



# London Concord Singers

conductor Malcolm Cottle

Thursday December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002

St. Cyprian's Church

## Programme

*Esquivel - Duo Seraphim*

*de Monte - Factum est Silentium*

*Harvey - The Angels*

*Lassus - Scio Enim*

*Vaet - O Quam Gloriosum*

*Hugill - Here be Angels*

## Interval

*Hassler - Laetentur Caeli*

*Handl - Orietur Stella*

*Handl - Rorate Coeli*

*Poulenc - Videntes Stellam*

*Amon - Magi Videntes Stellam*

*Sweelinck - Hodie Christus natus est*

*Harris - Faire is the Heaven*



There are a number of interesting links and connections between the works in tonight's programme. Three of our 20<sup>th</sup> century works and some of the renaissance motets are all centred around the theme of Angels. Lurking behind the words used by Hugill and Harris (and possibly even Harvey) lie the writings of Dionysius the Pseudo Areopagite. In his *De Celestia Hierarchia*, this 6<sup>th</sup> Century Syrian codified the heavenly hierarchy of Angels, dividing them into three ranks of three and giving each rank its own particular characteristics. Besides these literary links, the Harvey and Hugill pieces are both linked by their use of bitonality - each piece uses two choirs with each choir in a different key.

The renaissance motets are also linked by a web of friendship and influence. Philippe de Monte was a friend of Lassus, they were both in Naples in the 1540's and Philippe de Monte succeeded Vaet at the Imperial chapel. Amon and Handl were all also Imperial service in Vienna, where Handl sang in the Imperial Chapel under Philippe de Monte. Hassler studied with Gabrieli, who had studied with Lassus. The links were probably even more extensive than we can now reconstruct. Besides the links of friendship, pupils could spread influence so that Sweelinck, who rarely left Amsterdam, was influential in Eastern Europe due to the number of German pupils that he taught. Hassler, who studied with Andrea Gabrieli, was succeeded in his post by Praetorius who had been taught by Sweelinck, who may have been taught by Andrea Gabrieli. And so the chain goes on.

### Juan Esquivel (c.1563 - c.1614) Duo Seraphim

Juan Esquivel de Barahona was born around 1560 in Ciudad Rodrigo, where it is supposed he was taught by Juan Navarro who also taught Victoria. The thing we know about him is his appointment as musical director of Oviedo Cathedral, following a lawsuit against the Chapter because they had appointed Alonso Puro contrary to a previous agreement with Esquivel. He remained there until 1585 but little is known of his life after this date. He was probably musical director at Ciudad Rodrigo from before 1608 until at least 1613. Esquivel was one of the few Iberian musicians who had the good fortune to have their works printed.

The first book, edited in Salamanca in 1608, entitled *Missarum liber primus*, contains 6 masses (one being a Requiem) and the antiphon *Asperges me*. The second book, edited the same year and in the same city, is entitled *Motecta Festorum et Dominicarum cum Communi Sanctorum IV, V, VI et VIII vocibus concinenda*. It contains seventy-one motets. The third book is the most important because it contains: eight vesper psalms plus the Song of Simeon; a *Nunc dimittis*; twenty-nine hymns; sixteen *magnificats*; four Marian antiphons; five different pieces plus one motet; seven masses and one *Officium Defunctorum*.

*Two seraphim cried out to one another and said:  
"Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory".*

### Philippe de Monte (1521-1603) Factum est Silentium

Philippe de Monte was born in Flanders. Little is known of his early life, but when he was quite young he travelled to Italy. He was in Naples from 1541 to 1544 and knew Lassus there. In 1554 he was the *chorus praefectus* in the private chapel in Antwerp of Philip II of Spain. In this capacity he travelled to England when Philip married Mary Tudor. He was also a friend of William Byrd. In 1545 de Monte returned to Naples, disliking the number of Spaniards in Philip's chapel. In 1568, Emperor Maximilian appointed de Monte the Imperial Hofkapellmeister in Vienna, succeeding Jacob Vaet. He remained in this position under the next Emperor, Rudolf II, and died in post in 1603. He wrote around 40 masses, 144 sacred madrigals, over 1100 secular madrigals, around 250 chansons and 450 motets. Most of compositions were published after 1568, on his move to Vienna. In his madrigals, mainly written during his Italian years, he comes closer perhaps to Palestrina than to Lassus in the mixture of polyphony and homophony, in the fine contrapuntal technique he displayed and in his fondness for the spiritual madrigal.

*There was silence in heaven, and then the Dragon made war with the Archangel Michael. A million voices were heard crying out: health, honour and power to the Almighty God, alleluia. A million ministered to him and tens of thousands attended him*



## Jonathan Harvey (1939 - )

### The Angels

Jonathan Harvey was a music scholar at St. John's College Cambridge, going on to further study at Glasgow and Cambridge. On the advice of Benjamin Britten he studied composition privately with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller (thus gaining an early acquaintance with the music of Schoenberg). In the 1960's his composing was widely influenced, but contact with Milton Babbitt along with work in Schenkerian analysis refocused his musical aims. In the 1980's Boulez invited him to work at IRCAM, when he produced four highly regarded commissions all including tape or electronics.

Notwithstanding these impressive modernist credentials, he has also written a large and varied output of choral music, much of it suitable for church performance. The largest of these is *Passion and Resurrection* (1981), which was the subject of a BBC Television film and was subsequently toured on the Contemporary Music Network under Martin Neary in 1993.

His opera, *Inquest of Love* was commissioned by the English National Opera and first performed by them in 1993 at the London Coliseum.

**The Angels** was written for the Choir of Kings College Cambridge, and first performed by them in 1994 at their Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. It sets a poem by the late John V. Taylor, poet and Anglican Bishop of Winchester. The piece is written for two choirs. Choir 2 provide a wordless accompaniment based on 3 basic chords, over this choir 1 (in an entirely different key) sing the setting of Taylor's words, the canonic setting of the opening words gradually developing into something more complex.

*Should you hear them singing among the stars  
or whispering secrets of a wiser world,  
do not imagine ardent, fledgeling children;  
they are intelligences old as sunrise  
that never learnt right from left, before from after,  
knowing but one direction, into God,  
but one duration, now.*

*Their melody strides not from bar to bar,  
but, like a painting, hands there entire,  
one chord of limitless communication.*

*You have heard it in the rhythms of the hills,  
the spiralling turn of a dance, the fall of words,  
the touch of fingers at the rare, right moment,  
and these were holy, holy.*

John V. Taylor.

## Orlandus Lassus (1532 - 1594) Scio Enim

Lassus was a Franco-Flemish composer and legend holds that as a choirboy with an uncommonly beautiful voice he was thrice kidnapped from his birthplace for service elsewhere. It is not certain, however, that he was ever a chorister in Mons. His first known position was in the service of Ferrante Gonzaga, who passed through the Low Countries in 1544 on his way to Italy. Lassus spent the next decade in Italy, at first with Gonzaga, later in the service of Constantino Castrioto of Naples. By 1553 he was choirmaster at St. John Lateran in Rome, remaining there for a year, then returning to his homeland and settling briefly in Antwerp. His career from 1556 was centred in Munich at the court chapel of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, as *maestro di cappella* from 1563, with duties that included some travel in Germany, Flanders, France, and Italy. While employed at Munich, he came to know both Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, each of whom spent time in the musical establishment he directed. His accomplishments brought formal recognition from Emperor Maximilian II, the French king Charles IX, and Pope Gregory XIII.

*I know that my Redeemer lives and that at the last day I shall rise  
out of the earth. I shall again be clothed in my body, and in my  
flesh shall I see God my Saviour, whom I shall see for myself, my  
eyes looking upon him and no other. This is the hope in my breast.*



## Jacob Vaet (c. 1529 - 1567) O Quam Gloriosum

Jacob Vaet was a Franco-Flemish composer. He was Kapellmeister to the Archduke Maximilian in Prague from 1554 and when Maximilian succeeded as Emperor in 1564, Vaet became court Kapellmeister in Vienna. His output consists almost entirely of church music, including many parody Masses on models by composers such as Josquin, Mouton and Crecquillon. His earlier work is solidly imitative in the manner of Gombert, but his later music shows the influence of Lassus in its freer textures and bold dissonances, and of the Venetians in his double choir pieces. On his death his post at the Imperial Chapel was taken by Philippe de Monte.

*O how glorious is the kingdom, where all the saints rejoice in Christ.  
Dressed in white robes, they follow the Lamb wherever he goes.  
Alleluia.*

## Robert Hugill (1955 - ) Here be Angels Motet for Double Chorus

In *Here Be Angels* I wanted to look at different aspects of the nature of Angels from the point of view of the pre-Reformation and early post-Reformation periods. A time when the Angelic host could be rigorously divided into nine categories, each with their own particular characteristics; when Angels could be given names and have real characters; when the argument about how many Angels could dance on the head of a pin represented a very real philosophical argument about the very nature of Angels; and when the poet Milton could describe and name the rebel Angels with such force.

A subtitle for the piece might be *Angels and their names*, as the names of the Angels and the names of the Angelic hosts run as threads through all three movements. The first movement includes the names and descriptions of the nine ranks of Angels, the second includes a list of individual Angels' names and the final movement includes the names of the rebel Angels.

The work is written for unaccompanied double chorus. One chorus might be described as the earth-bound chorus, sung by lower voices (Altos, Tenors and Basses) and the second chorus as the more ethereal chorus, sung by higher voices (Sopranos, Altos and Tenors). To emphasise the split between the choirs the outer movements are bi-tonal (the first choir sings in a different key to that of the second choir).

When producing the piece, I was concerned to write a dramatic work that was both challenging and enjoyable for the choir to sing. To dramatise the text, I used various other musical techniques, in addition to the more conventional ones: certain sections are aleatoric and unmeasured, in each of these, the beginning and end of the section is indicated by the conductor. Within the section, the individual choir members choose the speed and rhythm of the notes that they sing, though the notes themselves are fixed. Some passages mix singing with unpitched, rhythmical speaking of the text. Other passages reduce the speaking of the text to an unrhythmical muttering. Besides giving the freedom to choose speeds and rhythms, other passages specify the rhythm but allow the individual singers to choose the exact pitches of the notes within a given range.

The text is drawn from a variety of sources. The first movement uses passages from *The Celestial Hierarchy* by Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Written in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, this was the first book to formalise the Angelic host into nine groups (three groups of three). The second movement uses a list of Angel's names from the Book of Enoch (a work preserved by the Ethiopian church), combined with a discussion on how many Angels can dance on a pin. The final movement uses some of the lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost* that describe the rebel Angels.

The first movement opens with a prelude that is an evocation of heaven. At first we see Heaven from a distance as the earthly choir sings Alleluias and are answered by distant echoes of the singing of the heavenly host. Then, as we approach closer to Heaven, both choirs combine to name and describe the nine ranks of Angels dwelling there. The heavenly choir's descriptions of the Angelic host being accompanied



by unpitched passages designed (in one of my more fanciful moments) to evoke the beating of the Angels' wings.

The second movement combines the slow movement and the scherzo. The altos and tenors engage in a discussion about how many Angels can dance on a pin. This starts out humorously but develops into a philosophical discussion with quotations from such writers as St. Thomas Aquinas. The sopranos and basses accompany this by slowly singing a list of the names of Angels.

The final movement describes the snarling, growling assembly of the host of rebel Angels. Occasionally one of the rebel commanders, such as Moloch, Peos or Chemor, appears accompanied by snatches of a march. Later, some of the more exotic rebels appear, such as Astarte or Ashtoreth, accompanied by more erotic, languorous melodies. Finally, amidst the clamour, Satan himself appears, the hosts hoist their banners and the music takes on the form of a steady, but rather noisy, march. We leave Satan in all his fallen glory, at the head of his myriad hosts, waiting revenge.

The work was commissioned by Crouch End Festival Chorus, conductor David Temple, and first performed by them in 1998. At these performances a choir of around 125 people sang the work, with an organ providing a continuo in the first and last movements. With a work as complex as *Here be Angels*, I was aware that it might be possible to do an alternative type of performance of the work, using a smaller choir. It was through singing in London Concord Singers that I became familiar with many of the choral techniques that I use in *Here be Angels*. In particular, Thea Musgrave's 'Rorate Coeli' was quite influential. So I delighted when Malcolm suggested that Concord might sing the work. For this performance we have omitted the organ continuo (marked *ad lib* in the score) and I have made one or two small adjustments to the vocal parts.

Dionysius the Areopagite is the judge of the Areopagus who, in Acts, xvii, 34, was converted to Christianity by the preaching of St. Paul and was Bishop of Athens. Over time, however, errors arose in connection with this name and a series of famous writings of a rather peculiar nature was ascribed to him.

Deep obscurity still hovers about the real author of these writings, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. There is no evidence as to the time and place of his birth, his education and occupation.

Our only source of information regarding this problematic personage is the writings themselves. The clues furnished by the first appearance and by the character of the writings enable us to conclude that the author belongs at the very earliest to the latter half of the fifth century, and that, in all probability, he was a native of Syria. His thoughts, phrases, and expressions show a great familiarity with the works of the neo-Platonists, especially with Plotinus and Proclus. He is also thoroughly versed in the sacred books of the Old and New Testament, and in the works of the Fathers as far as Cyril of Alexandria. The writings themselves form a collection of four treatises and ten letters. The first treatise presents, in 13 chapters, an explanation of the divine names. The second treatise, in 15 chapters, develops the doctrine of the celestial hierarchy comprising nine angelic choirs which are divided into closer groupings of three choirs each (triads). The names of the nine choirs are taken from the canonical books and are arranged in the following order. First triad: seraphim, cherubim, thrones; second triad: virtues, dominations, powers; third triad: principalities, archangels, angels. The third treatise is a continuation of the first two, the fourth concerns the Mystical Union with God, which is entirely beyond the compass of sensuous or intellectual perception.

## 1-THE CELESTIAL HIERARCHY

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*

*The word of God has provided nine designations for the heavenly beings, angels, archangels, transcendent principalities, authorities, powers, dominions, divine thrones, cherubim, seraphim, always and forever near God and with God.*

*The first sphere angels who serve as heavenly counsellors, for ever around God, united with him.*

*Seraphim, fire-makers, carriers of warmth.*

*Cherubim, fullness of knowledge, outpouring of wisdom.*

*Thrones, of equal order with the cherubim and seraphim.*



*The middle rank of the heavenly hierarchy. The second sphere angels who work as heavenly governors.*

*Dominions, a lifting up which is free, unfettered by earthly tendencies.*

*Holy Powers, unshakeable courage in all its God-like activities.*

*Holy Authorities, harmoniously, unfailingly uplifted toward the things of God*

*The final rank in the hierarchy, the third sphere angels who function as heavenly messengers.*

*Heavenly Principalities, who possess a God-like, princely hegemony, the power to receive to the full mark of the Principle of Principles.*

*Archangels, who commune with the most Holy Principalities and with the Holy Angels.*

*Angels, who possess the final quality of being an angel, they too make known the enlightenment proceeding from the Deity.*

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*

## 2-OF ANGELS, NAMES AND PINS

*Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraquel, Gabriel, Remiel, Smlazaz, Arkiba, Rameel, Kokablel, Tamlel, Ramlel, Danel, Ezeqeel, Baraqijal, Asael, Armaros, Batarel, Ananel, Zaqler, Samsapeel, Satarel, Turel, Jomjael, Sariel, Semjaza*

*Would it bother you if you did not know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.*

*Do angels dance to the rhythm of today's raucous beat or do they do it cheek-to cheek?*

*Is the count made when angels are standing on one foot or on two?*

*If the angels use their wings for balance, is it cheating.*

*Do angels really enjoy dancing or standing on the heads of pins.*

*Would it bother you if you did not know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.*

*One Angel - since an angel is incorporeal, it would entirely fill the pin.*

*The pin would need to be animated by one angelic substance excluding all others.*

*None - because angels have no spatial position.*

*As many as they please - because 'on' can only mean 'attending to' and one attention does not exclude others. An angel is in a place, not as a body is said to be in a place but by the application of its power to that place.*

## 3-THE REBEL ANGELS

*Those who, from the pit of Hell*

*Roaming to seek their prey on Earth, durst fix*

*Their seats, next the seat of God,*

*Their altars by his altar and durst abide*

*Jehovah thundering out of Sion, throned*

*Between the Cherubim; with cursed things*

*His holy rites and solemn feasts profaned,*

*And with their darkness durst affront his light.*

*First, Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood of human sacrifice*

*Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons, from Aroar to Nebo and the wild of southmost Abarim;*

*Peor, his lustful orgies, lust hard by hate, drove them thence to hell.*

*Baalim and Ashtaroth, spirits either sex assume, in what shape they choose, works of love or enmity fulfil.*

*Astoreth, Queen of Heaven with crescent horns, Astarte, beguiling.*

*Next Dagon, sea-monster, upward man and downward fish, dreaded throughout the coast.*

*Osiris, Isis, Orus, with monstrous shapes and sorceries abused Fanatic Egypt.*

*Belial, a Spirit more lewd Fell not from Heaven,*

*All in a moment through the gloom were seen*

*Ten thousand banners rise into the air,*

*Their dread Commander, he, above the rest*

*In shape and gesture proudly eminent,*

*Stood like a tower. An archangel ruined,*

*Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride*

*Waiting revenge.*

Interval



## Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612) *Laetentur Caeli*

Hassler was an important German composer and organist of the late Renaissance. He was born in Nuremberg, one of three sons of the prominent organist Isaac Hassler from whom he received his early musical training. He studied in Venice with Andrea Gabrieli and became a colleague of Giovanni Gabrieli (with whom he composed a wedding motet in 1600). Through this connection, Hassler secured an appointment as chamber organist to Octavian II Fugger in Augsburg in 1586. In 1595 Hans and his brothers were all raised to the nobility by Emperor Rudolph II. However, Hassler's Protestant convictions eventually stifled his career. In 1602 he was appointed *kaiserlicher Hofdiener von Haus aus* (Imperial servant of the first order), and commissioned to undertake some commercial journeys on behalf of the Emperor. In 1608, he was appointed court organist for the Elector of Saxony in Dresden. Soon afterwards, he developed tuberculosis. Hassler died while attending the coronation of Emperor Matthias at Frankfurt am Main. He would be succeeded at the chapel by Praetorius and Schütz.

Hassler is seen as the first great German Protestant composer. His early works were for the Roman church and reflect much Italian and Venetian influence. His later works are more ethnically German and seem to flow out of the spirit of German folk song. He wrote masses, Latin and German motets, chorales, songs, instrumental music in the Venetian manner and pieces for the organ. His church music was influenced by Lassus but in his Italian secular music he showed himself familiar with the more contemporary style of Vecchi and Marenzio.

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;  
let the sea resound, and all that is in it;  
let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them.  
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;  
they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the  
earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.*

## Jacob Handl (1550 - 1591)

### *Orietur Stella, Rorate Coeli*

Jacob Handl (Jacobus Gallus), was born in Slovenia and he became one of the most respected and serious renaissance composers in Austria. His origins are somewhat obscure. If his parents were Slovenian then his real name could have been Jakob Petelin (Petelin means rooster in Slovenian as does Handl in German). He sometimes latinised his name to Jacobus Gallus (Gallus meaning rooster in Latin). There is no known connection between him and Georg Frideric Handel. It is not known where he was educated, but around 1565 he travelled to Austria, presumably to make his fortune. He seems to have enjoyed staying in Monasteries. He might have actually become a monk, but records for the period are rather incomplete. By 1574 he was a singer in the Imperial Chapel of Maximilian II where the Imperial Hofkapellmeister was Philippe de Monte. After further travels he became choir master to the Bishop of Olmotz (now Olomouc, Czech Republic). After 5 years he became cantor of a church near Prague, where he remained until he died. There was a lively literary group centred round the church and they probably performed secular choral music. Through this group Handl gained contact with the court of Emperor Rudolf II, gaining a high reputation not only for compositional skill but also literary knowledge. The majority of his compositions are Latin sacred settings, the bulk of it is a group of nearly 500 motets. He also wrote about 20 masses. His secular music also sets Latin texts, using Roman poets such as Ovid, Virgil, Catullus and Horace.

*A star shall rise from Jacob, and a man shall spring up out of Israel.  
He shall destroy the leaders of alien peoples, and the whole earth  
shall be his possession.  
All the kings of the world shall adore, every nation shall serve him.*



### Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963) *Videntes Stellam*

The French composer Francis Poulenc only undertook formal musical training with Charles Koechlin in 1921, by which time he had already become identified with Les Six, the six French composers of the circle of Jean Cocteau, including Honegger, Auric and Milhaud. He was the most famous of Les Six, and the one who found it easiest to stick to Jean Cocteau's ideals of simplicity. He came from the same family that started the French agrochemical giant Rhône-Poulenc. In his earlier musical life Poulenc was something of a dandy and an aesthete and his music rather reflects this.

A highly complex man, Poulenc first suffered serious bouts of depression in the late 1920's, at about the same time as he became aware of his homosexuality. He was permanently affected by the death in 1930 of Raymonde Linossier, the only woman he ever wanted to marry. His letters testify to the complexity of his emotional life which was bound up with his creativity. Subject to manic depression, Poulenc always rebounded from depression into phases of enthusiasm.

In 1935 he suffered a stunning loss: an automobile accident killed Pierre-Octave Ferroud, friend, colleague, and musical advocate. This event brought a new depth to his work. A pilgrimage to the shrine of the Black Virgin of Rocamadour in 1936 revived the Catholic faith of his childhood. *Videntes Stellam* comes from his group of four Christmas Motets, *Quatre Motets pour le Temps de Noël* written between 1951 and 1952.

*At the sight of the star, the Kings rejoiced.  
Entering into the house, they offered to the Lord gold, frankincense  
and myrrh.*

### Blasius Amon (c1560 - 1590) *Magi Videntes Stellam*

Amon (or Ammon) was an Austrian composer, trained as a choirboy at the Hofkapelle of Archduke Ferdinand I at Innsbruck. He went on to study further in Venice. After returning to Austria he worked as Kantor for the Franciscan and Cistercian orders, finally entering the Franciscan Monastery in Vienna, where he took his vows in 1590.

He was the first of a group of late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century composers north of the Alps who were strongly influenced by Venetian music. *Magi Videntes Stellam* comes from his book of motets published in 1590. Like many motets in this collection, *Magi Videntes Stellam* makes use of sections scored, in the Venetian manner, for two contrasting groups.

*The Magi saw the star and said to one another,  
this is the sign of a great King.  
They went to seek him and offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

### Jan P. Sweelinck (1562 -1621) *Hodie Christus Natus Est*

Sweelinck was a Dutch organist, teacher and composer. The elder son of Peter Swybbertszon and Elske Sweeling, he adopted his mother's family name. He may have studied in Venice with Andrea Gabrieli, but his only known teachers besides his father were the pastor of the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam and a singer instrumentalist from Haarlem. By 1580 and possibly earlier he became organist at the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, succeeding his father. His family were organists at the church for over 100 years. He became famous for his brilliant organ improvisations. Best known today for his keyboard compositions, he also wrote secular and sacred choral music. He spent most of his life in Amsterdam and rarely ventured out of Holland. When he did leave Amsterdam it was usually to inspect organs and give advice on repairs and restorations. But, as a result of his teaching, his influence spread widely. His pupils included Scheidemann, Scheidt, Praetorius, and Hasse. He was the first composer to use an independent organ pedal part, including fugue subjects on the pedals. His 39 motets were published in his *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1619.

*Today, Christ was born. Today the Saviour appeared, Alleluia. The  
Angels sing on earth, the Archangels rejoice. Today the just ones  
rejoice saying, Glory be to God on high, Alleluia.*



**Sir William H Harris (1883 - 1973)    Faire is the Heaven**

W H Harris studied with Stanford at the Royal College of Music and he later taught there from 1923 to 1953. He was organist at New College Oxford, Christ Church Cathedral and from 1933 to 1961 at St. George's Chapel, Windsor. Despite being an almost exact contemporary of Stravinsky (!) his compositions are firmly rooted in the Anglican tradition and he wrote mainly choral and organ pieces. A fastidious craftsman, although he was never a prolific composer, his works always produced, in the words of Herbert Howells, "*sounds appropriate to the beauty of the cathedrals and churches that are their natural home.*" During his long life Harris became a well-loved figure in English musical life. He was the piano and vocal teacher of Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose. He was known primarily as a fine chorus master and for the ceremonial services and festivals which he organised at Windsor, he was knighted in 1954.

But Harris did have interests in music outside the English establishment. In the 1920's he conducted a performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, very early on in the revival of interest in that composer. Around that time he also produced an edition of Gesualdo's *O Vos Omnes*, the first edition to be generally and easily available in England. It was also at this time, in 1925, that he produced his Spenser setting, **Faire is the Heaven**

The motet is scored for double chorus and though not long, it's richness of scoring and harmony (including many of Harris's trademark en-harmonic modulations) put it on altogether a different plane from his other works. The work is full of Edwardian splendour and rings with nostalgia for the perfect world before the First World War.

The text was written by Edmund Spenser (1552?-1599) in 1596, it is taken from his *Hymn of Heavenly Beauty*, a long poem which is Spenser's vision of the ascent of the soul through the heavenly powers, based not only on Plato but on the writings of Dionysius the Pseudo Areopagite, a great imaginer of mystical theology, whose writings are also used in the libretto of Robert Hugill's **Here be Angels**, also on the programme tonight.

*Faire is the heaven where happy soules have place  
In full enjoyment of felicitie;  
Whence they do still behold the glorious face  
Of the Divine, Eternall Majestie;*

*Yet farre more faire be those bright Cherubins  
Which all with golden wings are overdight.  
And those eternall burning Seraphins  
Which from their faces dart out fiery light;*

*Yet fairer than they both and much more bright  
Be the Angels and Archangels  
Which attend on God's owne person without rest or end.  
These then in faire each other farre excelling  
As to the Highest they approach more neare,  
Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling*

*Fairer than all the rest which there appeare  
Though all their beauties joynd together were;  
How then can mortal tongue hope to expresse  
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?*

Edmund Spenser