



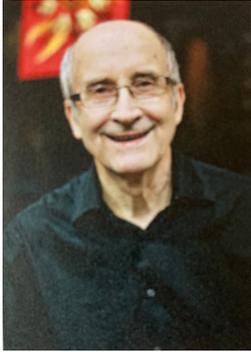
NANTWICH
singers

Music for

INNER PEACE



Choral gems by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Tallis, Gibbons, Gorecki and Stopford



Tony Metcalfe

For 25 years (1989-2014), Tony Metcalfe was director of the Nantwich Singers (formerly the Tudor Consort). It would be impossible adequately to summarise his contribution to the musical life of St Mary's and Nantwich generally. He was inspirational as a director, his knowledge and experience were impressively wide-ranging, his musical ear frighteningly acute, his sight-reading ability at the piano phenomenal, his imagination in regard to programming unmatched, and his wit sharp but never cruel. He was ever the soul of courtesy, and criticism of others seemed to be anathema to him. But somehow you'd be made aware of shortcomings, in the politest possible terms. It was a joy and a privilege to sing under his direction, as any present or past member of the Nantwich Singers will affirm. The earlier name of the choir quickly came to suggest too narrow a focus, as Tony always looked to every century to delve into possibilities for exploration and enjoyment. He took the Singers to Coventry, Lichfield, Ripon, Hereford, Derby, Manchester and Chester Cathedrals to sing the services, and to a range of venues for concerts around Cheshire - and even to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2009. Tony's fresh and ever inquisitive approach to programming led to some interesting combinations: on the 25th anniversary of his directorship he was asked to nominate his favourite choral works for inclusion in a celebratory concert. Finding himself unable to choose between the Masses of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Zoltan Kodaly, he decided on the original plan of interleaving movements because, as he said, "they go surprisingly well together"! It would be an insurmountable task to attempt to quantify the effect Tony has had on the musical life of innumerable people, young and old, throughout Cheshire and far beyond. He shall be remembered with gratitude and respect.

Music for Inner Peace

*This programme is dedicated to the memory of Tony Metcalfe,
with love and gratitude*

<i>Even when he is silent</i>	Kim André Arnesen
<i>O vos omnes</i>	Pablo Casals
<i>Locus iste</i>	Anton Bruckner
<i>O Nata Lux</i>	Philip J Stopford
<i>Hear my cry, O God</i>	Alison Hendricken
<i>O sacrum convivium</i>	Thomas Tallis
<i>Exsultate Deo</i>	Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
<i>Rest</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams
<i>Totus tuus</i>	Henrik Górecki
<i>O salutaris Hostia</i>	Giacomo Rossini
<i>Lux Aeterna</i>	Edward Elgar (arr. John Cameron)
<i>Hosanna to the Son of David</i>	Orlando Gibbons
<i>Good Night, Dear Heart</i>	Dan Forrest

Music for Inner Peace

From the Treasure Chest of music for “inner peace” we have drawn religious and secular sources from the 16th to the 21st century, wandering through themes of meditation, supplication, praise, sleep, death and the affirmation of life *in extremis*.

The earliest work, *O sacrum convivium* by Thomas Tallis, is full of joyful hope, revelling in the “*pledge of the glory to come*”. The most recent, *Hear my cry, O God*, is the première of a work by Alison Hendricken, in mood as far as it could be from the Tallis, excepting the shared foundation of faith. Not all are explicitly Christian; Vaughan Williams’s *Rest* sets a wonderful poem by Christina Rossetti which focuses on sleep - or is it death? - as a healing restorative. In terms of musical style, the Treasure Chest selection embraces elaborate polyphony, 21st century minimalism, and 19th century romantic operatic. We finish with Dan Forrest’s poignant *Good Night Dear Heart*, which is especially dedicated to Tony Metcalfe.

Most of these pieces are anthems or motets (a piece of music in several parts with words) and it is impossible not to enjoy the late 13th century theorist Johannes de Grocheo's pronouncement that the motet was “*not to be celebrated in the presence of common people, because they do not notice its subtlety, nor are they delighted in hearing it, but in the presence of the educated and of those who are seeking out subtleties in the arts*” (Margaret Bent). We have no fear that our audience will fail to notice and delight in the music.

Even when he is silent

Kim André Arnesen (b.1980)

*I believe in the sun even when it's not shining.
I believe in love even when I feel it not.
I believe in God even when He is silent.*

Anonymous: Germany after the 2nd World War.

Kim André Arnesen is a young Norwegian composer who specialises in choral music. This starkly beautiful and haunting work is both uncompromisingly direct and at the same time gloriously captures an essential facet of humanity's irrepressible will to embrace hope in seemingly impenetrable darkness. It feels like a transparent framework within which the devastatingly simple text resonates with incandescent faith. The context of the text's origin is specific, but the clarion call to life and hope is universal and echoes across generations and history. *"This is a work about hope in the darkest time of life. The text was written by a Jew hiding in Cologne, Germany, during World War 2, where the text was found scratched on to a wall."* (Arnesen)

O Vos Omnes

Pablo Casals (1876-1973)

*O vos omnes, qui transitis per viam.
Attendite si est dolor sicut dolor meus.
O vos omnes qui transitis per viam.*

*O ye people that are passing by me and see me,
Behold and see, and consider if there can be any sorrow as mine.
O yes people, is it nothing to you?*

Antiphon at 3rd Nocturne for Holy Saturday.
Trans: Kenneth Sterne

King James's Bible version:

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. (Lamentations 1:12)

Pablo Casals is much better known as a wonderful 'cellist, (*"the greatest man who ever drew a bow"*, according to Fritz Kreisler) but here he has composed an emotionally intense *a cappella* setting of the familiar words from *Lamentations*. It was composed in 1932 during the Spanish Civil War, and is dedicated to the Benedictine Monastery at Monserrat in Catalonia. Many "religious" were murdered during the war, including 22 brothers from the Abbey. Casals was born in Catalonia and his father encouraged him and his brother to learn music - maybe 'encouraged' is something of a euphemism, but it clearly didn't put him off. He learned piano, violin and flute, later turning to 'cello at age 11, having been inspired by a group of travelling musicians.

O Sacrum Convivium

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

*O sacrum convivium, In quo Christus sumitur:
Recolitur memoria passionis eius:
Mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.*

*How holy this feast in which Christ is our food;
His passion is recalled; grace fills our hearts;
And we receive a pledge of the glory to come.*

Vespers antiphon to the Magnificat. Attrib. St Thomas Aquinas.

When Thomas Tallis died, William Byrd, a former pupil and colleague, composed a song to mourn his passing which ends with the line “*Tallis is dead, and music dies.*” Fortunately for posterity this proved to be a gesture of heartfelt grief rather than a prediction of the future of English music, but it illustrates the importance of Tallis’s influence both in his lifetime and far beyond, even allowing for the florid expression characteristic of the time. Tallis lived and worked through the reigns of four monarchs, successfully navigating the perilous political and religious waters of the time, equally able to write settings for Roman Catholic or Anglican services. His range was considerable, encompassing everything from intimate, 4-voice anthems to the glorious 40-part *Spem in Allium*.

The lively polyphony in *O Sacrum Convivium* is certain to raise the spirits. Close imitation between parts highlights the text at key moments, but is also a characteristic of instrumental music of the time, and it has been suggested that the work may have begun life as an instrumental rather than choral work. But then, much of the music of this era is equally appropriate for instruments or voices.

O Salutaris Hostia

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

*O salutaris Hostia, que caeli pandis ostium,
Bella premunt hostilia, da robur, fer auxilium.*

*Lord, who for us was sacrificed, Thou opened heaven’s portals wide;
Guard us now from our foes, O Christ, thy strength and saving help provide.*

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Trans: John Rutter

Rossini is widely celebrated as a composer of dramatic and comic opera, but he did also compose some sacred music, such as the *Petite Messe Solennelle*, which includes a setting of this text. This setting, however, is a

stand-alone anthem. In character it reflects the theatricality of Rossini's style, with sweeping dynamic and dramatic gestures carrying us from hushed anticipation to rapturous delight within a miniature setting.

O Nata Lux

Philip W J Stopford (B.1977)

*O Nata Lux de lumine, Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare clemens supplicum laudes precesque sumere
Qui carne quondam contegi dignare natus est pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici tui beati corporis.*

*O light born of light, Jesus, redeemer of the world,
With loving kindness deign to receive suppliant praise and prayer.
Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh for the sake of the lost,
Grant us to be members of thy blessed body.*

Anon.

Commissioned by the Hood River Valley High School Chamber Singers 2015.

This beautiful motet begins as an embodiment of calm contemplation, progressing steadily through the text with a subtle simplicity of melody and harmony and understated expressiveness. The verse is repeated; but the doubling of parts underpinned by a sonorous *ostinato* bass line enriches and intensifies the texture and expression.

Philip Stopford has said that in choral works it is the words which are always the starting point, and that simplicity is key. Clearly he has mastered the art of manipulating 'simplicity' to achieve powerful expressive effect.

The anthem certainly exhibits some characteristic features of Philip Stopford's style: harmonic and melodic structures which appear to be simple but seldom are, and subtle and understated but nonetheless powerful expressiveness.

Stopford is an organist, choir master and composer and was Assistant Organist at Chester cathedral for two years before becoming the youngest Director of Music at St Anne's cathedral in Belfast, where he worked until 2010. Stopford has also worked in the USA but now works freelance in this country. The Nantwich Singers enjoyed a wonderful *Come and Sing* day with him recently.

Totus Tuus

Henryk Górecki (1933-2010)

*Totus tuus sum, Maria,
Mater nostri Redemptoris,
Virgo Dei, Virgo pia,
Totus tuus sum, Maria!*

I am totally yours, Maria,

*Mother of our Redeemer,
Maiden of God, Pure Maiden,
I am totally yours, Maria.*

Maria Bogusławska (1868-1929)

This is surely music as meditation, comparable to saying a rosary or chanting a psalm. The music is minimalist and therefore built upon repetition; indeed, the term 'Holy Minimalism' has been applied to the music of Górecki and to other composers such as Arvo Pärt and John Tavener who work with religious texts. Repetition manipulated like this, with waves of increasing and decreasing intensity, can induce a state of heightened focus as distractions melt away.

It is interesting that throughout the final section the *ostinato* bass line is not the tonic which we would expect it to be, grounding the whole with deep resonance. Instead the basses sing the third note of the inferred key, and the effect is subtle but powerful; it seems to float, as if set loose from earthly ties. John Cage, writing of minimalism, said, "*In Zen they say, if something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, 16, 32 and so on. Eventually one discovers it's not boring, but very interesting.*"

Hosanna to the Son of David

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

*Hosanna to the Son of David.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Blessed be the King of Israel.
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest places.
Hosanna in the highest heavens.*

From Matthew 21:9 and Luke 19:38

Orlando Gibbons's career was successful, even illustrious, by any standards, although his life was cut tragically short. He was active during the reign of James I and died suddenly a matter of weeks into the reign of Charles I. He was born in Oxford, lived in Cambridge and moved to London, where he was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, junior chapel organist, and later organist at Westminster Abbey. He came from a musical family, with father and brothers all working in the profession, also his son Christopher, who in turn became the teacher of Henry Purcell (for those who enjoy tracing the lineage of composers).

He was considered the foremost keyboard player of his time as well as being a singer. He wrote primarily sacred music although he also ventured in the secular, as in his celebrated madrigal "*The Silver Swan*".

He always set texts in English, never Latin, and he preferred to pay attention to the sense of the whole phrase rather than individual words. As Jeremy Summerly says, "*Gibbons's unique genius lay in telling a story to musical accompaniment.*"

In this exuberant anthem there is lots of joyous imitation among parts in playful polyphony. Imitation, mirroring, canon - a slightly riotous choir of angels only just holding it together?

There are about 30 known editions of this, showing its great popularity over the years. Naturally none agrees with any other.

Hear my cry, O God

Alison Hendricken

Hear my cry, O God, hear my cry.

Listen to my prayer, O God.

From the ends of the earth I call to you as my heart grows faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

You have been my refuge, A strong tower against the foe.

I long to take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

For you God have heard my vows.

So I will ever sing in praise of your name, O God.

God, hear my cry.

Psalm 61

We are thrilled to be including a new work by our very own resident composer Alison Hendricken.

This contemporary setting of Psalm 62 begins in A minor and ends more or less in F major although not decisively, suggesting a continuing journey of hope in the face of life's trials. The subtle use of syncopated rhythms combined with the rocking, undulating piano accompaniment creates a mood of relentless urgency. This is not a sitting back and putting in a polite request - it is a demand, and a determination to push onward, supported and encouraged by faith.

Alison is a pianist, singer and composer who lives in Betley, Staffordshire.

Locus Iste

Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

*Locus iste a Deo factus est, inestimabile sacramentum,
Irreprehensibilis est.*

This is God's house, a temple he has made,

A temple God the Lord has made.

O holy covenant beyond all telling, worthy of his glorious Name.

Gradual at Mass for the dedication of a church.

Trans:John Rutter

Bruckner composed this motet in a single day in 1869, its focus a single, blazing idea of the holiness of place. It was written for the dedication ceremony of the Votivkapelle, the first section completed of the new cathedral in Linz, where Bruckner had previously been organist. But the place may be anywhere, biblical references or none.

Opening in stained-glass-window C major purity, it seems to summon the shade of Mozart. The structure is a clear ABA (opening idea, new idea, return of opening idea), apparently simple but gorgeously direct. The middle section introduces a rising bass figure growing to *fortissimo* and imitated by the sopranos, then the tenors, *pianissimo*, introduce a chromatically falling figure in complete counterbalance, leading to the return of the first theme and a gently swelling then fading cadence.

Rest

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

*O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hush'd in and curtain'd with a blessèd dearth
Of all that irk'd her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.*

Christina Rosetti (1830-1894)

Vaughan Williams's setting of Rosetti's beautiful poem employs exquisite and subtle phrase and word painting, capturing perfectly the ebb and flow as if of breath, and pointing up individual words and phrases. For example, "harsh laughter" is given a jolting discord, and *crescendos* rise and fall away almost immediately creating a sense of hushed awe, most poignantly on "*With stillness that is almost Paradise*".

The poem is entitled *Rest*, but the imagery also evokes a more permanent rest than simply sleep. Arguably, it could equally be concerned with refreshment after sleep, or waking to Paradise after death (or indeed both). The wonderful imagery of being closed around with earth and darkness and

silence and a “*blessed dearth of all that irk’d her*” is most telling. Perhaps here Rosetti is quietly referencing her own experience of the ill-health which she suffered throughout her life. According to Carol Rumens (2021) “*she understands what it is to be tired and worn, and knows the sheer sweet pleasure of turning in for a night’s kip.*”

Exsultate Deo

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

*Exsultate Deo adjutori nostro;
jubilate Deo Jacob.
Sumite psalmum, et date tympanum;
psalterium jucundum cum cithara.
Buccinate in neomenia tuba,
in insigni die solemnitatis vestrae.*

*Come rejoice and sing ye unto God our helper:
Sing unto the God of Jacob.
Praise him with singing, praise God with pipe and drum:
With lute and merry harp in tuneful accord.
Sound his praise in the new moon with loud trumpet:
Upon your feast day and at the time appointed.
Psalm 81:1-4.*

Ed: Anthony Greening

In the Piazza outside the Duomo in Palestrina there is a statue with the designation: “*Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Principe della Musica*”. This is his native town although he spent most of his life in Rome at St Peter’s. His influence was considerable, suggesting that the claim on the statue is more than an expression of local civic pride. His development of polyphony was influential such that later composers not only emulated his style but even saw it as providing ‘rules’ for good composition (Johann Joseph Fux compiled a manual, which was later endorsed by J S Bach). Palestrina was important in his native country also because he was the first Italian to publish a book of masses (the major influences of the time previously coming chiefly from the Netherlands).

This joyful motet exhibits all of Palestrina’s skill in polyphony and in capturing mood and meaning through deft phrasing and the sometimes playful and always joyous highlighting of key words and moments.

In different outbreaks of plague Palestrina lost his wife and two of his sons, after which for a time he considered entering the priesthood. Luckily for music, he decided instead to marry a rich widow who could support his work.

Mendelssohn was a great fan, as had been Bach.

Lux Aeterna

Edward Elgar (1867-1934) (arr. John Cameron)

*Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine, cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.*

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Let eternal light shine upon them, Lord, with your saints forever,
for you are merciful.*

Grant them eternal rest, Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Requiem Mass

The wonderfully familiar “Nimrod” variation from the *Enigma Variations* is given a choral setting here by John Cameron, who is better known as a composer and arranger of film, television and popular music. This movement from Elgar’s beloved work lends itself beautifully to these words of prayerful peace, and Cameron’s arrangement skilfully manipulates the voice parts to create a richness of texture to match that of the original orchestral setting.

Good Night, Dear Heart

Dan Forrest (b.1978)

Warm summer sun,

Shine kindly here,

Warm southern wind,

Blow softly here.

Green sod above,

Lie light, lie light.

Good night, dear heart,

Good night, good night.

Mark Twain (1835-1910) (adapted from Robert Richardson’s poem “Annette”.)

The designation at the top of the score is *semplice, molto espressivo* (simple, very expressive). This beautifully shaped miniature embodies layers of poignant history, distilled in an exquisitely gentle and heartfelt farewell. *The Nantwich Singers* dedicates this final item as a special tribute to Tony Metcalfe.

Dan Forrest is an American composer, pianist and teacher.

Programme notes © Rachel Duerden 2026

The Nantwich Singers
Musical Director: Susan Marrs

Soprano

Barbara Arch
Lyn Bright
Jackie Dixon
Annabel Nielsen
Emma Pemberton
Katy Robinson
Kathryn Skerratt

Alto

Jan Campbell
Rachel Duerden
Rebecca Grout
Alison Hendricken
Rachael Parkinson
Marjorie Seddon

Tenor

Michael Booth
Andy Coleman
William Hall
Liam Tyler-Murphy

Bass

Duncan Brown
David Burrowes
Quentin Duerden
David Guest
Cameron Paterson

SUSAN MARRS
LTCL FTCL

Susan is a Graduate and Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, and has worked extensively as a professional Mezzo-Soprano soloist.

During 15 years with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and as a long-standing member of London Voices, Susan has enjoyed singing in concert halls all over the world – including venues in Berlin, Lucerne, Paris, New York, Shanghai and Beijing. She has also sung for English National Opera.

Susan is currently Musical Director of 3 choirs - Nantwich Ladies Choir, Just Sing! Community Choir, Bunbury, and The Nantwich Singers. Susan has taught singing and vocal technique, from basic to advanced level, for 35 years and occasionally organises and leads vocal masterclasses.

Sue also enjoys working as an adjudicator at various music festivals in the UK.

New Singers - Join us!

We are always pleased to hear from singers of any voice parts who are interested in joining us. It is important to have some experience of singing choral music and to be a reasonably good sight reader. Commitment to a challenging and wide-ranging repertoire is essential. We rehearse every Tuesday during term time between 7.15 and 9pm at St Mary's Church, Nantwich. For a short, informal audition with our Musical Director, please contact us via our website www.thenantwichsingers.org.

Forthcoming events:

Folksongs and Fancies

Sunday 28th June 3pm, St Alban's, Tattenhall CW3 9QE

Thursday 2nd July 1230pm, St Mary's, Nantwich CW5 5RQ

Nantwich Singers in the Garden

Sunday 12th July 3pm, for Peeps-HIE at Coole Barns, CW5 8AU

Come and Sing with Amy Bebbington

Saturday 17th October 12pm-69m St Mary's, Nantwich CW5 5RQ

Christmas with the Nantwich Singers

Sunday 13th December 3pm, St Mary's Nantwich CW5 5RQ

Sound and video recording by the audience is prohibited.

Thank you.