



STEVIE WISHART

GOLD AND PRECIOUS SILVER

FOR HARPSICHORD AND LOWER STRINGS



Composer's notes

The starting point for this intermezzo was an idea from Thomas Kemp to compose a piece that could be used as an additional movement to one of J.S Bach's Brandenburg concertos and to be performed at West Malling Abbey - a very special place that I have long wanted to visit. There is a liturgical respond dedicated to St Eanswythe, daughter of King Eadbald, King of Kent in the seventh Century AD in the form of a 34-note plainchant melody written in 2007 by the Choir Mistress of West Malling Abbey. This seemed a good place to start.

And so I began composing at dawn during the late-winter to see how the West Malling chant might combine with the Bach. A blackbird started to sing and, despite the chill through my open window, I felt I heard a blackbird responding to my initial ideas, in Bb major, and the same thing happened during the following early-morning composing sessions. I had previously decided not to use birdsong (as it has rather dominated my work of late and is so very difficult), but felt I had to give in, as the blackbird was already a part of the music. As the work developed, thirteen blackbird songbursts were woven into the composition; they resonated with the chord progression implied by the elegantly simple plainsong melody. The songbursts are, of course, rapid and complex; and I could hear them working well for the sparkling tones of a harpsichord which can be played so very fast, so when I heard that Steven Devine was the harpsichordist for the event, the harpsichord became the intermezzo's soloist as a voice for the blackbird. I chose to work with Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 because of its rare combination of bowed string timbres harking back to the Renaissance.

I wanted to get under the surface of Bach's mellow and unusual instrumentation. In the first part of *Gold and precious silver* the strings play a sequence of 34 chords very slowly, allowing the timbres to sustain our attention. The cello solo moves freely through each note of St Eanswythe's melody using only natural harmonics, which draw further attention to those mellow sound-colours of bowed strings without the brightness of the violin. Flying over the surface, the harpsichord plays 34 blackbird songbursts as close to bird-speed as possible.

During the latter part of the piece, themes from Bach's concerto appear alongside the St Eanswythe chant. The title, *Gold and precious silver*, comes from the words of the chant: "The Almighty is your gold, and your precious silver"

These words made me think of gold and silver threads of sound weaving together the chant, with its implied harmonies, and the Brandenburg themes. The blackbird's extraordinary song carves its way through all this like a blazing trail of gold and silver, linking our time with those of Bach and St Eanswythe long before.

With grateful thanks to Michael Crump and Marion de Mello Catlin for their assistance and expertise in preparing this work.

SCORE

Stevie Wishart, April 2022

GOLD AND PRECIOUS SILVER

FIRST MUSIC PAGE

STEVIE WISHART

① ♩ 270

2-manual Harpsichord

jazzy6

② ♩ 120

Hpd.

jazzy1

③ ♩ 180

Hpd.

Cm7-ditty

(gliss.)

① ♩ 40 ② ③

Viola 1

Viola 2

Violoncello 1

Violoncello 2

Violoncello 3

Double Bass

St Eanswythe chant

mp

iv

34

Hpd.

jazzy6

Bach A

freely embellish trill figurations

St Eanswythe chant

iv

end of chant (from Vc. 1)

80
legato

f

3 3 3 3

3 3 3 3

3 3 3 3

3 3 3 3

tr

(π v)

tremolo harmonic/open string, slowing into triplet pulse

3

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a page of music, page 12. It features five staves: Harp (Hp.), Violin 1 (Va. 1), Violin 2 (Va. 2), Violin/Celli 1 (Vc. 1), Violin/Celli 2 (Vc. 2), Violin/Celli 3 (Vc. 3), and Double Bass (D. B.). The Harp part starts at measure 34 and includes a 'jazzy6' section with triplets and a 'Bach A' section with trills. The Violin 1 part has a 'freely embellish trill figurations' section. The Violin 2 part has a 'St Eanswythe chant' section. The Violin/Celli 1 part has an 'iv' section. The Double Bass part has an 'end of chant (from Vc. 1)' section and a 'tremolo harmonic/open string, slowing into triplet pulse' section. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, trills, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'legato'. The tempo is marked as 80.

PAGE 12

37

Hpd.

Va. 1

Va. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

D. B.

PAGE 13

The musical score for page 13, measures 37-42, is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The Harp (Hp.) part is at the top, followed by Violin 1 (Va. 1), Violin 2 (Va. 2), Violoncello 1 (Vc. 1), Violoncello 2 (Vc. 2), Violoncello 3 (Vc. 3), and Double Bass (D. B.) at the bottom. The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature is 4/4 until measure 40, where it changes to 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and articulation marks. A red stamp 'PAGE 13' is located in the center of the page.

62

Hpd.

(Cm) $\frac{6}{4}$ (Bb) $\frac{6}{3}$ (Gm) $\frac{5}{3}$ (Cm) $\frac{5}{3}$ (F) $\frac{6}{4}$

Bach E

chant (from D. B.)

(to Vla. 2)

8va

jazzy6

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Va. 1

Va. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

D. B.

PAGE 17 END



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