

Organ recital – St Mary's, Welwyn
Saturday 3 April 2021
Linden Innes-Hopkins

A musical journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day

Palm Sunday

Dominica in Palmis

J Langlais

Langlais, who was blind from birth, was steeped in the French Roman Catholic tradition; he would have been familiar, from childhood, with the plainsong melodies associated with the different church festivals. In this piece there are fragments of several melodies associated with Palm Sunday. The piece was actually composed for the harmonium, a kind of reed organ, and you will hear the St Mary's reeds extensively used.

Valet ich will dir geben (Fantasia), BWV 735

J S Bach

This is not the only setting Bach made of the chorale melody to which we in England sing the great Palm Sunday hymn, *All glory, laud and honour*. Bach sets the chorale melody itself in the pedals with plenty of bustling, joyful semiquavers in the manuals; crowds of black notes, if you like!

Maundy Thursday

Chorale Prelude on 'Rockingham'

C H H Parry

Thither be all thy children led, and let them all thy sweetness know.

Parry's hymn settings offer a wide variety of styles and moods. In each prelude, Parry seeks to capture something of a specific part of the hymn text. Although the tune *Rockingham* is usually teamed with the hymn *When I survey the wondrous cross*, it is also used for *My God, and is thy table spread*, a Holy Communion hymn. It is from the latter that Parry's music derives.

Toccata-Prelude on 'Pange lingua'

E Bairstow

The *Pange lingua* plainsong also has a connection with the Holy Communion service, whose institution is remembered on Maundy Thursday. Bairstow alternates bright, extravert sections with quieter, more reflective sections; the flowing feel of the piece is, in part, a result of there being 5 beats in a bar throughout. There are snippets of the plainsong melody itself or motifs derived from it in almost every bar.

Good Friday

Kommt her zu mir, spricht Gottes Sohn, BuxWV 201

D Buxtehude

It is thought that most of Buxtehude's chorale preludes were written down versions of the introductions he would have improvised before the hymn was sung. To our ears, these chorale preludes (often quite decorated, as in this instance) seem to conceal the melody to be sung but it is important to remember that the good Lutherans would have been very familiar with the melodies and recognised them instantly, even heavily disguised!

Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen

H Walcha

Ah! holy Jesu, how hast thou offended

A repeated Bass and left hand of six bars is overlaid by the melody by Crüger. Walcha calls for the Krummhorn stop; the nearest in sound to that is the Oboe, which is what you will hear.

O Mensch, bewein' dein Sünde gross, BWV 622

J S Bach

This must be among the most well-known of Bach's many, many chorale settings and it must also be one of the most ravishingly and hauntingly beautiful. To quote Stainton de B Taylor, the way Bach has constructed the inner parts, 'sets up an atmosphere of almost unbearable anguish expressed in music.' Bach was careful to write in all the ornamentation of the melody – of which there is a great deal – himself.

O man, thy grievous sin bemoan

Holy Saturday

Pari intervallo

Arvo Pärt

Pärt is an Estonian composer. He is probably most famous for his choral music, which has been championed by the Hilliard Ensemble. In seeking an organ piece for Holy Saturday, that part of the sequence of services leading to Easter Day on which nothing happens, I wanted to find a piece that distilled a sense of the pause button having been pressed. In Pari Intervallo, there is utter stillness, an absence of anything happening, an air of waiting...

Easter Day

Noel nouvelet ('Now the green blade rises')

Malcolm Archer

Although the tune on which Archer bases this quirky set of variations is originally a Christmas carol, most of us will recognise it (despite the tongue-in-cheek wittiness of the composer) as *Now the green blade riseth*.

Final from Sonata No 1 in D minor

A Guilmant

Guilmant was famed for his virtuosic performances all over Europe and beyond. He was something of a celebrity! The Final from his 1st Sonata rattles through with energetic semiquavers before coming to an abrupt halt, after which something more lyrical emerges. The return of the opening music, with the addition of a pedal part which ranges over the entire pedalboard in next to no time, cascades breathlessly towards the grand finale in which the lyrical section from earlier is given a full organ makeover.