colour.

Days glowing from the inside,
Every moment a sun-spangled drop of water,
A ripened berry, a quivering leaf.

[June 2014]

The world on fire, not the fire of destruction,
but of energy, creation, love.
Burning in every moment.

Text: Jacqueline Stedall (1950-2014)

14 The Seventh Angel

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and
there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The
kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of
our Lord'. Then the twenty-four elders who sit on
their thrones before God fell on their faces and
worshipped. Then God's temple in heaven was
opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in
his temple; and there were flashes of lightning,
rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and
heavy hail. And I saw what looked like a sea of
glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the
sea, those who had been victorious over the beast
and its image and number of its name. They held

harps given them by God and sang the song of
God's servant Moses and of the Lamb. 'Great and
marvellous are your deeds, Lord God almighty.
Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.
Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your
name. For you alone are holy. All nations will come
and worship before you, for your righteous acts
have been revealed.' Amen.

Text: Revelation 11: 15, 16, 19; 15: 2–4

CHOIR OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE OXFORD

Soprano

Eleanor Bray *
Helen Brown
Isabella Grive
Caroline Halls
Calypso Hetherington
Olivia Hugh-Jones
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Dabin Kwon
Rosie Miller
Bethan Rose
Dominique Simpson
Fleur Smith †

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Esther Brazil
Joanna Cousins
Henrietta Gullifer
Rachel Miller
Elizabeth Nurse #
Elliot Parrott
Sophia Sosnina
Hannah Street
Henry Taylor

Tenor

James Beddoe †
Marco Galvani
Peter Harris
Lachlan Hughes
Laurence Jeffcoate
Ethan Kelly
Matthew Reese

Organ

David Bednall ^{7, 11, 14}

Organ Scholar

Rebecca Baker ⁴

Bass

Erik Andreoli
Nick Ashby
Charles Day
Ben Fellows
Rory Green
Robert Holbrook ¶
James Ritzema
William White

* Solo on track 5

† Solo on track 13

Solo on track 7

¶ Solo on track 11

The Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford is among the finest and most active university choirs in the UK. Its extensive concert schedule involves appearances in many parts of the UK and abroad, including work with such professional ensembles as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Brook Street Band, and the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. It regularly tours abroad, and recent concert tours have included China (with appearances in the Forbidden City Concert Hall, Beijing, and the

Shanghai Concert Hall), the USA (including concerts in the National Cathedral in Washington and in Virginia), Sri Lanka, Italy, Sardinia, Portugal, Spain, France, the Low Countries, and Germany.

The choir's wide-ranging repertoire, on recordings and in concerts and services, includes a rich array of Renaissance and Baroque music and contemporary works. The group broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio, and during the academic

year it provides the music for regular services in the splendid Baroque Chapel of The Queen's College. Queen's choir's recent CD releases are on the Signum and Avie labels. May 2013 saw the release of a CD on the Avie label of *Dixit Dominus* settings by Handel and Alessandro Scarlatti, which was hailed as 'a disc of unusually high calibre' by *Early Music Review* and awarded 5 stars by *Choir and Organ*. In 2011 Queen's choir commissioned and premiered a major new work, *Welcome all Wonders*, by the British composer David Bednall. That concert was hailed as 'a glorious performance' by *The Oxford Times*, and the choir's recording of the work,

released on Signum Classics in 2013, attracted excellent reviews. The choir's latest release, *Carols from Queen's*, enjoyed nine weeks in the Official Specialist Classical Charts, was Drive Featured Album of the Week on Classic FM, and was a *Telegraph* Christmas pick. Queen's choir has also recorded for film at the famous Abbey Road Studios, and appears on the Grammy-nominated soundtrack of the Warner-Brothers film *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

For further information about the choir and its activities, please see www.queenschoir.com, twitter.com/queenschoir, facebook.com/queenschoir.



OWEN REES

Owen Rees is Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, and Fellow in Music and Organist (Director of Music) at The Queen's College. He directs the Chapel Choir of The Queen's College and also conducts the professional early-music choir Contrapunctus. His work as a conductor has taken him to many parts of the world, including the USA, China, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, Norway, and the Netherlands, and he is much in demand internationally as a leader of choral workshops.

His recordings have three times been shortlisted for the *Gramophone* Early Music Award, have been selected as Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and Choral and Song Choice in *BBC Music Magazine*, and have featured in the '20 Classical Recordings of the Year' 2015 in *The Sunday Times*. His CDs with Queen's and other choirs, on the Signum, Hyperion, and Avie labels, encompass a remarkably wide variety of choral repertory from the Renaissance to contemporary works. *BBC Music Magazine* recently hailed his interpretations of choral music as 'revelatory and even visionary'. He has brought to the concert hall and recording studio substantial repertories of magnificent

Renaissance music, particularly from Portugal, Spain, and England, including many previously unknown or little-known works which he himself has discovered and edited. His interpretations of these repertories have been acclaimed as 'rare examples of scholarship and musicianship combining to result in performances that are both impressive and immediately attractive to the listener', and he has been described as 'one of the most energetic and persuasive voices' in this field.

As a scholar, Owen Rees has published widely on many of the foremost Renaissance composers, including Josquin, Morales, Guerrero, Victoria, and Byrd. He is renowned as one of the world's foremost authorities on Portuguese Renaissance music, and appears regularly on BBC Radio 3 in discussions of early music. His next major book, to be published by Cambridge University Press, is a study of Victoria's famous Requiem of 1603 and of the whole genre of polyphonic Requiem music in the late Renaissance and early Baroque.



DAVID BEDNALL

David Bednall is recognized as one of the leading choral composers of his generation and studied for a PhD in Composition with Professor John Pickard at the University of Bristol. He is Organist of The University of Bristol, Sub Organist at Bristol Cathedral, and conducts The University Singers. He was Organ Scholar of The Queen's College, Oxford, held a number of posts at Gloucester Cathedral, and was Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. His teachers included Dr Naji Hakim and David Briggs.

He won prizes in Improvisation and Performance at the examination for FRCO and a CD of improvisations with Malcolm Archer received excellent reviews. He has improvised on live radio, and performed extensively in the UK and abroad, including a recital at Notre Dame de Paris. He appeared as stunt-organist on *Dr Who*.

His compositions are widely recorded, and the CD *Hail, gladdening light* was a *Gramophone* Editor's Choice. The recording of his *Requiem* received similar accolades, and a further recording, *Flame Celestial*, received a *Gramophone* Recommendation. His largest work to date,



Welcome All Wonders, was commissioned by The Queen's College, Oxford, and their recording on Signum has garnered superb international critical acclaim. His *Stabat Mater* was recently premiered in New York and has been recorded for release in 2016, and his 40-part motet *Lux orta est iusto* closed the Bristol Proms 2015.

www.davidbednall.com





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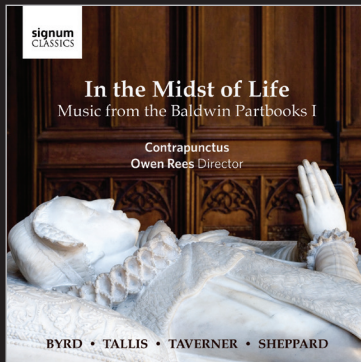
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Owen Rees *director*

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