

## **‘In the Presence of the Angels’**

This piece is a gift for the monks at Downside in Somerset, for their use in worship in the Abbey. It was composed during this past winter, and written unselfconsciously with no plans for it to be presented as a recital work. This public performance (its first) will therefore be of as much interest to me as I hope it will be to you! The music colours and elaborates a sequence of chant celebrating the life of St Benedict, Downside’s patron. It falls into eight sections, presented today in pairs, between which the original plainchant is sung.

*Laeta dies magni ducis  
Charis datur piae menti*

We are called upon to be both joyous and quietly contemplative on this special day.

*Hunc per calem Orientis  
Amplum semen magnae prolis*

We hear of Benedict’s wanderings in the east, and of his noble origins.

*Corvum cernis ministrantem  
Elisaeus dignoscatur*

The chant relates two miracles: A raven brings Benedict food to sustain him during his period as a recluse in the wilderness. Next, Benedict is able to make an iron implement, lost under water, float to the surface.

*Illum Joseph candor morum  
Ipse memor suae gentis*

We hear of Benedict’s brilliance, comparable to that of Joseph. We learn of his concern for his people, and of his joy in Christ.