

# A Celebration of the Choral Music of Dr John Blow

(1649-1708)

## THE GILTSPUR SINGERS

Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008, 7.00pm

**Behold, O God our defender** *Composed for the Coronation of James II (1685)*  
**Let my prayer come up into thy presence** *Composed for the Coronation of William & Mary (1689)*  
**O pray for the peace of Jerusalem** *Included in Playford's 'Divine Companion' (1701)*

*Soprano solo: Antonia Mott*

**Be merciful unto me, O Lord** *Undated*  
**Let thy hand be strengthened** *Composed for the Coronation of James II (1685)*

Henry Purcell (1659-1695) **Chaconne** 'Two in one upon a ground' from *Dioclesian*  
William Williams (*fl.* 1677-1704) **Trio sonata in F major** 'In imitation of birds'  
*Adagio – Allegro – Grave – Allegro*

*Nicky Johns & Alex Milne (recorders), Christopher Goodwin (theorbo), Catriona Boyle ('cello)*

**My God, my God, look upon me** *Composed 'At Aspinden Hall Sept the 6<sup>th</sup> 1697'*  
**Salvator mundi** *Composed c. 1675*  
**Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis** *From the Short Service [No. 4] in F*

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John Blow was born in Newark and baptised on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1649. As a boy, he moved to London to be a chorister at the Chapel Royal. Blow was appointed Organist of Westminster Abbey in 1668 at the age of 19 and entered the king's service as 'Musician for the Virginals' less than a month later. At 23 he was elected to the 'Corporation for Regulating the Art and Science of Music' and became its Warden the following year. He was made a Gentleman and the Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal in 1674, adding the post of Organist to his bulging portfolio from 1676. Aged 28, Blow was awarded the honorary degree of D.Mus. (Cantuar): the first known recipient since the Reformation. In 1679 he resigned the post of Organist of Westminster Abbey in favour of his friend and former pupil, Henry Purcell. Blow was Almoner and Master of the Choristers of St Paul's Cathedral from 1687-1703. On the death of Purcell in 1695, Blow returned to the Abbey. He was named official Composer to the Chapel Royal (a newly created post) in 1700. Blow died at Westminster on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1708 and was buried in the north aisle of the Abbey, next to Purcell. On his handsome monument is engraved one of his canons.

After Blow's death, his music was discussed in scathing terms by the eminent music historian, Dr Charles Burney, in his *General History of Music*: "Though there are strokes of the pathetic, and subjects of fugue in Blow's works that are admirable, yet I have examined no one of them which appears to be wholly unexceptionable, and free from confusion and crudities in the counterpoint." Burney goes on to make personally offensive remarks against Blow; but his poisonous diatribe says more about the historian himself than the composer, who was evidently held in high esteem by his

contemporaries and was loved by his pupils for his fatherly care toward them. Among the many young men whose musical gifts Blow nurtured were the great Purcell, Jeremiah Clarke (of *Trumpet Voluntary* fame) and Dr William Croft.

Blow's output of sacred music includes some 100 anthems, many with orchestra, among them the spectacular *God spake sometime in visions*, composed for the Coronation of James II; 12 services; and Latin works. His secular music includes *Venus and Adonis* (the model for Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and possibly the work, rather than *Dido*, to warrant the appellation 'the first English opera'); over 20 court odes; 10 odes for other occasions; over 120 songs, duets and trios; and catches. He composed c. 30 organ works; over 70 harpsichord pieces (some grouped as suites); and music for strings. Thus, the repertoire that we are performing tonight explores but a part of the corpus of fine music composed by Dr John Blow.

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### **The Giltspur Singers**

...were formed in the autumn of 2003. They take their name from Giltspur Street, which leads up to the entrance of the church where they rehearse: St Bartholomew-the-Less, inside the grounds of St Bartholomew's Hospital in the City of London.

The members of the choir are professionals in a wide range of careers, including the law, finance, education, medicine, the entertainment industry, P.R. and I.T. Some are music graduates; but, for the majority, music has always been a hobby. It is the sense of music as a source of recreation and enjoyment that the Giltspur Singers hope to communicate in their performances.

**Sopranos** Linda de Belder, Julie Gonzalez Torres, Andrea Liu, Antonia Mott, Elisabeth Somerville, Katy Turner

**Altos** Catriona Boyle, Ian Goddard, Nicky Johns

**Tenors** Sam Butler, Christopher Goodwin, Nick Grounds

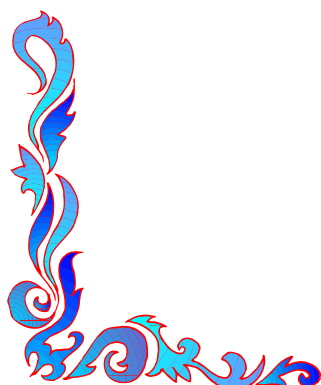
**Basses** Dan de Belder, Alex Milne, Timothy Murray, Nick Whitehead

### **Simon Daniels (Accompanist)**

... is a member of the tenor section of the Giltspur Singers. He read music at the University of Edinburgh and completed an M.Phil. at the University of Birmingham, researching seventeenth-century liturgical music from Bologna. He currently works as a fundraiser at the Tower of London. In the summer of 2008 Simon was awarded the Certificate of the Royal College of Organists.

### **Christopher Maxim (Conductor)**

... is a composer, academic, critic and teacher whose qualifications include a Ph.D. in music and four Fellowship diplomas. Chris's compositions are performed on both sides of the Atlantic and are published in the UK by Stainer & Bell, the Royal School of Church Music, and Allegro Music; and in the USA by St James Music Press. Much of his music is also available on the web at [www.sibeliusmusic.com](http://www.sibeliusmusic.com). As a conductor, Chris specialises in directing chamber and liturgical choirs. His former conducting posts include the Cardiff Bay Singers and the Elizabethan Singers of London. He has been Organist of St Matthew's, Bethnal Green since January 2003. To find out more, please visit his website: [www.christophermaxim.co.uk](http://www.christophermaxim.co.uk).



*If you would like to join the Giltspur Singers  
or if you would like to hear about future concerts,  
please contact the Choir Administrator, Tim Murray at  
[Tim.Murray@twobirds.com](mailto:Tim.Murray@twobirds.com),  
or call him on 020 7415 6643.*

*News and forthcoming concerts are publicised at:  
[www.christophermaxim.co.uk/the\\_giltspur\\_singers.html](http://www.christophermaxim.co.uk/the_giltspur_singers.html)*