

Music and sweet poetry



Choral music by
Matthew Harris

Kantorei
of Kansas City
Chris Munce



Music and sweet poetry

Choral Music by Matthew Harris (b. 1956)

Kantorei of Kansas City

Chris Munce *director*

About Kantorei:

'A notable light in our city's choral firmament'
KC Independent

'[...] electric, exciting, and offering a new vision'
KCMetropolis

Two Lorca Songs

- | | |
|---------------------|--------|
| 1. Las seis cuerdas | [3:30] |
| 2. Crótalo | [3:04] |

3. La Guitarra [6:55]

from Shakespeare Songs

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| 4. Full fathom five | [1:37] |
| 5. Under the greenwood tree | [2:01] |
| 6. Come away, come away, death | [4:41] |
| 7. Blow, blow, thou winter wind | [2:30] |
| 8. When daisies pied | [1:36] |
| 9. Fear no more | [4:29] |

10. O sacrum convivium [2:43]

11. Ave verum corpus [4:37]

12. Ave Maria [2:48]

13. O vos omnes [4:16]

Innocence & Experience

- | | |
|-------------------|--------|
| 14. The Sick Rose | [1:21] |
| 15. The Lamb | [3:30] |
| 16. The Tiger | [2:25] |

17. Sweet and low [4:35]

18. If music and sweet poetry agree [3:26]

19. i love you much (most beautiful darling) [5:08]

20. Fantasy on La Bamba [6:49]

Total playing time [72:09]



Matthew Harris

Music and sweet poetry:

Choral music by Matthew Harris

As a composer who early on favoured writing for percussion, it may seem odd that I ended up mainly known for its aesthetic opposite, choral music. But then, those are the two most primitive kinds of music making—banging and *a cappella* singing. The latter is also a moveable feast: I like hearing how singers have spontaneously got up a piece of mine late at night on a bus, drifting in a boat on a lake, or at rush hour in Grand Central Station. Most of all, I feel at home with choral music because it is the genre least concerned with labels. In fact, for decades, choruses have been doing as second nature what the rest of the classical music world is only now cautiously attempting: concerts that mix up not just standard repertoire, early and modern music, but world music, jazz, folk, Broadway and rock as well. In 1989, when audiences heard my *Who is Sylvia?* shift between classical and doo-wop, it made a splash and put me on the map. But I was only writing into my music what was already happening on the risers (albeit between the pieces). To this day, choruses are still giving me musical ideas which I in turn give back to them.

Lorca Songs

Two Lorca Songs (1994)

1. La Seis Cuerdas
2. Crótalo

La Guitarra (2013)

My first instrument was the guitar, on which I wrote about eighty songs in my teens before switching to classical composition, so it seems fitting to begin with Lorca's melancholy ode to that instrument. In 'Las Seis Cuerdas', the lower voices imitate gentle fingerpicking; in 'Crótalo', they mimic Flamenco strumming as the sopranos become castanets.

After twenty years, it was a pleasure to return to the same poet and theme in my most recent work on this album, *La Guitarra*, this time in an extended form and with an actual guitar as accompaniment.

Shakespeare Songs

Full Fathom Five (Book I - 1989)

Under the Greenwood Tree (Book II - 1991)

Come Away Death (Book II)

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind (Book IV - 1995)

When Daisies Pied (Book VI - 2010)

Fear No More the Sun (Book VI)

Shakespeare was the captain on my maiden voyage as a choral composer, and I've since made it a tradition to journey out with him



every few years. I'm up to Book VI of my Shakespeare Songs, which are my musical settings of the lyrics to songs in his plays. Shakespeare wrote these lyrics with the popular tunes of the day in mind, sung by actors, not classical singers, so they are more direct and accessible than his sonnets. Thus, I felt that I, too, should "lighten up", and I set aside the harmonic language and techniques from my Juilliard days with Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt and Roger Sessions in favour of something closer to my guitar-playing days.

Sacred Music

O sacrum convivium (1993)

Ave verum corpus (1994)

Ave Maria (1998)

O vos omnes (2013)

After my first three books of Shakespeare Songs, I was eager to take the choral style I had developed in new directions. At the same time, the musical world was discovering Eastern European mystic minimalists such as Arvo Pärt and Henryk Górecki, and I too was inspired by their reinvention of sacred music. I quickly wrote both *O sacrum convivium* and the eight-part *Ave verum corpus*.

Ave Maria was commissioned for a

premiere at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. After years of hearing a church's echo turn my counterpoint to mush, I thought I'd use it to my advantage this time, with single lines and chords of slow-moving harmony.

In 2011, I joined New York's Amor Artis chorus and two years later composed for them my eight-part *O Vos Omnes*. The influence of singing Renaissance motets every week is in evidence here: the short, minimalist patterns of my earlier sacred pieces give way to long, flowing polyphony.

Music and Sweet Poetry

Innocence & Experience (2000)

Sweet and Low (2005)

If Music and Sweet Poetry Agree (2008)

i love you much (most beautiful darling) (2013)

My success with Shakespeare led me to take a crack at other major British poets. William Blake did not disappoint; his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is a world large enough to invite influences of Mahler in 'The Sick Rose' (the alto solo in Symphony No. 2, 'O Röschen rot!'), Welsh folksong in 'The Lamb' (*Suo Gan*), and reggae in 'The Tiger'.

Sweet and Low, for SSATTB, is both a barcarole and lullaby. The notes E and D





Kantorei of Kansas City with
Chris Munce & Matthew Harris (l-r, front row)

gently undulate throughout like the rolling waters in the poem. A quasi-fugue begins at the words, “Sleep and rest”, as if the child has nodded off into a dream.

The witty Elizabethan poem, *If music and sweet poetry agree*, was once attributed to Shakespeare. To put its argument in a nutshell: “He likes Spenser, she likes Dowland: let’s not call the whole thing off!” All they need is a madrigal.

These days I set as much American as British poetry, and when it comes to infectious *joie de vivre*, I find no one compares with e.e. cummings. Think of *i love you much (most beautiful darling)* as a singing valentine.

Fantasy on La Bamba (2008)

Sitting at an outdoor café in Mexico, I heard a mariachi band play something strange yet familiar. Here was *La Bamba* the “right” way, I thought. A little research back home revealed that this song has been evolving for centuries, from its roots as a Veracruz wedding dance. I wanted my Fantasy to loosely reflect some of that history, as well as to have one musical idea take you through the gamut of emotions — from

sadness to joy to delirium — as Ravel did with *La Valse*.

* * *

I’d like to thank a number of people — in particular many thanks to Christopher Munce and Kantorei of Kansas City, whose undertaking this recording was, and also to Resonus Classics producer Adam Binks. I’m also grateful to Dr Joseph Ohrt, Joan Winter Skerritt, Robert Drafall and Barbara Elder for bringing about the commissions of many of the above works, and to the MacDowell Colony, where I wrote most of *Shakespeare Songs* Books I & IV & *Ave Maria*.

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Texts & translations

Two Lorca Songs

1. La seis cuerdas

La guitarra,
hace llorar a los sueños.
El sollozo de las almas
perdidas,
se escapa por su boca
redonda.
Y como la tarántula
teje una gran estrella
para cazar suspiros,
que flotan en su negro
aljibe de madera.

*At a sign
from the guitar
Dreams start to weep.
Sighs of lost souls
Escape from its
round mouth,
Like the tarantula
it weaves a star
To catch the sighs
that float
In its dark well of wood.*

Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936)

2. Crótalo

Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Escarabajo sonoro.

En la araña
de la mano
rizas el aire
cálido,
y te ahogas en tu trino
de palo.

Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Escarabajo sonoro.

*Rattler.
Rattler.
Rattler.
Raucous beetle.*

*In the spider legs
of a hand
you curl the hot air
and drown in your trill
of wood.*

*Rattler.
Rattler.
Rattler.
Raucous beetle.*

Federico Garcia Lorca

3. La Guitarra

Empieza el llanto
de la guitarra.
Se rompen las copas
de la madrugada.
Empieza el llanto
de la guitarra.
Es inútil
callarla.
Es imposible
callarla.
Llora monótona
como llora el agua,
como llorEs imposible
callarla.
Llora por cosas
lejanas.
Arena del Sur caliente
que pide camelias blancas.
Llora flecha sin blanco,
la tarde sin mañana,
y el primer pájaro muerto
sobre la rama.
¡Oh guitarra!
Corazón malherido
por cinco espadas.a el viento
sobre la nevada.

*The weeping of the guitar
begins.
The goblets of dawn
are smashed.
The weeping of the guitar
begins.
Useless
to silence it.*

*Impossible
to silence it.
It weeps monotonously
as water weeps
as the wind weeps
over snowfields.
Impossible
to silence it.
It weeps for distant
things.
Hot southern sands
yearning for white camellias.
Weeps arrow without target
evening without morning
and the first dead bird
on the branch.
Oh, guitar!
Heart mortally wounded
by five swords.*

Federico Garcia Lorca

from Shakespeare Songs

4. Full fathom five

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them,—ding-dong, bell.

*William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
from The Tempest*

5. Under the greenwood tree

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleas'd with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

William Shakespeare
from *As You Like It*

6. Come away, come away, death

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O, prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown.
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

William Shakespeare
from *Twelfth Night*

7. Blow, blow thou winter wind

Blow, blow, thou winter wind
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most freindship if feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze thou bitter sky,
That does not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As a friend remembered not.

Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most freindship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

William Shakespeare
from *As You Like It*

8. When daisies pied

When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

William Shakespeare
from *Love's Labour's Lost*

9. Fear no more

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art done, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The Sceptre, Learning, Physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have,
And renown'd by thy grave!

William Shakespeare
from *Cymbeline*

10. O sacrum convivium

O sacrum convivium!
in quo Christus sumitur:
recolitur memoria passionis eius:
mens impletur gratia:
et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.
Alleluia.

*O sacred banquet!
in which Christ is received,
the memory of his Passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future glory to us is given.
Alleluia.*

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

11. Ave verum corpus

Ave verum corpus, natum
de Maria virgine;
vere passum, immolatum
In cruce pro homine,
Cujus latus perforatum
Unda fluxit sanguine,
Esto nobis proegustatum
In mortis examine.
O dulcis, O pie, O Jesu, Fili Mariae.
Miserere mei.
Amen.

*Hail the true body, born
of the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were sacrificed
on the cross for the sake of man.
From whose pierced flank
flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us
in the trial of death.
O sweet, O merciful, O Jesus, Son of Mary.
Have mercy on me.
Amen.*

14th century, attr. Pope Innocent VI (d. 1362)

12. Ave Maria

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 you
Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*

13. O vos omnes

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,
attendite et videte:
Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.
Attendite, universi populi,
et videte dolorem meum.
Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

*O all who walk by on the road,
pay attention and see:
if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.
Pay attention, all people,
and look at my sorrow
if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.*

Latin Vulgate, Lamentations 1:12

Innocence & Experience

14. The Sick Rose

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

William Blake (1757-1827)

15. The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

William Blake

16. The Tiger

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake

17. Sweet and low

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,

Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

18. If music and sweet poetry agree

If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,
Then must the love be great, 'twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear; whose heavenly touch
Upon the Lute, doth ravish human sense:
Spencer to me; whose deep conceit is such,
As passing all conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound,
That Phoebus' lute, the queene of Music makes:
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd,
When as himself to singing he betakes.
One god is god, of both, as poets feign;
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.

Richard Barnfield (1574-1627)

20. Fantasy on La Bamba

Para bailar La Bamba
Se necessita una poca de gracia
Una poca de gracia
Para mi, para ti, ay arriba, ay arriba
Ay, arriba arriba
Por ti sere, por ti sere, por ti sere

Yo no soy marinero
Yo no soy marinero, soy capitán
Soy capitán, soy capitán
Bamba, bamba, bam

*In order to dance The Bamba
You need a little bit of grace
A little bit of grace
For me, for you, higher and higher
faster, faster
By you I will be, by you I will be, by you I will be*

*I am not a sailor,
I am not a sailor, I am a captain
I am a captain, I am a captain
Bamba, bamba, bam*

Mexican Traditional



Chris Muncie

Kantorei of Kansas City

Soprano

Beth Munce
Bonny Green
Anna Hacker
Amy Krinke
Jamie Trumpp

Tenor

David Adams
Trent Green
Alan Murray
Chris Munce

Bass

Jon Duncan
Nick Stoppel
Bradley Wilson
Andrew Cunard
David Figuracion

Alto

Stacy Tholen
Courtney Williams
Hallie Richardson
Joanna Metzger
Erin Keller

Beau Bledsoe *guitar*

Soloists:

La Guitarra – Nick Stoppel (baritone), Erin Keller (mezzo)
Fantasia on La Bamba – David Adams & Chris Munce (tenor), Beth Munce (soprano)
The Tiger – Trent Green (tenor)

Kantorei of Kansas City

Formed in 2010, Kantorei of Kansas City has a rapidly growing reputation for its unique high-quality, clear sound and a fresh innovative approach to programming. Led by Founder and Artistic Director Chris Munce, Kantorei is formed of the finest professional singers in the Kansas City area and beyond, who each have a hand in shaping the over-arching vision of the group and its performances.

With its roots in performing early music, Kantorei has further broadened its repertoire to include a diverse range of music from the Mediaeval period through to world premieres of the latest contemporary works from both renowned and up-and-coming composers.

The group have made a number of recordings including a collection of Renaissance motets in 2011 and an album of Christmas music by the contemporary British composer, Tim Porter. Kantorei's first recording for the pioneering label, Resonus Classics, features a wide selection of the choral music of New York-based American composer, Matthew Harris.

Aside from their regular concerts in the

Kansas City locale, 2013 has seen Kantorei perform at the American Choral Directors Association conventions in Missouri and Nebraska, as well as launching its annual summer school Choral Institute for young singers with the aim of encouraging future generations of choral performers. Kantorei were also invited to perform alongside renowned singer Josh Groban during his most recent national tour.

Future plans include further regular performances in the Kansas City area that explore more rarely performed repertoire, a tour of the upper Midwestern US. Plans are also under way for the group's next album

www.kantoreikc.org

Kantorei of Kansas City would like to thank the following for their assistance with this recording:

Our engineer Josh Williams; our rehearsal and recording venues Lee's Summit First Presbyterian Church & St Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church; our singers for their tireless work and commitment; our board of directors for their leadership and support; MyCollegeOptions.org for their critical sponsorship of our organisation; and finally to all of our Kickstarter backers.

Chris Munce *director*

Chris Munce is an accomplished choral performer, conductor, educator, clinician and arts administrator. As a performer he is a member of Kantorei of Kansas City, as well as its Founder and Artistic Director. He has also performed with the Simon Carrington Chamber Singers, and the GRAMMY®-winning Kansas City Chorale. Chris was fortunate to be a part of the Chorale's GRAMMY® nominated album, *Rheinberger: Sacred Choral Works*, as well as Simon Carrington's *Juxtapositions*. Most recently, Kantorei completed recording the Christmas Album *Sweet Was the Song*, as well as this, their first recording for Resonus Classics.

Chris received a Bachelor of Music Education and a Masters Degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. His graduate research focus was the performance practice of early Baroque choral singing in the French and Italian styles. Chris has been privileged to learn from Eph Eely, Charles Robinson, Ryan Board, William Dehning, Peter Bagley and Jerry McCoy as well as many other talented colleagues. He has also served as adjunct faculty at the Conservatory teaching choral arranging, and at

Blue River Community College as a professor of voice. Chris currently serves as the President of Conservatory's Alumni Board of Directors.

Chris is now teaching at Lee's Summit High School in Missouri as the Director of Choral Studies where his premier ensemble, Sounds of Summit, has recently performed at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC and on a Masterclass with the multiple Grammy Award winning vocal group Chanticleer. Chris is also Director of Music at Lee's Summit First Presbyterian Church where he directs the Chancel Choir and Vesper Bells. He is also active as a private voice instructor.

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Engineer: Josh Williams

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DDD – MCPS

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