

Meditation

This Sunday, we celebrate the feast of the Ascension. There are many inspired musical responses to Christ's Ascension, including *Ascendit deus* by Peter Philips and *Coelos Ascendit Hodie* by Charles V. Stanford. Gerald Finzi's *God is Gone Up*, written in 1951, is probably the finest English-language anthem conceived on this theme.

Finzi was deeply taken with the metaphysical poets of the 17th century, including Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan. The text of *God is Gone Up* was written by an "American metaphysical," Edward Taylor. A Puritan, Taylor fled England for Massachusetts in 1668, serving as a priest at Westfield, MA until his death in 1729. His poetry was virtually unknown until his manuscripts were discovered at Yale in 1937. The poem used by Finzi is rich with musical imagery: "God is gone up with a triumphant shout: The Lord with sounding Trumpets' melodies ... sing Praises out." It is no wonder that Finzi saw great compositional potential when he encountered these words!

The opening organ fanfare contains numerous rising motifs, signaling the Ascension theme from the very start. And Finzi cleverly amplifies the speech-like flow of the poem into recurring rhythmic patterns. A declamatory triplet, emanating from the first line of text, becomes a recurring motif throughout the whole work. Above all, we hear Finzi's extraordinary gift for melody, most especially in the lyrical middle section: "Mixing their Music, making ev'ry string, More to enravish as they this tune sing."

On Sunday morning, we will sing the great Ascension hymn *See the conqueror mounts in triumph*, as well as *Crown Him with many crowns*. I look forward to seeing you at our Zoom service!

With all best wishes,

Tim Pyper
Director of Music

God is Gone Up (Gerald Finzi):

https://youtu.be/Y_67yfaroek

Text of God is Gone Up:

http://www.emmanuelmusic.org/notes_translations/translations_motets/t_finzi_god_is_gone_up.htm

Hymn 215: See the conqueror mounts in triumph:

<https://youtu.be/gVeWDtVVdI>

Hymn 494: Crown him with many crowns:

<https://youtu.be/gobvWmrUCbc>