

## What Sweeter Music: John Rutter

RTHK Radio 4  
Tues. 19:00 – 20:00

Programme: 2  
13 november 2007

**MUSIC:** What Sweeter Music      04 X 04 # 17      c. 0:35 >> fade on cue....

**KANE:** “What Sweeter Music” --- a carol of John Rutter, introducing *another* in a *series* of programmes of his music. This week, one of his purely *instrumental* compositions, and a set of songs inspired by the poets and madrigalists of England’s Elizabethan era, which Rutter finds so attractive. But as he himself has written, *church* music has played a significant and cherished part in his musical life, from boyhood through university and his early appointment as director of music at his *alma mater*, Clare College, Cambridge. There the daily running of the chapel choir was one of his responsibilities, and he built up the international reputation of the choir, one of the first in traditional Cambridge to mix women’s and men’s voices. Not surprisingly, then, a large amount of his composing has been of *church* music of various kinds. Among *psalm* settings is his version of the popular Ps 27, “The Lord is my Light and My Salvation”, originally scored with keyboard accompaniment for *service* use, but provided also with the more colourful form of an orchestra and solo *clarinet* accompaniment.

**MUSIC:** The Lord is my Light and my Salvation    94 R 15 # 11      7:12

**KANE:** John Rutter’s Ps 27, ‘The Lord is my Light and my Salvation’. An *organist* from his schooldays, Rutter *has* written for the instrument, and has a rather *unusual* organ piece among his compositions ----an organ *duet*, which as you may imagine calls for some dexterity and diplomacy on the pedals. Written in 1983, this was a commission from the United States for the giant instrument in the Washington National Cathedral, Washington D.C. It’s titled “Variations on an Easter Theme”, and is based on the plainchant Easter song ‘O filii et filiae’ ( O sons and daughters ), an old melody that’s found in hymnbooks of many European countries over the centuries. Rutter’s variations, in different moods, have as their centre-piece a gentle *blues*-infected passage. This recording was made in 2002 in Douai

Abbey, England, with two young organists , graduates of Clare College: Nicholas Rimmer and Nicholas Collon,

**MUSIC: Variations on an Easter Theme      Naxos 8.557130 # 14      7:41**

**KANE:** An unusual organ *duet*, 'Variations on an Easter theme' by John Rutter. "*Fancies*" is the title of a *set* of six songs Rutter wrote in 1971 for a group *then* called the Richard Hickox Singers and Orchestra. The orchestra later became the City of London Sinfonia, which very often accompanies recordings of Rutter's music, including *this* one, of 'Fancies', for choir and chamber orchestra. The songs are all from around the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Elizabethan era in England, starting with one from 'The Merchant of Venice' by William Shakespeare: 'Tell me where is fancy bred'. 'There is a garden in her face' is by Thomas Campion; and Robert Herrick's 'The Bellman's Song' is the final one in the set.

**MUSIC: Fancies      CD 20514 ## 1 – 6      16:08**

**KANE:** Six English Elizabethan songs, in John Rutter's "Fancies". *Gloria* was the first of the large '*classic*' sacred hymns that Rutter put to music, in 1974. His version of the very old hymn of *praise*, "Te Deum" ('We praise thee O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord') followed in 1988. It was written for use in a church festival service, with an organ accompaniment, but provided with an orchestral version as well. Intermittent fanfares of brass and percussion frame Rutter's quite straightforward and uncomplicated setting of the text.

**MUSIC: Te Deum      94 R 15 # 1      7:15**

**KANE:** John Rutter's "Te Deum", performed by the Cambridge Singers and the City of London Sinfonia, conducted by the composer himself. You may by now have noticed that it's been the *same* choir performing *all* the works in this programme so far, and that the name of Clare College keeps cropping up. Well, they'll keep doing so, because The Cambridge Singers is a group formed by Rutter himself, originally from among friends and colleagues at his *alma mater*. This happened a few years after Rutter had left his post at Clare in order to spend more time at composing and editing. The success of his *Gloria* had led to *many* more commissions, especially from the United States.

