



Byrd & Howells

April 23, 2024

7:30 PM

Vashon Center for the Arts

May 14, 2024

7:30 PM

St. James Cathedral, Seattle

EMERALD

ENSEMBLE

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EMERALD

ENSEMBLE

Dr. Gary D. Cannon

Artistic Director

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The Emerald Ensemble enlightens the mind, uplifts the heart, and enriches the soul through great choral music presented with passion and skill. We envision a world made better through great choral music.

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Byrd & Howells

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

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PROGRAM

Deep river (2010)

arr. Karen P. Thomas (b.1957)

Mass for five voices (c.1595)

William Byrd (c.1540–1623)

1. Kyrie
2. Gloria
3. Credo
4. Sanctus – Benedictus
5. Agnus Dei

INTERMISSION

O Absalom (2024)

Gary D. Cannon (b.1975)

world premiere performances

Requiem (1932)

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

1. Salvator mundi
 2. Psalm 23
 3. Requiem æternam (i)
 4. Psalm 121
 5. Requiem æternam (ii)
 6. I heard a voice from heaven
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PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

Deep river (2010)

Karen P. Thomas (born 1957)

African-American spirituals developed as slaves melded Christian imagery with the singers' intrinsic desire for freedom. In *Deep river*, the titular waterway can be interpreted as the River Jordan from the Old Testament, the metaphorical river that separates the dead from the living, the Atlantic Ocean across which the slaves' ancestors had come, or the Potomac River that divided North from South. Karen Thomas made the present arrangement for Seattle Pro Musica, which she conducts. Each part gets its turn with the refrain "I want to cross over into campground," joining in the desire for peace. To Thomas, the hailed "gospel feast" is a dramatic occasion.

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,
deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.

Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast,
that promised land where all is peace?

Walk into heaven, and take my seat,
and cast my crown at Jesus' feet.

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,
deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.

Mass for five voices (c.1595)

William Byrd (c.1540–1623)

Scene: the woods in the Norfolk countryside. Time: early on Sunday morning, in the mid-1590s. Participants: Sir John Petre, prominent aristocrat; Edward Paston, poet-turned-squire; William Byrd, pre-eminent living composer; a Jesuit priest or two, who have lived in hiding for some years; an additional small number of recusant Catholics. All of these, if caught in the act of worship, could be fined, arrested, or even hanged. It was for a scenario such as this that Byrd composed in his later years. Since relocating to Essex in 1593, Byrd embarked on a remarkable project to compose all the necessary music for the major feast days of the Catholic liturgical calendar. The project began with three settings of the mass—one each for three, four, and five voices. The five-voice mass is believed to have appeared second, probably around 1595.

This was a composer who was at the very top of his profession. Indeed, no musician was more central to Elizabethan life than was William Byrd. London-born, he began his musical career as a boy chorister at the Chapel Royal—the monarch's personal chapel—during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary Tudor, and thus literally had a front-row view of the sixteenth century's religious controversies. In 1563, he became organist and choirmaster at the somewhat Puritan cathedral in Lincoln. Byrd returned to the Chapel Royal in 1572 as co-organist with his former mentor, the ageing Thomas Tallis. Byrd quickly gained prominence among the English aristocracy. His influence extended even to the Queen herself, who in 1575 granted to him and Tallis a monopoly on music printing.

Byrd remained devoutly Catholic, even as Queen Elizabeth's initially tolerant reign began increasing persecutions in order to establish the predominance of the newer Anglican Church. In addition to supplying music for secret Catholic worship services, he may even have repeatedly harbored Jesuit priests from the law. Byrd's important patrons ensured that he was harassed only minimally. It was fortunate that the Queen enjoyed Latin services at her private Chapel Royal, thereby giving Byrd opportunities to compose in historically Catholic forms, such as the motet, without particular recrimination. Perhaps he was granted special allowance in part because of the brilliant music he wrote specifically for the Anglican service, such as his masterpiece, the *Great Service*.

In 1593, Byrd and his family moved to Essex, joining a group of recusant Catholics that centered around the household of Sir John Petre in nearby Norfolk. Until this point his music had been marked with florid, complex polyphony, but in his Essex retirement he softened his style. The Mass for five voices is a fine representation of this new simplification, and while the style may be subdued, the mood is nonetheless quite expressive. Byrd rarely repeats the text, and his points of imitation are concise. This austere construction means that, while the complete work is shorter than, say, the average mass by Palestrina or Victoria, the flow of mood is more carefully focused and just as powerful.

The fundamental organizational principle of Byrd's masses is imitative writing. Each voice takes the principal melody in turn, the first few notes being recognizable and clear. It's almost like a fugue or even a round, except rather less strict in what a composer can do *after* the initial statements. The starting Kyrie introduces this compositional idea well: the sopranos begin, followed by first tenors, then second tenors, then altos, and finally basses. The first three entrances are displaced by just one measure, after which Byrd plays around with the timing. Since the mass was probably written for an ensemble of only male singers, the soprano line does not extend very high. Its arrival to a top E-flat during the "Christe" is thus perceived as dramatically charged.

In another demonstration of his compositional economy, for the Gloria, the voices are occasionally grouped into duets or trios. He reserves the full ensemble for especially dramatic junctures such as "Laudamus te," "Gratias agimus," "Quoniam tu solus," and "Altissimus." Similarly, in the Credo—always a musical challenge given the quantity of words—points of imitation come more quickly, and there is almost no repetition of text within a single voice. There are a few musical puns, such as the rising line for "Et resurrexit" ("and rose again") and "Et ascendit" ("and ascended"). Especially poignant is the firm, sober repetition of "et apostolicam Ecclesiam," reinforcing his belief that the true way to worship is through the traditional Catholic church which the ancient apostles had founded, not King Henry's new Anglicanism. The Credo concludes with a dramatic "Amen."

The opening motive of the Sanctus is actually a pair of motives: a rising fourth simultaneous with a smooth line that briefly descends, then ascends to a third higher than the initial note. In the concluding Agnus Dei, note the humble falling motive for "miserere nobis" ("have mercy on us"). Each statement of "Agnus Dei" increases in the number of voices, building dramatically, but the final rising line of "dona nobis pacem" ("grant us peace") poignantly recalls the softly spoken but tenaciously held beliefs of a small group of oppressed worshippers in the woods.

1. Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex cælestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili Unigenite, Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis;
qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus,
Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu:
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks
for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

3. Credo

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem, factorem cæli et terræ,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filius Dei Unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum ante omnia sæcula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum,
consubstantialem Patri:
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines
et propter nostram salutem.
descendit de cælis.
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato;
passus et sepultus est,
et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum Scripturas,

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men
and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

et ascendit in cælum,
sedet at dexteram Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria,
judicare vivos et mortuos,
cuius regni non erit finis.
Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
Dominum et vivificantem:
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio
simul adoratur et conglorificatur:
qui locutus est per prophetas.
Et unam, sanctam, catholicam
et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
et vitam venturi sæculi. Amen.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic
and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism
for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

4. Sanctus – Benedictus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

5. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

INTERMISSION



EMERALD CHORAL ACADEMY

The Emerald Choral Academy is a series of interactive webinars where Seattle's leading professional singers teach their personal tricks of the trade to community members. The videos are freely available on YouTube. More information at www.emeraldensemble.org/eca.



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O Absalom (2024)

Gary D. Cannon (born 1975)

The composer writes:

I began composing my setting of the popular Renaissance text, “When David heard that Absalom was slain,” in 2010, intending it for the Renaissance choir, Sine Nomine, which I was directing at the time. I did not complete the work, however, until earlier this year, when I added two brief sections to conjoin my earlier sketches. *O Absalom* is in the form of a prelude and fugue. The fugal writing is intended to convey David’s obsessively repeated phrase: “O my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee.” Periodic hints of quartal harmony (sometimes based on the pitches G–D–C) add color. The introductory material returns at the end, implying that David’s mourning could continue indefinitely.

It has been a pleasure finally completing *O Absalom* for performance this year by the Emerald Ensemble and, next month, by the Cascadian Chorale. The work is dedicated to Carl Ryanen-Grant, my childhood best friend who died of cancer when we were twenty-four. Carl was a remarkable fellow; check him out on Wikipedia.

When David heard that Absalom was slain,
he went up to his chamber, over the gate, and wept, and said:
O Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.

Requiem (1932)

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

We choral folk tend to think that Herbert Howells belongs to us alone, thanks to the vast quantity of liturgical music written for the great Anglican cathedrals, and the brilliant unaccompanied *Requiem*. In the early 1930s, Howells promised a work to the choir at King's College, Cambridge, and the present *Requiem* was the result. Evidence indicates that he completed the work by 1932. However, he never delivered it to King's, for reasons unknown. (One scholar has suggested to me that the intended conductor, Bord Ord, judged the work to be too difficult to perform by any choir of the day.) Then in 1935 came the blow that obsessed Howells for the rest of his life: the sudden death from polio of his nine-year-old son, Michael. The composer set aside this *Requiem* as too personal for public consumption. He revised parts of it into his stunning *Hymnus Paradisi* (1938) for chorus and orchestra, but only released the original unaccompanied work in 1980, when it emerged as one of the great choral masterpieces of the twentieth century. His early efforts with modal Renaissance music are in clear evidence, but this is clearly an Anglican work, with much of the text taken from the English psalms.

The *Requiem* is cast in six unconventional movements, loosely modeled after *A Short Requiem* (1915) by Sir Henry Walford Davies. Both works begin with the prayer "Salvator mundi," in English. Howells begins in D major, but flirts with the minor-sounding Phrygian mode as well. For the supplication "Save us and help us," he divides the singers into double choir for more evocative modal harmonies. Psalm 23 begins with a solo trio, marked "the rhythm to be approximate, for the most part, in speech-values." Though the *Requiem* is generally thought of as a soothing work, there is much drama here. As in the Walford Davies work, there are two settings of the Latin "Requiem aeternam." The first begins with four-part counterpoint unlike any other and continues to double-choir modality for "et lux perpetua" ("and perpetual light"). Psalm 121 features a baritone soloist, and the choir is assigned mixed meters with dramatic underpinnings. The second "Requiem" movement builds to a major climax for "et lux perpetua." The closing movement, "I heard a voice from heaven," takes as its text Revelation 14:13, as God commands St. John to write: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," the same text that concludes Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Over several minutes Howells experiments with the modal structure before finally resting on a soothing D major.

And what about the rest of Howells? He decided when just a boy that he would become a composer. Studies followed with Herbert Brewer, the acclaimed organist at nearby Gloucester Cathedral, and at age twenty Howells entered the Royal College of Music in London. His mentor there was the indomitable Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, who predicted great things for the lad. Howells's research into composers of the Tudor era bore early fruit in an unaccompanied Mass (1912) written for Westminster Cathedral, the seat of English Catholicism. Those musicological pursuits proved the foundation of his compositional language: modality (organizing pitches without using modern major or minor keys). He tinges his modal harmony with chromatic notes outside the key, sometimes inadvertently evoking jazz. He continued to compose chamber music (most notably the string quartet *In Gloucestershire*, which achieved its final form in 1920), orchestral works, and songs (his settings of Walter de la Mare, including *King David* of 1919, are especially fine).

Howells taught for decades at the Royal College of Music. He was dealt a psychological reversal when an audience member heckled his Second Piano Concerto (1925) at its premiere; it took him several years before he composed again on such a large scale. He composed two wonderful cycles for the keyboard, *Lambert's Clavichord* (1927) and *Howells' Clavichord* (1961), which incorporate Renaissance dance forms. During the Second World War, he was interim organist at St. John's College, Cambridge, and he undertook *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* settings for King's College, Cambridge (1945), and for Gloucester Cathedral (1946), which became his calling cards. Dozens of works for the Anglican liturgy followed; it seemed like every major cathedral in England vied for the next commission. Major works such as the *Missa Sabrinensis* (1954) and *Stabat Mater* (1965) began again to flow from his pen, and he remained active as a composer until his death.

1. Salvator mundi

O Saviour of the world,
who by thy Cross and thy precious Blood hast redeemed us,
Save us and help us,
we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.

2. Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me:
thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.
But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

3. Requiem æternam (i)

Requiem æternam dona eis	Eternal rest grant to them
et lux perpetua luceat eis.	and may perpetual light shine on them.
Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.	Eternal rest grant to them, Lord.

4. Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heav'n and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is thy keeper: he is thy defence upon thy right hand;
So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth and for evermore.

5. Requiem æternam (ii)

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine,	Eternal rest grant to them, Lord,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.	and may perpetual light shine on them.
Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine	Eternal rest grant to them, Lord.

6. I heard a voice from heaven

I heard a voice from heav'n, saying unto me, Write,
From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,
Even so saith the Spirit,
For they rest from their labours.

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PERFORMERS



Chad DeMaris
tenor



Christine Friday
mezzo-soprano



Rebekah Gilmore
soprano



Nicholas Gorne
tenor



Ben Harris
bass-baritone



Elizabeth Hungerford
soprano



Natalie Ingrisano
soprano



Eric Angus Jeffords
tenor



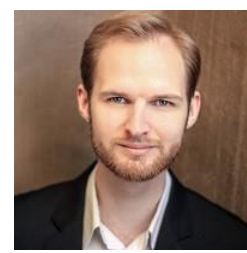
Dustin Kaspar
tenor



Charles Robert Stephens
bass-baritone



Kathryn Weld
mezzo-soprano



Robin Wyatt-Stone
baritone



Kathea Yarnell
mezzo-soprano

Dr. Gary D. Cannon is one of Seattle's most versatile choral personalities, active as conductor, musicologist, singer, and composer. In addition to Emerald Ensemble, he conducts two community choirs—Cascadian Chorale in Bellevue and the Vashon Island Chorale—in repertoire spanning from the medieval to frequent premieres. He has also appeared as guest conductor of Choral Arts Northwest, Kirkland Choral Society, Northwest Mahler Festival, and Vashon Opera. Dr. Cannon gives pre-concert lectures for Seattle Symphony and has provided program notes for choirs across the country. He holds degrees from the University of California at Davis and the University of Washington.



Gary D. Cannon
conductor
