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BACH
BYRD
BRITTEN

THE CHOIR OF ORMOND COLLEGE
directed by Douglas Lawrence

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden BWV 230

Johann Sebastian Bach

Modern scholarship ascribes eight motets to the great master of baroque music J.S. Bach. Of these, *Lobet den Herrn* is the only one which cannot be identified as written for a particular occasion. Lutheran practice in Bach's day was to use motets as introits for services on special occasions (some of which would have lasted hours, like the ones on Good Friday for the *St Matthew* and *St John Passions*) – most of Bach's motets, it seems, were composed for burial or memorial services in the Lutheran Church.

We know that the scoring of *Lobet* was for four voices and organ (which is omitted according to one tradition in this recording), and that the text is a direct setting of Psalm CXVII, unlike the other motets which all (except for one which is a setting of poetry) derive their texts from a mixture of chorales and biblical interpolations. We also know that the other motets are part of the Leipzig tradition – no such works survive from Bach's Weimar period (1710-1717). It's a fair guess, then, in the absence of a firm date, that this motet dates from the 1720s, most of the other seven having been written between 1723 and 1730. The only problem with all of this conjecture is that doubt has been raised as to the

authenticity of *Lobet den Herrn* as a piece of Bach's work. Certainly, it differs from the others in style and text, and (presumably) the reason for which it was written: it seems singularly unsuitable as an introit for a funeral: 'Praise the Lord, all ye heathen'!

As a consequence of its discreet text it also lacks the typical chorale of Bach's motets and cantatas. Of course, all of these distinctions may be purely arbitrary – it may truly be a one-of-a-kind among Bach's motets. Whoever did write it, it is in the highly instrumental style which Bach employed repeatedly for vocal, and especially choral, music. It consists of three main sections of intense polyphonic imitation based on simple scalar subjects, and culminates in an exultant canonic *alleluia* in triple time.

Praise the Lord all ye heathen
And worship him all peoples
For his mercy and truth reign over us for
ever.
Alleluia.

Mass for four voices

William Byrd

Byrd's famous mass settings date from c.1592-1595. The four-part mass was the first to be written, followed by the 3- and 5-part settings. As products of unabashed English catholicism in a time of religious persecution, they reflect the deeply expressive piety of Byrd's religious sensibilities. Yet Byrd was also a man of the world and a practical musician (like Bach!). Proof of this is that Byrd discreetly published the dangerous works separately, with no title-pages and in tiny books, easy to conceal and anonymous-looking from without; however, each page inside defiantly attributed the music to Byrd!

Stylistically, the masses have an unmistakably English modality (a legacy of Byrd's grounding in the native style of his teacher Tallis), and share a common musical simplicity. Any lack in adventure, however, is more than compensated for by the beautiful clarity and expressiveness of the musical line, and although verbal repetition in the style of the great Italian masses is not featured in the four-part, Byrd gives us moments of great strength and pathos in certain places, notably with the *et resurrexist* of the *Credo* and the *dona nobis pacem* of the *Agnus Dei* with its visionary pedal and yearning suspensions.

Five flower songs

op. 47 Benjamin Britten

The *Five flower songs* dates from 1950. The texts are settings of poems by native English poets – apart from *Ballad of green Broom* (anon.) – and are united by their floral subject matter. The work is part of Britten's output as rediscoverer of his own 'English' heritage. Indeed it was a chance reading of an article about the West Country poet George Crabbe (represented here by *Marsh Flowers*) which inspired the disaffected Britten to return from across the Atlantic: the first fruits of this was *A ceremony of carols* written before the composer even got off the ship to England.

In bringing together the sometimes quirky texts Britten spans a range of styles and atmospheres, from the breezy word-painting of *Daffodils* and the ghostly fragility of the *Primrose* to the naïve rusticity of *Green Broom*. He peppers the grotesquerie of *Marsh flowers* with *sforzandi* and a couple of hysterical *glissandi*, and sketches a calm and mellifluous picture of early summer in the *Four sweet months*.

As a group of miniatures these flower songs demand great intensity of portrayal from the performers and reward the listener with vivid and idiosyncratic glimpses of Flora's plenitude.

To daffodils

Fair daffodils, we weep to see you
Haste away so soon;
As yet the early rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay until the hasting day
Has run but to even song;
And, having prayed together,
We will go with you along.
We have short time to stay, as you.
We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or any thing.
We die, as your hours do, and dry away
Like to the summer's rain,
or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again!

The succession of the four sweet months

First, April, she with mellow showers
Opens the way for early flowers;
Then after her comes smiling May
In a more rich and sweet array;
Next enters June and brings us more gems
Than those two that went before;
Then (lastly) July comes and she more
wealth
Brings in than all those three.

Marsh flowers

Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy
root;
Here the dull night-shade hangs her
deadly fruit:
Here on hills of dust the hen-bane's faded
green,
And pencilled flower of sickly scent is
seen.

Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
Grows the salt-lavender that lacks
perfume.
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs
With fruit globose and fierce with
poisoned stings;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below;
The few dull flowers that o'er the place are
spread
Partake the nature of their fenny bed.
These with our seaweeds rolling up and
down,
Form the contracted Flora of our town.

The evening primrose

When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dew-drops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew,
And hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night.
Who, blind-fold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty he possesses.
Thus it blooms on while night is by:
When day looks out with open eye,
'Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

Ballad of green Broom

(Broom, green Broom, green Broom)
There was an old man lived out in the
wood,
And his trade was a-cutting of Broom,
green Broom, green Broom;

He had but one son without thought
 without good
 Who lay in his bed till t'was noon
 bright noon, bright noon, bright noon;
 The old man awoke one morning and
 spoke:
 He swore he would fire the room,
 that room, that room;
 If his John would not rise and open his
 eyes,
 And away to the wood to cut Broom.
 So Johnny arose and slipped on his clothes
 And away to the wood to cut Broom.
 He sharpened his knives, and for once he
 contrives
 To cut a great bundle of Broom.
 When Johnny passed under a lady's fine
 house,
 Passed under a Lady's fine room,
 She called to her maid: "Go fetch me,"
 she said,
 "Go fetch me the boy that sells Broom."
 When Johnny came in to the Lady's fine
 house,
 And stood in the Lady's fine room,
 "Young Johnny" she said, "will you give
 up your Trade
 And marry a Lady in full bloom?"
 Johnny gave his consent, and to church
 they both went,
 And he wedded the Lady in bloom,
 full bloom, full bloom.
 At market and fair all folks do declare,
 There's none like the Boy that sold Broom,
 green Broom, green Broom.

A ceremony of carols

op. 28 for treble voices and harp

Benjamin Britten

A ceremony of carols was written in 1942 on board the *MS Axel Johnson* as Britten returned home to England after a short self-enforced exile in the USA. Britten turned to two sources of texts in compiling his Christmas settings for 3-part treble voices: English medieval lyrics and 16th century poetry. His treatment of the varied texts encompasses gregorian tone-colour, piquant vocal stretto, naïve pastoral exuberance and wintry lyricism.

Although the piece was conceived for boys, the treble tone can be reproduced with disarming semblance by a choir of female voices singing as here with strict justness of intonation and a vocal tone free from unnecessary vibrato and embellishment.

I Procession

Hodie Christus natus est: hodie Salvator apparuit: hodie in terra canunt angeli: laetantur archangeli: hodie exsultant justi dicentes: Gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia!
 Today Christ is born; today the Saviour has appeared; today the angels sing on earth; the archangels rejoice; today the righteous rejoice, saying: glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!

ANON.

II Wolcum Yole!

Wolcum be thou hevene king,
 Wolcum, born in one morning,
 Wolcum for whom we sall sing!
Wolcum Yole!

Wolcom be ye, Stevene and Jon,
 Wolcom Innocentes every one,
 Wolcum, Thomas marter one,
 Wolcum be ye, good Newe Yere,
 Wolcum, Twelfth Day both in fere,
 Wolcum, seintes lefe and dere,
 (Wolcum be thou) Candelmesse,
 (Wolcum be thou) Quene of bliss,
 Wolcum bothe to more and lesse.
 Wolcum be ye that are here,
 Wolcum alle and make good cheer.
 Wolcum alle another yere:

ANON, 14th CENTURY

III There is no Rose

There is no rose of such vertu
 As is the rose that bare Jesu:
Alleluia.
 For in this rose contained was
 Heaven and earth in litel space:
Res miranda.
 By that rose we may well see
 There be one God in persons three:
Pares forma.
 The aungels sungen the shepherds to:
 Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gaudeamus.
 Leave we all this werldly mirth,
 and follow we this joyful birth:
Transeamus.

ANON, 14th CENTURY

IV (a) That yonge child

That yonge child when it gan weep
With song she lulled him asleep:
That was so sweet a melody
It passed alle minstrelsy.
The nightingale sang also:
Her song is hoarse and nought thereto:
Whoso attendeth to her song
And leaveth the first then doth he wrong.

ANON, 14th CENTURY

IV (b) Balulalow

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweat,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee to my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.
But I sall praise thee evermoir
With sanges sweat unto thy gloir;
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow!

JAMES, JOHN AND ROBERT WEDDERBURN,
16th CENTURY

V As dew in Aprille

I sing of a maiden
That is makeles:
King of all kings
To her son she ches.
He came al so stille
There his moder was,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the grass.
He came al so stille,
To his moder's bour,

As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the flour.
He came al so stille

There his moder lay,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the spray.
Moder and mayden
was never none but she:
Well may such a lady
Goddes moder be.

ANON, 14th CENTURY

VI This little Babe

This little Babe so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do shake;
For in this weak unarmed wise
The gates of hell he will surprise.
With tears he fights and wins the field,
His naked breast stands for a shield;
His battering shot are babish cries,
His arrows looks of weeping eyes;
His martial ensigns Cold and Need
And feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitched in a stall,
His bulwark but a broken wall;
The crib his trench, haystacks his stakes,
Of shepherds he his muster makes;
And thus, as sure his foe to wound
The angels' trumps alarum sound.
My soul, with Christ join thou in fight,
Stick to the tents that he hath pight;
Within his crib is surest ward,
This little Babe will be thy guard.
If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy
Then flit not from this heavenly Boy.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL, 16TH CENTURY

VII Interlude (harp solo)

VII In freezing winter night

Behold, a silly tender babe
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
Alas, a piteous sight!
The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed.
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.
This stable is a Prince's court,
This crib his chair of State;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate
The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heaven;
This pomp is prized there.
With joy approach, O Christian wight,
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise his humble pomp,
Wich he from Heaven doth bring.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL, 16TH CENTURY

IX Spring carol

Pleasure it is to hear iwis, the Birdes sing. The deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale, the corn springing.	God's purvayance for sustenance, it is for man. Then we always to give him praise and thank him than.
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WILLIAM CORNISH,

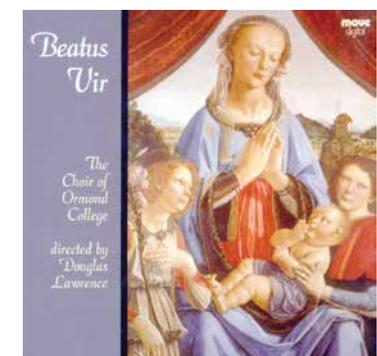
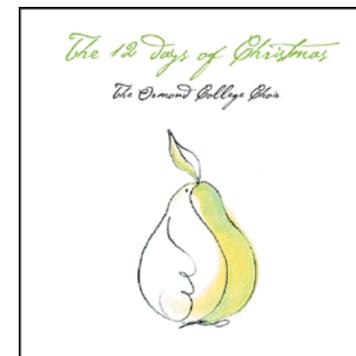
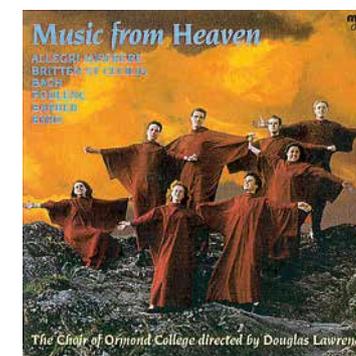
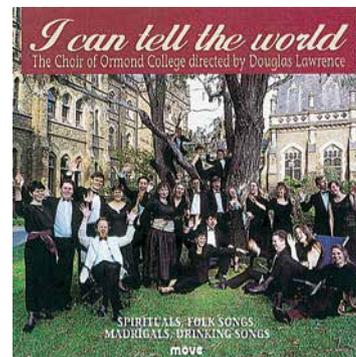
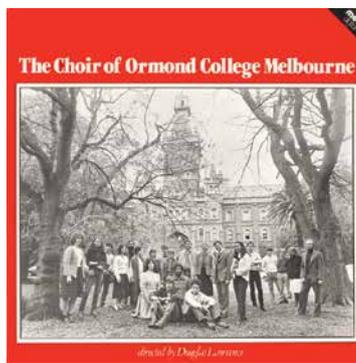
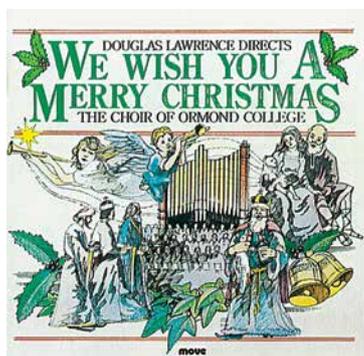
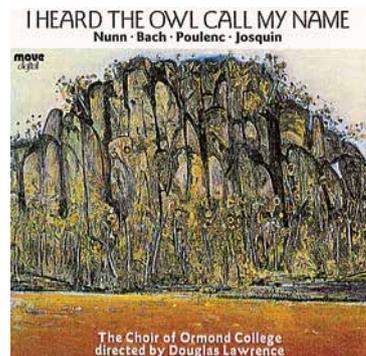
16TH C

X Adam lay i-bounden
 Deo grācijas!
 Adam lay i bounden
 Bounden in a bond;
 Four thousand winter
 Thought he not to long.
 And all was for an appil,
 An appil that he tok,
 As clerkes finden
 written in their book.

Ne had the appil take ben,
 The appil take ben,
 Ne hadde never our lady
 A ben hevene quene.
 Blessed be the time
 That appil take was.
 Therefore we moun singen:
 Deo gracias!

ANON. 15th CENTURY

XI Recession (as I)



Digitally recorded (with no editing within sections) in the Dining Hall, Ormond College, University of Melbourne, and the Chapel of Xavier College, Melbourne.

Harp: Mary Anderson
Soprano soloists: Lenore Stephens, Anne Hunter
Alto soloists: Patricia Shaw, Elizabeth Anderson

Engineer: Martin Wright
Notes: David Wilson
Photography: Howard Birnstihl

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1 LOBET DEN HERRN,
ALLE HEIDEN BWV 230
Johann Sebastian Bach 6'40"

FIVE FLOWER SONGS op. 47
Benjamin Britten 11'20"

A CEREMONY OF CAROLS
op. 28 for treble voices and harp
Benjamin Britten 23'15"

MASS FOR FOUR VOICES
William Byrd 23'20"

2 Kyrie 2'10"

3 Gloria 5'47"

4 Credo 8'05"

5 Sanctus 2'27"

6 Benedictus 1'25"

7 Agnus dei 3'13"

8 To daffodils 2'04"

9 The succession of the
four sweet months 1'52"

10 Marsh Flowers 2'35"

11 The evening primrose 2'23"

12 Ballad of green Broom 2'17"

13 Procession 1'19"

14 Wolcum Yole! 1'26"

15 There is no Rose 2'34"

16 That yonge child 1'37"

17 Balulalow 1'28"

18 As dew in Aprille 1'04"

19 This little babe 1'36"

20 Interlude (harp solo) 3'37"

21 In freezing winter night 4'23"

22 Spring carol 1'15"

23 Adam lay i-bounden 1'17"

24 Recession 1'21"

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