

Distant Music:

Uncovering Music Collections of Lincoln Cathedral Library

Introduction

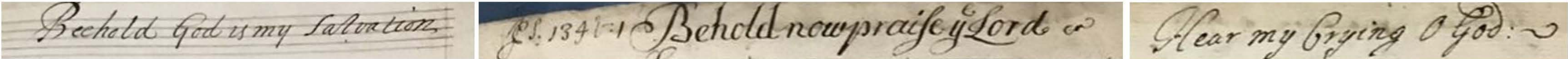
Rarely will you find a history of Lincoln that does not herald its great cathedral. Since its arrival in the late 11th century, many clergymen and laymen have walked through its aisles, not least of its composers, organists and choirmasters, many of whom held two or all of these titles. However, the Cathedral's digital music presence is virtually non-existent. There are many physical manuscripts and documents from throughout the Cathedral's lifetime, but very few can be accessed easily. This makes it impossible for researchers, choirmasters and general lovers of music to explore what great music has been written, performed and enjoyed by many for the last 10 centuries. In order to rectify this, we have begun to undertake the gargantuan task of digitising and making available the music archives of Lincoln Cathedral. We realise that this cannot be done over one summer, but we hope to at least lay the groundwork for whomsoever next picks up the gauntlet.

Aims and Objectives

Our aims were to produce a collection level description and to research key composers with significance to Lincoln specifically. Our wider goal, of course, was to uncover and work with music that may not have been heard for centuries. We are also making the collection available to academics and musicians by collaborating with the Cecilia's online guide, IAML (UK & Ir) to music collections in archives, libraries and museums in the UK and Ireland. Additionally, this project sets a precedent and encourages other cathedrals and institutions to comence similar work on their own undiscovered collections.

Methodology

The majority of investigative work on this project has been secondary research. The first and principal source was the archive itself, from which a list of composers was extracted to examine and research. We could then use this during other secondary research to cross reference names and dates; and discover composers. 223 boxes of uncatalogued manuscripts and 60 of printed music are held in the Cathedral Library and were made accessible to student researchers using a document camera. This resource was obviously crucial and invaluable to our research and it's a shame we didn't get to work with it in person. Oxford Music Online provided much of the historical information about composers. For some of the lesser-known composers this was the only information available, so it was a very valuable resource. Each online entry included at least a first name, dates, and names of pieces, which helped to trace some of the partial names pulled from the collection. We also had access to some physical books, such as Fellowes, E.H., 1969. English Cathedral Music, as well as other online libraries, which proved useful for filling in gaps in our wider background knowledge. We also made visits to Peterborough and Ely to see how other cathedrals make their collections available to the public, however due to the current pandemic they did not allow us to see their archive.



Findings and Results

When we approached the list of composers, it was clear that we would have to allow for certain discrepancies within the documentation. The clearest example of this is the inconsistent spelling of names, which was very common before the first Dictionary of the English Language was published in 1755. For instance, in the collection just 79 out of 262 recorded entries include more than a surname, and of those, 51 have only titles (most often Dr), partial names, or initials.

Firstly, there were of course some names in the collection which immediately stood out as well-known Western Classical composers. The earliest of these is Henry VIII, followed by Renaissance Byrd and the Baroque era Handel and Purcell, through to capital C Classical Haydn and Mozart. William Byrd is the main attraction here, having been born in Lincoln and composing here for many years. Later becoming a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, Byrd went on to be hailed as one of the great Western Classical composers. His contemporaries included Thomas Tallis, Richard Farrant and Orlando Gibbons, who are also all featured in the Lincoln Cathedral Collection.

A number of our collection composers were active during the very brief Restoration Period (1660-1666) and their work and influences overlap each other. This group, taught by Henry Cooke, were Pelham Humphrey, John Blow, Michael Wise, Thomas Tudway, William Turner, and Henry Purcell. They all began as Choristers for Chapel Royal. Humphrey and Blow returned later to become the Master of the Choristers. Chapel Royal is described as a "mobile religious establishment" dedicated to maintaining the "spiritual life" of the royal family (The Chapel Royal - Hampton Court Palace - The Tudor Palace and Chapel Royal, 2021). Introduced by Henry VIII, it refers to the group of musicians and priests who would accompany the monarch on their travels and perform masses, give advice, and. It is not tied a specific building or buildings, although it has been housed in various locations during its service – Palace of Whitehall, Greenwich Palace – and now primarily uses St James's Palace, Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle. In Church of England cathedrals, the role of Master of Choristers, or Master of the Children, was often combined with the role of Organist to appoint a Director of Music.

William Turner was well known not only for his anthems and choral works, but also for his own singing voice. He was tutored at Chapel Royal by fellow collection composer Henry Cooke until 1667 when he was appointed Master of Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral and during his short stay wrote the earliest of his 40 anthems. He then returned to Chapel Royal as a Gentleman of the Chapel, where he remained until 1740, dying just four days after his wife.

We have used and will continue to use MuseScore – a digital notation software – to transcribe pieces from the collection, making them easier for choirs to access. This means we're able to present MIDI recordings of the first few items. The first of these is Turner's 'Behold now praise ye Lord'. Due to the nature of the notation software, the recordings are using modern standard pitch tuning (A = 440Hz), but it is more likely that they originally used Baroque pitch (A = 415Hz). [QR CODE #1] [MUSIC MS 2 p1 (tenor), MUSIC MS 4 p1 (bass)]

Several of the composers in the collection held the post of Lincoln Cathedral Organist, including Phillip Marshall, originally rediscovered the collection.

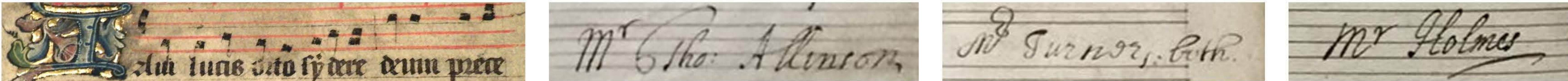
Thomas Allinson was born in Durham in 1670 and became a chorister at Durham Cathedral at the age of 12. In 1689 he was appointed as a lay clerk, before moving to Lincoln where he presided as organist for the rest of his life.

Allinson's 'Behold God is My Salvation'. [QR CODE #2] [MUSIC MS 2 p53 (tenor), MUSIC MS 4 p53 (bass)]

George Holmes also began as a chorister at Durham Cathedral and then in 1698 became domestic organist to the Bishop of Durham. In 1704 he succeeded Allinson as organist of Lincoln Cathedral, and although he only held this post for a few years, Holmes remained active in the church at Lincoln Cathedral until his death in 1720, both as a junior vicar and master of the Company of Ringers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lincoln.

The cathedral collection houses several works by Holmes, dated 1708-12. 'Hear my Crying O God' has been transcribed using digital notation software. [QR CODE #3] [MUSIC MS 4 p111 (bass), MUSIC MS 2 p115 (tenor)]

Collection Level Description – Because we haven't yet fully explored the items in the collection, we've not completed the collection level description. With documents still left unexamined, there could be many more composers hidden in Lincoln Cathedral Library's music collection. We intend to keep working on the project for now and have laid a groundwork for the library to recruit more students in the future. It would also be a much more well-rounded collection description if as much as possible has been digitally transcribed, which we also intend to continue.



Conclusion

The aim for this project was to investigate Lincoln Cathedral's collection of uncatalogued manuscript music and put together a collection level description. Research has uncovered many composers of interest, some with significance to Lincoln itself and others with wider notability. Additionally, by exploring the digital archives kept by other British cathedrals we were able to establish the correct formatting and language to use in our own description. Although the collection description has not yet been submitted to Cecilia, the progress made towards making the collection fully discoverable is significant. Both student researchers now have enough background knowledge to continue independently, and the resources produced during the project (list of composers, photographed documents etc.) could easily be handed over to an informed successor. As stated in the introduction, we expected the time limit and vast amount of material to make this project a challenge. Adding remote researching into the equation meant that we had limited contact with each other and the collection, which made our work more difficult. If we had been able to work more closely together and with the physical collection, the initial research process alone would have been much quicker.

Making this research public will be hugely beneficial, not only to religious and music historians, but also to choirs, local, national and beyond, and to music educators at any level. The obvious application is for choral singers to perform the works, or for musicologists to directly study them, which could be used to show how these composers who worked around the same time adopted compositional traits from each other. In the same way, a non-musical historian could use this research to discuss the movement of church officials across different posts. This all offers insight into the inner workings and even social politics of Lincoln Cathedral in the 16th-18th century. Going forward we will continue to transcribe and digitise the works in the collection, whilst working to perfect the collection level description. It may also be possible to commission performances of a few pieces, once we can provide typed sheet music.

References

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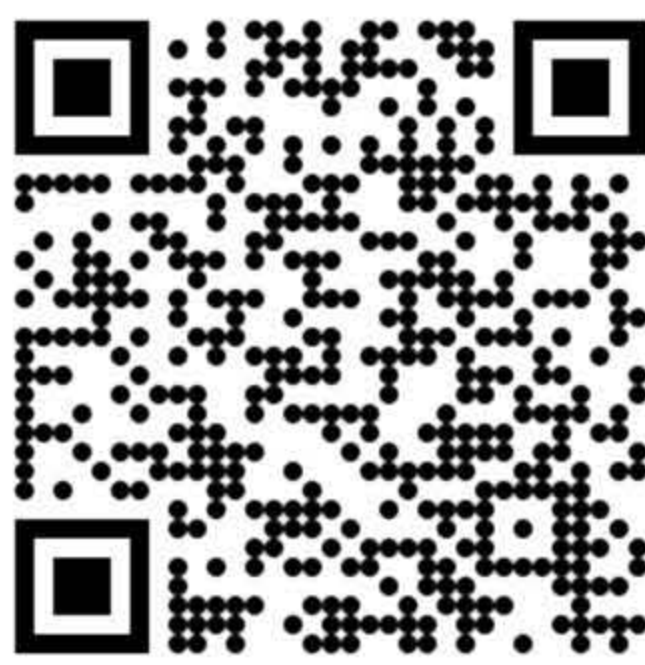
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Acknowledgements

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Recommendations

We continue to work with the manuscript music in order to create fully digital copies for use by local and other musicians and groups.



Student: Megan Lomas, Valerie Arindra

Supervisor: Claire Arrand, Hope Williard



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