

**Transcript of talk: *The Verse Anthems of Henry Aldrich*, by Dr Dean Jobin-Bevans
Delivered on 6 November 2017**

Introduction

The Henry Aldrich Choral Edition Project is an ongoing programme of research, begun in 2013. The results of this research are currently being made available through the Christ Church Library website (please see: <http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives/henry-aldrich-project>), where for the first time, scholars and performers can access and download the complete, edited original sacred choral works by Henry Aldrich available in modern choral performing editions. To date, the complete set of full anthems have been transcribed and are available in PDF format for download from the Henry Aldrich Choral Project on the Christ Church Library website. The first five of the sixteen verse anthems will soon be uploaded and available for access in the coming months.

Brief Biography

Henry Aldrich was born at Westminster on January 15, 1648, where he attended school, and was chosen as a king's scholar in 1658. He later matriculated from Christ Church in 1662, graduating Bachelor of Arts in 1666, and a Master of Arts in 1669. While at Oxford, he may have received formal musical training from Edward Low, who was a professor of music until his death in 1682. Aldrich was appointed canon in 1682, having proceeded Bachelor of Divinity and Doctorate of Divinity that same year.

On April 4, 1689 Aldrich was installed as the Dean of Christ Church, succeeding John Massey, a Catholic. Massey, whom three years earlier had been appointed Dean by James II, was forced to make an abrupt departure from Oxford the previous November due to the escalation of anti-Catholic tensions at Oxford during this time. In fact, in his capacity as a canon at Christ Church, Aldrich actively worked to appose James II's attempts to Catholicize Oxford.

In addition to his three years as the Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1692 to 1695, and the twenty-one years served as Dean, Aldrich distinguished himself as logician, skilled architect, competent musician, and composer of predominantly sacred music used in cathedral services at Christ Church. During the 1690s, he was closely involved with the cathedral music programme, both as a singing man and as a composer. He was also known to hold regular musical gatherings in his rooms at college where the incentive for an on-time arrival was beer following the rehearsal. In the same decade, Aldrich experimented with music printing which used moveable type created by Peter de Walpergen, the university printer. He engraved many plates himself, including the printed edition of his *Service in G*, found in the collection assigned Mus 870-6, containing seven identical copies which were printed but never published for distribution.

As an historical figure, Aldrich remains an enigma to modern scholars due in part because there is very little that remains of his personal correspondences and writings, as it was his

wish that all personal correspondence was to be destroyed following his death. However, there is a great deal of physical evidence that endures in testimony to his many skills and interests, including publications on architecture, philosophy, and of course his manuscripts which also contain his original compositions. Stuart Handley, the author of the Aldrich entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography argues that there are very few buildings that can be absolutely attributed to him, Aldrich was probably the original architect of All Saint's Church, and was certainly the designer of Peckwater quadrangle just outside the entrance to the Christ Church Library.

The Aldrich bequest to Christ Church includes his library of 3000 books, more than 2000 engraved prints, and a manuscript collection containing over 8000 titles.

The Choral Music

Aldrich's original sacred choral compositions were intended for use in services in the Christ Church Cathedral, and can be organized into three distinct groups, including: four complete sets of service music (in the keys of A, G, F Major and E Minor), seven full anthems, and sixteen verse anthems. In addition to his own original compositions, Aldrich's arrangement of the Tallis *Litany* for four voices (AATB) is in manuscript Mus 48, representing another aspect of Aldrich's skill both as a music scholar, and as an arranger.

The collection also includes his arrangements in English of sacred motets inspired by sixteenth-century Italian composers which received wide distribution throughout English cathedrals in the later part of the seventeenth century. These compositions were an attempt to reinforce the place of the church in the state and in society through the restoration of the Church of England's musical tradition, which had been all but lost during the English Civil war.ⁱ The American musicologist Robert Shay has referred to these works as 'recompositions', numbering nearly thirty-five in all, and based on Latin motets by composers such as Palestrina, Carissimi, Byrd, and Tallis. This practice of recomposition set Aldrich apart from his Restoration contemporaries, as this method compositional imitation was more common in the earlier part of the century. Quoting Shay: "Aldrich may in fact be the best practitioner of a true *stile antico* in the later seventeenth-century England, not surprising given his interest in collecting and emulating old polyphony."ⁱⁱ

It would be inaccurate to think of Aldrich's personal compositional style simply as reminiscent of an earlier period. Upon closer examination, his anthems occasionally incorporate contemporary musical gestures of the later part of the seventeenth century. By the late 1670s, Aldrich's choral works appeared in the repertoires of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey, and were regularly performed alongside the music of more famous contemporaries, such as John Blow and Henry Purcell.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Full and Verse Anthems

Both full and verse anthems were popular musical liturgical forms both before and after the Civil War of the mid-seventeenth century. A verse anthem alternates musical sections

between the soloist, or small solo ensemble, and the full choir, with a short final chorus at the close of the anthem, usually the Doxology or a Hallelujah. By contrast, a full anthem is sung by the entire choir throughout, without sections for vocal soloists.

Of the twenty-five original anthems composed by Aldrich, seven are full anthems and sixteen are the lesser-known verse anthems which are scored for varying solo voices, duets, trios as well as full chorus. Texts for the anthems are either direct quotations, or paraphrases from the Book of Common Prayer (1662), with themes ranging from penitential to celebratory. Shay suggests that Aldrich may have advocated his more straight forward full anthems over his more musically complicated verse anthems as an indication of his tastes for liturgical music appearing to have been more on the conservative side.^{iv}

John Blow and Henry Purcell: A Context

The period of the last decade of the sixteenth century, and the years leading up to the English Civil War, is often referred to as the 'Golden Age' of the anthem, lead by composers such as Byrd, Gibbons, and Tomkins. During the period of the Restoration, there occurred a renewed interest in the anthem form, with greater attention given to the solo voice in the context of the verse anthem. This preference for the solo voice gave rise to a new variety, the 'solo anthem', which featured a soloist throughout, usually closing with the Doxology or a Hallelujah chorus.

Restoration composer and organist John Blow served as the organist at Westminster Abbey from 1669 wrote four types of church music, including: service; anthems for full choir and organ, or with short ensemble verse passages (often referred to as 'full with verse anthems'); verse anthems for solo voices, choir, and organ; and 'symphony anthems' for solo voices, choir, strings, and continuo. The symphony anthems were composed in response to Charles II's royal preferment for instrumental accompaniment to anthems traditionally scored for organ accompaniment. Of the nearly ninety-one English anthems composed by Blow, thirty are symphony anthems.

Henry Purcell was a member of the Chapel Royal and succeeded John Blow as organist at Westminster Abbey in 1679, a post which he held until his death in 1695. Like Blow, Purcell wrote four types of church music, including verse anthems which date from the early 1670s or from after 1685, where in the time in between, he was predominantly concerned with the composition of symphony anthems. In general terms, the form of Purcell's verse anthems incorporates contrasting passages for solo voices in a variety of different combinations, interspersed with short choruses throughout, culminating with a final chorus at the conclusion.

Much of Purcell's anthem output has been dedicated to the symphony anthems composed for performance in the Chapel Royal between 1677 and 1685. Music scholars have suggested that the layout of the space in the Chapel Royal at Whitehall may have influenced performances of the symphony anthems, with the vocal soloists and the instrumental group placed in separate, opposing galleries, and the chorus in the usual place within the choir stalls on the floor below. In addition to spatial separation, the galleries of the Chapel Royal

during Charles II's reign were only large enough to accommodate a string quartet accompanied by a plucked keyboard continuo instrument.

As contemporaries, Blow and Purcell share many similarities as it applies to their place in time; a similar listener, and similar instrumental and vocal resources. In terms of their musical style, the two composers are quite distinct. In specific, Purcell's skill as composer of music for dramatic purposes encouraged the importation of dramatic musical gestures into his church anthem repertoire resulting in an added layer of musical interest. By contrast, Blow was more subdued in his musical treatments and more adept at setting texts of a brooding or supplicatory manner.^v

The Aldrich Verse Anthems

British musicologist Lionel Pike described the Aldrich choral anthems as being "worthy and competent, though lacking the divine spark of inspiration."^{vi} To date, of the sixteen verse anthems in the collection, five have been transcribed for publication, including: *O Lord our Governor*, *The Lord is King and hath put on*, *O God, thou art my God, I will love Thee*, *O Lord*, and *O sing unto the Lord*.

Solo anthems make up most of the sixteen verse anthems, with *O Lord our Governor*, *The Lord is King and hath put on*, and *O Sing unto the Lord* scored for soprano soloist, where the full choir sings only the concluding Doxology. The balance of anthems from this group are composed in the traditional verse anthem style, with solo sections balanced by full choir choruses. As an example, *O God, Thou are my God* is scored for tenor soloist, and the SATB chorus singing the first and second verse, concluding with a Hallelujah conclusion for full choir.

Aldrich's anthems are compositionally conservative in style, incorporating loosely imitative, staggered entries balanced by passages of homorhythmic writing which is, for the most part, straightforward and uncomplicated. Of interest is the last verse anthem entry in Mus 19 entitled *We have a strong city*, scored for ATB solo trio and full choir. The soloists in the trio are featured as a collective, and as individuals punctuated by responses sung by the full choir including the final chorus.

Where the Aldrich anthems depart dramatically from those of Purcell is in the limited suggestion of performing forces. The most important source of surviving accompaniments for the anthems is the organ book Mus 1230. While there is no reason to believe that instruments in addition to the organ were not used in the Cathedral to accompany service music (in celebration of the coronation, for example), there is no evidence that remains to support this notion. Additionally, there is no evidence that Aldrich composed symphonic anthems in the style of his contemporaries, John Blow and Henry Purcell.

Organ Accompaniment

Organ accompaniments for many of the verse anthems are found in the organ book, manuscript Mus 1230, and are in the hand of Richard Goodson Sr., Christ Church Cathedral organist between 1693 and 1718. Much discrepancy exists in modern editions concerning how much detail to include in the organ accompaniments.^{vii} Goodson's organ book notations suggest that its purpose was more of an aid in performance and resembles more of a musical sketch, than an actual reduction of the vocal parts. The musical notation is written on two staves containing a bass line (sometimes figured, often not) and a treble line, with six lines per staff, where the additional line in both staves denotes middle C (C4). Often, there appears an occasional text cue written above the treble staff to assist the accompanist in performance. Once again Shay offers, "there is no single answer (to the question of organ accompaniment) and contemporary sources suggest the practice was far from uniform in Aldrich's day".^{viii}

O Lord! Grant the Queen

The occasional full anthem *O Lord! Grant the Queen a Long Life*, attributed to Henry Aldrich, is not included in the manuscript Mus 19 but rather in a separate manuscript, Mus 720, and is not in Aldrich's hand. The only attribution to Aldrich is the indication marked "Aldrich" in the organ book Mus 1230, in Goodson's hand. As the provenance for the organ book is dated between 1693 and 1718, it is possible to speculate that the anthem was composed to mark celebrations in honour of the coronation of Queen Anne, daughter of James II, in April of 1702. Given the occasion for which the anthem was composed, it is not unreasonable to believe that this anthem was copied and bound separately by someone other than Aldrich. The anthem is scored for SSATB and organ accompaniment, and most certainly was composed for performance in the Cathedral. The latest performance of this anthem in modern times, was given by the Choir of Corpus Christi on 6 February 2017 in Christ Church Cathedral.

Future Directions

The Henry Aldrich Choral Series Project continues with the transcription of the balance of the sixteen verse anthems soon to be made available for downloading from the Christ Church Library web site ⁹ <http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives/henry-aldrich-project>). The estimated time for the completion of the entire project is approximately three years.

Currently, there are two demonstration recordings available on the web page including, *Out of the deep* and *O praise the Lord, all ye heathen*. There is a plan in the works for the recording of the complete seven full anthems to take place in August of 2018.

ⁱ Stuart Handley, 'Aldrich, Henry (1648-1710)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/314>, accessed 30 October 2017].

ⁱⁱ Robert Shay, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, (Madison: A.R. Editions Inc., 1998), viii.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, viii.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, viii.

^v Harold Watkins Shaw, *John Blows Anthems*, *Musical & Letters*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Oct., 1938), pp. 429-442, Oxford University Press [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/727726> accessed 30 October 2017].

^{vi} Lionel Pike, *Selected Anthems and Motet Recompositions. Edited by Robert Shay*, Review of *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, (Madison: A.R. Editions Inc., 1998) in *Notes*, Second Series, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Sept., 2001), pp. 176-179, Music Library Association [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/900908> accessed 30 October 2017].

^{vii} *Ibid.*, ix.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, x.