

HERBERT HOWELLS

A Sequence for
Saint Michael

Requiem

Take Him, Earth,
for Cherishing

Te Deum
Laudamus
*for Washington
National
Cathedral*



Gloria Dei Cantores
Elizabeth C. Patterson,
Director

program

- | | | |
|--|--|-------|
| 1 | Behold, O God our Defender
(Novello & Company Limited) | 3:48 |
| 2 | A Sequence for Saint Michael
(Novello & Company Limited)
Br. Richard Cragg, tenor | 11:23 |
| Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis
For the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Chichester
(Novello & Company Limited) | | |
| 3 | Magnificat | 7:59 |
| 4 | Nunc Dimittis
Sr. Amanda Ortolani, soprano Br. Nathanael Reese, tenor | 4:50 |
| 5 | Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing
(The H.W. Gray Co., Inc.) | 9:02 |

Requiem

(The H.W. Gray Co., Inc.)

Kathy Schuman, soprano | Sr. Phoenix Marcella Catlin, alto
Br. Richard Cragg, tenor | G. Luke Norman, baritone

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------|
| 6 | Salvator mundi | 2:03 |
| 7 | Psalm 23 | 2:54 |
| 8 | Requiem æternam (I) | 3:32 |
| 9 | Psalm 121 | 3:02 |
| 10 | Requiem æternam (II) | 3:32 |
| 11 | I heard a voice from heaven | 4:50 |

12 Te Deum Laudamus

for Washington National Cathedral
(Novello & Company Limited)

11:23

Total Time:

68:18

Photography: courtesy of Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P., pages 2, 3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21; Reg Wilson and EMI Classics, pages 6, 13; courtesy of Melissa Mertz, pages 10, 11; courtesy of Samuel Mather, pages 12, 13.

Elizabeth C. Patterson, Director
James E. Jordan, Jr., Organist

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the interior of Gloucester Cathedral. The image shows a long, narrow aisle with a series of tall, narrow stained glass windows on the left side. The windows are set in Gothic-style arches and feature various colorful scenes and figures. The architecture is made of dark stone, and the lighting is warm and golden, creating a sense of depth and grandeur. The perspective is from a low angle, looking down the length of the cathedral.

program notes

often, out of great suffering and deep need, incredible beauty is born. This was certainly the case with Herbert Howells (1892-1983): he surmounted poverty and social rejection early on in life, struggled with debilitating illness, and personal and national tragedies, from the death of his son to both World Wars. In the vast choral repertoire of the twentieth century, the music of Howells stands apart, unmatched in its complexion of color and expressivity, and unflinching in its ability to move hearts. The work he left behind radiates his love for the craft, as stated in an interview with BBC Radio 3 (1967), “I love music as a man can love a woman . . . I have written really, to put it simply, the music I would like to write and for no other reason.”

Gloucester Cathedral: Howells began his musical studies at Gloucester Cathedral at age 18, and his *Hymnus Paradisi* was premiered there in 1950. He is memorialized with an image of his music set in stained glass in the Lady Chapel.

Westminster Abbey: Howells' ashes are interred in the north choir aisle of Westminster Abbey, near the graves of his teacher Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, and his compatriot Ralph Vaughan Williams.

In an interview with *Gramophone* magazine in March 1971, Howells explained: "I have never wanted to write a symphony or an opera. In the last twenty years I have written mainly church music. I suppose it's a throwback to my early days as a chorister and incompetent organist. I was brought up in Gloucester and my earliest experiences are all bound up with that particular cathedral. I wanted to write for people and places and so a large proportion of my church music is dedicated to particular cathedrals or a particular occasion."¹

The anthem *Behold, O God our Defender* was one such work. Written on Christmas Day, 1952, nothing in the score reveals the incredible occasion for which the piece was composed. Howells' biographer, Paul Spicer, tells of its origin:

"... the introit he (Howells) had been commissioned to write for the forthcoming Coronation of Queen Elizabeth which he had written on Christmas Day 1952. This was *Behold, O God our Defender*. In many ways this short piece sums up succinctly everything which Howells had come to achieve in the short time that he had been writing seriously for the church (only since the early 1940's). . . . What a way

to start one of the great celebrations in church, and who better to create the right atmosphere for the thousands of onlookers that day, and for the woman at the centre of everyone's attention."²

It was thanks to Dr. George Guest this next anthem came into being. Dr. Guest commissioned his friend for a work to honor the 450th Anniversary of Saint John's in Cambridge. Dr. Guest recounts their correspondence in his memoir, *A Guest at Cambridge*:³

"The composer wrote on 16 January 1961:

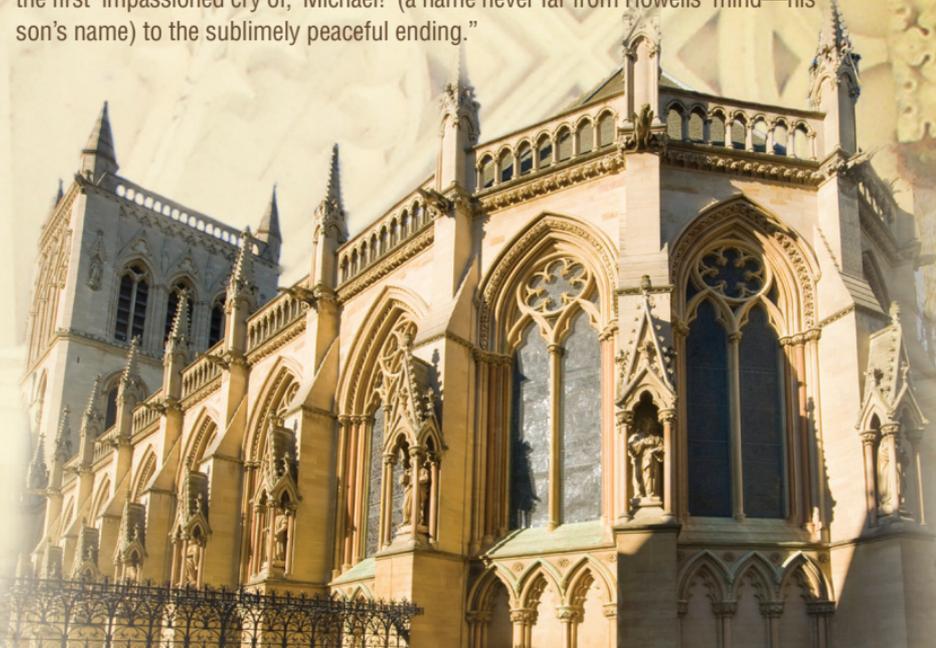


‘My dear George,
I’ve been slow to answer your letter:
and I’m the world’s slowest composer,
and my honoured publishers the
slowest in Christendom (if c. includes
Soho!). But if it comes to writing a new
anthem or motet for beloved Saint
John’s College—I’d love to: if there’s
time. There will be, I expect. Anyway,
tell whomsoever it may concern
there’s no question of my being
commissioned. I’ll do it for love, or not
at all. . . . Yours ever,—Herbert.’

By the 9th of August he was writing, ‘The planned notes for Saint J’s C. November celebration are . . . done—a setting of Alcuin’s *Sequence for Saint Michael.*’ A week later he wrote, ‘I hope (a) it isn’t too long, (b) it isn’t too difficult, (c) it may fit into your scheme, (d) there’s be no objection on account of Alcuin’s addressing the poem to Charlemagne, (e) that the altos in Chapel, once over their fright, will realize I’ve really had contraltos in mind, (f) that you’ll put the whole thing aside (by registered post to me!) if you can’t abide it.’

The *Sequence* is a wonderfully successful work, from the tension created by the first impassioned cry of, ‘Michael!’ (a name never far from Howells’ mind—his son’s name) to the sublimely peaceful ending.”

St. John’s College Chapel, Cambridge: Howells served as Organist at Saint John’s College Chapel in Cambridge during World War II.



The fact that Howells did not call himself a believer makes his overwhelming contribution to sacred choral music of the 20th century all the more wonderful. In an interview with the London *Independent* his daughter Ursula said, “People assume he must have been deeply religious, and I have to tell them he wasn’t. He loved the tradition of the church, and the Bible as literature. But he was never more than an agnostic who veered toward belief.”⁴ Steeped as he was from such a young age in the “tradition of the church” however, Howells composed some twenty settings of the Evening Canticles inspired by his interest in the cathedrals and their respective choirs. Each setting—beginning with *Collegium Regale* of 1945—reflects that particular cathedral’s acoustic, style, choir, and organ. A marvelous example is the Chichester Service composed in 1967 for the beginning of the Southern Cathedrals Festival. Chichester Cathedral, its architecture and artwork, is a fusion of ancient and modern. Inside are remnants of the original Norman building dating from 1076, as well as stained glass by Marc Chagall. The *Chichester Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* explore both sides: pairing the ancient, traditional words of Mary with Howells’ more modern style.

In 1963, Howells presented a special gift to the people of the United States at a time of grave national tragedy: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Howells wrote: “Within the year following the tragic death of President Kennedy in Texas, plans were made for a dual American-Canadian Memorial Service to be held in Washington. I was asked to compose an a cappella work for the commemoration. The text was mine to choose, Biblical or other. Choice was settled when I recalled a poem by Prudentius (AD 348-413). I had already set it in medieval Latin, years earlier, as a study for *Hymnus Paradisi* (1938). But now I used none of that unpublished setting. Instead, I returned to Helen Waddell’s

faultless translation. Here was the perfect text—the Prudentius Hymnus *circa Exsequias Defuncti*.”

The anthem *Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing* reflects that exchange of anguish and release between earth and heaven at the death of the beloved, which Howells knew so well. Howells’ wedding of the text by Prudentius, with an ever-changing harmonic palette—sometimes spare and haunting with mortal grief, then evolving into the richness of eternal glory—embodies the meeting of earth’s sorrow and heaven’s joy. The anthem was sung again nineteen years later at Howells’ own memorial service at Westminster Abbey.

In September 1935, Howells suffered his own most unnatural loss: the death of his only son, Michael. At the end of a family vacation in Gloucestershire, the nine-year-old boy contracted polio, dying three days later in his father’s arms. Understandably, Howells entered into a period of grief that made his work, which had been steadily and successfully building to this point, come to a standstill. When Howells did pick up his pen again he went back to work on the *Requiem*, a composition he had begun and put away in 1932.

The *Requiem* formed the basis of his masterwork, *Hymnus Paradisi*, which Howells released for performance in 1950 at the persuasion of colleagues

JFK Memorial at Arlington Cemetery: President John F. Kennedy and Howells held in common the early loss of a son: Kennedy’s infant son Patrick is buried beside him at his memorial in Arlington National Cemetery.



including Herbert Sumsion, Gerald Finzi, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Adrian Boult. The Requiem itself was left undiscovered until 1980—just three years before his death. The composer's own words about his *Hymnus Paradisi* can be applied to the *Requiem* in retrospect:

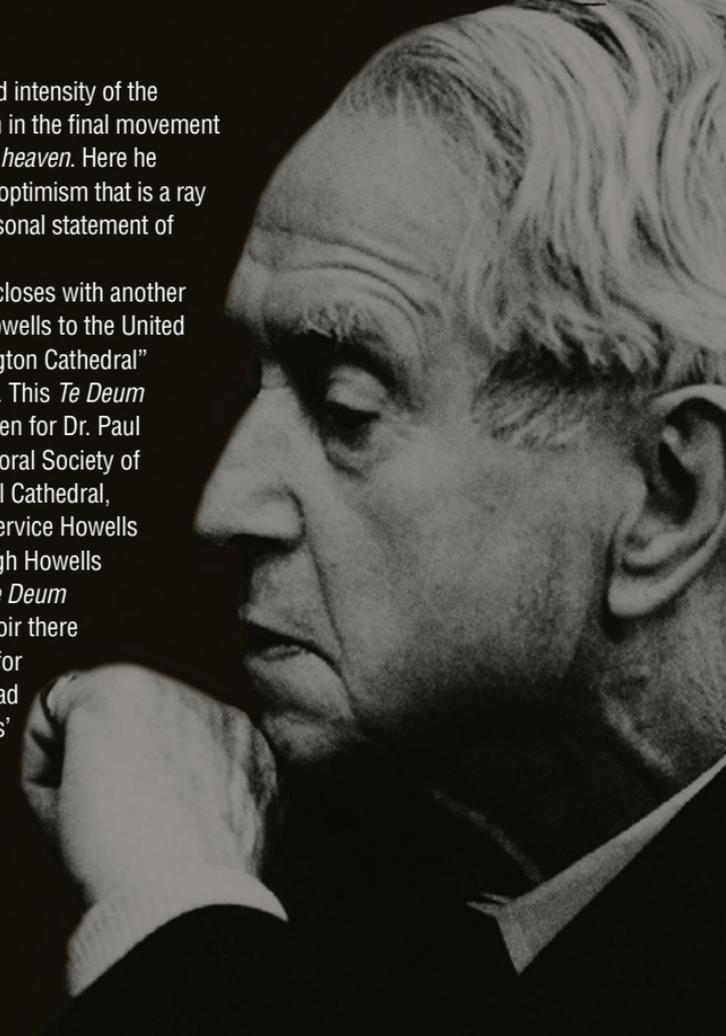
Archway from St. John's College: In 1961, many years after his service as Organist at St. John's College Chapel, Howells was awarded with an Honorary Doctorate from Cambridge University.

“The sudden loss in 1935 of an only son, a loss essentially profound and, in its very nature, beyond argument, might naturally impel a composer, after a time, to seek release and consolation in language and terms most personal to him. Music may well have the power beyond any other medium to offer that release and comfort. It did so in my case, and became a personal, private document. For text, I sought immemorial prose. . . . [These] are immemorial reflections upon the transient griefs and indestructible hopes of mankind.”

The Requiem's mixture of Palestrina-like counterpoint and Impressionistic mystery gives it an emotional quality quite unlike anything of its time. Howells also said many times how important the treatment of pathos in music was to him. This perhaps accounts for the bittersweet quality of his harmonies and his sensitivity to the nuances

of text. The sustained intensity of the music is only broken in the final movement *I heard a voice from heaven*. Here he turns to a consoling optimism that is a ray of light in a very personal statement of grief and loss.

This program closes with another musical gift from Howells to the United States: the “Washington Cathedral” *Te Deum Laudamus*. This *Te Deum Laudamus* was written for Dr. Paul Callaway and the Choral Society of Washington National Cathedral, and it was the last service Howells wrote. In fact, though Howells had promised the *Te Deum Laudamus* to the choir there with great affection for Dr. Callaway (who had championed Howells' music in the U.S.), other work and deteriorating





King's College: Among Howells' more than twenty settings of the Mass and Evening Canticles, his settings for King's College, Cambridge (*Collegium Regale*) have been labeled his finest.

health prevented Howells from completing the work himself. Aside from references in a few letters back-and-forth with Howells and members of the cathedral, all traces of the *Te Deum Laudamus* seemed to disappear. But in 1988, five years after Howells' death, John Buttrey learned about the incomplete commission during a visit to Washington National Cathedral. Buttrey returned to the Royal College of Music Library where he discovered Howells' detailed sketches for the *Te Deum Laudamus*. These sketches pieced together "so convincingly (in the sequence of key-relationships, and in the way the progress of the earlier music continues to move forward) that it is difficult not to believe it represents Howells' final thoughts on how he wanted this *Te Deum Laudamus* to end."⁵ Rich and adventurous in its harmonic language and rhythmic structure, and powerful in its emotional range, this *Te Deum Laudamus* sets an exclamation point both at the end of this program, and at the closing statement of Howells' invaluable contribution to the sacred choral music of the twentieth century.

Gloriæ Dei Cantores encountered the work of Herbert Howells early in its development as a choir through one of his successors at Saint John's College in Cambridge, Dr. George Guest (1924-2002). Having known Howells personally, Dr. Guest infused Gloriæ Dei Cantores with a passion for Howells' settings of the Mass, Evening Canticles, Preces and Responses, and anthems, which quickly became the "bread and butter" of the choir's repertoire. Gloriæ Dei Cantores proudly shares in upholding his legacy now in the United States, and considers it a privilege to present this recording as an American tribute.

foot notes

¹ *Gramophone*, March 1971: "Herbert Howells and His Hymnus Paradisi" by Susan Regan.

² Spicer, Paul. *Herbert Howells*, Border Lines, Seren Books, Bridgend, Wales. © 1998.

³ Guest, George. *A Guest at Cambridge*, Paraclete Press, Brewster, MA. © 1994.

⁴ London Independent, October 1992: "The sorrow that sounds like heaven: When Herbert Howells lost a son, the church gained some immortal music. Michael White pays a centenary tribute" by Michael White.

⁵ *The Musical Times*, July 1991: "The Washington Canticles: Herbert Howells's Last Service" by John Buttrey

texts

Behold, O God our Defender

Behold, O God our defender, and look upon the face of thine Anointed. For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

A Sequence for St. Michael

Michael, Archangel of the King of Kings, give ear to our voices. We acknowledge thee to be the Prince of the citizens of heaven: And at thy

prayer, God sends His angels unto men that the enemy with cunning craft shall not prevail to do the hurt he craves to weary men. Yea, thou hast dominion of perpetual Paradise, and ever do the holy angels honour thee. Thou wast seen in the Temple of God, a censer of gold in thy hand and the smoke of it fragrant with spices rose up till it came before God. Thou with strong hand didst smite the cruel dragon and many souls didst rescue

from his jaws. Then was there a great silence in heav'n and a thousand saying: Glory to the Lord King. Hear us, Michael, hear us greatest angel. Come down a little from thy high seat, to bring us the strength of God and the lightning of His mercy, and do thou, Gabriel, Lay low our foes, and thou, Raphael, Heal our sick. Purge our disease, heal our sick, ease our pain, and give us to share in the joys of the blessed. Hear us, Michael, come down from thy high seat, and give us to share in the joys of the blessed.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis

For the Cathedral Church of The Holy Trinity, Chichester

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 rememb'ring 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.



Nunc Dimittis

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel. 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.

Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing

Take him, earth, for cherishing,
to thy tender breast receive him.
Body of a man I bring thee,
noble even in its ruin.

Once was this a spirit's dwelling,
by the breath of God created.
High the heart that here was beating,
Christ the prince of all its living.

Guard him well, the dead I give thee,
not unmindful of his creature
shall he ask it: he who made
it symbol of his mystery.

Take him, earth, for cherishing.

Comes the hour God hath appointed
to fulfil the hope of men,
then must thou,
what I give, return again.

Take him, earth, for cherishing.

Body of a man I bring thee.
Not though ancient time decaying
wear away these bones to sand,
ashes that a man might measure
in the hollow of his hand:
not though wandering winds,
scatter dust was nerve and sinew,
is it given to man to die.

Once again the shining road
leads to ample paradise;
open are the woods again
that the Serpent lost for men.

Take, O take him, mighty Leader,
take again thy servant's soul.
Grave his name, and pour the fragrant
balm upon the icy stone.

Take him, earth, for cherishing,
to thy tender breast receive him.
Body of a man I bring thee,
noble in its ruin.

By the breath of God created.
Christ the prince of all its living.
Take, O take him, take him, earth,
for cherishing.

Requiem Salvator mundi

O Saviour of the world, O Saviour,
Who by thy Cross and thy precious
Blood hast redeemed us, help us,
Save us and help us, we humbly
beseech thee, O Lord.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd: therefore
can I lack nothing. He shall feed me
in a green pasture: and lead me forth
beside the waters of comfort. He shall
convert my soul: and bring me forth
in the paths of righteousness, for his
name's sake. Yea, though I walk in
the valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil: thy rod and thy staff
comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a
table before me against them that
trouble me: thou hast anointed my
head with oil, and my cup shall be
full. But thy loving kindness and
mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life: and I will dwell in the house of
the Lord for ever.



Requiem æternam

Requiem æternam dona eis, Et lux perpetua luceat eis. Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.

Give them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine (illuminate) on them.

Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh thy help. My help cometh from the Lord: Who hath made heav'n and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep, Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord himself is thy keeper: he is thy defence upon thy right hand: So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going

out, and thy coming in: from this day forth and forevermore. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.

Requiem æternam

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine, Et lux perpetua luceat eis. Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.

Give them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine (illuminate) on them.

I heard a voice from heaven

I heard a voice from heav'n, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: Even so saith the Spirit: From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: For they rest from their labours.



Te Deum Laudamus

We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heav'ns, and all the Pow'rs therein. To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heav'n and earth are full of the Majesty of thy Glory. The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee. The noble army of Martyrs praise thee. The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee, the Father of an infinite Majesty; Thine honourable, true and only Son; Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou took'st upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When thou hadst overcome

the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heav'n to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the Glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeem'd with thy precious blood. Make them to be number'd with thy Saints in glory everlasting. O Lord, save thy people and bless thine heritage. Govern them and lift them up for ever. Day by day we magnify thee, and we worship thy Name ever world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us. O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee. O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

GLORIÆ DEI CANTORES

Gloriæ Dei Cantores, an internationally acclaimed choir of over forty voices, ranging in age from 20-70, and directed by Elizabeth C. Patterson, is dedicated to preserving and authentically interpreting great choral music from the eleventh to the twenty-first centuries. Founded in 1988, Gloriæ Dei Cantores has touched the hearts of audiences in twenty-three countries in Europe, Asia, and North America. They sing in eighteen languages and have a discography of more than thirty-five recordings. For more information, please visit www.gdcchoir.org.

The church of the transfiguration

The Church of the Transfiguration is a contemporary expression of early Christian architecture that draws upon a fourth-century architectural heritage shared by Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox. Constructed of Minnesota limestone the color of Cape Cod sand, it stands 55 feet high, 72 feet wide, and 182 feet long. Its architectural style is basilican and features on a long, rectangular nave, a rounded apse at the east end, narrow side aisles, a peaked timber roof, and interior columns and arches along the side aisles. It was designed by William Rawn Associates of Boston and was dedicated June, 2000. The art program for the Church of the Transfiguration combines fresco, mosaics, stone and bronze sculpture, and stained glass, to present a cohesive narrative based on biblical history and church tradition. The organ is a restoration and expansion of pipework from twelve organs built by the E.M. Skinner Organ Company early in the twentieth century.

The Church of the Transfiguration, Orleans, Massachusetts. Detail of the Atrium at night.

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First Soprano

Rachel McKendree
Sr. Anneliese Minster
Sr. Amanda D. Ortolani
Mary Virginia Smith

Second Soprano

Sr. Paula Irving
Kathy Schuman
Kathryn Shannon
Sr. Lucia Smith

First Alto

Sr. Melody Edmonson
Lillian Miao
Wendy Saran
Blair Tingley

Second Alto

Sarah Andre
Sr. Phoenix M. Catlin
Sr. Estelle Cole
Sr. Seana Shannon

First Tenor

Br. Patrick Clark
Br. Richard Cragg
Br. Nathanael Reese

Second Tenor

Br. Peter Logan
Br. Anthony Kanaga
Br. Jacob Witter

Baritone

Michael Hale
Br. Phillip MacNeil
G. Luke Norman
David Ortolani
Br. Joel Sweet
Paul Tingley

Bass

Br. John Henderson
N. Andrew Mitchell
Br. Paul Norman
Richard K. Pugsley
Br. Timothy Pehta

HERBERT HOWELLS

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from the Herbert Howells Trust.



Gloriæ Dei Cantores
Elizabeth C. Patterson,
Director

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Richard K. Pugsley
Sound Engineer: John Newton
Mastering Engineer:

Mark Donahue
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