

JAMES WHITBOURN  
THE SEVEN HEAVENS

divine art



COR CANTIAMO  
ERIC A. JOHNSON, CONDUCTOR

JAMES WHITBOURN  
**THE SEVEN HEAVENS**  
AND OTHER CHORAL WORKS

**The Seven Heavens**

1	I. The Moon	4:52
2	II. Mars	4:32
3	III. Mercury	4:21
4	IV. Jupiter	2:56
5	V. Venus	4:48
6	VI. Saturn	5:21
7	VII. The Sun	5:20
8	<b>Ada</b>	6:15
9	<b>Video caelos apertos</b>	4:18
10	<b>The Voices Stilled</b>	5:45
11	<b>Eternal Rest</b>	4:19
12	<b>Gratias agimus tibi</b>	2:11
13	<b>Canticle of Mary</b>	6:28
14	<b>Canticle of Simeon</b>	4:04

**Total playing time:** 65:34

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# THE MUSIC

Notes by the composer

## **The Seven Heavens (2014/2016) Chamber Version**

*The Seven Heavens* is a musical portrait of C. S. Lewis portrayed in the imagery of the mediaeval planets. The work has its genesis in Belfast, where C. S. Lewis was born and the city which he always called home, even though he lived and worked in Oxford for most of his life. *The Seven Heavens* was commissioned by my friends in the Belfast Philharmonic and their conductor Stephen Doughty for a celebratory concert with the Ulster Orchestra. It was for the close of the 2014-2015 concert season which marked the 140th anniversary of the choir's foundation in 1874. The initial scoring was for huge orchestra—fitting for the Ulster Hall—and even made use of the hall's famous and majestic organ. After the magnificent 2015 Belfast première another opportunity arose from conversations with my friend Eric Johnson who was keen to commission a work for his renowned choir Cor Cantiamo. After many conversations, we decided upon a re-working of *The Seven Heavens*, but this time with a chamber ensemble in place of the orchestra. It would be a challenge to bring down the large orchestra to just a few instruments and it would inevitably become a piece with a different sound; it was a prospect that excited us both. In honour of the planetary scheme, I choose seven instruments as my ensemble. In its new chamber version, Cor Cantiamo gave the first performance in November 2016 at the beautiful concert hall in Northern Illinois University.

The Belfast-Illinois axis is a fitting one, since these places—along with Oxford—are the leading centres of C. S. Lewis scholarship. The work itself was composed in Oxford, mostly in the church within St Stephen's House, a building well known to Lewis, who used to visit often.

The narrative told here is the life of C. S. Lewis, and it follows a scheme designed by the Lewis scholar, Michael Ward. He is the author of all the narrative sections printed below. Dr Ward has arranged Lewis's life into chronological episodes each of which relates to the attributes associated with one of the medieval planets – or the 'Seven Heavens'. The cosmological imagery is itself part of the Lewisian portrait, for the Seven Heavens constituted one of the favourite pieces of imagery used by C. S. Lewis. As Michael Ward argues<sup>1</sup>, the imagery became the overarching theme of the seven 'Chronicles of Narnia'. Michael Ward explains the relevance of the imagery in *The Seven Heavens*:

"C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), though best known for his Narnia Chronicles and works of popular theology, was professionally neither a fiction-writer nor a theologian. He was a medieval literary critic and historian who taught English at Magdalen College, Oxford for nearly thirty years and finished his career as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge.

As a medievalist, Lewis had a deep interest in the old view of the cosmos, the pre-Copernican model, in which Earth was central and surrounded by the seven heavens, each heaven with its own planet, and each planet with its peculiar attributes and influences. Lewis described these seven planets as "spiritual symbols of permanent value", which were "especially valuable in our own generation". It is from these seven planets, of course, that we derive the names of the days of the week. Lewis wrote about them from a scholarly point of view in *The Discarded Image*; from a poetic point of view in his long alliterative poem, 'The Planets'; and from a narrative point of view in his Ransom Trilogy. He

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia* (OUP, 2008)

also based the whole of the Chronicles of Narnia on the imagery of the medieval planets, assigning a planet to each book.

In this musical portrait of C.S. Lewis, these seven spiritual symbols become a series of lenses through which to view his life. The seven movements follow the order of the days of the week (beginning on a Monday, finishing on a Sunday) and, with a little overlapping in places, correspond to periods of Lewis's biography."

The sung text of *The Seven Heavens* comprises lines taken mainly from the collection of Orphic hymns (The Hymns of Orpheus), translated into English by Thomas Taylor (1792). With these extracted lines are lines from Shakespeare, Joseph Addison, the psalmist, Thomas Lodge, Saint John, Shelley and C. S. Lewis. In addition to the sung texts, there appears also a set of 'hidden texts,' identified only by a musical reference written into the score. Each of these is taken from the literature of medieval music. Thus, *The Seven Heavens* can be heard by many different ears. The outer layer can be heard without reference to any other. It is, I hope, attractive and is written in a language which the general listener will readily understand. But there are other layers for those who wish to find them.

Within those layers are myriad details and references: from the ship's horn on Belfast Lough in *The Moon* to the Belfast shipyard in *Mars*; the sound of the clock chimes of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the birds of Addison's Walk in *Mercury*; the songs from Magdalen tower on May morning in *Jupiter*, and so on throughout the piece. *The Sun* brings them all together and completes the cycle of fifths that runs through the work, movement by movement, as each plays its part in the music of the spheres. The narrative texts below written by Michael Ward should be read in conjunction with the musical performance.

## [1] The Moon (1898-1914)

### Narrative

Lewis was born in Belfast, second son of Albert and Flora, and baptized by his grandfather, The Revd Thomas Hamilton. Not liking his given names of Clive and Staples, Lewis was known as Jack from an early age. As a youngster and throughout his life, Jack would experience inconsolable longings, which he called "Joy" (hence the title of his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*) and eventually understood as intimations of immortality. His mother died when he was nine years old, and within a few weeks of her death he was sent over the Irish Sea to be educated in England. His first school was run by a sadistic headmaster, Robert Capron, who was later certified insane and died in a lunatic asylum. As his teenage years began, Lewis abandoned the Christian faith in which he had been raised. He experienced an increasing tension between his imaginative and his rational faculties. "The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow rationalism. Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless."

### Sung text

Hear, beauteous queen, diffusing silver light,  
light canoe and drifting through the gloom of Night.<sup>2</sup>  
With stars surrounded, and with circuit wide  
Night's torch extending, through the heavens you ride:

*The Hymns of Orpheus VIII 'To the Moon'*

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<sup>2</sup> Some changes are made to these lines to insert a more Lewisian understanding of the properties of the Moon. 'Light canoe' - Lewis's description of the moon - replaces Taylor's 'Bull-horned'; 'beauteous' replaces 'goddess' and 'drifting' replaces 'wandering'.

Daughter of Jove and sister to the Sun.

Thomas Lodge

Fair lamp of Night, its ornament and friend,  
Who givest to Nature's works their destined end.

*The Hymns of Orpheus VIII 'To the Moon'*

## **[2] Mars (1914-1930)**

### **Narrative**

In 1914 Jack was withdrawn from public school by his father and sent to be tutored privately by a retired headmaster, William Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick, an ultra-logical rationalist, strengthened Jack's philosophical and argumentative side, training him for study at the University of Oxford, where Jack obtained a Triple First in Classics and English. His time as an undergraduate was interrupted by service in the First World War and marred by a growing estrangement from his father, Albert. Jack served as a Second Lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry, arriving in the French trenches on his nineteenth birthday. He was badly wounded in the spring offensive of 1918 and was invalided back to England. He resumed his studies, graduated and began to teach at Oxford. After he was no longer dependent on his father, their relationship improved. Albert died in 1929. The following year, Lewis abandoned his unbelief and became a theist: "I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England . . . The words *compelle intrare*, compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation."

### **Sung text**

Compelling, unconquered, boisterous Mars,  
In darts rejoicing, and in bloody wars.  
Fierce and untamed, whose mighty power can make  
The strongest walls from their foundations shake:  
Stay, furious contests, and avenging strife,  
Whose works with woe, embitter human life;  
Encourage peace, to gentle works inclined,  
And give abundance, with benignant mind.

*The Hymns of Orpheus* LXIV 'To Mars'

Compelle intrare.

Scripture (Luke 14: 23), quoted by Lewis in 'Surprised by Joy'

The hand that made us is divine.

Joseph Addison

### **[3] Mercury (1926-1945)**

#### **Narrative**

In 1926 Jack made the acquaintance of a colleague in the Oxford English faculty whose name was J.R.R. Tolkien. Their friendship would prove to be one of the most momentous of the 20th century; it formed the kernel of that group of writers known as the Inklings. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, was instrumental in guiding Jack from theism to Christianity, and Jack, in turn, would be instrumental in encouraging Tolkien to write *The Lord of the Rings*. In 1931, Tolkien and Lewis, along with a third friend, Hugo Dyson, had a long conversation in Addison's Walk in the grounds of Magdalen College, where Jack was now a Fellow and Tutor.



This conversation led, a few weeks later, to Lewis's Christian conversion, which happened in the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle on the way to Whipsnade Zoo. "They have spoiled Whipsnade since then," Lewis wrote. "Wallaby Wood, with the birds singing overhead, and the bluebells underfoot, and the wallabies hopping all round one, was almost Eden come again." After his conversion, Jack gave up his ambition to be known as a poet (he had already published two volumes of verse and is now memorialized in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey), and began instead to focus on writing prose works in many different genres, including philosophy (*The Abolition of Man*), satire (*The Screwtape Letters*), and science fiction (*The Ransom Trilogy*). This period also saw his emergence as a distinguished literary scholar, with works such as *The Allegory of Love* and *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. He became famous as a broadcaster on the BBC (delivering talks that would later be published as *Mere Christianity*) and as a fearsome debater at the Socratic Club in Oxford.

### **Sung text**

Studious of contests, ruler of mankind,  
With heart almighty, and a prudent mind.  
Celestial messenger, of various skill,  
Whose powerful arts could watchful Argus kill:  
With power endued all language to explain,  
Of care the loosener, and the source of gain.  
Assist my works, conclude my life with peace,  
Give graceful speech, and me memory's increase.

*The Hymns of Orpheus XXVII 'To Mercury'*

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

John 1

#### [4] Jupiter (1939-1956)

##### **Narrative**

Depressed in 1939 at the outbreak of another war, Jack wrote to a friend, "What state of affairs in this world can we view with satisfaction? If we are unhappy, then we are unhappy. If we are happy, then we remember that the crown is not promised without the cross . . . But 'would it were evening, Hal, and all well.' I have even, I'm afraid, caught myself wishing that I had never been born." The quotation from Shakespeare's *Falstaff* is characteristic, for Lewis generally had a Falstaffian *joie de vivre* and enjoyed a sanguine, rather than a melancholic, humour. When teaching about medieval cosmology in his university lectures, he would say, "Those born under Jupiter are apt to be loud-voiced and red-faced." He would then pause and add, "It is obvious under which planet I was born", which always produced a laugh. In the face of so much Saturnine disaster in the 20th century, Lewis wrote: "Of Saturn we know more than enough, but who does not need to be reminded of Jove?" Jove (Jupiter) was "the best planet", symbolically speaking, who brought about "winter passed and guilt forgiven", and was held to be responsible for all things kingly, festive, and truly noble. Lewis's greatest fictional character – Aslan, the lion king of the Narnia Chronicles – illustrates the continuing fruitfulness of his naturally Jovial personality, even in the face of unrelenting Saturnine circumstances.

##### **Sung text**

O Jove much-honoured, Jove supremely great,  
To thee our holy rites we consecrate,  
The earth is thine, and mountains swelling high,  
The sea profound, and all within the sky.  
Even Nature trembles at thy mighty nod,  
Loud-sounding, armed with lightning, thundering God.

Source of abundance, purifying king,  
O various-formed from whom all natures spring;

*The Hymns of Orpheus XIV 'To Jupiter'*

Joy and jubilee.

C. S. Lewis from 'The Planets'

## **[5] Venus (1956-1960)**

### **Narrative**

In 1956, Jack married Joy Davidman, a New York writer. Their marriage was initially only a legal convenience, designed to enable her to go on living in England after her visa expired, and they did not live together as man and wife. Shortly after their secret, civil wedding, Joy fell seriously ill with bone cancer and was expected to die. Faced with this prospect, they regularized their relationship and were married a second time, in a Christian ceremony at Joy's hospital bedside. The priest who married them also prayed for Joy's healing. Miraculously, so they believed, her cancer went into remission and she and Jack had a brief but very happy marriage, during which time they had a belated honeymoon in his native Ireland and fulfilled a life-long wish by visiting Greece. Joy's disease returned after three years and she died in 1960 at the age of 45. This poignant period in Lewis's life is dramatized in the film *Shadowlands*.

### **Sung text**

'Tis thine the world with harmony to join,  
For all things spring from thee, O power divine.  
The circling choirs of mortals, thy delight,  
Or beauteous nymphs, with eyes cerulean bright,  
And beauteous daughters in the chorus join,  
Adonis pure to sing and thee divine;

Come, all-attractive to my prayer inclined,  
For thee, I call, with holy, reverent mind.

*The Hymns of Orpheus* LIV 'To Venus'

Thou wert my morning star among the living.

Shelley

## **[6] Saturn (1960-1963)**

### **Narrative**

Jack wrote about the loss of his wife in *A Grief Observed*. It is a short but devastating journal of bereavement, asking unflinchingly all the hardest and darkest questions. Twice in the book, Lewis refers to Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Lewis did not lose his faith, but neither did he shrink from acknowledging the pains and struggles inherent in mortal life. *A Grief Observed* contains many of the same thoughts and reflections that we find in his earlier "Five Sonnets", with their memorable image of a bee bumping against a window and having to submit to the terror of being wrapped inside a handkerchief in order to be released into the garden. Within a few years of his wife's death, Lewis himself became ill and resigned from his professorial chair. He died at his Oxford home, The Kilns, on Friday 22nd November 1963, the same day (indeed, the same hour) that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. He is buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry. On his gravestone is a line from *King Lear*, "Men must endure their going hence." This text was chosen by Lewis's brother because it had appeared on the family's Shakespeare calendar the day their mother died.

### **Sung text**

Men must endure their going hence.

Shakespeare

Consumed by thee all forms that hourly die,  
By thee restored, their former place supply;  
The world immense in everlasting chains,  
Strong and ineffable thy power contains  
Father of vast eternity, divine,  
O mighty Saturn, various speech is thine:  
The sacred rites benevolent attend,  
And grant a blameless life, a blessed end.

*The Hymns of Orpheus XII 'To Saturn'*

Men must endure their going hence.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Scripture (Matthew 27:46), quoted by Lewis in *Surprised by Joy*

## **[7] The Sun**

### **Narrative**

At the time of his death, Lewis was readying for publication two works, which both appeared posthumously in 1964. One was *The Discarded Image*, his scholarly treatment of the medieval and renaissance view of the cosmos, whose structure and traditional associations we have relied upon so extensively in this musical portrait. The other was *Letters to Malcolm*, a book about prayer, in which Lewis wrote of his hope for resurrection:

"My hope is that we shall return and re-assume the wealth we laid down. Then the new earth and sky, the same yet not the same as these, will rise in us as we have risen in Christ. And once again, after who knows what aeons of the silence and the dark, the birds will sing out and the waters flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be. For we know that we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

This final movement begins and concludes with the motto of the University of Oxford, which is taken from Psalm 27: "Dominus illuminatio mea" (The Lord is my light).

**Sung text**

Dominus illuminatio mea

Psalm 27

Lord of the seasons, with thy fiery car  
And leaping coursers, beaming light from far:  
Agile and vigorous, venerable Sun,  
Fiery and bright around the heavens you run.  
With various founding, golden lyre, 'tis mine  
To fill the world with harmony divine.

*The Hymns of Orpheus VII 'To the Sun'*

Dominus illuminatio mea

Amen.

## [8] Ada (2015)

*Ada* is another musical portrait and was composed in 2015 in response to a commission from the 5th Earl of Lytton, a descendant of Ada Lovelace. Ada Lovelace, born 10th December 1815, was the only legitimate child of the poet Lord Byron. Born Ada Byron, Lovelace was a mathematician who has become known as a computer programming pioneer. In her work with Charles Babbage, she recognised possibilities of his Analytical Engine beyond pure calculations. Her collection of letters and personal papers is housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Ada's daughter, Lady Blunt, owned an important Stradivarius violin (still known as the 'Lady Blunt'). More importantly, Ada Lovelace herself was a keen musician and in her letters she talks of her voice lessons and harp lessons. She was also known to play the piano. In her letters, she frequently refers to herself as 'The Little Bird' and she speaks of the relationship between science and music.

These connections defined the instrumentation, and I decided to characterise her name, Ada, as 'the little bird' in a rising motif which uses sequences of musical pitches derived from the letters of her birth name: A-D-A and, later, A-ADA-B (Augusta Ada Byron). The sequence of notes A-D-A is heard in the piece thirty-six times, one for each year of her life.

The text is taken from a very long and famous poem by Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* published within a few years of Ada's birth (although he never saw her again after he had left England when Ada was four months old) and in which his daughter is named. This is the poem from which Berlioz took inspiration for his *Harold in Italy*. It also has inspired many other cultural references. The lyrical style of *Ada* reflects the subject's yearning to understand life not only through mathematics but also through poetry. Ada Lovelace, at her request, was buried next to her father.

Text: Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!  
ADA! sole daughter of my house and heart?  
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,  
And then we parted, -- not as now we part,  
But with a hope. --

*Canto III, stanza I*

Since my young days of passion -- joy, or pain,  
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,  
And both may jar: it may be, that in vain  
I would essay as I have sung to sing.

*Canto III, stanza IV*

My daughter! [with thy name this song begun --]<sup>3</sup>  
My daughter! [with thy name thus much shall end --]  
I see thee not, -- I hear thee not, -- but none  
Can be so wrapt in thee: thou art the friend  
To whom the shadows of far years extend:  
Albeit my brow thou never should'st behold,  
My voice shall with thy future visions blend  
And reach into thy heart, -- when mine is cold, --  
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

*Canto III, stanza CXV*

## **[9] Video caelos apertos (2014)**

Commissioned for the singers of Medina High School, Ohio, to mark their visit to St Stephen's House, Oxford, in 2014, *Video caelos apertos* makes reference to

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<sup>3</sup> Words in square brackets are not set.



the college's two principal dedicatees: St Stephen, after whom the college is named and St John, to whom the college's large church is dedicated. The music is reflective of the church's architectural style, being built to a medieval revival design by the renowned architect G. F. Bodley. Thus the music makes use of the mensural devices beloved of medieval composers.

*Text:* Video caelos apertos et Filium hominis a dextris stantem Dei

Acts 7, 55

Amen Alleluia

Revelation 19, 4

Dignus es Domine et Deus noster accipere;  
Gloriam et honorem et virtutem

Revelation 4, 11

### **[10] The Voices Stilled (2013)**

Although the piece appears to be simply a setting of the Agnus Dei from the *Missa de profundis*, it is named 'The Voices Stilled' in honour of the purpose of the commission. Commissioned for the Shipley Arts Festival it was dedicated to those who lost their lives in war. First performed in Lancing College Chapel on Sunday 14th July, by the Williamson Voices of Westminster Choir College, Princeton under my direction, the work was originally scored for small chamber orchestra. It was specially re-scored for single instruments for this recording by Cor Cantiamo. The viola part at one point plays the music of 'The Last Post', a recognisable military reference heard annually in the UK at remembrance services and other memorial occasions.

*Text:* Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi:  
dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi:  
dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi:  
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

### **[11] Eternal Rest (2002/2017)**

This music was written originally as an orchestral piece and was commissioned by the BBC to be used in their broadcast coverage of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 2002. I conducted the BBC Philharmonic in the recording of the original version which then accompanied a beautiful visual graphic of a rotating rose, with each petal reflecting an image from the life of Queen Elizabeth. The piece incorporates a substantial section of a melody composed by Thomas Arne for the words of the Eighteenth century Scottish playwright James Thomson 'When Britain first, at Heaven's command' (Rule Britannia), a melody that has also been incorporated into works by Beethoven, Wagner, Johann Strauss and Elgar. There is also a clear reference in the music (though not an exact quotation) to Handel's coronation anthem 'Zadok the Priest' heard at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth and her husband King George VI.

I later re-worked the piece as an anthem for choir and organ using the text from the Requiem Mass. For this recording, I made a new arrangement which brought the two versions together by drawing upon the original orchestral parts in creating a scoring for choir and instrumental ensemble.

*Text:* Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And light perpetual shine upon them.

## **[12] Gratias agimus tibi (2015)**

*Gratias agimus tibi* is the college grace of St Stephen's House, Oxford, and is sung in this setting before all major college feasts. The words are by Nigel Palmer. Like *Video caelos apertos*, it reflects the medieval revival nature of the college buildings and uses an isorhythm for the opening section of the piece.

*Text:* Gratias agimus tibi, Domine Jesu Christe, qui propter salutem nostram gaudium tua magna misericordia nobis dedisti. Da nobis gratiam ut non modo huius mundi res consideramur sed quoque cum Sancto Stephano patrono nostro semper conspiciamur caelos apertos et gloriosi corporis tui visionem, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. Amen

*Translation:* We give you thanks, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the good things which You have in Your great mercy given us for our health and delight. Give us grace that we may not only look to the things of this world but also, with Saint Stephen our patron, we may always see the heavens open, and the vision of your glorious body, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen

## **[13] [14] The Canticles of Mary and Simeon (2011)**

When asked by the RSCM Millennium Youth Choir to write a new setting of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer Evening Canticles for them to sing in York Minster, I decided to look at the origins of the text, both from a historical literary point of view and also from the viewpoint of the two individuals to whom these poems are attributed. Both individuals are devout Jews: one a young woman and the other an old man. Both were born and died as Jews and lived in a world in which the Hebrew Scriptures were a source of divine knowledge.

In forming the poetic response to moments of revelation given to Mary and Simeon, the gospel writer had numerous Old Testament sources to draw on, and the Song of Mary in particular bears a striking resemblance to the Cantic of Hannah, found in 1 Samuel, 2. The Cantic of Simeon does not have a single clear Old Testament counterpart, but its verses comprise a collection of thoughts with clear allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the Books of Isaiah.

With this background in mind, I decided to make the new setting of the Canticles of Mary and Simeon with their Jewish heritage to the fore, and I have introduced into the musical setting some of the contours of Jewish melody. Whilst there is no particular reference or quotation, the tonality and general shape of Jewish melody can be heard. I have also introduced the rich sonority of a viola, a stringed instrument with the capacity to project both deep, expressive passages and also ecstatic, high, brilliant writing. Both the revelatory experiences of Mary and Simeon represent a strange combination of ecstasy and introspection as each realises the extent to which their life will change (in Simeon's case, to finality) as a result of each revelation.

*Texts:* My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden: For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name. And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations. He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel: As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever. Glory be to the Father, and to the

Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.



# THE COMPOSER

**James Whitbourn** is a GRAMMY-nominated composer described by *The Observer* as 'a truly original communicator in modern British choral music'. After graduating from Magdalen College Oxford, he started his career in broadcasting, composing many works for the BBC. His works are admired for their direct connection with performers and audiences. Through his imaginative treatment of voices and instruments he manages to 'expand the experience of classical music beyond the edges of the traditional map of classical styles' (NPR). *Annelies*, the setting of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, is among the most performed large-scale choral works of the twenty-first century. Other scores reflect his eclectic interests, from a planetary portrait of C. S. Lewis (*The Seven Heavens*) to a portrayal of Ada Lovelace, a Carnatic-influenced work for dance (*Luminosity*) and a narrative work on the NASA Apollo missions. He has written for several national occasions, including D-Day and the Queen Mother's funeral.

There are six complete album recordings of his choral music. Among the other renowned ensembles who have recorded his music are the choirs of King's College, Cambridge, Magdalen College, Oxford, Clare College, Cambridge, Wells Cathedral, the Princeton-based choir Westminster Williamson Voices and the Oxford-based Commotio.

James Whitbourn is also an award-winning conductor who, as a member of Oxford University's music faculty, directs the university's choral summer courses.

# THE PERFORMERS

**Cor Cantiamo** is a professional chamber choir whose creative programming and artistry weave contemporary music with choral masterworks to present concerts designed to inspire and engage audiences. This ensemble-in-residence at Northern Illinois University School of Music has achieved critical acclaim and recognition for their musicality, impassioned performances, and versatility. Since their inaugural concert with Morten Lauridsen in 2010, Cor Cantiamo has focused their mission on collaborations with contemporary composers, educational outreach, and recording projects. The result of their efforts includes multiple commercially released recordings and the commissioning of projects with internationally acclaimed composers of our time including Dominick DiOrio, Libby Larsen, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, Cecilia McDowall, Timothy C. Takach, and James Whitbourn.

Distinguished recognition for this ensemble's artistic output is highlighted by multiple foundation grants awarded to Cor Cantiamo from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Illinois Arts Council, The Wurlitzer Foundation, and many community foundations.

Their touring schedule regularly includes appearances on community concert series, college and university campuses, and professional conferences. Cor Cantiamo has performed at multiple American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) division and state conferences. In 2020 Cor Cantiamo has the singular honor of being invited to premiere the ACDA Raymond Brock Commission competition winner for the Central/North Central Division Convention. The ensemble also reaches thousands of classical music patrons through annual concerts that are broadcast on Northern Public Radio's "Encore!" program (WNIU 90.5 FM).

Cor Cantiamo's educational outreach programs, including the Masterworks Project and All-State Audition Clinic, annually reach hundreds of high school choral musicians. These educational outreach programs empower the students to reach for their highest musical goals. Through rehearsals with professional musicians, master classes, and combined performances of choral orchestral masterworks, the high school students learn to work on their craft and discover how performing choral music can be a lifelong journey.

**Eric A. Johnson, D.M.A.** is the founding Artistic Director of Cor Cantiamo and Director of Choral Activities at Northern Illinois University (NIU). As a recent National Endowment for the Arts Artworks grant recipient, he has been recognized for his artistic leadership, whose ensembles represent "choral artistry at its finest." (Morten Lauridsen). He is a committed champion of contemporary choral music and dedicated to addressing social justice issues through interdisciplinary concert events. Ensembles under his direction have performed at multiple national and division conventions for the National Collegiate Choral Organization, American Choral Directors Association and the Music Educators National Conference. He has served as a guest conductor at Avery Fisher Hall and the David Geffen Hall; Lincoln Center, toured internationally and prepared choruses for collaborations with professional orchestras.

Internationally, Johnson has served as a guest conductor of the Clare College Chapel Choir (Cambridge, England) and the Asian Pacific Activities Conference Choral Festival (Guangzhou, China); taught at Makumira University (Arusha, Tanzania); the Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (Natal, Brazil); and directed guest choral residencies at Canterbury and Worcester Cathedrals. As the Artistic Director of Cor Cantiamo, Johnson has produced commercial recordings released on Centaur Records and the Divine Art record labels. He has



collaborated with many leading composers of our time including Dominick DiOrio, Stacey Gibbs, Libby Larsen, Morten Lauridsen, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, Timothy C. Takach, Sir John Tavener, and James Whitbourn. Johnson has published music with Santa Barbara Music Publishing, served as a music editor for Earthsongs Publications and has published articles in the Choral Journal. He is active nationally as a clinician and guest conductor for high school and collegiate honor choirs and regularly conducts choral/orchestral masterworks works with both collegiate and professional ensembles.



ERIC A. JOHNSON

# COR CANTIAMO ON DIVINE ART:



## **PSALLITE**

Music old and new based on psalms

### **Divine Art DDA 25133**

A co-production with Soli Deo Gloria  
(SDG Music Foundation)

“This is a rather wonderful album... rich... powerful... there’s much to appreciate” – *The Chronicle/Review Corner*

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Ily Matthew Maniano: Doxologia

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck: Chantez à Dieu

Gavin Bryars: Psalm 141

Stephen Foster; arr. Craig Hella Johnson: Hard Times

Traditional; arr. Carol Barnett: By and By

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina: Exultate Deo

Eriks Ešēvalds: Psalm 67

Galina Grigorieva: Bless the Lord, O my Soul

Peter Bannister: Psalm 96

Daniel Kellogg: Preserve Me, O God

Traditional; arr. Moses Hogan: Didn’t my Lord deliver Daniel?

Traditional; arr. William Appling: We Shall Walk through the Valley in Peace

Recorded at Boutell Memorial Concert Hall, Northern Illinois University on May 26-29, 2017

Recording Engineers: Simon Kiln, Dan Nichols

Mixing and Mastering: Simon Kiln

Producer: Donald Fraser

Cover design: Sophia Varcados

Program notes: James Whitbourn

Photos of Cor Cantiamo and Eric Johnson by Janderson Photography

Photo of James Whitbourn by Gerard Lynch

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JAMES WHITBOURN