

A Little Jazz Mass

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

Bob Chilcott is one of the busiest and most popular choral composers and conductors in Britain today. He has been involved in choral music for most of his life. He was a boy chorister and then a tenor choral scholar in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, and later sang with, composed and arranged for the celebrated King's Singers. Since 1997 he has worked as a full-time composer. Today, Bob is in great demand internationally as composer, conductor and choral consultant. He has been invited to appear at many important international festivals, and has worked with some of the world's leading choral ensembles. At home, he is currently Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers.

Bob Chilcott's singing experience has given him an inside knowledge of an exceptionally wide range of music, and this is reflected in the eclectic nature of his own compositions which, whilst remaining within the mainstream English choral tradition, are variously inspired by folksongs, Gregorian chant, Anglican hymns, spirituals, jazz, close-harmony, gospel and African music.

During his time with the King's Singers, Chilcott had the good fortune to work with such jazz luminaries as George Shearing, Richard Rodney Bennett and John Dankworth. His wonderful setting of the Latin *Missa Brevis*, **A Little Jazz Mass**, was composed for the 2004 Crescent City Choral Festival, New Orleans. A relaxed, easy tempo Kyrie is followed by a Gloria with driving, upbeat outer sections enclosing a lyrical central section. The music of the Sanctus could be described as a 'jazz lullaby'; the Benedictus ups the tempo a little, building to a strong *forte* for the 'Hosanna'. Clearly inspired by the blues, the Agnus Dei reaches a powerful climax at 'Dona nobis pacem' before arriving at a peaceful conclusion. It says much for Chilcott's skill that he has successfully brought together two very diverse traditions - the Latin mass and the jazz idiom - in such an expressive and entirely unforced way, an achievement that has generally eluded other composers who have tried something similar.

programme notes by John Bawden

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