



CREÁTUS
CHAMBER



SACRED CHORAL STORIES

12TH NOVEMBER 2022

CHURCH OF STS. PETER & PAUL (SINGAPORE)

Foreword

The past 2 years have been unsettling for many of us, I'm sure. In my conversations with friends and acquaintances, I've heard of stories where loved ones had to spend their last days in isolation because of restrictions in hospitals. I've heard anecdotes of how mothers could not see their children after having given birth to them because these mothers had to return to Singapore for work amidst border-controls.

The anxiety of uncertainty, is coupled with the feeling of not being able to resolve an issue in one's personal capacity – the loss of control, and the onset of the unknown. While programming this evening's event, I'm reminded that oftentimes, we are not alone. Someone might have had their journeys through the dark; and by stumbling upon their story, we learn how they found their light.

Behind the text and embellishment of the harmonies, we invite you to unfold the stories that have inspired and given birth to these songs of hope, of triumph, of comfort, and of peace. May they encourage you, just as they have been the balm of comfort for countless individuals.

My heartfelt appreciations to the EXCO of Creátus Chamber for the sacrifice and dedication especially these past 2 years; and to the choristers for supporting each other. I am grateful and delighted that the choirs of St. Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) were also able to collaborate with us this evening. And my utmost thanks to Rev. Fr. Edward Lim, OCD for his graciousness and support in allowing us to share our music in the beautiful Church of Sts. Peter and Paul.

We hope you will enjoy this evening and together discover the stories that have stood the passage of time.

Kenneth Wee
Creátus Chamber

Programme

Creátus Chamber

“Lighten Our Darkness” (Alexander L’Estrange)

Combined Choir

“How Great Thou Art” (Boberg, Hine)

Creátus Chamber

“Otche Nash” (Tchaikovsky)

“Justorum Animae” (Byrd)

“Holy God We Praise Thy Name” (Ambrose, Walworth, Franz)

St. Joseph’s Church (Victoria Street) Choir

“Ave Verum Corpus” (Mozart)

“O God You Search Me” (Farrell)

Creátus Chamber

“It Is Well With My Soul” (Spafford, Bliss)

“Just A Closer Walk” (Anon.)

“The Road Home” (Paulus)

“Good Night, Dear Heart” (Forrest)

Combined Choir

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (Runyan, Chisholm)

Creátus Chamber

Conductor: Kenneth Wee



Creátus Chamber was formed in 2016 primarily to explore and study Sacred Polyphony. As most of its repertoire was used in a liturgical setting, Creátus Chamber aims to share a more spiritual interpretation of the music for various audiences; as well as its history and how it remains to be beautiful and relevant for the modern listener.

The group has been a regular participant at the Voices of Singapore festival and has had collaborations and joint concerts with various singing groups in Singapore: Cappella Martialis, The Crescendos, Vox Camerata as well as around the region with the Byrd Consort (Australia/UK) and Ottophony (Malaysia).

St. Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) Choir

Conductor: Benjamin Chee



The St Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) Choir is a combined vocal ensemble group that features choristers from different nationalities and cultures coming together to sing weekly at the Sunday 10am and 5pm masses.

Besides doing regular traditional church hymns, the choir also strives to draw rich sacred repertoires from plainchant to present day music. The members who sing do it genuinely out of the love in serving the Lord through their musical gift, at the same time it allows them to commune in prayer together as a community through the music, thereby enriching their spiritual growth in Christ.

“Lighten Our Darkness” (2007)

Alexander L'Estrange (b. 1974)

Composed for the christening of his eldest son, Toby L'Estrange

*Collect “For aid against all perils” at Evensong,
Book of Common Prayer (1928)*

The metaphors of darkness and light lead us to cling onto the safety and assurance of Day over Night. We recall the Easter Vigil experience of having the entire church in darkness at the start of the Liturgy and then witnessing that lone candle's warm glow overcome the darkness as we spread the light to each other's candles.

Lighten our darkness,
We beseech thee, O Lord;
And by thy great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night;
For the sake of thy only Son,
Our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

“How Great Thou Art” (1886)

Text: Carl Boberg (1859 – 1940), Stuart Hine (1899 – 1989)

Tune: Swedish Folk Tune

The year was 1886.

A looming thunderstorm, its passing showers, the return of the blue skies and all of nature’s creatures were the ingredients that inspired the Swedish Carl Boberg to pen this poem. His mind flashed to the verses of Psalm 8: “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers... how majestic is your name in all the earth!” It got published in 1886 in a local Swedish Newspaper and being paired with a folk tune, it began to be sung in Swedish churches. Fast forward a couple of years, Stuart Hine was a British Methodist missionary serving in Ukraine when he heard the Russian version of this hymn. Stuart then created this English version which became popularised by the Southern Baptist Evangelist Billy Graham who held countless rallies from the mid-1950’s throughout America.

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed.

(Refrain)

**Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!**

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

“Otche Nash” (1878)

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 41

Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

Tchaikovsky composed “The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom” in 1878. It consists of texts taken from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom – the most celebrated of the eucharistic services of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Eucharistic Prayer is attributed to St. John Chrysostom – Archbishop of Constantinople in the 5th Century.

Although Tchaikovsky was known primarily for his symphonies, concertos and ballets, he was also deeply interested in the music and liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church. This composition was his attempt to accentuate the poetry and highlight the divine mysticism in the liturgy.

However, due to politics in the church that monopolised the permissions of what could be sung, Tchaikovsky’s setting was banned and all printing plates were confiscated. It was only later, through legal proceedings that the Interior Minister passed judgement in favour of Tchaikovsky. For the first time in many years, it became possible for Russian composers to create sacred music without being subjected to bureaucratic review.

Otche Nash directly translates to “Our Father”. The piece is in Church Slavonic, and the English translations are found in the program booklet.

In 1928, Joseph Stalin launched his first “Five Year Plan’. Among other things, this meant the strong hand of the Soviet was to control and mandate what Russian artists produced. Another target in Russia’s 1920’s & 1930’s was the Russian Orthodox Church as part of the Soviet’s anti-religious campaign. Nearly all of its clergy and many of its believers were shot or sent to labour camps. Theological schools were closed, and church publications were prohibited. At least 106,300 Russian clergymen were executed during this period.

Slavonic

Отче нашъ,
иже еси на небесѣхъ,
Да свѣтитсѧ имѧ Твое,
Да прїидеть царствїе
Твое,
Да боудет воля твоѧ,
Яко на небеси и на
земли.
Хлѣбъ нашъ
насоущный даждь
намъ днесь:
И ѡстави намъ долги
наша,
якоже и мы
ѡставляемъ
должникомъ
нашимъ,
И не введи нас во
искоушенїе,
Но избави нас ѿ
лоукаваго.

[Яко Твое есть
царство и сила и
слава во вѣки.]

Аминь.

Transliteration

Oche nash, izhe
jesi na njebyesjeh,
Da sfjatitsa imja
tfoje
Da priidjet
tsarstvije tfoje
Da budyet volja
tfoja,
Jako na njebyesi i
na zjemli.

Hleb nash
nasushnij dazh
nam dnjes,
I ostavi nam doolgi
nasha,
Jakozhe i my
ostavljajem
Dolzhnikom
nashim
i nje vjedi nas vo
iskushenije
no izbavi nas ot
lukavago.

Amin.

English

Our Father, who art in
heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread.
And forgive us our
trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into
temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

[For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.]

Amen.

“Justorum Animae” (1610)

Music: William Byrd (1540 – 1623)

Text: Wisdom 3:1-3

The English Renaissance composer produced sacred music for use in Anglican services, although he became a Roman Catholic in his 30's and wrote Catholic sacred music as well. His commitment to the Catholic faith, while serving under a Protestant government, created a painful paradox. However, he found favour in the Protestant Queen Elizabeth who allowed him to continue his work in secret without risk of being beheaded as long as he didn't openly practice his religion.

His serene and beautiful setting of "Justorum animae" comes from the biblical Book of Wisdom. The line 'Justorum animae in manu Dei sunt' ('The souls of the just are in the hand of God) would have been a source of solace for devout believers especially in frequent conflicts between the Catholics & the Protestants.

Latin

Justorum animæ
in manu Dei sunt,
et non tanget illos
tormentum mortis.

Visi sunt oculi
insipientium mori:
Illi autem sunt in pace.

English

The souls of the righteous
are in the hand of God,
and there shall no torment
touch them.

In the sight of the unwise
they seemed to die;
but they are in peace.

“Holy God We Praise Thy Name”

Text: attributed to St. Ambrose (339 – 397)

English Text: Fr. Clarence Walworth, CSsR (1820 – 1900)

Music: Fr. Ignaz Franz (1719 – 1790)

This hymn has borne the test of time, having originated from the 4th century hymn the “Te Deum Laudamus” (To thee, O God, we praise), possibly written by St. Ambrose (339 – 397), then Bishop of Milan and tutor to St. Augustine. It is a popular story that the hymn was penned upon the conversion and baptism of St. Augustine.

A German translation of the “Te Deum” appeared in an Austrian hymnal titled “Grosser Gott” in 1774 that was associated with Church Administrator and Composer Fr. Ignaz Franz (1719 – 1790). The tune for this version is kept for the English version that is known today.

Nearly a century later, the English translation of “Grosser Gott” was published by the American Redemptorist Priest Fr. Clarence Alphonsus Walworth in a Redemptorist Hymnal – who himself was a lawyer, a writer, and after being ordained as a Catholic Priest, became a missionary.

Fr. Walworth grew up in a Presbyterian home, studied for the Episcopal Ministry (Anglican), but was influenced by the Oxford Movement to become Catholic. This hymn is accepted and found in many denominations because it transcends the theological differences pronounced by each denomination, encapsulating a unifying anthem of praise.

Holy God, we praise thy name;
Lord of all, we bow before thee!
All on earth thy sceptre claim,
All in heav'n above adore thee;

(Refrain)

**Infinite, thy vast domain,
Everlasting is thy reign.
Infinite, thy vast domain,
Everlasting is thy reign.**

Hark! The Loud celestial hymn
Angel choirs above are raising;
Cherubim and Seraphim,
In unceasing chorus praising.

Lo! The apostolic train
Join, the sacred Name to hallow;
Prophets swell the loud refrain,
And the white-robed martyrs follow.

“Ave Verum Corpus” (1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)

This composition of “Ave Verum Corpus” by Mozart was written for Anton Stoll – a friend who was a church musician and Music Director of St. Stephan in Baden bei Wien (Austria). The motet was composed for the feast of Corpus Christi; six months before Mozart’s death.

Latin

Ave verum corpus
natum de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine

Cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine.

Estos nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.

English

Hail, true Body
born of the Virgin Mary,
having truly suffered, sacrificed
on the cross for mankind.

From whose pierced side
water and blood flowed.

Be for us a foretaste (of heaven)
in the trial of death.

“O God You Search Me” (1878)

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 41

Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

God is nearer to us than we are even to ourselves. Before we were even knit within our mother's womb, God called us to himself. We were created to share in his life.

In this beautiful hymn by Bernadette Farrell, the words of the psalmist celebrate our identity as chosen and beloved by God.

For most of us, our baptisms occurred before we can remember them. We can easily forget the immense dignity of being persons baptized into Christ's body. Our hope is that this song brings to mind this powerful love of God which brings us into union with him and his grace in the Sacrament of Baptism.

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
And with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,
Still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,
Gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

It Is Well With My Soul (1876)

Text: Horatio Spafford (1828 – 1888)

Music: Philip Paul Bliss (1838 – 1876)

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 proved disastrous for Lawyer Horatio Spafford, who had many investments in real estate that were in ashes. When his wife's health took a turn for the worse, Horatio made arrangements for his family including his four children to travel to England for some European air. However, Horatio was held up by some business just before leaving the States, and sent his family ahead onboard the ship.

Disaster struck again. The ship that his family was on collided with another vessel in the middle of the Atlantic. Out of the 307 passengers, only 81 survived and Horatio's wife was one of them – although all 4 of his children drowned. After his wife sent him a telegram, Horatio rushed to England to be with her. As his ship sailed over the spot where the accident took place, the words to this hymn came to Horatio's heart and mind. A week later, he wrote to a relative about the grief and the accompanying assurance in the salvation of his children.

It may be that Horatio drew his main phrase from 2 Kings 4:26, where a woman whose son has died tells Elisha, "it is well". And perhaps also from Philippians 4:12 where the apostle Paul writes of his contentment "in every situation." Horatio – the modern day Job – continues to be steadfast in his faith that empowers him "whatever my lot".

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

(Refrain)

It is well (it is well)

With my soul (with my soul)

It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, tho’ trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought,
My sin not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

“Just A Closer Walk” (19th century)

American Spiritual, Anonymous

What started as a traditional spiritual borne from the songs of cottonfield slaves in the late 1800s, became a musical tradition in funeral processions to honour members of the Jazz community in New Orleans in the 1930's. It became a popular song among the African American churches and was first recorded by the Selah Jubilee Singers in 1941. Since then, more than a hundred artists in the likes of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Rosetta Tharpe, and Red Foley have released their own rendition.

This song is often used during the funeral procession as it was considered inappropriate to have jazz music in churches. Members of the Jazz community would take it upon themselves to improvise and embellish the song befitting of a musical tribute that was expressed in the streets. The death of the person transforms from mourning into dancing as they celebrate the life that was lived, and the eternal life to come for the deceased.

I am weak but thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to thee.

(Refrain)

**Just a closer walk with thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea.
Daily walking close to thee;
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.**

Through this world of toil and snares
If I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.

When my feeble life is o'er,
Time for me will be no more;
Guide me gently, safely o'er
To thy Kingdom shore, to thy shore.

The Road Home (2001)

Music: Stephen Paulus (1949 - 2014)

Text: Michael Dennis Browne (b. 1940)

This tune is taken from “The Southern Harmony Songbook” (1835) – a tome of hymns and spiritual songs many of which were borne from the singing tradition of the southern states of America. In what became known as Sacred Harp singing, or Shape Note singing, was a style that made it easy for amateur choirs to harmonize especially in churches that relied a lot on community singing to evangelise. Many American hymns have been influenced by this style of singing and remain popular today.

The text expresses the lyricist’s journey, who having grown up in Irish ancestry, settled in the United States since 1965. While visiting his sister in England who had fallen ill, he thought about the old Irish folksong “Loch Lomond” and reminisced how he had sung it often as a child. This song is about a pilgrim’s journey of coming home after a period of wandering and being lost. And though we might wander with our plans and schemes, there is a place with the Father we know will be home.

Tell me where is the road I can call my own,
That I left, that I lost, so long ago?
All these years I have wandered, Oh when will I know
There's a way, there's a road that will lead me home?

After wind, after rain, when the dark is done,
As I wake from a dream in the gold of day,
Through the air there's a calling from far away,
There's a voice I can hear that will lead me home.

Rise up, follow me, come away is the call,
With love in your heart as the only song;
There is no such beauty as where you belong,
Rise up, follow me, I will lead you home.

Good Night, Dear Heart (2009)

Music: Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

The text from this song was lifted from a poem found on the headstone of Olivia Susan Clemens (1872 – 1896), who was the second child and eldest daughter of Samuel Clemens. Olivia was already a budding author at the mere age of 13 – writing a biography of her father that impressed him with her literary ability. Samuel Clemens considered his daughter a literary prodigy which inspired his own writing. Samuel Clemens was devastated by the death of Olivia when she was just 24, after she developed spinal meningitis, lost her sight and lapsed into a coma.

Samuel Clemens had to witness the deaths of 3 of 4 of his children in his lifetime: apart from Olivia, his first-born son Landon Clemens (1870 – 1872) died of diphtheria in 1872 at the age of 19 months; and Jane Clemens (1880 – 1909) who drowned in a bathtub due to a seizure at the age of 29. Samuel Clemens was survived by his second daughter, Clara Clemens (1874 – 1962) who helped managed his estate and guarded his legacy after Samuel's death, for Samuel Clemens was an American writer, humorist, entrepreneur, published and lecturer. He is often regarded as the Father of American Literature, and more popularly known by his pen name – Mark Twain (1835 – 1910).

The composer's brother and sister-in-law had been looking forward to receiving an adopted orphan Ethiopian infant into their family. However, the 4-month old girl had fallen ill and passed away, and the Forrest family was devastated as they grieved her passing. Taking a walk just to help him in his mourning, Dan Forrest came across the headstone that inspired this song; "Good Night, Dear Heart".

Warm summer sun,
Shine kindly here,
Warm southern wind,
Blow softly here.
Green sod above,
Lie light, lie light.
Good night, dear heart.
Good night, good night.

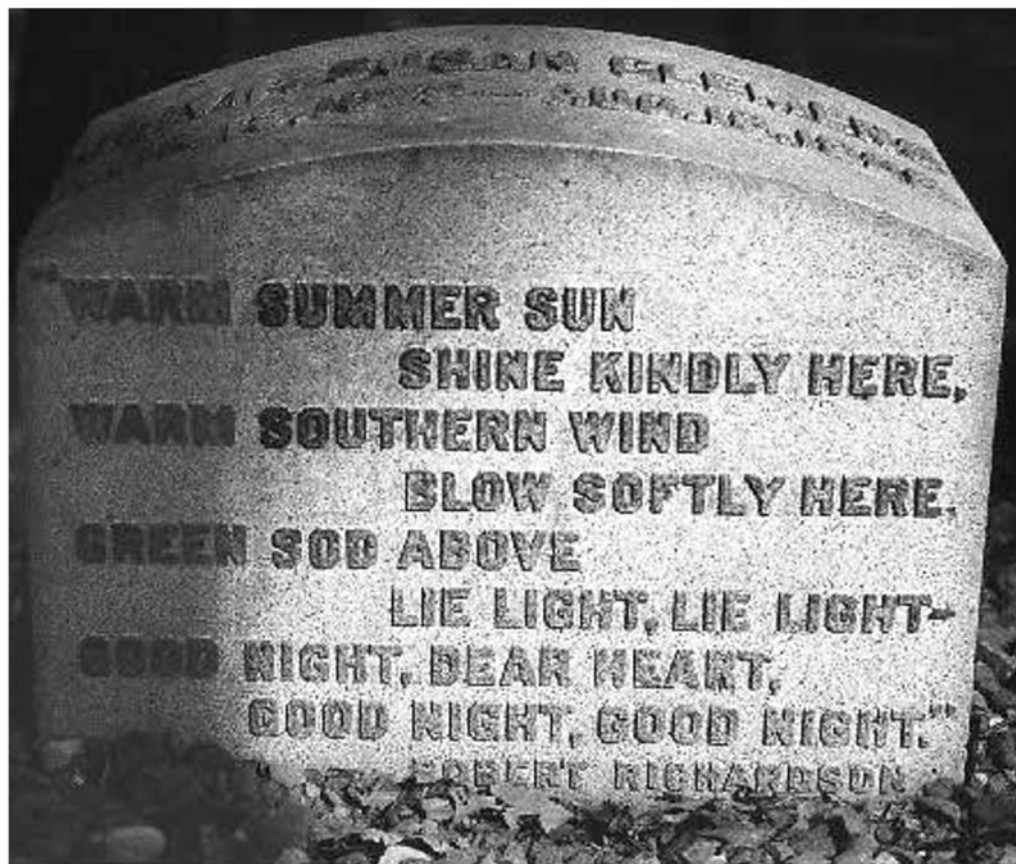


Photo from the Hurlev Hagood collection.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness (1923)

Music: William M. Runyan (1870 – 1957)

Text: Thomas Chisholm (1866 – 1960)

*“Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”*

Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)

Thomas O. Chisholm was born in 1866 in a Kentucky log cabin. Even though he was not offered a formal education, Thomas succeeded academically. Beginning work at the age of sixteen, Thomas became a schoolteacher in the same schoolhouse that he was educated. He later became associate editor of the local newspaper and moved on to be an editor of the Pentecostal Herald in Louisville, Kentucky. He also made some poetical contributions of his own to other local newspapers. At the age of 26, Thomas became a Christian. In 1903, he was officially ordained a minister, but was forced to limit his years of service due to his poor health.

Throughout his life, Thomas wrote hundreds of poems. He eventually sent his work to a fellow minister and friend, William Runyan who configured a musical setting for the poem.

Billy Graham was a young student at Wheaton College at the time he heard the song “Great is Thy Faithfulness” on the radio and often included it as part of his ministry of evangelism. Eventually through the many crusades put on by Billy Graham, the song “Great is Thy Faithfulness” became internationally known.

Although Thomas Chisholm had suffered under poor health throughout his life, God's faithfulness was evident to him. God has been faithful in the past, is faithful in the present and will continue to be faithful till the end of the age. Both William Runyan and Billy Graham evidently saw the beauty and significance in the words that Thomas Chisholm wrote in his poem, making the rising popularity of "Great is Thy Faithfulness" inevitable.

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not; thy compassions they fail not.
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

(Refrain)

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning, new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness,
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Amen!

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank
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Our appreciations to Leonard Sng and family for his
generous support to the chamber and the arts.

Benjamin Chee and the St. Joseph's Church (Victoria
Street) Choir for kindly collaborating with us.



Thank You for coming

Thank you for visiting us in support of the work of this evening's performers. The event is made Free-Entry so that people of all abilities may experience Sacred Polyphony and the choral arts community.

Do follow us on our social media pages and we hope to see you again in our future performances.

Godspeed, and have a blessed evening.

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