



THE BURNING BABE

Motet for Mixed Voices

Poem By
Robert Southwell

Music By
Charles Wood

COVER IMAGE

“Jesus as a Child” - Emil Munier 1891



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ENGLISH HERITAGE

MUSIC SERIES

The “renaissance” in English music is generally agreed to have started in the late Victorian period, beginning roughly in 1880. Public demand for major works in support of the annual choral festivals held throughout England at that time was considerable which led to the creation of many large scale works for orchestra with soloists and chorus.

Although a number of those works were engraved, printed and are regularly performed today, performance scores for a considerable number of compositions, both large-scale and more intimate works, are not available. These works were either never engraved or were engraved and printed but are no longer available in the publishers’ catalogues. While the existence of these works is documented in biographies of the composers, the ability to study and, most importantly, to perform these compositions is not possible.

Changes in the International copyright laws, coupled with changing musical tastes, played a pivotal role in creating this void. As a result, music publishers lost the ability to generate revenue from the sale/rental of such music. In 1964, holograph and copyist scores from both Novello and from publishers it represented were offered to the British Library and the Royal College of Music Library (see The RCM Novello Library – The Musical Times, Feb. 1983 by Jeremy Dibble).

These autograph full score manuscripts along with copies of engraved vocal scores, widely available through various online library sources, are now the only resources available for studying and performing these works.

The English Heritage Music Series has been created to ensure that these compositions are preserved, are accessible for scholarly research and, most importantly, are available for performance by future generations. Its mission is to:

- Source non-engraved/out-of-print English composer compositions that are in the U.S. public domain
- Preserve these compositions through the preparation of performance scores using notation software
- Provide open Internet access to the scores to facilitate study, performance and sharing of performance material (program notes, audio, reviews, etc.)

In preparing the English Heritage Music Series editions, every effort has been made to adhere strictly to the notation contained in the manuscripts. Because of the passage of time and its effect on the condition of the manuscript, the absence of clear information often times by the composer in notating divided instruments, and with emendations in the composer and other hands resulting from use of the manuscript in performance, there were numerous circumstances which required interpretation and decisions for notes, accidentals, dynamics, articulations and tempi. Should questions arise in the use of these editions, the composers’ autograph manuscripts and the Novello vocal scores should be consulted for clarification.

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Editor

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Source Information

Full Score Manuscript	Royal College of Music Library MS 4483
Vocal Score	Unpublished
Manuscript Transcription & Score Engraving	David Fielding - dhcfielding@charter.net

Reference Material and Software

Notation Software: Dorico Pro Version 6.0.20.6047 Audio Software: NotePerformer 4 Graphic Software: Affinity Serif Photo 2
Document Software: Affinity Serif Publisher 2 Music Notation Reference: [Behind Bars](#) by Elaine Gould, Faber Music © 2011



Charles Wood (15 June 1866 – 12 July 1926) was an Irish composer and teacher; his students included Ralph Vaughan Williams at Cambridge and Herbert Howells at the Royal College of Music. He is primarily remembered and performed as an Anglican church music composer, but he also wrote songs and chamber music, particularly for string quartet.

Born in Vicars' Hill in the Cathedral precincts of Armagh, Ireland, Charles was the fifth child and third son of Charles Wood Sr. and Jemima Wood. The boy was a treble chorister in the choir of the nearby St. Patrick's Cathedral (Church of Ireland). His father sang tenor as a stipendiary 'Gentleman' or 'Lay Vicar Choral' in the Cathedral choir and was also the Diocesan Registrar of the church. He was a cousin of Irish composer Ina Boyle.

Wood received his early education at the Cathedral Choir School and also studied organ with two organists and masters of the Boys of Armagh Cathedral, Robert Turle and his successor Dr Thomas Marks. In 1883 he became one of fifty inaugural class members of the Royal College of Music, studying composition with Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles Hubert Hastings Parry primarily, and horn and piano secondarily. Following four years of training, he continued his studies at Selwyn College, Cambridge until 1889, where he began teaching harmony and counterpoint. In 1889 he attained a teaching position at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, first as organ scholar and then as fellow in 1894, becoming their first director of music and organist. He was instrumental in the reflowering of music at the college, though more as a teacher and organiser of musical events than as composer. After Stanford died in 1924, Wood assumed his mentor's vacant role as Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge.

According to his successor at Cambridge, Edward J Dent, as a teacher of composition, Wood "was surpassed only by Stanford himself [and] as a teacher of counterpoint and fugue he was unequalled". His pupils at Cambridge included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Nicholas Gatty, Arthur Bliss, Cecil Armstrong Gibbs and W Denis Browne. Dent says that, because Stanford did not reside in Cambridge, Wood took on the real burden of teaching for many years before his own election as Professor of Music, by which time his health was already undermined. He died in July 1926 after only two years in the post.

Like his better-known colleague Stanford, Wood is chiefly remembered for his Anglican church music: there are over 250 sacred works and many hymn tunes. As well as his Communion Service in the Phrygian Mode, his settings of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis are still popular with cathedral and parish church choirs, particularly the services in F, D, and G, and the two settings in E flat. During Passiontide his St Mark Passion, written in 1920 for Eric Milner-White, the then Dean of King's College, Cambridge, is sometimes performed. It demonstrates Wood's interest in modal composition, in contrast to the late romantic harmonic style he more usually employs.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Wood_\(composer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Wood_(composer))



Robert Southwell, SJ (c. 1561 – 21 February 1595), also **Saint Robert Southwell**, was an English Catholic priest of the Jesuit Order. He was also an author of Christian poetry in Elizabethan English, and a clandestine missionary in Elizabethan England.

After being arrested and imprisoned in 1592, and intermittently tortured and questioned by priest hunter Sir Richard Topcliffe, Southwell was eventually tried and convicted of high treason against Queen Elizabeth I, but in reality for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, renounce his belief in the independence of the English Church from control by the State, and similarly repudiate the authority of the Holy See. On 21 February 1595, Southwell was hanged at Tyburn. In 1970, he was canonised by Pope Paul VI as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Southwell_\(priest\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Southwell_(priest))

“The Burning Babe” is a 16-line poem written in 1595 by Robert Southwell, an English Jesuit priest, and martyr who would later be ordained a saint. The poem depicts the speaker encountering a baby Jesus surrounded by flames, symbolizing his fiery love and the suffering he endures for humanity. The baby explains that the fire represents his love, which is fueled by human sins and imperfections, and that his tears are shed for the salvation of humanity. The poem concludes with the speaker realizing it is Christmas Day, highlighting the connection between the Incarnation and the promise of redemption. In essence, “The Burning Babe” is a powerful and unique Christmas poem which explores the themes of love, suffering, redemption, and the transformative power of faith.



THE BURNING BABE.

As I in hoary Winter's night stood shivering in the snowe,
Surpris'd I was with sodayne heat, which made my hart to glowe;
And liftinge upp a fearefull eye to vewe what fire was nere,
A prety Babe all burninge bright, did in the ayre appeare,
Who scorched with excessive heate, such floodes of teares did shedd,
As though His floodes should quench His flames which with His teares were fedd;
Alas! quoth He, but newly borne, in fiery heates I frye,
Yet none approach to warme their hartes or feelee my fire but II
My faultles brest the fornace is, the fuell woundinge thornes,
Love is the fire, and sighes the smoke, the ashes shame and scornes;
The fuell Justice layeth on, and Mercy blowes the coales,
The metall in this fornace wrought are men's defilèd soules,
For which, as now on fire I am, to worke them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to washe them in My bloode:
With this He vanisht out of sight, and swiftly shroncke awaye,
And straight I callèd unto mynde that it was Christmas-daye.

The Burning Babe

Robert Southwell

Charles Wood

Moderato

As I in ho - ry win - ter's night stood shiv - 'ring in the
Who, scorch - ed with ex - ces - sive heat, such floods of tears did
"My fault - less breast the furn - ance is, the fuel wound - ing
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their

snow, Sur - pris'd I was with sud - den heat which
shed As though his floods should quench his flames which
thorns; Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the
good, So will I melt in - to a bath to

made my heart to glow; And lift - ing up a fear - ful eye to
with his tears were fed. "A - las!" quoth He, "but new - ly born in
ash - es shames and scorns; The fuel Jus - tice lay - eth on, and
wash them in my blood." With this He va - nish'd out of sight and

11



view what fire was near, A pret - ty Babe all___
fie - ry___ heats I fry, Yet none ap - proach to___
Mer - cy___ blows the coals, the me - tal in this___
swift - ly___ shrunk a - way, And straight I called un -

14



burn - ing bright did in the___ air___ ap - pear.
warm___ their hearts or feel my___ fire___ but I!"
furn - ace wrought are men's de - fil - ed souls."
- to___ [my] mind That it was___ Christ - mas Day.

Written
25th December
1920



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