

Apocalypse

Choral music by David Lancaster

EX CORDE VOCAL ENSEMBLE
Paul Gameson

Apocalypse

Choral Works by
David Lancaster (b.1960)

Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble

Anna Snow *soprano*

Paul Gameson *conductor*

David Lancaster (b.1960)

1. **Apocalypse** [20:37]

2. **Magnificat** [6:58]

At the Edge of the World

3. I am on the edge of the world [7:33]

4. Glass painters forming stories on the church windows [15:51]

5. Listen, you will hear things [6:56]

6. The seventh rule is the rule of penance [7:31]

7. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto [5:40]

Total playing time [71:09]



Apocalypse: Choral Works by David Lancaster

As a composer I am very interested in exploring the distant past, and trying to build bridges which link the past with the present. In the music on this recording I have drawn upon the legacies of artists and craftsmen who lived and worked in medieval York, leaving evidence of their beliefs, stories and ideas which have survived into the present, in carved stone and painted glass.

All Saints Church in North Street, York, is possibly York's finest medieval church. It contains some of the oldest and most beautiful examples of medieval stained glass in Europe. Particularly dramatic is the so-called 'Pricke of Conscience' window – based on a Middle English poem of the same name – consisting of fifteen panels, each of which depicts a scene from the last fifteen days of the world. In the first nine panels we witness the physical destruction of the earth, followed by buildings (including All Saints Church itself) before mankind and all living things are destroyed. This is a simple moralistic tale to persuade sinners to repent; at the top of the window the virtuous are escorted into

heaven whilst at the base sinners are transported by demons into hell.

In **Apocalypse** I present the text of the *Pricke of Conscience* poem, both in its original form and simultaneously in modern translation, bringing old and new together. It is set for unaccompanied SSAATTBB chorus with high soprano soloist, located centrally in the choir. The soloist is joined mid-way by two additional soprano voices at either side of the choir, and together they are leading protagonists in the drama, angels of the apocalypse perhaps, who extend the range of the choir in terms of pitch, space and texture.

The narrative unfolds in the chronological sequence one might expect: firstly describing the sea rising and falling, like a tsunami, followed by the appearance of strange creatures, earthquakes, fire and return of dead people, rising from their graves. However, in addition, the words increasingly refer back to earlier events in the sequence, to generate a sort of montage which grows in density and complexity as the scale of the apocalypse becomes apparent, just as the eye might explore at will the detail of the window, to create one's own 'disaster movie', complete with flashbacks and premonitions.

Finally, 'on the fifteenth day' when all is destroyed, we are left to contemplate our fate in a bare, austere landscape.

Apocalypse was first performed in York by The 24 (directed by Robert Hollingworth) in June 2014; its first broadcast was a live performance from Christian's Church, Copenhagen, presented by the Danish Radio Vocal Ensemble (February 2016).

All Saints Church also inspired the other major work in this recording. **At the Edge of the World** (SSAATTBB vocal ensemble with soprano soloist) documents the life of Emma Raughton, an anchoress who lived in the church during the early part of the fourteenth century. She occupied two small rooms, completely isolated but able to follow services and receive food through small architectural 'squints' which remain visible today. The role of the anchoress was to live a holy, devotional life and to pray on behalf of her wealthy patrons. Historical texts (*The Beauchamp Pageant*, an illustrated biography of Richard Beauchamp [1382–1439] and the *Rous Roll* c.1483) indicate that while at All Saints, Emma Raughton received seven visitations from the Virgin Mary, who accurately predicted (amongst other prophecies) the impending death of Henry V, the

coronation of Henry VI, and that Richard Beauchamp would have the custody of the young king until he reached the age of sixteen.

The text of this piece not only articulates the personal thoughts and feelings of Emma Raughton herself, based on the information passed down to us, it provides a broader sense of her life in the church (such as the sights and sounds she might have experienced) and the wider expectations of a woman in medieval society. Words are drawn from four main sources, and to a large extent they shape the structure of the music.

'The first strand of text is 'Magnificat', the oldest Marian prayer, and I imagine Emma Raughton praying to Mary during a Vespers service, hearing those words as they are sung in the church. This musical setting of 'Magnificat' is used as a composition-within-a-composition, fragmented and dispersed between the other texts but acting as a force that binds everything together.

The second strand of text is taken from the *Ancrene Wisse*, a 'Guide for Anchoresses' from the early thirteenth century, which outlines her duties and responsibilities (as determined by its anonymous male author) with a hectoring

authority. These words are sung exclusively by ensembles of men's voices.

A third strand is taken from the *York Processional*, a service book from the fourteenth century which was used at All Saints and at churches across Yorkshire, prior to the Reformation. From this I have not only taken words that describe the Virgin Mary (which are sung by female voices as a sort of invocation, calling on Mary to appear), but also the short plainsong fragments which we can assume would have been familiar sounds to Emma Raughton.

The final – and the most extensive – strand of the text was written especially for this piece by poet Abi Curtis, who has imagined new words to represent the thoughts and feelings of the anchoress herself, giving Emma Raughton a clear, often impassioned voice. These words are sung by the soprano soloist, supported by a small ensemble of female voices. We hear fragments of Emma's conversations with Mary, and with her wealthy benefactor. The title of the composition is taken from the first line of Abi's text.

At the Edge of the World was not conceived as sacred music. It is concerned much more with forming links with lives of

people from a very distant past, and with themes of solitude, confinement, power, authority and devotion. It was first performed in July 2022 at All Saints, North Street, York: the same church where Emma Raughton had lived some 700 years earlier. The performers at the premiere were Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble with Anna Snow (soprano), conducted by Paul Gameson.

Magnificat (SSATB chorus) was composed specifically to be incorporated into *At the Edge of the World* but can be performed independently in its own right. It exists in two versions, in English (as recorded here) and Latin, as Emma Raughton would have witnessed it through her squint as she prayed to Mary by candlelight.

The compositions on this recording belong together; whilst they can each stand alone, they are linked musically, historically and geographically. Any similarities between them are purely intentional!

© 2023 David Lancaster

Texts

Apocalypse

On the first of the fifteen days
The sea shall rise (as the book says)
About as high as a mountain,
Full forty cubits tall for certain.
And the waves will rise up and stand
Just like a hill does on the land.

On the second day the sea will retreat,
that men will see what lies beneath.

On the third day, the sea will seem plain
And return to its calm state again
Just like it had been before,
rising or falling no more.

On the fourth day, there will a wonder be:
The strangest creatures of the sea
Shall come together and make such a
clamouring
That it shall be hideous to men's hearing,
But what their clamour will signify
No-one may know but God almighty.

On the fifth day, the sea will burn
And all other waters as they run.
And this will last from sunrise
Until the sun sets in the skies.

On the sixth day a bloody dew
Will hang from trees, and spring up on the
grass below.

On the seventh day, tall buildings will fall,
Along with great castles, then towers and all.

On the eighth day, hard rocks and stones
Will strike together all at once
And each of them shall the other down cast
And against each other hurtle fast.
So that each stone on a different path
Will sunder the other into three parts.

On the ninth day there will be a great
earth-quake
And all countries on earth will shake.
So great a noise there was never heard,
Than this one now, in all the world.

On the tenth day – for so it is given
The earth shall be made plain and even,
For hills and valleys shall turned be
Into desert, and made even to see.

The eleventh day, people will come out
Of caves and holes, and wend about
Like madmen, who've lost their wit;
And no-one shall speak to the others
they meet.

On the twelfth day, the stars and all
The planets from high heavens shall fall.

On the thirteenth day shall dead men's bones
Be put back together and rise all alone,
And above their graves they will stand;
This shall befall throughout the land.

On the fourteenth day all that live then
Shall die: children, men and women.
For they will with them rise again
Who before were dead – to joy, or pain.

On the fifteenth day, this shall betide:
All the world where we now reside
Will burn with flames which will not dispel.
Until the utter end of Hell.

*Based on the fourteenth-century poem
Pricke of Conscience, author unknown*

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of
His handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed.

For He that is mighty hath magnified me
and holy is His name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him
throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm,
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination
of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things
and the rich He hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen
His servant Israel,
As He promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.

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

At the Edge of the World

*Key to texts:
Plain text: poetry by Abi Curtis.
Italic text (English): fragments from Ancrene Wisse.
Italic text (Latin): Magnificat.*

PART 1

I am at the edge of the world,
but the world is there, beyond the window.

*The first rule for anchoresses is the outer
rule: it governs how you live, what you eat
and drink, how you dress – and how you pray.*

*You must eat no meat or fat, do not dine
with others outside your anchorhold; no
man should eat in your presence, nor
should he sleep at your premises. Do not
be too attached to your family; do not send or
receive letters. Men do not see you, therefore
your clothing does not matter, and may be black
or white. Do not own rings or brooches. As a sinful
daughter of Eve, you should cover your head in
prayer. You may wear underclothes of rough cloth,
but nothing made of iron, haircloth or hedgehog
skins. Do not beat yourself or draw blood without
permission. Your hair should be cropped, and you
should let blood as often as necessary. You should
keep no animal, except a cat.*

Magnificat anima mea Dominium.

Make the window small. A slit of light fit for an arrow.
But O how it frames the stars and the fleshy moon
How it shows the dusted feet of the congregation
the dropped apples in the market
and the river, moving with light.

Et exultavit spiritus meus: in Deo salutari meo.

This spy-hole
This half-closed lid
How my heart squeezes through and leaves
for hours
seeking the city.

PART 2

The second rule for anchoresses is the rule of devotions: it directs when and how you are to pray.

You pray from the moment you rise until sleep returns. Sprinkle yourself with holy water, meditate upon the cross, you beat your breast, prostrate yourself before your altar, and kiss the ground. Fervent, incessant, and anxious prayers quickly gain help and support from our Lord against temptations of the flesh. The prayers of one who humbles herself will penetrate the clouds.

All woe comes from sight.
If I pull back the dark cloth
what do I see?

Glass painters forming stories on the church windows
their delicate hands brushing
blood red,
the blue of dusk,
corn yellow,
hedge green,

into the shapes of saints and angels
But the light that glows behind them
is beyond me.

Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:

Past the window flows the Ouse
sweet and bitter scented river.

I listen to the masons chip-chipping
faces from the grey stone.
Some are anguished, some are passionate.
And inside the church, wood carvers
bring to life the saints and angels.

PART 3

The third rule is the rule of the senses, and how you must guard your heart from the many temptations.

Trample on the serpent's head. What the mouth cannot say for shame, the roving eye expresses. Close your windows. Speak but rarely and briefly. Silence enforces meditation on heavenly matters. Your strength is in silence and hope. Block your ears against sinful speech, heresy, lies, backbiting and flattery. The stench of hell awaits those who take pleasure in physical scents. Do not complain about your food, no matter how bitter; food and drink in excess lead to reckless words, reckless acts and the desires of lechery. Fondling and touching between a man and an anchoress is an indecent thing and a shameless act and a naked sin.

All that I see and hear and smell
absorb into my cell
and spread out as a landscape
shrunk to fit these walls.



The steps below: a mountain pass.
The ceiling: a celestial roof.
I bathe my feet in river stones
and taste the sun in every bite of bread.

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

Like the pelican that breaks its breast
anything that touches my heart
will make it bleed.
In my cell, my skin prickles.
My cat, slinking in the dark,
is a wolf I stroke
to sleep.

(Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae)
With her legs I prowl the cobbled streets.
Or, as a peregrine, I lift my wings
above the spires
whilst all the while, never leaving.

*Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen eius.*

PART 4

The fourth rule for anchoresses is the rule of the recluse: enclosed in this world, but lighter and swifter in the next, flying upwards to the heavens like a bird.

How good it is to be alone? Anchoresses who are enclosed in this world will be lighter and swifter in the next. Remove yourself from the devil's claws and range at will in the wide pastures of heaven. The anchoress is like a bird that leaves the world behind. Through your heart's desire fly upwards towards the heavens. Those birds fly well that have

little flesh; the anchoress who indulges her physical desires finds that the heaviness of her flesh deprives her of flight. The anchorhold is your nest where you should live until death. Be like the pelican in the wilderness, become the night bird in the eaves, the solitary sparrow.

At the window an eye peers back
close-up. A curl of hair, a crease in skin,
the scent of rain and copper,
a hint of laughter.
Then a finger hooks into the stone
and I recall my other life:

steam from a cup
leaves chiming in a storm
The heads of apples in the grass
A pot boiling at the hearth
A touch as someone wanders past.

And every hair upon my arms goes up.
My flesh is air.
Until the cloth drops back.
I count the gaps between the stones.
I press my body flat against the anchor hold,
until my breast is cold.

*Et misericórdia eius in progénies
et progénies tíméntibus eum.*

PART 5

The fifth rule for anchoresses is the rule of temptation, governing the physical and the spiritual.

The righteous will always be tempted, more than the weak. The highest tower is more vulnerable in the storm. Blessed is the woman who bears

temptation, for she will be crowned with the crown of life. It is sinful, not just to desire, but also to want to be desired. God knows how much I would prefer to see you, my dear sister, hanging on the gallows than drawn into carnal sin.

The first time Mary comes I do not know her.
She is thin and pale as a forgotten sister,
her eyes hazel as the riverbed,
her shoulders bare and dusty.

*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.*

I come to know her over seven visits.
She says she is and is not part of me,
that she has been where I will never go:
the dry desert and the damp forest,
calling out amongst the cattle.
'Listen, you will hear things.
Those voices are the messengers,
they tell your destiny.
Long ago, someone came to me so bright
I could not look at them.
After that, my body has never been empty,
like your body.
It is full of grief and love.

I've learned that men will sit upon their thrones,
but that their crowns will end up piercing them.'
She shows me her empty arms
and mine tingle.
She shows me the blood on her robes.
It is not her own.

PART 6

The sixth rule is the rule of confession.

Confession defeats the devil, cuts off his head, and scatters his army. Confession washes away your filth, and returns all the virtue lost in mortal sin. Confession must be bitter with regret, naked, frequent, prompt, humble, shameful, fearful, hopeful, truthful, resolute, and complete. Prostrate yourself before the altar with arms outstretched: through my own fault I have sinned, have mercy on me.

Deposuit potentes de sede: et exaltavit humiles.

The Earl comes to my window
from the King.
I see the shape of a
baby in the liquid air
between us.
I see two tiny boys,
one on the throne
the other at the foot of a cliff, below a chapel.
I see it all as if I were an owl passing
from one riverbank to the other.
He meets my eyes and says:
'Tell me how I might have a son.
In every moon I see his face,
in every moon that passes he dissolves.
I wish to hold the king up like an oak,
to be his roots and laden leaves
but am not strong without the heir I need.'
Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes.
I tell the Earl to build the chapel of my vision.
I do not tell him I also see a body
lying grey upon the marble.
(I do not know its meaning)
And then I lower back the curtain.

PART 7

*The seventh rule is the rule of penance.
What is the anchor house if not your grave?
I must remember I have died to this.
This is a blessed death, but alive in Christ.
I am my best kept secret.
My anchorhold a homely tomb.
Everything you bear is penance, everything
you suffer is martyrdom, because you are on
the cross day and night.*

*That I am ash, and thought, and shining bones.
The woman who keeps her death before her eyes,
on the judgement of Doomsday, where angels will
tremble, and on the eternal pains of hell, will not
lightly follow the pleasures of the flesh.*

That I am here but gone.

*Suscepit Israel puerum suum:
recordatus misericordiae suae.*

If you are wise the food you eat will be alike the words
you speak: plain, wholesome, baked beyond the window
on the other side of the street
touched by the floured hands of those you will not meet.

*Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros:
Abraham, et semini eius in saecula.*

I will grow old as an anchoress:
hair flowing down my back
womb still as an empty room.
And the eyes of others,
when they meet my own
will be painted glass
bright with their own secrets.

PART 8

*The eighth rule for anchoresses is the rule of the
heart's purity, and how you must love.
You will, as if in a mirror, see Our lady with all her
virgins, the host of angels, the assembly of saints,
and above them, He who makes our hearts rejoice.
Make his pleasure garden within yourself, for it is
His delight to reside there.
Love, piety and a pure heart will achieve everything.
Abstinence, humility and the innocence of a dove
are flowers beautiful to God's eyes.*

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,

My anchor hold is a deep pit in the earth
and it is an empty bowl.
It is a woven nest without an egg.
It is a beehive with a dying queen.
It is the binding of a book.
It is where I live
and where I do not live.
It is the mouth of a cave.
It is an eyelid.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,

It is a full cup of holy water
where I bask.
It is the dark, the shadow.
It is a hiding place and yet
a curtained stage.
It is a Moses basket.
It is a straw-lined stable.
It is my mother's arms.
It is my grave.
My feathered grave.

et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.



Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble

Formed in 2020, Ex Corde consists of professional singers from across the UK with diverse and successful careers, many of whom are alumni of the University of York. They use vocal music to create, collaborate and connect, bringing composers, performers, and audiences together. Alongside the obvious vocal implications, the group's name reflects its passionate belief in making choral music – both old and new – accessible 'from the heart', through innovative programming and imaginative performances. The group has performed live on Radio 3 and featured in the Beverley Early Music Festival, and has worked with composers Ambrose Field, Christopher Fox and David Lancaster.

David Lancaster (composer)

David Lancaster is a composer whose works have been performed, recorded and broadcast internationally, by artists including the Kronos String Quartet, Ligeti Quartet, Danish Radio Vocal Ensemble, Delta Saxophone Quartet, Juice, and the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra.

Originally from Wigan (Lancashire, UK), David began his musical life as a brass player, before a chance encounter with the music of Harrison Birtwistle aroused a passion for composing. Music studies at York and Cambridge universities followed, and for three years David was RVW Composer-in-Residence at Charterhouse during which time he received commissions from Leith Hill Festival, the Salomon Orchestra and New Macnaghten Concerts. He previously collaborated with Abi Curtis on *Music of a Thousand Breaths*, inspired by medieval frescoes in Pickering Church. Much of his work takes inspiration from the distant past, attempting to connect with the legacies of artists and craftsmen, and build bridges between past and present. David is currently Associate Professor of Composition at York St John University, Projects Manager of the Late Music concert series, and Music Director of York Railway Institute Band; his music is published by UYMP. David lives in York with his partner Bridget.

Abi Curtis (writer)

Abi Curtis is professor of Creative Writing at York St John University. She is the author of two poetry collections from Salt Modern Poets series, a climate change novel *Water & Glass* (Cloud Lodge, 2017) and has written for BBC Radio 3 and the Wellcome Trust. She enjoys collaborating with artists, musicians and scientists, and has contributed to work exploring ancient church frescoes to giant squid; Abi writes about animals, motherhood, elegy and the uncanny. She has received an Eric Gregory Award and a Somerset Maugham prize. She lives in York with her husband and two sons.

Paul Gameson (conductor)

Paul Gameson began his formative training as a singer began as chorister at St George's Chapel, Windsor under Christopher Robinson. He read music at the University of York, under Peter Seymour, researching sacred music of seventeenth-century France. He subsequently settled in York, enjoying the thriving early and contemporary choral scene there. He is a Vicar Choral in the choir of York Minster and works variously as conductor of The Ebor Singers and Ex Corde Vocal Ensemble, and Associate Lecturer at the University of York. He has sung with Corona Coloniensis and Red Byrd. Paul enjoys sharing his love of singing, particularly with younger singers. He teaches singing to the York Minster choristers, previously tutored at the York Music Centre, and has directed choral workshops in the UK and Holland. He has conducted live on BBC Radio 3 and at music festivals including the York Early and Late Music festivals. He also appears on the Resonus label with The Ebor Singers.

Anna Snow (soprano)

Anna Snow studied music under John Potter at the University of York before establishing the award-winning Juice Vocal Ensemble ('Juice') with two other graduates of the university, Kerry Andrew and Sarah Dacey. As part of this experimental trio, Anna has toured nationally and internationally in venues that range from London's Wigmore Hall to the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas.

As a founding member of Juice Anna has enjoyed collaborating with a wide range of artists, from beatboxers to composers and performers such as Anna Meredith and folk/avant-garde musician David Thomas-Broughton.

Anna has recorded a number of critically acclaimed albums, independently and with Juice, including 'Snow Queens' on the Resonus label. Anna's recording of Tansy Davies's *Troubairitz* songs for soprano and percussion was also shortlisted for an Independent Music Award.

Now based in York, Anna is highly involved with the local charity Accessible Arts and Media (AAM) for whom she is currently leading their Hands & Voices choir.

Acknowledgements

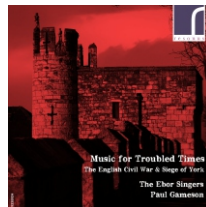
Our thanks go to Rev. Jane Speck, Chaplain at York St John University, and Dr Robert Richards at All Saints Church, North St., York.

This recording has been made possible by QR Research Funding from York St John University.

All music on this recording is published by UYMP.

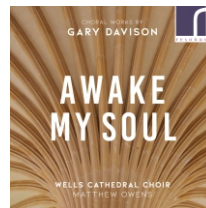
www.uymp.co.uk

More titles from Resonus Classics



Music for Troubled Times:
The English Civil War & Siege of York
The Ebor Singers, Paul Gameson (conductor)
RES194

'This is a thoughtfully compiled programme of little-known but interesting repertoire, some of which has specific York connections [...]'
The choir sing with unanimity and a good blend'
Early Music Review



Awake, My Soul: Choral Works by Gary Davison
Rachael Lloyd (mezzo-soprano), Philip Dukes (viola),
David Bednall (organ), Wells Cathedral Choir,
Matthew Owens (conductor)
RES10211

'The Requiem's additional forces give us some sumptuous viola-playing from Philip Dukes and some vibrant colours from the Wells Cathedral organ, played here by David Bednall.'
Gramophone

© 2023 Resonus Limited

© 2023 Resonus Limited

Recorded in the Chapel of York St John University on 4–5 June 2021 and 8–9 September 2022

Producer, Engineer & Editor: Adam Binks

Recorded at 24-bit/96 kHz resolution

Cover image: Detail from the *Pricke of Conscience* window in All Saints Church, North Street, York, UK

RESONUS LIMITED – UK

info@resonusclassics.com
www.resonusclassics.com

