

## Paul Spicer: *His heart's desire*

for SSAATTBB a cappella

### Composer's note

One of my oldest friends, Peter Floyd, had his relationship with his long-term partner, Felix McLymont, formalised at a civil partnership ceremony on 26 May 2007. Prior to the legal ceremony the couple had a Sung Eucharist service in Southwark Cathedral where Peter has been not only a bass in the choir for many years but also a Churchwarden. I wanted to find a text from the scriptures for this motet which somehow managed to say the right things for a same-sex couple. I found what I wanted in an amalgamation of verses from Psalms 21, 26 and 27 which were approved by the cathedral and which begin:

You have given him his heart's desire,  
And have not withheld the request of his lips.  
For you meet him with rich blessings.  
You bestow on him blessings for ever.

Starting simply, the piece moves into eight-part, double-choir formation at the words "O Lord I love the house and the place where your glory abides". In the warmth and richness of its choral textures it is a heartfelt tribute to two close friends.

The key thing in performing this motet is the care taken over the balance between parts in all divisi work, but especially when it moves to double choir formation. The realisation of the interaction of parts with each other is key so as to make the most of the richness of texture which is at the heart of the writing. Close attention should also be paid to the speeds and to the sustained lines.

Duration: 2 minutes

### Text

- <sup>1</sup>You have given him his heart's desire,  
and have not withheld the request of his lips.  
For you meet him with rich blessings.
- <sup>2</sup>You bestow on him blessings for ever.
- <sup>3</sup>O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,  
and the place where your glory abides.
- <sup>4</sup>One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 21:2–3

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 21:6

<sup>3</sup>Psalm 26:8

<sup>4</sup>Psalm 27:4

### Paul Spicer



Paul Spicer is one of the UK's most widely respected choral conductors. He studied at the Royal College of Music where he was a composition student of Herbert Howells. As director of the Finzi Singers, he made many recordings on the Chandos label focusing on his specialist area of 20th century British music, and he currently conducts the Birmingham Bach Choir and the Whitehall Choir in London. He teaches choral conducting at Oxford and Durham Universities, and at the Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also directs the Chamber Choir which has an increasing reputation through its regular recordings. Paul's choral workshops take him all over the world and his *English Choral Experience* foundation runs choral courses in the UK and Europe. He has written biographies of Herbert Howells and Sir George Dyson and his compositional output includes the large-scale *Easter Oratorio* and *Advent Oratorio*, a choral symphony *Unfinished Remembering*, and *The Deciduous Cross*, a five movement work for choir and wind instruments, as well as many smaller-scale works.