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CLASSICS

HUBERT PARRY
SONGS OF
FAREWELL

T

TENEBRAE

NIGEL SHORT

CHORAL MUSIC BY
PARRY, TAVENER, SULLIVAN,
HOLST, RODNEY BENNETT, HOWELLS,
ELGAR & VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

HUBERT PARRY SONGS OF FAREWELL

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12	The Turtle Dove Soloist: Gabriel Crouch	Ralph Vaughan Williams	[3.18]
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14	Rest	Ralph Vaughan Williams	[3.51]
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	Total timings:		[75.54]

TENEBRAE
NIGEL SHORT DIRECTOR

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BRITISH CHORAL MUSIC

Gustav Holst (1874-1934) composed *The Evening-Watch*, subtitled 'Dialogue between the Body and the Soul' in 1924, and conducted its first performance at the 1925 Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester Cathedral. A setting of Henry Vaughan, it was planned as the first of a series of motets for unaccompanied double chorus, but only one other was composed. 'The Body' is represented by two solo voices, a tenor and an alto – singing in a metrically free, *senza misura manner* – and 'The Soul' by the full choir. The work has something of the austerity of Holst's other works of this period, an impression intensified by his instruction that the voices should sing *sempre pp* until near the end; but the final efflorescence of passion and vocal colour feels all the more powerful for the previous restraint.

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (b.1936) composed *A Good-Night*, a setting of prose by the 17th-century writer Francis Quarles, in 1999 as his contribution to *A Garland for Linda*, a collaborative series of works written in memory of Linda McCartney (to which John Tavener also contributed). Bennett had known Linda McCartney, and this touching tribute is

remarkable for its harmonic warmth and melodic simplicity.

Herbert Howells (1892-1983) composed his memorial anthem *Take him, earth, for cherishing* in late 1963 as a tribute to the assassinated President John F Kennedy, an event that had moved him deeply. The text, translated by Helen Waddell, is from a 4th-century poem by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius. There is a continual suggestion in the poem of a move or transition from Earth to Paradise, and Howells enacts this by the way his music moves from unison melody to very rich harmony. This deeply-felt work is among his finest shorter anthems, and was performed at Howells's own funeral 20 years later.

Sir John Tavener's (b.1944) *Funeral Ikos*, which has become one of his best-known shorter works, was composed in 1981 and is a calm, even serene setting of words from the Greek Orthodox service for the Burial of Priests, evoking (rather like Elgar's *They are at Rest*) the bliss of the righteous in Paradise. In order to place the words at the forefront of the experience, the music is of extreme simplicity, much of it in unison or with only the most exiguous of harmonies. The chant is shared between upper and lower voices and then the full choir, and each verse ends with a

spell-binding *Alleluia*.

Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918) has always been paid at least lip-service as one of the founding fathers of the English musical renaissance. For a long time, although his memory was kept green through such fine works as the choral song *Jerusalem* and the Coronation anthem *I was glad*, his large output of music was largely forgotten and unregarded. Recent years, however, have seen the beginning of a reevaluation of Parry's orchestral and choral works, foremost among which is his noble series of motets collectively entitled *Songs of Farewell*. Composed between 1913 and 1915, they are superbly written for unaccompanied voices; in their contrapuntal mastery and harmonic richness they must be ranked among the masterpieces of English choral music.

Probably the best-known of the motets is the first, 'My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars' a four-voice setting of words by the 17th-century metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan (1622-1695). The constant changes of rhythm and tempo make this beautiful piece quite a challenge; the rising phrases with which the work opens return at the end with a new strength and confidence. 'I know my soul hath power' sets

two stanzas from *Nosce Teipsum*, a didactic poem on human knowledge by Sir John Davies (1569-1626). This is the simplest of the motets, almost entirely homophonic in style, but Parry makes it highly effective through his use of dramatic pauses and unexpected changes of chord and dynamics.

In the third motet, 'Never weather-beaten sail', the number of parts is increased to five by the addition of a mezzo-soprano line. From here on, each motet in the cycle has one more voice than the one that precedes it, building eventually to eight parts. For the charming poem by Thomas Campion (1567-1620) Parry also eschews the dramatic style of the first two motets in favour of a much more flowing, essentially lyrical approach. For 'There is an old belief', Parry chose words by the Scottish poet, novelist and biographer John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854) which declare that a better world lies 'beyond the sphere of Time and Sin, and Fate's control'. Serenity is the distinguishing characteristic of this motet, expressed by Parry in a sonorous six-part polyphonic texture, changing to a unison reference to the plainsong of the *Credo* where the text mentions 'that creed I fain would keep', and the motet ends with majestic choral writing.

The last two motets are the most ambitious: the fifth sets John Donne's (1572-1631) 'At the round earth's imagined corners', a vision of the Last Judgement. Parry's contrapuntal gifts are displayed at their finest in the monumental seven-part writing that evokes the fanfares of the angelic trumpets, the rising from the grave of the 'numberless infinities of souls', and the distress of the sinner who has repented too late.

The climax of the entire cycle, and the longest of the motets, is 'Lord, let me know mine end', a setting of verses from Psalm 39 for double choir. The two four-part (SATB) groups allowed Parry to compose antiphonal responses as well as very full eight-part harmony and very elaborate eight-part polyphony, as well as giving him a tremendously varied vocal palette from the leanest to the fullest textures. He took advantage of all these possibilities in a work that is a *tour-de-force* of a cappella technique. The final section, 'O spare me a little', has a wonderful luminous delicacy and poignancy that suggests that the composer, who by now was suffering from a serious heart condition, may have known he had less than three years to live.

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) was not a Parry pupil, though he was a firm admirer. His name

is closely associated with that of Cardinal Henry Newman (1801-1890) through his masterwork *The Dream of Gerontius*, which is a setting of Newman's philosophical poem of that title. In 1909, Elgar turned again to Newman for the text of the partsong *They are at rest* (which he also titled 'Elegy'), a commission from Sir Walter Parratt which was premiered at the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore on 22 January 1910, the anniversary of the death of Queen Victoria. The words, from Newman's poem 'Waiting for the Morning', evoke the souls of the blessed at rest in paradise, surrounded and protected by an angelic host; Elgar's tender setting, which seems a little like an echo of Gerontius, aptly realizes the vision.

The two works here by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), perhaps the greatest of Parry's pupils, illustrate different aspects of his many-sided genius. At the beginning of his career he emerged first as a composer of songs and partsongs, and the mellifluous *Rest* is a very early work indeed: its performance at St James's Hall, London on 14 May 1902 must have been one of the very first times that a work of his was heard in public. While *Rest* is an attempt to emulate the manner of the Elizabethan madrigal – a cause in which Vaughan Williams

was deeply interested – he is even more firmly associated with the Folk Song Revival that did so much to revivify English music in the early years of the 20th century, and the beautiful setting of *The Turtle Dove* is one of his many folksong arrangements, made in 1919, here of a tune that Vaughan Williams had himself collected.

The long day closes has become the best-known of all the partsongs composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900). Composed to a poem by his friend Henry F Chorley, it was published in 1868 and quickly became successful with Victorian choral societies. The plaintively expressive harmonies with which Sullivan clothes the text's gentle meditation on death have made this work a popular choice at funerals and memorial services. Sullivan's beautiful partsong forms an appropriate introduction to a programme of English choral music that is largely concerned with acts of farewell, or mourning, or contemplation of the souls of the departed in Paradise. Central to the programme is the majestic succession of Parry's *Songs of Farewell*, and most of the other composers represented here (apart from Elgar, Tavener and Bennett) were at one time or another Parry's pupils at the Royal College of Music.

William Henry Harris (1883-1973) was one of the best-loved and most stalwart cathedral musicians of the first half of the 20th century. Professor of organ and harmony at the Royal College of Music from 1921 to 1955, he also became organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1933 and conducted for the Coronation services in 1937 and 1953. A famously efficient and inspiring choir-trainer, he wrote mainly Anglican church music, and his services and canticles are still in use. The anthem *Bring us, O Lord God* is a comparatively late work, dating from 1959, and setting a religious poem of John Donne that paints a radiant picture of heaven. Harris builds to a grand, resplendent climax but reserves his most mystical page for the concluding 'Amens' and their final cadence.

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TEXTS

1 The Evening-Watch, Op.43 No.1

Gustav Holst (Edited by Imogen Holst)

The Body

Farewell! I go to sleep; but when
The day-star springs, I'll wake again.

The Soul

Go, sleep in peace; and when thou liest
Unnumber'd in thy dust, when all this frame
Is but one dram, and what thou now descriest
In sev'ral parts shall want a name,
Then may his peace be with thee, and each dust
Writ in his book, who ne'er betray'd man's trust!

The Body

Amen! but hark, ere we two stray
How many hours dost think 'till day?

The Soul

Ah go; th'art weak, and sleepy. Heav'n
Is a plain watch, and without figures winds
All ages up; who drew this circle, even

He fills it; days and hours are blinds.
Yet this take with thee. The last gasp of time
Is thy first breath, and man's eternal prime.

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

2 A Good-Night

Richard Rodney Bennett

Close now thine eyes and rest secure;
Thy soul is safe enough, thy body sure;
He that loves thee, he that keeps
And guards thee, never slumbers, never sleeps.
The smiling conscience in a sleeping breast
Has only peace, has only rest;
The music and the mirth of kings
Are all but very discords, when she sings;
Then close thine eyes and rest secure;
No sleep so sweet as thine, no rest so sure.

Francis Quarles (1592–1644)

3 Take him, earth, for cherishing

Herbert Howells

Take him, earth, for cherishing,
to thy tender breast receive him.
Body of a man I bring thee,
noble even in its ruin.

Once was this a spirit's dwelling,
by the breath of God created.
High the heart that here was beating,
Christ the prince of all its living.

Guard him well, the dead I give thee,
not unmindful of his creature
shall he ask it: he who made it
symbol of his mystery.

Comes the hour God hath appointed
to fulfil the hope of men,
then must thou, in very fashion,
what I give, return again.

Not though ancient time decaying
wear away these bones to sand,
ashes that a man might measure
in the hollow of his hand:

Not though wandering winds and idle,
drifting through the empty sky,
scatter dust was nerve and sinew,
is it given to man to die.

Once again the shining road
leads to ample Paradise;
open are the woods again,
that the serpent lost for men

Take, O take him, mighty leader,
take again thy servant's soul.
Grave his name, and pour the fragrant
balm upon the icy stone.

Prudentius (348–413) from *Hymnus circa Exsequias Defuncti*
translated by Helen Waddell (1889–1965)

4 **Funeral Ikos**
John Tavener

Why these bitter words of the dying,
O brethren, which they utter as they go hence?
I am parted from my brethren.
All my friends do I abandon, and go hence.
But whither I go, that understand I not, neither
what shall become of me yonder;
only God, who hath summoned me knoweth.
But make commemoration of me with the song:
Alleluia.

But whither now go the souls?
How dwell they now together there?
This mystery have I desired to learn,
but none can impart aright.
Do they call to mind their own people, as we do them?
Or have they forgotten all those who mourn them
and make the song:
Alleluia.

We go forth on the path eternal and as condemned,
with downcast faces,
present ourselves before the only God eternal.
Where then is comeliness? Where then is wealth?
Where then is the glory of this world?
There shall none of these things aid us,
but only to say off the psalm:
Alleluia.

If thou hast shown mercy unto man,
O man, that same mercy shall be shown thee there;
and if on an orphan thou hast shown compassion,
the same shall there deliver thee from want.
If in this life the naked thou hast clothed,
the same shall give thee shelter there,
and sing the psalm:
Alleluia.

Youth and the beauty of the body fade
at the hour of death,
and the tongue then burneth fiercely,
and the parched throat is inflamed.
The beauty of the eyes is quenched then,
the comeliness of the face all altered,
the shapeliness of the neck destroyed;
and the other parts have become numb,
nor often say:
Alleluia.

With ecstasy are we inflamed
if we but hear that there is light eternal yonder;
that there is Paradise,
wherein every soul of Righteous Ones rejoiceth.
Let us all, also, enter into Christ,
that all we may cry aloud thus unto God:
Alleluia.

Orthodox Service / Tavener

5 **My soul, there is a country**
from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

My soul, there is a country,
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a wingèd sentry,
All skillful in the wars.

There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

He is thy gracious Friend
And (O my soul, awake!)
Did in pure love descend,
To die here for thy sake.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.

Leave, then, thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure
But One, who never changes,
Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

Henry Vaughan

6 I know my soul hath power to know all things

from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

I know my soul hath power to know all things,
Yet she is blind and ignorant in all:
I know I'm one of Nature's little kings,
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.

I know my life's a pain and but a span;
I know my sense is mocked in every thing;
And, to conclude, I know myself a Man,
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.

John Davies (1569–1626)

7 Never weather-beaten sail
from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

Never weather-beaten sail more
willing bent to shore,
Never tired pilgrim's limbs
affected slumber more,
Than my wearied sprite now longs
to fly out of my troubled breast:
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and
take my soul to rest!

Ever blooming are the joys of
heaven's high Paradise,
Cold age deafens not there our ears
nor vapour dims our eyes:
Glory there the sun outshines;
whose beams the Blessed only see:
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and
raise my sprite to Thee!

Thomas Campion (1567–1620)

8 There is an old belief
from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

There is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dear friends shall meet once more.
Beyond the sphere of Time and Sin
And Fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime
Of body and of soul.
That creed I fain would keep
That hope I'll ne'er forgo,
Eternal be the sleep,
If not to waken so.

John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854)

9 At the round earth's imagined corners
from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

At the round earth's imagined corners
blow your trumpets, angels
and arise from death
you numberless infinities of souls
and to your scattered bodies go!

All whom the flood did and fire
shall overthrow
All whom war, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
despair, law, chance hath slain;
And you whose eyes shall behold God

And never taste death's woe,
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn apace,
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace
When we are there.

Here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent, for that's as good
As if Thou'dst sealed my pardon with
Thy blood.

John Donne (1572–1631)

10 Lord, let me know mine end
from *Songs of Farewell*
Hubert Parry

Lord, let me know mine end and the number
of my days,
That I may be certified how long I have to live.
Thou hast made my days as it were a span long;
And mine age is as nothing in respect of Thee,
And verily, ev'ry man living is altogether vanity,

For man walketh in a vain shadow
And disquieteth himself in vain,
He heapeth up riches and cannot tell
who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what is my hope?
Truly my hope is even in Thee.
Deliver me from all mine offences
And make me not a rebuke to the foolish.
I became dumb and opened not my mouth
For it was Thy doing.
Take Thy plague away from me,
I am even consumed by means of Thy
heavy hand.
When Thou with rebukes does chasten man
for sin
Thou makest his beauty to consume away
Like as it were a moth fretting a garment;
Ev'ry man therefore is but vanity.
Hear my pray'r, O Lord
And with Thy ears consider my calling,
Hold not Thy peace at my tears!
For I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner
As all my fathers were.
O spare me a little, that I may recover
my strength before I go hence
And be no more seen.

Text – Psalm XXXIX V.V. 5—15

11 They are at rest

Edward Elgar

They are at rest;
We may not stir the heav'n of their repose
By rude invoking voice, or prayer address
In waywardness to those
Who in the mountain grotts of Eden lie,
And hear the fourfold river as it murmurs by.

And soothing sounds Blend with the
neighb'ring waters as they glide;
Posted along the haunted garden's bounds,
Angelic forms abide,
Echoing, as words of watch,
o'er lawn and grove
The verses of that hymns which Seraphs
chant above.

Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–1890)

12 The Turtle Dove

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone,
And leave you for a while;
If I roam away I'll come back again,
Though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear,
Though I roam ten thousand miles.

So fair though art, my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I;
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till the stars fall from the sky, my dear,
Till the stars fall from the sky.

The sea will never run dry, my dear,
Nor the rocks melt with the sun;
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till all these things be done, my dear,
Till all these things be done.

O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove,
He doth sit on yonder high tree;
A-making a moan for the loss of his love,
As I will do for thee, my dear,
As I will do for thee.

Traditional text

13 The long day closes

Arthur Sullivan, arr. Philip Lawson

No star is o'er the lake,
Its pale watch keeping,
The moon is half awake,
Through gray mists creeping,
The last red leaves fall round
The porch of roses,

The clock hath ceased to sound,
The long day closes.

Sit by the silent hearth
In calm endeavour,
To count the sounds of mirth,
Now dumb for ever.
Heed not how hope believes
And fate disposes:
Shadow is round the eaves,
The long day closes.

The lighted windows dim
Are fading slowly.
The fire that was so trim
Now quivers lowly.
Go to the dreamless bed
Where grief reposes;
Thy book of toil is read,
The long day closes.

Henry F. Chorley (1808–1872)

14 Rest

Ralph Vaughan Williams

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth

With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,

Hush'd in and curtain'd with a blessèd dearth
Of all that irk'd her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

15 Bring us, O Lord God

William H. Harris

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening
into the house and gate of heaven,
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling,
but one equal light;
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity;
in the habitations of thy glory and dominion,
world without end.

John Donne

BIOGRAPHIES

TENEBRAE

“... is there any finer chamber choir in Britain today than Nigel Short's outfit, Tenebrae?”

The Independent

Hailed as “one of the country’s most outstanding vocal ensembles” (Evening Standard), Tenebrae has established itself as the chamber choir of choice for critics and audiences in the UK and around the world. Founded and directed by Nigel Short, the group blends the passion of a large cathedral choir with the precision of a chamber ensemble to create a unique and enchanting sound, one which is as dazzlingly effective in mediaeval chant as it is in contemporary works. With every performance exploiting the unique acoustic and atmosphere of each venue in which they perform with movement and light, often using candlelight as the sole means of illumination, the carefully chosen team of singers enable the audience to experience the power and intimacy of the human voice at its very best.

Formed in 2001, the group was launched to critical acclaim with a performance of Nigel Short’s own composition, *The Dream of Herod*. Since then they have collaborated with composers Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Pierre Thilloy, Alexander Levine, and Joby Talbot. Tenebrae’s dedication to the music of today is complemented by a commitment to the music of the past; from mediaeval chant to Romantic masterworks, they respond to the demands inherent in whatever they sing with equal passion and musicality.

The group has toured Europe, the USA and Bermuda, performing in many renowned festivals (BBC Proms, Montreux Choral Festival, Edinburgh Festival) and tailoring their distinctive performances to many venues (Royal Albert Hall, Barbican, King’s College Chapel, Lausanne Cathedral). Working with the LSO under Sir Colin Davis, the English Concert, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Scottish Ensemble, and the Endymion Ensemble, the choir have proved themselves as adept at larger orchestral works



as the a cappella repertoire for which they are so well known.

Recording on the Signum, LSO Live, Decca, EMI Classics and Warner Classics labels, the group has so far released twelve albums; from Christmas carols to solemn vespers, their revelatory performances have thrilled listeners across the world and ensured their continued position as one of the world's favourite choirs.

For more information please visit
www.tenebrae-choir.com
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Sopranos

Grace Davidson
Susanna Fairbairn
Joanna Forbes L'Estrange
Alison Hill
Emilia Hughes
Laura Oldfield
Katie Trethewey

Altos

David Allsopp
Martha McLorinan
Clare Wilkinson

Tenors

Benjamin Alden
Benedict Hymas
Matthew Long
Nick Todd
Christopher Watson

Basses

Gabriel Crouch
Joseph Cullen
William Gaunt
Simon Grant
Thomas Guthrie
Stephen Kennedy

NIGEL SHORT

Tenebrae is a dream realised for Nigel Short. Growing up in the Midlands (UK) Nigel began his musical life as a chorister at Solihull Parish Church going on to study singing and piano at the Royal College of Music in London. As a young counter-tenor he was soon working with various opera companies, was in demand as an oratorio and early music soloist, sang at Westminster Cathedral, with The Tallis Scholars and various other specialist choral groups.

In 1993, Nigel joined the world-renowned vocal ensemble The King's Singers. Whilst touring the world with them Nigel began to seriously consider the possibility of starting up a new choral group which would combine a larger force of singers with movement around the performance venue as well as considerations of lighting, ambience, time and space. It would not only mean that the singers were more physically involved in the performance but also that the audiences could become caught up in the experience. This would be a team that had all the discipline and precision of a world-class ensemble yet with the dynamic power and range of a large choral group. Such a team would be able to use ecclesiastical buildings as a performance

space, combining his love of traditional choral repertoire with a more “theatrical” style of performing.

Like many such ideas, the realisation of the dream eventually came about through discussions with like-minded musicians, singers and friends, who together realised the formation of Tenebrae – a combination of talented composers and arrangers, pianists and organists, specialists of jazz and renaissance, instrumentalists and singers.

Nigel has now conducted Tenebrae in concert performances and recordings with some of the world's finest orchestras, most notably the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the English Concert and the Scottish Ensemble.



ARTIST MANAGEMENT

Tenebrae is managed by
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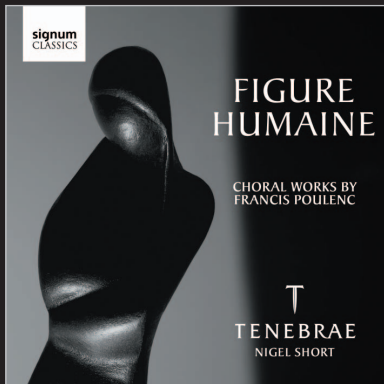
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