



Photo: Thousand Word Media

Composer Profile: Bob Chilcott:

Described by The Observer, as “A contemporary hero of British choral music”, Bob Chilcott has enjoyed a lifelong association with choral music as an institutionally renowned composer, conductor and singer with a prolific output of works, performed worldwide.

Bob Chilcott’s affinity with music grew from his time as a young chorister, then choral scholar in the choir of King’s College, Cambridge, and for 12 years as a member of the King’s Singers. He became a full-time composer in 1997, embracing his career with energy and commitment and has produced a large catalogue of music, for all types of choirs, published by OUP.

His music for Christmas forms a considerable part of his most popular repertoire, setting both new and traditional texts in his carols, and writing for mixed-voice and upper-voice choirs. Among his multitude of works, community-based projects, pieces for children, and a significant amount of music for the church, Bob is also renowned for A Little Jazz Mass, Requiem, and St. John Passion.

He has written large-scale works, including The Angry Planet, commissioned by the BBC Proms in 2012. And, in 2013, The King Shall Rejoice, commissioned by Westminster Abbey to celebrate the Queen’s 60th Anniversary of her Coronation.

Bob’s music has been widely recorded by leading British choirs and groups including the King’s Singers, The Sixteen, Tenebrae, The Bach Choir, BBC Singers, Houston Chamber Choir and Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir.

In 2016 he collaborated with Katie Melua on her album In Winter, and in 2017 with Choralis, to release In Winter’s Arms, and also with Commotio, to release his album of jazz infused choral works, All Good Things.

Bob was invited to write the Raymond Brock Memorial Commission for the ACDA National Conference in Dallas in 2021: Collaborating with poet Delphine Chalmers, Songs My Heart Has Taught Me explores and embraces themes of identity, diversity, inclusivity, unity and commonality.

For 7 years Bob was conductor of the Chorus of The Royal College of Music. He has been Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers since 2002. In 2017 he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Royal School of Church Music and in 2019 took up the role of Principal Conductor with Birmingham University Singers. In Autumn 2020, Bob was appointed Musician-in-Residence at Downe House School.

Working with choirs in more than 30 countries around the world, Bob Chilcott inspires all age groups. He works annually as an adjudicator and conductor at choir festivals and with many thousands of amateur singers across the UK in a continuing series of Singing Days.

Composer's Notes: The Lily and the Rose

OXFORD

Secular
BC66
upper voices (SS)
and piano

The Lily and the Rose

The maidens came
When I was in my mother's bower,
I had all that I would.
The bailey beareth the bell away;
The lily, the rose I lay.
The silver is white, red is the gold;
The robes they lay in fold.
The bailey beareth the bell away;
The lily, the rose I lay.
And through the glass windows shines the sun,
How should I love, and I so young?
The bailey beareth the bell away,
The lily, the rose, I lay.

Bob
Chilcott

THE LILY AND THE ROSE

Text: Anon. 16th-century English

Ever since I have been working as a full-time composer, I have written music for upper voices. One of my first commissions was from Jean Ashworth Bartle's Toronto Children's Chorus back in 1994, and it was soon after I fulfilled this commission that I found myself becoming more and more involved with upper voice choirs, both as a composer and a conductor.

This gave me the opportunity to write songs, which I love to do. It also gave me the opportunity to work with many different young choirs from all over the world, who showed me very quickly how much joy could be had from working with people such as these who were open, energetic, funny, unprejudiced, honest, and ultimately always determined to do the very best work that they could.

As a composer in this context, I have always looked for texts that might inspire or motivate, and looked for melodic devices that might help both trained and untrained singers shape phrases in the most natural and musical way that they are able. I am at heart a melodist, and I unashamedly draw on many of the influences that have touched my musical life - from my time as a chorister in King's College, Cambridge, my time working as an arranger and orchestrator for BBC Radio 2, and as a singer with The King's Singers, with all the breadth of repertoire that they embrace.

Nothing however has touched my musical life more than the legions of young choirs with whom I have worked over the past eleven years, who with their energy, their community, and their musical diversity have inspired me to look at the way I think about what music and singing gives and can give to us all.

Bob Chilcott

The 16th Century text of 'The Lily and the Rose' is full of multiple meaning, but perhaps the most compelling one suggests it is a song the Virgin Mary sings, grieving for her dying son.

The piece was written for the 2002 Oklahoma Music Educators Association Children's Chorus, conducted by Jean Ashworth Bartle.

Bob Chilcott's rare gift for crafting the most poignant and beguiling melodies is rarely more apparent than in his setting of this enchanting medieval poem.

The style is akin to folk ballad, lyrical with just a hint of melancholy. This beautiful and seductive music will draw in singers and listeners alike.

Duration: c. 4.02 minutes