



Musical Director William Vann Charity No 264764

Deo Gratia

**Motets by Bach, Brahms, Bruckner,
Górecki, Ockeghem & Purcell**

Dulwich Choral Society

Joshua Ryan organ

William Vann conductor

Saturday 13 June 2026, 7.00pm

St Stephen's Church, College Road, Dulwich

Programme

Deo gratia à 36 – Johannes Ockeghem

Locus iste – Anton Bruckner

Ave Maria – Anton Bruckner

Christus factus est – Anton Bruckner

Organ solo: Fugue in A flat minor – Johannes Brahms

Geistliches Lied – Johannes Brahms

Totus tuus – Henryk Górecki

Organ solo: Suite in D major – Henry Purcell

I was glad – Henry Purcell

Lobet den Herrn – J. S. Bach

*Refreshments will be on sale
before and after the concert.*

*Please switch your phone to silent before the start
of the concert, and refrain from filming or recording.*

Deo Gratia

Programme note

Tonight's programme brings together a selection of the finest sacred choral writing, in particular a group of motets composed between the 15th and 20th centuries. Almost all the works we will hear were requested by members of Dulwich Choral Society, including Ockeghem's monumental 36-part canon *Deo Gratia*, the title of our programme tonight, Bruckner's sumptuous choral pieces, Henryk Górecki's minimalist best-seller *Totus tuus* and J. S. Bach's vibrant and energetic *Lobet den Herrn*. It has been a fascinating programme to study throughout our summer term, and it is particularly delightful to present a selection of music curated by the singers themselves.

William Vann

Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410–1497)

Ockeghem, born in what is now Belgium, was a highly respected composer in his era, evidenced by the many compositional tributes on his death including by the famous Josquin des Prez. Details of his early life are scarce until his time as chorister in Antwerp. From the mid-century onwards he composed for the French royal court and served as diplomat, priest and chaplain. In his *Deo gratia à 36*, nine separate voices within each of the four main voice parts enter sequentially to give a 36-part round. The constantly shifting kaleidoscope of melodic fragments within a simple underlying two-chord structure produces a surprisingly contemporary effect. The entire round is repeated to ensure no detail is missed!

Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)

Born in Austria, Bruckner is renowned for his monumental symphonies but as devout Catholic and ordained priest he also composed significant sacred choral music. *Locus iste* is a notable example of this genre and was composed in 1869 for the dedication of a chapel in the New Cathedral, Linz. Celebrated for its heartfelt simplicity it is often used today for the dedication of religious buildings. *Ave Maria*, composed in 1861, is one of three of his settings of the well-known prayer. The upper voices greet Mary, to be echoed by the lower voices, and then all voices together petition Mary for intercession.

Christus factus est was written in 1884 when Bruckner was finally achieving wide recognition for his symphonies after many years in relative obscurity. It features adventurous harmony influenced by Wagner, whom Bruckner admired. The piece begins mysteriously, before a contrasting section which builds in waves with increasing chromaticism to a peak of intensity, before concluding in serenity.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

During his twenties Brahms exchanged contrapuntal exercises with his friend and co-performer, the violinist Joseph Joachim. One such piece from that time was the organ work *Fugue in A-flat minor*. This sombre work was sent to his friends the Schumanns, for the birthday of the seriously ill Robert, and later privately dedicated to Clara. Another exercise was *Geistliches Lied*. Written in 1856 and published in 1864, this sets verses by the 17th-century chorale writer Paul Flemming. The piece opens with sopranos and tenors in canon, followed by altos and basses in a second canon. The central section, also a double canon, introduces the voices in a different order in a minor key. The opening music then returns, before a long final Amen. Although Brahms was born Lutheran, he kept his religious beliefs private; nevertheless, the work clearly conveys a straightforward and affecting message of consolation and reassurance, despite its intricate structure, similar in tone to his later Requiem.

Henryk Górecki (1933–2010)

Górecki shared Pope John Paul II's deep attachment to the Virgin Mary, setting a short Marian prayer by a contemporary poet to mark the Papal visit to Poland in 1987. Górecki, initially part of the *avant garde*, had established himself as a leading Polish composer of both orchestral and choral works, but he later adopted a more accessible style, sometimes described as 'holy minimalism', which was taken up by several other contemporary composers, like John Tavener and Arvo Pärt. The description was not necessarily welcomed by those composers, but the style became very popular with choirs and audiences. *Totus tuus* is a typical example, with monumental gestures containing repeated small motifs that vary subtly in tempo and dynamics giving the piece grandeur and expressive fluidity.

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Purcell mastered the French and Italian contrapuntal traditions of the early baroque and excelled in English word-setting for the Anglican liturgy, especially in Royal ceremonies. His uniquely English music thus contrasts with the Lutheran and Catholic pieces in this concert. Although a prolific composer of theatre music through most of his life, in his twenties he focused on sacred music in roles as organist at both Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal. His *Suite in D major*, published posthumously, was written at this time and follows the French idiom of a Prelude followed by dance movements, including a distinctly English hornpipe. The anthem *I was glad* was written for the coronation of James II in 1685; its text, from Psalm 122, has been used at all subsequent British coronations. The anthem features three sections. The opening dotted rhythm evokes a jubilant mood, before a more reflective prayer for peace intervenes. The final fugal hymn of praise shows off Purcell's virtuosic counterpoint, ending with variations based on a descending four-note scale.

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

The motet has a long history both before and after the 18th century. In Germany during that period, it developed into a sacred work containing intricate polyphony that expressed a single idea suited to a particular occasion. Such motets were often performed *a capella* by trained church choirs for significant events such as weddings and funerals and also sometimes appeared as individual movements within the larger form of the cantata. Bach seems to have composed relatively few motets: only six are securely authenticated, compared with around 200 cantatas. *Lobet den Herrn*, written during Bach's Leipzig years from 1723 onwards (though the exact date is unknown), was first published only in 1821, with an instrumental accompaniment. The original occasion is uncertain, but the work suggests a spirit of celebration. The piece unfolds in three stages. The first contains two fugues, matching the opening two sentences of the very short text and urging praise of God; the central, more devotional, prayer section has a simpler and quieter texture with long-held notes on 'Ewigkeit' ('evermore'). Lively energy returns in the Alleluia, bringing back fugal writing to end the work in exuberant mood.

Morven Main

Texts and translations

Anton Bruckner (1824–1896): Locus iste (WAB 23) **From Genesis 28:16 and Exodus 3:5**

Locus iste a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum.
Irreprehensibilis est.

This place was made by God,
an inestimable holy place.
It is without reproach.

Anton Bruckner: Ave Maria (WAB 6) **Luke 1:28 and 1:42**

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui,
Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst
women, and blessed is the fruit of
thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our
death. Amen.

Anton Bruckner: Christus factus est (WAB 11) **From Philippians 2:8–9**

Christus factus est pro nobis
Obediens usque ad mortem
Mortem autem crucis
Propter quod et Deus exaltavit
illum: Et dedit illi nomen
Quod est super omne nomen.

For us Christ became
Obedient unto death,
Even to the death on the cross.
Therefore God exalted him
And gave him a name
Which is above all names.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897):

Geistliches Lied, Op. 30

Text: Paul Flemming (1609–1640)

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauern
mit Trauern,
Sei stille, wie Gott es fügt,
So sei vergnügt mein Wille.

Do not be sorrowful or regretful,
Be calm, as God has ordained,
and thus my will shall be content.

Was willst du heute sorgen auf
morgen?

Der Eine steht allem für,
Der gibt auch dir das Deine.

Sei nur in allem Handel ohn'
Wandel, Steh' feste! Was Gott
beschleußt,
das ist und heißt das Beste.
Amen

What do you want to worry about
from day to day?

There is One who stands above
all, who gives you, too, what is
yours.

Only be steadfast in all you do,
stand firm! What God has
decided,
that is and must be the best.
Amen.

Henryk Górecki (1933–2010): Totus tuus

Text: Maria Boguslawska

Totus Tuus sum, Maria
Mater nostri Redemptoris
Virgo Dei, Virgo pia
Mater mundi Salvatoris
Totus Tuus sum, Maria!

I am totally yours, Mary
Mother of our Redeemer
Virgin of God, Holy Virgin
Mother of the Saviour of the
world, I am totally yours!

Henry Purcell (1659–1695): I was glad (Psalm 122: 1, 4–7)

I was glad when they said unto
me: we will go into the house of
the Lord. For thither the tribes go
up, ev'n the tribes of the Lord, to
testify unto Israel and to give
thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there is the seat of judgement:
ev'n the seat of the house of
David.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
and plenteousness within thy
palaces.

Glory be to the Father, and to the
Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it
was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be.

World without end. Amen.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750):

Lobet den Herrn, BWV 230

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,
und preiset ihn, alle Völker!
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Alleluia!

O praise the Lord, all ye nations.
Praise Him, all ye people!
For his merciful kindness is great
towards us and the truth of the
Lord endureth for ever. Alleluia!

Biographies

Joshua Ryan: organ

Australian conductor, collaborative pianist, and organist Joshua Ryan is a prizewinning graduate of the Royal Academy of Music. He is Director of Music of St Alfege Greenwich, accompanist of Dulwich Choral Society, and pursues a busy portfolio career alongside these positions. He is establishing himself as one of his generation's most exciting and dynamic musicians. His recordings and live performances have been lauded as "impeccable" (British Music Society), "beautiful, wonderful, and full of colour" (BBC Radio 3), and "offers great clarity and panache" (Music Web International).

Joshua's musical interests are diverse and wide-ranging. He has worked across Europe and Australia as a soloist, collaborative pianist, and continuo player with a vast array of conductors, singers, choirs, and ensembles including the BBC Singers, Academy of Ancient Music, London Mozart Players, Hampstead Collective, Sydney Chamber Choir, Allegri Ensemble, Philippe Herreweghe, John Butt, Edward Gardner, William Vann, Iain Ledingham, Rachel Podger, Margaret Faultless, Eamonn Dougan, Nicky Spence, Thomas Hobbs, and Nicholas Mullroy. Joshua has also featured on four critically acclaimed discs of music by Vaughan Williams, Elgar, and Holst as the accompanist with the Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and William Vann recorded for the SOMM and Albion labels. In early 2024, he recorded a fifth disc with the BBC Singers featuring previously unrecorded choral works by English composer Michael Berkeley.

For more information and recordings please visit joshua-ryan.co.uk

William Vann: conductor

William Vann was appointed Musical Director of Dulwich Choral Society in March 2020. A multiple-prize winning and critically acclaimed choral, orchestral and opera conductor and song accompanist, he is particularly renowned for his revival performances and recordings of lost and lesser-known works of vocal and choral music by British composers and has performed with a host of renowned singers, instrumentalists and orchestras across the world.

Born in Bedford, he was a Chorister at King's College, Cambridge, and a Music Scholar at Bedford School. He subsequently read Law alongside a Choral Scholarship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and studied piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music with Malcolm Martineau and Colin Stone. His extensive discography includes over twenty-five recordings for Albion, Champs Hill, Chandos, Delphian, Etcetera, Navona and SOMM. His world premiere recording of Hubert Parry's *Prometheus Unbound* was awarded Gramophone Recording of the Month in October 2023 and subsequently shortlisted for a 2024 Gramophone Award. Recent performances have included appearances at Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, the Royal Opera House, at the Aldeburgh and Edinburgh Festivals and abroad in France, Germany (on live ZDF television), Ireland, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal, South Africa (National Arts Festival) and Sweden.

He is the Director of Music at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Musical Director of The London Chorus, an Associate of the RAM, a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, a Trustee of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, the Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea Music Society, a conductor and vocal coach at the Oxenfoord International and Grasmere Summer Schools and the founder and Artistic Director of the London English Song Festival. In 2024 he took up the role of Chorus Master at The Grange Festival, where he will return this summer for productions of *La bohème* and *Eugene Onegin*, and in February 2026 he conducted opera scenes at the Royal College of Music.

www.williamvann.com

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Dulwich Choral Society

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www.dulwichchoral.com

Forthcoming events

Saturday 3 October 2026, 10am–4pm

Come and Sing Day: Monteverdi 1610 Vespers

All are welcome to participate. £20, members £15, under 16s £10

St Barnabas Church, Dulwich

Saturday 21 November 2026, 7pm

Autumn concert with Dulwich Symphony Orchestra

Works by Boulanger, Fauré, Holst, Ravel, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams

All Saints Church, West Dulwich

Monday 14 December 2026, 7pm

Christmas concert

St Barnabas Church, Dulwich

Saturday 20 March 2027, 7pm

Spring concert with the Meridian Sinfonia

Bach: St John Passion

All Saints Church, West Dulwich