

PREFACE

The aim of the *Oxford Choral Classics* series is to offer choirs a practical and inexpensive working library of standard repertoire in new, reliable editions. The majority of works are classics of the repertoire, but also included are pieces of music that are less widely known but are of especial value. Inevitably, any such anthology reflects the personal perspective of its editor, and for this volume of English church music in particular, for which there is such a fine and varied range of repertoire from across more than five centuries, the available selection is exceptionally rich and could easily have filled several volumes. Cornerstones of the repertoire, such as Byrd's *Haec Dies* and *Sing joyfully*, Stanford's *Beati quorum via*, Harris's *Faire is the heaven*, and Purcell's *Remember not, Lord, our offences*, are set alongside less frequently performed works such as Patrick Hadley's wonderful *My song is love unknown*, Purcell's melancholy *Let mine eyes run down with tears*, and Wesley's *Praise the Lord, O my soul*. This last anthem was an especial joy to discover afresh, for its concluding movement is often performed but is only an extract from a much larger work. This volume allows choirs the option to perform either the full work or just the well-known extract. Returning to original sources has produced some fascinating variants: the many singers who will know Howells's eloquent *Like as the hart* can finally see the composer's original thoughts for the soprano descant that decorates the return of the opening theme, and can then choose between that early setting or the more frequently heard version.

The specific parameters followed have been these:

1. The period covered ranges from around 1500 to the present day, although copyright considerations have limited the scope and amount of twentieth-century music included. A parallel intention has been to present a representative selection of music from each century.
2. Pieces originally intended to have orchestral accompaniment, rather than organ, have been excluded, hence the omission of the rich seam of Restoration verse anthems with strings by Purcell and his contemporaries, of Elizabethan works originally intended to be accompanied by viol consort, and of eighteenth-century works by Handel and his contemporaries (resulting in a relative dearth of music from that century in this volume). None of these categories of anthem sound as well in organ transcription as they do in their original instrumental versions. However, both Mendelssohn's famous *Hear my prayer* and Hadley's *My song is love unknown* exist with the composer's own organ accompaniment, made at the time of the first performance.
3. By and large, extracts from larger pieces have been omitted (though Hadley's anthem was simply too good to miss out, and may tempt choirs to programme the full cantata in a future concert).

Translations

Many, if not most, of the choirs using this book will never need to make use of the singing translations provided. Others—including, for example, those serving the largest Christian denomination in the United States—have little choice but to sing in English. It does not seem right that they and their listeners should be denied the experience of so much of the best English choral literature for lack of an English text. The policy in this volume, therefore, has been to provide singing translations for everything except the longest Latin pieces, such as Naylor's *Vox dicentis: Clama* and Tallis's *Loquebantur variis linguis*, which seem most likely to be performed either by concert choirs or in churches where the use of Latin is not an issue.

The principles governing the singing translations in the *Oxford Choral Classics* series are: to be as faithful as possible to the meaning and flavour of the originals; to alter the rhythms of the originals as little as possible; and to make the English texts as singable as possible. Where these principles come into conflict and one or more of them has to be sacrificed, singability remains the primary aim. The style of religious language is also a factor. Whilst respecting the viewpoint that religious texts should be presented in contemporary language, it seems appropriate that music of a past period should reflect the language of that time, especially when in most cases there is an extensive corpus of settings by that composer already in English that uses similarly 'historic' language. For those reasons, in the translations for this collection there has been no hesitation in using 'thou' or in echoing phrases from older bibles, hymns, and prayer books.

Editorial practice

The policy of the *Oxford Choral Classics* series is to use primary sources, printed or in manuscript, wherever possible, and this has resulted in the elimination of some long-standing errors. In presenting the editions, the aim is first and foremost to serve the practical needs of non-specialist choirs, keeping the music pages as clean and uncluttered as possible, though not neglecting the needs of the scholar. Prefatory staves are given for pre-1700 sources. References to clefs and pitch follow the standard conventions. Note values in early pieces have generally been reduced to give a ♩ pulse; pitches have been transposed to suit standard voice ranges; editorial barring has been shown in a modern, standard way; and key signatures have been modernized. Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling of texts has been modernized, with the *Liber Usualis* as a principal point of reference for Latin texts and the Authorized Version for biblical texts. Psalm numbering follows Protestant usage. Editorially completed text underlay is not shown in italics, as this convention would present a confusing appearance when italics are already being used for the singing translation. Indications of ligature and coloration are omitted, though care has been taken with editorial underlay never to move to a new syllable in the middle of a ligature. Obvious scribal or printing errors in sources are silently corrected; cases of doubt or discrepancy between sources are listed in the commentary. Dynamics and expression marks have been positioned as in their sources, even where this may lead to slightly differing policies across the volume. Some composers, for instance Wesley, are not always wholly consistent in their dynamic schemes, and editorial dynamics have been added only where considered really necessary. All material in square brackets or in small print is editorial. In pre-1700 pieces, full-size accidentals are those that appear in the source; they are silently omitted when made unnecessary by a modern key signature, and also omitted for immediate repetitions of the same note in the same bar. Small accidentals are editorial. Cautionary accidentals are shown full size in round brackets. Cancelling accidentals customary in modern notation but absent in the source are shown full size in round brackets. Crossed slurs are editorial; dotted slurs have been inserted only when felt to be really necessary, and indicate that the underlay of the translated text and the original text differ. Syllabic slurs in voice parts, as used in modern publishing style, have not generally been added. Beaming and stemming of notes has been modernized.

Not everyone will agree with the inclusion of editorial suggestions of tempo and dynamics. To some choir directors they are an irritation, whereas to others they are thoroughly useful. As a compromise solution, suggested dynamics have been added into the keyboard parts in pre-1700 pieces, making them available to those who would like to consider them but easy to ignore for those who would not. Such markings are, necessarily, a general guide only, and cannot take account of the natural rise and fall of individual voice parts within a polyphonic texture. So many factors—not least of all the size and acoustic of a building—can affect the choice of speed and dynamics between performances, even by the same choir on consecutive nights, that such editorial markings should be treated as tentative suggestions only, and never as a prescription. For that reason, dynamic suggestions have not generally been added to verse (solo) sections, as soloists will surely wish to follow their own interpretations.

Keyboard parts

Keyboard parts of a *cappella* pieces are given in their most readable and playable form, without always showing the movement of individual polyphonic voices, especially where these cross. This sometimes results in apparent parallel fifths and octaves, but this is surely preferable to the frequent sight of upstems and downstems crossed. Where all the voices of a texture are impossible to play, the keyboard reduction has been discreetly simplified. Editorial *musica ficta* is incorporated into the reduction without qualification, surely preferable to the alternative of a mass of small or bracketed accidentals (most of whose origins can in any case, if required, be quickly deduced from the vocal lines above). Accidentals follow the convention of homophonic keyboard music, not polyphony, and are not duplicated within a bar at the same pitch if in different voices.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pieces originally published with a *basso continuo* part (even where this is no more than a *basso seguente*) have been assumed to be intended for accompanied performance. Those Restoration anthems by Purcell and his contemporaries that were undoubtedly accompanied by continuo instruments, but for which no continuo part survives, have had their figured basses editorially provided. Where relevant and apposite, any figures from the original figured bass have been included (though often in the original manuscripts these are written in a different, sometimes later, hand), with such

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existing figures editorially enhanced and completed to create a consistent style of figured bass across the volume. The wide variety of styles of 'shorthand' figures have also been standardized to meet modern editorial practice. Such editorial continuo realizations are intended both as a workable solution for performers who wish to play them exactly as written (when they will produce a thoroughly satisfactory continuo part), and also as a basis for more experienced players who may wish to create their own realizations from the figured bass alone.

Full scores and parts for instrumentally accompanied items are available on rental from the publisher or copyright owner (see Index of Orchestrations, p. 378).

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Greatest thanks, however, go to my wife Viola, who patiently tolerated my late nights and early mornings, my long, library-burrowing, absent hours, the piles of manuscripts taking up ever more space in our office, and the occasional exasperations and more frequent triumphs as another number was completed. Without her good-humoured support the volume would still be nowhere near completion. Our young son Johannes has watched the volume progress with great excitement, and nothing would give the project greater purpose and completion, and me greater pleasure, than if, in a few years' time, he himself should be singing from a copy of this volume. So it is to him that this volume is dedicated, as a representative of all those singers who hopefully for many years to come will continue that most noble of traditions: choirs across the world singing the finest English church music.

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