

The Music of **Richard Pantcheff**

Volume 1: Choral Music

London Choral Sinfonia
Michael Waldron



ORCHID CLASSICS

THE MUSIC OF RICHARD PANTCHEFF: VOLUME 1

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London Choral Sinfonia
Michael Waldron, *conductor*
Matthew Fletcher, *piano*
Jeremy Cole, *organ*

Richard and I first crossed paths in London in early 2013. In the coming months we exchanged emails and scores, and I was immediately struck by his music. It was still relatively early days for the London Choral Sinfonia, but plans were afoot for a recording of Christmas music, and I was keen to include one of Richard's pieces. *A Christmas Carol* seemed like a perfect addition to the album. It had not been recorded before, but from fumbling through the score at the piano I could sense it was a piece of great depth. I am always captivated by music that has the ability to transport a listener in a relatively short period of time: *A Christmas Carol* is one such piece, and has remained close to my heart ever since.

Within another 12 months Richard and I were in discussion about an album showcasing his music. A single-composer album requires particularly thoughtful programming. I was very keen to showcase Richard's broad appeal: the intensity of the words and music in *Four Poems of Stephen Crane* is quite different in character – yet complement brilliantly – the more overtly melodic, stand-alone pieces of *Spirit of Mercy* and *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. The intimacy of *Turn again then unto thy rest* alongside the enormous breadth of the *St. Paul's Service* demonstrate Richard's great ability to portray scale. The virtuosic and charged setting of the secular *King Henry VIII's Apologia* will challenge the most experienced choral singer, but numerous other pieces on the recording are far less demanding and would suit almost any choir in a secular or sacred context.

Richard himself discusses the influence of the rich heritage of English choral music, from which his compositional voice is clearly descended. This being said, it is by no means pastiche: I find it original, inspired and at all times profound. There is music on the album to suit all tastes, and I hope people hearing the anthology on this album will develop the same love for it as I have.

Michael Waldron

Given a lifetime of involvement in church music, as singer, organist, and conductor of church, college, and cathedral choirs, it is perhaps inevitable that a significant proportion of my compositions are written for choirs such as these, and gratifying that they have been included in the musical programmes of so many cathedrals and churches worldwide. This body of work is often considered to be in a line which stretches from Vaughan Williams, Finzi, Howells, and Britten, through to Leighton, Lutyens, and beyond. The focus has always been on combining intellectual rigour, understanding of form, and harmonic originality with the expressive purpose of the music and the context for its performance.

With the exception of one notable piece (the *Four Poems of Stephen Crane*), the works on this album date from what might be described as the composer's early and mid-compositional periods.

The two substantial settings of *Evening Canticles* on this recording were commissioned for two major British cathedrals (Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, in the case of the *Evening Canticles – 'Aedes Christi'*; and St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in the case of the *Evening Canticles – St. Paul's*). These two pillars of the composer's output are deeply contrasting works. The edgy, dynamic setting for upper voices and organ at Christ Church, Oxford, is designed perfectly to capture the acoustic of that landmark Oxford building, as well as its Rieger organ and the very direct style of singing developed there by Simon Preston and Stephen Darlington over many years. Equally, and yet in total contrast, are the *Canticles* for men's voices and organ commissioned by the late John Scott for the gentlemen of St. Paul's Cathedral. Here, the acoustic challenge of that famous building is met by a work filled with undulating, melismatic, phrases and mellowness.

The *Evening Canticles – Aedes Christi* were first performed by the boys of the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, on 25th October 1997, directed by Stephen Darlington. The *Evening Canticles – St. Paul's* were first performed by the

gentlemen of the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, on 27th April 2002, directed by John Scott.

Christ Church, Oxford, was also the source of the secular anthem *King Henry VIII's Apologia*, commissioned in 1996 in honour of the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the college. The text here is attributed to King Henry VIII, the founder of Christ Church. In it, the king seeks to absolve himself from blame for the various failings he is customarily associated with, explaining that his wayward behaviour in his youth was quite probably no worse than anyone else of that age. *King Henry VIII's Apologia* for unaccompanied SATB choir was premiered in Christ Church, Oxford on 2nd November 1996 by the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, conducted by Stephen Darlington.

By far the most recent work presented here is the significant *Four Poems of Stephen Crane*. The American author, Stephen Crane, is better-known for his novels, in particular his epic story of the American Civil War, *The Red Badge of Courage*.

His poetry, however, has a brooding, questioning quality, and these four settings for SATB choir and piano, although secular in nature, explore deep questions about the nature of humankind's relationship with God. In all four pieces, Crane suggests to us that God might possibly be found in the most unexpected places (perhaps through the 'still, small, voice of calm' rather than in the grander and more obviously 'religious' places). The harmonic writing of the music here is very brazen and direct, as befits the texts. The harmonic language and texture here has, on occasion, understandably been likened to that of Michael Tippett. There is a wide variety of light and shade in these four settings, and the whole work is in many ways shaped in a quasi-sonata form, the third movement being a scherzo, and unaccompanied. The *Four Poems of Stephen Crane* were commissioned by the Rand Club Chamber Music Series in Johannesburg, South Africa, and were premiered there on 22nd March 2013 by a quartet of soloists from the Royal Academy of Music in London.

If the remaining works on the album seem rather less grand by comparison with the heavyweight pieces here, each one is, nevertheless, an intense and specific response to the words being set.

Veni Sancte Spiritus for soprano voices and organ is a short anthem suitable for use at Pentecost. It was commissioned by the Episcopal Church of Christ the King, Frankfurt, Germany, at the time when the composer was Assistant Director of Music there. Brian Foley's words are set in music of a deeply reassuring, numinous, quality. The work was premiered in Frankfurt on 4th June 1995, and received its UK premiere performed by the Girls Cathedral Choir at Salisbury Cathedral on 26th May 1996, directed by Dr. Richard Seal.

What shall we offer Thee? is an arrangement (in English) of Greek Orthodox words, for SATB choir and piano, and is ideal for use at Advent, Christmas, or celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The text speaks of the mystery of the incarnation, and humankind's response to it. Unusually, this work was not the result of any commission, but was written purely in response to the text, and as an expression of the composer's family connection to Greek culture and history. It was completed in May 1995, but did not receive its premiere until 23rd March 2013, where it was performed by a Vocal Quartet from the Royal Academy of Music, London, at the Wakkerstroom Music Festival in South Africa.

In 1998, St. Edward's School, Oxford commissioned the Advent carol *Creator of the starry height*, as part of its fund-raising effort for the School's development fund. The work was given a rousing first performance at St. Edward's School, Oxford, on 6th December 1998, with the Chapel Choir conducted by Anthony Kerr-Dineen. The famous Latin text (translated by J.M. Neale) gives plenty of opportunity to express the Advent message. Starting in relative quiet and obscurity, the work then picks up the pace through two solo verses (soprano and tenor) to burst into a rollicking, chorale-like finale, with full organ.

The Covenant sets to music a sonnet by John Donne. This anthem was specially commissioned for the Choir of St. Thomas' Church, Coral Gables, Florida, USA, where it was premiered on 20th June 2004. The words speak of the wonder of God's redemption of humankind, with the ascending, questioning, chords of the opening being later inverted and sung by the choir at the point at which God's plan for redemption is revealed.

The much-performed introit *Turn again then unto thy rest* sets texts from Psalm 116. This is one of my earliest works, being written in Whitchurch, Hampshire, immediately after the death of my father, to whose memory the work is dedicated. It is a very short, compact work, invoking God's blessing upon the soul of the departed.

This collection concludes with *Spirit of Mercy*, originally written for upper voices and organ, but later re-arranged into the version now sung around the world (SATB and organ). It was completed in Oxford during April and May 1996, but lay unperformed until its premiere in September 2008, and subsequent very frequent performances, by The Chamber Choir of South Africa conducted by Michael Dingaan.

This simple and yet strikingly effective work sets words from the Foundling Hospital Collection. It commences with the statement of its central theme in the most simple terms by sopranos and the organ. It then progresses through a number of variations, during which more voices are added, and ends in triumphant fashion with full choir and organ. *Spirit of Mercy* has raised the roof in numerous concert halls and festivals across the world, including at the Cape Festival of Voices, and national TV in South Africa.

Richard Pantcheff



Richard Pantcheff

Richard Pantcheff is internationally renowned as one of the finest contemporary British composers of Choral, Organ, Chamber and Instrumental music. He was trained in choral music and composition from an early age, starting at Ripon Cathedral, and thereafter reading music at Christ Church, Oxford, under Simon Preston and Francis Grier. He was mentored in composition by Benjamin Britten in the last years of Britten's life. Since then he has been commissioned to write new works for the leading performers in their field.

From 2012-2019 he was Director of Music at St. George's Anglican Church, Johannesburg, South Africa, where he remains as Composer in Residence. He is a Patron of the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, and Founder-Director of the Akorina Consort, a new choir comprising young professional singers in London.

All of his music has been published, and features regularly in major international music festivals, as well as in concerts, recitals, and church services worldwide. There are currently eleven commercially-released recordings in the catalogue featuring his music.

His compositions are performed and broadcast all over the world, and have received wide acclaim from performers, critics, and audiences for their originality, technical brilliance, and emotional power.

More information can be found on his website: www.richardpantcheff.com.

London Choral Sinfonia

The London Choral Sinfonia was formed for a concert in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 2008. Since then the LCS has secured a reputation as one of the highest-regarded and critically-acclaimed chamber choir and orchestral ensembles, performing a broad repertoire throughout the season. A busy performance schedule involved regular appearances at venues including Cadogan Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, Kings Place and St. John's Smith Square.

Aside from championing many of the major cornerstones of the repertoire, the LCS seeks to champion new music, having premiered new works and recordings with numerous composers including Tarik O'Regan, Owain Park, Richard Pantcheff and Ian Assersohn. Recent premieres include former Composer-in-Residence Oliver Rudland's *Christmas Truce*, with a libretto by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. The group's realisation of Francis Grier's epic *Sword in the Soul* was premiered in 2010 and featured poet Sir Geoffrey Hill and librettist Alice Goodman.

Performance highlights include Bach *Jauchzet Gott* with Katherine Watson (soprano) and Crispian Steele-Perkins (trumpet), Bach Motets and Cello Suites with Guy Johnston (cello), Mozart *Requiem* with Duncan Rock (bass), Britten *St. Nicolas* with Nick Pritchard (tenor), and Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with Matthew Brook (baritone).

Michael Waldron

Conductor

Michael Waldron began his musical training as a chorister at St Ambrose College, Hale Barns. After a gap year Organ Scholarship at Worcester Cathedral, he held the Organ Scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, for four years. Here he studied under Stephen Layton, during which time he was involved with the Choir's numerous international tours, concerts, broadcasts and recordings.



Since graduating, Michael has quickly established himself as one of the most dynamic and versatile conductors of his generation, enjoying a busy concert career. He has worked with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Polyphony, London Mozart Players and Tonbridge Philharmonic, including appearances at the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Cadogan Hall, Wigmore Hall and BBC Proms.

Michael enjoys an extensive operatic career, including shows and projects for the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Buxton International Festival, Opera Della Luna, Wilton's Music Hall, and West Green Opera.

He is currently Artistic Director of the London Choral Sinfonia, London Lyric Opera, Islington Choral Society, Epworth Choir, and has also held posts with Guildford Choral Society and University of West London Chamber Choir.

www.michael-waldron.com



Jeremy Cole

Organ

Jeremy Cole is Director of Music at Wells Cathedral, a position he took up in January 2020, having previously been Acting Organist and Master of the Choristers, and Assistant Organist since 2017. He was organ scholar at Trinity College from 2010-2013, where he studied the organ with Colin Walsh, Stephen Farr, and David Briggs, and conducting with Stephen Layton. He was closely involved in the world-famous choir's routine of services and concerts, and features on several of their recordings on the Hyperion label.

Jeremy has held positions at St. Paul's Knightsbridge and St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, where he was the principal organist, playing for all regular and special services, as well as concerts and special events, in one of London's busiest churches and concert venues. He combined this role with a busy freelance career as an organist, conductor and piano accompanist. While in London he was assistant conductor and accompanist of the Holst Singers, and worked regularly with leading choirs such as Polyphony and the City of London Choir. He is in demand as a repeteur for solo singers and instrumentalists and as a continuo player.

In his role at Wells Cathedral, Jeremy is responsible for the Cathedral Choir's busy schedule of nine sung services each week, as well as its broadcasts, concerts and tours. He is also a visiting organ teacher at Wells Cathedral School, and Musical Director of the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society, through which he works with many of the country's finest orchestras and soloists,

Matthew Fletcher

Piano

Matthew has a varied career as an accompanist, répétiteur and chamber musician. He has collaborated with leading artists, including Danielle De Niese, Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Sir Thomas Allen, Brindley Sherratt, Sally Matthews and the Kokoro Ensemble. His performances have been broadcast live on BBC, Sky Arts and Classic FM, and have taken him to major



UK venues and festivals, including Wigmore Hall, Snape Maltings, Oxford Lieder, Cheltenham Festival and the BBC Proms. Matthew has performed as a pianist and harpsichordist with the LPO, RPO and OAE and his competition successes include the accompanist prizes at 'Das Lied' 2019 and the 2014 Kathleen Ferrier Awards. He is on the music staff at Glyndebourne, and has worked on a huge variety of repertoire, from Handel and Mozart to Strauss, Janáček and several world premieres. Matthew read music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was organ scholar. He then studied with Michael Dussek and Pascal Nemirovsky at the Royal Academy of Music, where he now teaches. In 2016 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

1 Veni Sancte Spiritus

Brian Foley

Holy Spirit, come, possess us,
You, the love of Three in One,
Holy Spirit of the Father,
Holy Spirit of the Son!
Holy Spirit, come.

2 What shall we offer Thee?

Eastern Orthodox

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ,
Who for our sake hast appeared on the earth as man?
Every creature made by Thee offers thanks.
The angels offer Thee a hymn;
The heavens, a star;
The Magi, gifts;
The Shepherds, their wonder;
The earth, its cave;
The wilderness, the manger;
And we offer Thee a Virgin Mother.
O God from everlasting, have mercy upon us.

3 Aedes Christi – Magnificat

Book of Common Prayer

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 shewed 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.

4 *Aedes Christi – Nunc dimittis*

Book of Common Prayer

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.

Four Poems of Stephen Crane

5 I. A man went before a strange God

A man went before a strange God -
The God of many men, sadly wise.
And the deity thundered loudly,
Fat with rage, and puffing.
"Kneel, mortal, and cringe
And grovel and do homage
To My Particularly Sublime Majesty."
The man fled.

Then the man went to another God -
The God of his inner thoughts.
And this one looked at him
With soft eyes
Lit with infinite comprehension,
And said, "My poor child!"

6 II. The Livid Lightnings

The livid lightnings flashed in the clouds;
The leaden thunders crashed.
A worshipper raised his arm.
"Hearken! Hearken! The voice of God!"
"Not so," said a man.
"The voice of God whispers in the heart
So softly
That the soul pauses,

Making no noise,
And strives for these melodies,
Distant, sighing, like faintest breath,
And all the being is still to hear.”

7 III. In Heaven

In Heaven,
Some little blades of grass
Stood before God.
“What did you do?”
Then all save one of the little blades
Began eagerly to relate
The merits of their lives.
This one stayed a small way behind
Ashamed.
Presently God said:
“And what did you do?”
The little blade answered: “Oh, my lord,
“Memory is bitter to me
“For if I did good deeds
“I know not of them.”
Then God in all His splendor
Arose from His throne.
“O blest little blade of grass,” He said.

8 IV. I met a seer

I met a seer.
He held his hands
The book of wisdom.
“Sir,” I addressed him,
“Let me read.”
“Child –“ he began.
“Sir,” I said,
“Think not that I am a child,
For already I know much
Of that which you hold.
Aye, much.”
He smiled.
Then he opened the book
And held it before me.
Strange that I should have grown so suddenly blind.

9 King Henry VIII's Apologia

King Henry VIII (attr.)

Though sum saith that yough rulyth me,
I trust in age to tarry;
God and my ryght and my dewtye
from them shall I never vary;
though sum say that yough rulyth me.
I pray you all that aged be,
How well dyd ye your yough carry?

I thynk some wars of ych degre,
Therein a wager. lay dar I:
Though sum sayth that yough rulyth me.

Pastymes of yough sumtyme among,
none can sey but necessary:
I hurt no man, I do no wrong;
I love trew wher I dyd mary,
thow sum saith that yough rulyth me.

Then sone dyscusse that hens we must,
Pray we to god and Seynt Mary,
That all amend; and here an end,
Thus sayth the kyng, the eighth Harry,
Though sum saith that yough rulyth me.

10 **Creator of the starry height**

*Latin **Conditor alme siderum**, trans. J.M.Neale*

Creator of the starry height,
Thy people's everlasting light,
Jesu, redeemer of us all,
Hear thou thy servants when they call.

Thou, sorrowing at the helpless cry
Of all creation doomed to die,
Didst come to save our fallen race
By healing gifts of heavenly grace.

When earth was near its evening hour,
Thou didst, in love's redeeming power,

Like bridegroom from his chamber, come
Forth from a Virgin-mother's womb.

At thy great Name, exalted now,
All knees in lowly homage bow;
All things in heaven and earth adore,
And own Thee King for evermore.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Praise, honour, might and glory be
From age to age eternally. Amen

11 The Covenant

Wilt thou love God as He thee? then digest,
My soul, this wholesome meditation,
How God the Spirit, by angels waited on
In heaven, doth make His temple in thy breast.
The Father having begot a Son most blest,
And still begetting - for he ne'er begun -
Hath deign'd to choose thee by adoption,
Co-heir to His glory, and Sabbath's endless rest.
And as a robb'd man, which by search doth find
His stolen stuff sold, must lose or buy it again,
The Son of glory came down, and was slain,
Us whom He had made, and Satan stole, to unbind.
Twas much, that man was made like God before,
But that God should be made like man, much more.

12 *St Paul's Service – Magnificat*

Book of Common Prayer

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 shewed 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.

13 *St Paul's Service – Nunc dimittis*

Book of Common Prayer

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.

14 Turn again then unto thy rest

Psalm 116

Turn again then unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath rewarded thee.
He hath inclined his ear unto me;
therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.
Behold O Lord I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid;
thou hast broken my bonds in sunder.
Turn again then unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath rewarded thee.

15 Spirit of Mercy

Words from the Foundling Hospital Collection

Spirit of mercy, truth, and love,
Send thy blest influence from above,
Unfailing Comfort, heavenly Guide,
over thy favoured Church preside,
and still from age to age convey
the wonders of this sacred day.

Through all the listening earth be taught
the acts our great Redeemer wrought.
In every clime in every tongue,
Be God's eternal praises sung;
Still may mankind thy blessings prove,
Spirit of mercy, truth, and love.



Soprano

Molly Alexander
Charlotte Ashley
Zoë Brookshaw
Lucy Cronin
Emily Dickens
Rachel Ambrose Evans
Rosemary Galton
Rebecca Lea
Louise Prickett

Alto

Lucy Goddard
Guy James
Clara Kanter
John Lattimore
Amy Lyddon
Simon Ponsford
Sarah Shorter

Tenor

Peter Harris
Hugo Hymas
Stefan Kennedy

Nick Pritchard

Matthew Sandy
Gareth Treseder

Bass

Michael Craddock
Christopher Dollins
Timothy Murphy
Samuel Pantcheff
Samuel Queen
Laurence Williams
Dingle Yandell

Producer : Adrian Peacock

Engineer: Andrew Mellor

Recording Managers : Susan Stephens, Ann Barkway

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All of the works appearing on this recording have been published by Composers Edition. Scores and further information on each work can be obtained by visiting www.composersedition.com

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www.orchidclassics.com

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