



Charles Hubert Hastings Parry
(1848-1918)

There is an old belief

aus "Songs of Farewell"

für vierstimmigen Chor (SATB) a cappella



EDITION VOCE BELLA

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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,
Schicksals,
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

Es gibt einen alten Glauben,
dass an einem erhabenen Ufer,
jenseits aller Trauer,
geliebte Freunde sich wiedertreffen werden,

jenseits aller Zeit
und fern der Sünde und der Macht des
gelassen in beständigem Blühen
von Körper und Seele.

Diesen Glauben will ich bewahren,
von dieser Hoffnung werde ich niemals lassen;
ewig sei der Schlaf
ohne dieses Erwachen.

Übersetzung: Christian Bährens

John Gibson Lockhart war ein schottischer Schriftsteller und Verleger und neben einigen Romanen vor allem durch die Biographie über das Leben und Wirken seines Schwiegervaters Sir Walter Scott bekannt. Er studierte Jura in Glasgow und Oxford und ging nach Edinburgh, wechselte dort bald zur Literatur und wurde Mitarbeiter des politisch engagierten *Blackwood's Magazine*, für das er neben literaturkritischen Artikeln auch Übersetzungen spanischer Lyrik in Englische verfasste. Durch den Einfluss Scotts avancierte er zum Herausgeber des *Quarterly Review* und schrieb später erneut eine viel beachtete Biographie, diesmal über den schottischen Nationaldichter Robert Burns.

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry wurde in eine wohlhabende Familie geboren und genoss die denkbar beste Ausbildung. Bereits als Schüler erhielt er in Oxford den Bachelor of Music, arbeitete aber auf Drängen des Vaters zunächst bei der Versicherungsfirma Lloyds in London. Sein Talent als Komponist und Musikwissenschaftler brachten ihm schließlich eine Professur am Royal College of Music in London ein und er wurde Lehrer bedeutender englischer Komponisten wie Holst und Vaughan Williams. Sein berühmtes Chorlied *Jerusalem* wurde ähnlich wie Elgars *Land of Hope and Glory* zu einer zweiten Nationalhymne. Nicht wenige Zeitgenossen sahen Parry als den bedeutendsten englischen Komponisten seit Purcell.

There is an old belief ist ein Teil der *Songs of Farewell*, die Parry in den Jahren 1916-18 komponierte. Sie entstanden unter dem Eindruck des furchtbaren Weltkriegs, in dessen Verlauf viele Musikstudenten Parrys in den Schützengräben ums Leben kamen. Vor dem Hintergrund dieses schmerzlichen Verlustes ist seine Textauswahl zu verstehen. Parry erlebte das Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges nicht mehr. *There is an old belief* erklang bei seiner Beerdigung in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918)

There is an old belief

Words by John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854)

p *poco cresc.*

Sopran 1 There is an old be - lief, that on some so - lemn shore, be

p *poco cresc.*

Sopran 2 There is an old be-lief, that on some so-lemn shore,

p *poco cresc.*

Alt There is an old be - lief, that on some so-lemn shore, be

p *poco cresc.*

Tenor There is an old be - lief, that on some so-lemn shore,

p *poco cresc.*

Bass 1 There is an old be-lief, that on some so - lemn shore be -

p *poco cresc.*

Bass 2 There is an old be - lief, that on some so - lemn shore, be -

4

p

S 1 yond the sphere of grief dear friends shall meet once more,

p

S 2 be-yond the sphere of grief dear friends shall

p

A yond the sphere of grief dear friends shall meet once more,

p

T be-yond the sphere of grief dear

p

B 1 yond the sphere of grief dear friends shall meet once

p

B 2 yond the sphere of grief dear friends shall meet, dear friends shall

7

pp *poco animando*

S 1 dear friends shall meet, shall meet once more.

pp

S 2 meet, shall meet once more. Be -

pp

A shall meet, shall meet once more. Be-yond the sphere of

pp

T friends shall meet, shall meet once more.

pp

B 1 more, shall meet once more. Be-yond the sphere of

pp

B 2 meet, shall meet once more.

10 *mf*

S 1 Be-yond the sphere of time and sin, and fate's

S 2 yond the sphere of time and sin, be - yond the sphere of

A time and sin, be - yond the sphere of time and sin,

T 8 Be-yond the sphere of time and sin, be - yond the sphere of

B 1 time and sin, be - yond the sphere of time and

B 2 Be - yond the sphere of time and

13 *p dolce*

S 1 con - trol, se-rene in change - less

S 2 time and sin and fate's con - trol, se - rene in change-less

A and fate's con - trol, se - rene

T 8 time and sin and fate's con-trol, se - rene in change-less prime, —

B 1 sin and fate's — con-trol, se - rene in

B 2 sin and fate's con-trol,

16

S 1 prime of bo - dy and of

S 2 prime, in change - less prime, se - rene in change -

A in change - less prime, in change - less

T 8 in change -

B 1 change - less prime of bo - dy and of

B 2 *p* se - rene in change -

18

S 1 soul, se - rene in change - less prime

S 2 - less prime, se - rene in change - less prime

A prime, in change - less prime, se - rene in

T 8 - less se - rene

B 1 soul *p* se - rene in

B 2 *p* less prime, se - rene in

20

pp *rit.* *f* *Tempo*

S 1 in change-less prime of bo-dy and of soul. That

S 2 of bo-dy and of soul. That

A change-less prime of bo-dy and of soul. That

T 8 in change-less prime of bo-dy and of soul. That

B 1 change-less prime of bo-dy and of soul. That

B 2 change-less prime of bo-dy and of soul. That

23

p

S 1 creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

S 2 creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

A creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

T 8 creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

B 1 creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

B 2 creed I fain would keep that hope I'll ne'er for-go

30

pp dolce poco cresc.

S 1 e - ter - nal be the sleep,

pp poco cresc.

S 2 e - ter - nal be the sleep,

pp poco cresc. mf

A e - ter - nal be the sleep, e -

p

T e - ter -

pp poco cresc.

B 1 e - ter - nal be the sleep,

pp poco cresc.

B 2 e - ter - - - - - nal,

35

mf dim.

S 1 e - ter -

mf dim.

S 2 e - ter - - - - - nal be the sleep,

dim.

A ter - - - - - nal be the sleep,

mf

T - - - - - nal be the sleep, e - ter - - - - - nal

mf dim.

B 1 e - ter - - - - - nal be the

mf dim.

B 2 e - ter - - - - - nal, e - ter - - - - - nal

39

pp *p* *rit.*

S 1 - nal be the sleep, if not to wa - ken

S 2 if not to wa - ken

A be the sleep, if not to wa - ken

T 8 be the sleep, if not to wa - ken

B 1 sleep, if not to wa - ken

B 2 be the sleep, if not to wa - ken

44

mf *Tempo*

S 1 so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

S 2 so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

A so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

T 8 so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

B 1 so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

B 2 so, e - ter - nal be the sleep,

49

pp

S 1 e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

S 2 e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

A e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

T e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

B 1 e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

B 2 e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

54

Slower
p cresc.

S 1 if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

S 2 if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

A if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

T if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

B 1 if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

B 2 if not to wa - - - ken so. *pp*

It has perhaps become a commonplace to think of a composer turning in upon himself towards the end of his life, yet this was certainly the case in the *Songs of farewell* which were composed between 1916 and 1918. This is not to say that Parry had withdrawn from public life; far from it. His capacity for hard work remained undiminished even in his late sixties. He was still director of the Royal College of Music, a post which he had held since 1894, and was president of the 'Music in Wartime' committee which he had helped found in 1914 to provide opportunities for professional musicians to serve the war effort by giving concerts in hospitals, camps, and the like. Nevertheless, Parry found the war profoundly depressing; it was, in Herbert Howells' words, 'a scourge that cast a devastating shadow over Parry's mind and heart'.

The six *Songs of farewell* give us a glimpse of this private man, who sensed that his own life was drawing to a close; of his seventieth birthday he wrote, 'I have reached the last milestone'. One feels that the religious impulse can never have been stronger than at this time, and yet these are not conventionally devotional works, although he called them motets. The sentiments and the mode of expression are, in several of the poems, personal rather than spiritual, and only 'Lord, let me know mine end' has a traditionally sacred text. Taken together, the *Songs of farewell* are Parry's masterpiece for the choral medium. In them he approached levels of musical expression and sensitivity to textual meaning and inflexion which have rarely been exceeded in English music. All the first performances were directed by Parry's friend Hugh P Allen, who had succeeded him at the Royal College of Music and who did much to foster interest in his music in the early post-war years.

In terms of scoring and treatment the six pieces fall into three groups. 'My soul, there is a country' and 'I know my soul hath power' are written for four voices in a predominantly chordal style. 'Never weather-beaten sail' and 'There is an old belief', for five and six voices respectively, introduce a certain amount of contrapuntal interest. Finally, in 'At the round earth's imagined corners' for seven voices, and 'Lord, let me know mine end', for eight, Parry takes full advantage of the flexibility of treatment available with these scorings in his use of contrasting registers, a variety of contrapuntal techniques, and rich choral sonorities.

John Heighway (1988)

Many of the great religions have within them a divide between doctrine, scriptures, precepts that necessarily define and sustain the tradition and the less-well-defined creative imagination that has given people the motivation to try to live by those precepts. Many of the greatest composers of sacred music in the Western tradition have found themselves on the edge of organized religion or philosophy – composers such as Brahms, Verdi, Vaughan Williams, and Herbert Howells among many others – preferring to call themselves "agnostic" - another way of saying "I don't know, but I want to know."

The English composer Hubert Parry was one of those – he was so offended by organized religion he could not bring himself to attend his own daughter's christening, and yet his hymns are among the most profound and beloved in the Christian canon. A royal wedding in his home country cannot go forward without his anthem setting of Psalm 122, "I was glad when they said unto me." He was teacher and direct inspiration to a renaissance of English composers in the generation to follow, most notably Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, and Gerald Finzi.

It was surprising then that after over twenty years as a choral musician, it was only recently I took the time to take a closer look at his valedictory masterpiece, *Songs of Farewell*, a set of six pieces seldom performed all on the same program in the United States. This is the kind of music that makes you feel enriched, ennobled, fulfilled more and more at each encounter. Like the Brahms *Requiem*, the Rachmaninoff *Vespers*, and the *Sea Symphony* we performed last season, it is music you wish you could rehearse forever.

Thomas Lloyd (2014)

