

Robin Milford (1903-1959)

Te Deum Laudamus

A Spiritual Work for Children

Robin Milford's *Te Deum Laudamus* was written in 1944 for the choir of Downe House Chapel, the school where the composer taught. Published in 1946 by the OUP, with Harold Darke as editor, it is for 'unbroken voices in unison (with Optional Descant) and Organ'.

Set in E major, the introduction is characterised by falling thirds using a descending dotted figure, while the first section ("We praise thee, O God") presents a lively melodic line with flowing quavers and syncopation. Antiphonal answering commences on the words "All the earth doth worship thee". The organ part remains largely independent of the voices, giving strong independence to the young lively voices.

Although chromaticism has been a feature, the tonality of the second section (Holy, Holy, Holy) appears uncertain with a sense of reverence and *pianissimo* singing. Here, the voices are in unison, leading to a dramatic ending with both voices singing "The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee".

The third section ("The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee") presents sustained chords and references to the introductory falling 3rds against quasi-intoning in the voices (reminiscent of Benjamin Britten).

"Thou are the King of glory" (section 4 – a long section) shifts the tonality to a C major feeling for a 'recitativo' form of voice-line with longer durational notes, involving different sides of the choir (Decani and Cantoris). Chromaticism and textures increase. The music now climaxes, unusually at the phrases "We therefore pray Thee help thy servants" and "O Lord, save thy people". These are normally penitential moments but not so with Mr Milford, creating one of his surprising and quirky moments.

Section 5 ("Day by day we magnify Thee") commences simplistically, with some interesting organ moments leading to penitential singing for the phrases "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin/O Lord have mercy upon us". A small climax appears for the phrase "as our trust is in Thee" through a rising and falling melodic contour with effective dynamic and textures, leading to the final section (possibly the 'codetta').

Section 6 (“O Lord, in Thee have I trusted/Let me never be confounded”) presents a moving end to this delightful work. The word “trusted” is emphasised through repetition. The section is so simple in its textures, dynamics and prolonged voice line – all ending with an E major final organ chord.

This is an inspirational and spiritual work for children. It was a joy that this work was revived by the English Music Festival in 2023 because, as with so much of his church music for all types of vocal ensembles, it presents Milford’s deep Christian faith within the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Such a faith was vital for the composer’s temperament which involved depression, anxiety, nerves and, sadly, a death-wish.

Kirstie Kane Robin. With all my love. July, 1946.

Oxford Church Music

General Editor

Harold E. Darke

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For Downe House Chapel (by request)

Price 9d

Te Deum Laudamus

A setting for unbroken voices in unison (with optional Descant) & Organ

Te Deum Laudamus on mine ear was stealing
in voices with sweet music interblended,
Purgatorio IX

ROBIN MILFORD

Allegro leggiero

DESCANT
(Optional)

VOICES
in unison

ORGAN

praise thee, O God, we ac - know-ledge thee to be the

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