

# The Choir of Royal Holloway Reviews

(updated July 2024)



## Recording Review of Dan Locklair's 'From East to West'

"The Choir of Royal Holloway College, University of London reveals itself as a force to be reckoned with. Fabulous diction and a phenomenal sense of rhythm characterize Royal Holloway's performance...a brilliantly recorded, brilliantly performed disc of music"

(Fanfare Magazine, 2024)

"Wonderful sacred music, beautifully performed by one of England's leading choirs"

(Laudate Magazine, 2023)

"The Choir of Royal Holloway are on impressive form, with voices that seem equally at home as soloists as they are within an ensemble. Rupert Gough achieves a wonderful blend and sense of atmosphere throughout the recording"

(Organist's Review, 2023)

"This is a landmark recording...high quality performances of fine music."

(Cathedral Music Magazine, 2022)

"The 22-voice Choir of Royal Holloway holds its own against any other collegiate choir."

(The American Organist, 2022)

"Rupert Gough has made the Choir of Royal Holloway into one of the UK's premier choirs and here once again they show their qualities"

(Music Web International, 2021)

"It is well known, and widely appreciated, that Rupert Gough has honed his choir at Royal Holloway into one of the very finest in the kingdom, their sound beautifully blended and very fine in interpretation and intonation"

(Cathedral Music, 2020)

"Under Rupert Gough, the Choir of Royal Holloway is long acknowledged as one of the country's most respected university ensembles and has an impressive reputation for illuminating hidden corners of the repertoire....one of the most rewarding discs I've reviewed all year."

(Opera Today, 2020)

## Recording Review of Dan Locklair's 'Requiem'

"The stars were in alignment for this magnificent recording, which features stunning music from a brilliant composer, an exceptional collegiate choir, a superstar organist, a richly voiced string ensemble, an imaginative, courageous conductor, and an impeccable audio engineer... The recording was made in June 2021 in the acoustically rich Christchurch Priory, Dorset, U.K., under the direction of Rupert Gough, who has mastered the art of synthesizing repertoire, musical forces, and physical environment, then preparing and performing in such a way that there is nothing to criticize and everything to praise. The 22-voice Choir of Royal Holloway holds its own against any other collegiate choir and can be heard on a number of other outstanding recordings. The mixed-voice ensemble sings with excellent diction, nuance, balance, and blend."

## Recording Review of Ben Parry's *The Hours*

"Gough's singers revel in the wide, arching phrases and word-painting Parry offers them."

(Gramophone, June 2020 - Alexandra Coghlan)

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## **Concert Review of a performance of Cecilia McDowall's *Brightest Star***

"...and the choir delivered this well, the staccato and legato phrases alternating seamlessly between high and low voices; the subsequent declamatory homophony was well blended and precisely controlled."

(Music OMH, January 2020 – Barry Creasy)

## **Recording Review of Kakabadse's *Odyssey***

"Odyssey is a very appealing work and it's extremely well served here by Rupert Gough and his excellent choir. The singing is fresh, eager and full of vitality. There are a number of important solos taken by members of the choir. All are excellent. So far as I can see, these soloists aren't named in the booklet; they should have been."

(MusicWeb International, 2019 – John Quinn)

## **Recording Review of Kakabadse's *Ithaka***

"The choir is well schooled, with pure-toned sopranos and fine tuning from all concerned"

(Fanfare, May 2019 – Colin Clarke)

## **Reviews from a tour of North America, April 2018**

"I can't recommend highly enough this excellent ensemble for anyone considering a hosting or exchange project in future."

Leonard Ratzlaff, University of Alberta Madrigal Singers

"We present many of the world's finest choirs on our concert series, and several patrons remarked that they thought Royal Holloway was among the most enjoyable concerts they have attended. It was a real treat for us to have them here."

Scott Dettra, Director of Music & Organist, Church of the Incarnation, Dallas

"We were delighted to welcome the outstanding Royal Holloway Choir to Cornell University - their performance of a rich and varied repertoire was an inspiration to our own singers, and they were delightful guests."

Robert Isaacs, Cornell University

## **Concert Review of a performance as part of the *Presteigne Festival***

"Royal Holloway Choir's late-night concert on Monday evening, a highlight of the festival. They exploited the church's lovely acoustic, opening the concert with the singers spread down each side of the nave as well as on stage for a spell-binding performance of the hymn Ave generosa by the 12th-century composer Hildegard of Bingen. Their entire programme of music dedicated to the Virgin Mary demonstrated choral singing of the highest quality, though the piece that may linger longest in the audience's memory was Gabriel Jackson's setting of Ave regina caelorum with its extraordinary and wonderfully effective inclusion of an electric guitar accompaniment, played by Ant Law."

(Hereford Times, September 2018 – Clare Stevens)

## **Concert Review of a performance as part of Tenebrae's *Holy Week Festival***

'The student Choir of Royal Holloway were very impressive...They made a fine consort sound.'

(March 2018 – Andrew Wilson)

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## Ola Gjeilo on The Choir of Royal Holloway in his CD *Winter Songs*

"The Choir of Royal Holloway is a really wonderful college choir from just outside London. They have such a beautiful, really fresh, gorgeous, very real, kind of natural sound that I really like. So that was a wonderful experience to work with them."

(Interview with Classic FM, 2017 – Ola Gjeilo)

## Concert Review of Handel's *Messiah*

"Divine, transcendent, riveting and utterly monumental, it was a victorious, rousing early Christmas present from start to finish. Magnificent."

(365Bristol, December 2017 \*\*\*\*\*)

## Concert Review of a performance as part of the *Presteigne Festival*

"What sets these young choral scholars apart is not just the diversity of their repertoire (very impressive though it is) but the quality of their singing, and with only about 24 voices they are able to sound twice that number. Quality and diversity were both heard in abundance...'  
'Gough drew from his choral forces considerable tonal variety..."

(Bach Track, September 2015)

## Review of *Calm on the listening ear of night*

"I've been impressed by the very high standards of singing and musicianship shown by the Choir of Royal Holloway every time I've heard them and this latest disc maintains their very high standards."

(Musicweb-International, November 2015)

## Review of *Hymns to Saint Cecilia*

'a glorious compendium in every way ... from the ever-impeccable Royal Holloway Choir'  
(Choir & Organ, Nov 2014) \*\*\*\*\*

"Here's a ravishingly beautiful testimony to the allure of music's patron saint to composers. Focusing on British composers from the last and present centuries, it's a glorious compendium in every way. Two first recordings catch the attention: James MacMillan's Cecilia Virgo, a radiant concoction for double choir blissfully fusing bitonality and contrapuntalism; and Gabriel Jackson's La musique, a substantial 13-minute work setting Baudelaire and Elisabeth Bishop, and featuring Felicity Lott in gloriously crystalline voice, Britten's Hymn to St Cecilia receives a beautifully brittle and burnished reading from the ever-impeccable Royal Holloway Choir under Rupert Gough (who also provides excellent booklet notes) and there are first rate performances of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Bliss and other to enjoy"

(Michael Quinn - Choir & Organ) \*\*\*\*\*

"With their latest disc, The Choir of Royal Holloway and Music Director Rupert Gough ensure that Oxbridge ensembles don't have it all their own way when it comes to great university choirs. Gough's projects are reliably interesting and this latest - is no different... If the handful of soprano solos spread across the disc are anything to go by, Gough has an exceptional group of singers here."

(Alexandra Coghlan - Gramophone)

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## **Reviews of *Kreek's notebook***

"This album proclaims the excellence of British choral singing and the remarkable quality of contemporary choral music from the Baltic countries. If you think that only indigenous choirs can bring out the best in music from this part of the world, then these magnificent performances, the latest in a Hyperion series, will make you think again ... Gough and his forces deliver a spellbinding performance"

(International Record Review, June 2013)

"The Choir of Royal Holloway's championship of the music of the Baltic countries is a true feather in their cap, as this recording proves once again ... these simple, memorable melodies are couched in Kõrvits's lush (but never too lush) arrangements ... performances and recording are outstanding." (Gramophone)

## **Review quotes from the UK première of *Kreek's Notebook* in the Spitalfields Festival**

"An evening of Baltic choral music from the Choir of Royal Holloway and the Britten Sinfonia threatened to strip the peeling paint from the walls of Shoreditch Church, so raw was its emotional delivery. Oxbridge chapel choirs have long had it all their own way, but under the direction of Rupert Gough, Royal Holloway have become a serious rival. Their chief strength is their musicality."

(New Statesman, June 2012 - Alexandra Coghlan)

## **Reviews of Philips' *Cantiones sacrae***

"The Choir of Royal Holloway is a fine one on this showing ... the overall sound full and well balanced but not overpowering ... A very enjoyable portrait of a composer whose name deserves to be better known."

(Gramophone, June 2013 - Fabrice Fitch)

## **Reviews of Hansson's *Endless Border***

"Gough creates a selection of choral musical delights...each with exquisite treatment of text and perfect performance of sensitive musical nuances"... "credit must go to Gough's performance with its shape, at each stage of this piece, crafted flawlessly"

(Choir and Organ Magazine, May 2012 - Philip Reed) \*\*\*\*\*

"This marvellous disc devoted to the works of Bo Hansson not only pays tribute to the Swedish composer's fresh, melodic choral writing but also to the uniformly excellent vocal ensemble at Royal Holloway under their inspirational director, Rupert Gough... Highly recommended"

(Music Web International, May 2012 - John Quinn)

## **Concert Review of a performance as part of the *Presteigne Festival***

"the finest concert I have ever heard in my long experience of the festival...a simply stunning account of James MacMillan's Seven Last Words from the Cross.

The youthful members of the Choir of Royal Holloway sang with unwavering commitment (expertly coached by Rupert Gough). This was a huge triumph for George Vass and the Presteigne Festival itself."

(Christopher Morley – The Birmingham Post, Sept 2011)

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“an example of choral singing at its most elegantly fashioned...stunningly delivered in terms of tonal quality and technical brilliance under Rupert Gough’s unobtrusive direction”

(David Hart – The Birmingham Post, Sept 2011)

## **Recording Review of Miskinis’ *Time is endless***

“Rupert Gough has wrought wonders with his Egham choristers...such compelling and committed singing, this benchmark recording has whetted my appetite for much more. Enjoy!”

(Gramophone, December 2010 – Malcolm Riley)

“The Choir of Royal Holloway is really enjoying the acoustics of St. Alban the Martyr, really enjoying the sound of the music. The whole way Royal Holloway have approached this project is magnificent. I think this disc has real integrity and I’m loving listening to it.”

(BBC Radio 3 Record Review, November 2010 – Jeremy Summerly)