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The four anthems by Purcell are intense in their expressive power, contributing an important dimension to English sacred music of his time. The expressive power of these anthems reveals a different side of Purcell’s style other than that which characterises his operas.

A CBE concert would not be complete without a work by Bach – tonight we present his unaccompanied motet Komm, Jesu Komm BWV 229 to conclude our performance. The performance of this work anticipates the cantatas that will be presented in two weeks time.

We hope you will be able to join us on Sunday 26 September at 2.30pm when the choir, orchestra and soloists of the Canberra Bach Ensemble will perform two cantatas – Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht BWV 105 and Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot BWV 39 – as well as the Missa Brevis in G minor BWV 235.

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choristers

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Kate Atkinson
Helen Thomson
Alice Richardson

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Marco Agostini
James Carter
Graeme Hill
Cameron Neylon

Alto
David Cassat
Kristen Clarke
Alison Cone
Jaki Kane
Richard Walker

Bass
Robin Darroch
Andrew Freeman
Alex Roose
David Woodgate

William Byrd (1543-1623)

The Great Service (1580s)

Venite
Te Deum
Benedictus
Creed
Magnificat
Nunc Dimittis

Interval

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Four Anthems (1680s)

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts

Lord, how long wilt thou be angry?

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Komm, Jesu, komm BWV 229 (1730)
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For his Great Service, Byrd took full advantage of the vocal forces available to him: the usual cathedral choir consisted of two choirs of five voices each (mean, two countertenors, tenor, and bass). There is only a tiny fragment of ten-part polyphony; instead, for the most part he wrote only four to six parts, occasionally employing seven or eight. Sometimes one choir will sing by itself, sometimes the choirs sing antiphonally (ie. alternating rapidly), sometimes all together, and all the while the different voices continually enter and leave, creating an aural kaleidoscope of vocal textures.

The score distinguishes the two choirs, known as decani (on your right) and cantoris (on your left), as well as between ‘verse’ and ‘full’ sections. For this performance, the ‘verse’ sections have been allocated to the choirs alternately: they will be sung by the cantoris in the Venite, the decani in the Te Deum, etc. The ‘full’ sections are for the whole choir. The Kyrie, which is a short, simple response to the chanting of the ten commandments, is omitted.

One of the most striking aspects of the Great Service is the extraordinary variety of rhythmic patterns employed. Not only is there no consistent time signature for much of the work, but there are also numerous daring syncopations, sometimes combined with soloistic ornamentation.

Four of the movements – the Venite, Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis – are bound together through the use of a ‘head-motive’, ie. a series of notes used, with only little alteration, at the beginning of each movement. Apart from these obvious ‘cross references’, there are also subtle similarities between movements. Some seem to be deliberate; it has been suggested that some others are subconscious at best, if not purely accidental.
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So I encircle myself in your hands and say to the world, good night! My life’s course will soon be rushing to an end; my spirit is certainly ready. Let it soar with its creator, because Jesus is, and remains, the true way to life.

Notes and translation © 1999 by Richard Walker.

Further reading and listening
Recordings by The Tallis Scholars (The Great Service), The Sixteen, and The Taverner Consort (Komm, Jesu, komm).

Venite (Psalm 95)
O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; and shew ourselves glad in him with Psalms. For the Lord is a great God: and a great King above all gods. In his hand are all the corners of the earth: and the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands prepared the dry land.

O come, let us worship, and fall down: and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is the Lord our God: and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; When your fathers tempted me: proved me, and saw my works.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said: It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways. Unto whom I sware in my wrath: that they should not enter into my rest.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, and is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Te Deum
We praise thee, O God: We knowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the Powers therein. To thee Cherubin, and Seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy Glory. The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee. The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.

The Holy Church throughout all the world doth knowledge thee, the Father of an infinite Majesty; Thine honourable, true, and only Son; Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Thou art the King of Glory. O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou took’st upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb, When thou hast overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the Glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy Saints in glory everlasting. O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage. Govern them, and lift them up for ever.

Day by day we magnify thee; And we worship thy Name ever world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. O Lord, in thee have I trusted: Let me never be confounded.

Benedictus (Luke 1: 68–79)
Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people; And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us: in the house of his servant David. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets: which have been since the world began; That we should be saved from our enemies: and from the hands of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers: and to remember his holy Covenant; To perform the oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham: that he would give us; That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies: might serve him without
fear; in holiness and righteousness before him: all the days of our life.

And thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people: for the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God: Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the beginning, and is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Creed
I believe in one God, The Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made, who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried, And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory, To judge both the quick and the dead: Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together Is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholick and Apostolick Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Magnificat (Luke 1: 46–55)
My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations. He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He rememb'ring his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel. As he promised to our forefather Abraham and to his seed for ever.

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Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2: 29–32)
Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

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Thou knowest, Lord
(The Book of Common Prayer)
Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts. Shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayers; but spare us, Lord most holy. O God most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee. Amen.

Lord, how long wilt thou be angry?
(Psalm 79, vv. 5, 8, 9, 13)
Lord, how long wilt thou be angry? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire for ever? O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon: for we are come to great misery: Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; O deliver us, and be merciful unto our sins, for thy name’s sake. So we, that are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture, shall give thee thanks for ever: and will always be shewing forth thy praise from one generation to another.

Remember not, Lord, our offences
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Hear my prayer, O Lord
Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee.

Purcell’s anthems have formed part of the staple diet of cathedral and church choirs for centuries. This evening you will hear four, which despite their unity of theme—penitence and a cry for restoration—cover a broad range of musical styles. Certainly, ‘Hear my prayer’, a setting for two choirs, is the most expansive of the four. But the other anthems would best be described as deceptively simple. For example, ‘Remember not’ is mostly homophonic (the choir singing the words together) with a short polyphonic section in the middle. But in the last section there are some bold harmonic shifts, typical of Purcell; listen for the two occurrences of the words ‘with us for ever’, at which Purcell breaks a number of rules to startling effect.
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Come, O Jesus, come, my body is tired, my strength is vanishing more and more, I long for your peace; the bitter path is becoming too hard for me! Come, come, I will surrender myself to you; you are the sure way, the truth, and the life.


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Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot BWV 39
Missa Brevis in G minor BWV 235

Choir and orchestra with:
Helen Thomson
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Richard Anderson

Tickets now available - $10/$5 tonight only.