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CLASSICS

BOB CHILCOTT
**CANTICLES
OF LIGHT**

NFM Choir
Agnieszka Franków-Żelazny *conductor*



CANTICLES OF LIGHT

	Canticles of Light	Bob Chilcott	
[1]	Te lucis ante terminum		[4.19]
[2]	Christe, qui, splendor et dies		[6.56]
[3]	O nata lux de lumine		[4.42]
	Move him into the sun	Bob Chilcott	
[4]	Song of Songs		[4.55]
[5]	Spring Offensive		[4.36]
[6]	Apologia pro Poemate meo		[4.01]
[7]	Futility		[7.56]
[8]	Winter Song		[4.35]
	Soloists: Małgorzata Cieżka-Kątnik, Bianka Maxim, Aleksandra Turalska, Ewelina Wojewoda <i>Upper Voices</i> Sebastian Mach <i>Tenor</i>		
[9]	Standing as I do before God	Cecilia McDowall	[6.08]
	Soloist: Dagmara Kołodziej-Gorczyrzyńska <i>Soprano</i>		
[10]	Lament	Francis Pott	[4.19]
[11]	A Child's Prayer	James MacMillan	[4.07]
	Soloists: Aleksandra Turalska <i>Soprano</i> Dagmara Kołodziej-Gorczyrzyńska <i>Soprano</i>		
[12]	Sing the Colour of Peace	Bob Chilcott	[3.42]
	Soloist: Sebastian Mach <i>Tenor</i>		
	Total timings:		[60.26]

NFM CHOIR
INSTRUMENTALISTS OF THE NFM WROCŁAW PHILHARMONIC
AGNIESZKA FRANKÓW-ZEŁAZNY CONDUCTOR

www.signumrecords.com

Darkness to light is a theme which continues to engage artists, musicians, philosophers and thinkers through time, and this theme, coupled with thoughts of remembrance, hope, redemption and acceptance is the thread that ties together all the music performed on this recording.

Three Latin texts, well-known to singers and composers, *Te lucis ante terminum*, *Christe, qui splendor et dies* and *O nata lux* are the texts that I use in the piece *Canticles of Light*. The first two of these texts come from the evening service of Compline and they ask God for protection through the darkness of the night. The third text, *O nata lux*, comes from the morning service of *Lauds* and sings of God as ‘*the light born from light*’. This work was written in 1999 for Winchester Music Club to sing alongside the Winchester Cathedral Girls’ Choir who were newly formed at the time. I included the bell at the suggestion of Michael Till, the then Dean of Winchester and a friend, who loved the sound of the bells of Winchester Cathedral.

Wilfred Owen is known to many as the poet who died as a young man, and who wrote so vividly and emotionally about the horror and futility of war. However, other passionate themes are ever-present in his poetry, the two principal ones being those of beauty and love, the latter not only for the

natural world around him but also for his fellow human beings, comrades, and friends. In my piece *Move him into the sun*, the image of the sun as a source of light, life, and energy is that on which I have focused. Portrayed here largely by the upper-voice singers, it ultimately becomes a source of redemption and an expression of feeling at one with life, which is so beautifully articulated in Owen’s poetry. *Move him into the sun* was commissioned by the Trustees of St Chad’s Music Festival and Shrewsbury Bookfest in memory of Wilfred Owen, the Shropshire soldier/poet who lived in Shrewsbury from 1907. The piece was first performed in November 2018, one hundred years after he was killed in action near Ors, in Northern France.

Remembrance, redemption, and acceptance are three themes that resonate most strongly in the remaining pieces on this recording. In *Standing as I do before God* Cecilia McDowall uses Edith Cavell’s poignant words, sung here principally by a soprano soloist in combination with a new, complimentary text by Seán Street, which is sung mainly by the choir. After the German occupation of Brussels, Nurse Edith Cavell sheltered wounded soldiers and helped them to safety. She was arrested and executed for treason. Her last words were, ‘*Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.*’

James Macmillan's piece, *A Child's Prayer*, was written in memory of the sixteen young pupils and the one teacher who died in the 1996 Dunblane massacre at Dunblane Primary School, near Stirling in Scotland. Remembering a traditional text from his childhood, James Macmillan, in what is perhaps an expression of a redemption of sorts, focuses tellingly on two words that resonate through the piece, 'Welcome' and 'Joy'.

Francis Pott's *Lament* is a very personal response to the death of Staff Sergeant Olaf Schmid in Helmand Province in Afghanistan, who died attempting to defuse an explosive device while on active service. Francis discovered that Olaf Schmid had lived close to his own family home, not far from Winchester. Here he sets the heartfelt poetry of Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, who writes so

powerfully and simply of how loss and love can perhaps be reconciled through memories.

These thoughts also permeate the gentle but deeply resonant words of the poet Charles Bennett, in a piece written specially for the NFM Choir. Charles' words in *Sing the colour of peace* speak, like Wilfred Owen's did one hundred years before, of the futility of war.

I would like to thank the NFM Choir, the players from the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic, Izabela Grad, sound engineer Agnieszka Szczepańczyk, Val Withams of Choral Connections, and finally the architect of it all, Agnieszka Franków-Żelazny, a wonderful choral musician.

Bob Chilcott



1 - 3 Canticles of Light

Bob Chilcott

Text: Three Latin Hymns from the Liturgia Horarum

Te lucis ante terminum, rerum creator, poscimus,
ut solita clementia sis praesul ad custodiam.

Te corda nostra somnient, te per soporem
sentient, tuamque semper gloriam vicina luci
concinant.

Vitam salubrem tribue, nostrum calorem refice,
taetram noctris caliginem tua collustret claritas.
Praesta, Pater omnipotens, per Jesum Christum
Dominum, qui tecum in perpetuum regnat cum
Sancto Spiritu. Amen.

Christe, qui, splendor et dies, noctis tenebras
detegis, lucisque lumen crederis, lumen beatis
praedicans. Precamur, sancta Domine, hac nocte
nos custodias; sit nobis in te requies, quietas
horas tribue. Somno si dantur oculi, cor semper
ad te vigilet; tuaque dextra protegas fideles, qui
te diligunt. Defensor noster, aspice, insidiantes
reprime, gubernata tuos famulos, quos sanguine
mercatu es. Sit, Christe, rex piissime, tibi Patrique
Gloria, cum Spiritu Paraclito, in sempiterna
saecula. Amen.

*Before the end of the day, creator of all things,
we ask you with your wonted kindness be our
protector and guardian. Let our hearts dream of
you, let us feel you near while sleeping, and let us
celebrate always your eternal glory in the light of
the new dawn. Grant our bodies health, restore
our strength, and let the foul gloom of the night
be illuminated by your brightness. Do all this,
omnipotent Father, through Jesus Christ the Lord
who reigns with you and the Holy Ghost for ever.
Amen.*

*Christ, brightness of the light of day, you who roll
away the shadows of the night, who bestowed the
light of light, telling of the light to come for the
blessed. We pray, Holy Lord, that you watch over
us this night; let us find rest in you, and grant us
peaceful hours. Though our eyes be given over to
sleep, let our hearts be filled with you through the
night; and with your right hand protect the faithful
who cherish you. Look upon us, our protector, check
those who beset us, and guide your servants whom
you have redeemed with your blood. Glory be to
you, Christ, holiest of kings, and to the Father, and
to the Holy Ghost, forever and ever. Amen.*

O nata lux de lumine, Jesu redemptor saeculi,
dignare clemens supplicum laudes preces que
sumere. Qui carne quondam contegi dignatus es
properditis. Nos membra confer effici, tui beati
corporis.

Texts from the Liturgia Horarum with English translations by
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4 - 8 Move him into the sun

Bob Chilcott

Texts from: Wilfred Owen: The War Poems ed. Jon
Stallworthy (1935-2014) (Chatto & Windus 1994)

I. Song of Songs

Extracts from 'The Promisers' (Upper voices)

When I awoke, the glancing day looked gay;
The air said: Fare you fleetly; you will meet him!
And when the prosp'rous sun was well begun
I heard a bird say: Sweetly you shall greet him!

'Song of Songs' (SATB)

Sing me at morn but only with your laugh;
Even as Spring that laugheth into leaf;
Even as Love that laugheth after Life.

*O light born of the light, Jesus the redeemer of
mankind, kindly deign to accept the praises and
prayers of your suppliants. You who once stooped
to take on human form on behalf of those who
were lost, grant that our weary limbs find a resting
place in you.*

Sing me but only with your speech all day,
As voluble leaflets do; let violets die;
The least word of your lips is melody!

Sing me at eve but only with your sigh!
Like lifting seas it solaceth; breathe so,
Slowly and low, the sense that no songs say.

Sing me at midnight with your murmurous heart!
Let youth's immortal moaning chords be heard
Throbbing through you, and sobbing, unsubdued.

II. Spring Offensive

Extract from 'The Promisers' (Upper voices)
The sun felt strong and bold upon my shoulder;
It hung, it clung as it were my friend's arm.

The birds fife on before, shrill-piping pipers,
Right down to town; and there they eased to
charm.

Extract from 'Spring Offensive' (SATB)

Hour after hour they ponder the warm field
And the far valley behind, where the buttercups
Had blessed with gold their slow boots coming up;
When even the little brambles would not yield,
But clutched and clung to them like sorrowing
arms;
They breathe like trees unstirred.

Till like a cold gust thrills the little word
At which each body and its soul begird
And tighten them for battle. No alarms
Of bugles, no high flags, no clamorous haste –
Only a lift and flare of eyes that faced
The sun, like a friend with whom their love is done.
O larger shone that smile against the sun –
Mightier than his whose bounty these have
spurred.

III. Apologia pro Poemate Meo

Extract from 'Apologia pro Poemate Meo'
I, too, saw God through mud –
The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches
smiled.

War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,
And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a
child.

I, too, have dropped off Fear –
Behind the barrage, dead as my platoon,
And sailed my spirit surging light and clear
Past the entanglement where hopes lay strewn.

I have made fellowships –
Told of happy lovers in old song.
For love is not the binding of fair lips
With the soft silk of eyes that look and long.

I have perceived much beauty
In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;
Heard music in the silentness of duty;
Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest
spate.

IV. Futility

Extract from 'Sonnet, to a child' (Upper voices)
To all men else uncouth;
Save me, who know your smile comes very old,
Learnt of the happy dead that laughed with gods;
For earlier suns than ours have lent you gold;
Sly fauns and trees have given you jigs and nods.

'Futility' (SATB)

Move him into the sun –
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown,
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds –
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear achieved, are sides
Full-nerved – still warm – too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
- O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

V. Winter Song

Extract from 'Winter Song'

From off your face, into the winds of winter
The sun-brown and the summer-gold are blowing;
But they shall gleam again with spiritual glinter,
When paler beauty on your brows falls snowing,
And through those snows my looks shall be
soft-going.

Extract from 'Happiness'

The sun may cleanse,
And time, and starlight. Life will sing sweet songs.
And gods will show us pleasure more than men's.

Text by Wilfred Owen, edited Jon Stallworthy © Chatto & Windus.
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9 Standing as I do before God

*A reflection on the execution of Edith Cavell,
October 12, 1915*

Cecilia McDowall

Text: Edith Cavell (1865-1915) and Seán Street
(b. 1946)

'I have seen death so often that it is not strange or
fearful to me.
Standing as I do in view of God and eternity,
I realize patriotism is not enough.
I must have no hatred or bitterness towards
anyone.' "

And when the time was close,
for once her eyes filled, (with tears)
then she quietly rose,
walked silently through the stilled
prison, the grey dawn light,
passed gas flame, tired flowers,
out beyond her final night,

a flame alight in hours
before infinity,
in the presence of death
leaving all enmity:
we are air after breath.

Text by Edith Cavell** (1915) and Seán Street* (2013) © Seán
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10 Lament

Francis Pott

Text: Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (1878-1962)

We who are left, how shall we look again
Happily on the sun or feel the rain
Without remembering how they who went
Ungrudgingly and spent
Their lives for us loved, too, the sun and rain?

A bird among the rain-wet lilac sings –
But we, how shall we turn to little things
And listen to the birds and winds and streams
Made holy by their dreams,
Nor feel the heart-break in the heart of things?

Text by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson from 'Whin' © Pan MacMillan,
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11 A Child's Prayer

James MacMillan

Text: Traditional

Welcome Jesu,
Deep in my soul forever stay:
Joy and love my heart are filling
On this glad and sacred day.

Text traditional, remembered by the composer from childhood
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12 Sing the Colour of Peace

Bob Chilcott

Text: Charles Bennett (b.1954)

Rows of white stones
each of them wearing a name
and someone, possibly you, bringing flowers.

Someone is bringing flowers
as if this were a garden
where each of the stones might blossom.

If each of the stones could blossom
their petals would show
the colour of being at peace.

If each of the stones could speak
they'd sing the colour of peace,
like one white cloud in a blue sky.

One white cloud in a blue sky
does not see the lines
between our lands.

Lines between our lands
bring rows of white stones
and someone, possibly you, bringing flowers.

Text by Charles Bennett © Charles Bennett, 2019. Reproduced by permission of the author under licence to Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

NFM CHOIR

The NFM Choir was formed in 2006 by Andrzej Kosendiak as a resident ensemble of the Wrocław Philharmonic. Directed for its first 15 years by Agnieszka Franków-Żelazny, Lionel Sow became its Artistic Director in 2021. The ensemble has a well-earned reputation for its work in several genres, performing a cappella works as well as large-scale oratorios, operas, and symphonic compositions. The choir has collaborated with such renowned conductors as Giovanni Antonini, Bob Chilcott, Iván Fischer, Jacek Kasprzyk, Stephen Layton, James MacMillan, Paul McCreech, and Krzysztof Penderecki, performing more than 300 concerts, including at the Barbican Centre and Royal Albert Hall in London, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, and the Philharmonie de Paris and Salle Pleyel in Paris.

The NFM Choir is frequently invited to perform at international festivals such as the BBC Proms, International Ankara Music Festival, Gent Festival van Vlaanderen, Gstaad Menuhin Festival and Academy, Klarafestival, Serenade! Choral Festival, and Warsaw Autumn. The choir has worked with, among others, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Gabrieli Consort and Players, Il Giardino Armonico, and the Polish National Radio Symphony

Orchestra (NOSPR). At the core of the ensemble's activity are world premières of choral and vocal-instrumental works, including by such composers as Penderecki, Zubel, Panufnik, Augustyn, Łukaszewski, Wolfe, and Chilcott.

The NFM Choir has made a series of award-winning recordings under the direction of Paul McCreech issued by Winged Lion, and an a

cappella disc of Bob Chilcott's music, *The Seeds of Stars*, on Signum. Its recording of *De profundis* won 2017 Album of the Year in the category for choral music, oratorio, and opera from the Fryderyk Awards. Recent releases include *Ubi caritas*, *The Phantoms* by Stanisław Moniuszko, Beethoven's Symphony No.9, and an album of works by Marcin Józef Żebrowski.



CHOIR

Soprano

Małgorzata Ciężka-Kątnik
Dagmara Kołodziej-Gorczyńska
Patrycja Kujawa
Maria Kulisiewicz
Monika Michaliszyn
Agnieszka Niezgoda
Joanna Palac
Agnieszka Ryman
Aleksandra Turalska
Violetta Wysocka-Marciniak

Alto

Bianka Maxim
Marta Mączewska
Aleksandra Michniewicz
Ewelina Nawrocka
Agata Ranz
Joanna Rot
Aleksandra Sosna
Ewelina Wojewoda
Ewa Wojtowicz
Magdalena Wolska

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Marek Belko
Łukasz Czartowski
Krzysztof Domański
Andrzej Górniak
Jarosław Kawałko
André Khorsik
Sebastian Mach
Łukasz Wilda
Paweł Zdebski

Bass

Maciej Adamczyk
Jerzy Butryn
Filip Chudzicki
Marek Fras
Maciej Gorczyński
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Marek Paško
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INSTRUMENTALISTS OF NFM WROCLAW PHILHARMONIC

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Anita Koźlak

Viola

Michał Mazur

Cello

Jan Skopowski

Double Bass

Damian Kalla

Flute

Jan Krzeszowiec
Monika Konstantynowicz

Oboe

Joanna Kucharski-Żmijewska*

Clarinet

Maciej Dobosz
Arkadiusz Kweciński

Bassoon

Alicja Kieruzalska
Łukasz Łacny

Horn

Mateusz Feliński

Percussion

Bartłomiej Dudek*
Miłosz Rutkowski
Adrian Schmid

Piano

Katarzyna Neugbauer-Jastrzębska*

**guest*

AGNIESZKA FRANKÓW- ŻELAZNY

Agnieszka Franków-Żelazny is one of the most influential choral conductors in Poland and Europe, a professor of musical arts, teacher (AMKL and UMFC), singer, and arts manager. She has conducted over 20 albums and won more than 70 individual and collective awards, including the Honorary Badge of Merit for Polish Culture (2008), the "Iuvenes Wratlaviae" Award of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2012), the Bronze Medal for Merit for Polish Culture – Gloria Artis (2014), and the prestigious Fryderyk Award in 2017 and 2019. In 2018, she led the Choral Academy to



achieve a nomination for the “Koryfeusz Muzyki Polskiej” Award.

In 2000 she founded the Medical University Chamber Choir (now Medici Cantantes Choir of Wrocław Medical University), winning several awards and distinctions at national and international competitions. Between 2006 and 2021 she was Artistic Director of the Choir of the National Forum of Music, and in 2013 became the founder and Artistic Director of the Polish National Youth Choir, a nationwide educational project. In January 2015, she became the programme director of the Choral Academy, a project of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. During 2013-2016 she curated the music programme of the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016, co-implementing an artistic programme consisting of several hundred music events.

With her choirs, she has performed over 1,200 choral pieces and almost 300 vocal-instrumental works. She has made many world premières of Polish music, conducting in 19 European countries, Israel, the USA, and Brazil. She continues to teach choral conducting and directs the Stanisław Krukowski Choir at the Department of Music Education, Choral Music, and Church Music of the Karol Lipiński Academy

of Music in Wrocław. In 2022 she was appointed Managing Director of the Sudeten Philharmonic in Wałbrzych.

BOB CHILCOTT

Hailed by The Observer as ‘a contemporary hero of British choral music’, composer and conductor Bob Chilcott has enjoyed a lifelong connection with singing and choirs. He sang in the choir of King’s College, Cambridge as a chorister and choral scholar, and in the vocal group The King’s Singers. He is Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers and is conductor of the Birmingham University Singers. He has guest-conducted choirs in more than thirty countries.

As a composer he has a large catalogue of music published by Oxford University Press that reflects his broad view of musical styles and genres. His large canon of sacred works ranges from *St John Passion* and *Requiem to A Little Jazz Mass*. His catalogue includes music for Christmas, from his extended work *Christmas Oratorio to The Shepherd’s Carol*, written in 2000 for the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge.



© John Bellars

He has collaborated with several writers, principally the poet Charles Bennett, with whom he wrote *The Angry Planet*, composed in 2012 for the BBC Proms, and *The Voyage*, commissioned by Age UK, and nominated for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award. Their first music drama, *Birdland*, was premiered at the Oxford Festival of the Arts in June 2022. In 2020, he collaborated with Delphine Chalmers for the American Choral Directors Association Raymond Brock Memorial Commission, writing *Songs my heart has taught me*,

and they also wrote *Times and Seasons*, a book of songs for children. *Mary, Mother*, written with Georgia Way, received its first performance over Christmas 2022.

His works are widely recorded by many groups including The Sixteen, Tenebrae, The King’s Singers, The Choir of King’s College, Cambridge, Westminster Abbey Choir, Wells Cathedral Choir, Ora, Commotio, and the Houston Chamber Choir. In 2016 he collaborated with the celebrated singer songwriter Katie Melua and the Gori Women’s Choir on the album *In Winter*.

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All other works published by Oxford University Press

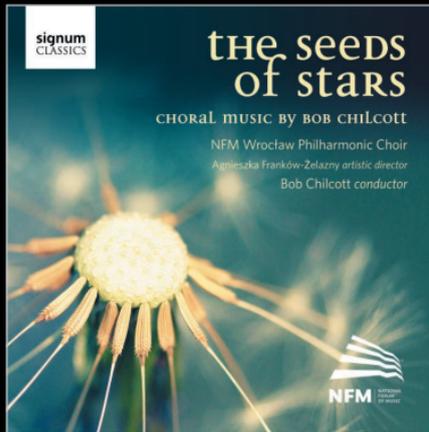
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Producer – Bob Chilcott
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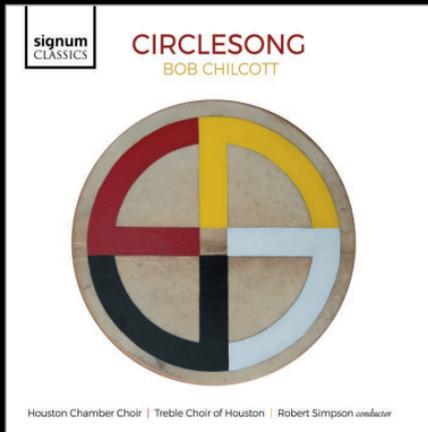
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Chilcott: The Seeds of Stars
NFM Choir
Bob Chilcott
SIGCD311

"Freshness of timbre, individuality in the four voice-sections and genuine versatility of interpretative approach are major characteristics."

BBC Music Magazine



Chilcott: Circlesong
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Robert Simpson
SIGCD703

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