

The Choir of Ormond College **LIVE**

directed by Douglas Lawrence



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Benjamin Britten
1 Te Deum 5'57"

JS Bach
St John Passion
BWV 245
2 Opening chorus
8'59"

Gabriel Fauré
Requiem Op.48
3 Introit et Kyrie 5'10"
4 Offertoire 7'30"
5 Sanctus 3'35"
6 Pie Jesu 3'27"
7 Agnus Dei 4'59"
8 Libera me 4'19"
9 In Paradisum 3'10"

Edward Bairstow
**10 Let all mortal flesh
keep silence** 3'06"

Giovanni Pierluigi
da Palestrina
Missa Christi munera
11 Sanctus 3'42"
12 Agnus Dei 4'40"

JS Bach, arranged
Ward Swingle
13 Fugue in G minor
BWV 578 2'56"

Trad. spiritual,
arranged Jay Althouse
14 PlentyGoodRoom
2'52"

Francis Poulenc
Gloria
15 Gloria in excelsis
2'58"
16 Laudamus te 3'00"

JS Bach
Mass in B minor
BWV 232
17 Gloria in excelsis
6'47"

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2001 Choir tour

concert recordings 1985–2000 never previously released

The Choir of Ormond College began in 1981 with the legendary (and oft- repeated) words from Douglas Lawrence,



to the then Master, “Take out the carpet, and you’ll have a choir”. The carpet in the Ormond College chapel was taken out, and the choir appeared (the exciting idea that one can cause a choir to appear spontaneously simply by removing carpet should be further investigated). Repertoire that afternoon (March 1981) included *Rejoice in the Lord Always* by Anon. and Purcell’s *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* in G minor. The performance may not have been exemplary, but a lot of hard work in the next couple of years set the foundations for a choral culture where new people could learn by imitating senior members of their section, become confident themselves, and eventually pass this collective experience on yet again. For a while the choir would regularly sing to a nearly empty chapel and listen to the chaplain preach a sermon against music, but in



general the chaplains have been supportive of the choir, and appreciative of the spiritual contribution good music can make to a service.

1 Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Te Deum 5’57”
New Zealand tour
1985

Soprano: Lenore
Stephens

The first track is a recording of Benjamin Britten’s *Festival Te Deum*, made in Our Lady of Victories, Camberwell, in 1985, the year the choir made its first overseas tour of New Zealand. Although it was recorded digitally (on Beta video tapes using Sony’s PCM F1 system) it was never released. Modern digital editing has made it possible to fix the small problems that may have been a barrier



Graeme Lieschke, organ scholar, 1985

to its release in 1985. Britten composed the *Festival Te Deum* in 1944 for the Centenary Festival of St Marks in Swindon, where it was performed on 24 of April 1945. He may have found it a welcome break, or an annoying distraction from finishing his operatic masterpiece *Peter Grimes*, which was premiered later in 1945. The text of the *Te Deum* is a fourth century hymn of praise. It is in three distinct sections.

The first (verses 1-13) is a hymn of praise to the Trinity, and to the Church Triumphant. The music has



Choir member Katherine Wells during 1985 New Zealand tour



the choir singing in unison with an irregular rhythm, which recalls the church tradition of plainchant. Against irregular choral phrases the organ plays solid chords in strict 3/4 time, perhaps signifying the steadfastness and timelessness of the Trinity, while humankind keeps changing on earth.

The second section (verses 14-21) is a hymn to Christ, his life on earth, his victory over sin and his future coming in glory.

The music consists of generally aggressive exchanges between the choir and the organ, perhaps signifying Christ's battle with sin and hell. The final verse of this section "Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in glory everlasting", is spectacular, with the choral phrase being extended to the limits of what can be sung in one breath, and each section singing up to their highest notes, signifying heavenly glory.

The third section (verses 22-29) is taken mostly from the psalms, and includes prayers for guidance,



deliverance and mercy. In keeping with the mood of the text, the music is calmer than the previous sections. A soprano soloist (Lenore Stephens) sings verses 22-25, the music requiring sweetness of tone and calmness of delivery. In the final choral section the four parts sing the words quietly in various rhythms before gradually coming together on the words "O Lord, in thee have I trusted". The work finishes with the soprano soloist singing "Let me never be confounded" over an echo of the first section in the organ.

2 Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

St John Passion BWV 245
Opening chorus 8'59"
recorded at St Mary's Star of the Sea, 1992

The rest of the pieces on the CD have all been recorded live in concert. First comes the opening chorus of Bach's *St. John Passion*, recorded at St Mary's Star of the Sea in March 1992. The passions are musical settings of the gospels, and do not include much music for the chorus (when compared with, say, the *Mass in B minor*). Bach makes up for this 'choral deficit' by opening the work with a large-scale chorus of great intensity and drama. The oboes and flutes weave chromatic lines over restless string parts. When the choir finally enters with its repeated



cries of Herr (Lord!), the dramatic effect is akin to the entrance of the chorus in Handel's *Zadok the Priest*. The main section of the chorus is taken up entirely with the invocation (in the archaic language of the time) "Lord, our Redeemer, Thou whose name in all the world is glorious". The second section (from *Zeig' uns durch deine Passion*) is a prayer to help find meaning in the terrible events of the passion.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Requiem Op.48

(32'07" complete)

3 Introït et Kyrie 5'10"

4 Offertoire 7'30"

5 Sanctus 3'35"

6 Pie Jesu 3'27"

7 Agnus Dei 4'59"

8 Libera me 4'19"

9 In Paradisum 3'10"

Maundy Thursday in 1991

Ormond College dining hall.

Melbourne Chamber Orchestra

Leader: Spiros Rantos

Soprano: Deborah Kayser

Baritone: Michael Gough

The recording of Fauré's *Requiem* was made on Maundy Thursday in 1991. The choir has traditionally used Fauré's original instrumentation of violin, 2 violas, cello, bass, 2 horns, timpani, harp and organ. Apart from being easier to assemble, this ensemble is Fauré's original conception. The orchestral version was only made after the work became popular, as romantic sensibilities would not be content with anything less than a large choir with orchestra for a requiem. In 1902 Fauré said "That's how I see death: as a joyful deliverance, an aspiration towards a happiness beyond the grave, rather than as a painful experience." The music reflects this belief by being much less dramatic and loud than most romantic requiems. The only dramatic part is the *Dies iræ*



Venice, 1987

(Day of wrath, calamity and misery), but even this is over in a moment. He leaves out the reference to the last trumpet (*Tuba mirum*) so beloved of romantic composers such as Berlioz or Verdi, and instead, at the end he adds in the *In paradisum* (May angels lead thee to paradise), which is normally spoken outside the church at the moment of burial. This movement (**9**) is a beautiful depiction of the departed soul in paradise, sung by the sopranos only, with the men joining in on the word *Jerusalem*, the final resting place of the departed soul.

10 Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)

Let all mortal flesh keep silence 3'06"

Hellingånds Kirke, Copenhagen, 13 July 1993

When Edward Bairstow wrote *Let all mortal flesh keep silence*, he must have known he was on to a winner. It is probably the piece most frequently requested by Ormond tenors. With its hushed beginning, exciting



development and sonorous climax, it is an ideal piece to test the acoustics of an unfamiliar church. When some choir members visited the Hellingånds Kirke in Copenhagen at lunchtime on 13 July 1993, the building got the choral seal of approval. The recording on this CD was made during a concert later that evening.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(1525-1594)

Missa Christi munera

11 Sanctus 3'42"

12 Agnus Dei 4'40"

Santa Maria Maggiore in
Bressanoro, Italy

19 July 1995

The choir does an international tour every two years, and by 1995 it would sing its tour repertoire for weeks in many different places, then record that repertoire at the end of tour. As a tenor/sound engineer, yours truly had the job of recording Music from Heaven. I also recorded some of the concerts, and this recording of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei from Palestrina's beautiful Missa aeterna Christi munera



comes from a concert in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bressanoro on 19 July 1995. This mass uses the plainchant *Aeterna Christi munera* as its basis, which can be heard sung by the tenors at the beginning of each movement. Being typical of Palestrina, the musical lines and counterpoint are artfully woven to a beautiful and satisfying effect. The last part of the Agnus Dei moves from four parts to five parts, and Palestrina's artistry is evident

in the beautiful climax (3'36" into **12**) where the basses descend to their lowest note of the movement before a serene ending.

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750), arr. Ward Swingle

13 Fugue in G minor
BWV 578 2'56"

concert in St Marys
Travemünde, Northern
Germany 13 July 1997

The Swingle Singers found fame in the 1960s with their distinctive jazz interpretations of JS Bach. This arrangement of Bach's organ *fugue in G minor* by Ward Swingle was taken up enthusiastically by the choir, and quickly became a party-piece. Frequent adrenalin-fuelled performances of the piece as an encore have changed Swingle's delicate conception into something more robust that has never failed to please an audience. The



German romanticism, and who aligned themselves with Cubism. In the 1930s he rediscovered his Catholic faith after the death of a friend, and began to write a series of religious and religiously inspired masterpieces. The *Gloria* is a late period piece, and the cheekiness of the music suits the joyfulness of the words well.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

17 Mass in B minor BWV 232: Gloria 6'47"

concert at The Scots' Church, 9 September 2000

The final track is taken from the choir's second performance of Bach's Mass in B Minor, performed on 9 September 2000 at Scots Church, as part of The Melbourne Bach Week, 2000. Bach's treatment of the words of the Gloria differs quite markedly from Poulenc's. Living 200 years earlier, Bach had a solid faith without the level of doubt that had accumulated by the twentieth century. In Bach's mind, the opening words of the Gloria (originally sung to the shepherds by choirs of angels) was an opportunity to write the most joyful music he could possibly write. And for JS Bach that's saying something.

NOTES: VAUGHAN MCALLEY
(CHOIR MEMBER 1993-1998)

performance on this CD was recorded during a concert in Travemünde, Germany's favourite seaside resort, on 13 July 1997. It acted as a bridge between the serious church music and the outrageous encores that were to follow!

Trad. spiritual arr. Jay Althouse
14 Plenty Good Room 2'52"
concert at the Stadtpfarrkirche,
St Martin, Wangen in Allgäu,
Southern Germany, 14 July
1999

The choir's contribution from 1999 is in a similar vein. *Plenty Good Room* is a spiritual arranged in a very bluesy style by Jay Althouse. As trains began crossing the countryside in the 19th century, they became incorporated into African-American spirituals, just like in the famous song *This Train is Bound for Glory*. This performance came after a very successful concert in Wangen in Allgäu, Germany, and was actually the third encore!

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)
15 Gloria 2'58"
16 Laudamus te 3'00"
concert at The Scots' Church,
with the Australian Classical
Players, 25 November 2000

Next are two movements from Poulenc's Gloria, performed at a Primelife Independent Classics concert at The Scots' Church (back in Melbourne) on 25 November 2000. Francis Poulenc was almost completely self-taught, which may partially contribute to the distinctive original colours of his music. In the 1920s he was a member of the informal Paris group Les Six, who sought to rid French music of Impressionism and





Douglas Lawrence, 1999

The choir started

when the then Master, Mr David Parker agreed to the removal of a particularly thick carpet from the College Chapel. This carpet of an indeterminate red; some said orange hue; covered the floor of the chapel and ran up the front wall. On this particular section hung the rather large wooden cross giving out a rather confused message. "The old rugged cross" on wall to ceiling axminster!

The College has been the great supporter and sustainer of the Choir. Under the present Master, Professor Hugh Collins, scholarships have been made attractive and we have now official positions of Organist, Librarian and Senior Chorister.

The main work of the choir is to sing week by week for the College Chapel service and to sing at special services, Christmas, Easter and for major university events. Other highly important motivating factors have been the biennial overseas concert tours, the production of now nine compact discs, and the concert series in which we have presented many masterpieces of the repertoire and the now more than 50 new works we have premiered. All this has presented a constant challenge to the choir and greatly aided its development.

Finally it is the calibre of the students who become Choral Scholars to this College which determines the quality of and ensures continuity of the choir. Each generation of singers passes on skills and experiences.

It is my hope the this choir will endure as long as there is an Ormond College at The University of Melbourne.

DOUGLAS LAWRENCE, 2002

There is only a small number of real personalities in the world of Australian music,



and few of these are actually good at what they do. Douglas Lawrence has been delighting us and expanding our expectations of him since the 1960s when he burst upon the Melbourne scene; Kenneth Hince wrote at the time,

‘Lawrence plays better with his feet than most organists do with their hands’.

Over the 40 years I have known him, Douglas has lived his professional life full-bore: distinguished teacher and lecturer, long-time director of the

annual Organ and Harpsichord Festival, Master of the Chapel Music at Ormond College, Director of Music (and organ generator!) at The Scots’ Church and – in his mind, the icing on his particular career-cake – director of the Ormond College Choir.

Ambitious for his singers and hyper-vigilant for their standards, maintaining amicable relationships even with tenors long since gone from the Ormond ranks, guiding his young charges’ faltering steps on their whirlwind tours from Scandinavia to Italy, he is the very model of a modern-day entrepreneur-kapellmeister.

And always in the background, there is the barely repressed larrikin, ready to burst out from academic or ecclesiastical garb!

Long may your flourish, Doug, to fly the banner of unaccompanied Bach motets and the cause of vigorous, scholarly performance.

CLIVE O’CONNELL, MUSIC CRITIC,
THE AGE (MELBOURNE)

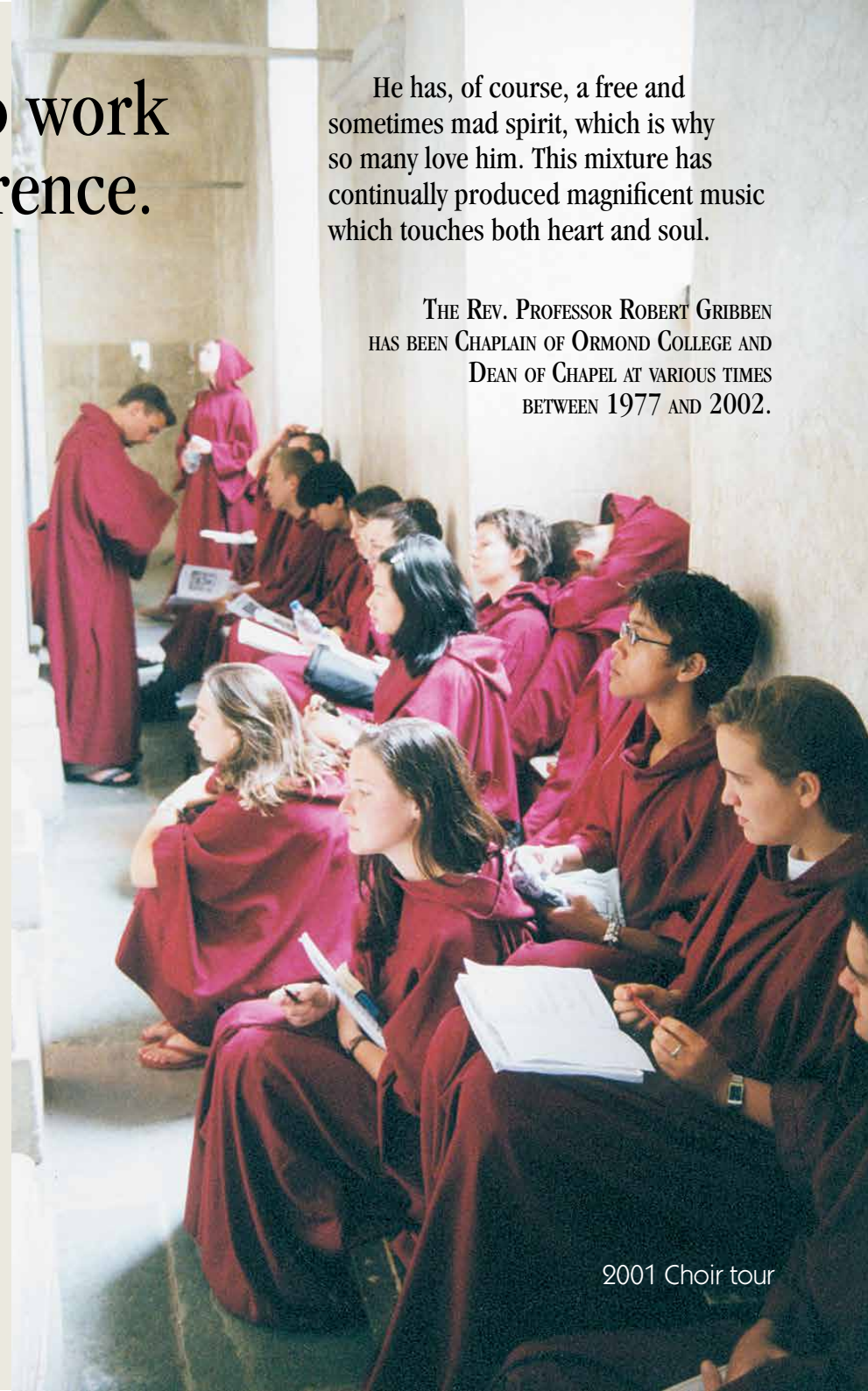
Few clergy have the opportunity to work with a musician like Douglas Lawrence.

When both have strong views on both music and liturgy, it can be a disaster. When I first became Chaplain there was no choir; Douglas got one together for special occasions, consisting of his friends (including my relatives). Only after I left for the UK in 1980 was a more permanent choir set up.

All I can say is that over more than twenty years, from the first scratch choir, which sang in Chapel in 1977 to the justly famed Choir of Ormond College, working with Douglas has been an extraordinary experience. Douglas and Elizabeth's prodigal hospitality has been instrumental in forming a large community of music lovers and supporters of both College and Choir. He works the choir hard and occasionally there's some mending to do. Discipline there is, but he also has a wonderful ability to respond on the spur of the moment, based on a deep understanding of how liturgy works.

He has, of course, a free and sometimes mad spirit, which is why so many love him. This mixture has continually produced magnificent music which touches both heart and soul.

THE REV. PROFESSOR ROBERT GRIBBEN
HAS BEEN CHAPLAIN OF ORMOND COLLEGE AND
DEAN OF CHAPEL AT VARIOUS TIMES
BETWEEN 1977 AND 2002.



2001 Choir tour

“The singing is excellent ... as we have come to expect.”
(ABC 24 Hours)

“youthful vigor ... freshness of tone and a determination to overcome the technical difficulties an adventurous repertory presents.”
(Tony Way, The Age ‘Green Guide’)

“a world-class choir at the height of its powers ...”
(Bruce Gillespie, The Melburnian)

“the incredible professional discipline and the rich sound was most impressive ... the effect and radiance was in places breathtaking ... this versatile Choir swept the audience away.” **(Lindau critic, 1999 tour)**

“Alle Achtung! ... 24 young Australians sang the most difficult German music in the most excellent manner possible ... the dynamic contrasts and vitality went alongside the best articulated German.”
(German critic, 1993 tour)

“I can tell the World’ and ‘Deep River’ proved the worthy voices, the homogeneity and the captivating intonation of this vocal ensemble.”
(Osnabrücker Zeitung, 1991 tour)



1989 – Barbarano, Italy



Choir at Ormond in 2001

Ormond College

is the largest residential college for The University of Melbourne. The academic community of students tutors and academic visitors draws from metropolitan Melbourne, rural Victoria, interstate and overseas, and students enjoy a diversity of opportunity where they are encouraged to fulfill their potential in cultural, sporting and social activities. Most of the members of the Choir are or have been resident at Ormond, where the Choir performs much of its repertoire in Chapel on Sunday evenings. The Choir encourages talented young musicians to pursue singing for sheer pleasure and to aspire to performance at an international level.



Sion, 1995

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TOURS

- 1985 — New Zealand
- 1987 — Germany, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium
- 1989 — Singapore, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy
- 1991 — Germany, Denmark, Holland, Italy, France
- 1993 — Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark
- 1995 — Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy
- 1997 — Germany, Italy, France, Austria, Denmark
- 1999 — United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Italy
- 2001 — Switzerland, Germany Poland, Denmark, Italy