



Gerald Finzi

THREE
SACRED
ANTHEMS

FOR CHOIR & STRINGS

The Choir of Robinson College, Cambridge | Will Sims

Gerald Finzi

THREE SACRED ANTHEMS

Gerald Finzi (1901–1956): Three Anthems, Op. 27

1	My Lovely One (arr. Peter Hayward)	.2.27
2	God is Gone Up	.4.57
3	Welcome Sweet and Sacred Feast (arr. Peter Hayward)	.7.30
Total running time		14.54

Conductor's Note

"There could hardly be a more determinedly English musician in his work, his musical outlook, his tastes and recreations, his way of life, than Finzi."

McVeagh, Gerald Finzi, 67

Perhaps best categorised alongside many of his contemporaries as an 'Anglican Agnostic' (as coined by Phillip Larkin) – that is, to be imbued in the church tradition without faith – Gerald Finzi produced a number of sacred works, from unaccompanied motets to orchestral cantatas, which remain at the heart of choral repertoire today. Drawing on his more prolific output of art song, these works retain the thumbprint of

the English Musical Renaissance – the influence of Tudor counterpoint, folk and church music – enhanced by Finzi's colourful harmony and progressions, lyrical melodic contours and syllabic text-setting, seeking to advance the poetry rather than distort it, and saving melismas for only the most emphatic moments of word-painting.

My Lovely One, subtitled 'Marriage Anthem', was written for the wedding of Finzi's sister-in-law in 1946. Its yearning, almost haunting opening (which led one of our choristers to ask if Finzi indeed liked his sister) gives way to characteristically rich unaccompanied writing, concluded with glorious harmony at "Lord, melt me all up to thee."

Programme Note

Composed in 1951 for the Feast of St Cecilia at St Sepulchre's, Holborn, and presented in the original orchestration here, *God is Gone Up* is undoubtedly the best-known and most widely performed of the trio, characterised by its triumphant fanfares and lush part-writing and textures. This Ascension anthem is structured in ternary form, with the jubilant opening and concluding sections contrasted with a reflective interior.

The longest and most complex of the Op. 27 set, *Welcome Sweet and Sacred Feast* is one of Finzi's final works, written by invitation of the BBC's Religious Broadcasting Department in 1953. Similarly to his other Eucharistic work – and choral masterpiece – *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*, the piece moves between short, distinct passages, underpinned with colourful text-setting and a sense of gentle introspection.

Will Sims

Arranger's Note

I first encountered Gerald Finzi's beautiful anthem, *Welcome Sweet and Sacred Feast*, as an academical clerk at Magdalen College, Oxford in the 1970s under the direction of Bernard Rose. Years later a friend and a fellow Magdalen clerk suggested to me that the organ accompaniment could be scored for strings. I readily accepted the challenge, aiming to write for strings as I imagined Finzi may have done whilst remaining faithful to the original organ part. The late Jeremy Dale Roberts provided helpful advice on behalf of the Finzi Trust. Michael Berman's Vox Musica ensemble performed my arrangement in 2005 under licence from Boosey & Co. Will Sims' enthusiasm for my string version, together with his suggestion I write a parallel string accompaniment for *My Lovely One*, has led to this premiere recording. I am indebted to him, to Robinson College Choir and String Ensemble, to the Finzi Trust and to Boosey & Co.

Peter Hayward

Texts

1 My Lovely One

*Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729),
from Sacramental Meditations*

My lovely one, I fain
would love thee much,
But all my Love is none at all I see;
Oh, let thy Beauty give a glorious touch
Upon my Heart, and melt to Love all me.
Lord, melt me all up into Love for thee,
Whose Loveliness excels
what love can be.

2 God is Gone Up

*Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729),
from Sacramental Meditations*

God is gone up with a triumphant shout:
The Lord with sounding
Trumpets' melodies:
Sing Praise, sing Praise,
sing Praise, sing praises out,
Unto our King sing praise seraphic-wise!
Lift up your Heads, ye lasting Doors,
they sing,
And let the King of Glory enter in.

Methinks I see Heaven's
sparkling courtiers fly,
In flakes of Glory down him to attend,
And hear Heart-cramping
notes of Melody
Surround his Chariot as it did ascend;
Mixing their Music, making ev'ry string
More to enravish as they this tune sing.

3 Welcome Sweet and Sacred Feast

*Henry Vaughan (1621–1695),
from The Holy Communion*

Welcome sweet and sacred feast;
welcome life!
Dead I was, and deep in trouble;
But grace, and blessings
came with thee so rife,
That they have quicken'd
even dry stubble;
Thus souls their bodies animate,
And thus, at first, when things were rude,
Dark, void, and crude
They, by thy Word, their beauty had,
and date;
All were by thee,

Texts

And still must be,
Nothing that is, or lives,
But hath his quick'nings, and relieves
As thy hand opes, or shuts;
Healings, and cuts,
Darkness, and day-light, life, and death
Are but mere leaves turn'd by thy breath.

But that great darkness at thy death
When the veil broke with thy last breath,
Did make us see
The way to thee.

Was't not enough that thou
 hadst paid the price
And given us eyes
When we had none, but thou
 must also take
Us by the hand
And keep us still awake,
When we would sleep,
Or from thee creep,
Who without thee cannot stand?

Was't not enough to lose thy breath
And blood by an accursed death,
But thou must also leave
To us that did bereave
Thee of them both, these
 seals the means
That should both cleanse
And keep us so,
Who wrought thy woe?
O rose of Sharon! O the Lily
Of the valley!
How art thou now, thy flock to keep,
Become both food, and
 shepherd to thy sheep.

Biographies

Choir

The Choir of Robinson College, Cambridge is an exciting and ambitious ensemble which strives for the highest standards of music-making. Made up from 24 to 30 Choral Scholars and volunteers covering a wide range of subjects and colleges within the University of Cambridge, the choir sings for two services each week during term, alongside a busy schedule of concerts,

recordings, and tours. The choir's repertoire encompasses music from across a millennium with a focus on contemporary music, including recent premieres by Jeremy Thurlow, Mary Offer, Ben Ponniah, and Sarah MacDonald. Recent recordings include cantatas by Andrew Downes and an EP of contemporary commissions for the Prima Facie label, and tour destinations have included Hong Kong, Canada, and across Europe.



Biographies



String Ensemble

The string orchestra for this recording is comprised of students from Robinson College, the wider University of Cambridge, and young musicians based in London. With thanks to Nessa Yip, Elliott Park, Fingal Plumpton, and Maddie Melville-Smith for fixing.

Will Sims, conductor

Will Sims is the Director of Chapel Music at Robinson College, Cambridge, where he directs the Choir and supervises undergraduates in the Faculty of Music. He has conducted the choir's first three commercial recordings, performed in the Thomaskirche, Sagrada Família, and Duomo di Milano, and premiered works from over fifteen composers. Will is a prize-winning Choral Director of the Royal College of Organists, an inaugural member of the Yale Sacred Music Academy, and an accomplished collaborative pianist, singer, and composer.

Biographies

Peter Hayward, arranger

Peter Hayward is a singer, musical director, teacher and composer. His compositions include music for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the BBC together with choral works, two of which have been recorded by The Sixteen. Peter was Learning Manager for the BBC Concert Orchestra and most recently Director of Lewisham Music.

Ben Cole, organ

Ben Cole (Robinson College Organ

Scholar 2021-24) is a keyboardist and musical director based in London. He combines an Organ Scholarship at St James, Sussex Gardens with study at the Guildhall School of Music.

Nessa Yip, leader

Nessa Yip has been a violinist since the age of 5 and studies under Stephane Crayton at Cambridge. She enjoys playing in a range of projects, from clarinet quintets and orchestras, to musicals and operas.



Performers

The Choir of Robinson College, Cambridge

Soprano

Holly Brady
Lili Cooper
Lily Crawford
Sarah Kasas
Anrie Kilian
Holly Jewitt Maurice
Hannah Millar
Jessica Ruddock
Rose Whitwam
Aimee Yan Zhang
Avery Yip

Alto

Max Entwisle
Sarah Halsey
Sophie Howarth
Zoë Lancaster
Maddie Melville-Smith
Nicholle Montevalde Lewis
Natalia Pilu
Emma Wragg
Taryn Young

Tenor

Fearghus Beauchamp
Tom Hammond
Jonny Keyte
George Maudgil
Matthew Supramaniam

Bass

Tom Bailey
Ben Cole
Daniel Morgan
Miles O'Brien
Fingal Plumpton
James Richards
Henry Rogers
Suanoi Sophonpanich

Conductor

Will Sims

Performers

String Ensemble

Violin I

Nessa Yip, leader* **
Emlyn Jones
Ryo Koyama
Aisling Martin

Violin II

Katie Styles
Sebastian Taylor
Taejas Venkataraman

Viola

Iona Azzopardi* **
Immie Graham

Cello I

Bella Lorenzo-Giguere* **
Sam Weinstein

Cello II

Kiran Buzza

Double Bass

Alex Maynard

Organ

Ben Cole

* Soloist: Track 1 ** Soloist: Track 3

Credits

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Recorded

Robinson College Chapel, Cambridge, 8th November 2025

Organ

Frobenius, 1980

Engineer

Adaq Khan

Producer

Elliott Park



Photography

Spike Alexander

Creative Director

Mike Cooter

Executive Producer

Adrian Green

Cover

Spotyphoto (Robinson College Gardens)

Publisher

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