



## ***Hear my Crying, O Lord***

### Restoration Symphony Anthems and Domestic Sacred Songs of Supplication and Despair

Purcell	In Thee, o Lord, do I put my Trust In the Black Dismal Dungeon of Despair Save me, o God Let mine Eyes run down with Tears How long, great God O Lord, Rebuke me not Unto thee will I cry, o Lord
Humfrey	By the Waters of Babylon Hear my Crying, O Lord Like as the Hart
Blow	I said in the Cutting off of my days Cry Aloud and Spare not

*“ ... some of the forwardest, & brightest Children of the Chappell, as Mr Humfreys, Mr Blow, &c began to be Masters of a faculty in Composing; This, his Majesty greatly encourag'd, by indulging their youthful fancies, so that ev'ry Month at least, & afterwards oft'ner, they produc'd something New, of this Kind ... for otherwise, it was in vain to hope to please his Majesty ... ”*

(Thomas Tudway, in c. 1715, reminiscing about the early post-commonwealth Chapel Royal.)

As soon as he had taken power in 1660, Charles II (re)established two essential musical elements of a respectable royal establishment: the ancient *Chapel Royal*, and the modern *Twenty-Four Violins*, fashioned after his cousin Louis XIV's string band. After a break of some 15 years during the comparatively musicless period of the Civil War and Commonwealth, he sent (Captain) Henry Cooke around the provincial and academic centres - by horse - throat-hunting the most suitable young singers to rebuild the choir, and appointed the frenchified catalan violinist Louis Grabu as master of the strings in 1666.

**Pelham Humfrey** (1647/8 - 1674) was one of the most precocious and talented of the first flush of boy choristers. After a research sojourn in France and Italy at the Crown's expense, he returned to build on the Consort and Verse Anthem of the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Gibbons et al), helping to establish an organic amalgamation of violins and voices in what came to be known as Symphony Anthems: verse anthems (those alternating solo and ensemble vocal sections with full choral passages) preceded by a 4 or 5-part string symphony, and peppered with string ritornellos and dance-like interludes. Humfrey's strength lies in the mournful and melancholy, but he was regularly called upon to write festive anthems, specifically for the King's birthday.

**Henry Purcell** (1658/9 - 1695), the acknowledged musical star of the Restoration, despite his too-short life, needs no illumination – except to say that his word-setting and illustrative expression of emotional and pictorial English texts is unrivalled. Some 25 of his 65 anthems are with string accompaniment – the well-known "Bell Anthem" of 1683 being an example quickly brought to mind – yet most of these gems have inexplicably remained practically unheard since his death.



**John Blow** (1649 - 1708) was the preeminent and most prolific composer of sacred music of his generation, and taught the young Purcell – until he generously realised he could teach him no more. Blow's large body of fine anthems is expressively rich, harking back to Matthew Locke in their harmonic angularity and breadth of feeling, yet constantly experimenting with form and style. Together with Purcell, Blow guided all the English Anthem forms through a period of rapid stylistic development.

Domestic sacred music, usually for 1-4 voices and continuo, composed and printed for broad distribution and consumption in even the most modestly-equipped musical houses, is a large and largely untapped source of often excellent, relatively intimate, devotional composition. The pieces included in this program exhibit Purcell's word-painting and dramatic (yet reverential) vocal writing at its colourful, expansive best.

**The solo vocal and choral setting in the Symphony Anthems is especially refined and expressive, and the string writing simply ravishing. It is a category of composition apart, and with special understanding and presentation, Restoration Company brings back to life its particularly English – and moving – devotional soundworld.**

**12 or 16-voice choir, 4 strings, organ, theorbo**