Module B4: English Cathedral music (c.1480-present)

This module surveys the place and repertory of polyphonic music in cathedrals and related choral foundations in England from the rise of polyphonic choirs with boys in the late fifteenth century to the point just before new liturgical trends began to have an impact on cathedral worship in the 1960s.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module you will have acquired a knowledge and understanding of the repertory within the context of cathedral worship, and of the historical influences upon it - stylistic, institutional, liturgical and theological.

General reading

There is, at the moment, no general study of church music in Britain which surveys the whole subject from the Middle Ages, through the Reformation to the present. Most surveys begin at the Reformation. One more recent general history does straddle the period, though it is not restricted to church music: John Caldwell, A History of English Music, volume 1: From the Beginnings to c.1700; volume 2: c.1715 to the Present Day.

Standard surveys include

Friedrich Blume (ed.), Protestant Church Music. The chapter by Watkins Shaw provides a clear and concise overview since the Reformation.

C. Henry Phillips, The Singing Church, rev. Arthur Hutchings and Ivor Keys

Erik Routley, A Short History of English Church Music, rev. Lionel Dakers

Kenneth Long, The Music of the English Church

A classic study of cathedral music since the Reformation, which is unashamedly partial, is

Edmund Fellowes, English Cathedral Music, rev. J. A. Westrup

For a different musical overview, see Judith Blezzard, Borrowings in English Church Music
More specialised sources of reading are listed in each study area.

Study areas

1 Late medieval institutions, liturgy, and music in England, c.1480-1560
   1.1 Institutions: cathedrals, monasteries, collegiate churches, educational colleges
   1.2 Polyphonic choirs, their formation and personnel: new trends in the late 15th century
   1.3 Polyphonic music and the Latin liturgy
   1.4 The inheritance from the period c.1400-80
   1.5 The florid repertories of the Eton, Lambeth and Caius choir books
   1.6 Taverner and his influence
   1.7 Latin polyphony during the reign of Mary: Sheppard and Tallis

Suggested reading for study area 1:
Frank Ll. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain. This is the standard work and a key work to read for this area.
Roger Bray (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Sixteenth Century
Frederick Sternfeld (ed.), Music in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
Hugh Benham, Latin Church Music in England, 1460-1575
Reinhard Strohm, The Rise of European Music
John Morehen (ed.), English Choral Practice, 1400-1650
David Wulstan, Tudor Music
Paul Doe, Tallis
David Josephson, Taverner
Stephen Bicknell, The History of the English Organ

For critical editions, see the relevant volumes of Tudor Church Music, Early English Church Music, Musica Britannica

Treasury of English Church Music, volumes 1 and 2

Essay questions related to study area 1:
You should relate your essay to specific, relevant music

B4.1.1 Consider the liturgical contexts and musical characteristics of Latin polyphony composed in Britain c.1480-1540. Did the choirs of the new collegiate institutions have a special influence on vocal scoring?
B4.1.2 Present a review of the Latin music of one of the following, taking into consideration the liturgy for which it was composed: The Eton Choir Book, John Taverner, Nicholas Ludford, John Sheppard, Thomas Tallis.

2 Music and the Reformation in England, c.1530-c.1660
   2.1 The Henrician Reformation
   2.2 The Edwardian Reformation and the two Books of Common Prayer
   2.3 Early vernacular settings c.1530-53: Tye, Tallis and their contemporaries
2.4 The Elizabethan settlement
2.5 The Chapel Royal
2.6 Anthem and service: full and verse, short and great
2.7 Byrd, Weelkes, Gibbons, Tomkins
2.8 The High Church movement
2.9 Puritans and the impact of the Commonwealth
2.10 The English organ 1500-1645

Suggested reading for study area 2:
Peter le Huray, Music and the English Reformation. This is the standard work to read for this area.
Roger Bray (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Sixteenth Century
Ian Spink (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Seventeenth Century
John Morehen (ed.), English Choral Practice, 1400-1650
Alan Brown and Richard Turbet, Byrd Studies
David Wulstan, Tudor Music
Paul Doe, Tallis
Stephen Bicknell, The History of the English Organ
Critical editions in appropriate volumes of
Tudor Church Music
Early English Church Music
The Byrd Edition
Musica Britannica (especially keyboard music)

Treasury of English Church Music, volume 2

Essay questions related to study area 2:
B4.2.1 In what ways did the Reformation affect cathedral music? Is there evidence of some musical continuity despite the upheavals? (You may if you wish relate your answer to the career and music of Thomas Tallis, but should not do so if you are writing on Tallis in study area 1.)
B4.2.2 Write a study of the styles and repertory of service music during the period c.1560-1640.
B4.2.3 Present a review of the English service music and anthems of one of the following, taking into consideration the liturgy for which it may have been composed: William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Tomkins, Thomas Weelkes.
B4.2.4 Write a study of the organization, duties, and membership of the Chapel Royal. How might it have influenced the course of cathedral music c.1540-1640?
B4.2.5 Discuss the influence of extremes of theological and liturgical outlook on cathedral music c.1540-1650.
B4.2.6 Outline the nature, function and repertory of the English organ in choral institutions,
3 From Charles II to George III
3.1 The Restoration and the Book of Common Prayer 1662
3.2 The Chapel Royal after the Restoration
3.3 Blow and Purcell
3.4 The decline of the Chapel Royal; music in provincial cathedrals
3.5 Croft, Greene and Boyce
3.6 Boyce’s Cathedral Music
3.7 The English organ 1660-1820

Suggested reading for study area 3:
Ian Spink, Restoration Cathedral Music. This study is the most comprehensive for the first part of the period.

Ian Spink (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Seventeenth Century
Harry Johnstone (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Eighteenth Century
Nicholas Temperley, The Music of the English Parish Church
Stephen Bicknell, The History of the English Organ

There is a large number of books on Purcell and Handel: the Master Musicians series is a starting point.

The Treasury of English Church Music, volume 3

Essay questions related to study area 3:
B4.3.1 To what extent did the revival of cathedral music after the Restoration depend on the Chapel Royal and Royal patronage?
B4.3.2 Traditionally the eighteenth century is regarded as a low point in the history of English Cathedral music. Is it a fair view, or were there significant and perhaps underestimated achievements?
B4.3.3 Write a comparative critical study of the church music of John Blow and Henry Purcell, or of Croft, Greene and Boyce.
B4.3.4 Evaluate the importance of Boyce’s Cathedral Music in the history of English cathedral music.
B4.3.5 Discuss the proposition that the best cathedral music of the eighteenth century is the music written for special occasions.
B4.3.6 Discuss the relationship of English organ design to the style of organ writing in services and anthems during the period c.1660-1820.

4 The nineteenth century
4.1 Samuel and Samuel Sebastian Wesley
4.2 The impact of the Tractarians: cathedral music in parish churches
4.3 Goss, Ouseley and Stainer and their contemporaries
4.4 The English organ 1830-1960
4.5 Publishing and cathedral music

Suggested reading for study area 4:
Nicholas Temperley (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Romantic Age

Bernarr Rainbow, The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church, 1839-1872
William Gatens, Victorian church music in theory and practice

Arthur Hutchings, Church Music in the Nineteenth Century

Nicholas Temperley, The Music of the English Parish Church

Philip Barrett, Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the Nineteenth Century

Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church

James F. White, The Cambridge Movement

Dale Adelmann, The Contribution of Cambridge Ecclesiologists to the Revival of Anglican Choral Worship 1839-1862

Stephen Bicknell, The History of the English Organ

Erik Routley, The Musical Wesleys

Paul Chappell, Dr S. S. Wesley

Peter Charlton, John Stainer

Watkins Shaw, Sir Frederick Ouseley and St Michael's, Tenbury

The Treasury of English Church Music, volume 4

Essay questions related to study area 4:

B4.4.1 Evaluate the influence of the theological movements in the church on cathedral music in the nineteenth century.

B4.4.2 Evaluate the importance of the work and cathedral music of one of the following: S. S. Wesley, John Stainer, Frederick Ouseley.

B4.4.3 Examine the extent and significance of the adoption of 'cathedral music' in parish churches in the nineteenth century.

B4.4.4 Review the course of the publishing of church music in the nineteenth century. How important was the firm of Novello and its sheet music series?

B4.4.5 Write a study of organs in cathedrals c.1820-1960. To what extent were they influenced by concert hall organ design, and what effect did this have on the way composers conceived accompaniments for liturgical music?

B4.4.6 Consider the influence of 'mainstream' music (including oratorios and opera) on the style of nineteenth-century cathedral music.

5 The twentieth century to the 1960s

5.1 The impact of the English musical Renaissance: Stanford, Parry, Wood

5.2 Vaughan Williams and Holst

5.3 Herbert Howells and canticles

5.4 Benjamin Britten

5.5 Style, sound, and recordings

5.6 Selection of repertory sung in cathedrals

Suggested reading for study area 5:

Erik Routley, Twentieth-Century Church Music
Stephen Banfield (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: the Twentieth Century

Otto Karolyi, Modern British Music: the Second English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Peter Maxwell Davies

Among the monographs you may wish to take note of

Michael Allis, Parry’s Creative Process

Jeremy Dibble, C. Hubert H. Parry: his Life and Music

Ian Copley, The Music of Charles Wood

James Day, Vaughan Williams

Imogen Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst

Christopher Palmer, Herbert Howells

Paul R. Rodmell, Charles Villiers Stanford

Peter Evans, The Music of Benjamin Britten

The Treasury of English Church Music, volume 5

Essay questions related to study area 5:
B4.5.1 What was ‘reborn’ in the ‘renaissance’ of Parry, Stanford and Wood? What were its sources, and how did it manifest itself in their cathedral music?
B4.5.2 Identify the musical influences on the church music of Vaughan Williams and Holst, and evaluate their influence on cathedral music.
B4.5.3 In what ways were Herbert Howells's techniques of composition of canticles for the cathedral repertory new and unique? What influences does his music reveal?
B4.5.4 Consider the relationship of Benjamin Britten's church music to his overall output. Are there any traits which distinguish the church music from the rest, or is it all part of a common corpus?
B4.5.5 Write a critical study of either the changing sound and style of English cathedral and collegiate choirs up to 1970 or of the choice of repertory up to 1970.

6 Cathedral music since the 1960s
6.1 Leighton, Mathias and their contemporaries
6.2 Harvey, Tavener and their contemporaries
6.3 The generations born after 1950
6.4 The impact of liturgical re-formation on repertory and practice
6.5 Festivals, commissions

Suggested reading for study area 6:
Inevitably this is the least comprehensively documented area of the module. Only books are identified here, and you should consult the indexes of periodicals, especially The Musical Times, for articles on individual composers and works. The bibliography for module A2 may also be helpful in considering the wider liturgical context. Inevitably this area requires more research and independent judgement.
Stephen Banfield (ed.), The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: the Twentieth Century

Otto Karolyi, Modern British Music: the Second English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Peter Maxwell Davies

Malcolm Boyd, William Mathias

Geoffrey Haydon, John Tavener: Glimpses of Paradise

Essay questions related to study area 6:
B4.6.1 Write an account of the church music of Kenneth Leighton and William Mathias. Evaluate the significance of their contribution to the cathedral repertory.
B4.6.2 Consider the new aesthetic found in the church music of Jonathan Harvey and John Tavener. Is it an import from other denominations and/or religions, or does it draw out an undercurrent found in cathedral music itself?
B4.6.3 Write a comparative study of any two or three composers writing cathedral music since 1970, and evaluate contribution to the repertory.
B4.6.4 Has cathedral worship and its music largely been left behind in the wake of liturgical reform and liturgical practice since the 1960s? If so, is that desirable or inevitable? If not, how has it been affected and responded to the changes?
B4.6.5 Assess the influence of festivals and commissioning on cathedral music since the 1960s.

Study
You must study at least four of the areas listed above. If you are also taking module B7, you should not select study area 6 in this module.

Although you may choose (or be directed by a supervisor in) your own pattern of study it must include those issues listed in the study areas above, and you are advised to take account of the recommended items listed in the diploma course bibliography. Additionally the Guild offers a brief guide to study of the module with directed reading based on the course bibliography, and suggestions of specific questions and issues to be considered.

In undertaking the writing of essays you are advised to consult the guidance for presentation of written work in the general study notes.

Assessment and satisfactory completion
At the end of the module you must submit two essays, each of 3,750-4,000 words, for assessment. The subjects of the essays must be selected from topics set by the Academic Board at the beginning of the module. Each essay must relate to a different study area. A bibliography of materials consulted should be appended to the essay.

The assessment of the module will be based on the two essays. You should complete a module log listing materials used for the study, time spent in study, and noting any special factors or difficulties encountered. You may also be required to provide additional evidence of study undertaken in the two areas not covered by the two assessed essays. In each case this may consist either of notes made during study or an essay on a topic related to the area. The examiners will request these materials if they require them.

Two copies of all materials for assessment and establishment of satisfactory completion should be forwarded to the Course Secretary and postmarked not later than 31 January or 30 June in the appropriate study period.
Bibliography:

Michael Allis, Parry’s Creative Process (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002)


Judith Blezzard, Borrowings in English Church Music 1550-1950 (London, Stainer and Bell, 1990)

Friedrich Blume, Protestant Church Music (London, Gollancz, 1975)

Malcolm Boyd, William Mathias (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1978)


Paul Chappell, Dr S. S. Wesley, 1810-1876: portrait of a Victorian musician (Great Wakering, Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1977)

Peter Charlton, John Stainer (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1984)


Peter Evans, The Music of Benjamin Britten (London, Faber, 1979)


Arthur Hutchings, Church Music in the Nineteenth Century (London, Herbert Jenkins, 1967)


David S. Josephson, John Taverner Tudor composer (Epping, Bowker, 1979)

Otto Karolyi, Modern British music: the second British musical renaissance from Elgar to Peter Maxwell Davies (London, Associated University Presses, 1994)


Christopher Palmer, Herbert Howells: a study (Sevenoaks, Novello, 1978)


Paul R. Rodmell, Charles Villiers Stanford (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002)


Erik Routley, A Short History of English Church Music (London, Jenkins, 1968)

Erik Routley, Twentieth-Century Church Music (London, Herbert Jenkins, 1964) Watkins Shaw, Sir Frederick Ouseley and St Michael's, Tenbury (Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 1988)
Editions

Critical editions of church music composed before 1700 are contained in volumes of Early English Church Music, Stainer and Bell, London (ongoing series)

Musica Britannica, Stainer and Bell for Royal Musical Association (ongoing series)

Tudor Church Music, 10 volumes, Oxford University Press, London, 1923-29, appendix 1948

The Byrd Edition, Stainer and Bell, London (ongoing series)

The Collected Works of Henry Purcell, Novello for Purcell Society, London (ongoing series)


Much of the standard repertory is available as sheet music, though major publishers only keep small amounts in print, and much has now been passed on to small presses. The Royal School of Church Music Publications Department is a useful source of information, advice, and purchasing.