

replacing. The book is not very clear about how those who hold this point of view can be won around.

For many readers, then, Sachs and Heaney will be seen as presenting a cogent and integrative way of viewing the many disagreements and contests that have constituted Anglican history and its 'promise' over the centuries. But for others the book will be seen as not recognizing the fundamental nature of the disagreements and the importance of not accommodating those who wish to change first order matters such as marriage doctrine and practice.

Secondly, is the book too negative about the Instruments of Communion? In a section about the many 'communities of practice' in the Communion, meaning associations such as mission agencies, diocese-to-diocese partnerships and renewal movements, which are not primarily formal or bureaucratic but are collegial in learning, formation and mission, it states that the 'problem has been that centralized bodies and Instruments of Communion have largely been unable to conceive of a tradition that takes account of [them]. The same bodies have certainly been unable to articulate a future promise of Anglicanism amid competing and conflicted communities of practice' (p. 189). But it has often been the experience of those attending the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates meetings and perhaps especially the Lambeth Conference of 2008 that they have entered into a deeply collegial community of learning, formation and mission. While the formal business of these meetings generally has not made significant impact, the experience of such collegial communities through informal conversations over meals, small group discussion and variegated worship, has deeply affected the outlook and attitudes of those attending. Is there not here an excellent example of the promise that the book is seeking to describe?

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Timothy Day, *I Saw Eternity the Other Night: King's College, Cambridge, and an English Singing Style* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2018), pp. xviii + 391. ISBN 978-0241352182.

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The premise of this book is that the 'traditional' English choral sound is an invention of the past 150 years. It traces the role of King's College Cambridge in transforming the performance of English church music since the late nineteenth century, gaining prominence through broadcasts and recordings as it created a unique sound that influenced sacred and secular English choral music of the past century.

The former curator of classical music recordings for the British Library, Day provides insights relevant both for practising musicians and researchers of the English choral tradition. While this thoroughly researched study overlaps earlier studies of how elite church choirs were staffed, its unique contribution is in examining how

they were trained, and the emergence of professionalism in training adult and particularly boy choirs.

Researchers will be familiar with the pre-Victorian choral tradition, beginning with the Tudor abolition of key aspects of the monastic and cathedral system that left standing semi-professional choirs in cathedrals, royal chapels, and the Oxbridge colleges; Peter Le Huray lists less than 50 such choirs at the end of the sixteenth century. The research of Bernarr Rainbow, Dale Adelman and Kenneth Long showed how standards for choral music in the Church of England (like liturgy more generally) were neglected for almost three centuries until the nineteenth century.

In his opening chapter, Day largely skips this early history, except to argue that enduring aspects of the 'English cathedral tradition' dating to the sixteenth century were ones of institutions and repertoire, not quality. After reporting contemporary complaints about the quality of cathedral singing in the mid-nineteenth century, he marks the beginning of the distinctive English choral sound with a nineteenth-century movement to raise standards of training and performance – a movement inspired both by a love of musical beauty in the secular Romantic era, and an emphasis on liturgical beauty from the Cambridge Camden Society and other Tractarians.

The next chapter examines the precursors of the ascendance of King's, including reforms by Frederick Gore Ouseley and his protégé John Stainer. As elsewhere, Day uses archival records to report the career trajectories of Stainer's Magdalen College singers: where do they come from, what education do they get, and what are their professional (and musical) careers after they leave?

The remaining chapters present the heart of the argument, in four phases: the (re)creation of the King's College Choir in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, King's rise to pre-eminence in the middle of the twentieth century, the impact of King's on other choral singing in the late twentieth century, and the impact of recent societal trends on English worship and choral singing. He traces the story through five King's organists of the past 140 years: Alfred Mann (1876–1929), Boris Ord (1929–57), David Willcocks (1957–73), Philip Ledger (1974–82) and Stephen Cleobury (1982–2019); only passing mention is given to the interim leadership by composer Harold Darke during World War II.

Although the initial phase is defined by the tenure of Mann, the first key institutional reform came a year earlier, when the college broadened the chorister pool to include boarding students from beyond the immediate area. Day follows the crucial (if often painful) decision to shift singing of the lower parts away from junior clergy and lay clerks, whose abilities, age and lack of practice limited the quality of choral singing. The key (and eventually widely copied) staffing breakthrough came in 1880, with the creation of the first choral scholarship for King's undergraduates funded by descendants of Jane Austen. With the improved calibre of singers, his obvious musical ability, and training as a Norwich Cathedral chorister, Mann dramatically improved the quality of the music at King's in less than a decade. He increased rehearsals, insisted on accurate intonation, and required his choristers to use their head voice. At the same time, recordings from his final years suggest he failed to fully reform the men's voices. The recordings (as well as a diary of a listener early in Mann's career) also suggest a pattern of enthusiastic expressiveness that Day terms 'Victorian emotionalism.'

The choir's most famous innovation came in 1918 from the Revd Eric Milner-White, newly installed as dean of the chapel after service as a chaplain in the Great War. Milner-White instituted the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, modelled on an earlier service begun on Christmas Eve 1880 in Truro. The annual King's service was already renown when first broadcast live by BBC radio in 1928, the last one conducted by Mann, who died and was replaced by Boris Ord in November 1929.

This leads to the most crucial phase of King's story, when it developed a unique sound and rose to international pre-eminence under the direction of Ord and David Willcocks, who garner more pages than the other three conductors combined. What was that unique sound? First, it built upon the efforts of Mann: selecting choristers and choral scholars for ability (particularly sight reading), an emphasis on accurate intonation, and reinforcement through rehearsal and discipline. Ord refined the head voice to one of clarity without vibrato – the antithesis of opera singing and most Victorian-era choral singing. Together, such accuracy and clarity provided an unmatched opportunity to blend upper and lower parts. The end result was a style that was expressive without being sentimental, 'the distinguishing qualities of King's under Boris Ord, made so familiar to the world in the particular style forged by David Willcocks.' This style was applied consistently across all pieces, without the emotive approach of Mann and other choir leaders.

With the international touring begun under Ord – and the growing frequency and audience of BBC radio broadcasts – the choir spread its influence throughout (and beyond) England. Ord was succeeded by Willcocks, the first King's organ scholar to lead the choir. Day documents how King's expanded its influence with the unchallenged dominance of commercial recording under Willcocks, whose 60 LP records were more than the combined output of the remaining cathedral and chapel choirs. Willcocks also introduced descants to favourite carols in the annual broadcast, which were then enthusiastically emulated by other choirs.

Given the central role of Ord and Willcocks in creating the quality and prominence of King's, it is perhaps understandable that their successors, Philip Ledger and Stephen Cleobury, warrant a briefer treatment for continuing and maintaining this tradition. Day concludes that the 1950s and 1960s marked the pinnacle of King's distinctiveness, as a wide range of sacred and secular English choirs imitated, adapted and modified the King's approach and sound.

The longest portion of the book – some 80 pages – is how the King's sound developed under Ord and Willcocks transformed English choral singing in the late twentieth century. The most direct influence came when the King's trained singers continued their musical careers after leaving Cambridge, whether in English cathedrals or in the proliferation of new choirs formed after the early music revival of the 1960s. Day traces King's influence on other college chapels, highlighting New College, Magdalen College and Christ Church in Oxford and St John's College, Cambridge. These chapel choirs emulated key institutional choices, creating a more selective boys' program and offering choral scholarships for the men's voices. By the 1960s, the net effect was a recognizable (if recent) 'English cathedral tone' that had been adopted by the leading chapel choirs.

At the same time, some of the greatest influence of King's choir came as reactions *against* its polished style. Perhaps the prominent response came from John Eliott Gardiner, a Cambridge undergraduate rejected from the King's chapel choir, who

later objected to the ‘effete and lip-wiping prissiness’ of a 1962 service. As Day put it, the 19-year-old history major ‘wanted to rebel against what he considered the outworn Victorian style of King’s College Choir under David Willcocks, which, he thought, sang Palestrina as if it were Stanford and Bach as if it were Stainer’.

Two years later, Gardiner created the Monteverdi Choir as an *ad hoc* collection of Cambridge choral scholars to perform the Monteverdi *Vespers* in the King’s chapel. As with other early music groups formed during this era, Gardiner sought to rediscover an authentic performance style – an approach that Ord and his three successors intentionally rejected.

Day also highlights the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral, which opened in 1903 with an English-style choral school and boys’ choir, led by a former King’s choral scholar. Suspended during the London Blitz, the choir was restarted in 1947 by George Malcolm who led it until 1959. Rejecting the style of the best English boy choirs as artificial, unnatural and ‘an insult to boyhood’, Malcolm instead promoted a more forceful and emotional style of singing one reviewer termed ‘brazen’. However, his influence on other choirs was limited because clergy allowed him only two commercial recordings.

Finally, an intermediate approach between King’s and Westminster was pursued at St John’s College, Cambridge, during the 1951–91 leadership of George Guest. The choir developed a wider range of dynamics and emotion that blended the English and continental styles, as well as a warmer sound to compensate for the drier acoustics of the chapel. Overall, Day attributes Guest’s contrarian strategy to the presence of the King’s College exemplar ‘not two minutes’ walk away’. Even with such reactions, Day argues that their breakthroughs were made possible by standards for excellence established by King’s for selection, training and discipline. For example, Gardiner’s inaugural Monteverdi Choir performance was ‘characterized by voices with very little vibrato, steady tempos and immaculate tuning, all of them qualities which defined the singing of the Chapel Choir too’.

Similarly, the rise of other secular choirs – usually including former choristers or choral scholars trained in the ‘English’ style – adopted many of these same attributes. The influence was so great that, Day argues, when key cathedral and chapel choirs replaced boy choristers with girls (or women), in many cases the sound was indistinguishable from that of King’s and its peers.

The epilog to the rise of this unique choral style is the declining influence of Anglicanism in English life. Despite the continuing appeal of cathedral and chapel evensong to the unchurched, these choirs are in uncharted territory as the choral service shifts from devotional worship to a performance for local and international tourists. This section also brings the most detailed discussion of actual Christian belief in the choir, when only half of a 1992 cohort of choral scholars were active communicants, while Willcocks and Cleobury articulated atheistic and agnostic beliefs of their own.

Overall, the heroes of this book are a single institution and its performance ideals, a story filtered through rose-colored glasses. This is not a history of twentieth-century English choral music, but – as the subtitle makes clear – that of the origins, beauty, influence and counter-reaction to the King’s sound. However, beyond the story of an influential college chapel, its real contribution is changing how we think about beauty in sacred music. With the exception of recent work by Jeffers

Engelhardt (e.g. his book *Singing the Right Way*), most of the research on such beauty has been on the inherent beauty of a given piece. Day conveys both the delivery of beauty and the experience of it by the listener, within the limits of how the written word can capture an aural experience. His painstaking examples demonstrate how measurement of such quality – and the processes used to deliver such quality – can be researched in future studies.

Even given length limits, there are some notable omissions. The signature 'Lessons & Carols' service only warrants a few pages. While the 'cathedral style' subsumes both cathedrals and chapels, the evolution of the former is largely absent – particularly the choirs of St Paul's and Westminster Abbey that Day ranks on par with the elite chapels. Also, musicians and scholars will have to look elsewhere to understand the impact of King's on choirs outside Britain, or upon any form of congregational singing. Despite these limitations, this book is indispensable in understanding the origins, nature and influence of this English choral style, and thus is recommended to the choral researcher, singer or listener.

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