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# A CHORAL TAPESTRY

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Soprano

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CLASSICS

# VOCE8

A CHORAL TAPESTRY



*A Choral Tapestry* reflects VOCES8's diverse musical influences. The album aims to present both the music itself and the personalities involved in its creation and performance. In an exploration of complementary and contrasting sound worlds, harmony, text and vocal forces, VOCES8 creates a sonic tapestry, weaving together individual voices and music to create this performance. The ensemble enters into a dialogue with the music, seeking to present its vision whilst allowing the listener freedom for individual engagement. For the recording's commissioned artwork, VOCES8 invited the artist to visualise his response to this performance in the hope of further stimulating the listener's interaction with this inspirational music. // The simple F major chords that open this recording have an interesting history. Bruckner's motets are part of the Cecilian Movement of reform that advocated the revival of Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony within the Catholic Mass. Composed in the Lydian mode and concluding with a plainsong alleluia, *Os Justi* is a compositional masterpiece that satisfies all the technical, stylistic, melodic and harmonic requirements of the movement. Also drawing upon historical influences, *Das Agnus Dei* and *Wir glauben an einen Gott* are taken from Reger's eight *Geistliche Gesänge*. In the context of *A Choral Tapestry*, a new sound world is created by Reger's adoption of the Lutheran chorale-like texture with a romantic harmonisation. // Composed in 1879, Brahms' motet *Warum ist das Licht gegeben* is the central work of *A Choral Tapestry*. The music comprises a combination of words from the Bible and Martin Luther, much like J.S. Bach's Motets. In fact, Op.74 from which the motet is taken is dedicated to the Bach scholar Philipp Spitta. VOCES8 considers the influence of Bach on Brahms' mastery of form and counterpoint, choosing to perform the opening movement by alternating tutti choral interjections of 'Warum' with solo counterpoint. The motet concludes with the Dorian chorale *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin*, the Lutheran translation of the Nunc Dimittis. // Written for double chorus, Brahms' *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* (Op. 109) were first performed in 1889 on the day Brahms was made a freeman of Hamburg. Brahms' Venetian-style antiphony creates an uplifting magnificence and grandeur that captures the patriotic sentiment of national festivals, exactly the occasions for which Op. 109 were intended. // Two African-American spirituals follow Brahms' and Reger's Lutheran chorale textures. In *Go Down Moses* the description of God's command for Moses to demand the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt represents the relationship between slave and slave-master. The drama of Tippett's F minor setting is achieved in the contrast between the powerful unison, singing God's command to 'Let my people go', the bass's solo narration and the solo soprano's anguished cry for release. *Steal Away*, by contrast, is a message of hope and aspiration. An arresting bass solo announces God's call to a new world whilst a searching solo soprano ascends an octave to a high E, ever closer to 'home'. In direct contrast to Tippett's sombre F minor, this setting of *Steal Away* is in E major; a bright key with transcendental connotations, creating a sound world that perfectly illustrates the essence of this text. // A similar sentiment is expressed in the beautiful melodic counterpoint and shimmering homophony of Victoria's *O Magnum Mysterium*. The motet unfolds organically towards triple-time alleluias with a resulting stillness that perfectly expresses the awesome text. In Palestrina's *Magnificat Primi Toni* antiphonal interplay between two SATB choirs communicates the rejoicing worship of the Magnificat. With increasing momentum the musical phrases are passed between the four-part choirs before the voices unite in a grand eight-part finale for the concluding *Amen*. // Also a song of joy, the comprehensive presentation of compositional techniques in Orlando Gibbons' anthem *O Clap Your Hands* displays great skill, fitting for its premiere at the composer's doctoral graduation ceremony. In line with the English Cathedral choral tradition, Gibbons writes for eight individual voices in sections of complex polyphony, double-choir antiphony and detailed word painting that illustrate each verse of Psalm 47. // Published in Byrd's 1589 *Cantiones Sacrae*, his motet *Vigilate* is thrilling in its dramatic madrigalianisms. VOCES8 delivers the motet's cautionary text with flair and drive, a colour which can also be found in Monteverdi's 1620 madrigalian setting of Psalm 98, *Cantate Domino*. This Psalm's description of music and singing is brought to life through Monteverdi's joyful antiphony, instrumental-like textures and vocal melismas. // The *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei* from William Byrd's four-part Mass frame *A Choral Tapestry*. Unlike his Protestant writing, these Catholic works are in Latin and embody the complex compositional techniques reminiscent of music discouraged by the Reformation. The contrast between Byrd's introspective and melodic counterpoint in the Mass, and Gibbons' joyful declamation of Psalm 47 in the language of the Anglican congregation, reveals a required difference in style and message that is evident within Byrd's own Catholic and Protestant compositions. The earliest of Byrd's Mass settings, and inspired by his own fervent Catholicism, the four-part Mass is particularly expressive. The *Agnus Dei* is preceded by John Tavener's song of innocence, *The Lamb*, and Rheinberger's *Abendlied*, a prayerful committal to the evening. VOCES8 considers the intense and pleading suspensions of 'dona nobis pacem' that close the *Agnus Dei* to be a truly fitting conclusion to *A Choral Tapestry*.

## Os Justi

Os justi meditabitur sapientiam,  
*The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,*  
et lingua ejus loquetur iudicium.  
*and his tongue speaks what is just.*  
Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius:  
*The law of his God is in his heart:*  
et non supplantabuntur gressus ejus. Alleluia.  
*and his feet will not falter. Alleluia.*

## VIGILATE

Vigilate, nescitis enim quando dominus domus veniat, sero, an media nocte, an galli cantu, an mane.  
*Watch, for you do not know when the Lord will come to the house, at evening, in the middle of the night, at the cock-crow, or in the morning.*  
Vigilate ergo, ne cum venerit repente, inveniat vos dormientes.  
*Watch therefore, lest he comes, and finds you sleeping.*  
Quod autem dico vobis, omnibus dico: Vigilate.  
*And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch.*

## KYRIE FROM THE MASS FOR FOUR VOICES

Kyrie eleison.  
*Lord, have mercy.*  
Christe eleison.  
*Christ, have mercy.*  
Kyrie eleison.  
*Lord, have mercy.*

## CANTATE DOMINO

Cantate Domino canticum novum,  
*Sing to the Lord a new song,*  
cantate et benedicite nomini ejus:  
*sing and give praise to his name:*  
Quia mirabilia fecit,  
*for he has done marvellous things.*  
Cantate et exultate et psallite  
*Sing and exult and praise*  
in cythara et voce psalmi:  
*in songs with the harp and the voice:*  
Quia mirabilia fecit,  
*for he has done marvellous things.*

## O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

O magnum mysterium  
*O great mystery*  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
*and wonderful sacrament,*  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
*that animals should see the new-born Lord*  
jacentem in praesepio.  
*lying in a manger.*

O beata Virgo, cuius viscera meruerunt  
*O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb*  
portare Dominum Jesum Christum.  
*was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.*  
Alleluia!  
Alleluia!

## MAGNIFICAT PRIMI TONI

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,  
*My soul doth magnify the Lord,*  
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.  
*and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*  
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.  
*For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,*  
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen eius.  
*For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his Name.*  
Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.  
*And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.*  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.  
*He hath showed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*  
Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.  
*He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.*  
Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes,  
*He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.*  
Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus misericordiae suae,  
*He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel,*  
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula,  
*as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.*

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.  
*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.*  
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.  
*As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

## WARUM IST DAS LICHT GEGEBEN?

Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen,  
*Why is light given to him that is in misery,*  
und das Leben den betrübten Herzen?  
*and life unto the bitter in soul?*  
Die des Todes warten und kommt nicht,  
*which long for death but it cometh not,*  
und grüben ihn wohl aus dem Verborgenen;  
*and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;*  
die sich fast freuen und sind fröhlich,  
*which rejoice exceedingly and are glad,*  
daß sie das Grab bekommen?  
*when they can find the grave?*  
Und dem Manne, deß Weg verborgen ist,  
*And given to a man whose way is hid,*  
und Gott vor ihm den selben bedeckt?  
*and whom God hath hedged in?*

Lasset uns unser Herz samt den Händen  
*Let us lift up our heart with our hands*  
aufheben zu Gott im Himmel.  
*unto God in the heavens.*

Siehe, wir preisen selig, die erduldet haben.  
*Behold, we count them happy which endure.*

Die Geduld Hiob habt ihr gehöret,  
*You have heard of the patience of Job,*  
und das Ende des Herrn habt ihr gesehen;  
*and have seen the end of the Lord;*  
denn der Herr ist barmherzig und ein Erbarmer.  
*that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.*

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin,  
*With peace and joy I go forth,*  
in Gottes Willen,  
*in the will of God,*  
getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn,  
*my heart and mind are comforted,*  
sanft und stille.  
*gentle and still.*  
Wie Gott mir verheißen hat,  
*As God has promised me,*  
der Tod ist mir Schlaf worden.  
*death is become sleep to me.*

## GO DOWN MOSES

Go down, Moses,  
*Way down in Egypt land.*  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
*Let my people go.*  
When Israel was in Egypt land,  
*Oppressed so hard they could not stand,*  
Thus spake the Lord' bold Moses said,  
*If not I'll smite your first-born dead.*

## O CLAP YOUR HANDS

O clap your hands together, all ye people.  
*O sing unto God with the voice of melody.*  
For the Lord is high, and to be feared.  
*He is the great King of all the earth.*  
He shall subdue the people under us,  
*and the nations under our feet.*  
He shall choose out an heritage for us,  
*even the worship of Jacob, whom he loved.*  
God is gone up with a merry noise  
*and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.*  
O sing praises, sing praises unto our God.  
*O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.*  
For God is the King of all the earth,  
*sing ye praises with understanding.*  
God reigneth over the heathen.  
*God sitteth upon his holy seat.*  
For God, which is highly exalted,  
*doth defend the earth, as it were with a shield.*  
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.*

## DAS AGNUS DEI

O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig,  
*O Lamb of God, pure and holy,*  
am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet,  
*Who on the cross didst suffer,*  
all zeit gefunden duldig.  
*Ever patient and lowly,*  
wie wohl du wurdest verachtet:  
*Thyself to scorn didst offer.*  
All Sünd hast du getragen,  
*All sins thou hast born for us,*  
sonst müßten wir verzagen.  
*Else had despair reigned o'er us:*  
Erbarm dich unser, o Jesu.  
*Have mercy on us, O Jesus.*

## WIR GLAUBEN AN EINEN GOTT

Wir glauben an einen Gott,  
*Our faith is in one true God,*  
Schöpfer Himmels und der Erden,  
*Maker of heaven and the earth;*  
mit Worten ließ er werden alle Dinge zu seinem Gebot.  
*By his word and command all things were made.*  
Von der zarten ward er geboren,  
*Of the tender he was born,*  
Maria, der reinen, auserkoren,  
*Maria, the pure, chosen one,*  
uns zu Trost und aller Christenheit.  
*to help us and all Christians.*  
Für uns wollte er leiden,  
*For our sake, he offered himself,*  
ob wir möchten vermeiden schwere Pein,  
*to save us from suffering, severe pain,*  
den Tod der Ewigkeit.  
*the eternity of death.*

## FEST- UND GEDENKSPRÜCHE

i.  
Unsere Väter hofften auf dich,  
*In thee have our fathers hoped,*  
und da sie hofften, halfst du ihnen aus.  
*they have hoped, and thou hast delivered them.*  
Zu dir schrien sie und wurden errettet,  
*They cried to thee, and they were saved,*  
sie hofften auf dich und wurden nicht zu Schanden.  
*they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*  
Der Herr wird seinem Volk Kraft geben,  
*The Lord will give strength to his people,*  
der Herr wird sein Volk segnen mit Frieden.  
*the Lord will bless his people with peace.*

ii.  
Wenn ein starker Gewappneter seinen Palast bewahret,  
*When a strong man guards his palace,*  
so bleibet das Seine mit Frieden.  
*his possessions are safe.*  
Aber: ein jeglich Reich, so es mit ihm selbst uneins wird  
*But: every kingdom divided against itself*  
das wird wüste; und ein Haus fällt über das andere.  
*will be laid waste and house will fall against house.*

iii.  
Wo ist ein so herrlich Volk, zu dem Götter also nahe sich tun  
*Where is so great a nation that has statutes and decrees*  
als der Herr, unser Gott, so oft wir ihn anrufen.  
*that are as just as the Lord our Gods, whenever we call on him.*  
Hüte dich nur und bewahre deine Seele wohl,  
*However, take care and watch your soul,*  
dass du nicht vergessest der Geschichten,  
*that you do not forget the stories,*  
die deine Augen gesehen haben,  
*the things which your eyes have seen,*  
und dass sie nicht aus deinem Herzen kommen alle dein Leben lang.  
*that you do not let them depart from your heart all your life long.*  
Und sollst deinen Kindern und Kindeskindern kundtun. Amen.  
*And teach them to your children and to your children's children. Amen.*

An ongoing programme of recordings and live broadcasts **VOCES8** is heard regularly on international television and radio including Deutschlandradio Kultur, ARTE TV and the BBC. // **VOCES8** plays a key role in the education work of the non-profit foundation VOCES CANTABILES MUSIC. The group leads innovative workshops as part of larger outreach projects in two hundred schools throughout the UK and internationally. **VOCES8**'s education work extends to workshops and master-classes for people of all ages and abilities with the aim of inspiring creativity through music. // **VOCES8** has received support from Arts Council England, the Musicians Benevolent Fund and The Worshipful Company of Musicians. The group is also grateful for the support of official sponsor; T.M.Lewin.

## STEAL AWAY

*Steal away to Jesus,*  
*Steal away home,*  
*I ain't got long to stay here.*  
*My Lord, He calls me,*  
*He calls me by the thunder,*  
*The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,*  
*I ain't got long to stay here.*  
*Green trees a-bending,*  
*Poor sinner stand a-trembling,*  
*The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,*  
*I ain't got long to stay here.*

## ABENDLIED

Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden, und der Tag hat sich geneigt.  
*Bide with us, for evening shadows darken, and the day will soon be over.*

## THE LAMB

*Little Lamb, who made thee?*  
*Dost thou know who made thee?*  
*Gave thee life and bid thee feed,*  
*By the stream and o'er the mead,*  
*Gave thee clothing of delight,*  
*Softest clothing woolly bright.*  
*Gave thee such a tender voice,*  
*Making all the vales rejoice.*  
*Little Lamb who made thee?*  
*Dost thou know who made thee?*

*Little Lamb I'll tell thee,*  
*Little Lamb I'll tell thee;*  
*He is called by thy name,*  
*For he calls himself a Lamb.*  
*He is meek and he is mild,*  
*He became a little child.*  
*I a child and thou a lamb,*  
*We are called by His name.*  
*Little Lamb God bless thee,*  
*Little Lamb God bless thee.*

## AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei,  
*Lamb of God,*  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
*Who takest away the sins of the world,*  
miserere nobis.  
*have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei.  
*Lamb of God.*  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
*Who takest away the sins of the world,*  
Dona nobis pacem.  
*Grant us peace.*

The international award-winning octet, **VOCES8**, has established itself at the forefront of British a cappella. Performing a repertoire ranging from Renaissance polyphony to unique Jazz and Pop arrangements, the group has been praised for stunning performance, exquisite singing and the creation of a sound that spans the entire range of vocal colour. // Founded in 2003 by ex-choristers of Westminster Abbey, **VOCES8**'s career has developed both in the classical choral scene and the world of a cappella with an annual touring schedule that takes the group to Europe, the USA, Africa and Asia. Highlights include performances at the Royal Festival Hall, the Wigmore Hall, Tel Aviv Opera House and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing. // With an