

When David heard that Absalom was slain

The Choir of Ormond College *directed by Douglas Lawrence*

move

When David heard that Absalom was slain

The Choir of Ormond College, Melbourne directed by Douglas Lawrence

Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)

1 I sat down under His shadow

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

2 Magnificat

3 Nunc Dimittis

William Walton (1902-1984)

4 Set me as a seal upon Thine heart

Adrian Batten (1583?-1637)

5 Lord, we beseech Thee

Gordon Kerry (1961-)

Canticles for Evening Prayer

6 first

7 second

Thomas Tomkins (1573-1656)

8 When David heard that Absalom was slain

Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652)

9 Miserere

John Goss (1800-1880)

10 Psalm 23

Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876)

11 Psalm 42

George Mursell Garrett (1834-1897)

12 Psalm 137

Christopher Tye (1497-1573)

13 Sing unto the Lord

Founded in 1982 by Douglas Lawrence, the Choir of Ormond College was established for the purposes of providing liturgical music for the College's weekly chapel services, and to present a number of major choral works in concert each year. The choir has given a series of subscription concerts each year since its inception, has been a regular participant in the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord, and has performed in many of the major concert venues in and around Melbourne. In addition to this, and a number of broadcast engagements, the choir toured New Zealand in February 1985 to great critical acclaim.

The first eight tracks on this recording show the choir in two of its specialist areas, the liturgical music of the 16th and 20th centuries.

Organist and composer, Sir Edward Bairstow, is chiefly remembered for his contributions to the music of the English church. His short anthem, **I sat down under His shadow** is an attractive example of his work, showing an interest in modal harmonic progressions and a mastery of the many possible sonorities of the ensemble. The

text is taken from the Song of Songs.

Like many English composers the Tudor master, Orlando Gibbons wrote a number of settings of the **Magnificat** and **Nunc Dimittis**. These canticles, the songs of Mary and Simeon as found in the Gospel of St Luke, are properly found in the Evensong liturgy as responses to Old and New Testament lessons respectively. Gibbons, who composed for the Chapel Royal, makes use of the customary division of the choir for beautiful antiphonal effects.

The late Sir William Walton is remembered for large works such as *Belshazzar's Feast*, the concertos and his collaboration with Dame Edith Sitwell in *Facade*. He also composed a great deal of choral music, including the wedding anthem **Set me as a seal upon Thine heart**, the text of which is also drawn from the Song of Songs. Like the Bairstow piece, this displays a mastery of choral sonorities within a simple, direct musical language. The soloists in this performance are Gordon Kerry (tenor) and Claire Wells (soprano).

Adrian Batten was another composer of the 16th century, a period which saw the uneasy transition from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism. This was a period perhaps unequalled in

the concentration of musical creativity, with a vast amount of music being composed for the liturgy of the new church. Batten's **Lord, We beseech Thee** shows the essentially simple style preferred by the reformers of the church, where every word of the vernacular could be understood.

The **Canticles for Evening Prayer** were written by Melbourne composer Gordon Kerry in 1983 for the Choir of Ormond College. Musically, they attempt to blend a number of stylistic concerns: a complex harmony of twelve-note music; the antiphony of much English church music, and the simple sonorities of medieval organum. This translation of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis is taken from the Jerusalem Bible, and is used by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs Darton, Longman and Todd, and Doubleday and Company.

Thomas Tomkins was organist of the Chapel Royal during the latter part of the 16th century and composed much music for the liturgy. **When David heard that Absalom was slain** is not, strictly speaking, a liturgical piece, but a highly moving part-song dramatising King David's grief at the loss of his son.

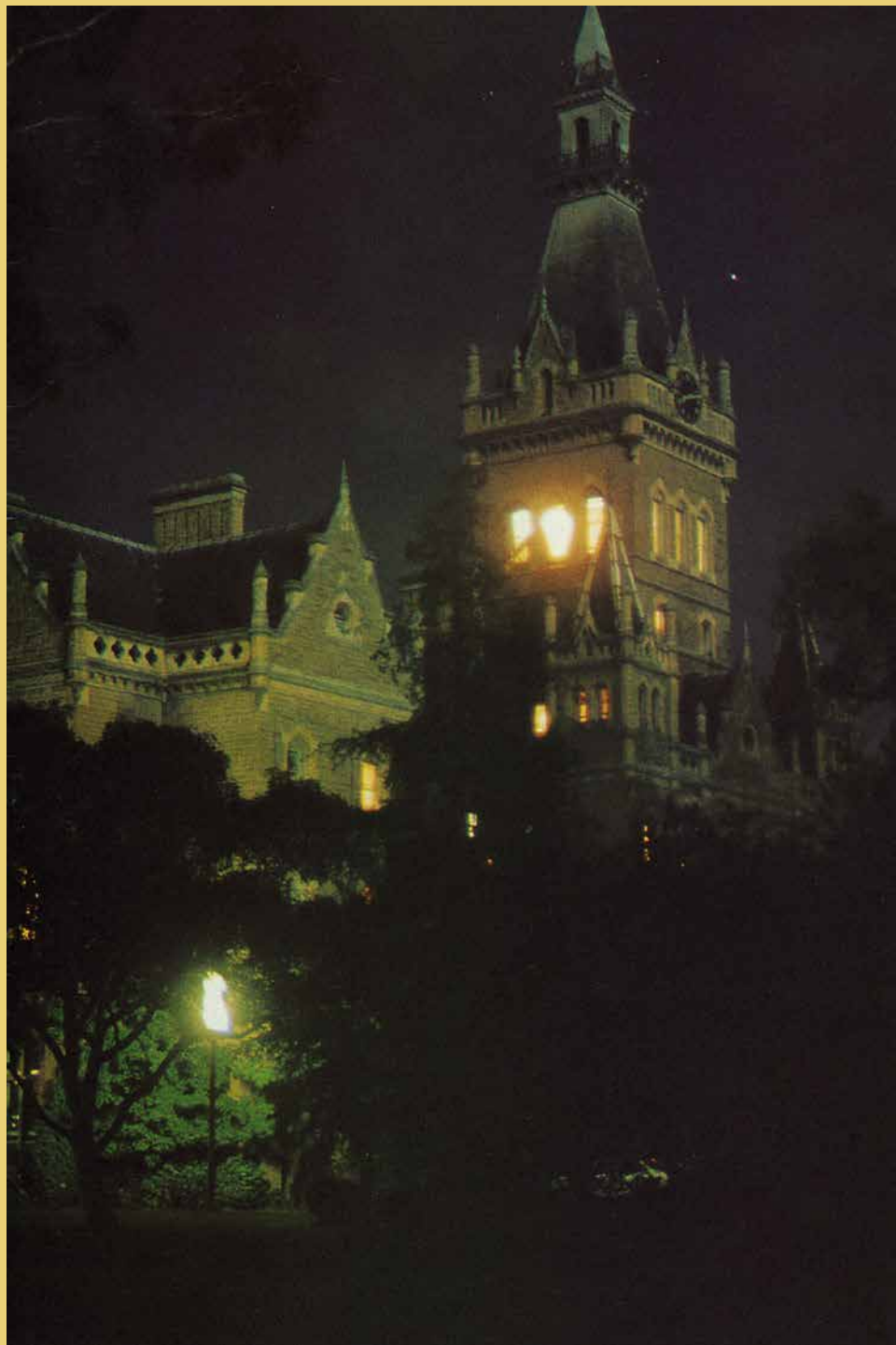
Tracks 9 to 13 are given over to settings of selected psalms.

The first is the famous **Miserere** of Gregorio Allegri, a setting of the penitential Psalm 51 originally used only in the Sistine Chapel during Holy Week. The story of the young Mozart's memorizing and later transcribing the work is now legendary. Other versions were, however, disseminated by Mendelssohn and in England by Dr Burney, the grandfather of historical musicology. The soloist is Anne Hunter. At one point in this piece the College bell is heard striking nine. This Miserere was not edited and indeed, there is no edit on the entire recording!

We include also three settings to Anglican chant. This very simple hypnotic form, which allows for the flexible declamation of prose texts regardless of the syllabation of each line, grew out of the harmonisation of Gregorian chant practised in Europe by composers as early as Josquin. With the revival of interest in Catholic ritual brought about by the Oxford Movement in the early 19th century, Anglican chant became a popular medium for Psalms and canticles. A great many cathedral and collegiate musicians composed chant settings, and three

of these are represented here: John Goss, organist of St Paul's Cathedral, London; the famous Samuel Sebastian Wesley; and G.M. Garrett, organist of St John's College, Cambridge. The four-part harmony of the chants is often accompanied by organ; it is the custom of this choir, however, to sing the chants unaccompanied.

Christopher Tye, another great Tudor composer, brings this recording to a close with the anthem **Sing unto the Lord**, a setting of verses from Psalm 30. The musical language is exuberant and daring, particularly in the opening passage with its chromatic ambiguities. The text gives thanks for God's salvation.



Recorded in the Dining Hall, Ormond College, Melbourne late 1985

Special thanks to Rod Mummery

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Sopranos: Anne Hunter, Louise Macdonald, Leonie Millard, Deborah Kayser, Lenore Stephens, Vicky Balabanski, Isabel Giles, Claire Wells

Altos: Elizabeth Anderson, Janet Watson, Patricia Shaw, Katherine Wells, Julia Ekkel

Tenors: James Barber, Rodney Baker, Simon Burgess, Gordon Kerry

Basses: John Waugh, Stephen Watson, Geoffrey Nelson, David Durance, Terence Tan, Gary Ekkel, Peter Balabanski