

Eboracum Choral Series

Banks Music Publications, Kindar House, The Crichton,
Bankend Road, Dumfries DG1 4ZZ

SATB & Organ

ECS 622

WHEN, IN OUR MUSIC, GOD IS GLORIFIED



by

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About the Anthem

The Scottish Federation of Organists consists of several affiliated societies spread across the nation. A two-day conference brings these elements together in a different Scottish venue every year.

For the 61st conference in Stirling, I was commissioned (actually, volunteered in absentia!) to compose a choral work for performance at a brief service towards the close of the event in Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Accepting the challenge, I cast around for a text. “When, in our music” was an obvious choice for a gathering of organists.

As to the music, I had to come up with something bold and arresting - melodically far different from Stanford’s fine tune, *Engelberg*, to which the words have long been wedded. A “lightbulb” moment occurred when I realised I had a tune fitting the metre in the “bottom drawer”, from as far back as 2007. That year, St. Alfege’s Church, Greenwich, London (burial place of Tallis), where I would often act as assistant organist, decided it wanted a patronal hymn. Circumstances led not only to my writing the tune, but a text outlining the life and death of Alfege, an Archbishop of Canterbury cruelly martyred by the Vikings in 1012 when he would not pay ransom for his release from captivity, knowing it would reduce his people to penury. He was canonised in 1078 by Pope Gregory VII. My original words appear below for interest.

Regarding style, I chose to commemorate Herbert Howells, from whom I was fortunate to have a few private lessons in London during the 1970’s. Thus, my shamelessly recycled tune appears in the borrowed garb of a composer whom I admire above any other in 20th century English church music. Perhaps the moral here is - never throw anything away!

O Humble Alfege

O humble Alfege, who did love the Lord,
True saint of God, who knew a martyr’s death;
You offered Christ, when others offered sword,
Proclaiming Him unto your dying breath.

2

Archbishop of the faithful in our land,
Great priest of God, in face of pagan shame;
Far down the years your sacrifice will stand,
A model for the faith we dare to claim.

4

With bones and axes struck they from the earth
The Saint whom earthly ransom would not pay;
Yet merest blade could ne’er destroy your worth.
The spirit lives, though mortal man they slay.

3

The gold you gave outshines all wealth of Man,
And Viking’s greed could not defile your way;
Yet, blind with riches, press’d they ransom’s plan,
While knowing not that Christ would have the day.

5

Here stands your church in witness to that day,
A living tribute to a life of love;
Grant us, your people, strength to serve and pray,
Then, Alfege, dwell with you in heav’n above!

111 *ff ardente*

- lu - ia! Al - le - lu -

ff ardente

- lu - ia! Al - le lu -

117 *allarg. lunga*

- - - ia! A - - - men!

allarg. lunga

- - - ia! A - - - men!

allarg. lunga

lunga

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