

OBSIDIAN



Thomas Weelkes

Grant the King a long life
English Anthems &
Instrumental Music

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1. Hosanna to the Son of David (1'50)
2. Pavan [1]: 'Mr Weelkes his Lacrimae' (3'24)
3. What joy so true (5'05)
4. All people clap your hands (1'52)
5. Voluntary [1] (1'50)
6. Lord to thee I make my moan (2'06)
7. When David heard (4'07)
8. Gloria in excelsis Deo (3'08)
9. Pavan [3]: 'Mr Weelkes his 3. Pavin' (2'29)
10. Give ear, O Lord (5'01)
11. Most mighty and all-knowing Lord (2'30)
12. O how amiable (3'01)
13. Voluntary [2] (2'06)
14. Alleluia. I heard a voice (2'46)
15. O mortal man (3'06)
16. Pavan [5] (2'25)
17. Give the king thy judgements (4'48)
18. Fantasy 'for 2 Basses' (1'26)
19. If King Manasses (6'40)
20. O Lord, grant the King a long life (2'33)

Total time (63'22)

Produced by David Skinner,
Ben Atkinson & Dan Smith
Engineered and edited by Jim Gross
Executive producer Martin Souter
Chamber organ supplied & tuned by
Dr Stephen Coles
box organ after John Loosemore
(Nettlecombe Court, 1655);
tuning Neidhardt 1724 (Dorf).

Cover image: Portrait of James I of England and
James VI of Scotland (1566–1625), purported to
be the marriage portrait sent to the Danish Court
to seduce Anne, his future wife (oil on panel),
Vanson, Adrian (fl.1580–1601) (attr. to) © Gavin
Graham Gallery, London, UK / The Bridgeman
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THE CHOIR OF
SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE
with soloists drawn from the choir
FRETWORK

DIRECTED BY DAVID SKINNER

OBSIDIAN

CD708

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Recorded in The Chapel of Sidney Sussex College,
Cambridge, 4–6 July 2011, with kind permission of the
Master and Fellows.

Thomas Weelkes has emerged in modern times as one of the finest composers of Elizabethan and Jacobean church and chamber music. He died in 1623, the same year as the more illustrious court composers William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, but never seemed to emerge beyond his comparatively provincial status, although his earlier career as a madrigalist promised much. Famously, his later life was somewhat plagued with intrigue and scandal.

Nothing concrete is known of Weelkes' birth or childhood, though there is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that he was the son of a certain 'John Weekes', who was rector of Elsted in Sussex, and who, like the composer, had connections with Oxford, Winchester and Chichester. A 'Thomas Wike' was baptised in Elsted parish church on 25 October 1576, while a 'Thomas Wikes' appears listed as a chorister of Winchester Cathedral in 1583 and 1584. Certainly in 1598

the composer was appointed organist at Winchester, and the following years were to be his most fruitful in terms of madrigal composition and publications. After Winchester, Weelkes moved the short distance to Chichester at some point between 1601 and 1602, and there received a decent salary. On 13 July 1602 he was awarded a BMus degree from New College, Oxford, and in the following year married Elizabeth Sandham, the daughter of a wealthy Chichester merchant.

Weelkes appears to have thrived during his early years in Chichester, where he completed his fourth and final volume of madrigals in 1608. It was shortly after this time, however, that his personal decline began. During the bishop's visitation in 1609 he was charged with unauthorised absences, and in 1611 the Dean and Chapter questioned his performance. In 1613 he was charged with public drunkenness, and by 1616 he was 'noted and famed for a common

drunkard and a notorious swearer and blasphemer'. Matters came to a head in 1617 when Weelkes was dismissed from his post as organist and choirmaster (though he still retained his singing position as a Sherbourne clerk). The oft-quoted passage concerning the height of his downfall is taken from the 1619 visitation of Bishop Carlton:

'Most of the choir and other the officers of the same (as many as come to Divine Service) demean themselves religiously all the time of prayers, save only Thomas Weelkes, who divers times and very often come so disguised [drunk] either from the tavern or alehouse into the choir as is much to be lamented, for in these humours he will both curse and swear most dreadfully ... as it is most fearful to hear, and to the great amazement of those present ... I know not of any of the choir or other the officers of the Church to be a common drunkard but Mr. Weelkes.'

After this time it is clear that Weelkes spent less time performing his duties in Chichester. Following his wife's death in 1622 he stayed in London at the house

of a friend, Henry Drinkwater, in St Bride's parish. Weelkes died in debt on 30 November 1623 and was buried the following day at St Bride's.

But regardless of any personal flaws on the man, the music firmly stands as sublime.

While more Canticle settings survive from Weelkes' pen than any other composer of the period, all are incomplete or woefully defective (yet those that do survive intact are of the highest quality). This recording centres around Weelkes' full and verse anthems, several of which are in honour of King James I (whose youthful portrait is on the cover of this CD) as well as music for viol consort and organ solo. His style, although akin to that of Gibbons or Tomkins (Obsidian CD702) is, one might argue, more tuneful and immediately appealing. Weelkes' melodies and harmonic progressions are infectious, and certainly memorable. It is thought that most of his church music dates from his years at Chichester, and a good sample has

come down to us: no fewer than sixteen full anthems and twenty-three verse anthems (though of these, unfortunately, only five survive intact). Weelkes drew largely from biblical texts and, in particular, the psalter: some metrical (Sternhold & Hopkins) and some composite. 'Hosanna to the son of David' stands out among his full anthems in that, with its close imitation and intense virile melodic entries, it follows closely his well-honed madrigalian practices (the same might be said for 'All people clap your hands', though to a lesser extent). The distinct three-part structure found in 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' and 'Alleluia. I heard a voice' is more typical, while the poignant lament 'When David heard' is one of the most successful settings of this popular text. While Weelkes describes himself as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in his last volume of madrigals (1608), there is nothing in the chapel records to confirm this. It is suggested that he was, at most, a Gentleman Extraordinary; perhaps anthems dedicated

or alluding to King James I were composed with such a position in mind. However, it is worth noting that Weelkes was at the height of his musical powers and influence when James was crowned in 1603, so it may be possible that 'O Lord, grant the King a long life' was composed for the coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey on 25 July (although it could have been written simply in praise of the new English king).

For some of his verse anthems Weelkes consulted published 'meditations' of the time, including William Hennis' 'Comfortable Dialogs betweene Christ and a Sinner' published in 1583 (containing a beautiful monody of 'Give ear, O Lord'), and 'If King Manasses', which is an extract from 'St Peter's complaint' by the poet and Catholic martyr Robert Southwell, who was executed at Tyburn by hanging, drawing, and quartering in 1595. It has been noted that, in his verse anthems Weelkes leaves much of the burden to the soloists, and the full chorus passages are technically less

demanding; while this is indeed true for most compositions, it is unlikely that this was forced by any lack of competence in the choir at Chichester. There is a depth, poise, and rhetoric in each of these little gems from the repeated 'Mercy, good Lord' passages in 'Give ear, O Lord' to the repeated couplets in 'What joy so true'.

'Most mighty and all-knowing Lord' is the only consort song to have survived by Weelkes. However, a number of Weelkes' full anthems are easily adaptable to such treatment, such as 'Lord, to thee I make my moan' and 'O mortal man' performed here with viols. Relatively little instrumental consort music survives, though the Pavans recorded here represent his finest (the third Pavan having been reconstructed for this recording). Even finer, perhaps, is his six-part Fantasy 'for 2 Basses', which, though short, is a beautiful example of expertly concise construction yet with profound impact.

Whatever the truth of Weelkes's life and morals, and setting aside the undoubted sadness of his final years, his posthumous reputation deserves to be based on his proven skills as a highly versatile and imaginative composer, with a sure mastery of the variety of styles, performing forces and textures which we hear on this recording.

David Skinner

Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Hosanna to the Son of David

Hosanna to the Son of David.

Blessed be the King that cometh in the
name of the Lord. Hosanna, Hosanna.
Thou that sittest in the highest heav'ns.
Hosanna. Hosanna in excelsis Deo.

(Paraphrase of Luke 19: v. 38)

What joy so true

What joy so true, what comfort so divine
Throughout the race of our mortality
As that which they in greatest measure find,
Which keep the sacred bond of unity!
It much resembleth that delicious oil,
Infus'd upon the sacrificer's crown,
Which, gliding thence, did all his beard
besoil,
Thence smoothly stream'd his gorgeous
coat adown.

Or that pure issue of sweet Hermon dew
Which, scattered in many a crystal drop,
Lies ev'rywhere like pearls of clearest hue,
Enameling fair Sion's stately top.

For so, right so, high God most lovingly,
Pours down His gracious benefits amain
Upon that, on that blest society
Whose life can love and amity maintain.
Amen.

(Paraphrase of Psalm 133)

All people clap your hands

All people clap your hands, sing loud unto
the Lord with a joyful voice.
God is gone up with triumph, ev'n the
Lord with the sound of the trumpet.
Praise the Lord with harp, sing unto Him
with viol and instruments of music.
Let us rejoice in the living God from this
time forth for evermore. Amen.

(Paraphrase of Psalm 47)

Lord to thee I make my moan

Lord to thee I make my moan,
When dangers me oppress;
I call, I sigh, 'plain and groan,
Trusting to find release.

Hear now, O Lord, my request,
For it is full due time,
And let Thine ears aye be press'd
Unto this prayer mine. Amen.

(Psalm 130, vv. 1-2; as in Sternbold & Hopkins)

When David heard

When David heard that Absalom was
slain, he went up to his chamber over the
gate, and wept; and thus he said: O my son
Absalom! Would God I had died for thee!
O Absalom, my son!

(2 Samuel 18, v. 33)

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Sing, my soul, to God Thy Lord,
All in glory's highest key.
Lay the Angels' choir abroad
In their highest holy day.
Crave thy God to tune thy heart
Unto praise's highest part.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Amen.

Give ear, O Lord

Give ear, O Lord, to hear a sinner's careful
cry:
And let my woeful plaints ascend, above
the starry sky.
To grace receive the soul that puts his
trust in Thee:
And mercy grant to purge my sins.
Mercy, good Lord, mercy.
My soul desires to drink from fountains of
Thy grace,
to slake this thirst, O God, vouchsafe, turn
not away Thy face,
But bow Thy tender ear with mercy when
I cry,

And pardon grant for all sins past.
Mercy, good Lord, mercy.
Behold at length, O Lord, my true
repentant mind,
Which knocks with faith and hope thereby
Thy mercies great to find.
Thy promise thus hath pass'd, from which
I will not fly;
Who doth repent, trusting in Thee shall
taste of Thy mercy.
Mercy, good Lord, mercy.
Amen.

*(from 'Comfortable Dialogs betweene Christ and
a Sinner', William Hunnis, London, 1583)*

Most mighty and all-knowing Lord

Most mighty and all-knowing Lord,
True spring of consolation,
I do confess with heart and word,
Thou art my preservation.

Thou know'st good father I am weak,
And cannot bear Thy heavy ire,
Not knowing what to do or speak,
Or how to save me from this fire.
Unless Thou point me out the way,
With Thy wise spirit me directing,
Unto the devil I am made a prey,
Were not Thy power me protecting.

*(Printed in Sir William Leighton's 'The teares or
lamentacions of a sorrowfull soule', London, 1614)*

O how amiable

O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou
Lord of hosts.
My soul hath a desire and longing to enter
into the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my flesh rejoyce in the living
God.

O Lord God of hosts, blessed is the man
that putteth his trust in thee.

Amen.

(Psalm 84)

Alleluia. I heard a voice

Alleluia. I heard a voice as of strong
thund'rings, saying: Alleluia.

Salvation and glory and honour and power
be unto the Lord our God, and to the
Lamb forevermore. Alleluia.

(Paraphrase of Revelation 19: 6)

O mortal man

O mortal man, how long wilt thou remain
Drowned in sin, in danger for to die?
Lift up thine heart, and turn to Christ again
With all meekness, and most humility.

Beseeching aye His heav'nly Majesty
Of faith and force to fight against the flesh,
Which wanders here in this vale of misery.
Is none but He that may our silly souls
refresh.
Amen.

Give the king Thy judgements

Give the king Thy judgements, O God,
and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.
Then shall he judge the people according
unto right, and defend the poor. Behold,
O God our defender, and look upon the
face of Thine anointed.

Let the words of his mouth and the
meditations of his heart be always
acceptable in Thy sight. O Lord, our
strength and our redeemer. Behold, O God
our defender, and look upon the face of
Thine anointed. Amen.

*(Composite of Psalms 72, vv. 1-2; 84, v. 9; and
19, v. 14)*

If King Manasses

If King Manasses, sunk in depth of sin,
With plaints and tears recover'd grace and
crown,
A worthless worm some mild regard may
win,
And lowly creep, where flying threw it
down.

A poor desire I have to mend my ill,
I should, I would, I dare not say, I will.

I dare not say I will, but wish I may;
My pride is check'd, high words the
speaker spilt.

My good, O Lord! Thy gift. Thy strength
my stay,

Give what Thou bidst, and then bid what
Thou wilt.

Work with me what of me thou dost request,
Then will I dare the worst and love the best.

With mildness, Jesu, measure mine
offence;

Let true remorse Thy due revenge abate;
Let tears appease when trespass doth
increase;

Let pity temper Thy deserved hate;
Let grace forgive, let love forget my fall:
With fear I crave, with hope I humbly call.

Tender my suit, cleanse this defiled den,
Cancel my debts, sweet Jesu, say Amen!

*(Extract from Saint Peters complaint by Robert
Southwell, 1561?-1595)*

O Lord, Grant the King a long life

O Lord, Grant the King a long life: that
his years may endure throughout all
generations. Let him dwell before Thee
for ever: O prepare Thy loving mercy and
faithfulness, that they may preserve him.
So shall we always sing and praise Thy
name. Amen.

*(Psalm 6, vv. 6-7; these verses with Psalm
132, v. 17, make up the coronation anthem
appointed to be sung during the procession into
Westminster Abbey)*

THE CHOIR OF SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Directed by David Skinner

Benjamin Atkinson & Daniel Smith, organ scholars

SOPRANOS

Hannah Berridge, Emma Boulding,
Verity Bramson, Eleanor Cramer (a),
Amanda Kay, Ruth Shannon,
Catherine Shaw (b), Philippa Vega

ALTOS

Victoria Bullard-Smith, Rosemary Dilnot (c),
Rachel Dilworth, Renee Hale, Anna Isaac,
Anna Souter, Camilla Wehmeyer

TENORS

Ruairi Bowen, James Cormack (d),
Patrick Flanagan, Thomas Hindmarch

BASSES

Joachim Cassel, Laurens Macklon (e),
Yates Norton, Henry Scarlett,
Christopher Webb (f), Toby Young

Soloists:

(a) tracks 3, 6, 11, 15 & 19.

(b) tracks 3 & 19.

(c) tracks 3 & 19.

(d) track 10.

(e) track 14.

(f) track 19.

SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE rose from the ruins of the Cambridge Greyfriars in 1596 and has long been a nest for professional musicians. Indeed the large chapel that stood on this site in pre-Reformation times was the regular venue for University ceremonies and was the venue where a number of early

English composers took their degrees, including Robert Fayrfax (MusB, 1501; DMus 1504) and Christopher Tye (MusB, 1536). One of the earliest musicians in the College was the Royalist pamphleteer, author, and violist Roger L'Estrange (1616–1704), whose family were patrons of the composer John Jenkins. Earlier



still, the great Elizabethan composer William Byrd would have been well-known to the foundress, Lady Frances Sidney, and indeed two very fine elegies by Byrd survive for her nephew, the poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney. Currently resident in the College is Dr Christopher Page (1991), founder and former director of the multi-award-winning Gothic Voices, and Dr David Skinner (2006) who

is director of the early music ensemble Alamire, and Sidney's first Director of Music.

The Choir's first recording with Obsidian was Thomas Tomkins 'These Distracted Times' with Fretwork and Alamire, which was awarded Editor's Choice and CD of the Month in the Gramophone. The

choir has since gone on to record and tour a number of innovative programmes, and frequently tours throughout Europe and the USA; they also work closely with Composer in Residence, Eric Whitacre, who has written a number of works especially for the College.



FRETWORK

Richard Boothby, Richard Tunnicliffe, Liam Byrne, Asako Morikawa, Reiko Ichise & Bill Hunt (six-part Fantasia only).

‘Fretwork is the finest viol consort on the planet’ – Stephen Petitt, The London Evening Standard.

In 2011, Fretwork celebrated 25 years of performing music old and new, and look forward to a challenging and exciting future as the world’s leading consort of viols. Fretwork have expanded their repertoire to include music from over

500 years, from the first printed consort music in Venice in 1501 to music written this year. And, in between, everything that can be played on a consort of viols – Byrd & Schubert, Purcell & Shostakovich, Gibbons & Britten, Dowland & Grieg. This great musical adventure has taken them all over the globe, from Russia to Japan to North America to Australia. Audiences

have responded enthusiastically to the extraordinary sound world that Fretwork create and to the consistently high standards that they embody. The future sees many exciting projects based on the thrilling juxtaposition of old and new; making the experience of old music new and bringing the sensibilities of past ages to bear on contemporary music. This recording is their second collaboration with the Choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

DAVID SKINNER

David Skinner is well known as a leading scholar and performer of early music, and director of the acclaimed early music ensemble Alamire (www.alamire.co.uk). He has also worked with the main early music ensembles in the UK, including The Cardinal's Musick (as co-founder), The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, The Hilliard Ensemble and The King's Singers.

David is Fellow, Tutor and Osborn Director of Music at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University, where he teaches historical and practical topics from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. With Sidney Sussex Choir he has toured and made highly acclaimed recordings. David is frequently invited to lead workshops and coach choirs in Europe and the USA, and is noted for his refreshing and entertaining approach. He has published widely on music and musicians of early Tudor England. As new Series Editor of Medieval and Renaissance



choral music at Edition Peters, first projects to roll off the press include a new edition of the early 15th-century Trinity Carol Roll, containing the earliest carols from Medieval England, an Anthology of Latin Motets from Renaissance England and Selected Consort Anthems by Byrd, Weelkes, Gibbons and Tomkins.



The Choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge