



ST GILES' CATHEDRAL CHOIR

CANADA & USA
JULY 2009



St Giles' Cathedral Choir

Michael Harris

Organist and Master of the Music

Peter Backhouse

Assistant Organist

Sopranos

Fiona Cantlay

Alison Cook

Rachael Dixon

Lorraine Fraser

Emily Gribbin

Dorothea Harris

Helen Heatlie

Ann Heavens

Anne Hood

Caroline Hood

Claire Taylor

Carine Tinney

Altos

Dala Aavik

Amanda Forsyth

Elizabeth King

Marjory Lobban

Bridget Taylor

Tori Graham

Tenors

George McNeil

David Rhodes

William Taylor

Mike Towers

Basses

Duncan Baddon

Martin Crapper

Hugh Hillyard-Parker

Frank Lucas

Iain McGregor

Tour Itinerary

Tuesday 7 July 7.30pm

Christ's Church Cathedral

Hamilton, Ontario

Wednesday 8 July 7.30pm

Knox Presbyterian Church

St Catharines, Ontario

Friday 10 July 7.30pm

St Paul's Cathedral

Buffalo NY

Saturday 11 July 7.30pm

St George's Cathedral

Kingston, Ontario

Sunday 12 July 10am

St George's Cathedral

Kingston

Monday 13 July

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Toronto



Concert Programme

William Byrd (c1539 – 1623)	Sing joyfully
Thomas Tallis (c1505 – 1585)	O nata lux
Thomas Tallis	O sacrum convivium
Orlando Gibbons (1583 – 1625)	Lift up your heads

Organ Solo

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)	Jauchzet dem Herrn
Herbert Howells (1892 – 1983)	Like as the hart
Felix Mendelssohn	Hear my prayer
	Soprano Solo: Carine Tinney

Interval

Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)	Rejoice in the Lamb
	Soprano Solo: Caroline Hood
	Alto Solo: Marjory Lobban
	Tenor Solo: Michael Towers
	Bass Solo: Hugh Hillyard-Parker

Organ Solo

Sally Beamish (b.1956)	God of the moon
Herrick Bunney (1915 – 1997)	Psalm 121
C.H.H.Parry (1848 – 1918)	I was glad

Sunday 12 July St George's Cathedral, Kingston Sung Eucharist

Francis Jackson	Communion Service in G
Thomas Tallis	O sacrum convivium
Maurice Duruflé	Tantum ergo

Introduction

Tonight's programme celebrates nearly five centuries of British choral tradition, as well as celebrating the bicentenary of Mendelssohn's birth with what is possibly his most famous anthem, *Hear my prayer*. All the music features in the Cathedral Choir's regular repertoire, and includes the recent commission, funded by The Friends of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral, from Sally Beamish. This new anthem was given its first performance on 7 June 2009 in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

The Choir of St Giles' Cathedral is an adult choir of thirty singers drawn from a wide variety of walks of life from the City of Edinburgh and further afield. Their main task is the singing of the two Sunday morning choral services, the 10 o'clock Holy Communion and the 11.30 Morning Service,



under the direction of The Master of the Music, Michael Harris. In addition to this they sing on many special civic and national occasions, such as the Installations of the Order of the Thistle.

Whilst the raison d'être of the choir is the leading of the worship in St Giles' Cathedral, from time to time the choir undertakes outside engagements, as well as joining with the choirs of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh, and Paisley Abbey for an annual joint Evensong. In 2004 they undertook their first foreign tour, to the USA, and a number of the singers also gave a concert in Athens in the spring of 2005. This was followed by a tour to south-west France in October 2006.

They have broadcast on many occasions over the years on both radio and television, including BBC Choral Evensong. Their most recent CD recording, released in June 2008, *I was glad*, includes music which will be heard in this concert; other recordings include *An Edinburgh Celebration*, *Sounds of St Giles'* and a recording of Christmas Carols, *Christmas at St. Giles'*.

Michael Harris received his earliest musical education as a chorister of Gloucester Cathedral. He was Organ Scholar of St Peter's College, Oxford, and continued his studies at the Royal College of Music.

Michael has been Organist and Master of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, since November 1996; he is also a Lecturer at the Ian Tomlin School of Music in Napier University, Edinburgh. Prior to moving to Edinburgh he held posts as Sub-Organist of Leeds Parish Church and Assistant Organist of Canterbury Cathedral.

As Organist of St Giles' Cathedral he hosts many organ concerts on the famous Rieger organ (built in 1992) and his work has involved him in numerous recordings and broadcasts, both for Television and Radio.

His solo recordings include *The Organ at St Giles'*, as well as a CD of eighteenth century German organ music for the Priory label, and he has directed the Cathedral Choir in a number of CD recordings, including *An Edinburgh Celebration* to mark their first tour of the USA in autumn 2004, and *I was glad*, released in 2008.

Michael has given recitals at many venues in Germany, Belgium, Italy, Poland, USA, Australia and New Zealand, as well as in the UK, where he has played in many of the major venues. Since 1998 he has been Music Director of the Scottish Chamber Choir.

He is also much involved in organ and choral education. He has led a number of study tours to Germany, with a special interest in the organs of Thüringen and Saxony. His Napier University duties include supervision of final year performance students, and directing the University Chamber Choir.

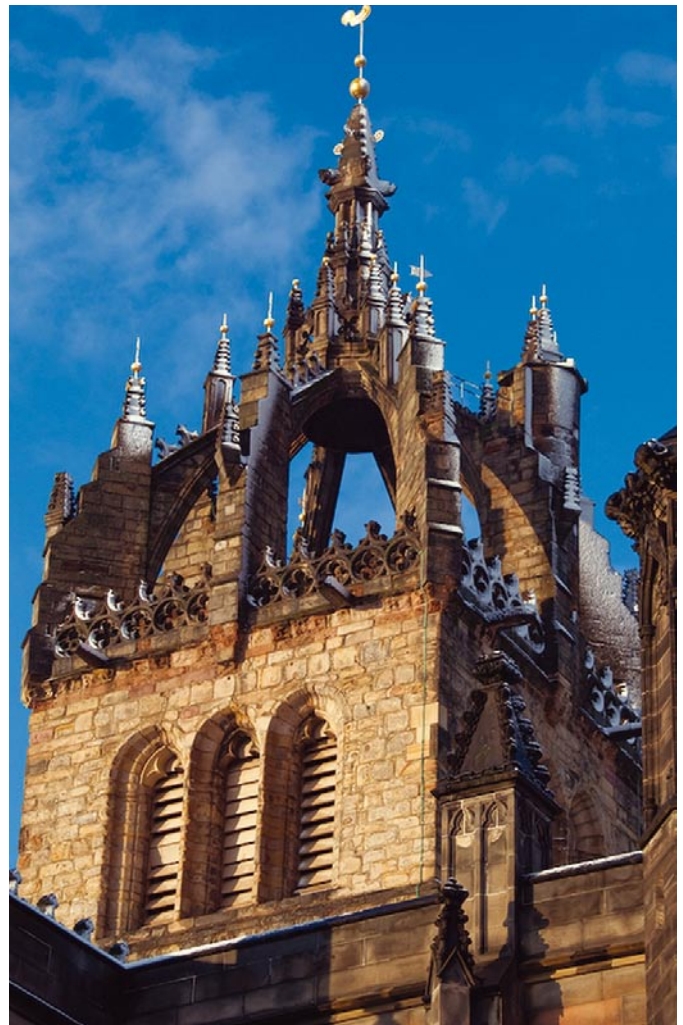
Peter Backhouse was appointed Assistant Organist at St Giles' Cathedral in August 2000, a post he combines with teaching music at The Edinburgh Academy. His musical training began as a chorister

in the choir of York Minster. Later he studied music at Edinburgh University where he graduated with BMus (Hons), having won the 3rd Year Class Medal as well as the Tovey Memorial Prize for his organ playing. In 1977 he was appointed Assistant Organist at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh, and this post, with its daily accompaniment of services, as well as many concerts, recitals, broadcasts and recordings, kept him busy for over twenty years. He has served on the Council of The Edinburgh Society of Organists for many years, including two as President. He supports the work of the Royal School of Church Music and is an organ adviser in the Edinburgh area for the Scottish Federation of Organists.

Railways have interested him all his life, and last summer he qualified as a signaller on the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway. His photographs, principally of organs, choirs and churches, continue to be published, and he tries to find time to enjoy cricket, golf and walking.

St Giles' Cathedral was founded in 1120 by King Alexander I. It is believed to have been dedicated to St Giles, Edinburgh's patron saint, from its foundation, although the first recorded dedication, by Bishop David de Bernham of St Andrews, took place in 1243. Few traces of the original Romanesque church survive in the present building. In 1385, a much larger church, early Gothic in style, was partially destroyed by the invading troops of Richard II of England. No record has been found of the building of this second church, which was quickly repaired. Over the next 150 years many chapels were added and by the mid 16th century there were around fifty altars in the church. The distinctive crown spire was added c.1500.

In 1560, the year of the Scottish Reformation, John Knox was elected Minister of Edinburgh in St Giles'. He played a principal role in establishing the new styles of worship and administration that were to be accepted throughout the country. He served as Minister of St Giles' until 1570. The Reformers subdivided the interior of the church and during the next 300 years the building housed (among other things) a police station, a fire station and a school, as well as providing meeting space for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Parliament and the Town Council. For more than a century after the Reformation worship in St Giles' was disrupted by disagreements about church government. In 1633, Charles I reappointed bishops in Scotland and St Giles' became the



Cathedral of the new diocese of Edinburgh, which it remained until 1638. It was granted cathedral status again from 1661-89. That St Giles' is, to this day, commonly called a cathedral dates from this period.

In 1638, those opposed to Charles' plans to reintroduce episcopacy in Scotland signed a document known as the National Covenant, one of the copies of which can still be seen in St Giles' today. Two important signatories of the Covenant, James Graham, Marquess of Montrose, and Archibald Campbell, Marquess of Argyll, are commemorated in the church. Both men professed loyalty to Charles, but Montrose later broke with what he saw as the excesses of Argyll's reforming party, to become commander of the royalist army in Scotland. He was executed outside St Giles' in 1650 but, following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, his body was reinterred inside the church with full honours. Argyll was himself executed in 1661 and is now commemorated in St Elois' Aisle.

By 1800, St Giles' was in a poor state of repair. Two major restorations took place in 1829-33 and 1872-83 respectively, the second of which included the removal of the internal partitioning to recreate a unified interior space. The famous Thistle Chapel,

home of the Knights of the Order of the Thistle, (Scotland's order of chivalry), was added in 1911, designed by Sir Robert Lorimer. Over the past hundred years St Giles' has hosted many important events, including state occasions and services of national thanksgiving. A new restoration programme, begun in 1977, is nearing completion, and has included essential repairs to roofs, walls, and windows; the cleaning and restoring of memorials; a new organ and new lighting; and the resiting of the Holy Table to a new position at the crossing, under the crown.

St Giles' is called upon to serve in the role of Scotland's National Cathedral, where services are held to mark great national occasions. The regular worship reflects a broad Christian tradition, and the dream of many has been fulfilled in a principal Sunday morning service of Holy Communion in which church people of Catholic, Reformed and Anglican background will tend to feel at home. The gathering of communicants around a central Holy Table is one way of combining different strands of church liturgy. We try to be open and welcoming, as well as faithful to the past.



Programme notes

The second half of the sixteenth century in England was known as the Golden Age of English Music, and coincided with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. For church music it was a time when composition flourished, mainly as a result of the need for new music for the newly-created Anglican Church following the Reformation. Much of the music was written by composers associated with the Chapel Royal, the private household chapel of the Monarch. Foremost among these composers were Thomas Tallis, and William Byrd, a pupil, and later colleague, of Tallis. William Byrd had been organist of Lincoln Cathedral before moving to the Chapel Royal; his English anthem *Sing joyfully unto God our strength*, is a setting of the words of Psalm 81 and is typical of the period in its precise illustration of the text, particularly in such passages as *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon*. Tallis' *O nata lux* is a much more concise and restrained motet, marked by its typically English dissonances, as is *O sacrum convivium*, a setting of the Antiphon for the second Vespers of Corpus Christi.

Orlando Gibbons was known as the father of English church music, and was the first composer of the period not to write any works in Latin. His Advent anthem, *Lift up your heads O ye gates*, is rhythmically incisive, and like Byrd draws on the musical language of the Madrigal in illustrating the text.

Mendelssohn's setting of *Jauchzet dem Herrn* probably dates from 1843 soon after he had been appointed choir director at Berlin Cathedral. In the summer of 1843, after protracted negotiations with King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, he had finally been assigned specific duties in a post that was first offered to him three years earlier. Mendelssohn had already made his name as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and in 1843 was given charge of the newly created Berlin Cathedral Choir, though relations with the cathedral authorities were never easy, and he had resigned most of his duties by the following summer.

This setting was probably originally written for a synagogue dedication in Hamburg in 1843, and later revised. It is written for four part a cappella chorus, with an especially sonorous central section dividing into eight voices. Whilst the structural patterns owe something to Schütz and J.S.Bach the harmonic language is instantly recognisable as Mendelssohn's.

Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, is one of four anthems for choir and organ written by Howells as a set in 1941, the year that he took over from Robin Orr as Organist of St John's College Cambridge, following Orr's call up to active service. Its setting of the opening words of Psalm 42 is marked by Howells' typically expansive phrases, beginning with unison Tenors and Basses and later finding even more intensity with the Sopranos at *My tears have been my meat, day and night*.

Mendelssohn composed *Hear my prayer* in January 1844, one of a number of pieces written for England, and in this case one that became far more popular in England than in his native Germany, though he produced a version in German a year later. The text of Psalm 55 was paraphrased by his friend William Bartholomew. The work is for soprano solo, chorus and organ, and in style Mendelssohn drew on the English verse anthem for inspiration; its central solo, *O for the wings of a dove*, made the anthem extremely popular; it was an important part of the English cathedral repertoire from the late nineteenth century onwards, though it was the recording made in 1927 of this solo by Ernest Lough, a chorister in the Temple Church in London, that cemented the work's popularity.

Benjamin Britten's Festival Cantata, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, is the product of a prolific period of choral writing for the composer. It was composed in 1943, not long after Britten's return from self-imposed exile in the United States at the beginning of World War II. The commission for the work came from Walter Hussey, at that time Vicar of St Matthew's Church Northampton, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the consecration of that church. Walter Hussey, later to become Dean of Chichester Cathedral, was to become one of the most influential arts patrons of the mid-twentieth century, commissioning not only famous composers such as Britten and Bernstein, but also art and sculpture from Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore among others.

For the text of his cantata, Britten selected words from the eccentric eighteenth-century poet Christopher Smart, using ten sections of Smart's poem, *Jubilate Agno*. In Walter Hussey's words, the message of the poem "is the worship of God by all created beings and things, each in its own way". The musical structure of the work is governed by the text, the central sections being given over to soloists, followed by a dramatic choral recitative. There are two vibrant choral sections, the first of which, *Let Nimrod, the mighty hunter*, is based on

an asymmetrical rhythmic motif, and the second, towards the end of the piece, is a celebration of the instruments of music. Britten has often been referred to as the greatest English composer since Henry Purcell, and was himself interested in and studied Purcell's idiom – there is a hint of it in the two Hallelujah sections that appear in the work, with their poised dotted rhythms providing a sense of quiet joy.

Sally Beamish, one of the UK's foremost living composers, was commissioned by The Friends of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral to write an anthem for St Giles' Cathedral Choir, and the first performance was given at Morning Service on Sunday 7 June 2009. *God of the Moon* sets a text from the *Carmina Gadelica* – a collection of Celtic hymns and incantations collected and translated in the 19th century by Alexander Carmichael. The organ accompaniment is set as a flute-like canon with the sounds of birdsong and water. Herrick Bunney was Organist and Master of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral for more than fifty years, and was responsible for establishing the Cathedral Choir in its present form. His setting of Psalm 121 in the words of the King James Bible has become a favourite in the repertoire. Charles Hubert Hastings Parry held a position as one of the foremost musical figures of his generation. Like Stanford, with whom he is often associated, he looked beyond the British Isles for his musical inspiration, and he was a fervent admirer of Wagner, as well as being heavily influenced by the music of Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Brahms. He was also the first Professor of Musical History at the Royal College of Music and contributed many articles to the first edition of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. *I was glad when they said unto me*, the setting of Psalm 122 which has become his most famous anthem, was written for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902 and subsequently revised for George V's Coronation in 1911.

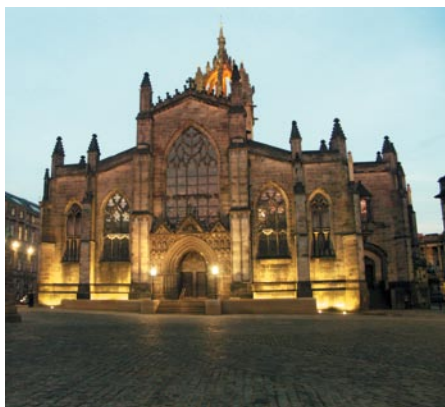
Programme Notes Michael Harris

Photographs Peter Backhouse

Acknowledgments

St Giles' Cathedral Choir is most grateful to all those who have made this tour possible. Much valuable help has been received from The Friends of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral, and from many individuals. We are most grateful to our hosts at the various venues for their welcome and hospitality, without which the tour would not have been possible.

CDs *from* ST GILES'



SOUNDS OF ST GILES'

J S Bach Prelude and Fugue in G BWV 541; Britten Jubilate Deo in C; Bach Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme BWV 645; Tavener God is with us - A Christmas Proclamation; Fleury Variations sur un Noël Bourguignon; Franck Pièce Héroïque; Bach An Wasserflüssen Babylon BWV 653; Leighton Drop, drop, slow tears; Bach O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde gross BWV 622; Langlais Incantation pour un jour saint; Mendelssohn Heilig; Vaughan Williams O, clap your hands; Mulet Tu es Petra. YORK CD 141. *This is an attractive and varied programme, very well recorded. The choral works are given polished, vibrant performances with sympathetic accompaniments. In the solo items, Michael Harris clearly enjoys the colours of the Rieger organ - widely regarded as one of the best instruments in the world. Gramophone. The nimble, expressive playing of Michael Harris ...showcases the tonal brilliance of the 1992 Rieger organ. BBC Music Magazine.*



HYMNS AT ST GILES'

19 favourite hymns from the Choir of St Giles' Cathedral including Praise to the Holiest in the height; The Lord's my shepherd; Lo! He comes with clouds descending; There is a green hill far away; When I survey the wondrous cross; Good Christian men, rejoice and sing!; Away with gloom, away with doubt!; Come down, O Love Divine; All my hope on God is founded; Loving shepherd of thy sheep; Come, ye thankful people, come; Ye that know the Lord is gracious; The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended. YORK CD 167.



I WAS GLAD

On this new CD, St Giles' Cathedral Choir sings Elgar Give unto the Lord Howells Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks Walton Jubilate Deo de Jongh Come come, let us sing unto the Lord; Blessed is the man Macmillan A new song Holst Psalm 148 Purcell Hear my prayer Boyce Turn thee unto me, O Lord Mendelssohn Richte mich, Gott Brahms How lovely are thy dwellings Stanford The Lord is my shepherd Parry I was glad when they said unto me. YORK CD 201.



CHRISTMAS AT ST GILES'

Join with the Choir of St Giles' Cathedral in a celebration of Christmas. Carols include Psallite unigenito; Hark! The herald angels sing; A Hymn to the Virgin; In dulci jubilo; In the bleak midwinter; The Lamb; O little town of Bethlehem; I saw three ships; Angels from the realms; Josef, lieber Josef mein; Ding dong! Merrily on high; It came upon a midnight clear; Coventry Carol; Susanni; O Magnum Mysterium; A babe is born; O Come all ye faithful. YORK CD 152.



THE ORGAN AT ST GILES'

Michael Harris plays Langlais Te Deum; Bach Concerto in A minor BWV 593; Böhm Partita *Wer nur der lieben Gott lässt walten*; Saint-Saëns Prelude and Fugue in G Op. 109 No 2; Franck Fantaisie in A; Hollins A Song of Sunshine; Walton Coronation March (1953) *Orb and Sceptre*; Vaughan Williams Prelude on *Rhosymedre*; Vierne Symphony No 1 - Final. YORK CD 172. *From the opening full-swell snarl of Langlais' Te Deum, he is afire with vitality, the big-scaled Rieger responding with relish to his every demand... A great joy. Organists' Review.*



AN EDINBURGH CELEBRATION

Gibbons Lift up your heads Tallis O nata lux Byrd Sing joyfully Buxtehude Praeludium in C Kuhnau Tristis est anima mea Philips Ecce vicit Leo Blow Salvator mundi Elgar The spirit of the Lord Stanford Beati quorum via Leighton Let all the world Stanford Fantasia and Toccata Macmillan A New Song Bunney Psalm 121 Howells A Hymn for St Cecilia Tavener The Lamb Händel Zadok the Priest. YORK CD 185.

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