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Spring 2024

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masterpieces 100  
years since the  
composer's death

► see page 18

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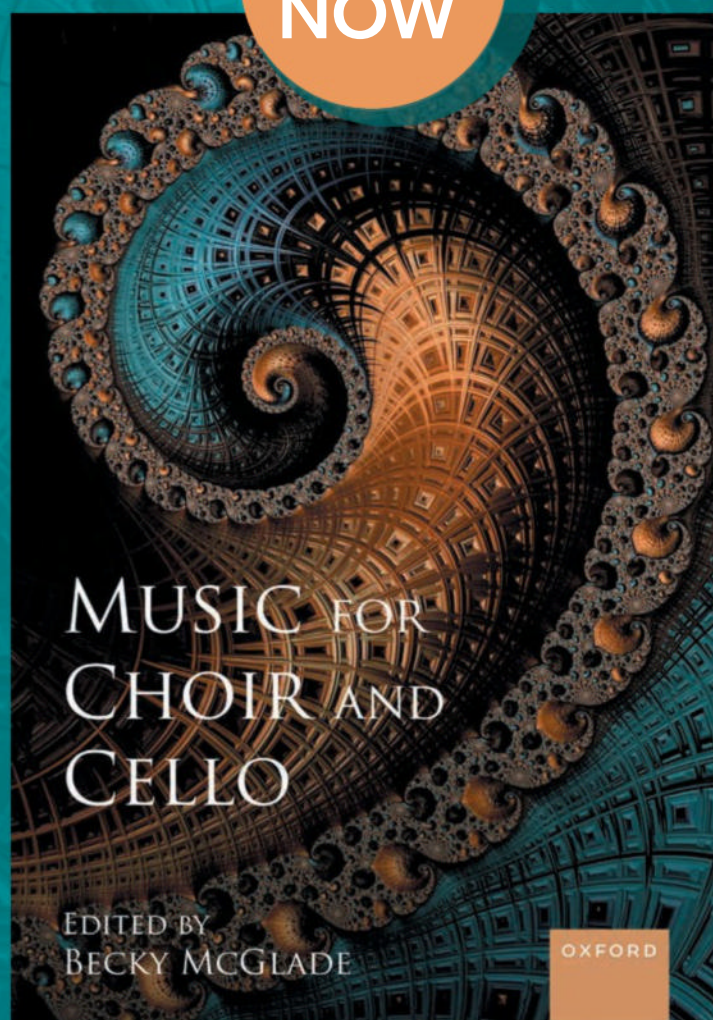
# Music for Choir and Cello

Edited by  
Becky McGlade

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## A lasting legacy

What would be of the modern choral and church music catalogue if it weren't for Charles Villiers Stanford? Overseeing the 20th Century boom of church music in the UK and Ireland, Stanford's incredible roster of students at the Royal College of Music suggests that we would be severely lacking if it weren't for his guidance.

To mark 100 years since his death, I'm listening to The Sixteen's new recording of his partsongs, on the album *Sirens' Song*, as well as rediscovering the Evening Canticles and the recording of his *Requiem* on Hyperion, suggested by Jeremy Dibble in his survey of Stanford's choral music on page 18.

It's marking moments like this, that makes me so excited to be taking over as Editor of *Choir & Organ*, as well as continuing my work editing *Opera Now* Magazine, which I have enjoyed for the past year. Choral and organ music was my first love. I grew up surrounded by church music and small country organs, often begging the organist at Ewyas Harold in



PHILIPPA BUTTERWORTH

Herefordshire to let me see the pipes round the back of the organ! I then moved into orchestral music, studying the cello at the Royal College of Music, though continuing to play the organ for the Mass at the Catholic halls of residence I lived at in South Kensington.

The next year holds many excitements in the worlds of choral

and organ music, beginning with the completion of two Harrison & Harrison organ projects surveyed in this issue. Looking ahead, we celebrate 150 years since Gustav Holst's birth and 30 years of the record label NMC, which continues to support young composers at a time where opportunities are devastatingly ever-decreasing. I look forward to showcasing some of the brilliant voices in worldwide choral and organ music, and hope to continue previous Editor Maggie Hamilton's close partnerships and care for the musicians, readers and academics in the industry.

Hattie Butterworth, Editor

*Choir & Organ* shines a global spotlight on two distinctive fields of creativity, celebrating inventiveness and excellence in all their forms.

We aim to inspire our readers through giving a platform to conductors, organists, composers, and choirs of every kind; and by showcasing the imaginative craft of pipe organ building across the centuries, critiquing new organs and tackling ethics in restoring historic instruments.

Specialist writers appraise new editions and recordings of standard repertoire and works fresh from the composer's pen, while our news and previews chart the latest developments in a changing world and present opportunities to become involved.

*Choir & Organ* is an invitation to engage with two unique areas of music – to explore the new, and look afresh at the familiar.

## Meet the Team

### Matthew Power - Organ & New Music Editor



After growing up on the small island of Guernsey, moving to Camberwell aged 18 was quite a culture shock, but a welcome one. I studied composition at Trinity College of Music and read for a London BMus degree. I soon found an antidote to the solitude of composing and essay writing in piano accompaniment, especially song, which is still one of my greatest musical joys.

I accidentally started work for *Choir & Organ* (selling ad space as a much-needed part-time job one summer) when the magazine was in its second year of life and beginning to grow. Working alongside Maggie Hamilton, first as her editor, then later with her as my editor (I believe that's quite an unusual succession in the publishing world!) led to my becoming New Music editor and Organ editor, both of which are truly life enhancing roles for which I am grateful.

### Theo Elwell - Editorial Assistant

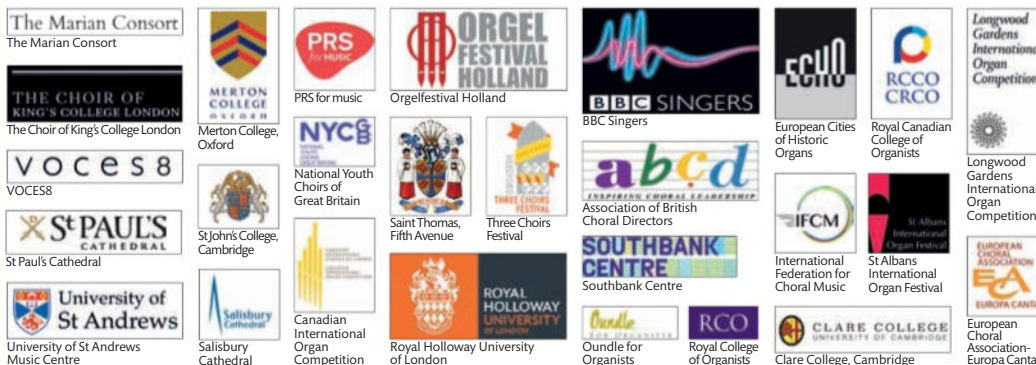


I was lucky enough to grow up singing in brilliant choirs, my secondary education was Roman Catholic so there was a big emphasis on music as part of the weekly services and daily life. I went on to join the Old Royal Naval College Chapel Choir as a choral scholar under Ralph Allwood, which gave me the opportunity to sing with some extremely talented musicians and occasionally go on tours. I have had

some of my fondest memories singing in choirs and I would encourage everyone to join one at one point in their life.

I'm looking forward to bringing my personal enthusiasm for the great choral and organ works, along with an interest of discovering new talent. Amy Summers is one of my favourite new composers at the moment. She's recently been published in the RSCM's Two Part Anthems anthology - a personal favourite is *Ave Virgo sanctissima*.

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## ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF ITS HIGHEST AWARD

PATRICK ALLEN



▲ Conductor Sofi Jeannin is among recipients of the RCO medal

THIS YEAR, THE ROYAL COLLEGE of Organists celebrates five respected musicians in their respective achievements relating to organ and choral music. An addition to last year's four recipients, the College's medal is only given once a year and is its highest honour.

Among the recipients is chief conductor of the BBC Singers Sofi Jeannin, whose career includes conducting Handel's *Messiah* with Britten Sinfonia and Poulenc's *Stabat*

*Mater* with BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Dr Stephen Layton MBE will also be awarded. Known for being the founder of choral group, Polyphony, Layton also served as director of music at Temple Church and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was educated under former president of RCO, the late Stephen Cleobury.

President of the RCO, David Hill says: "The 2024 honorands are both respected

and celebrated in their respective fields.

The RCO Medal acknowledges their many achievements, and we warmly congratulate them and thank them for their immense contribution to choral and organ music.'

The recipients will be presented with their medals at the RCO conferment ceremony in Southwark Cathedral on Saturday 9 March 2024. Jeannin will be awarded her Medal at the 2025 ceremony.

### Applications now open for the Longwood Organ Academy

With one of the world's largest symphonic organs, Longwood offers students the opportunity to study organ transcriptions at a week-long residential at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, USA. Students will be under the guidance of Peter Richard Conte, Longwood Principal Organist and Alan Morrison of the Curtis Institute of Music. Students will also have the opportunity to attend a masterclass with visiting organist Ken Cowan, Professor of Organ and head of the organ programme at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. At the end of the week, there will be a performance

on the Longwood Organ which will be broadcast to an audience of around 12,000 on the Longwood Gardens YouTube channel.

The gardens additionally host the Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition, which took place last year in June. Open to organists between the ages of 18 and 30, the competition holds an initial qualifying round judged anonymously by a jury of six esteemed members of the organ community. 10 finalists are then selected to compete live before a panel of renowned judges in a quest for the top prize.



# CORO TO PARTNER WITH MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

THE LABEL OF HARRY CHRISTOPHERS and The Sixteen, CORO, has announced a partnership with The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford. It will begin with the release of new album, *Peace I Leave with You* in April. Showcasing composers Joanna Marsh and John Sheppard, a previous director of the choir, the album will also feature works by Hubert Parry and John Tavener. In addition to the album, CORO will also make the first recording of Magdalen College Chapel's new organ, in a new album of popular hymns out in 2025.

The Choir of Magdalen College, founded in 1480 also makes appearances outside of its chapel in engagements which include the scores for BBC's *Blue Planet* and on Paul McCartney's album *Ecce Con Meum*. In a further link with the music of The Beatles, previous album *The Sweet and Merry Month: Music for May Morning* featured an arrangement of the song 'I'll Follow the Sun'. In addition to their recordings, they have performed extensively around the world, with The Academy of St Martin in the Fields and The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as performing at several of the BBC Proms and previously winning a *Gramophone* Award.

CORO, which was set up in 2001 to release recordings by The Sixteen, has since launched CORO Connections which presents some of the finest new artists of the early music world to audiences worldwide, including The Hilliard Ensemble, Elin Manahan Thomas and Sarah Connolly.

Harry Christophers, Founder and Conductor of The Sixteen, said of the new partnership, 'I regard them very much as part of our extended family having spent my student years at Magdalen soaking up its unrivalled history and having had the good fortune to be a member of this illustrious choir.'

▼ The Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford begins a new partnership with The Sixteen's record label, CORO



## IN BRIEF

The BBC has announced plans for new extensions to its radio stations: BBC Radio 1, 2 and 3. The change is in response to playlisting on streaming platforms becoming more popular in recent years, providing the curation of music for different moods and activities. BBC Director of Music Lorna Clarke said that the extensions 'will allow listeners to deep-dive into more pop and classical genres and periods of music they love the most'.

Applications are now open for the **Cumnock Tryst residential summer school**. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to work with Tryst founder and artistic director Sir James MacMillan and composer Anna Thorvaldstotti. The week-long course will be held at Dumfries House, Ayrshire and is open to aspiring composers aged 18 - 30. The week will finish with a public performance of the students' pieces by a professional ensemble at Dumfries House.

Organist and conductor **Edward Higginbottom** has been awarded the Choral Director's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Musicians' Company. In recognition of 35 years of 'pioneering work' as an organist, fellow and tutor at New College Oxford, he joins an impressive list of previous winners which includes Stephen Cleobury, Harry Christophers, Christopher Robinson, Andrew Carwood and James O'Donnell, while adding the award to his existing accolades which include Gold Medal of the Royal College of Organists.

Founder & Artistic Director of **Houston Chamber Choir**, Robert Simpson has announced he will be stepping down at the end of the 2024/25 season, coinciding with the choir's 30th anniversary. Moving forward, the Grammy Award-winning ensemble will be led by internationally renowned choral conductor, Dr Betsy Cooke Weber.



## Q&A WITH MARK WILLIAMS DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AT MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

### Aside from the release of the new album, does the choir have any exciting engagements lined up?

One of the main highlights for all of us is the annual May Morning ceremony, which sees the Choir ascend Magdalen's iconic tower to sing to the thousands of people gathered in the street below at dawn on 1st May. This year, the start of May also sees the 550th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the College's chapel, and we have some special services planned to celebrate that, including a BBC broadcast Evensong at the end of April. The Choir is also performing Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* in Oxford and London at the end of March, more recordings for CORO are planned, and future international touring plans include European venues as well as the United States and South Africa.

### What is your opinion on the benefits of choral singing as a grounding for musical training?

We're increasingly aware of the benefits of singing for wellbeing and mental health. To sing with others is particularly special, honing teamwork skills as well as musical ones, and it's particularly rewarding to see children as young as seven or eight developing their self-confidence as they learn to perform at an elite level on a daily basis. It's an enormous commitment and people are often surprised when they hear about the intensity of the choristers' schedule, but hopefully it brings rewards that simply wouldn't be possible without that rigorous training.

### You've been working with the choir for 7 years now, what are some of your stand-out moments?

My first May Morning fell on a beautiful, sunny Bank Holiday Monday, and I have to say that nothing could have prepared me for the experience of standing on the roof of the tower and looking down on the tens of thousands of revellers gathered below. We've also really enjoyed recording, first for Opus Arte, and now for CORO, as the Choir takes real pride in turning something that they do every day into something immortalised on disc, with all of the care and discipline required during recording sessions.

### What are you listening to at the moment?

I'm currently taking a period of study leave and am rather missing daily rehearsals in Magdalen, despite the welcome respite. I've been visiting other Oxford college chapels for Evensong and have been bowled over by the quality of choral music available in one small city – a recent service at Merton College combined the music of Gibbons with more contemporary repertoire to beautiful effect, for example. At home, I've been exploring some of the Hyperion releases that have recently been made available to stream, including Tatiana Nikolayeva's recording of the Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, and a ravishing 1987 disc, *Souvenirs de Venise*, made by the peerless and much-missed Anthony Rolfe-Johnson.

▼ The Choir of Magdalen College's first album *Peace I leave with you* is released in April



MAGDALEN COLLEGE



# APPEAL FOR FUNDS TO REPAIR UNION CHAPEL ORGAN

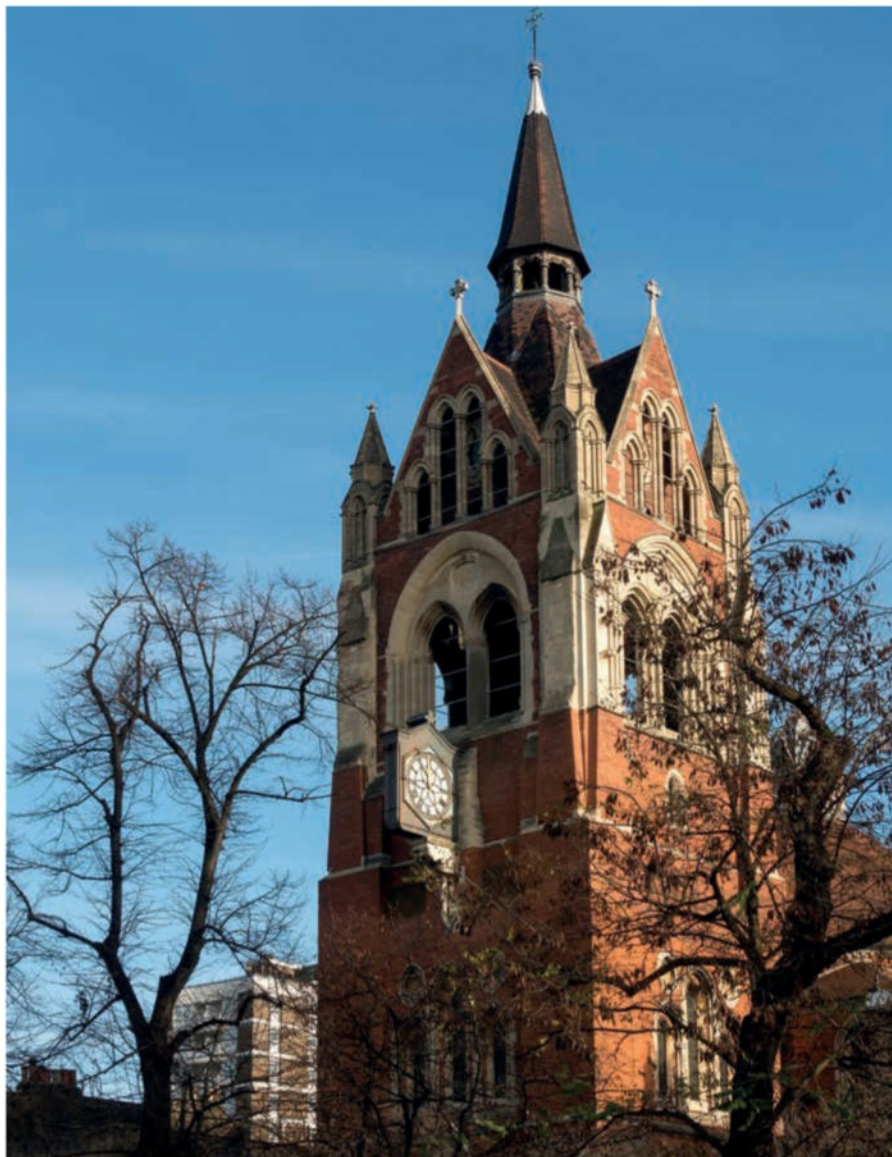
LONDON'S UNION CHAPEL HAS SUSPENDED its organ activities due to the discovery of a fatal crack.

As a result of extreme fluctuations in temperature and humidity, the Swell section of Union Chapel's organ has sustained a significant crack, making that part of the instrument unplayable. Despite the organ undergoing regular surveys and upkeep (including a complete restoration in 2012-13 by organ builders Harrison and Harrison), the 19th century Father Willis instrument is incredibly vulnerable. The main factors contributing to the damage are the building temperature dramatically dropping during the forced closure during the pandemic, followed by the increasingly dry hot summers. Included in the proposed restoration will be the installation of a humidifier in order to combat the extreme changes in weather we now experience more often.

Music Director Claire Singer said of the damage: 'It is heartbreaking to see our historic gem suffer damage from the period when I was unable to monitor conditions so closely. After pausing the organ programme this year to concentrate on submitting urgent funding applications, we now desperately need help from the public to make sure we can proceed with the repair.'

As of February 20, the chapel has raised £61,000 of the £130,000 needed for the repair. A link to donate can be found on the Union Chapel website.

► Union Chapel in Highbury and Islington



ADOBESTOCK

## Cadogan Hall celebrates 20th anniversary

Cadogan Hall is celebrating its 20th year of presenting live music with a new choral series. The venue will host big names as part of its year-long 'Choral at Cadogan' series, including The Tallis Scholars, VOCE58, BBC Singers and The Sixteen.

Adam McGinlay, Managing Director of Cadogan Hall, said of the series: 'No sound is more moving than the human voice, and here at Cadogan Hall it gets the setting it deserves. That's why we've become known as the London home of some of the world's

finest choirs.'

With a broad range of repertoire, from Tallis's *Spem in alium* to choral arrangements of songs by Paul Simon, the series will celebrate the ensembles that continue to bring renown to the British choral music scene. Each concert will present its own unique theme; The Tallis Scholars beginning the darker months of the season with *Darkness to Light* and The Sixteen finishing the year with *Christmas with The Sixteen*.



## JAM ANNOUNCES PROGRAMME FOR MARCH CONCERT



MUSIC ORGANISATION AND CHARITY JAM (John Armitage Memorial Trust) launches its season on 20 March at 7:30pm with a concert of new works for choir, brass quintet and organ at St Bride's Church in Fleet Street.

Named 'Music of Our Time', the concert will premiere six new works, including commissions from Tarik O'Regan and Isabelle Ryder. Selwyn College Chapel Choir will be lead by Sarah MacDonald, with Simon Hogan as organist and brass quintet Onyx Brass. A world premiere from Isabelle Ryder, *Illumination*, written for organ and two trumpets, pays homage to St Brigid (St Bride) of Kildare, patron saint of St Bride's church.

Founded in 2000 to support and commission new music in the UK, JAM now comprises its annual March concert, composers' residency and the JAM on the Marsh multi-arts festival in Kent and has commissioned a total of over 150 new works.

◀ Six new works will be premiered in JAM's March concert

### PAST LIVES

#### IVAN MOODY 1964 – 2024

The composer, conductor, priest, musicologist, *Choir & Organ* writer and *Gramophone* reviewer Ivan Moody has died aged 59.

Born in London in 1964, Moody studied music and theology at the Universities of London, Joensuu and York (where he did his doctorate). Among his teachers had been Sir John Tavener and, like him, Moody was powerfully drawn to the music, spirituality and liturgy of the Orthodox Church – whose music and faith was to play a foundational part in his own compositions and life.

His substantial body of music includes such works and collaborations as the oratorio *Passion and Resurrection* (1992), based on Orthodox liturgical texts and premiered by Red Byrd and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir under Tõnu Kaljuste, *Canticum Canticorum I* for the Hilliard Ensemble, and *Prayer for the Forests* which won the Arts for the Earth Festival Prize, and was premiered by the Tapiola Choir in Finland. Later works have been premiered or championed by groups and artists including Raphael Wallfisch (a cello concerto), Trio

Mediaeval, The Tallis Scholars, Chanticleer and Capella Romana, with ECM among labels to have released his music.

Reviewing a recording of his work *Simeron* for *Gramophone* in 2014, Alexandra Coghlan perfectly caught the influences that shaped his music-making here and elsewhere, describing it as 'typical of the composer's recent work – a distillation and crystallisation of a style that has become ever cleaner and more texturally refined. Setting the Greek text of the Byzantine Holy Week Rite and a sermon by Bishop Melito of Sardis, the work finds a harmonic astringency to balance its yielding, unbending instinct to melody. Chant meets human cries, ecstatic chorales break through scuttling chromatics in a performance whose precision and restraint only heighten its intensity.'

Moody held various academic posts, including Professor of Church Music at the University of Eastern Finland from 2012 to 2014, and worked extensively as a conductor. A onetime member of the choir of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in London, he subsequently served as cantor in both Greek and Bulgarian parishes in Lisbon. In 2007 he

was ordained to the priesthood, becoming rector of the Serbian Orthodox Parish of the Transfiguration in Estoril, Portugal.

Writing and teaching widely, he contributed for a number of years to *Choir & Organ* and *Gramophone*, on choral music across the full breadth of eras and styles from Hildegard von Bingen to Tavener and beyond, as well as writing on contemporary music more broadly, and will be remembered fondly by all those who worked with him.





# Q&A WITH SARAH MACDONALD

## JAM PANEL MEMBER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AT SELWYN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE AND COMPOSER

### **How did you become involved with JAM?**

Around 23 years ago I met Ed Armitage, the chair of trustees. I was producing a CD that he was editing, and back then JAM was very new. He was looking for choirs that were keen to be involved and I thought, why not? I was relatively new in my time at Selwyn, so he took me up on the offer and we gave a concert later that year in Cambridge. Since then Selwyn has made 20 single composer discs off the back of being involved with JAM and helped launch the careers of some quite well known composers.

### **How do you go about guiding the choir through learning so much new music?**

20 years ago I used to have sleepless nights about it, but now I know that every single year it's been fine in the end. It's a lot of notes to digest and perform professionally with a non-professional choir. We have to turn that around in 3 days!

### **As a composer what's the hardest part about writing for voices?**

I think it's about writing idiomatically for the voice. Much as I love professional ensembles, I'd like things to be performable by parish choirs and amateur choral societies. Basic things like making sure that the singers know where to find their notes, rather than plucking things out of the air is really important. There are many contemporary composers who do know how to write music that is performable by choirs other than the BBC Singers. Those of us who work daily with children (as I do at Ely Cathedral), or with very good but not professional singers, understand idiomatic, singer-friendly writing.

### **What are your thoughts about the future of choral music in the UK?**

Having a pyramid is really critical - so having something like the BBC Singers to aspire to is incredibly important. But you've



▲ Conductor and composer Sarah MacDonald

also got to have the base of the triangle. I grew up in Canada after the government had already destroyed music in the state system, which is what has happened over the past 10 years in this country. We're getting a bit of a revival in faith schools with parish and

cathedral musicians going into schools to teach. But in the average comprehensive school, there's very little music after year 7 and that's very depressing. Perhaps a change of leadership in Westminster will provide a glimmer of hope?



## PREMIERE SPOTLIGHT



Composer Cecilia McDowall

### *The White Road* – Cecilia McDowall

Friday 8 March, 7pm

Southwark Cathedral, London

Composer Cecilia McDowall's latest work, *The White Road*, will be premiered on 8 March by the Chapel Choir of Dulwich College, where she is currently visiting composer. Scored for solo tenor, cello and percussion alongside the choir, the work sets words by Dulwich's Master Dr Joseph Spence. Spence's poem stems from explorer and Dulwich College student Ernest Shackleton's journey in South Georgia which inspired part of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. McDowall said of the work: '*The White Road* falls into three sections; the Explorer, supported by a wordless Greek chorus; the Poet (the chorus as Eliot) in an intense middle section. The third and last section fuses the 'voices' of Explorer and Poet together, as they ponder on

the intangible presence 'walking always' beside them.' This is the third work commissioned of McDowall by the College for which Joe Spence has taken texts from Old Alleynians, including Ernest Armine Wodehouse and Raymond Chandler, alongside Shackleton.

Explorer Sir Ernest H. Shackleton



KARINA LYBURN

### Gavin Bryars: *Là ver l'aurora*

Elysian Singers

2 March, York Unitarian Chapel, York, UK

### Philip Cooke: *Antiphon*

Universities of Aberdeen & Edinburgh Chamber Choirs/Sam Paul/Michael Bawtree

9 March, Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Edinburgh, UK

### Karl Jenkins: *One World* [RP]

Philharmonia Orchestra / Crouch End Festival Chorus / Sir Karl Jenkins

10 March, Royal Albert Hall, London, UK

### Thomas Larcher: *Love and the Fever*

MDR Sinfonieorchester and choir / Dennis Russell Davies

10 March, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Germany

### James MacMillan: *Fiat Lux* [RP]

Mary Bevan (s), Roderick Williams (bar), BBC

Symphony Orchestra / BBC Symphony Chorus /

James MacMillan

15 March, Barbican Hall, London, UK

### Ninfea Cruttwell-Read: *The Dead*

ORA Singers

15 March, Kings Place, London, UK

### Electra Perivolaris: *An end without end*

ORA Singers

15 March, Kings Place, London, UK

### James Macmillan: *Composed in August*

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / SCO Chorus / Maxim Emelyanychev

21 March, Usher Hall, Edinburgh, UK

### Eric Whitacre: *The Sacred Veil*

Louisville Orchestra and Chamber Choir / Eric Whitacre

23 March, Kentucky Center for the Arts, Louisville, USA

### Bent Sørensen: *St. Matthew Passion* [RP]

Johanna Nylund (sop), Alessandro Fischer (ten)

/ Danish National Symphony Orchestra / DR

Vokalensemble / Andris Poga

28 March, DR Koncerthuset, Copenhagen, Denmark

### Melissa Dunphy: *Ode to Hope*

Saint Louis Chamber Choir/Philip Barnes

5 April, Graham Chapel, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, USA

### James MacMillan: *Composed in August* [RP]

Estonia Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Tallinn Chamber Orchestra / Tõnu Kaljuste

13 April, Estonia Concert Hall, Tallinn, Estonia

### Matthew Martin: *Christiani plaudite*

Choir of Merton College, Oxford/Benjamin Nicholas

20 April, Merton College Chapel, Oxford, UK

Please email items for News and Letters to the Editor for publication in future issues to [hattie.butterworth@markallengroup.com](mailto:hattie.butterworth@markallengroup.com), or post to The Editor, Choir & Organ, Mark Allen Group, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK.

DEVAN PAROUCHEV



Organist Olivier Latry

## TOP RECITAL CHOICES

- Merton College, Oxford celebrates 10th anniversary of its Dobson Organ French organist Olivier Latry, of Notre-Dame de Paris, will give a recital to celebrate 10 years of Merton's Dobson Organ on Saturday 20 April at 7:30pm. The programme will include works by Alain, Guilmant, Liszt, Gigout and Vierne.
- On 20 April, International Organ Day, Artistic Director of the St Alban's International Organ Festival David Titterington will play a fundraising concert at the Dutch Church in London at 5:30pm

### Astoria Centre, Yorkshire at 2.30pm

Nicholas Martin BEM (9 Mar)

<https://astoriacentre.co.uk/>

### Bailgate Methodist Church, Lincoln at 12pm

Edward Wellman (7 Mar), Julian Airstrop

(4 Apr), David Paul Oldfield (2 May)

<http://bailgatechurch.org/>

### Birmingham Town Hall at 1pm

Peter Holder (22 Apr), Thomas Trotter

(11, 25 Mar, 13 May)

<https://bmusic.co.uk/>

### Bangor Cathedral, Gwynedd at 11.15am

Paul Carr (14 Mar)

<https://bangorcathedral.churchinwales.org.uk/>

### Blackburn Cathedral, Lancashire at 5pm

John Robinson (3 Mar), Shanna Hart

(10 Mar), Ewa Belmas (13 Mar), Peter

King (17, 20 Mar), John Hosking (24

Mar), Graham Eccles (27 Mar)

<https://blackburncathedral.com/>

### Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London at 4pm

Jeffrey Howard (23 Mar), Colin Walsh

(27 Apr)

<https://www.bloomsbury.org.uk/>

### Christ's Chapel Dulwich, London at 7.45pm

Andrew Benson-Wilson (24 Mar)

<https://www.stbarnabasdulwich.org/christ-s-chapel/>

While every effort is made to provide correct information, readers are strongly advised to telephone the numbers given to confirm details before attending.

[choirandorgan.com](http://choirandorgan.com)

### Chelmsford Cathedral, Essex at 12am

David Hardie (3 May)

<https://www.chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk/>

### Eglwys Dewi Sant, Cardiff at 1.15pm

Paul Carr (12 Apr)

<http://www.eglwysdewisant.org.uk/>

### Gloucester Cathedral at 7.30pm

Jonathan Hope (17 Apr)

<https://gloucestercathedral.org.uk/>

### Leeds Cathedral at 1.15pm

Andreana Chan (11 Mar), Ben Bloor

(25 Mar), Thomas Trotter (4 Apr)

Darius Battiwalla (8 Apr)

<https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/cathedral/>

### Magdalen College Chapel, Oxford at 12am

Koenig Michael (2 Mar), William

Fox (4 Mar), Luke Mitchell (9 Mar),

Alexander Pott (28, 29 Mar, 20, 27 Apr,

4, 11, 18, 25 May)

<https://www.magd.ox.ac.uk/chapel-and-choir/>

### Newcastle Cathedral at 1.05pm

Ewa Belmas (27 May)

<https://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/>

### Peterhouse Chapel, Cambridge at 6pm

Anne Page (2 Mar), Anna Steppler (9 Mar)

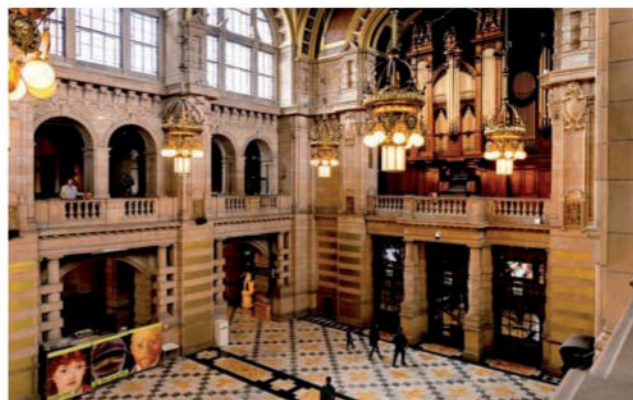
<https://www.pet.cam.ac.uk/chapel>

## VENUE FOCUS

### The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow is a cultural gem that houses an impressive collection of art, artifacts, and exhibits. Among its many treasures, including the currently on-load Salvador Dalí painting *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, the organ at Kelvingrove occupies a prominent place in the main hall of the museum. This grand pipe organ was built by the renowned Scottish organ builder Lewis and Co. and was installed in 1901, commissioned as part of the Glasgow International Exhibition. It serves as a visually striking focal point within the museum's grand entrance, with daily lunchtime organ recitals filling the museum for half an hour, seven days a week.

### ▼ The organ in the centre hall at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum



ADOBE STOCK

### Redland Park URC, Bristol at 11am

Ashley Marshfield (23 Mar), Eric Tyson

(13 Apr)

<https://www.redlandparkurc.org/>

### Royal Festival Hall, London at 2pm

James McVinnie (23 Mar), Iveta

Apkalna (24 Mar)

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/venues/royal-festival-hall>

### St Albans Cathedral at 12.30pm

Thomas Dille (20 Mar), Lucy Morrell

(17 Apr), Tom Winpenny (6 May),

Johannes Skoog (22 May)

<https://www.stalbanscathedral.org/>

### St Bride's Episcopal Church, Central London at 1.15pm

Anthony Gritten (26 Apr)

<https://www.stbrides.com/>

### St Martin-in-the-Fields, London at 1pm

Carolyn Craig (8 Mar)

<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/>

### St Mary's, Quarry Street, Guildford at 1.10pm

Peter Wright (12 Mar), Graham

Barbber (9 Apr), Tim Ravdale (14 May)

<https://www.htsmguildford.org/>

### St Michael's, Whittington at 3pm

Charles Edmonson (9 Apr)

### St Nicolas Church, Newbury at 1.10pm

Chris Totney (14 Mar), Christopher

Sears (11 Apr)

<https://www.st-nics.org/>

### St Paul's Church, Bedford at 12am

Miriam Reveley (13 Apr), Jack McCabe

(27 Apr)

<https://www.stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk/>

### St Peter's Church, Petersfield at 12am

Richard Pearce (20 Mar)

<https://stpeterspetersfield.org.uk/>

### St Thomas' Church, Canterbury at 3pm

Ewa Belmas (16 Mar)

<https://stthomasofcanterbury.com/>

### St Stephen Walbrook, London at 12.30pm

Anthony Gritten (19 Apr)

<https://ststephenwalbrook.net/>

### Symphony Hall, Birmingham at 1pm

Thomas Trotter (8 Apr)

<https://bmusic.co.uk>

### Victoria Hall, Hanley at 12am

Alex Goldsmith (13 Apr), Alexander

Binns (18 May)

### Westminster Abbey, London at 5pm

Anthony Gritten (17 Mar)

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/>

### The Welsh Church of Central London at 1.05pm

James Gough (20 Mar), Andrew Furniss

(17 Apr), Robert Jones (15 May)

<https://www.eglwysgymraeglundain.org/home>

### Worcester Cathedral at 12.15pm

Angela Sones (7 Mar)

<https://www.worcestercathedral.org.uk/>

For fuller listings, visit  
[www.choirandorgan.com](http://www.choirandorgan.com)

\* unless otherwise stated



# David Hill

## *In conversation with ...*



# Dr Felicia Barber

Associate professor of choral conducting at Yale School of Music

**DH: What is your musical background?**

FB: I do come from a very musical family, but none with formal training. My mother was our church pianist, and my sister is currently the organist at my home church in Western New York. My sister has played since she was a teenager and plays brilliantly by ear. My maternal grandfather was a band leader in World War II, composed music and played guitar, clarinet, saxophone, and sang. He died before I was born, but I was told that he was a wonderful jazz musician. He taught my mother both saxophone and clarinet.

My fondest memories of music making are of hearing my mother and aunts sing together at church; I loved it.

**DH: What were you doing from a young age?**

FB: I fell in love with singing. It is funny that I find myself as a professional choral conductor: that was never really part of the plan. The love of singing continued, and I often was selected as a soloist for school events. I also participated in state and regional singing festivals.

I also played clarinet all throughout school and into college, but choir and

singing has always been my first love.

Unfortunately, my school choral programme was affected by budget cuts which led to several choral directors, and no choral only instructor for my last two years of high school.

**DH: Nothing changes it seems! When did you learn the piano?**

FB: Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to begin until I went to college at 18. I'd wanted to learn since I was a child, but I experienced a situation which I shared in a recent presentation on bias and racism in the music classroom. When I was seven, my mum found a piano teacher and I was supposed to be sharing lessons with my friend Jenny Crane. We went there for our first lesson and at the end of it the piano teacher took me into the parlour, away from Jenny, and then she proceeded to tell me she couldn't teach me. I didn't know if I had done something wrong. She said, 'I can't teach you as your hands are too small'. But as soon as I left and reached for Jenny's hand to walk down the street, I realised that it wasn't about the size of my hand but rather the colour of my skin. Our hands were the

same size. That's one of my first memories in which I experienced direct racism. I never took another lesson until I got to college.

**DH: That's truly shocking. Where did you go to college?**

FB: In Oklahoma: My undergraduate degree is from Oral Roberts University in vocal performance. I didn't know what I should major in, I just knew I loved to sing. I didn't have much direction from counsellors about what type of music to major in – no one really guided me. I had been accepted pre-law to Spellman College in Atlanta, GA. But after a visit to ORU and my acceptance to the music programme there (I auditioned without my mother knowing, with a hymn), I enrolled there instead. Whilst there, I had an affinity with music theory and found myself tutoring in theory almost immediately. In my junior year, some of the theory faculty had me working for them!

**DH: It sounds like you knew more about all this than they did!**

FB: Ha ha! I'm not sure about that, but I did really enjoy theory classes. After completing my bachelor's degree, I enrolled in a Master

of Choral Music Education at Mansfield University in PA. As a teaching assistant I taught courses in music theory and appreciation as well as assisting the choirs. My mentor was Dr. Peggy Dettwiler, who was pivotal in my choice to pursue a career in choral music. We are still very close.

**DH: What was involved in the music theory process at university?**

FB: In the US undergraduate collegiate curriculum, we have two years for music theory, and then additional courses in counterpoint, orchestration, and form and analysis. All these classes include ear-training, aural dictation, and analysis, which I loved. In my Masters I continued with theory chorus, and even wrote an analysis treatise on music theory of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben*

which I went on to perform as well in a Master's recital. I was able to explore voice performance, conducting, and my love of theory during my Masters as I tried to figure out next steps for my career.

**DH: Too many interests are a good thing, Felicia!**

FB: Maybe, I am pleased that my first degree was in vocal performance which has allowed me to incorporate vocal pedagogy into my instruction and rehearsal process.

**DH: What next after Mansfield?**

FB: After completing the degree, I began teaching at a high school near Nashville, TN. While there I started an Advanced Placement (AP) music theory course for the county, and also became a national AP theory grader. I also taught music

appreciation, strings (briefly), and three choirs (an auditioned SATB & treble, and non-auditioned SATB ensembles). It was there that a light bulb finally went on, and I knew this is what I was supposed to do with my life.

**DH: I think taking your time to decide is commendable. When did you decide on the next stage of a doctoral programme?**

FB: I felt it was time for a new challenge. I hoped to pursue a degree in Tennessee, but I couldn't find a doctoral programme that fitted. Three years earlier, I attended a conference with Dr. André Thomas of FSU and thought, 'If I ever go back to school, I would like to work with him'. That led me to apply to Florida State, which not only had Dr. Thomas as the director

▼ Associate professor of choral conducting at Yale School of Music, Dr Felicia Barber also conducts the Yale Camerata



DAVID RIED





▲ Felicia Barber: 'I've seen a collective shift in the US within the last decade'

◀ of the programme, but also offered a dual emphasis in music education and conducting, which was a great fit for me. I was accepted and became the first Black female to go through that degree programme.

**DH: Is André your main mentor in choral conducting?**

FB: Yes, along with Dr. Judy Bowers also at Florida State and Dr. Peggy Dettwiler from my Masters degree. I really appreciate how committed Dr. Thomas is in mentoring his students even beyond their time with him at the university. He continues to encourage and mentor even beyond the degree, which is why he is so admired and appreciated by all of us.

**DH: He was with us in Yale during Covid and was deeply impressive for the reasons explained. What after Florida State?**

FB: Yale is only my third post. Before it I taught at Westfield State University in Massachusetts where I was director of choral activities and instructed undergraduates in basic and choral conducting as well as choral pedagogy. I also taught for five summers at Gordon College in the Boston area for their summer Masters programme, courses in conducting and pedagogy.

**DH: You must know more than anyone that being Black, a female and entering the conducting world, how difficult it is to be recognised, how do you think things are shaping up currently?**

FB: It can be difficult to break into the field, I've seen a collective shift in the US within the last decade. Many professional organisations have started to recognise the racism and bias that we have known and experienced our entire lives but were never actually talked about in that space. For example, I have been involved in the American Choral Directors' Association (ACDA) my entire professional life: they established a national diversity committee in 2017. We met at the national convention and had realistic and meaningful discussions about a wide range of topics. It continues to be real progress.

When I started in the early 2000s, as a young teacher, I remember reaching out for mentorship in my first year or two and being completely rejected. When I got to Florida State, and saw myself represented, I cannot describe the profound impact of that experience (referencing André Thomas). I think we are heading in a good direction with more people of colour (BIPOC) successfully breaking into the field.

## My fondest memories of music making are of hearing my mother and aunts sing together

**DH: We are colleagues at the Institute of Sacred Music in Yale: can you tell us something about your role?**

FB: It's been interesting after my first year in Yale how many people of colour (at Yale as well as across the country) have approached me, so appreciative of my presence and work at the university. The feedback I have received has made it clear that my appointment at Yale has made a meaningful impact on others in the field (especially in the BIPOC community).

My primary role in Yale is to teach conducting to secondary conductors, create new courses emphasising choral pedagogy, and conducting Yale Camerata. New to Yale is the part of my position that involves education initiatives. So, the new classes that emphasise choral pedagogy, including African American Choral Literature and an Advanced Choral Pedagogy. In addition, I have been developing professional

development sessions for teachers in the New Haven public schools. During my first year, we had four major sessions together and more are being planned.

**DH: A central pillar of your work in Yale is being Director of Yale Camerata: can you tell us about that?**

FB: Yes! It's called a town and gown chorus, and I love that it is multi-generational and, especially this year, how diverse it is. Currently our youngest singer is 17 and we also have members in their 70s. Yale undergraduates, graduates, and area high school students and their teachers are also involved. It's been a delight to see all this emerge. We saw over 150 people audition this year, which has been wonderful. The choir is currently made up of around 75 singers and I am thrilled Camerata really represents our community in Yale.

**DH: Such a positive story! Finally, are there composers or works you would find it difficult to live without?**

FB: My first love or passion is Gospel music, because it's what my mother played in the house – the only thing! I also adore jazz – Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Nina Simone are some of my favorite jazz musicians.

How can I not mention spirituals – having just written a book about them! In that genre, works by William Dawson, Jester Hairston, and Undine Moore. Other favorite African American composers include Nathaniel Dett, Florence Price, and Margaret Bonds. I love classical music as well, Mozart, Beethoven, but especially Chopin, Faure, and Debussy – I'm a bit of a romantic!

**DH: Well, that is a great example of advocating the idea that all music is important, and we should all open our ears even more widely. Thanks for such an interesting conversation, Felicia. ■**

*David Hill is musical director of the Bach Choir and Leeds Philharmonic Society, principal conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum, and associate guest conductor of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra*



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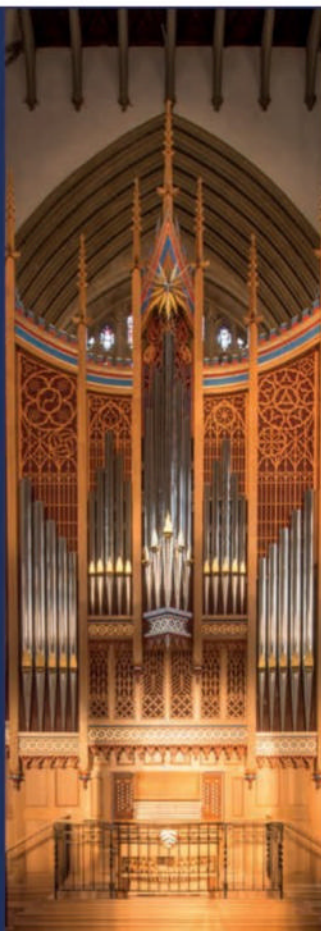
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Andrew Carwood

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Choir of Merton College  
Benjamin Nicholas

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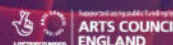
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# Undiscovered treasures

As we mark the centenary of Charles Villiers Stanford's death, **Jeremy Dibble** explores the choral music and the lesser-known works which have seen recent revival and recording

Today we quite rightly venerate the church music of Charles Villiers Stanford. It is without doubt among the most original liturgical creations of its era, and in conceptual terms, surely surpasses even the great motets of Brahms, Bruckner, Cornelius and Reger in its sheer brilliance of symphonicism, formal dexterity and functionality. Yet we have still to discover Stanford's extraordinary versatility as a composer of choral music for the concert hall and choral festival. Looking beyond those works which have established themselves in the repertoire, works engendered by a life of choral training and conducting, fostered in the Dublin cathedrals of Christ Church and St Patrick's, but lived out to the full through the agencies of Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge, the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS), the Royal College of Music, the London Bach Choir, the Leeds Philharmonic and the Leeds Triennial Festival.

setting of Bishop Heber's poem *The Lord of Might* Op 83, commissioned by the 1903 Festival of the Sons of the Clergy. Styled a 'motet', perhaps owing to its neo-Baroque allusions. This work deserves to be sung more often but is only available in the form of Novello's published vocal score. By comparison, however, *Song to the Soul*, a fusion of two of Stanford's settings of Walt Whitman's poetry Op 97 for chorus and orchestra ('Darest thou now, O Soul' and 'Joy, shipmate, joy!'), and a work the composer deeply valued, was to suffer a more luckless fate. Composed with an eye on an American east-coast tour and a performance at the Norfolk Festival in Connecticut, it was turned down (probably for practical reasons), shelved and remained unperformed at Stanford's death.

*Song to the Soul* is a fine example of the sheer variety of Stanford's shorter choral works which begins with the early but highly uplifting setting of Klopstock's

## Stanford's two oratorios, both written for Birmingham, are now ripe for rediscovery

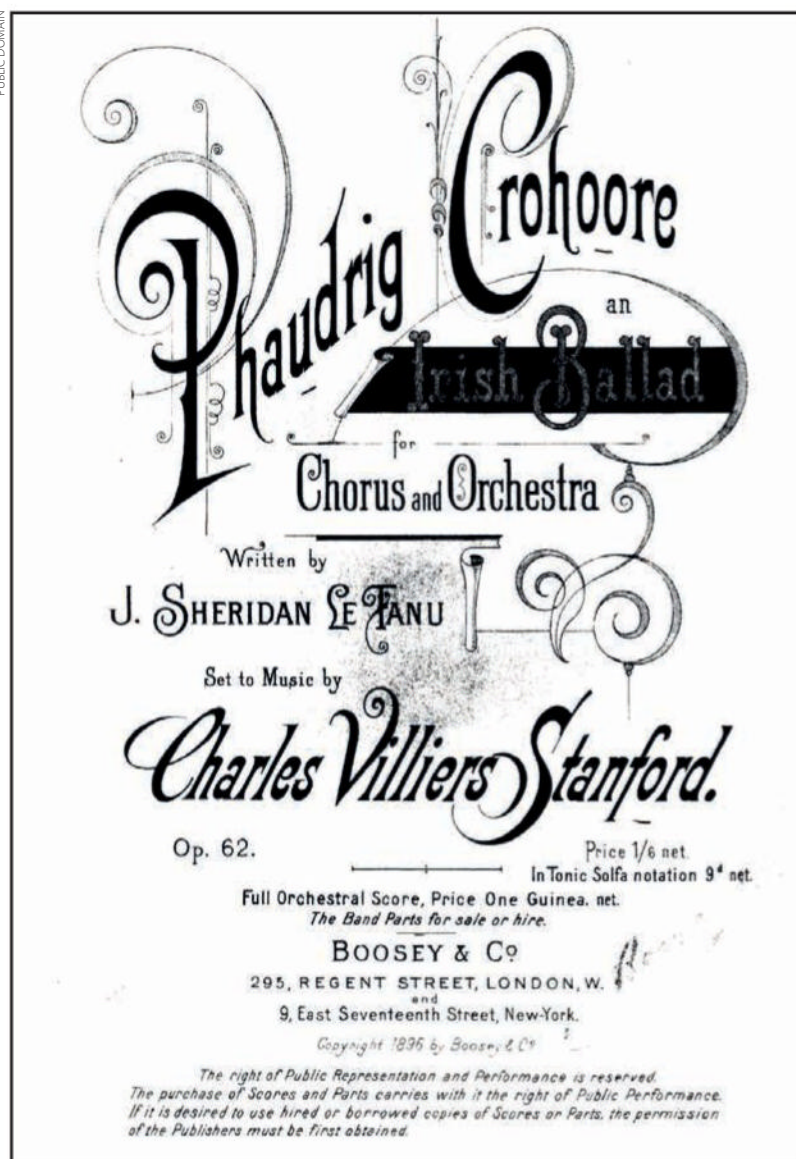
Almost certainly Stanford's two most popular choral works today are his two cycles of five orchestral songs with words by Henry Newbolt, *The Songs of the Sea*, (the first of which, 'Drake's Drum', has become a classic) and its sequel, and arguably more profound, *The Songs of the Fleet*. Both were written for Stanford's friend and Irish compatriot, Harry Plunket Greene, and the Leeds Festival where Stanford was artistic director between 1901 and 1910. These two five-song cycles are most frequently performed separately, but they can be performed together, particularly since the final song of *Songs of the Fleet*, 'Fare Well', a most affecting 'Envoi', makes reference in its dramatic coda, to the last song, 'The Old Superb', of *Songs of the Sea*. Stanford's partiality to Britain's naval heritage is also evident in his setting of Tennyson's *The Revenge* (1886). This was immensely popular during Stanford's lifetime, not only because of its patriotic spirit, but because it used a narrative model for chorus and orchestra where the swash-buckling 'story' was conveyed by the voices and the drama (often, and in keeping with Stanford's theatrical leanings, operatic in demeanour) by the orchestra. A second setting, of Thomas Campbell's *The Battle of the Baltic* (1891), used the same narrative template, but was less successful. On the other, *Phauidrig Crohoore* (1895), a further narrative, this time in the form of an 'Irish Ballad', enjoyed a vogue in the 1890s with its characteristic Hiberno-English (in a libretto provided by Sheridan Le Fanu, known for his chilling ghost stories and horror fiction) at the same time as Stanford's enormous operatic success with *Shamus O'Brien* (1896).

The eminently pragmatic, choro-centric dimension of *The Revenge* (which obviated the expense of soloists) did not, however, extend to the much neglected

'Osterlied' (which Mahler later used in his Second Symphony), published as *The Resurrection* (or *Die Auferstehung*), written when he was a private student in Leipzig in 1874 and revised in 1876. Others include his entertaining *Cavalier Songs* Op 17, settings of Browning's poems for baritone and male-voice choir, *O Praise the Lord of Heaven* Op 27, a *pièce d'occasion* written for the Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester in 1887 (the full score is lost), *East to West* Op 52, written for the Chicago Exhibition of 1893 with words by Swinburne, and *The Last Post* Op 75, composed during the Boer War to a poem by W. E. Henley and containing parts for bugles. Of a similar commemorative nature (and based on a comparable ternary march structure of great solemnity) is the unique *At the Abbey Gate* Op 177, inspired by the interment of the Unknown Warrior in October 1920. Here the outer sections of the march are consigned to the orchestra alone, leaving the dialogue for chorus and soloist to be enacted in the extended central 'trio'. As a counterbalance to the male-orientated scoring of the *Songs of the Sea* and the *Cavalier Songs*, the three ravishing 'idylls' of *Fairy Day* Op 131 (1913) were conceived for female chorus and small orchestra. Dedicated to Victor Harris and the St Cecilia Society of New York, the triptych of miniatures using words by another compatriot Irishman, William Allingham, shows Stanford at his most pointillistic in terms of its delicate orchestral garb and vocal scoring.

The innate symphonic mindset and sense of diversity which instinctively inhabits Stanford's shorter choral works can also be observed with equivalent panache in his large-scale canvases. His two oratorios, both written for Birmingham, are now ripe for rediscovery. ►





▲ Cover of Stanford's choral work *Phaudrig Crohoore*, composed in 1896

◀ *The Three Holy Children* Op 22 (1885), taken from the Book of Daniel and Psalm 148, recounts the biblical epic of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as they are saved from the 'burning fiery furnace'. A powerful drama, heard by the young Elgar (and which appears potentially to have influenced his own oratorios, not least *The Dream of Gerontius*), has all the ingredients of an *opéra-manquée*. Entirely different in content and more ambitious in concept, *Eden* Op 40 (1891), is more original in its combination of modality and advanced harmony. Based on a bespoke libretto by Robert Bridges (who drew inspiration from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*), it has been entirely neglected, yet it occupies a vital position in the evolution of pre-Elgarian experimental British oratorical forms, not least in the vivid role of the orchestra and the large array of soloists.

The Wagnerian aspect of both of Stanford's oratorios – primed by the staging of his two operas in Hanover in

1881 (*The Veiled Prophet*) and Hamburg (*Savonarola*) in 1884 – was anticipated in the pioneering setting of Whitman's burial hymn for President Lincoln (it predates by some way the more famous settings of Whitman by Delius, Vaughan Williams, Charles Wood, Holst, Hartly and Bliss). Recently recorded for the first time by the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, under Adrian Partington, the *Elegiac Ode* Op 21 (1884), a passionate four-movement essay written for the Norwich Festival, has all the properties of a symphony in the cyclic integration of its first movement and finale, the latter of which remains one of the composer's most impressive epilogues, as well as its 'dance' for solo soprano and hot-blooded, almost 'Tristanesque', outpouring for solo baritone. Whitman was one potent source of poetical stimulation for Stanford; another was his beloved Tennyson who not only prompted the creation of *The Revenge* but also *The Voyage of Maeldune* Op 34 (1889), an extended ballad also performed at Leeds. Essentially a choral 'odyssey' and loosely founded on the Irish 11th-century Romance, it depicts the adventures of the central character, the wandering chieftain (played by an 'heroic' tenor), and his visits to strange exotic islands. In this context the chorus take on an exciting range of roles, from Greek-style reflection to characterful *turba* ('crowd'), though as with so many Stanford choral works, it incorporates a stunning interlude for orchestra, this time in the guise of a scherzo (to rival that of Berlioz's 'Queen Mab').

Three of Stanford's major choral works, all conceived for chorus, orchestra and four soloists, require less introduction. His *Requiem* Op 63, performed at Birmingham in 1897, lately issued in a superb recording, ranks among his greatest achievements. Dedicated to the memory of his friend, the painter Lord Leighton, its conspicuously, Italianate countenance (though more sober than the 'blood and thunder' of Verdi who greatly admired Stanford's work) can be felt in the 'Dies Irae' sequence and the visionary 'Agnus Dei' and 'Lux Aeterna', conceived together as an imposing and deeply moving funeral march.

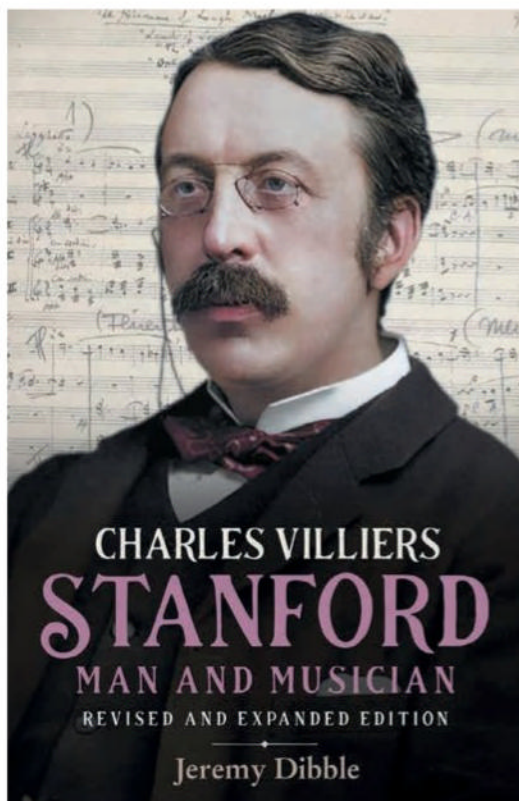
Even more operatic than the *Requiem*, the *Stabat Mater* Op 96, composed for the 1907 Leeds Festival, not only contains some of his most memorable and characteristic material, but its intricate matrix of two purely orchestral movements (an overture and intermezzo) and three vocal paragraphs seems to extend beyond its description as a 'symphonic cantata' into a work that elusively occupies a position between stage and concert hall. Less well known (but also recently recorded by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales) is the *Te Deum* Op 66 (1898). Also written for Leeds, and dedicated to Queen Victoria on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, it was very much a creation perfectly suited to the majestic proportions of the festival's legendary 450 voices, and any choir



willing to explore this challenging score will be thrilled by its sumptuous eight-part textures and the acuity of its choral *savoir faire*. This leaves the much later, and largely unfamiliar setting of the Latin mass, 'Via Victrix' Op 173 of 1919 (not to be confused with the shorter liturgical Mass in G Op 46 commissioned by Thomas Wingham of the Brompton Oratory in 1891), which Stanford never heard in its entirety during his lifetime. Although published in vocal score by Boosey, the lack of orchestral materials nevertheless militated against its performance until its world premiere by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in October 2018.

Recently performed by the enterprising Lincoln Choral Society, 'Via Victrix' stands as a mighty codicil to a rich and rewarding legacy which, like that of Parry's choral output, is now enjoying something of a revival and reassessment. Indeed, as we celebrate the centenary of the composer's death this year, the imperative to explore this treasure trove of highly varied and imaginative choral utterances has never been greater. ■

*Jeremy Dibble is Emeritus Professor of Music at Durham University. A revised and expanded edition of Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician is out on Boydell and Brewer in April*



◀ *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* by Jeremy Dibble

▼ Stanford's *Requiem* was recently recorded by CBSO and the University of Birmingham Voices under conductor Martyn Brabbins





# View from the villages

Organist and YouTuber **Ben Maton** brings a new column, reflecting on his travels and filmmaking capturing rural English churches and their organs. PHOTOS BY BEN MATON

**O**rganists, unlike other musicians, rarely own their own instrument. If they do, it's usually an electronic version – not the real thing!

When I started learning the organ, aged 15, this was a real hindrance for me. Churches are cold and damp and practice unpleasant. Only when I started rambling around local villages, filming blogs for my YouTube channel *Ben Maton – The Salisbury Organist*, did I realise the true value of playing the organ. Organs are quirky, dusty, noisy, unpredictable. The music they produce is, however, a perfect accompaniment to the rich beauty of the English countryside.

Last week, my travels took me to Bowerchalke, a village half-way between Salisbury and Shaftesbury (the *Shaston* of Hardy's *Wessex*). Equipped with microphone, camera and a backpack full of sheet music, I navigated stiles and footpaths as I descended

the valley towards the elegant 13th-century church, the clock face glinting in the February sun. Everything is caught on camera, from tiny airborne insects in the foreground to the gently undulating hills on the horizon.

Fields and hedgerows are the perfect filming environment. Natural light makes for wonderful video clarity and as I am alone, I'm free to describe my surroundings without distraction. Birdsong fills the air as I advance across uneven ground, wondering all the while about the kind of instrument that awaits.

Today was a fine, mild day, and when I crossed my final stile on to church road, the glorious majesty of the ancient building appeared before me. After meandering around graves I spotted the final resting place of William Golding. The characters in *Lord of the Flies* were no doubt inspired by the boys at my old school, Bishop Wordsworth's, where Golding was schoolmaster, and it

was a joy to share his peaceful spot with viewers worldwide.

Next: the church. Stepping through the gloom of the porch, to the sound of the gently ticking clock, I enter the silent nave. Haunting, tranquil and moving. Switching on an unfamiliar organ is always a delight. The familiar clunk of the stops, the charm of the heavy mechanical action and feel of the pedals. Testing out the sounds, improvising, all the while the birds singing cheerfully outside and the sunlight casting rays through the chancel windows.

I play *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, interspersed with footage of the well-worn Bowerchalke footpaths, and then *I Vow to Thee My Country*, taking viewers on an immersive tour of this small but imposing space, bringing the music to a *crescendo* as they read the names of men from the parish who fell in the Great War, remembered on the north wall of the church.

The pipe organ is ultimately a religious instrument. Its warm, rich tones are most powerful when we think of the near 1,000 years that this building has served its community, and of the many hundreds of events, marking life, death and marriage, which have taken place here. It is remarkable that such an instrument should sing so proudly after 150 years of service.

You can watch my video by tapping 'Playing the organ at one of England's Prettiest Villages' into the YouTube search bar. I have been filming one blog per week. Each church has its own story to tell, each organ its own distinctive sound. I hope that my travels provide comfort to those unable to experience these places themselves, and give a flavour of the wonderful village life that exists in rural England. Most of all, I want to share my love for an instrument which, for all its creaks and groans, is in perfect harmony with nature. ■





## Inside Bowerchalke Church



▲ Haunting, tranquil and moving, the nave of Bowerchalke church

▼ Each organ has its own distinctive sound



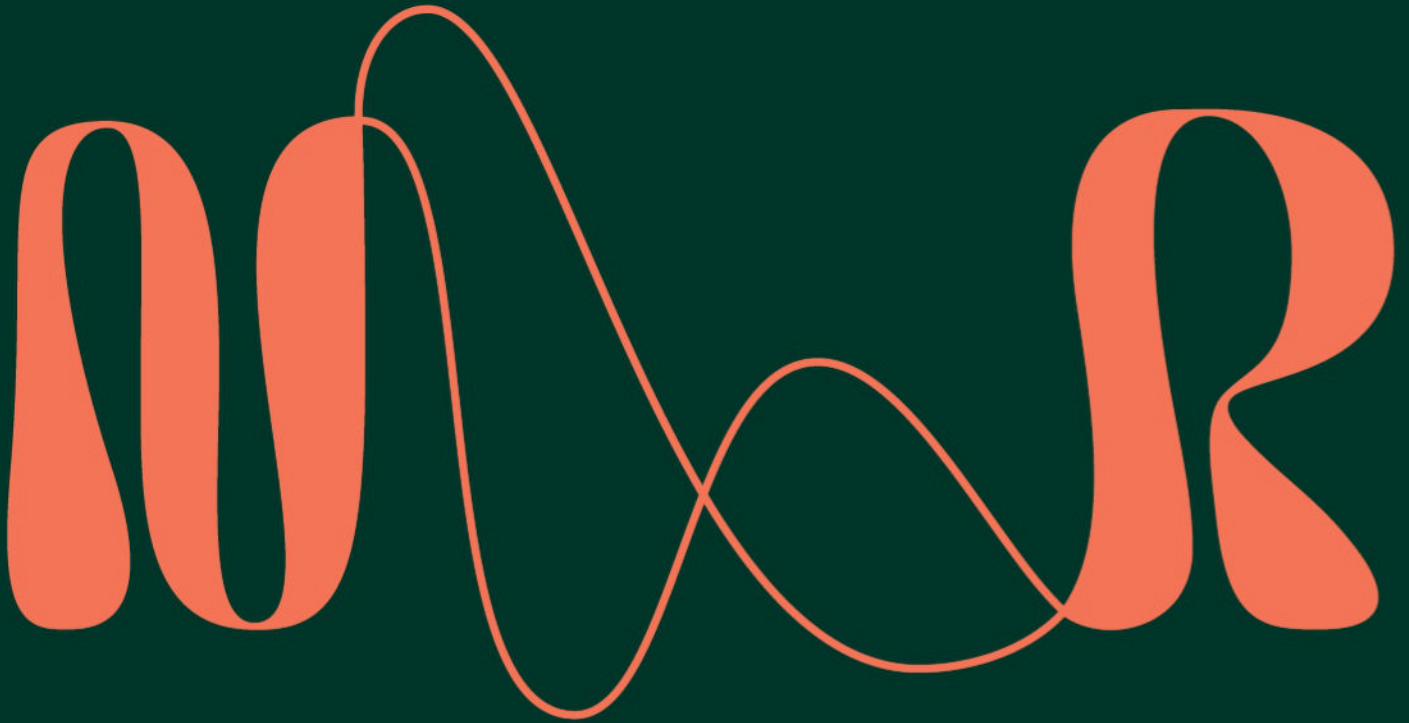
▼ The church's pipe organ



**'The pipe organ is ultimately a religious instrument. Its warm, rich tones are most powerful when we think of the near 1,000 years that this building has served its community'**



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# Changing of the guard

**Chris Bragg** meets **Sander Booij**, one of the most gifted Dutch organ builders of his generation, as he takes over the leadership of one of the country's most venerable workshops



‘**T**he careers advisor came to school and asked me what I wanted to become. When I told him that I wanted to be an organ builder he wasn’t exactly enthusiastic.’

I’m sitting with Sander Booij, one of the most gifted representatives of the new generation of organ builders and ideas in the Netherlands. Our conversation wanders widely; Booij, amicable and intense, is exceptional company. His encyclopaedic knowledge of and extensive direct contact with historic organ building feeds, as is often the case with Dutch builders, strong ideas about sound aesthetics, restoration practices and the interface between the creation of instruments and the making of music.

Now in his mid-thirties, Booij already has more than 20 years of experience to call on. Despite the misgivings of his careers advisor, while still at high school he undertook a traineeship with Klop and later, as part of a qualification in furniture making in Amsterdam, an internship with Flentrop. ‘They were restoring the [1916] Oscar Walcker organ at Doesburg,’ recalls Booij. ‘I was involved in the removing and re-making of the pneumatic motors.’ At 17, he set himself up in business as an independent organ builder with a focus on tuning, maintenance, (re-)voicing, pipework repair and restoration, as well as the rehousing of redundant instruments. The business, which since 2018 has operated in close collaboration with ex-Van Eeken craftsman Martin Butter, remained active alongside Booij’s work for other builders

◀ Sander Booij at Kollumerzwaag ▶

CHRIS BRAGG





◀ The 1960 Mense Ruiter organ in the Koningskerk in Amsterdam

◀ including Adema and Steendam, and freelance work on behalf of builders including Mense Ruiter and even the UK-based Drake (on-site voicing work on the Swell at Chelsea Old Church). Although not professionally trained as a musician, Booij is also one of the most gifted organists one is likely to encounter among the organ-building fraternity, able to improvise complex chorale fantasias in the North German style with extraordinary flair, somewhat in the spirit of Sietze de Vries. He was one of the organists of the Grote Kerk in Wijk bij Duurstede, where he and his colleagues were responsible for leading the outstanding restoration and rehoming of the 1883 Harrison & Harrison organ from St Peter's, Bishop Auckland, where it provides a noteworthy counterpoint to the church's esteemed 1617 meantone organ by Albert Kiespenning [*C&O* Nov 2022, pp.19-22].

## Booij has succeeded in creating an organ full of tonal interest

In 2020, Booij was appointed managing director of the Groningen workshop of Mense Ruiter, now located in the village of Ten Post. This company was founded by Ruiter (1908-93) in 1931, initially undertaking maintenance of existing instruments. During the 1940s, restoration projects were added to the portfolio and new organs were built from the 1950s onwards. Like their better-known Dutch contemporaries, these initial organs followed the dogmas of the era, largely determined by the Lambert Ern -led organ committee of the Dutch Reformed Church. Nevertheless, Ruiter was sufficiently headstrong to create organs which, while largely based on the Dutch/Danish organ-type, quickly absorbed elements of the historic organs of the north-east and which were a little less sharp in character. The 8ft Trompet, so often absent from the pedal departments of neo-Baroque organs, was, more often than not, present and correct.

A particularly fine example of the firm's work is found in the 1950s Van der Kuilen/Trappenburg-designed Koningskerk in Amsterdam. In an imposing brutalist

### Grutte Tsjerke, Kollumerzwaag, Friesland, Netherlands

MENSE RUITER ORGELMAKERS (1979)

RENOVATED AND REVOICED BY MENSE RUITER / SANDER BOOIJ (2021)

<b>HOOFDWERK</b>		Woudfluit	2
<i>C-f<sup>3</sup>, 54 notes</i>		Cornet	III
Prestant	8	Scherp	III-IV
<i>(C-F#: transmission from Pedaal)</i>		Dulciaan	8
Roerfluit	8		
Octaaf	4	<b>PEDAAL</b>	
Speelfluit	4	<i>C-d<sup>1</sup>, 27 notes</i>	
Spitsquint	3	Bourdon	16
Octaaf	2	Prestant	8
Mixtuur	IV-V	Bazuin	16
Trompet	8	Trompet	8
<b>RUGPOSITIEF</b>		<i>Tremulant</i>	
<i>C-f<sup>3</sup>, 54 notes</i>		<i>Coupler manual</i>	
Holpijp	8	<i>Hoofdwerk to Pedaal</i>	
Prestant ( <i>middle c</i> )	8	<i>Rugpositief to Pedaal</i>	
Prestant	4	<i>Tuning: Young II</i>	

structure, Ruiter had sufficient freedom to design the unusually convincing ensemble of modernist cases himself. This instrument has just been overhauled, with changes made to the sound of the flues in the early 1990s largely reversed. 'The sound was made milder by my predecessor Jan Veldkamp at the request of the organist,' says Booi. 'The flutes had had their cut-ups increased and some small nicking applied to the languids. I removed all the nicking (it was easy enough to see which was original and which wasn't). In addition, I increased the toe openings a little to compensate for the cut-ups. The entire sound was revisited in minute detail. When Mense Ruiter was voicing the organ originally, he spent months perfecting the sound on-site and you could still hear this "in the distance", as it were. We tried to bring this "perfection" back to the sound. We also re-introduced the silenced ranks in the Mixtuur and Scherp. Neo-Baroque organs often don't become more beautiful when the sound is softened...'

On Ruiter's retirement in 1974, Jan Holthuis took over the leadership of the business, from 1980 onwards alongside Jan Veldkamp. Like those of their peers, the organs, both visually and musically, became more historically aware; by 1981, the workshop was able to deliver a new organ (II/23) to 'De Kandelaar' in Assen, housed in a spectacular pair of richly-carved cases, the antithesis of the Amsterdam organ's visual starkness. The historic influences developed further under the leadership, from 1990, of Dolf Tamminga.

A project undertaken early in Booi's tenure has been the renovation of a Ruiter organ built in 1979 for the mid-1920s brick church in Kollumerzwaag (Friesland) and including a considerable body of 1950s pipework which Ruiter had added to its undistinguished Dekker pneumatic predecessor. The organ is located high above the pulpit on the east wall. 'They wanted to build a Baroque organ but without the knowledge and the techniques to achieve it,' notes Booi. Remarkably, when the builder's good intentions saw the provision of a stack of three wedge bellows, located adjacent to the instrument, the congregation complained, and they were promptly replaced with an internal single reservoir, out of sight and out of mind.

The present renovation was primarily intended to overhaul an organ which, after 40 years, was showing its age and still had to

accompany the singing of 150-200 people each Sunday. The organ was cleaned, tuning damage repaired and the keyboards restored. A recent church restoration, the ideal conditions for tonal work resulting from the Covid restrictions and the absence of a consultant, permitted seven weeks of re-voicing, however, and Booi has taken the opportunity to maximise the organ's potential within the present technical limitations. 'When the organ was built, there was no voicer involved; the pipes were all pre-voiced by Stinkens. Later, Jan Veldkamp was engaged and made some changes. There was a lot of nicking; I have tried to remove as much as I can, with the exception of some of the larger pipes.' The

narrow-scaled 1950s 3ft Spitsquint on the Hoofdwerk is a case in point; in addition to the removal of the nicking, certain cut-ups have been enlarged, and the languids raised to slow speech and to encourage overtones. It is now a lively, chameleon-like stop, binding the plenum, colouring the Trompet or taking on the role of soloist. The raising of the languids and the opening of the toes has been applied consistently across the fluework. The Pedaal Bourdon, made of copper, now sounds far broader and can be used for the first time with the 8ft Prestant alone, its cut-ups similarly raised. The interventions to the reeds have been even more drastic. The Hoofdwerk Trompet, for example, has had several of its tongues

▼ The 1979 Mense Ruiter organ in Kollumerzwaag, overhauled and revoiced in 2021

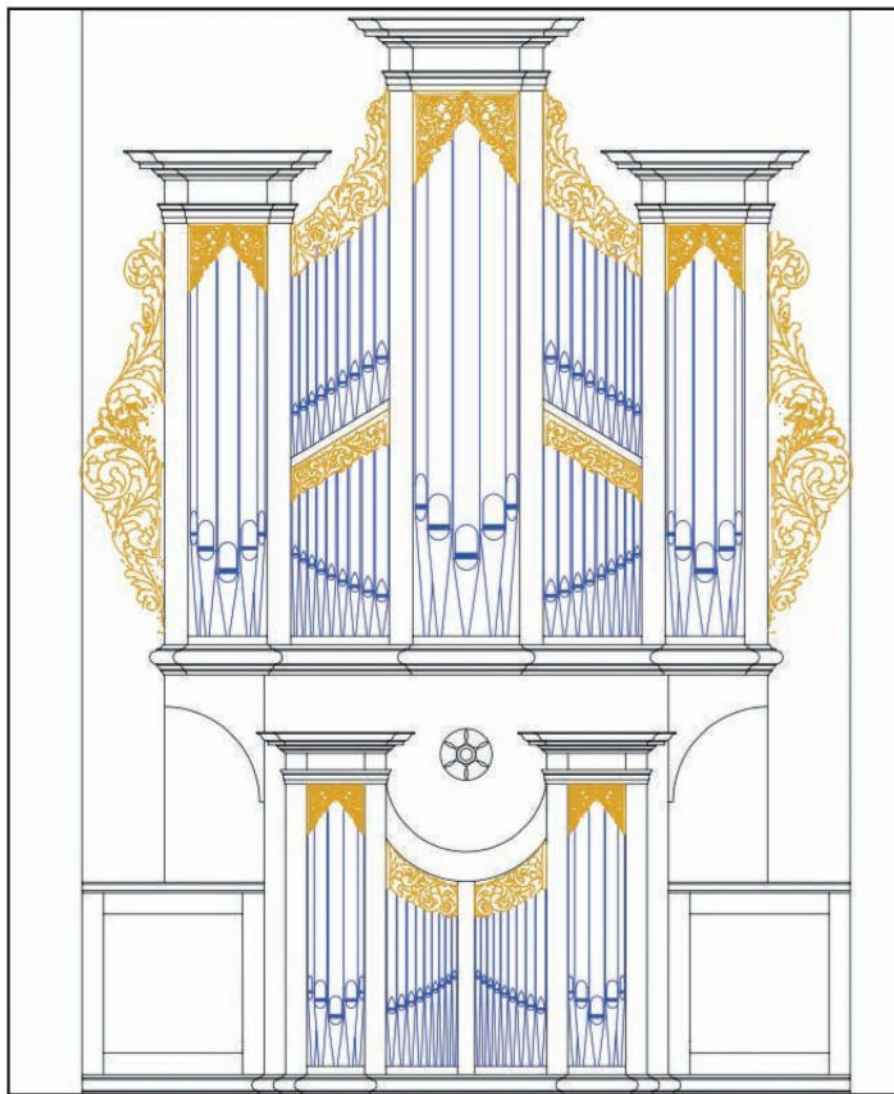


CHRIS BRACK



CHRIS BRACK





▲ Inspired by the work of Johannes Vollebregt, the new Ruiter organ in Renswoude is due for completion during 2024

replaced with thicker examples and the trebles have been made stronger. The Dulciaan has had its shallots transposed and the tongue curvature changed throughout the compass. For this to occur, the tongues were first annealed to improve their pliability; a process used on many of the reed tongues elsewhere in the organ. In the Pedaal, several tongues were replaced with thicker ones, the shallots have been flattened and leather added in the North German manner in the upper part of the compass. The Trompet was a later addition and has now been revoiced, emerging warm, muffled and elegant.

In conjunction with improved acoustics brought about by a new, polished stone floor, Booijs has succeeded in creating an organ full of tonal interest. The choruses are lively and slightly scratchy while wholly coalescent,

the flutes likewise, with transient both present and pleasant; further evidence of the changing perceptions of the sound of historic and historically influenced flue choruses I have noted in several previous articles. The reeds are round, dark and fundamental-oriented, the Hoofdwerk Trompet and Pedaal Bazuin more Renaissance than high Baroque. Booijs' work in Kollumerzwaag is a notable achievement in the context of an organ built during an intermediate phase of Dutch organ building generally, and further compromised by the large quantity of earlier pipework of only moderate distinction. Indeed, even the cases, limited by the church's height, in some way represent the crossroads of ideas; the Rugwerk with its obvious Hanseatic Renaissance flavour, the main case more obscure in its references, the Pedaal towers

notwithstanding. The absence of a manual 16ft stop in an organ intended primarily for congregational singing further marks the instrument out as a child of its time. Nevertheless, the Mixtuur of the Hoofdwerk originally included a 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>ft quint which has now been silenced.

Meanwhile, the first new organ to emanate from the Booijs-led Ruiter workshop is well underway. Its predecessor in the Utrecht village of Renswoude was undistinguished, but it contained a body of older pipework from previous instruments which demanded attention, not least because it clearly exhibited Southern influences. Extensive research has established a number of 18th-century stops from an unknown maker, alongside beautiful 19th-century material, most likely by Johannes Vollebregt (1793-1872). Vollebregt was active primarily in Den Bosch and built technically traditional organs for the Catholic market in North Brabant (and further afield). Study of other Vollebregt organs has provided pointers for scaling, case and console design. The organ is due to be completed during 2024. As is often the case today with smaller builders in the Netherlands (Ruiter currently has six employees), ongoing collaborations are a feature of the workshop's modus operandi, whether with pipe maker Stinkens, where Wijk bij Duurstede colleague Pim Schipper is a pipe maker and voicer, or with the Van Rossum organ-building workshop.

The changing of the guard at one of the Netherlands' long-established, if less fashionable, workshops, located in the 'organ garden of Europe' as Groningen province is known, is intriguing, even in this challenging time for organ building generally. Such is Booijs' hunger for knowledge about organs of all sorts, the extent of his pre-occupation with questions of sound and the startling results of his voicing work so far, one would be unwise to ignore his and the Mense Ruiter workshop's projects in the coming years. ■

Sander Booijs is featured in GOArt's YouTube video series 'Organ Hunting in the Netherlands': <http://tinyurl.com/Organ-Hunting>

Chris Bragg studied organ at the former RSAMD and the Conservatories of Amsterdam and Utrecht. He is head of programming at the University of St Andrews Music Centre, artistic director of St Andrews Organ Week, and a freelance organist, teacher, writer and translator



▲ The 1950 casework (viewed from the west), arguably the finest of its type, is invigorated with freshly gilded pipework

# A subtle symbiosis

The much anticipated rebuild, by Harrison & Harrison, at Norwich Cathedral merges new pipework into a restored tonal palette with brilliance. **Stephen Farr** assesses the results

PHOTOS DANIEL ROSE-JONES/HARRISON & HARRISON/NORWICH CATHEDRAL

Over the course of the 20th century, the organ of Norwich Cathedral underwent an eye-opening – and for contemporary listeners, probably ear-opening – transformation. From the relatively modest Norman and Beard instrument in position at the turn of the century (around 60 speaking stops, including an Echo division) it had become, after the Hill, Norman and Beard (HNB) rebuild of 1938–42, an instrument of more than 100 stops (the Echo of the 1899 instrument now disconnected). Around half of the pipework of this organ was new. By 1970, after further work by HNB, the instrument was essentially two organs, facing in two directions, and arguably attempting to marry two mutually exclusive approaches to tonal design. Facing east was a small two-manual organ

for choral accompaniment purposes, with an enclosed Choir-Swell division and a Baroque-style Positif. Facing west were the Swell and Solo (this latter division further demarcated acoustically by an internal wall inside the case, barring egress of sound towards the choir stalls), two Great divisions (one on the screen and one in the north triforium, the screen Great voiced with a strong tendency towards the neo-Classical and the Primary Great in the triforium leaning more towards the traditional). The whole was completed by a large Pedal division which made generous use of borrowing and extension.

In this incarnation, the instrument presented notable challenges of internal balance and overall cohesion, despite its many rewarding aspects; it was in many ways a

rather baffling organ. Post-1970, the voicing of the newer chorus work (and in places the revoicing of existing stops) sat uneasily with the still substantial amounts of earlier HNB material, and the placing of divisions within the screen case (the notably elegant creation of Stephen Dykes Bower, 1950) resulted in severely limited options for choral accompaniment, which of course remained the main function of the organ. The west-facing divisions of the instrument were of limited usefulness in the eastern half of the building; the east-facing divisions offered too limited a palette of timbre and dynamic range; and the Pedal could overwhelm unless used with extraordinary discretion.

By the end of the 20th century, as the instrument began to show inevitable signs



# Norwich Cathedral

NORMAN & BEARD (1899); WILLIAM HILL & SON AND NORMAN & BEARD (1942, 1950);  
HILL, NORMAN & BEARD (1970); HARRISON & HARRISON LTD (2023)

## CHOIR (*unenclosed*)

† Lieblisch Bourdon	16
† Open Diapason	8
† Viole d'Amour	8
† Rohr Flute	8
† Gemshorn	4
* Open Flute	4
* Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
† Fifteenth	2
* Block Flute	2
* Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
* Larigot	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
* Mixture 15.19.22.26	IV
* Trompette	8
* Cremona	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	
Bass Trumpet ( <i>Grand</i> )	16
Tromba ( <i>Grand</i> )	8
Clarion ( <i>Grand</i> )	4
<i>Choir &amp; Great Exchange</i>	

## GREAT (*Screen*)

† Double Geigen	16
* Open Diapason I	8
* Open Diapason II	8
† Stopped Diapason	8
* Octave	4
* Principal	4
* Wald Flute	4
* Octave Quint	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
* Super Octave	2
* Flautina	2
* Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
* Sharp Mixture 26.29.33	III
† Cornet 1.8.12.15.17 ( <i>tenor g</i> )	V
* Posaune	8
<i>Great on Choir</i>	

## SWELL (*enclosed*)

Bourdon	16
† Open Diapason	8
† Lieblisch Gedackt	8
* Salicional	8
* Voix Céleste ( <i>tenor c</i> )	8
Principal	4
Lieblisch Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
* Sesquialtera 12.17	II
† Mixture 15.19.22.26.29	V

Oboe	8
† Vox Humana	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	
* Double Trumpet	16
* Trumpet	8
Horn	8
* Clarion	4
<i>East Shutters Off / West Shutters Off</i>	

## SOLO (*enclosed*)

Contra Viole ( <i>from Viole d'Orchestre</i> )	16
Viole d'Orchestre	8
Violes Célestes ( <i>2 ranks from tenor c</i> )	8
* Harmonic Flute	8
Octave Viole ( <i>from Viole d'Orchestre</i> )	4
Flauto Traverso	4
Cor Anglais ( <i>tenor c</i> )	16
Orchestral Oboe	8
Clarinet	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	
* French Horn	8
Orchestral Trumpet	
<i>(from Orchestral Trumpet 8)</i>	16
Orchestral Trumpet	8
Orchestral Trumpet	
<i>(from Orchestral Trumpet 8)</i>	4
<i>(unenclosed)</i>	
Tuba Mirabilis	8
Cornet ( <i>Great</i> )	V
<i>East Shutters Off / West Shutters Off</i>	

## GRAND (*Triforium*)

Double Open Diapason	16
Open Diapason I	8
Open Diapason II	8
† Harmonic Clarabella	8
Octave	4
Octave Quint	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Super Octave	2
Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
† Bass Trumpet	16
† Tromba	8
† Clarion	4
† Cymbelstern	
<i>Grand on Choir</i>	

## PEDAL

Double Open Wood	
<i>(from Open Wood II)</i>	32
Open Wood I	16
Open Wood II	16
Open Diapason I	16
Open Diapason II ( <i>Grand</i> )	16
Violone	16
Viole ( <i>Solo</i> )	16
Bourdon	16
Lieblisch Bourdon ( <i>Choir</i> )	16
Dulciana	16
Quint	10 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Octave Wood ( <i>from Open Wood I</i> )	8
Octave ( <i>from Open Diapason I</i> )	8
* Principal	8
Violoncello ( <i>from Violone</i> )	8
Bass Flute ( <i>from Bourdon</i> )	8
* Twelfth	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Super Octave ( <i>from Open Diapason I</i> )	4
* Fifteenth	4
Octave Flute ( <i>from Bourdon</i> )	4
Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
Contra Trombone ( <i>from Trombone</i> )	32
Trombone	16
Bass Trumpet ( <i>Grand</i> )	16
Orchestral Trumpet ( <i>Solo</i> )	16
* Trumpet ( <i>Swell</i> )	16
Clarion ( <i>from Trombone</i> )	8
Octave Clarion ( <i>from Trombone</i> )	4
<i>Pedal Divide</i>	

*Usual couplers plus those described above.  
Stepper, operating general pistons in sequence.  
7,992 general piston memories, and 128  
Divisional piston memories stored in eight  
libraries, each having 999 General and 16  
Divisional memory levels.  
Record and playback system on an iPod.*

\* New stops  
† Revoiced

of age, it became increasingly clear that these issues needed to be addressed if the instrument were to meet adequately the increasingly varied demands placed upon it. The cathedral musicians (Ashley Grote, master of music, and David Dunnett, organist) and consultant Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite developed in consultation with Harrison & Harrison a creative but conservative scheme whose aim was to improve the blend and projection of the whole instrument, while preserving the distinctive HNB timbres which were an important part of its still impressive effect. The H&H team, collectively responsible with other colleagues for the resulting transformation of the organ, should be named at this point: Jim Reeves, team leader; Andrew Hale, head designer; Owen Woods, projects manager; Andrew Scott, pipe scaling; Andrew Fiddes and Daniel Rose-Jones, voicing; James Richardson-Jones, blower refurbishment, wiring and Cymbelstern; Robert Woodland and Debra Miller, gilding.

Judged by the evidence of an evening spent on the instrument at the very end of 2023 (with the integral iPod recording device to assist assessment of the organ's effect in the building) the rebuild has been notably successful in

achieving its aspirations. There have been (*horribile dictu* for some, perhaps) judicious and apposite tonal alterations – of which more later – but these have been conceived in tandem with another fundamental change: namely, the major realignment of the organ's internal layout. The screen Great and Swell soundboards have been turned through 90 degrees; these departments now speak far more clearly in the east of the building and are at last brought into play as fully viable resources for accompaniment. The 'roof' over the screen Great has also been removed (its introduction was perhaps inspired by the tone cabinets of the 1960s, and design aspects of the Royal Festival Hall instrument). Ironically, this roof had the reverse of its intended effect of improving projection of sound; in reality, it prevented the division interacting optimally with the stone vault which runs like a spine along the building. This aspect of the instrument's relationship to its acoustic environment is now greatly enhanced.

The flexibility of both Swell and Solo is much increased by the provision of two sets of shutters for each department (facing west/north and west/east respectively), whose operation can be selected independently



▲ Voicer Andrew Fiddes with the Solo Contra Viole



▼ David Beeby with the 32ft Ophicleide

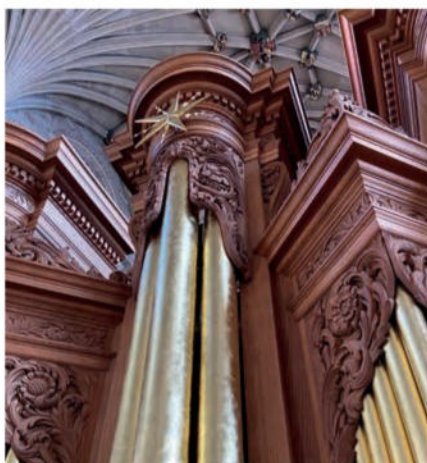
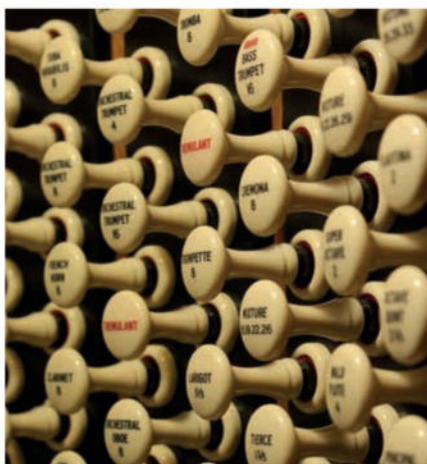
▼ Grand and Pedal pipework in the north triforium



▼ Pedal flue and Solo Tuba pipework looking west







- ▶ The elegant and uncluttered console is more ergonomic than its vast predecessor

◀ by drawstop. This nuance of design creates an additional reflective surface within the case – the non-operative shutters close when the relevant stop is selected – and allows the sound of each to be directed most effectively, opening up possibilities for creative use of the divisions' position within the case. This was demonstrated to fine effect in a recent BBC Singers concert, when Ashley Grote (accompanying the choir on the west side of the screen) used the east Swell shutters rather than the west. This allowed use of full range of the division's dynamics without overwhelming the singers and produced a striking sense of additional space and 'bloom' around the sound.

Turning to matters of tonal design – inevitably more controversial – a substantial part of the builders’ work has been to repair and tidy existing pipework, with new pipework introduced only where existing resources were not viable for reuse. Only the Positif and Secondary Great have been (almost) entirely removed from the instrument. Division by division, the main changes are as follows:

### ◀ The new Cymbelstern star on the west case

**Solo:** the French Horn is new, replacing a famously capricious and much revoiced register. The Harmonic Flute 8 is likewise new, and there has been some revoicing and regulation of soft orchestral reeds.

**Swell:** the Mixture has been recast, and the rather over-assertive Sharp Mixture removed. The Horn and some 8ft fluework has been revoiced; the 16.8.4 chorus reeds, Sesquialtera and strings are new. The Vox Humana has been transferred from the Solo and revoiced for its new position.

**Pedal:** new 8 and 4ft principals and Twelfth, and Mixture partly new, and provided to match the new screen Great chorus; Swell Double Trumpet 16 now available by borrowing.

Grand (previously Primary Great): pipework revoiced, with Harmonic Clarabella 8 added (revoiced Solo Harmonic Flute 8). Cymbelstern revoiced.

**Great (screen):** completely new, with some repurposing of existing pipework (Stopped Diapason taken from old Secondary Great Gedeckt 16, revoiced; Geigen 16 is from old Swell Geigen 16 revoiced; Cornet V existing register, revoiced).

**Choir:** new, except for Lieblich Bourdon 16, Open Diapason 8, Viole d'Amour 8, Gemshorn 4 and Fifteenth 2 (these originate in existing Choir-Swell and Positif pipework, in part revoiced). Great Primary Quint repurposed in part for Rohr Flute 8.

The most far-reaching tonal change is self-evidently in the provision of new screen Great and Choir divisions. These introductions seem on the basis of (a) a brief but thorough test drive, and (b) in-recital experience with their previous equivalents, to be entirely successful. They offer, as a starting point, a wide range of blended and internally balanced chorus combinations, underpinned in archetypal plenum combinations by a Pedal division which allows a wide range of dynamic shading (two enclosed 16ft Pedal reeds do not seem a luxury in this context). The screen Great chorus now speaks clearly and supportively into the choir stalls, while the triforium Grand keeps its assertive – indeed, thrilling – character, but with revoiced reeds whose speech reflects rather less of the county's proud agricultural heritage than was perhaps previously the case. The effect of this division is not confined to the nave: it adds perceptible weight and brilliance to the sound east of the screen as well and the tutti is magnificent in effect. The provision of a substantial flute, which does double duty as

a solo stop of great lyricism to the east of the screen, is an inspired stroke.

The Choir division is an equally welcome newcomer. Mutations and reeds (the Trompette 8 is ideally scaled for the space) allow the mixing of much subtle colour (the Cornet offers a distinctly different timbral experience to the winsome new Swell Sesquialtera, but of equal finesse) and the division speaks into the surprisingly confined choir stalls with what seems to be a perfectly calibrated balance of intimacy and clarity, even when the full chorus is drawn. Harrisons' approach to the marriage of older and newer material is at its most subtle here; the inclusion of the Viole from the previous organ adds characteristic colour to flue combinations, sitting so perfectly within the sonic character of the new pipework it seems they were always together.

It goes without saying that the console design is elegant and uncluttered. It's both amusing and oddly salutary to have a reminder of the epic dimensions of its predecessor, whose outer wooden frame remains in position, and of which the

location of the Swell Clarion drawstop somewhere near Birmingham (or so it used to seem) was such a characteristic feature. Mechanically too, the instrument satisfies; playing actions are crisp and clean, allowing enough rapidity of repetition to make the Duruflé Alain easily manageable, and electrically assisted swell boxes helpfully still offer the essential ergonomic feedback of mechanical systems.

Visually, the instrument is restored to full magnificence, with the regilding of the case pipes in the exquisite proportions of the case especially resplendent. Many regard the 1950 Norwich case as one of the finest of its type; the instrument now housed within it provides a suitable aural foil to that elegance of those proportions, and a musically well-reasoned symbiosis of newer and older approaches. ■

*Stephen Farr is an internationally active recitalist, accompanist and continuo player, with a discography that extends from the 16th to the 21st century. He is director of music at All Saints Margaret Street in London, and chief examiner of the Royal College of Organists*

▼ View from the east: the revised tonal scheme and internal layout allows tonal egress into the cathedral's stone vault like never before





Fraz Ireland

## Glitterball

Both innovative and idiomatic, this new organ piece explores the possibilities of registration and leaves organists to interpret its soundscape. Composer Fraz Ireland talks to **Matthew Power**



▲ Fraz Ireland: treating the audience as the final instrument

Exploring a ‘provocative and jovial relationship with your audience; lurking in the corridors between liminal spaces’ is how Fraz Ireland describes their work. Can we unpack those elements? Ireland recounts their studies at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) alongside an undergraduate degree at the University of Manchester. ‘My dissertation was about the things around the outside of music. Not the sounds that we hear, but all the other bits... The title, the programme notes, the seats we sit on... I was arguing that those paratextual elements are at least as important as the sounds themselves. Alongside that, I couldn’t ignore the importance of the composer’s biography. Who hasn’t sat through a concert, been a bit bored by one of the pieces, and started reading the programme?’ Giving the audience things to do while listening (notes to read, web pages

to click on) is Ireland’s means to consider the relationship between composer and performer in a provocative relationship with the audience. ‘But it’s not provocative in a way that is intended to shock or offend them; it’s more about having fun and welcoming them into the game, including them in the joke.’

A clarinettist to begin with, Ireland was first encouraged to explore their creativity on a residency at South West Music School, which welcomes talented musicians aged eight to 20 and serves a wide geographical area in the south-west of England. Ireland has returned there recently to be part of the team teaching composition for orchestra.

‘While I was studying there I had a mentor, Jon James. Aged about 13, my ambition was to learn every single instrument in the orchestra! Jon wisely advised that that was probably not the best use of my time and that,

instead of learning to play them all, I should learn how to write for them.’ After some initial experiments, Ireland won a place for three years as a composer with the National Youth Orchestra (NYO). ‘That was one of the most important things in my early development; it gave me opportunities to meet other musicians and to write.’

How did composition develop at the RNCM? ‘There was a constant trajectory through those four years of [learning] things that would get passed on to the next piece and the next piece. I was taught by Emily Howard and then by Larry Goves; they offered their own perspectives on my work – I had completely different conversations about the same music with both of them.’ As part of a techniques module, Ireland created a piece that aimed to replicate the sound of a dishwasher: ‘I did some very deep spectral analysis for that! These were exercises, not concert pieces, and were fantastically useful opportunities to explore a wide variety of approaches and compositional styles.’

Ireland was a Britten-Pears Young Artist in 2020. ‘It was during lockdown, in the early days of being completely online, so it felt like a very unknown environment – quite a good place to start getting to know each other and experimenting with new ideas.’ They explored the use of video and how it works with performers and audiences, and their work was workshopped by resident ensemble The House of Bedlam (a collective of four musicians including Larry Goves).

The term ‘composer’ is too restrictive to describe Fraz Ireland. Their website has a whimsical, hand-made quality that reflects the playfulness of their work. We talk more about the specific inclusion of video

alongside musical structures. 'When I use video, it's like another instrument rather than some extra entity.'

The Manchester-based contemporary ensemble Psappha, founded in 1991, was forced to close last November when all of its Arts Council funding was scrapped. *That looks like a good book, what's it called?* for solo piano was composed as part of Psappha's 'composing for...' scheme in 2021. While the pianist plays what might be called a stream-of-consciousness narrative, choosing their own path through a score containing graphics, notation, text and quotation from other music, the audience is invited (if they wish) to follow on-screen programme notes which provide an amusing and often distracting counterpoint. 'Over several months I was able to work with Ben [pianist Benjamin Powell] and explore ways of creating this score. Ben gets to choose which bits he clicks on and goes on a kind of fantasy adventure.'

## 'Any audience is going to have stuff going on in their own minds while they're listening'

... and we would have taken the same route had it not been for the storm last night, for the Eskandari Quartet, was written in 2019 and premiered at Manchester Cathedral. There is an intense linear form to this as it grows out of notes sustained and altered through its duration, increasing in its scope of dynamic and tonal range before reverting to its origin. Ireland's teacher Emily Howard suggested drawing the form of the piece to begin with, an approach also promoted by Anna Meredith at the NYO. Does Ireland see colours and textures, or just ways of visualising what is musical? 'It's not always as simple as how it would appear on a score. I think we often forget how metaphorically we talk about music. If you describe a pitch as high or low, that is a metaphor: it's not actually high or low. You're making an interpretation of how the wavelengths operate.' These metaphors are so familiar to us that we forget that they are metaphors – I realise that is something I do all the time.

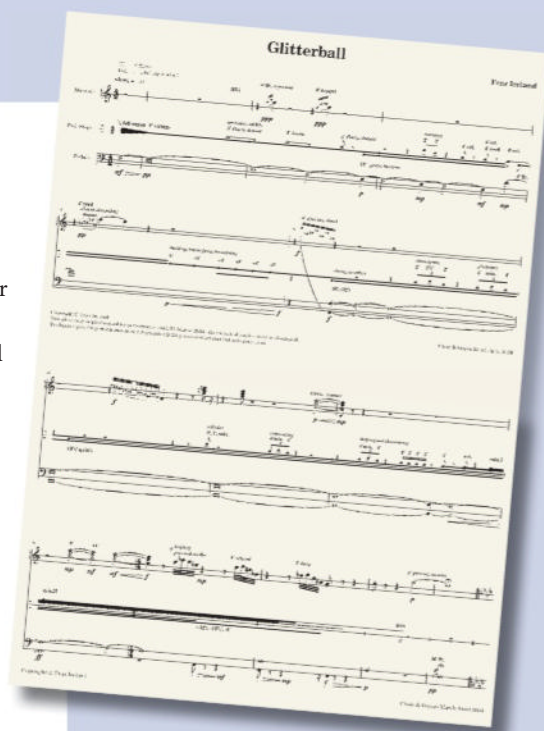
In 2021, Ireland was composer-in-residence for the Centre for Cultural Values Research Conference, producing an experimental and extended work in a

video medium, *4th ought sing raved ink loud | for thoughts engraved in cloud*, which contains, among other elements, audio snippets from audience members leaving after a performance. This palimpsest answer to music creation seems countercultural when viewed through the lens of traditional composition. How can all these elements combine to be less of a distraction from the music and more of an enhancement?

'During the pandemic lockdowns I had really missed the feeling of leaving concerts and talking about the music, and particularly of hearing other people talking about it. I think that's such a nice moment when you get tiny glimpses of other people's thoughts and ideas. You can't avoid the fact that any audience is going to have stuff going on in their own minds while they're watching, while they're listening. If you ignore that, you miss the opportunity to engage with it positively. The audience is the

final instrument that we're writing for... for their own private performance that they get inside their mind.'

Turning to *Glitterball*, Ireland's New Music piece for organ: was this a first foray into writing for the instrument? 'Yes – apart from choral accompaniments... It was great to speak to Nicholas [Morris], who sent me off with some things to listen to. He was really open to whatever I came up with. I knew from the start that I wanted to do something interesting for the feet hence these little canonical bits that pop up, and I wanted to somehow explore the possibilities of registration.' The most unusual element is in the opening section; a separate stave depicting manipulation of the Pedal stops to create a soundscape. 'It might look unfamiliar at first but it shows you what to do and when to do it, just as you would for any instrument. Pulling out stops rather than playing keys is just another way of writing for the hands. And I wanted to leave some freedom over the exact stops so that any organist with any instrument will be able to bring their own interpretation to it; not to micro-manage, but to trust the performer.' ■



**Download your free copy of *Glitterball***  
Visit [www.choirandorgan.com](http://www.choirandorgan.com)  
and click on New Music series

New Music is a series of pieces for choir or organ by talented young composers featured in *Choir & Organ*. Visit our website to:

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- ▶ **WATCH** videos of the choral works being performed by The Marian Consort, and the organ pieces played by Nicholas Morris

*New Music scores are available under licence to be printed free of charge for a period of six months, after which copies must be destroyed as copyright reverts to the composer. See our website for details*

### World premiere

Nicholas Morris will give the premiere of *Glitterball* by Fraz Ireland on 9 April, 1.10pm, at St George's Church, Hanover Square, London W1S 1FX

### Introductory film

Watch the launch of our 2024 New Music series on the New Music page at [choirandorgan.com](http://choirandorgan.com)

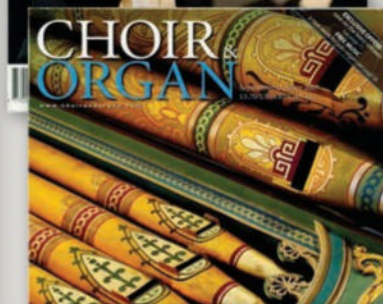
### Our New Music Partners

Throughout 2024, our New Music Partners are The Marian Consort, a UK-based professional vocal ensemble which performs throughout Europe, North America and Asia. With their track record of commissioning imaginative new works, they will record and premiere each of the choral pieces in our series. Nicholas Morris, director of music at Queens' College, Cambridge, and assistant director of music at St George's, Hanover Square, London, will provide first performances and recordings of the organ pieces



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# SUMMER SCHOOLS & FESTIVALS

*All information correct at time of going to press. Please check websites for the latest details.*

## COURSES

### **CORSI DE MUSICA ANTICA E MAGNANO**

15-24 Aug, Magnano, Italy  
Tutors: Albert Muehlboeck (clavichord, fortepiano), Eva Kiss (voice), Georges Kiss (harpsichord), Silva Manfré (organ and basso continuo), Anastase Démétriades (recorder).  
Offering specialisation to trained musicians and to introduce younger musicians to the study and interpretation of early music.  
[MusicaAnticaMagnano.com](http://MusicaAnticaMagnano.com)

### **CREATIVE OUNDLE FOR ORGANISTS SUMMER SCHOOL**

19-25 Jul, Oundle, UK  
Director: Ann Elise Smoot.  
Instruction in repertoire, keyboard skills, hymn-playing, and a chance to try conducting.  
**Contact** Yvette Murphy, [creativeoundle.co.uk](http://creativeoundle.co.uk)

### **JENNIFER BATE ORGAN ACADEMY**

2-6 Apr, St Catherine's School, Bramley, UK  
A fully-catered residential course

for women organists aged 13-21. Masterclasses and opportunities to work on repertoire as well as choral conducting, service accompaniment, improvisation, continuo and concerto performances.  
**Contact** Matthew Greenfield (director) [stcatherines.info/jboa](mailto:stcatherines.info/jboa)

### **OREGON BACH FESTIVAL ORGAN INSTITUTE**

8-13 Jul, Eugene, Oregon, US  
OBF Organ Institute, directed by Grammy Award-winning organist Paul Jacobs, offers organists the

opportunity to immerse themselves in the music of Bach and explore technique and interpretation through specialised seminars, masterclasses, and performance.  
[oregonbachfestival.org/organ-institute](http://oregonbachfestival.org/organ-institute)

### **ORGELFESTIVAL ALKMAAR 2024, ACADEMY SCHNITGER-ECHO**

25-30 Jun, Alkmaar, Netherlands  
Tutors: Mauricio Croci, Bernard Focroulle, Pieter van Dijk, Clemens Lücke, João Vaz, Frank van Wijk.  
[orgelfestivalholland.nl](http://orgelfestivalholland.nl)

▼ Dartington Hall in Devon



ADRIAN STOCK



#### ◀ ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS

*Various dates and venues*

##### **The Organ Student Experience Week**

25-30 Jul, Oxford, UK  
Tutor: Daniel Moulton. For teenage organists. Tuition in repertoire, technique, keyboard musicianship, and choral conducting and accompanying.  
<https://www.rco.org.uk/>

##### **ST ANDREWS ORGAN WEEK**

28 Jul - 2 Aug, University of St Andrews, UK

Open to young and amateur organists of all ages and abilities. Daily individual or group lessons, workshops, lectures, masterclasses and concerts.  
[events.st-andrews.ac.uk](https://events.st-andrews.ac.uk)

##### **SUMMER@EASTMAN**

##### **Summer Organ Academy**

July 8 - 11, Rochester, NY, US  
Faculty: David Higgs, Stephen Kennedy, Nathan Laube, William Porter. Intensive workshop for pre-college and undergraduate organists. Private and group instruction from world-renowned performers and pedagogues, and daily access to a wide variety of instruments. Opportunity to perform in masterclasses focusing on repertoire, sacred music skills, improvisation, and technique. The programme includes social activities and excursions and two culminating student performances open to the public.  
[summer.esm.rochester.edu/](http://summer.esm.rochester.edu/)

##### **DARTINGTON SUMMER SCHOOL & FESTIVAL**

3 - 11 Aug, Dartington, Devon, UK  
Artistic director: Gavin Carr. Shared music-making, from early music to jazz. Courses for all ages and abilities, accompanied by over 60 concerts and events. All musical abilities are catered for, from absolute beginners to advanced postgraduate students. Families welcome. Bursaries for Advanced Courses, and volunteering opportunities to gain industry-relevant experience while participating in the Summer School.  
<https://www.dartington.org/event/choralfest/>

##### **ENGLISH CHORAL EXPERIENCE: VARIOUS COURSES**

03 Apr - 10 Nov, UK and abroad  
Director: Paul Spicer. Choral

courses featuring wide variety of music for different abilities.  
[englishchoralexperience.co.uk](http://englishchoralexperience.co.uk)

##### **HAROLD ROSENBAUM CHORAL CONDUCTING INSTITUTE**

13 - 15 Jun, Kaufman Music Center, NYC, US  
Active participants work closely with the maestro while learning the intricacies of choral conducting.  
[haroldrosenbaum.com/institute](http://haroldrosenbaum.com/institute)

##### **RODOLFUS CHORAL COURSES Adult Course (ages 22+)**

11 - 14 Apr, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich (non-res, ages 22+)

##### **Senior Courses (age 16 - 21)**

26 Jul - 2 Aug, Royal Holloway, University of London  
4 - 11 Aug, St Edward's School, Oxford  
5 - 12 Aug, Selwyn College, Cambridge  
12 - 19 Aug, St Peter's School, York  
15 - 18 Aug, Anglican Cathedral, Liverpool

##### **Junior Courses (ages 8-15)**

11 - 17 Aug, Wellington College  
19 - 25 Aug, Winchester College  
Course directors include: Ralph Allwood, Simon Toyne, Anna Lapwood, Katherine Dienes-Williams, Sarah MacDonald, Martyn Ford and James Bartlett. Choral singing courses for children and young people led by leading choral conductors, singing teachers and educators. Junior courses learn secular and sacred choral pieces as whole choir and in consort groups; senior courses sing Evensong at neighbouring cathedrals and college chapels, receive singing lessons, masterclasses, whole-choir and consort group rehearsals. All courses are residential except Liverpool and London. Bursaries available for Junior and Senior courses.  
[therodolfusfoundation.org.uk](http://therodolfusfoundation.org.uk)

##### **RSCM**

##### **RSCM Bath Course**

19-25 Aug, Kingswood School, Bath, UK  
Course director: Hugh Morris. A summer residency for young singers (ages 8-21). Course music-making is rooted in liturgy and worship. Open to a wide age and ability range. The course timetable includes rehearsals, musicianship training and other activities designed to develop and inspire young choral singers. As well as taking part in a wide range of choral services at the school during the week, course attendees will also sing in the inspiring setting of Bath Abbey.  
[rscm.org.uk/learn-with-us](http://rscm.org.uk/learn-with-us)

##### **RUN BY SINGERS**

*Various dates*

##### **A Week in Girona**

2 - 9 Jun

Tutor: Neil Ferris

##### **A Week in Burgos**

19 - 23 Jun

Tutor: David Skinner

##### **Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin**

4 - 8 Jul

Tutor: Jeremy Jackman

##### **A Week in Vilnius**

14 - 21 Jun

Tutor: Patrick Craig

##### **Assisi Summer School**

4 - 11 Aug

Tutor: Rory McCleery

##### **Lincoln Summer Schools**

13 - 17 Aug

Tutors: David Allinson & Matt Finch

##### **Summer in Salisbury**

25 - 29 Aug

Tutor: David Ogden

##### **Stanford in Cambridge**

30 Aug - 1 Sept

Tutor: Patrick Craig

##### **Transylvanian Adventure**

15 - 22 Sept

Tutor: David Ogden

##### **The Glory of Venice**

2 - 6 Oct

Tutor: Andrea Brown

3 - 6 Dec

Tutor: Jeremy Jackman

[runbysingers.org](http://runbysingers.org)

##### **SHERBORNE SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

*Various dates, Sherborne School, Sherborne, Dorset, UK*

##### **Cappella Chamber Choir**

28 Jul - 4 Aug

Director Greg Hallam. For keen choral singers of a reasonably accomplished standard.

##### **The Art of Choral Conducting**

4 - 11 Aug

Directed by Amy Bebbington with Charlie Penn. For choral conductors at all levels.

##### **Choral Masterpiece of Five Centuries**

4 - 11 Aug

Director: James Davey

##### **The Lighter Side Choral Course**

4 - 11 Aug

Director: Sue Hollingworth  
[Sherbornesummerschoolofmusic.org](http://Sherbornesummerschoolofmusic.org)

##### **STRANGELAND FAMILY YOUTH CHORAL ACADEMY**

29 Jun - 9 Jul, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, US

For high school choral musicians under the direction of Dr Anton Armstrong at the Oregon Bach Festival. Two weeks performing choral literature and strengthening a passion for the choral arts through daily rehearsals, classes, workshops, and performances alongside leading musicians.  
[oregonbachfestival.org/sfyca](http://oregonbachfestival.org/sfyca)

## FESTIVALS

##### **MARCH**

##### **Passiontide at Merton**

22 - 24 Mar, Oxford, UK  
[merton.ox.ac.uk/passiontide-merton](http://merton.ox.ac.uk/passiontide-merton)

##### **3rd Vox Lucensis**

23 - 27 Mar, Lucca, Italy  
[interkultur.com](http://interkultur.com)

##### **Oundle Festival of Music and Drama**

22 - 30 Mar, Oundle, UK  
<https://www.ofmd.org.uk/>

##### **APRIL**

##### **Slovakia Cantat**

24 - 27 Apr, Bratislava, Slovakia  
[Choral-music.sk](http://Choral-music.sk)

##### **Venezia Music Festival**

09 - 14 Apr, Jesolo & Venice, Italy  
[mrf-musicfestivals.com](http://mrf-musicfestivals.com)

##### **Misatango Choir Festival**

4 - 8 Apr, Berlin, Germany  
[misatango.com](http://misatango.com)

##### **MAY**

##### **Leeds International Organ Festival**

May-Jul, Leeds, UK  
[info@leedsiof.org](mailto:info@leedsiof.org)  
[leedsiof.org](http://leedsiof.org)

##### **10th International Choir and Orchestra Festival Barcelona**

1 - 5 May, Calella, Barcelona, Spain  
<https://www.mrf-musicfestivals.com/choir-orchestra-festival-on-the-costa-barcelona-spain>

##### **Cornwall International Male Choral Festival**

2 - 6 May, Cornwall, UK  
[cimcf.uk](http://cimcf.uk)

##### **Cork International Choral Festival**

1 - 5 May, Cork, Ireland  
[corkchoral.ie](http://corkchoral.ie)

##### **London Festival of Contemporary Church Music**

10 - 19 May, St Pancras, London, UK  
[lfccm.com](http://lfccm.com)

##### **Prague Spring Festival**

5 May - 3 Jun, Prague, Czech Republic  
<https://festival.cz/en/>

##### **Norfolk & Norwich Festival**

10 - 26 May, Norwich, UK  
[nnfestival.org.uk](http://nnfestival.org.uk)



ADORESTOCK

▲ The Three Choirs Festival is held this year in Worcester Cathedral

#### **Dresden Music Festival**

9 May - 9 Jun, Dresden, Germany  
[musikfestspiele.com](http://musikfestspiele.com)

#### **Bloomington Early Music Festival**

19 - 25 May, Bloomington, IN, US  
[office@blemf.org](mailto:office@blemf.org)  
[blemf.org](http://blemf.org)

#### **Beverley & East Riding Early Music Festival**

24 - 26 May, Beverley, UK  
[ncem.co.uk](http://ncem.co.uk)

#### **The English Music Festival**

24 - 27 May, Dorchester-on-Thames, UK  
[englishmusicfestival.org.uk](http://englishmusicfestival.org.uk)

#### **JUNE**

##### **Bachfest Leipzig**

7 - 16 Jun, Leipzig, Germany  
[bachfestleipzig.de](http://bachfestleipzig.de)

##### **Aldeburgh Festival**

7 - 23 Jun, Aldeburgh, UK  
[brittenpearsarts.org](http://brittenpearsarts.org)

##### **Limerick Sings International Choral Festival**

7 - 9 Jun, Limerick, Ireland  
[limericksings.com](http://limericksings.com)

##### **Festival Pusteria**

12 - 16 Jun, South Tyrol, Italy  
[festivalpusteria.org](http://festivalpusteria.org)

##### **Thaxted Festival**

21 Jun - 14 Jul, Thaxted, Essex, UK  
[thaxtedfestival.co.uk](http://thaxtedfestival.co.uk)

#### **East Neuk Festival**

26 - 30 Jun, Fife, UK  
[eastneukfestival.com](http://eastneukfestival.com)

#### **Musica Orbis Prague Festival**

27 Jun - 1 Jul, Prague, Czech Republic  
[musicaorbis.com](http://musicaorbis.com)

#### **Summa Cum Laude International Youth Festival**

5 - 10 Jul, Vienna, Austria  
[sclfestival.org](http://sclfestival.org)

#### **JULY**

##### **International Choir Festival Provence**

6 - 9 Jul, Provence, France  
[choral-events.com](http://choral-events.com)

##### **International Choir Festival Provence**

1 - 26 Jul, Provence, France  
<https://www.choral-events.com/en/event/international-choir-festival-in-provence-france-2024/#:~:text=Location%3A%20Provence%2C%20France,a%20concert%20tour%20throughout%20Provence>

##### **13th World Choir Games**

10 - 20 Jul, Auckland, New Zealand  
[interkultur.com](http://interkultur.com)

##### **Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod**

2 - 7 Jul, Llangollen, Wales  
<https://international-eisteddfod.co.uk/>

#### **Jam on the Marsh**

4 - 14 Jul, Romney Marsh, Kent, UK  
<https://jamconcert.org/>

#### **Festival d'Aix-en-Provence**

3 - 23 Jul, Aix-en-Provence, France  
[festival-aix.com](http://festival-aix.com)

#### **International Youth Music Festival Bratislava**

2 - 5 Jul, Bratislava, Slovakia  
[Choral-music.sk](http://Choral-music.sk)

#### **Cantus MM Music & Culture Festival**

4 - 7 Jul, Salzburg, Austria  
[cantusmm.com](http://cantusmm.com)

#### **York Early Music Festival**

6 - 13 Jul, York, UK  
[ncem.co.uk](http://ncem.co.uk)

#### **BBC Proms**

19 Jul - 14 Sep, London, UK  
[bbc.co.uk/proms](http://bbc.co.uk/proms)

#### **Toscana Music Festival**

17 - 21 Jul, Montecatini Terme, Italy  
[mrf-musicfestivals.com](http://mrf-musicfestivals.com)

#### **World Peace Choral Festival**

18 - 21 Jul, Vienna, Austria  
[wpcf.at](http://wpcf.at)

#### **Three Choirs Festival**

27 Jul - 3 Aug, Worcester, UK  
[3choirs.org](http://3choirs.org)

#### **AUGUST**

##### **Edinburgh International Festival**

5 - 28 Aug, Edinburgh, UK  
[eif.co.uk](http://eif.co.uk)

#### **Lahti International Organ Festival**

5 - 11 Aug, Lahti, Finland  
[lahtiorgan.fi](http://lahtiorgan.fi)

#### **Charles Wood Festival**

11 - 18 Aug, Armagh, UK  
[charleswoodsummerschool.org](http://charleswoodsummerschool.org)

#### **Edington Music Festival**

18 - 25 Aug, Edington, Wiltshire, UK  
[edingtonfestival.org](http://edingtonfestival.org)

#### **Presteigne Festival of Music and Arts**

22 - 26 Aug, Presteigne UK  
[presteignefestival.com](http://presteignefestival.com)

#### **SEPTEMBER**

##### **Cracovia Music Festival**

25 - 29 Sep, Krakow, Poland  
[mrf-musicfestivals.com](http://mrf-musicfestivals.com)

#### **OCTOBER**

##### **The Cumnock Tryst**

2 - 6 Oct, Cumnock, Ayrshire, UK  
[thecumnocktryst.com](http://thecumnocktryst.com)

##### **City of Derry International Choral Festival**

23 - 27 Oct, Derry, UK  
[derrychoirfest.com](http://derrychoirfest.com)

##### **Lago di Garda Music Festival**

17 - 21 Oct, Lake Garda, Italy  
[mrf-musicfestivals.com](http://mrf-musicfestivals.com)

#### **NOVEMBER**

##### **Pura Vida Costa Rica**

23 - 27 Nov, San José, Costa Rica  
<https://perform-international.com>



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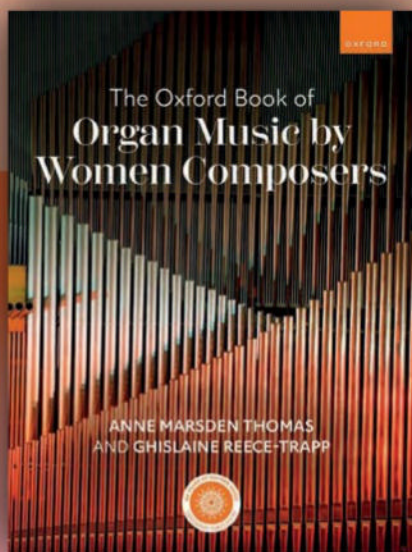


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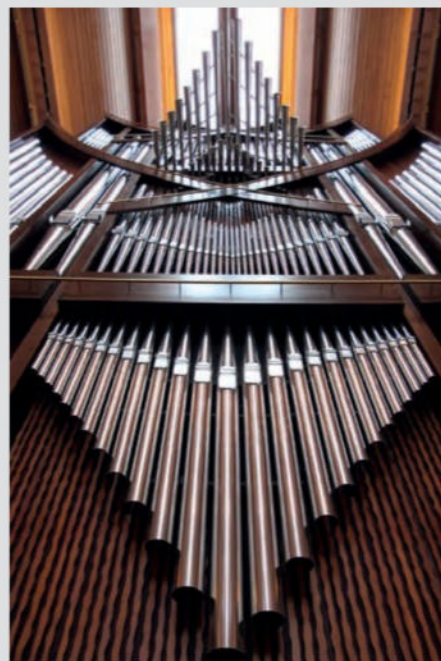
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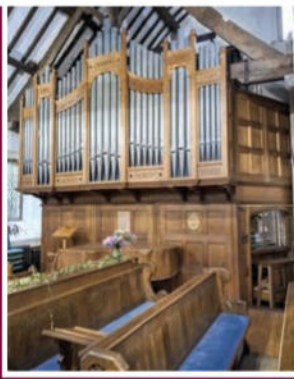
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ALEJANDRO IBARRA

# Sounds of the city

With a commitment to new music and diverse composers, New York City choir Musica Viva is paving the way for daring collaborations, finds **Clare Stevens**

**T**he clue is in the name: the concert repertoire of Musica Viva NY (MVNY) does regularly include Bach cantatas and works by the likes of Mozart, Brahms, Duruflé and Bernstein, but the choir's USP is its commitment to performing the work of living American composers, together with music by women composers, composers of colour and works that address social, racial or environmental issues. The current season demonstrates that commitment wholeheartedly, and has included recording three of its recent commissions for commercial release in the autumn of 2024.

MVNY is a chamber choir of around 30 singers, some of whom are professional and others skilled volunteers – alumni include the soprano Renée Fleming and the bass-baritone Samuel Ramey. It was founded in 1977 by Walter Klauss, then organist of the Unitarian Universalist Church of All Souls, Lexington Avenue, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where it is still based. In 2015 Klauss was succeeded as director of music at the church and artistic director of MVNY by Alejandro Hernandez-Valdez, who steered the ensemble through the challenges of the global pandemic and is now getting back on track with his vision for future projects.

‘Walter Klauss – “Wally”, as we call him – was a real force of nature. He created a lot of wonderful opportunities for the choir; they toured Europe a few times, and did a couple of recordings,’ says Hernandez-Valdez, explaining that MVNY eventually became independent from All Souls, as a non-profit organisation with its own board, although the personnel in the All Souls choir who sing on Sundays and the Musica Viva NY concert choir are essentially the same. ‘When I came along, of course I had my own ideas, but the bones of the organisation were already so well established that it was just a pleasure to be able to come in and do what I wanted to do.’

Mexican by birth, from the age of eight Hernandez-Valdez sang in a children's choir in Guadalajara, where his father was principal bass in the symphony orchestra. At 17 he won a scholarship to study piano at the Shenandoah Conservatory in Virginia, but he started teaching himself to conduct from sheet music and CDs as a teenager, and switched his academic studies from piano to conducting at post-doctoral level, largely because it is a more sociable activity. He has been artistic director of the Victoria Bach Festival in Texas since 2016 and is also co-founder and artistic director of the New Orchestra of Washington (NOW). ▶





**'I love to collaborate with composers ... it's so great to be able to pick up the phone and ask them all those questions that you can't ask Beethoven or Mozart'**

▲ Musica Viva New York's artistic director, Alejandro Hernandez-Valdez

◀ At All Souls he is assisted by organist and composer Trent Johnson, who accompanies the choir and stands in as conductor if Hernandez-Valdez has to be away. He runs a community choir that sings at All Souls every few weeks, and is also closely involved with MVNY's growing programme of community engagement work, which includes visits to local schools and libraries with small groups of singers: 'I always say I couldn't do my work without Trent,' says Hernandez-Valdez. 'The choir and the instrumentalists we work with love him, and because he is a composer as well, he understands the music from the inside out.' For his part Johnson says, 'The

breadth of repertoire and especially the quantity of new music we explore together is one of the things that makes working at All Souls and with Alejandro so satisfying. Many of our new works are written by people from different ethnic groups, so there is inclusivity in the commissioning process as well, and even for many of our singers in the Musica Viva NY choir one of the big draws is repertoire. I was talking to one of our singers recently and he said, "You know I really enjoyed my last choir, but we never performed anything past 1750!"'

'Once I became a conductor, one of my ambitions was to commission as many new works as possible,' Hernandez-Valdez continues. 'I love to collaborate with composers; I just love the huge advantage of being able to work with them on the creative process of giving birth to a new piece of music. It's so great to be able to pick up the phone and ask them all those questions that you can't ask Beethoven or Mozart.'

As an example, he recalls the process of commissioning and performing Joseph Turrin's 45-minute cantata *And Crimson Roses Once Again Be Fair*, the title track of the forthcoming Naxos CD. A First World War centenary co-commission, first performed by MVNY with the NOW and the Washington Master Chorale in 2018 to mark the anniversary of the Armistice, it sets poems by Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Vera Brittain and others who fought, died or were bereaved in the conflict. 'It was such a rewarding process – watching lots of documentaries about the First World War, about the Armistice, reading a lot of books – obviously it's Joe's piece, but it was a wonderful collaboration. For me the most remarkable aspect of the cantata is how the heart-wrenching poetry absolutely guides the music throughout.'

The apex of the piece in terms of both text (Vera Brittain's poem 'Perhaps') and music is the penultimate movement – a mezzo-soprano solo, for which the composer had in mind the voice of the legendary Frederica von Stade. She is now largely retired, but she generously agreed to take part in this recording project. The piece has a particular resonance for her, she says, because her father was killed in the Second World War while her mother was expecting her. 'She never got over losing him, so I'm kind of creating this wonderful chance to honour her.'

Hernandez-Valdez chose two other MVNY commissions that spoke to him very directly to sit alongside *Crimson Roses*. Gilda Lyon's *Momotombo* for a cappella chorus sets a poem by Rubén Darío, inspired by the spectacular volcanic landscape of Nicaragua. 'Gilda is a wonderful singer as well as a composer. Her family is from Nicaragua, and this piece speaks to her roots and the love she has for Latin American culture

in general. As a Latin American person myself, I was very drawn to that idea,' he explains.

'And then the third piece is *The Luminous Ground*, for SATB chorus, strings and piano, by Richard Einhorn. He has an incredible background as a composer and a music producer – he has produced records for people like Glenn Gould and Yo-Yo Ma, all the greatest. He is also a Buddhist, a very spiritual person; having a conversation with him is a wonderful, calming experience. I met him through Pamela Patton, one of our ministers at All Souls who is also a Buddhist, and he wrote a piece that we performed at one of our services; then I asked if he would write something for full choir and strings, and he came up with this beautiful work, which we premiered in March 2023.'

The title refers to that stage in a person's progress towards enlightenment when, according to the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, the 'pacifying light of wisdom dawns' and 'attachment and aversion have thoroughly ceased' ... leading to 'a nearly unimaginable state of serenity,' says Einhorn, adding that this transcendent state is evoked for him by the light sculptures of James Turrell, which he has tried to match with a slow, gradually changing soundscape.

Asked about the relationship between liturgy and music in a Unitarian Universalist congregation, compared to, say, Episcopalian or Roman Catholic, Hernandez-Valdez agrees that the repertoire is more wide-ranging, but adds that All Souls has its own way of making music and its own traditions, which he inherited from Walter Klauss, and which are not typical.

Invited to elaborate on this, as an organist who has worked in many churches, Trent Johnson says that All Souls is not attached to dogmas and creeds: 'It's more open to the entire world, let's put it that way – I would even say that unitarians are all-inclusive. People from many different backgrounds Christians, non-Christians, atheists, agnostics, Muslims – all are *truly* welcome. The music reflects all of those various traditions, so we might have some anthems that are Christian-based, some that are based on a Muslim text or maybe on secular poetry. We have a wide range of musical sources that we can draw from to create a varied programme each week.'

This has its advantages and disadvantages, says Hernandez-Valdez. It is rewarding to have such a wide choice, but a lot of the canon has been written for the Christian liturgy and theology. Nevertheless, both men feel that the bright, welcoming space of All Souls, the preaching of its team of ministers from different traditions, and the music offer enrichment and solace to people who are searching for comfort and inspiration, a different way of thinking in this troubled world.

As for the choir members, Hernandez-Valdez says they are 'a group of people who get along and get a lot done.'

'I have worked with a lot of groups in my career, and each group has its own personality, but there is something about the Musica Viva NY organisation and the choir and the church – it has a very special personality and a big heart, and I think more people should experience what we are striving to accomplish.' ■ [musicaviva.org](http://musicaviva.org); [allsouls-nyc.org](http://allsouls-nyc.org)

Clare Stevens works as a writer, editor and publicist in the Welsh Marches

▼ The chamber choir is formed of around 30 singers, some of whom are professional and others skilled volunteers

▼ The music sung by Musica Viva reflects the various traditions of the congregation of All Souls



ALBANO BARRA



YACQUIA SISCO



# Letter from... Stockholm

A city hosting a year-round musical spectacle, Stockholm's cultural and sacred history is one to prioritise in your travels, writes **Stephen Pritchard**

Let's say you don't want the servants overhearing sensitive matters of state in the dining room (such a common problem these days, one finds). You can't possibly lay the table yourself, nor serve the food, so what to do? The answer is simple: you cut a big hole in the floor and drop the table down below stairs. Once the soup is ladled, your staff will hoist it back into place – steady now – using an ingenious pulley system. Repeat between courses and, hey presto, secrecy is maintained.

This *table à confidence* was crucial to the royal and political life of Sweden in the 18th century, but it did more than serve as cover

for covert conversations; it lent its name to the Confidencen, Stockholm's jewel-like opera house and theatre, commissioned by Queen Louisa Ulrika and opened in 1753. It's just one of the wealth of gorgeous historic buildings that adorn this elegant city of water and light, making it such a seductive travel destination.

Queen Louisa made sure her theatre had a private dining room where secretive meetings could be held in the fevered political atmosphere of the time. The table's clever block-and-tackle system took its inspiration from the inventive stage machinery next door, which today – like the

rest of the theatre – is restored and back in working order. After centuries of silence this riot of rococo is once again hosting seasons of opera that flourished in the late 18th century, when the Queen sought out singers, dancers, musicians and composers from across Europe to perform there.

However, the dangerous intrigue engulfing Sweden's politics which had made the *table à confidence* so necessary also led to a dramatic tragedy and the theatre's closure after only 40 years. Gustav III, known as the 'theatre king', had made his debut on the Confidencen stage when still a young prince, but in 1792 he was assassinated

▼ Stockholm's Cathedral (Storkyrkan)



ADOBE STOCK



HOLGER ELIASSON

▲ Stockholm's Confidencen opera house hosts an opera and music festival in July



OWEN HOLMSTAD

▲ The Storkyrkan Organ, made by Marcussen &amp; Søn, dates from 1960

during a masquerade at the Royal Opera in central Stockholm – a shocking incident that would later inspire Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. Theatres were closed and Sweden gradually sank into cultural obscurity.

When in the 1920s the theatre historian Agne Beijer rediscovered the nearby Drottningholm Palace theatre, interest grew in reviving the Confidencen too, but it wasn't until 1976, when opera singer Kjerstin Dellert pledged to raise the money to restore it, that serious work could be planned.

Now, every July the theatre machinery cranks into life under the seductive glow of candlelight when an opera from the Swedish baroque is revived in the Confidencen Opera and Music Festival. At other times of the year the theatre hosts seasons of concerts, theatre and ballet and should be high on the list of any musical visitor to Stockholm, pairing it perhaps with a charming boat ride out to Drottningholm to enjoy its opera season.

Summer in Stockholm is a delightful time for musical events, with endless days under a sun that rises before 4am and doesn't set until 10pm, but in the winter, when nights can last 18 hours, Stockholm offers an altogether different experience: the celebration of Lucia, the patron saint of light. Should you be there in December, you might see processions of white-clad children and adults, singing special songs which Swedes have known for generations.

Crowned with candles, Lucia arrives early in the morning, accompanied by handmaidens and 'star boys', all dressed in long robes. Three wise men and children dressed as gingerbread biscuits could also

feature in the many processions. Much singing ensues after which coffee and S-shaped yellow saffron buns decorated with raisins ('lussekatter') are served. This charming custom has become something of a symbol for Sweden and is often staged by Swedes living abroad.

Like so many Christian festivals, the Lucia celebrations have their roots in pagan times. At the darkest time of the year people believed that evil powers would stalk the

## 'Summer in Stockholm provides endless days under a sun that rises before 4am and doesn't set until 10pm'

land, so they would keep watch through the night, guarding their farms and animals. When Christianity arrived in Sweden the Julian calendar gave the longest night of the year between 12 and 13 December, but in 1753 (the same year, coincidentally, that the Confidencen opened) the Gregorian calendar took over and the winter solstice moved to 22 December. Sweden, however, maintains the tradition of Lucia on 13 December, with concerts throughout that week, particularly in Stockholm Cathedral in the old town and in nearby St Jacob's church.

These fine buildings and the church of St Clara host abundant choral and organ concerts, alongside regular sung services. The Cathedral is home to an annual masterclass for choral conductors, a festival for young singers and offers regular recitals on its mighty Marcussen & Søn organ from 1960, which sits behind an ornate facade created in 1789.

The Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra performs throughout the year at the Konserthuset, right in the heart of the city, a venue that every three years sees an extraordinary event, one that firmly displays Stockholm's high regard for music and musicians. The great Swedish soprano Birgit Nilsson, who died in 2005, established a prize that continues to honour musicians and institutions responsible for creating an important chapter in music's history.

At \$1m it's the biggest award in classical music and compares with the Nobel Prize for its significance and status. Winners have included the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the conductor Riccardo Muti and the soprano Nina Stemme. Last year, the prize went to the cellist Yo-Yo Ma for his work in bringing sometimes opposing communities together through music.

The ceremony is a glittering occasion, with the prize presented by King Carl Gustav amid much fanfare – a stamp of royal approbation that would surely warm the heart of his ancestor, the music-loving Louisa Ulrika, queen of the disappearing table. ■

*Stephen Pritchard writes on music for the Observer and the classical music website Bachtrack. He trained at Portsmouth Cathedral and sings with the English Chamber Choir*



# In defence of the neoclassical

A respectful restoration of the inspired Walker organ at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral has released its intended potential for the first time. **Tom Bell** takes us on a tonal tour PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ORGAN BUILDER

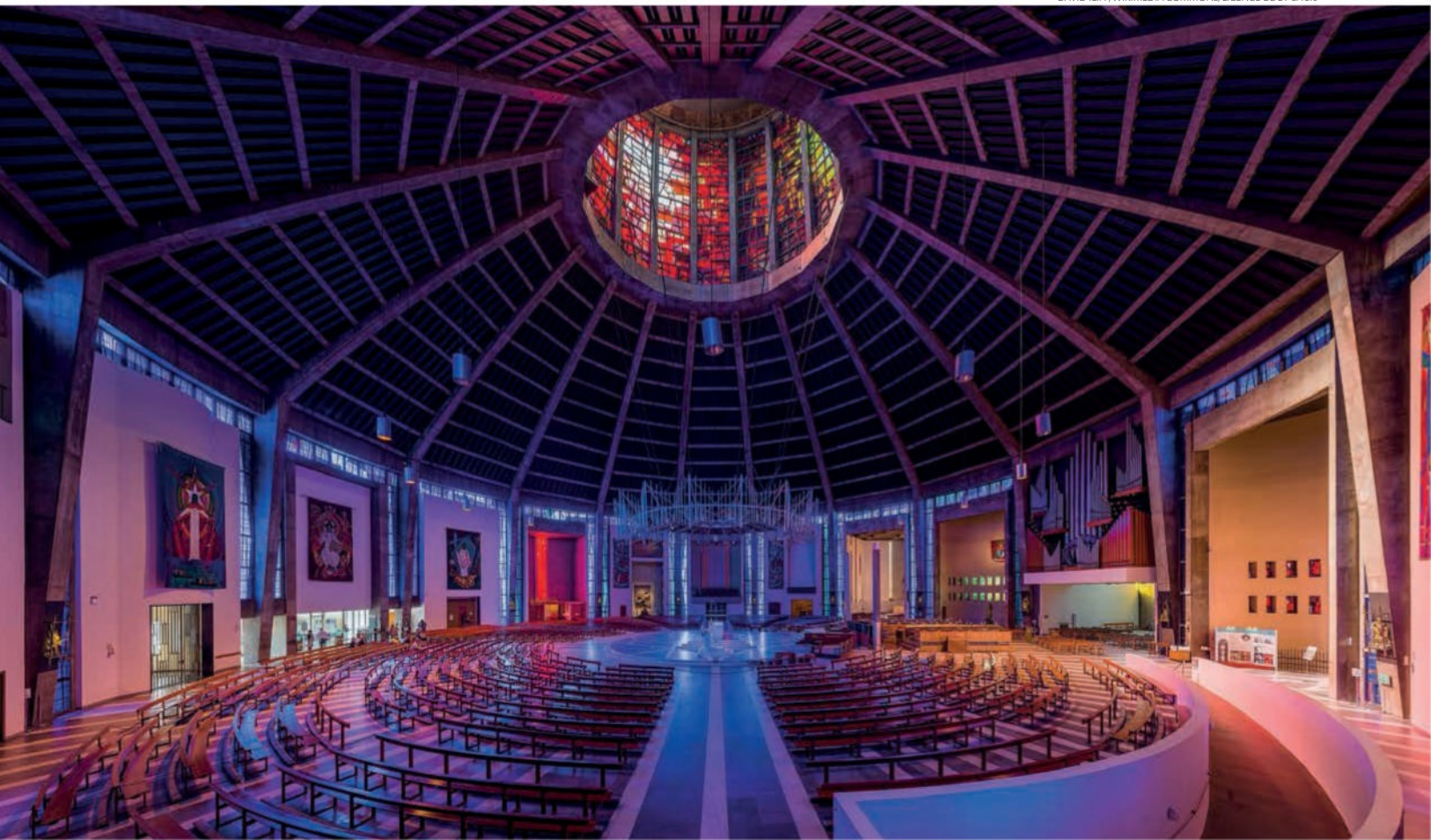
▼ The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool, mother church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool, was designed by Sir Frederick Gilbert (1908-84) and consecrated in 1967, when its Walker organ was first heard

Let me take you back in time 50 years or so, to a period when organists and organ builders were utterly convinced that the 'right' sort of organ, the 'correct' sort of organ, was a classically-voiced instrument. Your Open Wood 32? Saw it up. Your well-appointed Solo or Orchestral division? Shove a Cymbal III on it. Without a doubt, ill-considered things were done to beautiful Romantic organs, in pursuit of a dogma. Fast forward to the 2020s and the tide has turned, as has the dogma. Having lamented the vandalism of Romantic instruments, without a thought we seem to have commenced doing precisely the same thing to the Classical organs of the 1950-80 period.

Is it not enriching to be challenged by an organ? Perhaps one that speaks a different artistic language from that which we might prefer or be accustomed to? Is this not a fact of life for organists? Too often, it seems, we prefer to ask our communities to find vast sums of money, apparently so that we don't have to learn new repertoire or reconsider our approach to an instrument. This writer doesn't understand it.

A number of excellent, challenging, and often still-controversial organs were built in the UK in the decades after London's Royal Festival Hall instrument burst on to the scene in 1954 and distressed poor Ralph Vaughan

DAVID ILIFF/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/LICENCE CC BY-SA 3.0





Williams. Harrison & Harrison built that one and went on to build the organ at Coventry Cathedral, too. Hill, Norman & Beard gave us Gloucester Cathedral organ; J W Walker built striking instruments at Blackburn Cathedral, and two years earlier a larger instrument at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. Walker voicer Dennis Thurlow's style is unmistakable: lively, fresh and exciting still, after more than half a century.

We must rejoice that the Liverpool organ has been respectfully and beautifully overhauled by Harrison & Harrison of Durham. To understand the recent project fully, it is worth returning to our time machine. Terry Duffy, cathedral organist (1963-93), and director of music (2004-07) – to whom I am indebted for much of what follows – described to me the architectural process by which the organ arrived at its 1967 form: 'When the organ was planned in the 1960s, Walkers agreed to allow architect Frederick Gibberd to design the façade. While this is striking and befits the building, in organ-building terms it went against good practice. The original intention was that the choir would be sited in a raised gallery over the Blessed Sacrament chapel. The console would also be placed there with the organ divided into two and placed in the two apses either side of the chapel. That plan was quickly rejected. Instead, the organ was placed on the gallery above the Blessed Sacrament chapel, and the console (and choir) were placed at ground level, where they remain. The result was an organ shoehorned into a difficult space with a sharply inclined roof: the height and depth available within the chamber are a fraction of what they might appear to be from without. The internal layout of the organ ended up being, in the words of Duffy, 'something of a cramped maze'. Access to the organ chamber was difficult, via an alarming vertical ladder from the car park deep beneath the cathedral. It was once scaled at astonishing speed by a tuner to correct a fault during a Papal visit but is now condemned as a health and safety risk. Today a scaffold must be used even to tune the organ. The ceiling of the aforesaid car park hosts the (mechanical) action for the swell shutters; at around 120ft, this is the greatest distance for such a mechanism, from console to swell box, in the UK if not the world. And it is as light as a feather.

Despite the problems described above, the organ has always had a magic to it. Its sound floats so elegantly in the cavernous acoustic, paradoxically crystal clear yet somehow diffuse at the same time. Recordings in recent decades by Richard Lea and Jeremy Filsell give the flavour of a distinctive organ worth savouring in a unique building. But my, it must be a nightmare to record it.

The Pedal is supported by a tapered 32ft which is pungent and clear, the lowest two notes less so as they are Haskelled and lie across the back of the chamber. The Rohr Schalmel 4 is something of a calling card for this generation of organs. The Positive is incisive, as one



▲ Orchestral trumpet resonators: before cleaning (right), and after (left)

▼ David Robinson tests the electro-pneumatic action of the stop jams



▼ Geoff Pollard buffs the keys





# The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool

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## POSITIVE

Gedeckt	8
Prestant <i>new</i>	4
Koppelflöte	4
Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Principal	2
Blockflöte	2
Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
Larigot	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Siffelöte	1
Cymbale 29.33.36	III
Krummhorn	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	
Contra Posaune <i>from Great</i>	16
Trumpet <i>from Great</i>	8
Clarion <i>from Great</i>	4

## GREAT

Violone	16
Open Diapason	8
Principal	8
Gemshorn	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Octave	4
Chimney Flute	4
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Fifteenth	2
Blockflöte	2
Mixture 15.19.22	III

▼ The Solo Orchestral Trumpet on the voicing machine



Plein Jeu 19.22.26.29

Contra Posaune  
Trumpet  
Clarion

## SWELL (enclosed)

Open Diapason  
Rohrflöte  
Salicional  
Vox Angelica *tenor c*  
Principal  
Gedeckt Flute  
Twelfth  
Super Octave  
Flageolet  
Sesquialtera 12.17  
Scharf 22.26.29.33

## SOLO (enclosed)

Double Trumpet  
Bassoon  
Trumpet  
Oboe da Caccia *from Bassoon*  
Shawm  
*Tremulant*  
Quintaton  
Orchestral Flute  
Viola Da Gamba  
Voix Celeste *low A*  
Lieblich Gedeckt  
Dulciana  
Suabe Flute  
Quintadena *from Quintaton*  
Nazard  
Piccolo  
Quartane 12.15  
Clarinet  
*Tremulant*  
Tuba  
Orchestral Trumpet *unenclosed*  
Octave Tuba *from Tuba*

## ACCOMPANIMENTAL (enclosed)

Quintaton *from Solo*  
Lieblich Gedeckt *from Solo*  
Dulciana *from Solo*  
Dulcet *from Solo Dulciana*  
Quintadena *from Solo Dulciana*  
Nazard *from Solo*  
Quartane 12.15 *from Solo*

IV

16  
8  
4

8

8

8

8

8

4

4

2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>

2

2

II

IV

16

16

8

8

8

4

## PEDAL

Contra Spitzflöte	32
Principal	16
Violone <i>from Great</i>	16
Spitzflöte <i>from Contra Spitzflöte</i>	16
Bourdon	16
Quintaton <i>from Solo</i>	16
Octave	8
Octave Spitzflöte <i>from Contra Spitzflöte</i>	8
Bass Flute <i>from Bourdon</i>	8
Twelfth	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Fifteenth <i>from Octave</i>	4
Nachthorn	4
Octave Flute	4
Siffelöte <i>from Nachthorn</i>	2
Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
Contra Posaune <i>from Great</i>	32
Bombarde	16
Posaune <i>from Great Contra Posaune</i>	16
Bassoon <i>from Swell Bassoon</i>	16
Tromba <i>from Bombarde</i>	8
Rohr Schalmei	4

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◀ might expect, and lives at the bottom of the organ towards the front. Its little pipes make a striking contrast with the Contra Spitzflöte 32, which seems to grow out of them like an over-large garden tree. The Krummhorn is narrower than the Solo Clarinet, though in power they match each other. The 8ft flute is the most penetrating of several such stops on the manuals: not unexpectedly the cornet décomposé is bigger and broader than the equivalent tierce combination on the Swell. A second 4ft flute (a Spitzflöte) was provided here in 1967, but curiously no principal rank at that pitch. Duffy reports that Walkers tried more than once to develop the contrast intended between the 4ft flute stops to no avail. Thus, Harrison & Harrison has provided an excellent new Prestant 4. The Spitzflöte has been retired to safe storage, leaving the gorgeous Koppelflöte to fly the flag for 4ft flute tone. On the Great, the Principal 8 provides the foundation of

the chorus and is supported by the bigger, broader Open Diapason. These are joined by a colourful and stringy Gemshorn and a Stopped Diapason. The chorus from 16ft to Plein Jeu is rich and silvery, the reeds topping it with éclat. In 1967 baffles were fitted above the Great, with the intention of focusing the sound of the fluework in the room. Alas, they sat in front of the reeds, slightly muffling those stops without making much difference to the flues. The baffles have been removed, and the layout of the Great and Positive altered, to good effect. As Terry Duffy puts it, 'The outcome of all of this is that the true potential of the Great – flues and reeds – has finally been released 57 years too late and the difference is remarkable.'

The Swell department is a little more distant than the Great and Positive, though it does not lack impact. This must be an advantage for the accompanist and lends nuance and contrast to the overall effect of the organ; ▶

▼ Clockwise from top left:  
Voicer Andrew Fiddes  
with a section of the Pedal  
32ft Contra Spitzflöte;  
Voicer Daniel Rose-Jones  
inside the solo box;  
Interior of the Swell box;  
Orchestral Trumpet and  
façade pipes





## LIVERPOOL METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL

◀ unlike some neo-Classical organs, and doubtless aided by the building, this instrument can emit mild sounds as if from another realm. The Sesquialtera is narrow-scaled but is not the bold Germanic principal version one might hope for. As for the Oboe da Caccia, is it the only such stop with that name? The Solo has, like the Swell, been moved slightly. It possesses a mixture of stops traditionally provided on such a department (for example the delicious Orchestral Flute, and the big strings) and others of softer character, which play a role in accompanying the choir. From the latter are drawn the Accompanimental Organ, a small division entirely derived from the Solo which can be played from the

lowest keyboard. The enclosed, extended Tuba rank is a reminder that this organ was perhaps a shade more eclectic in concept than its cousin at Blackburn was. The Tubas have the effect of broadening as well as loudening the tutti. They do not dominate the ensemble. That job is left to the Orchestral Trumpet, which is startling.

The organ has had its challenges addressed thoroughly. Besides the small but telling revisions to the layout mentioned above, the struggling schwimmers have been replaced by single-rise reservoirs throughout. The console has been restored, its awkward roll-top being replaced by a fine set of doors. Owing to these sorts of changes, there are some who might deny this project the term 'restoration'. Yet the retention of the tonal scheme, and the respect shown for the work of Dennis Thurlow and his colleagues, is both broad-minded and very welcome.

Delighted with the work carried out by Harrison & Harrison, Duffy also acknowledges the contribution of consultant Dr John Rowntree for his 'meticulous attention and guidance in achieving a wonderful outcome'. Summing up the results, Duffy's successor Richard Lea says: 'It feels as though we are hearing the 1967 Walker in its full glory for the first time. The organ sounds now as it was intended to do, before architectural compromises had to be made in 1967'. Meanwhile, I would echo Terry Duffy's ultimate assessment: 'I adore it!' ■

*Tom Bell is a performer, educator, and independent organ consultant. He lives in the north of England*





# *Fratelli Ruffatti*

congratulates

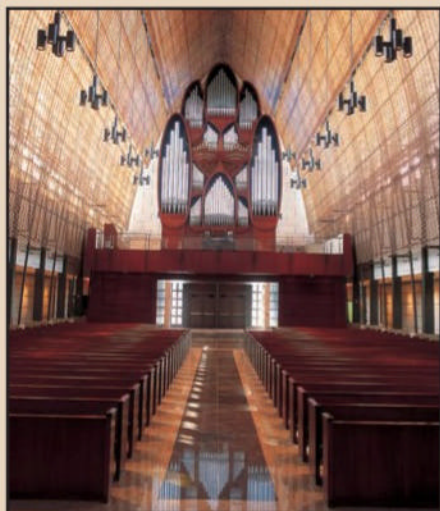
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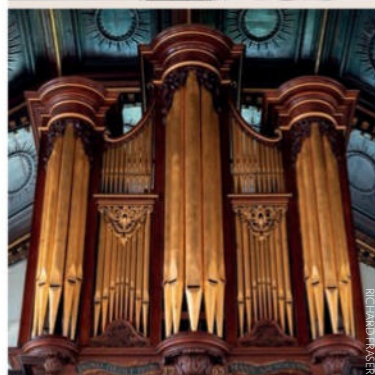
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# CHOIR & ORGAN NEXT ISSUE SUMMER 2024

## GUSTAV HOLST AT 150

Surveying the choral works of the great composer as we mark 150 years since his birth

## TÕNU KALJUSTE

David Hill speaks to the renowned choral director and Principal Conductor of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir about the musical tradition of Estonia and his most favoured choral music

## PETERHOUSE CAMBRIDGE

The historic Snetzler organ at Peterhouse, Cambridge, is preserved while creating a versatile new instrument to serve the musical and liturgical needs of the chapel. Flentrop Orgelbouw and Orgelbau Klais have collaborated on this unusual project

## NEW MUSIC

Meeting composer Hugo Bell, who takes us through his new choral work for The Marian Consort

## Plus...

The latest international news and previews, specialist reviews, regular columns and the International Directory of Pipe Organ Builders' supplement.



## EXPLORING THE WORLD OF CHORAL AND ORGAN RECORDINGS



FRANCES MARSHALL

▲ Recording Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the Gabrieli Roar singers

### Upcoming releases

The Gabrieli Consort under Paul McCreesh is releasing a recording of **Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*** on 26 April featuring the young people taking part in 'Gabrieli Roar'. Fifty singers aged 15-21 took part in the recording through a five-day residential course, part of the Consort's commitment to engaging teenagers with choral music.

A recording of **John Stainer's oratorio *The Crucifixion*** will be released by Delphian on 29 March. Duncan Ferguson and the Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh are joined by two Scottish soloists and, in the hymns, by local young musicians and the cathedral congregation.

A collection of recordings on BIS Records of both Masaaki and Masato Suzuki will be released in the coming months. The fifth volume of Masaaki's **Bach Organ Works** recordings, playing the 1737 Christoph Treutmann organ of Stiftskirche St Georg, Grauhof, Germany, is released on 1 March.

Following this on 22 March, Masaaki releases a disc of **Bach's *Art of Fugue*** on harpsichord, with his son Masato taking to the keyboard for three of the fugues.

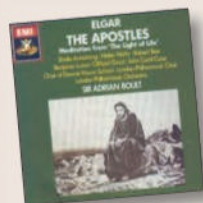
Then on 28 April a 78-disc boxset of the entire **Bach Vocal Works** is released with Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan.

### Recording retrospective

**50 years ago... Sir Adrian Boult's premiere recording of Elgar's oratorio *The Apostles* was released on EMI**

Boult's 1974 recording with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Choir and the Choir of Downe House School was released 50 years ago. Soloists were Sheila Armstrong, Helen Watts, Robert Tear, Benjamin Luxon, Clifford Grant and John Carol Case. Premiered in Birmingham in 1903, Boult's world premiere recording of *The Apostles* marked 70 years since its composition, which succeeded *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900) and preceded *The Kingdom* (1906). Writing in *Gramophone Magazine* in 1974, Jerold Northrop Moore said of the recording: 'There was of course only one man to conduct such a recording ... Sir Adrian has somehow welded these eight sessions into the performance of a lifetime. I have no words to express my admiration for his achievement ... What emerges is a single concentrated curve of expression moving steadily forward in its pattern from first note to last.'

◀ Sir Adrian Boult was 84 at the time of recording *The Apostles*



EMI

## STUDIO NEWS

From 27 to 29 January at Maida Vale Studios a recording was made of previously unreleased **Imogen Holst choral and orchestral works**. Conducted by Alice Farnham and featuring the BBC Singers and BBC Concert Orchestra, the disc is due for release on NMC in September 2024.

Late January also saw the start of a collaboration between **Bath Abbey and CRD Records**, as they celebrated 150 years of the choir by recording an album spanning 150 years of repertoire. Spotlighting the trebles alongside the Bath Abbey Girls' Choir and esteemed alumni, music is featured from choral greats, including Vaughan Williams, Stanford and Howells, stretching right up to the present day with works from celebrated contemporary composers James MacMillan and Matthew Martin. The recording will be released in 2025.

Delphian has been recording music by female composers with vocal ensemble **Siglo de Oro** at Waltham Abbey. Music recorded includes Joanna Marsh's *Worthy is the Lamb* and Kerensa Briggs's *Media vita* alongside a number of works by Judith Ward. The recording will be released in February 2025.

▼ Alice Farnham recording Imogen Holst, who was instrumental in the founding of NMC



# REVIEWS

Rating: ★★★★★ Highly recommended ★★★★★ Very good ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Poor



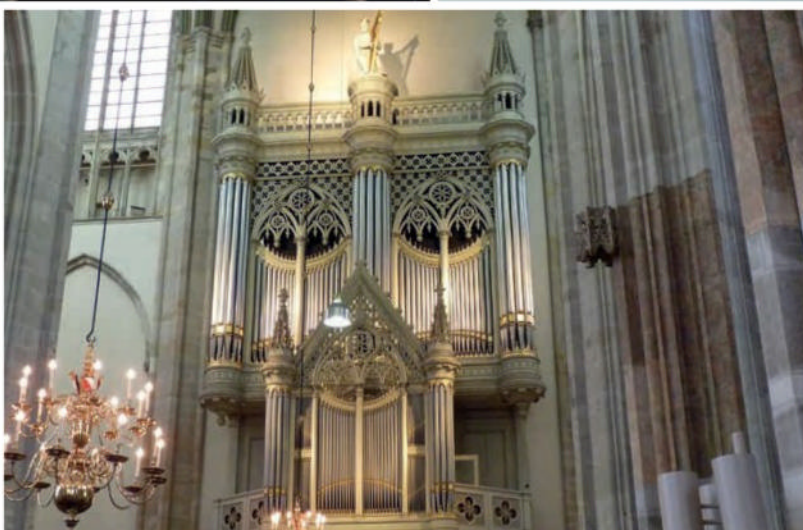
**Early Music Editor**  
Rebecca Tavener

**Organ Music Editor**  
Stephen Farr

**Choral Music Editors**  
Martin Ashley  
Joy Hill  
Jeremy Jackman  
Jeremy Summerly

## THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS

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Michael Quinn  
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Clare Stevens  
Rebecca Tavener



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## KEYBOARD CDS

**Liszt: Piano works, arranged for Organ**

Diederik Blankesteyn, Bätz Organ (1831), Domkirk, Utrecht, Netherlands

Brilliant Classics 96855

★★★



For Liszt, piano and organ were often interchangeable,

with the composer pushing the boundaries of tonal possibilities for both instruments. At the core of this album is Diederik Blankesteyn's own transcription of the great *Sonata in B minor* S178. This monumental work can be seen as a struggle between the holy and the satanic. Maintaining a sense of connection with the church, this is bookended with *Spotalizio* (a wedding piece) and *La lugubre gondola* (a kind of funeral procession). The music translates extremely well to the sonorous Bätz organ in the generous acoustic of Utrecht's Domkirk. The drama and colour of this music is expressed with great conviction by Blankesteyn and captured well on this recording.

RUPERT GOUGH

**Langlais: Organ Music, Vol 1**

Giorgio Benati, Fausto Caporali, various organs in Italy

Brilliant Classics 96877 [79:42, 79:32, 79:48, 78:30, 79:44]

★★★



This is the first volume of an ambitious project to record the

complete organ works over more than 20 CDs. The project is curated by organist Giorgio Benati, himself a pupil of Langlais who shares this recording with Fausto Caporali. Luciano

Carbone also joins the line-up for the *Third Fantasy for two organists*. There is no discernable logic to the compilation and the earliest pieces to feature in this first volume of five discs are the 24 *Pièces* from the 1930s performed on the harmonium. We are going to have to wait longer for the major works as this volume mostly contains the later collections of smaller pieces: *Neuf Pièces* (1942/3), *The Organ Book* (1956), *12 Petites Pièces* (1962), *6 Petites Pièces* (1976), *4 Preludes* (1975), *8 Preludes* (1984), *Versets* (1986), *Expressions* (1988). It is disappointing not to see even one of the symphonies.

The organs featured are from various churches in Italy, all chosen to suit the specific style and requirements of the chosen repertoire. Although one might have reservations about the choice of instruments, it is worth remembering that Langlais was a well-travelled recitalist and the possibilities afforded by different styles of organ were absorbed into much of his music. Appropriately therefore this compilation begins with the *Hommage à Frescobaldi* performed on the 1984 Mascioni Organ of Cremona Cathedral. This is more successful than other choices: the *Suite Brève*, for example, is recorded on the 1960 Ruffatti Organ of Santa Maria Assunta, Cluone which simply does not have the right registrations available.

The main issue I have with this new box set is that the quality of performance is really rather hit and miss – some pieces lack the required attention to detail while others are just rather lifeless. *Expressions* is completely lacking in, well, expression! Indeed, some performances are notably sub-standard: wrong registrations, wrong and/or split notes, inaccurate rhythm, very

inconsistent and lumpy legato. Across this whole volume there is simply not enough care and attention paid to legato phrasing of melodic line, particular in the pedal parts. Langlais' own recordings are characterised by almost seamless legato – such a key element of this style of writing. This is particularly evident in the polyphony of the *Cantilène* from the *Suite Brève*. The rendition of this movement sounds like a struggle and is in no way 'sung'. Sadly, as one of the key works on this volume, the whole suite is particularly disappointing, complete with split notes.

It is good to have all of these pieces referenced together but ultimately there are simply better recordings already available on the market, including the complete works recorded by Ann Lebounsky between 1979 and 2000.

RUPERT GOUGH

**Johann Sebastian Bach: Organ Transcriptions**

Wolfgang Rübsam, Casavant organ (1998), St Louis, King of France, St Paul, Minnesota

Brilliant Classics 96846 [70'47]

★★★



Wolfgang Rübsam is one of the most distinctive Bach interpreters to

emerge over the last 50 years or so. His Philips complete Bach-cycle, recorded in the 1970s, was quicksilver and, for its time, excellent if perhaps unremarkable. His later Naxos recordings, largely made on landmark historically oriented organs in the US, was from a different planet; the broad tempi, trademark delayed downbeat and rhetorical whimsy dividing the crowd. This new release of 'transcriptions' (are they really written down as such?) of the

second and third orchestral suites, as well as the D minor Chaconne, will prompt similarly 'Marmite' reactions. Most striking is the sense of late-Romantic expressive grandeur (amplified by the mid-20th-century tempi) delivered despite the (mostly) conventional registrations, and articulation which is far from universally legato (indeed it occasionally swings too far the other way). There's something slightly grotesque about the experience...and yet, one realises that every note, every rhythmic delay, every extended up-beat, every spread chord is planned with astonishing detail. Not a single moment is left to chance. One is likewise aware of Rübsam's early studies with Helmut Walcha, so linearly conceived is the contrapuntal expression. This won't be many people's cup of tea, but I find it hard to deny that there's a genius at work.

CHRIS BRAGG

**Organ Music of Pierre Kunc – French composer and organist**

Damin Spritzer, John Abbey organ (1849), Cathédrale Saint-Étienne, Châlons-en-Champagne, France

RAVEN OAR-184 [79'53]

★★★



Pierre Kunc (1865–1941) was a member of a very prominent

Toulouse family of musicians: his mother was an organ pupil of Franck, his father influential in the restoration of Gregorian chant, his brother Aimé a *Prix de Rome* winner. Pierre was a pupil of Gigout at the École Niedermeyer in Paris, where, later in his career, he served as Maitre de Chapelle at St Sulpice. His organ music is undeniably conservative, certainly if one compares his Symphony in D



## REGENT RECORDS

### New and Recent Releases



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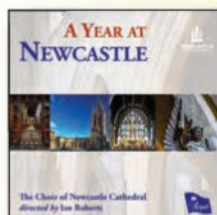
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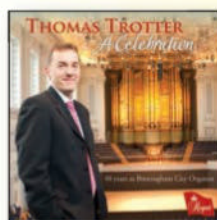
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City Organist

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Thomas Trotter was appointed Birmingham City Organist in 1983 in succession to Sir George Thalben-Ball. This album, a personally-selected programme showing the dynamic and expressive range of the Town Hall organ complements 'Symphony Hall Sorcery' (released in 2022) in celebrating Trotter's consummate artistry over four decades on these two iconic Birmingham instruments.

**Gramophone Editor's Choice**

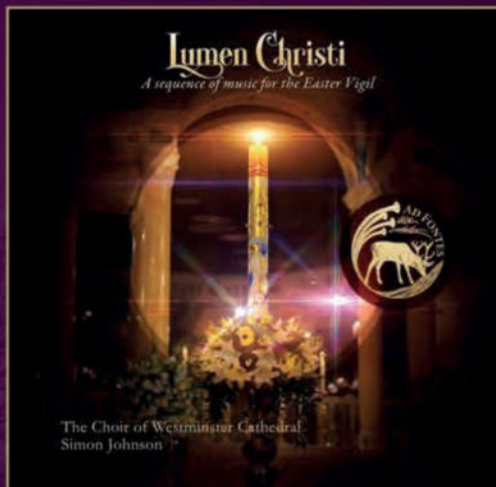
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### Lumen Christi: A sequence of music for the Easter Vigil

The Choir of Westminster Cathedral  
Simon Johnson *director*  
Peter Stevens *organ*

Lassus | Reid | Victoria | Palestrina | Monteverdi  
Martin | L'Héritier | Baker | Langlais

The Choir of Westminster Cathedral is the crowning jewel of Catholic church music and has been at the forefront of English sacred music since its foundation in 1901. This new disc draws us into the mystery of the Paschal Vigil, the very apex of the Church's liturgical year, transporting us on a journey from darkness into light through a sequence of plainsong and polyphony. It is the first album under the choir's current director, Simon Johnson, picking up where *Vexilla Regis* (AF002) left off, and immerses the listener in the Cathedral's own unique treasury of liturgical music, including compositions crafted by its former musicians, as well as repertoire at the heart of the choir's work, represented here in polyphony by Victoria, Monteverdi and L'Héritier's glorious *Surrexit pastor bonus*.

RELEASED 22 MARCH 2024

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## EARLY MUSIC



### Rebecca Tavener rounds up the latest releases

If the Mass is both drama and love story it may not be inappropriate to preface this mass of mass recordings with **Vox dilecti mei (Tacet S 270)** as Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett's

Ensemble Peregrina anthologise the earliest settings of the Song of Solomon (10th-15th century) with characteristically impeccable research and performance practice. Sinuous, subtle, believable – siren voices, with Gothic bray harp and vielles, call across the ages in SACD surround sound. *The Song of Songs* has long been associated with the Virgin Mary, so here's a Lady Mass: **Ymaginacions (Paraty 1123291)** is the second volume from the forthright vocal trio with portative organ of La Quintana. Its premiere recording of Ludford's Mass upon John Dunstable's 'square' is informed by authentic pronunciation in a joyous marriage of fascinating, exhaustive scholarship and gloriously immersive performance, going the extra mile to transport us back 500 years. By contrast, over the pond and on a scale surely beyond the composer's imagination, the double album **Byrd – Sacred Works (Signum Classics SIGCD776)** features The Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Fifth Avenue, New York. CD1 showcases the Mass for Four Voices in liturgical framework and CD2 features recent recordings of seven motets alongside their highly respectable 1981 reading of the Great Service. Distant, massy, lofty, weighty, in a ponderous acoustic, this is an indulgently old-school tribute of marmoreal splendour.

Back to chamber-style performance practice for **Ludwig Daser – Missa Pater Noster & other works (Hyperion CDA68414)**. Daser overlapped with (and was overshadowed by) Senfl and Lassus as part of the Munich court chapel establishment. This album of attractive, original polyphony in 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 parts encourages us to know him better with affectionately compelling, convincing

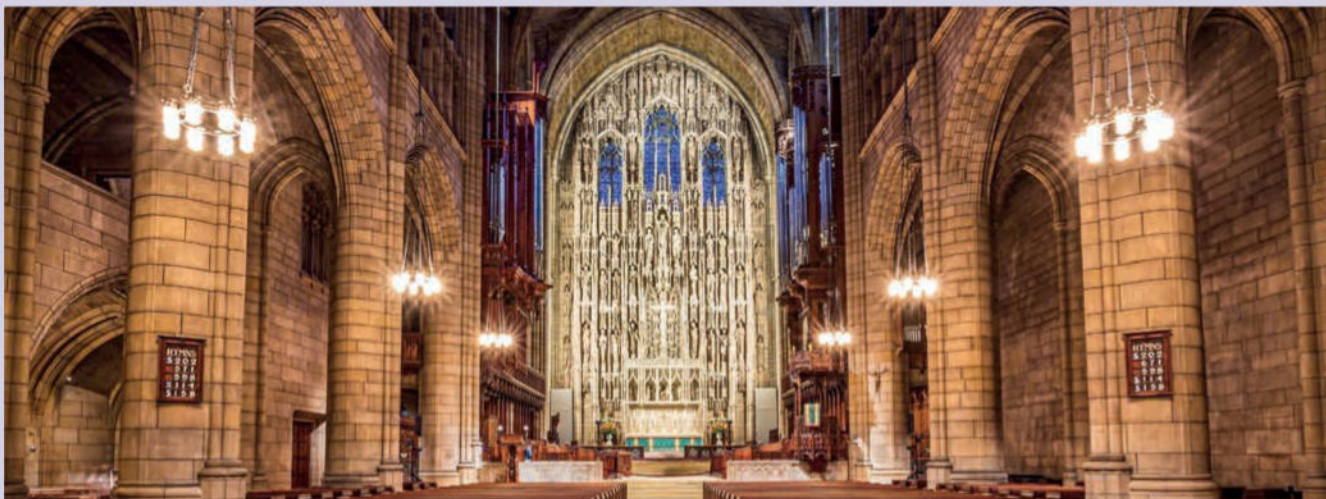
and classy performances from the male consort Cinquecento and guests. Pioneering isn't just about unknown composers, of course, here is a Mass, with eight motets and a Magnificat, all believed to be premiere recordings, by **Guerrero – Ecce sacerdos magnus (Hyperion CDA68408)**. The Brabant Ensemble finds a luminous lightness of touch, reserved and elegant, in works for 4, 5 and 6 voices. For a blast of genuine Spanish vocal colour with native singers leading us along a fascinating early baroque byway here's **Alonso Xuárez – Sacred Music (Brilliant Classics 96954)** – premiere recordings of his Misa (sic) Surge propera a 7, Lamentations a 8, motets, and a Magnificat a 8 from eight excitable, idiosyncratic, technically and tonally uneven singers with organ. This highly expressive, often chromatically adventurous and flavoursome music from the maestro de capilla of Cuenca Cathedral might have benefited from greater acoustic bloom.

### 'Sinuous, subtle, siren voices, with Gothic bray harp and vielles'

Perfect levels of resonant clarity burnish **Missa Tu es Petrus – Orazio Benevoli (CORO COR16201)** from I Fagiolini. A Mass for four choirs of voices and instruments (cornett, sackbut, strings, recorder, bass dulcian, organs, harp, chitarrone), this mid-1600s papal coronation material deserves the nimbly effervescent and virtuosic treatment that graces this world premiere recording. It's a refreshing alternative to previous, more heavy-handed interpretations of Benevoli's lavish musical structures. His contemporary, Graziani, glitters and glows in five solo-voice motets, also recorded for the first time. It all feels like flying on a luxurious, silky, exquisitely-stitched sonic magic carpet.

*Rebecca Tavener is a singer and director specialising in early and contemporary music. She is founder-director of Canty, Scotland's only professional medieval music group*

▼ The Choir of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York City gives an old-school tribute to Byrd's sacred choral works



◀ minor, composed in the early 1920s, with those composed two decades earlier by Louis Vierne. At his best, there is something of the eloquent cantando style of Franck and the absence of frippery in its earnestness is attractive. Damin Spritzer, as usual, plays this unknown repertoire with an impressive sense of devotion and attention to detail. The choice of organ is not obvious; it was built some time before Kunc was born, but it is highly interesting: the largest organ built by John Abbey's workshop while the English émigré was still in charge. With its occasionally bucolic reeds (the Voix Humaine in the long, tense Pièce Funèbre), pretty harmonic flutes and strings, it's somewhat extraordinary that this splendid pre-symphonic instrument remains so obscure. Here, it is dynamically captured by Aeolus's Christoph Martin Frommen. In addition, as we expect from Raven, the booklet is exceptional with a number of fascinating interior photos of the organ.

CHRIS BRAGG

## CHORAL CDS

### Daniel Knaggs: Two Streams

Houston Chamber Choir, Kinetic / Robert Simpson (dir)  
Cappella Records CR429 [70:02]

★★★★★



Mercy-bearing visions granted to the Polish nun and mystic, St Maria

Faustina Kowalska, are both inspiration and framework for this deeply thoughtful and moving cantata. Latin scriptural verses and liturgical texts weave around English translations of Faustina's words, communicated superbly by professional choir ▶

## CHOIR & ORGAN CHOICE

### Arvo Pärt: Essential Choral Works

Theatre of Voices, Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Ars Nova Copenhagen, The Pro Arte Singers, NYXD Quartet / Paul Hillier (dir)

Harmonia Mundi HMX290408790 4CDs [4:16:00]

★★★★★



Estonian-born Arvo Pärt developed as a composer in the isolation of the Soviet-bloc in the 1950s, largely unaware of contemporary musical trends in the west. By the 1960s, however, he was at the forefront of serialist experimentation and other techniques, producing some major compositions at this time. But the first of several periods of self-imposed silence led him to reassess his musical style and evolve a musical language radically different from his earliest compositions. By 1976 he had formulated the technique to which he has remained loyal which he calls 'tintinnabuli' (derived from the Latin, 'little bells'), which he describes thus: 'I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements – with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials – with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation.'

## 'Paul Hillier's special relationship with the composer and his music is evident throughout'

Pärt settled in (West) Berlin in 1980, where he has pursued his minimalist techniques in a series of concentrated settings of religious texts, the majority of which are included in this magnificent 4CD boxed set. Many of these pieces are brief and achieve powerful effects using common scales and triads that have been liberated from their former associative values and relationships.

Paul Hillier is the key figure in these recordings (made between 1996 and 2010): he has been a leading interpreter of Pärt's vocal music for decades, and with these recordings set down authoritative readings of the music whose legacy will last. His special relationship with the composer and his music is evident throughout and all is lovingly presented. The recording are brought together for the first time as a single set at a special price. No one who loves Pärt's music will want to be without this set.

PHILIP REED

▼ Many of the pieces featured in this boxed set are brief, though achieve powerful effects



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 and that is why I write  
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 for good music must also reach  
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 often cursed resource, the heart.”

Eugene Zador

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◀ and viscerally vivid soloists, supported by remarkably varied and rich strata of string colour from Kinetic.

Knaggs embraces many historical influences, powerfully and unapologetically evident in an instantly relatable work which offers, nonetheless, deeper insights with repeated listening to this immediate and immersive SACD recording. A classic for our time, perhaps?

REBECCA TAVENER

### Arvo Pärt: *Tractus*

Maria Litra (s) / Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Tallin Chamber Orchestra / Tõnu Klajuste (dir)

ECM New Series 2800 [68.20]

★★★★



For Arvo Pärt, as for the entire Christian faith, everything begins

with the embodied word. That is true here even in the orchestral pieces in which the relevant text is unheard. In the new version of *Littlemore Tractus*, to words preached in Oxford by St John Henry Newman on 'Wisdom And Innocence' in February 1843, and in the pilgrimage songs of *Cantique des degrés*, the source of Pärt's tintinnabulary style of composition in sacred speech is made explicit. This puts great pressure on the choir and conductor to integrate the vocal music with the orchestral parts and this they have done with almost uncanny accuracy: to the extent that the vocal works seem to transcend speech, while the orchestral pieces clearly articulate their source texts.

Even the great prayer of Matthew 6: 9-13, set here as 'Vater Unser' passes through language to the unsayable.

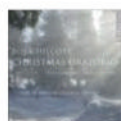
BRIAN MORTON

### Bob Chilcott: *Christmas Oratorio*

Dame Sarah Connolly (m-s, Mary), Neal Pritchard (t, Evangelist), Neal Davies (b, Herod, Simeon), Choir of Merton College, Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia / Benjamin Nicholas (dir)

Delphian DCD34321 [72.10]

★★★★



How do you take a story 2,000 years old, now less cherished than it

was, but representing what Rowan Williams called 'the most important event in human history' and retain its grandeur while still allowing that it happened to the simplest and most lowly? For this first recording of Bob Chilcott's shining Christmas music, the original soloists from the 2019 premiere have been brought back. Nick Pritchard's Evangelist is a wonder, youthful but steward to an awe-filled secret; Sarah Connolly conveys Mary's wonderment and even fear with grace and not a flutter of girlishness, while Neal Davies's Herod stands as reminder that the world isn't ready to love. Orchestrated with a light hand – especially round the Evangelist – and impeccably recorded in the Delphian manner, this is a Christmas must.

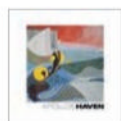
BRIAN MORTON

### Apollo5: *Haven*

Penelope Appleyard (s), Clare Stewart (m-s), Oscar Golden-Lee, Oli Martin-Smith (t), Augustus Perkins Ray (b), Apollo 5

VOCES8 VCM151 [68.29]

★★★★



This comes tricked out in a psychedelic cover, but it isn't in the wrong

browser. Inside is some of the

most insightfully earthy singing of Byrd (the *Mass for Five Voices*) you're likely to hear.

There's no plumminess about Apollo5, who take their mythological name seriously and always root the human and divine in one another.

The five voices create an unbroken spectrum, which creates the illusion of larger forces or some kind of chordal instrument behind.

They make clever choices of subsidiary material as well: ancient pieces like de Monte's *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi* and modern stuff you won't have heard before, woven together into an hour-plus of enchantment.

BRIAN MORTON

### Ola Gjeilo: *Dreamweaver*

Grace Davidson (s); Choir of Royal Holloway / Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Rupert Gough (cond) / Duncan Ridell (vn), Roberto Sorrentino (clo), Ola Gjeilo (p)

Decca 485 4635 [56.55]

★★★★



Ola Gjeilo's music breathes his native Norway and with *The Road* he takes

us from Hallingskvartet all the way to Hardanger fjord, a journey undertaken in companionable song. Charles Anthony Silvestri also wrote the texts for *Autumn*, which the Royal Holloway choir approaches with the same intimate address, and for *Dreamweaver*, which touches on the popular medieval dream poem *Draumkvedet*, about a man who sleeps from Christmas Eve to Twelfth Night.

It's a sombre piece in some respects but the Holloway singers don't go sad-sack on it but simply and subtly temper their delivery. It's not pictorial music, but it wonderfully conjures up a place.

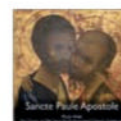
BRIAN MORTON

### Sancte Paule Apostole: *Music from The Choir of Old Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh*

The Choir of Old St Paul's Church, Paul Newton-Jackson (scholar-in-residence), Calum Robertson (asst dir), John Kitchen (dir)

Old St Paul's Church / Praxa Studios PXSC0001 [86:07]

★★★★★



Tucked into an awkward site between Waverley Station and the

Royal Mile, Old St Paul's Scottish Episcopal Church (OSP) is one of Edinburgh's best-kept secrets.

This double CD takes us up the steps and into the beautiful building to eavesdrop on its two feasts of title, the Conversion of St Paul in January and St Peter and St Paul in June, presenting a compendium of the music typically performed by its young choir at High Mass, Solemn Evensong and Benediction on those occasions. Highlights include world premiere

recordings of a mass setting *Tu es vos electionis Sanctissimae Pascale* by Cristobál de Morales (c.1500–1553), using an edition prepared by the choir's 'Scholar-in-Residence' Paul Newton-Jackson, and of a *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* from the Leiden Choirbooks by the 16th-century Flemish composer Johannes Flamingus (d.c.1598), using an edition by Newton-Jackson and Rowan Hawitt. But I was equally entranced by director of music John Kitchen's setting of a poem by Alan Spence written to sit alongside Alison Watt's painting *Still* in the Memorial Chapel at OSP; by assistant director of music Calum Robertson's anthem *Liturgy*, setting a poem by Irene Zimmerman, and his performance of James MacMillan's clarinet solo *For*



## CHORAL SELECTION



### Joy Hill assesses new works for choir, concert items, a new work by Will Todd and a book of Stanford folk songs

B.E. Boykin's **Silver Rain** (SSA, piano and cello. OUP 9780193565876, £2.65) caught

my attention as being a particularly good choice for young upper voices with its focus on the topical theme of nature when...*In time of silver rain, the earth puts forth new life again*, B.E. Boykin sets the Langston Hughes text so effectively with melancholic yet uplifting harmonies with a haunting, lyrical cello solo that accompanies the voices as well as playing between the verses. I love the ending where the singers *snap their fingers to emulate the sound of rainfall*. Categorised as being 'easy' by OUP, this piece, with its effective part-writing, does not in fact sound overly simple and will be a popular piece for both singers and listeners.

Another newly published work that also relates strongly to current environmental issues is **Tree Song** by Anders Edenroth (SSAA, unaccompanied. Walton WW1990 Code C12, £2.40). Unusually for a pamphlet copy, it is around 4:55 in duration and so is a substantial piece to programme. With both the music and lyrics by the composer, he explains how the tree is a metaphor for the world and has played

▼ Will Todd's *Tantum ergo* could be suitable both for communion and a more general sacred setting



an important position in Viking mythology; the wellbeing of the cosmos depended on the wellbeing of the tree Yggdrasil. He also says that 'this song may be a tribute to the tree, but even more so a call for action to protect and preserve'. Some of the vocal lines touch on the very lowest register and so it will only be suitable for more developed voices with very sound vocal technique. With its strong harmonic shape and poignant text (I particularly love the line, '*Hear my plea, my tree song. Join my caring choir*') this could be a sophisticated choice for a fine, upper voice vocal ensemble.

I was immediately drawn to a new piece by Will Todd, **Tantum ergo** (for SATB, with divisi, a cappella - maximum divisi SSAATTBB. Boosey & Hawkes 9790060140433, £3.50), with its homophonic texture and beautifully long lines. In the preface it states that it should be flexible and have a *chant-like feel*. This setting of the well-known text can obviously be used as a communion motet but will also be suitable for a more general sacred setting. However, the warm, close harmony, which is realised through the beautifully crafted divisi, would also sit comfortably within a concert programme. I am interested to see that it is written with an optional organ accompaniment, which will support the moving harmonies, and make it accessible for a wider range of abilities. This really is a highly distinctive, sumptuous piece.

### 'This song may be a tribute to the tree...but even more so a call for action to protect and preserve'

Previously written but only recently edited and published music is a rare category and particularly fascinating when the music is by a highly regarded composer. **Charles V Stanford: Nine Irish Folksongs** (SATB unaccompanied. Stainer and Bell Ltd 9790220228513, £9.50) are edited by leading Stanford authority Jeremy Dibble and will be of high interest to choirs who might be considering featuring music by this composer during 2024 to mark the centenary of his death.

This anthology, which for unknown reasons, never reached a publisher during the composer's lifetime, includes original Irish airs, and the pieces cover a wide range of contrasting metres and character, all supported by useful biographical notes by Angus Smith. I particularly like *Molly Hewson* with its lively feel of an Irish céili, which will be fun to perform.

The pieces come with a full piano part (for practice only) and will give choirs a unique opportunity to touch on some repertoire that is both newly published but has historic and fascinating roots.

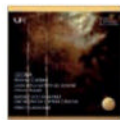
*Joy Hill directs the Royal College of Music Junior Department Chamber Choir, RCMJD Parry Voices and Vigala Singers. She has worked extensively with young voices and is known for her commitment to new choral music*

◀ *Galloway*. Psalms and hymns are performed with as much care as the less familiar works. There is a wonderfully collaborative feel to this music-making – Kitchen and Robertson have worked together at OSP for many years and share the roles of conductor and accompanist on these discs, with no indication in the track listings of who is taking which role. The shimmering candles on the festal cake are provided on more than one occasion by the *Zimbelstern* on the church's Willis organ; and Kitchen does allow himself to be credited with the spectacular performance of the Toccata in E minor Op 29 by the Belgian composer Joseph Callaerts (1830–1901) that concludes this evocative and wonderfully varied sequence.

CLARE STEVENS

### Antonio Caldara: Gloria; Respighi: Lauda per la Nativita del Signore

Cristina Fanelli (s), Maria Eleonora Camnada (s), Ilaria Molinari (m-s), Blagoj Nacoski (t), Leo Zappitelli (t), Alessandro Ravasio (b), Intende Voce Ensemble, Orchestra Da Camera Canova / Mirko Guadagnini (dir)  
Urania Records LDV 14107 [59:10]  
★★★★



This is the first recording of the elaborate 14-movement

*Gloria* by Antonio Caldara (1670–1725), written while he was in the service of the Duke of Mantua. The autograph score, inscribed 'Venice, 1707', is in the National Library in Vienna and was recently rediscovered and transcribed by musicologist Luca Della Libera. It's a really inventive, engaging setting, but unfortunately a lively instrumental introduction to this performance leads to disappointment when the

choir enters as if wearing hobnailed boots. The lower voices are cumbersome throughout, with some unstable tuning, and over-long pauses between the movements interrupt the flow of the piece. The upper voices are much more pleasing and the performance is redeemed by Cristina Fanelli's virtuosic solo in the 'Quoniam...', embellished by sparkling trumpets and oboes and leading to a simply splendid 'Cum sancto spiritu'. This is the second project by this team contrasting baroque and 20th-century repertoire, following a previous disc of Scarlatti and Howells; it's a shame the vocal forces aren't more refined, especially as the Berlin Radio Choir released a version of the beautiful Respighi Nativity anthem a few years ago that has all the lightness of touch that is missing here.

CLARE STEVENS

### Folks' Music

Chamber Choir Ireland, Esposito Quartet / Paul Hillier (dir)  
Louth Contemporary Music Society Digital Release LCMS2302 [55:00]  
★★★★



The three pieces on this album were all premiered at Louth Contemporary Music Society's midsummer festival 2023.

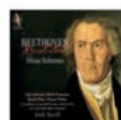
(That's the small town of Louth in the Republic of Ireland, just west of Dundalk.) They reflect the meticulously-punctuated theme of that edition of the festival: the idea that new music in the western classical tradition belongs to us all, but because we are all different, with no common heritage, the continuity implicit in the notion of tradition is not always recognised. Cassandra Millar's *The City, Full*

of *People* is inspired by Tallis's Lamentations, written in the 1560s; six small groups of singers perform just one line of its text, set using similar harmonies but an expanded timeframe, creating what the composer calls a 'cacophony of private secrets.' This was probably very atmospheric in live performance but the later recording in a Dublin chapel does not capture the sense of different groups very clearly. A string quartet by Laurence Crane, referencing both the idioms of classical chamber music and the in/out breath required to play a mouth organ, separates Miller's piece from another *a cappella* choral work, Linda Catlin Smith's poignant *Folio*, setting some of the poems that Emily Dickinson scribbled on the backs of envelopes. Performed by Chamber Choir Ireland with great assurance, this stood up well to the clunky process of listening to digital downloads on a desktop computer.

CLARE STEVENS

### Beethoven: Missa Solemnis

Lina Johnson (s), Olivia Vermeulen (m-s), Martin Platz (t), Manuel Walser (bar), La Capella Nacional de Catalunya, Les Concerts des Nations / Jordi Savall (dir)  
Alia Vox AVSA9956 [76:19]  
★★★★★



Following his generally well-received Beethoven symphony cycle on period instruments and adopting an historically informed approach to performance practice of the first quarter of the 19th century, Savall now caps that achievement with this marvellous account of the *Missa solemnis*, one of Beethoven's greatest works, though more admired than loved.

Using a small professional choir of 36 voices and an orchestra of 47 players, Savall maintains an excellent balance between vocal and instrumental resources, achieving great clarity throughout yet never at the expense of diluting Beethoven's most dramatic gestures.

Equally, the *Missa's* tender moments – the violin solo in the Benedictus, for example – are lovingly shaped without going over the top.

Four well-matched soloists complete the line-up. Two hundred years after its premiere, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* has lost none of its power, a point reinforced by Savall's new recording.

PHILIP REED

### Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: Partsongs

The Choir of King's College London / Joseph Fort (dir)  
Delphian DCD34271 [46:38]  
★★★★★



With no fewer than seven premiere recordings, this CD of partsongs by

Coleridge-Taylor plugs a further gap in the composer's burgeoning discography, as over a century after the composer's premature death we continue to get to grips with his output. Just *Hiawatha* he most certainly was not, and recordings such as this allow us to reassess and evaluate his true position in the landscape of late 19th-/early 20th-century British music. It helps, of course, that Joseph Fort and his youthfully fresh and vibrant vocal forces have the full measure of this material. A hugely enjoyable programme, beautifully sung, with one's pleasure enhanced by the authoritative liner notes by Jonathan Clinch.

PHILIP REED

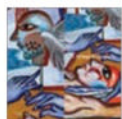


## ◀ A Winged Woman

The Marian Consort / Rory McCleery (dir)

Linn Records CKD724 [70:05]

★★★★★



This superbly executed and beautifully recorded album of contemporary vocal music – the disc's title is taken from Electra Perivolaris's 12-minute piece at the album's outset – presents no fewer than seven premiere recordings among its 10 tracks. With music from a range of composers including Perivolaris, Dani Howard and Chloe Knibbs, it is a programme that not only challenges traditions of approach but entirely restores one's faith in the future of concerted vocal

music. Rory McCleery and his colleagues are to be applauded for such a fine addition to their already significant discography.  
PHILIP REED

## Franck: Les Béatitudes

Anne-Catherine Gillet (s), Héloïse Mas (mez), Ève-Maud Hubeaux (a), Artavazd Sargsyan (t), John Irvin (t), David Bižić (bar), Yorck Felix Speer (b), Patrick Bolleire (b), Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, Hungarian National Choir / Gergely Madaras (dir)  
Fuga Libera FUG817 2CDS [1:59:00]

★★★★★



Composed between 1869 and 1879, Franck's oratorio *Les*

*Béatitudes* is a poetic meditation on the eight beatitudes of Christ as related in Matthew's Gospel, by Joséphine-Blanche Colomb. Inspired by the impressive scope of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Franck's oratorio has never achieved anything more than a toehold in the repertoire, despite Franck's personal response to Christ's message in music that is exceptionally beautiful. Performances and recordings of this rather forgotten oratorio are rare so it's good to be able to welcome this new set from Gergely Madaras and his Belgian-Hungarian forces. Madaras draws fine music-making from his chorus and orchestra, who appear to relish the special qualities of Franck's major work. With a



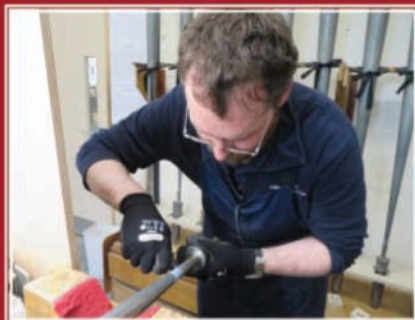
PUBLIC DOMAIN

▲ Tissot, *The Beatitudes Sermon*

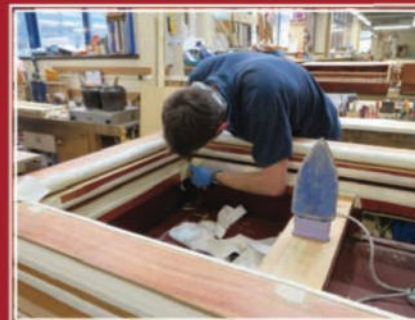
cast of decent soloists, this recording is a perfect opportunity to become acquainted with this exquisite work.

PHILIP REED

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# ENCOUNTERS

MATTHEW WHITESIDE, COMPOSER AND AUTHOR



MATTHEW WHITESIDE

Whilst studying my undergraduate in music at Queens' University, Belfast in 2008, I realised that no one was going to be as interested in my music as I am. That prompted me to start putting on concerts and promoting my music myself.

During the undergrad, I set up the Queens Composers Concert series with a few other students. The idea was to give performance opportunities to other composers and performing opportunities to performers who were interested in working with composers. This ethos moved with me across to Scotland when I began my Masters at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. I continued putting on concerts during my studies, eventually launching *The Night With...* in 2016. *The Night With...* has grown from an initial two concerts in 2016 to a record label and presenting a two-day festival of 15 concerts with 12 premieres in 2023.

Once I finished my Masters, I'd had that experience of already taking control myself to try and promote my music and started applying for funding for projects. The first project that got funded was to write a new

piece for viola d'amore for Emma Lloyd to tour as part of an album launch tour. The album, *Dichroic Light*, was essentially the best of my music up to that point.

*Dichroic Light* was released in 2015. When I released it I was thinking, 'Oh, here is some music in the world. People are going to buy it aren't they?' But they didn't, they were streaming it. I started looking more and more into digital distribution and digital releases because at that point I hadn't really bought an album for maybe about two years. I'd been streaming music through Apple Music. Why should I expect someone else to buy music if I'm just streaming it?

Before releasing *Dichroic Light* I knew about PRS and the royalties for concert performances, but at that point I didn't know about MCPS royalties for the mechanical reproduction of the work or PPL – for the performer and the record label side of royalties, or more importantly how to release music and promote it properly. It was through the process of releasing the album I had to learn all this, very quickly.

I was very much learning on the fly. It felt like every week or two I was finding out about

new parts to the logistics of royalties or the release timeline. It felt like a never-ending ball of string that I couldn't find the start of. No one had ever told me any of this stuff about the music industry, either in formal education or when sitting in the pub after a concert. People didn't want to think of the business of art, they just wanted to create and perform their art. Reasonable, but we all need to afford to live.

People started asking me for advice on how to release their music so, during lockdown I started giving online webinars, sharing my knowledge on how I released music. By that time I'd been through the process around five times with my own music and music released on TNW Music (*The Night With...*'s record label). These webinars were often over-subscribed showing there was a huge demand for the information. I started offering the talks to other organisations like universities and the Musicians' Union, sharing my experiences of self-releasing music and guiding other composers through the process. Eventually people started asking me if I could share any other resources. In 2023 I wrote *The Guidebook for Self-Releasing Your Music*.

I started the book with an introduction that explains that the point of this book isn't to force people to self-release their music. It's to empower people with the information. Presenting them with the tools and the truth about everything that a record label might do for you. After reading this book, I hope that people will be able to make an informed decision about whether to self-release their music or go with a record label. And to be able to enter into negotiations with a label from a place of knowledge rather than ignorance.

My biggest tip for composers in general is to be interested and be interesting. Be interested in what's going on and in what everyone else is doing, or as much as you possibly can be. (There is a huge amount going on!) Use that within your own work and absorb it, but also then do interesting stuff, whatever that means to you. That helps you make connections to create more work and have stories to tell around the releases of your music. ■

*The Guidebook for Self-Releasing Your Music* by Matthew Whiteside is out now.  
[matthewwhiteside.co.uk](http://matthewwhiteside.co.uk)

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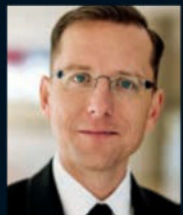
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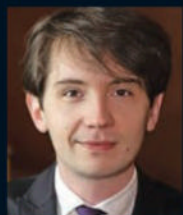
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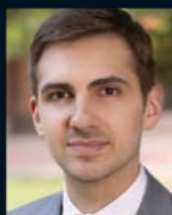
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