

CHOIR & ORGAN

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September 2021

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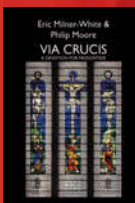
ORGELBAU KLAIS

Reconstructing a 1759 Engler organ in Poland is one of many projects keeping the Bonn team busy

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STRAVINSKY

Assessing the choral canon of one of the 20th century's greatest composers



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CECILIA MCDOWALL

What is the composer's role in today's society?

ROYAL CHORAL SOCIETY

How the choir has developed during its 150 years

LIVERPOOL'S BLUE COAT SCHOOL

A Father Willis organ is restored to its original state



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Live and let live

After 18 months, it feels like a miracle to be able to hear music live again. There is an immediacy to live music that is lost, or at least diluted, when filtered through technology – even though that same technology has been a lifeline during the pandemic. Hearing music live has an impact that cannot be simulated, like going for a walk on a wet and blustery day with nowhere to hide – it cuts through everything.

In my first concert 'back', I was bowled over by the quality of sound of Merton College Choir, who displayed a professionalism that belied the disruption of the pandemic on their normal routine; while attending James O'Donnell's opening recital of the Westminster Abbey Summer Organ Festival felt as personal as a one-to-one sharing over a cup of coffee. And what a difference a live audience makes. Though unable to attend in person Daniel Hyde's thrilling Poulenc at the first night of the Proms or Martin Baker's engaging lunchtime recital two days later ('Nimrod' and 'Corrie', anyone?), the energy from the audience almost crackled over the airwaves, and must have buzzed even more so in the Royal Albert Hall. Add to this a world premiere, and the moment is even more magical. Gabriel Jackson's *The World Imagined*, given its first airing at this year's Three Choirs Festival (see review, p.70), was a reminder of how special it is to be present at the delivery of a new creation, and of the importance for music to keep being regenerated.

These events are just a few of the shoots of recovery for the arts after the global trauma of Covid-19. But for many in the performing arts their lives have been irrevocably changed: some caught the virus, or cared for others who



did, or mourn those who have died; many lost jobs, income and professional confidence; and some found themselves forced to earn a living by leaving the stage and taking work that, in the chancellor of the exchequer's words, is 'more viable'. Performing artists are used to adapting to make ends meet; but the UK government has forced some unnecessarily to resort to such drastic measures due to its arbitrary allocation of financial support

during the pandemic.

All this has long-term effects on the mental, physical, and spiritual health of the nation – none of which seem to be on the present government's agenda. Having omitted the arts from schools' core curriculum, and refused financial support for arts teacher training, the government now plans for 50 percent funding cuts to arts subjects at universities, which could take effect from this autumn. In July, a report by the schools watchdog, Ofsted, noted not only a decline in those taking music at GCSE and A levels, but also a reduction in music provision for children at key stage 3 (ages 11-14), as well as reduced training for primary school teachers alongside reduced lesson time and staffing.

Together with the fact that this government has still failed to reach a visa agreement for artists to work in the EU, it is clear as day that they are no friends of the arts. All those who believe in the value of the arts must take every opportunity to challenge this government's policies – before it is too late.

Maggie Hamilton

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.

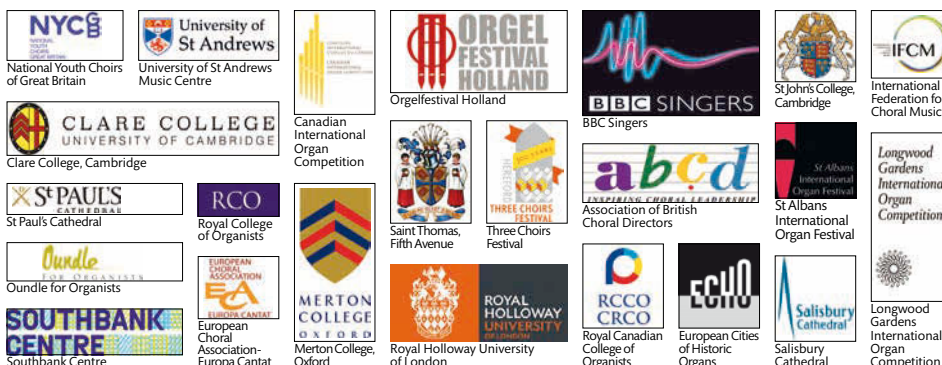
Specialist writers appraise new editions and recordings of standard repertoire and works fresh from the composer's pen, while our news and previews chart the latest developments in a changing world and present opportunities to become involved.

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11 AM Central Time Zone

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Todd Wilson, Robert Lehman,
Angela Kraft Cross, Nathan Stang

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19

Christmas Lessons & Carols
5:30 PM Central Time Zone

Chorister Anthem by
Samuel Sweet

SUNDAY, MAY 15

Gala Choral Concert
4 PM Central Time Zone

Combined Choirs Anthem by
Cecilia McDowall



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Fifty years after his death, we
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH GEORGE GRANTHAM
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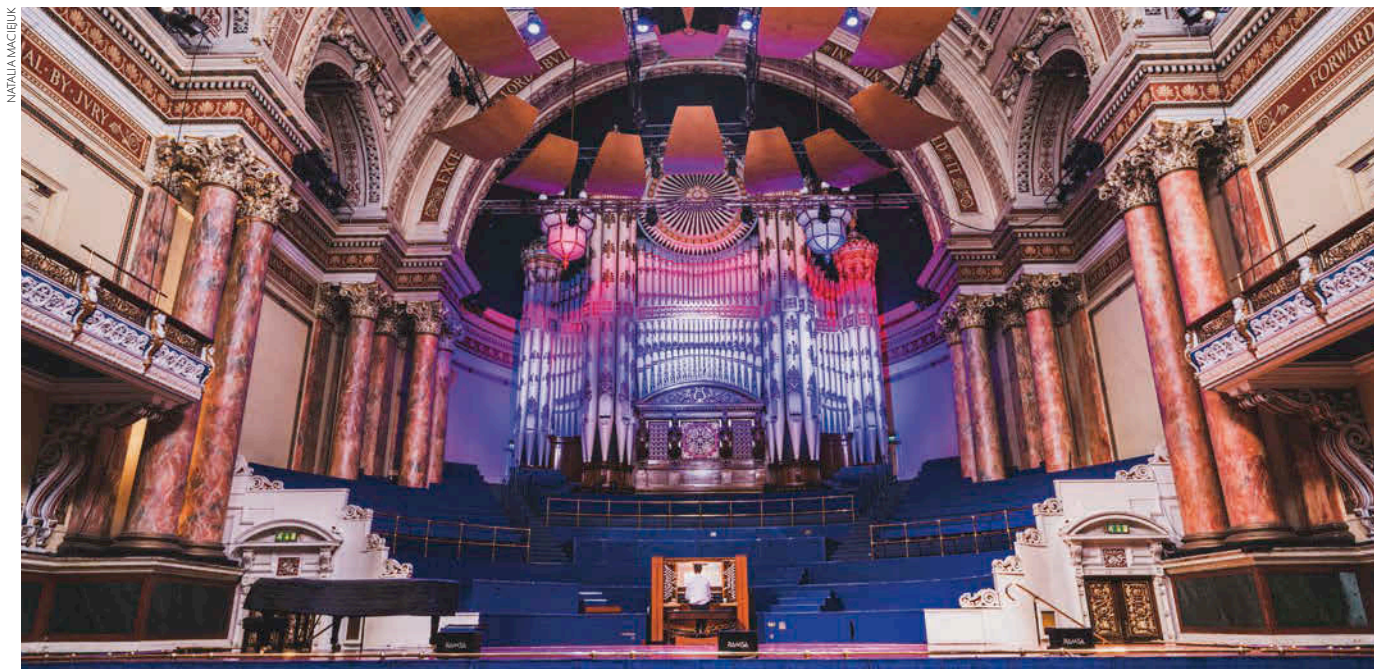
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Thomas Trotter's 'beautifully crafted' Duruflé;
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Michael Bacon, BBC studio manager.

LEEDS HISTORIC ORGAN TO BE RESTORED



NATALIA MACIELIK

▲ The organ of Leeds Town Hall, to be reconstructed by Nicholson and Co. Ltd

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEEDS TOWN HALL ORGAN will begin later in 2021. Nicholson and Co. Ltd have been chosen to embark on one of the biggest concert organ projects of recent times in consultation with Leeds City Organist, Darius Battiwalla. The reconstruction of the organ forms part of a wider building refurbishment project that began in 2019.

The present organ was built by Gray & Davison for the opening of the Town Hall in 1858, then rebuilt by Abbott & Smith in the 1890s and again by Wood, Wordsworth & Co. in 1972. The organ is heavily used in weekly recitals from September to April as well as featuring frequently in the international concert season with visiting choirs and orchestra. This intensive use, combined with the low humidity and powerful heating in the hall, has taken its toll on the instrument: the internal mechanisms are in poor condition as well as dating from many different periods.

In the forthcoming work, the instrument will retain its façade and about half the pipework, but otherwise will be all new. Although the clarity and brilliance of the organ were greatly enhanced in the 1972 rebuild, many of the rich sounds and orchestral colours which were unfashionable at the time were removed. The vision for the new instrument is to create a modern and versatile concert organ for the city of Leeds, with an inspiring musical character that reflects the organ's majestic appearance. The organ will return to around 100 stops on four manuals, with new enclosed Solo and Echo Choir divisions, and a new Grand Organ division, to be played separately or as part of the Great.

The current organ will be played publicly for the final time in October 2021 before being dismantled. Completion of work on the new organ is scheduled for November 2023.

Darius Battiwalla told *C&O*: 'The organ in Leeds Town Hall, in its current form, has served us magnificently for nearly 50 years. Leeds

City Council had the vision in 1971 to rescue the organ from its unplayable state and it has been hugely successful since then. We're proud of the fact that this instrument, built for the people of Leeds, can be heard free of charge each week played by leading recitalists, as well as in other concerts with orchestras, choirs and brass bands; but in recent years it's become increasingly unreliable, only kept going by the heroic efforts of our tuner, Andrew Carter. It now needs significant attention, and the two-year closure of the hall gives us the opportunity not simply to renovate what we have, but to create something really exciting. It's been a huge privilege to develop this project with Nicholson & Co., and I'm confident that by the end we will have one of the finest concert instruments in the country.'

Nicholson & Co. managing director Andrew Caskie added: 'The centrepiece of Leeds Town Hall is the magnificent organ case, which has been the backdrop to over a century and a half of music making. We are immensely privileged to have been entrusted with the opportunity to create a new organ that will inspire music for new generations in Leeds. The two significant alterations of the present instrument suggest that it has never quite reached its musical potential. Our proposed scheme takes inspiration from the Victorian façade and the best of the existing pipework, taking their place within a new 21st-century English concert organ. Our aim is that the organ will, perhaps for the first time, have a real cohesion between its appearance, musicality and mechanism. We look forward to working with Darius Battiwalla, William McVicker and Leeds City Council in this exciting project.'

For an introduction to the Leeds Town Hall Organ Renewal Project, presented by Petroc Trelawny, visit bit.ly/2Va3mqg. leedstownhall.co.uk

TRIAL BY FIRE

DOBSON PIPE ORGAN BUILDERS are on the road to recovery following the fire which devastated their workshop in Lake City, Iowa, on 15 June.

Company president John Panning told *Choir & Organ*: 'First of all, we are relieved there was no loss of life. The second-degree burns suffered by my co-worker, Randall Wolff, required skin grafts, but he is recovering well. And although our workshop was totally destroyed, several adjacent buildings escaped with only minor damage – a few broken window panes, and some slight roof damage from falling embers.'

The firm has found temporary office and workshop facilities and is currently working on service and restoration projects, with a view to restarting construction soon on Opus 99, the part-built four-manual organ for St James' Church, Sydney, Australia, which was destroyed in the fire.

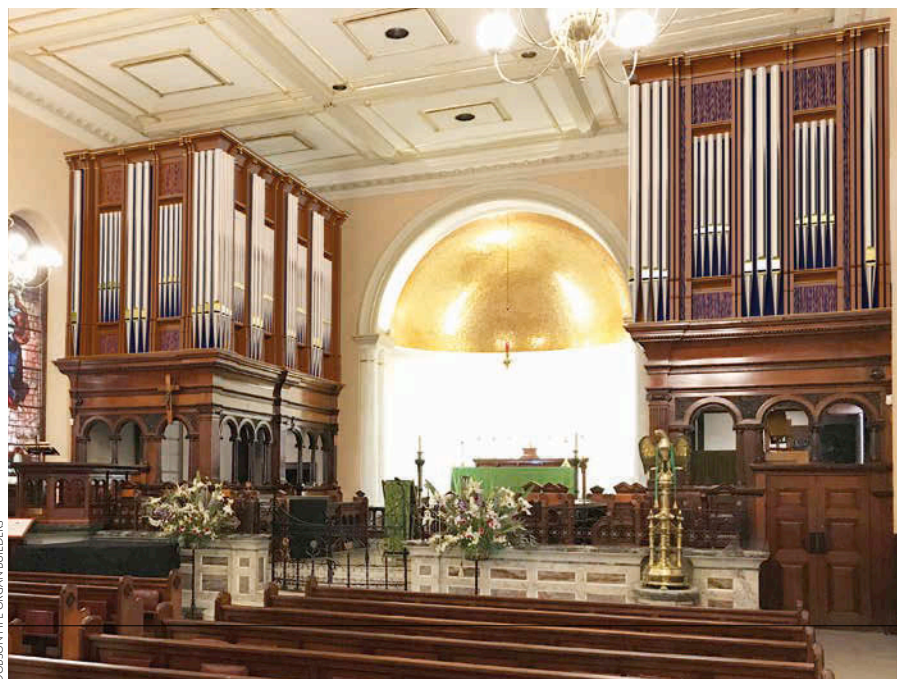
Hundreds of organ builders and others have rallied to offer support to the company. A GoFundMe campaign (bit.ly/3i4vFzH), set up by fellow organ builder Michael Sutcliffe of Foley-Baker (Tolland, Connecticut) has already raised over US\$35,000 to replace tools lost in the flames; Sutcliffe explained to local radio station CBC that many organ builders use their own personal tools – including drills, jigs, voicing tools, and wiring/electrical tools – which may not be covered under the company's insurance policy. Panning also reported, 'Nelson Barden, famed restorer of early 20th-century American organs who is retiring, has agreed to sell us the tools and equipment from his workshop.'

The firm has reposted a drone video of the aftermath of the fire on the front page of their website.

The company was founded in 1974 by Lynn A. Dobson, who served as president and artistic director until his retirement in February 2020. In its 47 years, the Dobson team has constructed 96 organs; restored a dozen historical mechanical action instruments; and rebuilt or restored several dozen electric action instruments.

Although most of the Dobson company's work has been in the USA, there have been several notable exports, including the organ for the chapel of Merton College, Oxford.
dobsonorgan.com

▼ Computer rendering of the new organ for St James', Sydney, which was destroyed in the fire



IN BRIEF

The Incorporated Society of Musicians has presented composer **Errollyn Wallen** with the 2020 ISM Distinguished Musician Award for her services to music. Established in 1976, the award recognises outstanding contributions to musical life in the UK.

The US conductor, composer and choral clinician-consultant **Dale Warland** has been named the 2021 recipient of The American Prize National Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement. Warland is one of only two choral conductors inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame.

Hal Leonard Europe (HLE) has announced a new sponsorship agreement with music charity **Music for Youth**. HLE will contribute to funding for Music for Youth's Mentors Programme, which supports the training of music professionals as mentors to young music makers and their leaders.

The next **Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition** has been moved from 2022 to 2023, running from 20-24 Jun. This is to allow the construction of *Longwood Reimagined: A New Garden Experience*. Applications for the competition will open in Jun 2022.

The Carice Singers stepped in at less than 24 hours' notice to perform the world premiere of RPS composer Lillie Harris's commissioned piece, *The Dusk of Thee*, at the Cheltenham Music Festival. They replaced the Choir of Merton College, Oxford, who had been asked to self-isolate due to NHS Test and Trace requirements.

Stile Antico baritone **Will Dawes** has been appointed guest director of the chamber choir Commotio. Dawes is also director of music at St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, and director of chapel music at Somerville College, Oxford.

IN BRIEF

International Choral Festival Wales has gone virtual for its 2021 edition on 30 Oct. Interested participants should submit a video of their choir singing a piece of 3-5 minutes' duration.
Deadline: midday on 1 October.

Composers are invited to submit a Christmas carol for the Bach Choir's **Sir David Willcocks Carol Competition**. The winning carol will be premiered at the Bach Choir's 'Carols at Cadogan' concert on Monday 20 Dec. The competition is open to amateur composers of all ages, in two categories: under-18s and over-18s.
Deadline for submissions: Friday 15 October.

The four finalists in the 'Grand Orgue' category of the **#SAINTSULPICE2021** composition competition have been announced. The works of Gabriele Agrimonti, Andrea Damiano Cotti, Jean-Emmanuel Filet and Thomas Kientz will be performed in the final on 21 Nov.

Schmidt Piano and Organ Service is now Canadian distributor for **Eminent Organs**. The instruments are handcrafted in the Netherlands.

The Grade II listed **Hele organ** (1894) in All Saints' Church, Falmouth is to be fully renovated by Henry Willis & Sons. Additional work has been carried out by Henry Speechly & Sons (1926), Roger Yates of Michaelstow (1950) and Lance Foy (1980, 1997 and 2008). In 2015 the instrument was placed in the care of Willis & Sons. A recording of the organ can be heard at bit.ly/3zvdRmW.

On 2 Jul, the **Steel City Choristers** performed their first indoor concert. The community-based choir, conducted by Sheffield Cathedral's former director of music, Joshua Stephens, was formed after the closure of Sheffield Cathedral Choir in 2020.

CANTATA TO BE PREMIERED IN ENGLISH AND POLISH VERSIONS



CHUCK SMITH

▲ Daniel Knaggs: the composer said that writing *Two Streams* was 'a labour of love'



© DANIEL KNAGGS

▲ The opening of the fifth movement of *Two Streams*

US COMPOSER DANIEL KNAGGS'S NEW CANTATA *TWO STREAMS* (*Dwa Zdroje*) will be premiered in English and Polish versions in September and October.

Scored for mixed choir, soloists and string orchestra, the 70-minute work comprises texts from three main sources: the Diary of St Faustina (a Polish Roman Catholic nun and mystic who was canonized in 2000), the Scriptures (in Latin), and liturgical texts (in Latin and Greek). The 14 movements are arranged symmetrically (1 and 14 are linked, 2 and 13 etc).

Knaggs told *C&O*: '*Two Streams* is inspired by a message of hope, seen through the eyes of an extraordinary Polish woman named Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905-38). Living in a time of increasing upheaval, she felt called to write down words she heard and experienced in prayer, recording these in her diary. The message she was given was about mercy – that the world would not know peace without turning to mercy. After fulfilling her brief mission of relaying this message, she passed away only months before the outbreak of the second world war, in which all could see the trajectory of a world *not* turning to mercy.

'The music itself is a tapestry weaving together threads from many eras, ancient to present. Threads of musical procedure and thought – including medieval, renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary – all contribute to the body of this work. This wide range of musical "styles" is far from being a nod to eclecticism for its own sake. Rather, incorporating musical features from throughout the ages in a sense illustrates the etymology of musical expression. Some of the earliest known examples of music are songs/chant expressing and asking for mercy. For millennia now, music has been seen as an apt medium for imploring, showing, and celebrating mercy. The composition *Two Streams* continues in this vein, exploring the timeless message of mercy as proclaimed through the hidden (but meaningful) life of St Maria Faustina Kowalska.'

The conception of the piece began in discussions with the Toruń-based ensemble Schola Cantorum Thorunensis. 'It was a labour of love,' said Knaggs, 'a project that for years I was greatly looking forward to tackling. But this project took on a new scope and purpose after my father unexpectedly passed away in September 2019. He was undoubtedly the individual most supportive of me and my music. Still unable to find words, I dedicate to him this composition he could not wait to hear.'

Robert Simpson will conduct Houston Chamber Choir and Kinetic in the premiere of *Two Streams* on 9 September at the Church of the Annunciation, Houston; *Dwa Zdroje* will be premiered by Schola Cantorum Thorunensis and Capella Bydgosciensis, directed by the composer, as part of the 2021 Musica Vera Festival at St James's Church, Toruń on 16 October.

PRIZES AT ST ALBANS

THE PRIZE WINNERS OF ST ALBANS INTERNATIONAL ORGAN COMPETITION were announced in St Albans Cathedral and live-streamed on the evening of 16 July.

From 60 entrants who had submitted recordings for the pre-selection round, 12 were shortlisted.

Covid restrictions had altered the usual structure of the competition. Instead of holding quarter- and semi-finals leading to a two-part final of solo and concerto repertoire, Interpretation competitors performed a 40-minute programme that had been videoed, to include the three set works: J.S. Bach Fantasia in C minor BWV 562, Saint-Saëns's Prelude & Fugue in B major, op.99 no.2, and the commissioned work, Roxanna Panufnik's *Gloria cum Jubilo*.

The Improvisation competition 2021 was not held.

The use of videoed performances allowed freedom to play on different instruments according to the repertoire – Magdalena Moser (AT), for example, gave a virtual tour of organs in Styria. Others chose to perform their entire programme on a single instrument.

There were also varying degrees of sophistication in the recording techniques. Artistic director David Titterington stressed, however, that the competitors were not judged on the quality of the videology but on the quality of the performance. Jury member Pieter van Dijk added, 'We were looking for varied programmes performed at the highest level technically and stylistically, and with a personal narrative style.'

The competition committee had decided on an alternative award structure for 2021: in lieu of first and second prizes, £1,500 was awarded to each of three competitors for the most outstanding overall performance.

The prizes were awarded as follows:

- **Most outstanding overall performance** (£1,500 each) – Mitchell Miller (US), Quentin du Verdier (FR), Mona Rozdestvenskyte (LT)
- **Peter Hurford Bach Prize** for the best performance of J.S. Bach's BWV 562 (£1,000) – Daniel Chang (US)
- **Best performance of the commissioned work** (£800) – Mona Rozdestvenskyte (LT)
- **Douglas May Award** for the best performance of a single work (£800) – Magdalena Moser (AT), for her performance of Muffat's *Toccata decima*

The jury comprised Bine Bryndorf (DK), Franz Danksagmüller (DE/AT), David Hill (UK), Rie Hiroe (JP), Jean-Baptiste Robin (FR), Pieter van Dijk (NL), and Todd Wilson (US). All members of the jury commented on the excellent standards, Hill drawing attention to each of their personalities 'radiating' through their performances; and they congratulated the competitors for overcoming the challenges of this year's competition. Mona Rozdestvenskyte revealed she had faced a particular challenge, having been ill with Covid for three weeks; this had left her with only two weeks to practise in situ before the filming.

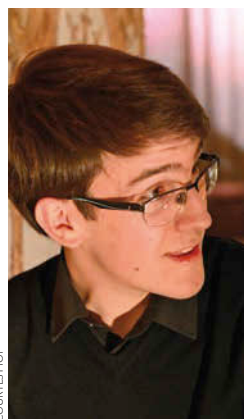
Announcing the winners of the prizes for most outstanding overall performance, David Hill praised the 'wow' factor of Mitchell Miller's Reger, adding that he had given 'very compelling performances' of all the other works too; Todd Wilson complimented Quentin du Verdier on his 'very gripping Sweelinck'; and Bine Bryndorf praised Mona Rozdestvenskyte for her 'wonderful and powerful musicianship', understanding of the instruments, and the 'energy and intensity' of her performance of Thierry Escaich's *Vers l'espérance*, saying that her performance in all was 'a marvellous and most exciting musical journey'.

Pieter van Dijk told *C&O*: 'It was a new experience for me to be a jury member in an online competition. Of course, we missed the direct contact with jury colleagues while listening to the competitors. And it was difficult for us to compare and judge performances on such different instruments, some of them of high quality, others less so. Also, a live performance always gives a different impression from a recorded performance, in which candidates can record the piece again if mistakes are made.'

'I was very impressed by the high level of all the 12 competitors and I congratulate them all on these results. The commissioned work by Roxanna Panufnik also stole my heart, and it was excellent for reviewing and comparing!'

The 60th St Albans International Organ Festival will take place on 3-15 July 2023; the 2021 competition jury will return. organfestival.com

▼ Winning smiles (l to r): Quentin du Verdier, Magdalena Moser, Mitchell Miller, Daniel Chang and Mona Rozdestvenskyte



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PAST LIVES

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN (1939-2021)



MARCO BORGHEVE

Louis Andriessen, one of the most lauded Dutch composers of his generation, has died aged 82.

Son of organist and composer Hendrik Andriessen, who tutored him in his formative years, Andriessen continued his studies with Kees van Baaren at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. Receiving the major composition prize upon his graduation, he subsequently studied for

two years with Luciano Berio in Milan and Berlin.

His compositions cover all musical genres, but he had a predilection for theatre, literature, dance and film. For Andriessen, 'choir' often meant a small, amplified ensemble of professional solo singers – frequently provided internationally by Synergy Vocals – sometimes mixed, sometimes women only, and sometimes with added children's choir. Works with these characteristic groupings include *De Staat*, *De Tijd*, *De Materie*, and *Trilogy of The Last Day*.

Andriessen's final work, the cantata *May*, a tribute to his late friend Frans Brüggen and written before his Alzheimer's and vascular dementia progressed rapidly, was premiered by Cappella Amsterdam and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century in December 2020. It is a rare Andriessen work in featuring a full mixed chorus. Andriessen's opposition to conservatism in the music world perhaps influenced his arrangement of Satie's non-conformist, Rosicrucian *Messe des pauvres* to be accompanied by 15 solo strings, accordion, harp and bass clarinet. A cappella mixed voice works include *Flora Tristan*, a substantial setting of a multi-lingual text by Fleur Bourgonje, and two short works: *Ahania Weeping*, a setting of words from William Blake's *The Book of Ahania* premiered by The Crossing in 2016, and *Un beau baiser* from the music theatre work *George Sand*.

Andriessen wrote two solo organ works – the two-minute *Mach's mit mir*, *Gott* and *De goddelijke routine* – and *De Eerste Minnaar* for boy soprano and organ. Two carillon pieces often feature in organists' programmes: *De Toren* and *De komst van Willibrord*.

Andriessen's principal publishers are Boosey & Hawkes and Donemus.

MZILIKAZI KHUMALO (1932-2021)



SAWRO MUSIC ARCHIVE

Professor James Steven Mzilikazi Khumalo, a doyen of South African languages, arts and culture, has died aged 89. A distinguished teacher, and professor of isiZulu, he was also a prolific composer who broke the compositional mould of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Khumalo was born in kwaNgwelu in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. His parents

were in the ministry of the Salvation Army, whose choirs he would later conduct. His musical development was all the more remarkable given he had no formal qualifications in music. Khumalo later worked with the music director and SABC producer Richard Cock to popularise dual notation – staff notation alongside tonic sol-fa – which became the staple in South Africa. He also established important cultural ties with the African diaspora during the apartheid years.

Khumalo was pivotal in establishing the Sowetan Nation Building Massed Choir Festival, which he co-directed with Richard Cock from its inception. The festival attracted thousands of participants and audience members each year and became one of the leading events for young singers and soloists, many of whom went on to achieve success both locally and abroad. He also pioneered the publication of three dual-notation volumes of *South Africa Sings*, profiling the works of South Africa's black choral composers including John Knox Bokwe (1855-1922), Joshua Mohapeloa (1908-82), Hamilton Masiza (1894-1955) and Khumalo himself.

Khumalo's contributions to choral music were recognised by former arts and culture minister Ben Ngubane, who appointed him chair of the national anthem committee for South Africa in 1995. Khumalo was instrumental in advocating for *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* as the basis for a new anthem for the country. It was his idea to join the new and old anthems for purposes of reconciliation and he arranged the first part of the new hybrid national anthem.

In 1999, he was awarded the Order of the Star by President Nelson Mandela in recognition of his contributions to the nation.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS IN EAST ANGLIA

On 25 September, the RCO presents **The Organists' Perfect (Re-)Starter Kit**, a full day of coaching in the two churches on HM The Queen's Sandringham estate. It is led by regional consultant Julian Haggett, who also gives a closing recital on the historic Snetzler organ (1756) in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Hillington. All playing places are booked, but at the time of going to print, reduced-price observer places are still available. bit.ly/3eZ61dR.

The RCO's **St Edmundsbury Experience** will be held on 26 September. Participants will observe choir practice, attend Choral Evensong, and hear the cathedral's Harrison & Harrison organ (2010, pictured) demonstrated by regional consultant William Saunders. Attendees will also be given the opportunity to play the organ. This event is chiefly for RCO members, but non-members are welcome to attend. bit.ly/2UVbdYR



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NEW CHORISTER PROGRAMME

CRAIG WILLIAMS



▲ Bilton Grange pupils will now be able to join an independent chorister programme

BILTON GRANGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL in Dunchurch – part of the Rugby School Group – is to start its own independent chorister programme for girls and boys. From September 2022, pupils will have the chance to become part of separate chorister teams from each year group (years 3-8).

The scheme will form part of a wider music programme, Music Every Day, that will include a daily singing initiative for all pupils. Each chorister will receive high-level training including instrumental studies, music theory, aural training, and vocal coaching.

The schedule will comprise a daily morning

rehearsal and a chapel service four afternoons a week – of Evensong or Eucharist – at either Bilton Grange or Rugby School. Unlike most cathedral chorister routines, the Bilton Grange programme will not include weekends. In time, extra activities, including tours, concerts, recordings and broadcasts, will be developed.

As at Rugby School, with which Bilton Grange merged in January 2020, means-tested bursaries of up to 100 per cent of fees will be available, as well as options of boarding (full, flexi-, or weekly) or being a day pupil.

Peter Green, executive headmaster of the Rugby School Group, said: 'Our new chorister programme will provide children who love to sing the chance to develop their talent with specialist training and exceptional facilities, as well as have an outstanding education.'

Richard Tanner, director of music at Rugby School, added: 'The new chorister programme at Bilton Grange will afford children a pathway for excellence in music on a par with the very best cathedral and collegiate choral programmes in the world.'

A recruitment drive begins in September 2021 with a series of open days at Bilton Grange. Prospective recruits can experience being a chorister for a day. bit.ly/3i18NBc

IAO-RCO COMPETITION WINNER

WENYING WU HAS WON the IAO-RCO Organ Playing Competition, having been praised for her 'committed and electrifying performance of a bold and challenging programme, and for her conviction and consummate technical control.'

Wu has a Master's degree from the University of Music and Theatre in Leipzig, where she studied with Martin Schmeding. She is now studying church music under Martin Sturm at the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar, and is taking masterclass studies with Martin Sander at the University of Music in Detmold.

Second prize was shared between Merle Hillmer, a student of church music in Leipzig, and Ashley Wagner, assistant head of music at Birmingham Cathedral; the finalists also

included Joshua Hughes, William Peart and James Short.

The competition is open to organists between the ages of 18 and 26. Originally due to be held as part of the IAO Festival in Edinburgh in July 2020, it was postponed due to the pandemic, and was held instead in a virtual format, with the six finalists submitting recordings of their playing on instruments across Europe. Their performances and the adjudication can be viewed at bit.ly/3AaHElu.

The competition jury comprised Incorporated Association of Organists (IAO) president John Kitchen, Royal College of Organists (RCO) president Gerard Brooks, and Oundle for Organists director Ann Elise Smoot. iao.org.uk, rco.org.uk

EVENTS

On 1-5 Sep, Musikfest Bremen presents the **Arp-Schnitger-Festival**. Artists include organists Léon Berben and Harald Vogel, the choirs La Capella Ducale and Vox Luminis, and the instrumental ensembles Musica Fiata and a nocte temporis. The festival culminates in a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* at St Cyprian & Corneliuskirche, Ganderkesee. bit.ly/2V04mgX

The **8th International Organ Competition Dudelange**, featuring the Stahlhuth organ at St Martin's Church, Dudelange, Luxembourg, begins on



5 Sep; the final round, performed as a public concert, is on 10 Sep. Finalists will include works by Dominik Susteck in their 30-minute programme. bit.ly/3kGHZl2

Wolfgang Kogert and the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, directed by Pablo González, will perform the Scandinavian premiere of **Bernd Richard Deutsch's** organ concerto, *Okeanos*, on 17 Sep at the Konserthus in Stavanger, Norway.

Booking is now open for **abcd's** second **Virtual Choir Leaders' Festival** on 3-5 Sep. Events include workshops, webinars, a virtual exhibition, and the opportunity to network with presenters and colleagues from the UK and around the world. Details of the schedule and delegate and exhibitor rates can be found at bit.ly/3iBLY6c.

WELLS CATHEDRAL LAUNCHES NEW CHORAL COMPOSITION COMPETITION

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▲ Encouraging new compositions: Wells Cathedral

WELLS CATHEDRAL IS TO LAUNCH the Cathedral Commissions Choral Competition.

The competition will feature two categories. Undergraduates (18-21) are asked to compose a work of three to five minutes' duration for SATB choir and organ, selecting a text from a choice of three provided. The prize is a premiere performance by the cathedral choir.

Postgraduates (22 and over) are asked to submit a portfolio of three recent compositions, of which at least one should be choral. The winning entrant will be commissioned by Cathedral Commissions to write a piece of three to five minutes' duration for SATB choir and organ on a given text. The work will be premiered by the cathedral choir. The winner will receive mentoring in the compositional process from an internationally recognised choral composer.

The two winning works will receive their premiere performance by the cathedral choir during the 2022 Easter season.

More details will be available on the Wells Cathedral website this autumn: wellscathedral.org.uk. **Deadline: 1 December 2021.**

RECITAL ROUND-UP

Alton, St Lawrence at 1pm

Rob Goldfinch (16 Sep)
01420 543628

Birmingham Town Hall at 1pm

Thomas Trotter (27 Sep)
0121 780 3333

Bristol, All Saints, Clifton at 4pm

James Lancelot (11 Sep)
0117 974 1355

Cambridge, St Andrew's, Chesterton at 7.30pm

Paul Hale (11 Sep) 07974 931057

Chelmsford Cathedral at 12 noon

James Davy (10 Sep)
01245 294484

Cirencester Parish Church at 1.10pm

James Lancelot (1 Sep)
01285 659 317

Coventry Cathedral at 12.30pm

James Lancelot (20 Sep)
024 7652 1200

Ely Cathedral at 5.15pm

Edmund Aldhouse (5 Sep), Glen Dempsey (12 Sep) 01353 667735

Grasmere, St Oswald's at 7pm

John Robinson (27 Sep)
017684 83886

Hereford Cathedral at 1.15pm

Laurence John (7 Sep), Jonathan Allsopp (14 Sep), Emily India Evans (21 Sep), Peter Dyke (28 Sep) 01432 374251

Liverpool Cathedral at 2.25pm*

Will Jeys (5 Sep), Ian Tracey (12 Sep), Drew Sellis (5pm, 18 Sep), Joshua Simões (6pm, 18 Sep), Ian Wells (19 Sep), Matthew Breen (26 Sep) 0151 709 6271

London EC4, St Paul's Cathedral at 4.30pm

William Fox (5 Sep), Kees Nottrott (12 Sep), David Price (19 Sep)
020 7651 0898

London N1, St John the Evangelist, Duncan Terrace at 7.30pm

Isabelle Demers (25 Sep)
020 7226 1218

London W1, St George's, Hanover Square at 1.10pm

Oliver Macfarlane (14 Sep), Freddie James (28 Sep) 020 7629 0874

London W1, Grosvenor Chapel at 1.10pm

Richard Hobson (7 Sep), Christopher Strange (21 Sep)
020 7499 1684

Ludlow, St Laurence at 1pm

Jonathan Scott (4 Sep)
01584 875154, stlaurences.org

Norwich Cathedral at 7.30pm

George Incoe (16 Sep)
01603 218306

Patterdale, St Patrick's at 12 noon

Andrew Cantrill-Fenwick (8 Sep)
017684 83886

Portsmouth Cathedral at 1.10pm

Martyn Noble (16 Sep), Rhidian Jones (23 Sep) 023 9282 3300

Reading Minster at 12.30pm,

Gillian Blythman (17 Sep)
0118 9571057

Salisbury Cathedral at 7.30pm

David Briggs (15 Sep)
bit.ly/3w13hNE

Southwell Minster at 7.30pm

Martin Baker (15 Sep), James Furniss-Roe (29 Sep)
southwellminster.org.uk

Tewkesbury Abbey at 1pm

James Lancelot (7 Sep)
01684 850 959

Warwick, St Mary's at 1.15pm

Oliver Hancock (24 Sep) 01926 403940, stmaryswarwick.org.uk



PAUL HALE

INAUGURAL RECITAL IN CAMBRIDGE

Paul Hale is to give the inaugural recital on the rebuilt organ at St Andrew's, Chesterton, Cambridge (11 Sep). The instrument (pictured) dates back to 1860, when it was supplied by Henry Bryceson & Son. It underwent major rebuilds by Hill & Son (1900) and Hill, Norman & Beard (1939), with further alterations in 1961 (Hill, Norman & Beard) and 1980 (Norman Hall & Sons). By 2013 the organ was no longer fit for purpose, and following a consultation process, a contract was given to Henry Grove & Sons of Nottingham. The work was completed in May 2021.

Meanwhile, at Southwell Minster Martin Baker improvises an accompaniment to the 1929 film *Phantom of the Opera* (15 Sep); George Incoe continues Norwich Cathedral's monthly evening recital series (16 Sep); and William Fox performs another instalment of his Complete Bach at St Paul's Cathedral (5 Sep).

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

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Roger Fisher

1936 – 2021

Roger Fisher, who died on 3 June, was for 29 years organist and master of the choristers at Chester Cathedral, as well as an international recitalist and a recording artist who featured on more than 35 albums.

Roger was born to Vera and Leslie Elgar Fisher of Woodford, Essex, in 1936, and his childhood memories included watching the London docks ablaze during the blitz of the second world war. He often told the story of how his mother was so fed up with sleeping in the bomb shelter in the garden that one night she took Roger and his sister Rosemary back inside the house; the shelter was hit that night and destroyed.

Surrounded by music – both his father and grandfather were accomplished pianists – Roger took piano lessons and sang in the choir of St Mary's, Woodford, before attending the local independent Bancroft's School; from there, he would walk to the nearest church to practise on a Father Willis organ. His organ teacher, Stanley Andrews, encouraged him to approach Harold Darke for further study,

Three Choirs Festival, as well as conducting the Hereford String Orchestra and turning his hand to building a couple of pipe organs.

1967 brought the move to Chester Cathedral as organist and master of the choristers, a post he was to hold for nearly 30 years, his energy and dynamism earning him the sobriquet of 'the mighty atom'. The dean at the time of his appointment – the indomitable George Addleshaw – commissioned Roger to make improvements all-round. Having 'inherited' the exactitude of Melville Cook, Roger greatly improved the standard of the choir, and under his stewardship the cathedral's organ – an 1867 instrument by Whiteley Bros of Chester, with a Gilbert Scott case, rebuilt in 1910 by William Hill & Son – was rebuilt by Rushworth & Dreaper in 1969/70, with some pipework made to Roger's own design. Roger's recordings – notably in EMI's Great Cathedral Organs series, which included Reubke's Organ Sonata – did much to raise the international profile of the instrument. Of the Great Cathedral Organs release, he later wrote: 'The

Roger was a man who lived for his music and was dedicated to it all his life

and Roger deputised for Darke at St Michael's Cornhill, in the City of London; in later years he was to record Darke's complete organ works for JAV Recordings. Gaining a place in 1957 at the Royal College of Music, he studied organ (with Darke) and piano, and also took harmony and counterpoint lessons with Herbert Howells, both of whom commended him in their reports; he also gained his FRCO and the Geoffrey Tankard prize for organ playing. The following year Roger moved to Christ Church, Oxford as organ scholar under Sydney Watson.

In 1962, Roger became assistant organist at Hereford Cathedral, where the music department was under the exacting leadership of Melville Cook. His time at Hereford presented Roger with opportunities to work as accompanist and chorus master for the

recording sessions progressed with almost miraculous ease and the disc was completed in an evening and a half. The producer [Brian Culverhouse] and engineers were booked to be in Chester for four days and, on completion of the recording we all wondered what to do. When I suggested a Rheinberger disc of Sonatas 7 and 8, Brian wondered whether we should complete this in the time available, but the fates smiled on us and we completed the second disc in record time.'

Outside his cathedral work, Roger was active in conducting the Chester Music Society and Orchestral Society where he could indulge in his love of orchestral music, particularly Brahms, Elgar and Mahler; he also maintained a busy schedule of recording, teaching, examining, touring internationally, and the occasional broadcast. Also a proficient



MIKE WILLIAMS

▲ 'The mighty atom': Roger Fisher

pianist, his repertoire included concertos by Beethoven and Mozart.

After leaving Chester, in 1996 Roger retired to Wales with his second wife, Gillian (my mother), though remained active as a recitalist and organ adviser, and wrote two books: the four-volume *Masterclass with Roger Fisher*, and *Towards keyboard fluency*, published by Animus. A serious stroke in 2019 brought his ability to play to an abrupt end. One heart-breaking thing I remember about the period after his stroke was a trip arranged for him to hear Evensong in Malpas Parish Church. After the service we wheeled Roger to the piano but he could only manage to play five notes with his left hand – the hand that worked. I could only bring myself to say to him that he'd better get on and learn Ravel's Piano Concerto for left hand alone. Believe it or not, Roger chuckled.

Roger was a man who lived for his music and was dedicated to it all his life. He was a voracious reader, which included not only books on music, but railways and a great deal of fiction. He enjoyed watching *Coronation Street* and *Strictly Come Dancing*. He also wrote many articles about the organ and its design. He was, essentially, a shy and humble man and always hated parties, although he loved his food and wine. In 1992, for the cathedral's ninth centenary celebrations, Roger conducted probably his favourite work, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, with the Hallé Orchestra and Chorus together with the Cathedral Choir. As the Angel sings towards the end, 'Farewell, but not forever, brother dear.' ■

Philip Rushforth

Fritz Noack

1935 – 2021

The death of Fritz Noack, on 2 June following a brief illness, takes from us the last of the founding members of the North American tracker revival. Between 1960 and his full retirement in 2015, Noack made or restored 158 organs from his shop in Georgetown, Massachusetts, 30 miles north of Boston. Almost all these instruments have tracker action, from one to four manuals, and are rooted in the tonal principles of the tracker revival. As important, through Noack's shop passed many budding artisans who would go on to make considerable contributions to the art.

Clever, charming, and industrious, Noack melded German birth and training with formative early US experience. Born in Wolgast, he moved in 1954 to Hamburg as an apprentice to Rudolf von Beckerath, after which he worked briefly for Klaus Becker and Ahrend & Brunzema. Coming to the United States in 1959, Noack first went to 'beautiful Vermont' (as he later wrote) and the Estey shop, some of whose hands mentioned Charles Fisk. Intrigued, Noack soon left Vermont for Lawrence, Mass., and the fledgling shop of what was then Andover and Charles Fisk. (The two would soon become separate companies.)

The typical Noack Great had incisive, unmistakable energy, its chorus members classically balanced

The year with Fisk proved pivotal. 'Contrary to appearances,' he wrote, 'in this shop there was a glow of love, hope and intellect that in the decades hence, of course, has become obvious.' While Noack had the benefit of a traditional European apprenticeship, Fisk's utterly individual path through organ building had led to a new kind of incubatory working environment. In his shop, urgency never came ahead of enquiry. 'There was always time,' Noack remembered, 'to explore a thought about organs (all kinds) or to explain a word to me, as I struggled to learn English.'

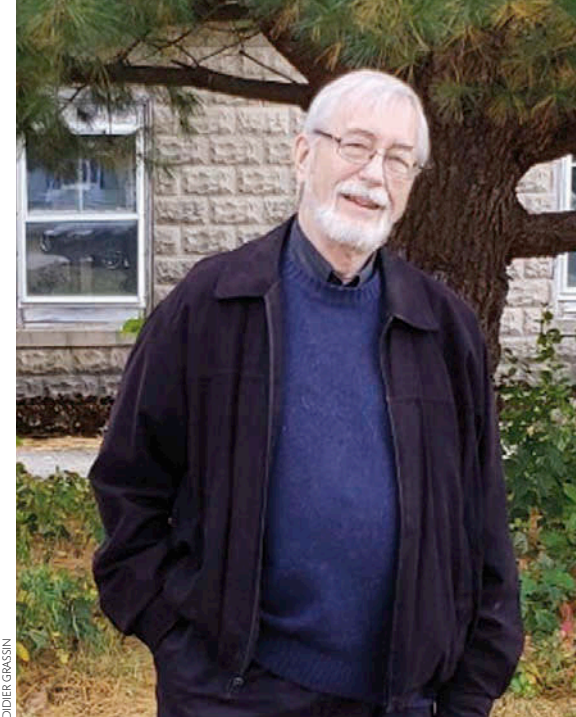
Noack established his shop in 1960. Fisk's eclectic tonal bent wasn't really for him, and in the early work a strong link to Beckerath can be seen and heard. The 1969 landmark three-manual for Trinity Lutheran Church in Worcester, Mass., might even be mistaken for the Hamburg shop's.

The moment was ripe for exactly such organs, and Noack thrived. The 1960s saw about 50 new instruments, the 1970s another 50. Restoration also found a place, as with the 1974 work on the 1807 Conrad Doll at Peace Church, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. Such sensitivities were a prelude to Noack's reconstructive restoration of the 1864 E. & G.G. Hook at Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Mass., completed in 1982. This project involved much undoing and recreation, including a new Barker machine, in what is America's first home-built concert organ.

Something about Hook tone would find certain echoes in Noack work going forward. 'Second Diapasons' became common on Greats, as did Dulcianas and other stops that recognised an organ's need for occasional calm. But a strong personal style was at work. The typical Noack Great had incisive, unmistakable energy, its

chorus members classically balanced, its Trumpet so blazing as to make a Clarion unnecessary. The typical Swell was set several steps beneath, milder foundations supporting increasingly bolder upperwork. The Swell reed chorus was generally based on a cylindrical double, a dark unison chorus reed, and a potent Oboe for contrast. Stoplists large and small evinced the conviction that all manual departments should contain a tierce.

While this personal tonal style held fast, the late 1990s and 2000s showed Noack in a more expansive mode, relishing fresh



DIDIER GRASSIN

▲ Clever, charming, and industrious: Fritz Noack

challenge. In 1995, he hewed more closely to a historical style than ever in the two-manual at Christ the King Lutheran in Houston, patterned after Zacharias Hildebrandt. With input from Kristian Wegscheider, a landmark resulted. In 2004 the shop restored the 1866 Koehnken at Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, a rare survival in a style quite unlike most other US building of the period. Noack's approach here was restrained, in line with a growing consensus of conservation sweeping Europe and England, but then little practised in the United States. After the project, Noack wrote, 'Sometimes I had to slap my wrist when I felt the urge to apply our own standards; many of the pipes do not speak as quickly as we might like.' Even after four decades came new triumphs, perhaps most fondly the 74-stop four-manual at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph the Workman in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 2010.

Beyond making organs, the Noack shop minted a sizeable number of future organ builders: Bozeman, Boody, Brombaugh, to name merely three. 'Fritz understood,' writes current Noack president Didier Grassin, 'that organ builders do not pop out of nowhere, but rather are mere links in a long chain of masters and apprentices shaped by tradition, craftsmanship, and passion. He made sure that the link was not broken.' Of his various mentors, George Bozeman wrote, 'All had things to teach and inspire me, but Fritz was outstanding. His passing leaves a big hole in our world.' ■

Jonathan Ambrosino



‘Classicist and iconoclast’

Although choral works comprise a relatively small part of Stravinsky’s output, they nevertheless reveal the genius of a composer who looked both to the past and the future, writes **David Wordsworth**

If pushed into a corner and forced to nominate the greatest composer of the 20th century, it is more than likely, I think, that most musicians would name Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971). His long composing life takes us from the extravagant excesses of *The Rite of Spring* and *The Firebird* to the uncompromising beauty of his late serial music, with much in between. Ever changing, ever adapting, cheerfully pilfering, and yet always uniquely himself. Paul Griffiths has described Stravinsky as ‘peasant and sophisticate, classicist and iconoclast, believer and mercenarian’; all these things are true and help to make Stravinsky one of the dominant artistic figures of any time, let alone the 20th century.

to whom the composer’s dedication is prefaced by ‘To the Glory of God’, must surely be regarded as Stravinsky’s choral masterpiece and one of the most significant choral works of the 20th century, which has had, and continues to have, a huge influence on composers of our own time. Stravinsky had relatively little interest in 19th-century symphonic form, and indeed wrote of this work that ‘it is the singing of Psalms that I am symphonising.’ The orchestra has no violins, violas, or clarinets, but does include a harp and two pianos, giving a refreshing, open-air quality to the sound. Stravinsky said the last movement was inspired by a vision of Elijah’s chariot climbing up to the heavens, and yet this is not really a joyful celebration

Stravinsky was ever changing, ever adapting, cheerfully pilfering, and yet always uniquely himself

Apart from a few years of youthful rebellion, Stravinsky was for most of his life a devout member of the Russian Orthodox Church. While noting that ‘Music praises God. Music is well or better able to praise Him than the building of the church and all its decoration; it is the Church’s greatest ornament’, Stravinsky confessed on several occasions to heartily detesting the sound of an a cappella choir, so it should come as no surprise that his output for this genre consists of a tiny handful of works. Among the earliest are the *Three Sacred Choruses* – ‘Pater Noster’ (1926), ‘Credo’ (1932) and ‘Ave Maria’ (1934) – written over a period of 12 years but often grouped together. All are compact and straightforward, their clarity, directness and even severity a world away from many better-known, more ‘perfumed’ settings of these texts; and yet, for all that, they lose nothing in their impact and, compared to a good deal of the other music discussed in this short survey, are within the capabilities of most choirs.

The *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), famously commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and

of singing and praising God. The chant-like vocal lines of the opening movement have an ominous air, despite the bubbling accompaniment, while the opening and concluding bars of the last movement – a setting of Psalm 150 and some of the most unforgettable bars in the history of music – are distinctly unsettling, even as the music settles into C major: a conventional chord, but voiced in an unmistakably Stravinskian manner.

Although not written until 1944–48, Stravinsky’s setting of the Mass has its origins in the composer’s intention to compose a full Mass setting when he was writing his earlier *Credo* in the 1930s.

It seems that the composer did a certain amount of research during the preparation for writing this work, dismissing the efforts of Mozart as ‘operatic suites of sin’. Once again, as with the *Sacred Choruses*, Stravinsky’s approach to this text is a good deal less sentimental than most, original in its clarity and again in its duration, illustrating the composer’s spikey complaint that ‘too many pieces of music finish too long after the end.’ Stravinsky’s intention was to write a Mass

▶ **Igor Stravinsky, one of the dominant artistic figures of all time**

III

Tempo (♩ = 48)

SOPRANO
Al-le-lu-ia.

ALTO
Al-le-lu-ia.

TENOR
Al-le-lu-ia. Lau-da-te, lau-da-te,

BASSE
Al-le-lu-ia. Lau-da-te, lau-da-te,

PIANO
p

43 **SANCTUS**

DISCANTI
f *meno f*
Sanctus...

ALTI
f *meno f*
Sanctus...

TENORI
Solo *mf*
Sanctus... f *tutti meno f*
Sanctus...

BASSI
Solo *mf*
Sanctus... f *tutti meno f*
Sanctus...

PIANO
p Trp. Trbs. *poco f*

63

D.
do-na no-bis pa-cem.

A.
do-na no-bis pa-cem.

T.
do-na no-bis pa-cem.

B.
do-na no-bis pa-cem.

PIANO
pp Brass Trb.

◀ that might be used liturgically. Like the *Symphony of Psalms* he originally asked for boys' voices, though the impracticality of this request makes such performances rare. The extraordinary instrumentation (two oboes, cor anglais, two bassoons, two trumpets and three trombones) gives the Mass a bracing, ritualistic quality, as does the declamatory word-setting. Long stretches of text are sung over slowly changing harmony, which is perhaps a memory of the Orthodox chant that Stravinsky would have heard as a child, making the sudden brief, more elaborate solo flourishes of the Gloria and Sanctus all the more startling. The final unresolved chord, literally a question hanging in the air, at the end of the Agnus Dei, is nothing less than a stroke of genius.

The *Cantata* (1952) follows closely on the heels of Stravinsky's opera *The Rake's Progress*, which also raised its hat in more ways than one to earlier music. In the case of the opera, it was Mozart; with the *Cantata*, Stravinsky travels further back in time to music of the baroque and the renaissance – music that was to preoccupy him increasingly in later life. The work straddles both the sacred and the secular, setting 15th- and 16th-century English texts, and once again the instrumental ensemble is idiosyncratic: two flutes, oboe, cor anglais and cello. The small female chorus have relatively little to sing, their restrained setting of 'A Lyke-Wake Dirge' (also famously set by Britten, with whom Stravinsky had a long-running, not so secret personal feud) contrasting with the more elaborate and fluid lines of the soprano and tenor soloists.

Canticum Sacrum (1955), or to give the work its full title, *Canticum Sacrum ad honorem Sancti Marci Nominis*, was the result of a suggestion made to Stravinsky that he should write a work in honour of St Mark, the patron saint of Venice, a city particularly close to the composer's heart. The work was inspired by both the acoustics and architecture of the great Basilica San Marco. The ricocheting fanfares and chorales of the brass dominant orchestra can only remind the listener of the music of Monteverdi and Gabrieli, which was first heard in that building. The five 'real' movements of the work (there is a short 'Dedicatio' or Prelude for tenor and baritone soloists) correspond to the five cupolas or domes of San Marco, while the final movement, again with an eye on architectural proportion, is a mirror image of the first – not that this is necessary knowledge to appreciate this most grand and yet paradoxically austere work. Even more extraordinary is the use of the organ as part of the orchestra, the only appearance of the instrument in Stravinsky's oeuvre.

◀ (from top) *Symphony of Psalms*: the opening bars of the last movement are distinctly unsettling; 'startling' vocal flourishes in the Sanctus of the Mass; the Agnus Dei ends the Mass on an unresolved chord

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Stravinsky overcame his aversion to a cappella singing late in life, with the *Tres sacrae cantiones* (after Gesualdo), (1957-59). Prompted once again by the composer's later obsession with early music, these pieces are not strictly reconstructions – neither pure Gesualdo, nor pure Stravinsky, but an other-worldly fusion of two composers who lived over 300 years apart. Stravinsky's final a cappella work was the demanding two-minute *Anthem* ('The dove descending breaks the air') (1962), which takes its text from T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' and was somewhat bizarrely originally intended for a new English hymnal. The technical demands of this tiny piece seem rather beyond that particular brief.

The *Requiem Canticles* (1965-66) is Stravinsky's last major work. Describing it as his 'pocket Requiem', Stravinsky chose to set only excerpts from the Requiem Mass – the 'Dies irae', 'Tuba mirum', 'Rex tremendae' and 'Lacrimosa'. The work's brevity (it lasts only around 15 minutes) and stark, illuminating purity are all characteristic of Stravinsky's 'late style', while there is no suggestion of failing inspiration. On the contrary, the haunting beauty of the choral writing, restrained and colourful use of the orchestra, the strange muttering of the chorus alongside the chant-like lines of the four soloists in the 'Libera me' and, most of all, the chiming bells and perfectly judged silences of the 'Postlude' make this work not only the most approachable of the

composer's later works, but also the most magical. It was commissioned in memory of Helen Buchanan Seeger, a great patron of the arts. Stravinsky's widow was later heard to say that her husband knew that he was writing the work for himself. Although by this time the composer was in his 80s and in poor health, it was another five years before he died, and we cannot rely on this any more than the story that Mozart knew he was writing his own Requiem. Nevertheless, after some considerable difficulties, not least getting over the problem of finding a choir and orchestra that could deal with such a complex piece, the *Requiem Canticles* were indeed sung at the composer's own funeral, on 16 April 1971 – not in St Mark's, Venice, but in San Giovanni de Paolo, at least within the sound of the bells of the great cathedral, that can be heard tolling throughout the piece. Somehow a fitting conclusion to the life and work of this most imitated and most inimitable composer. ■

I have intentionally omitted works that are primarily intended for the stage, such as Les noces and Oedipus rex, as well as a number of the very complex serial works, which I imagine would not be practical for most readers.

David Wordsworth is a freelance conductor and workshop leader. His book Giving Voice to My Music, interviews with choral composers, was published by Kahn and Averill in July.

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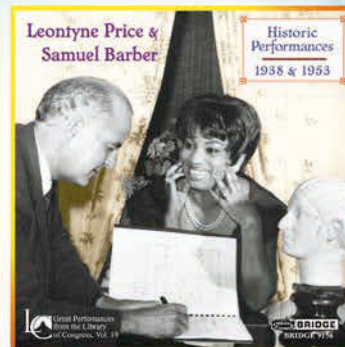
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▲ Peru's Colca Valley hides forgotten historic organs

In search of lost time

Natascha Reich continues her exploration of forgotten pipe organs in the Colca Valley, Peru, by asking what music may have been played on them, and how it would have been performed. ORGAN PHOTOS AND SCORES COURTESY NATASCHA REICH

part 2 Repertoire and performance practice

European baroque organs have always attracted the interest of scholars, performers and amateur musicians; research is flourishing, tourists go on 'organ tours', photographs of impressive organ façades swamp the internet. Historic organs in South America, on the other hand, seem to be less popular. One of the least considered historic organ cultures is that of colonial Peru. At present, no substantial body of publications on the subject exists. Part 1 of this series explored

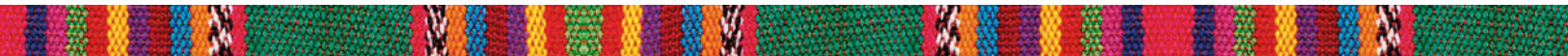
organological aspects of the, presumably, 17th-century chamber organ-like instruments in Tisco, Sibayo and Callalli in the Peruvian Valle de Colca, which are currently unplayable. This time, I investigate questions of repertoire and performance practice.

The music

Searches in the archives of Cuzco and Lima for Peruvian primary sources relating to sheet music or treatises have, so far, drawn

a blank. However, Peruvian baroque organs were modelled after Spanish prototypes and it therefore makes sense to draw comparisons with Spanish baroque repertoire and performance practices. For this article, I will consider as reference points Francisco Correa de Arauxo's *Quinto tomo del quarto tuono* and *El canto llano de la Inmaculada Concepcion de la Virgen Maria y tres Glosas* (*Facultad Orgánica*, 1626). Together, they cover a wide stylistic spectrum: the *Glosas*

►



▼ (top) First page of the *tres glosas*, original print of 1626. The red circle indicates the lowest note, D2; (below) second page of the *quinto tiento*. The red circles indicate the lowest note (7 with double stroke = E2) and the highest note (3 with apostrophe = A3)

◁ form a homophonic, cantus firmus work; the *Tiento* is a thematically free work in imitative polyphonic style. Correa de Arauxo's compositions are ideal representatives of Spanish baroque music: despite being born in the 16th century, Correa clearly was a 'child' of the 17th. Not only did his compositions introduce novel, post-renaissance concepts, Correa also addressed, and defended, these explicitly in his theoretical writings. The fact that he related the indicated meter with tempo, and no longer regarded the interval of a fourth as a dissonance, illustrates a departure from renaissance music theory.

The performance of the *Glosas* and *Tiento* Keyboard range

The tonal range of the *Tiento* is E2 to A5, and that of the *Glosas* D2 to A5. In the lower range, Correa does not write very virtuosically, and omits the notes F#2 and G#2. Furthermore, the lowest bass notes can easily be reached with the left hand. The pieces are therefore suitable for the instruments in the Colca Valley, which have a short octave and no pedals. In the highest octave, two of the organs fall short by one semitone. In practice, however, this does not matter: the highest notes in both pieces form part of melismatic, ornamental passages which can easily be adapted as required.

Registration

Correa scatters instructions for registration, in the form of little prefaces to his compositions, throughout the *Facultad orgánica*. For our *Glosas*, he specifies Principal stops in the bass and a Mixture in the treble, in typical Castilian *medio registro* fashion. Our particular *Tiento* does not bear any instructions regarding registration, although other *tientos* do. Those are all for *medio registro*, and in each, Correa asks for a 4ft basis for both the upper and the lower part of the keyboard. We can therefore assume that 4ft-based registrations were common options when playing a *tiento*. The organs in Sibayo, Callalli and Tisco mostly consist of Principal stops and all of them have Mixtures. The sliders for operating the stop action protrude on both sides of the cases and can be operated individually. A complete dismantling of the organ in Callalli provided additional proof of the sliders being divided into treble and bass regions. Thus, both the *Tiento* and the *Glosas* could be played on the Colca instruments with the correct registration.

Temperament

In his writing, Correa does not specify the temperament in use in Spain during his lifetime. However, secondary literature commonly assumes some variation of meantone, which corresponds with the abundant use of major thirds in Correa's music. We can make assumptions about the Colca organs' temperament based on their drone pipes. There are only two or three drone pipes in each organ, which might point towards specific, commonly used harmonies, which in turn might be an

suitable for this kind of playing. At present many keys are stuck and cannot be moved, which makes a direct measurement of the necessary pressure on the keys difficult. However, the tracker actions remain mostly intact. The trackers are very short, the wind-chest is situated immediately above the keys, and the chromatic layout means that no rollerboards are necessary; all this must have produced a very direct action. The pallets, like the keys, are small and light, which probably contributed to a light touch. Additionally, the suspended action allows for

guidelines is remarkable: altogether, he describes 14 different fingerings for scales, depending on whether (and how many) upper keys are contained in the scale, and which hand is to play it. In the *Tiento* and in the *Glosas*, we find both types of fingerings: those that Correa calls 'ordinary' (played without thumb), and those that involve all five fingers.

The organs in Sibayo, Callalli, and Tisco have lower keys of between 10cm and 12cm in length, which would allow use of the thumb without the other fingers having to be curled excessively. Paintings on Peruvian organ cases show St Cecilia playing with all ten fingers, indicating that the practice of thumb-playing was known and common in 16th- and 17th-century Peru. Furthermore, the above-described key action of the instruments would have been very suitable for Correa de Arauxo's 'ordinary' scale fingerings. The high level of control over the action, and the direct connection with the pallets comfortably allows quick runs using 3-4-3-4 or 2-3-2-3. We can therefore assume that the organs of the Colca Valley were suitable for both kinds of fingerings required to perform Spanish baroque music.

Conclusions

It appears that Spanish baroque repertoire could be performed on the organs in the Colca Valley. The question is whether it really *was* performed; or, indeed, whether *any* written-out music was played on these

The question is whether any written-out music was played on these organs

indication for meantone tuning. The few still playable baroque organs in Peru, such as the Gospel organ in the Cathedral in Cuzco, or the pair of organs in Andahuaylillas, are tuned in meantone. It therefore seems likely that meantone was used in the Colca organs as well.

Touch and articulation

Southern European primary sources seem to agree about how the organ should be played: both Girolamo Diruta and Correa de Arauxo demand a not-too-forceful, not-too-abrupt touch, in which the key is released at the same moment as the next key is depressed. The organs in the Colca Valley must have been

greater control than a balanced action would. The depression of the keys, of not more than 7mm, is rather shallow, facilitating a quasi-legato effect even for fast passages and scales in historic fingerings.

Fingerings

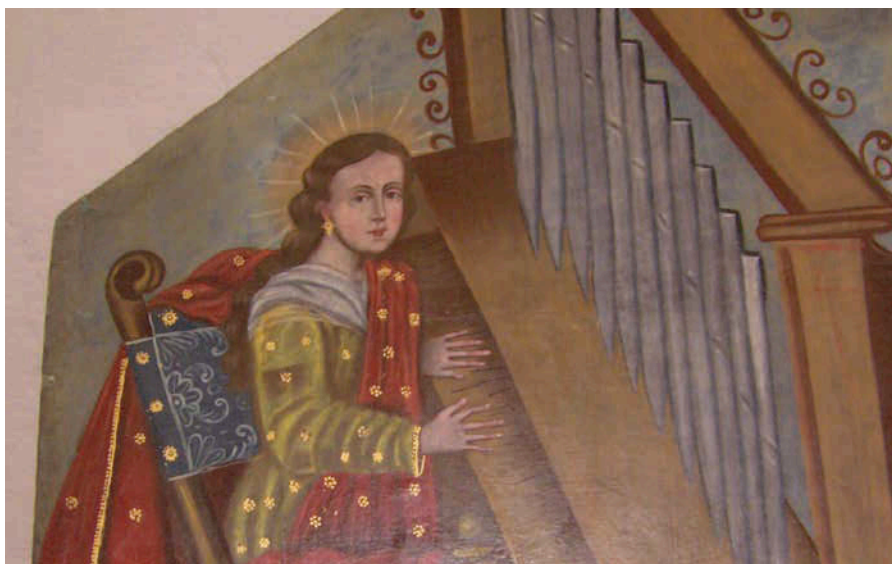
Sources on Spanish baroque fingerings differ significantly from the much better-known Italian ones. Correa provides fingerings that alternate between the second and third, or third and fourth fingers, similar to Diruta's. However, he also includes a number of instructions for using the thumb in scales and runs – something not common in Italian sources. The level of detail in Correa's

▼ (l) A view under the toeboard of the organ at Callalli showing the divided sliders; (r) the suspended action in Tisco allowing the player greater control over the keys





◀ (top) Inside the pallet box in Callalli; the extremely small pallets in Peruvian baroque organs make for a light touch, making the use of historical fingerings rather easier
(middle) The organ case in Sibayo depicts St Cecilia playing with 10 fingers
(bottom) The keyboard of the organ at Callalli is located in an opening just 11 cm tall



◀ organs. None of the instruments has a music rest. The organist would have had to play everything from memory. On the other hand, the drone pedals lend themselves ideally to certain improvisatory genres, such as pastorales, toccatas, or praeambula, all of which (can) include long, sustained pedal notes. From an active performer's perspective, I would also like to note the fact that the organist could hardly see his hands while playing, due to the recessed keyboards and the position of the keyboard. Playing with one's hands in a 'box' is not very comfortable when performing written music. When improvising, however, the organist could compensate, incorporating only techniques he could literally execute 'blind'. Improvisational practices could also have incorporated influences from non-European, indigenous music cultures – a topic I will discuss in the concluding part of this series.

Further research is required to unravel the nature of Peruvian baroque organ playing, to understand more about the music and the associated performance practices. At this point, it is safe to assume that these organs are *suitable* for the kind of music composed by Correa de Arauxo and his contemporaries. This conclusion might seem unsatisfying at first glance. However, on closer inspection it advances our understanding substantially: despite their relative obscurity among both scholars and performers, Peruvian colonial organs, no matter how small, remote or abandoned, were state-of-the-art instruments in their time. This insight, like others about the history, possible use, and cultural context of these valuable historical artefacts, brings us a step closer to assigning them the attention and recognition they deserve. ■

Natascha Reich is a PhD candidate in (ethno-) musicology at the University of Oregon. Her research areas include archeo-ethno-organology, music and cultural identity in (post) colonial environments, and the intersection of music and science.

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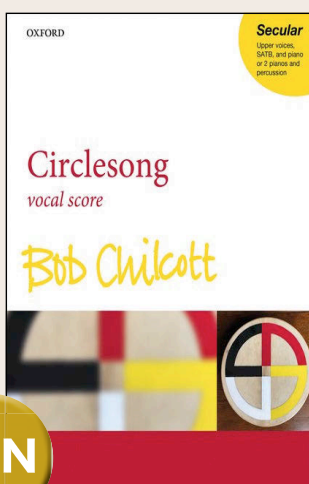
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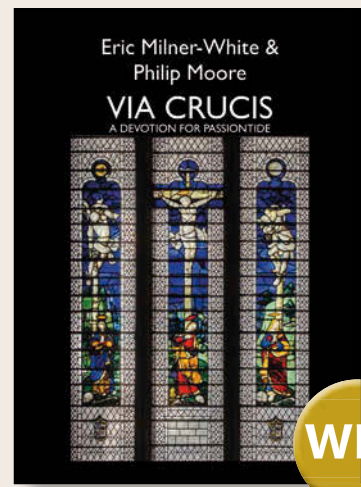
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150
ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Making their own weather

Founded in the year that the Royal Albert Hall opened in London, the Royal Choral Society has become a much-loved British institution. But the choir's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2021-22 have been unexpectedly marked by Covid and controversy, as **Clare Stevens** discovers

This feature was originally planned as a straightforward preview of the 150th anniversary season of a distinguished choir with a special place in the history of London's musical life. Needless to say, the Royal Choral Society's celebrations have been thrown into disarray by the coronavirus pandemic, so at the time of writing no one is quite sure how the 2021-22 concert season will look. At the end of May this year, however, another memorable chapter in the choir's history was written when the choir found itself in the national spotlight, giving a concert with an audience at a time when amateur choirs in England were forbidden to rehearse or perform indoors in groups of more than six.

The venue was the vast circular auditorium of the Royal Albert Hall, the choir's home since its foundation in 1871. Distanced from one another by a full two metres in every direction, 116 singers, organist Richard Pearce, four vocal soloists, trumpeter Michael Allen and conductor Richard Cooke, the Royal Choral Society's (RCS) music director for just over 25 years, performed Handel's *Messiah* to an 800-strong audience – a tiny fraction of the hall's usual capacity. The atmosphere was completely different from the RCS's usual performances in the hall, usually with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, but it had a unique excitement.

Less than two weeks before, the UK government had announced Step 3 of its roadmap towards recovery from lockdown, which everyone in the arts world had expected would include a recommendation that amateur choral singing could resume in England, with the appropriate precautions. But the guidance published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) said that no more than six non-professional singers should rehearse or perform indoors, or up to 30 outdoors (see News, *C&O* July/August 2021).

While most choirs waited to see if lobbying by individuals and professional organisations would have any effect before making decisions about summer concerts, others including the RCS had no time to see how the situation developed. The choir has sung *Messiah* on Good Friday every year since 1876, other than during the two world wars; after cancellations of the 2020 and 2021 performances they had planned a scaled-back performance for 23 May, expecting that the regulations would be eased. It had been moved to 30 May at the request of the Royal Albert Hall (RAH) management, as one of the first concerts in the hall's 150th birthday celebration.

'We were happy to do that,' says Richard Cooke, adding that the RCS committee didn't taken much persuasion to go ahead with the concert even after the publication of the revised guidance. Having been through the procedure of working out how to go ahead safely, with distancing, lateral flow testing, wearing

masks when not singing, and so on during the period between lockdowns in autumn 2020, most singers felt confident about taking part (and of course there was no obligation to do so). The RAH management undertook to approach the DCMS to request permission for the event to take place under the rules for professional music-making.

The government's response was that as the recommendations were guidance and not mandatory, the performance would not be illegal – good news for Cooke and his singers, who found themselves at the centre of a storm of publicity in the run-up to the concert, which was the focus of national radio broadcasts, newspaper articles and a frenzy of social media comment. Opinion in the UK choral world was split between those who saw the RCS performance as a brave and useful test case and those who were concerned about blurring an important distinction between amateur and professional singers on the one hand, while on the other, creating artificial divisions between different categories of amateur choir.

The chorus was limited to 119 and fortunately, says Cooke, exactly that number signed up. While performing in the RAH with such a small number of singers accompanied only by the organ was not an experience he would choose to repeat, he found it much more emotional than he expected to stand on the podium in front of his choir after so many months of Zoom rehearsals. 'It wouldn't have been possible without the remarkable skill of Richard Pearce, who spent a whole night in the hall setting up all the organ registrations ... he knew exactly what was needed. We had a marvellous team of soloists, because with so few concerts happening, they were all available. And it helped that the singers know *Messiah* so well. It was a fantastic experience.'

◀ Courting controversy: the Royal Choral Society's socially distanced *Messiah* in the Royal Albert Hall in May 2021 divided opinion

▼ (from l) RCS musical director Richard Cooke and accompanist Richard Pearce



LADY R FOUNDATION



COURTESY ROYAL CHORAL SOCIETY



▲ In the 1920s and 30s, the Royal Choral Society was renowned for its annual performances of Coleridge-Taylor's *The Song of Hiawatha*, complete with scenery, costumes and dancing (r)

◀ Alto Pat Phillips tweeted that she felt less exposed than normally, even though the singers were so widely spaced; bass soloist Edward Grint tweeted a few moments of the 'Hallelujah' chorus rehearsal in celebration of 'live music sung by one of the most professional amateur ensembles that I know'; another choir member admitted, 'I had a proper cry as we came off stage'; and alto Jackie Freshfield, seated in the front choir row, said, 'For the first time I actually heard the blend. But it was tricky to hear one's own voice part ... I have never concentrated so hard.' Twelve days later the choir was able to report 100 per cent negative Covid tests for everyone who took

Times noted that the choir comprised 242 sopranos, 174 contraltos, 174 tenors, 236 basses and 16 so-called 'superintendents', a total of 842 singing members, who were 'arranged as two separate choirs, one on each side of the [RAH] organ.' Under Bridge's guidance, the choir contributed strongly to the remarkable expansion of music-making in Edwardian London. Highlights of this era included the premiere of Ethel Smyth's *Mass in D* and the first performance in the RAH of Parry's 'Jerusalem', which went on to be sung there regularly at both Women's Institute gatherings and at the Last Night of the Proms.

The choir prides itself on its versatility, balancing traditional repertoire with performing in more unusual events

part from the lateral flow tests taken before the rehearsal and the performance and on the following weekend. 'We have worked to protect ourselves and our audience,' tweeted Cooke. "There may be dangers out there, but not from us."

Prior to this trailblazing initiative, the RCS had been focused on celebrating its long-established links with the RAH, where it gave its first performance on 8 May 1872 under the baton of founder-conductor Charles Gounod. Later that year Gounod was succeeded as musical director by Joseph Barnby, who amalgamated his own choir with what was then called the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society.

Following Barnby's death in 1896, Frederick Bridge, organist at Westminster Abbey, took charge. Bridge was a shrewd administrator and successful motivator of amateur musicians. In January 1899 the *Musical*

Since its inception, the RCS has worked with some of the most illustrious names in the musical world, conducted by Verdi in the British premiere of his *Requiem* in 1875, by Dvořák in his *Stabat mater* nine years later, and by Elgar in *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1927. The choir was later conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, an association lasting 40 years. In the 1920s and 30s its main claim to fame was its annual performances at the RAH of the cantata *The Song of Hiawatha*, by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, complete with scenery, costumes and dancing. The first of these famous stagings was actually conducted by the composer's son, Hiawatha Coleridge-Taylor, but they were usually conducted by Sargent (who called a chapter of his autobiography 'The Wigwam Years'); presented for two weeks, they attracted thousands of people, including the royal family, and the tradition was only brought to a halt by the second world war.

The choir now prides itself on its versatility, balancing performances of traditional repertoire with opportunities to perform in more unusual events at venues around the country and abroad – from singing as entertainment at corporate dinners and award ceremonies at the RAH, to corporate Christmas concerts, performances of Bach's Mass in B minor and Haydn's *Creation* (sponsored by Waitrose), and a concert of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* (supported by the Lady R. Foundation) that raised £100,000 for the charity Veterans Aid. Pre-pandemic, the most recent full concert featured Ariel Ramírez's *Misa Criolla* and *Nuestra Navidad* in a programme that celebrated the universal beats, melodies and rhythms of vernacular folk music.

Queen Victoria was the choir's first patron, and in 2019 a collaboration with the Coburg Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO) from her husband Prince Albert's home town celebrated the bicentenaries of the births of both Victoria and Albert. A concert at London's Cadogan Hall focused on works by Mendelssohn, who played for the royal couple at Buckingham Palace several times, with Richard Cooke and the CPO's music director Roland Kluttig sharing the conducting. This was followed by a choir tour to Coburg, where they performed Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*.

At the time of writing, Cooke and the choir's committee were still trying to work out how much of their 2021/22 anniversary season could be salvaged, following the many cancellations and postponements

caused by the pandemic. 'We are hoping to present the Duruflé Requiem in Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Square, on 23 October, accompanied by organ, with Brahms's *Liebesslieder* Waltzes accompanied by piano duet,' he said. 'After that there are our regular orchestral dates at the RAH for the RPO's [Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's] Classical Spectacular concerts of popular favourites and the wonderful big Christmas concerts. Last year we were only allowed 48 singers for the Christmas events, so we simply had to limit ourselves to 32 members of the society augmented by 16 professionals. And after that we hope there will be a *St John Passion* and a Verdi Requiem.'

Decision-making involves not just considerations relating to the safety of performers and audience and adherence to regulations, but also balancing the books; reduced audiences to allow for distancing inevitably means substantially reduced income. 'Although we have a very good relationship with the RPO we are an independent choir, we are not part of a larger organisation like the London Symphony Chorus or the BBC Symphony Chorus; we have to make our own weather,' Cooke explains. 'But we have endured difficult financial times in the past and I feel sure we will get through this somehow.' ■

royalchoralsociety.co.uk; royalalberthall.com

Clare Stevens works as a writer, editor and publicist in the Welsh Marches, where she sings with Hereford Choral Society.

▼ Pre-Covid days: a performance of Britten's *War Requiem* raised £100,000 for the charity Veterans Aid

LADY R. FOUNDATION



Pole star

A survivor of two world wars and the dissolution of his country, the Polish composer Feliks Nowowiejski became increasingly committed to a national identity. **Maria Erdman** traces his development with particular reference to his *Fantaisie polonaise* for organ



Feliks Nowowiejski, composer, organist, improviser and an enigmatic figure in his musical community, was born in 1877 in modern-day Barczewo, in Poland's Varmia region. A prodigious talent, he went to the music school in nearby Święta Lipka at the age of 10. In 1898 he joined Otto Dienel's organ class at the Stern Conservatorium in Berlin and took the post of cathedral organist in Olsztyn, two years later enrolling at the Kirchenmusikschule in Regensburg and taking improvisation lessons with Josef Renner. He then returned to Berlin for further studies in composition with Max Bruch. While still a student, Nowowiejski gained international recognition as the winner of the Meyerbeer Prize (in 1902 and 1904) and as the composer of the oratorio *Quo vadis* which, following a successful performance at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in 1909, toured Europe and, ultimately, Carnegie Hall in New York.

After a brief spell in Kraków from 1909–14, Nowowiejski returned to Berlin with his family, taking up a post as organist and choral director. During the first world war he was mobilised in the army, but was allowed to direct the military orchestra, based in Berlin. His attempts to secure the teaching position in Leipzig vacated by the passing of Max Reger were unsuccessful, and in 1919 he settled in liberated Poland, taking up residence at Aleja Wielkopolska 11 in Poznań. This address today houses one of two Nowowiejski museums (as well as a Nowowiejski Society and concert venue), the other being in his birthplace, Barczewo. The curator of the house is the composer's granddaughter, Bogna Nowowiejska, herself an organist.

In Poznań, Nowowiejski taught organ at the conservatory's Church Music Institute as well as being active as a performing organist,

◀ 'A prodigious talent': the Polish composer-organist Feliks Nowowiejski, by an unknown photographer

WIKIPEDIA

conductor and administrator. As a broadcaster, he did much to raise the profile of organ music in Poland. He also composed extensively, especially in the field of choral music, in which he remained active throughout most of his life. In 1929, he conducted a choir of around 20,000 singers during the First Pan-Slavic Vocal Convention in Poznań.

During the second world war Nowowiejski was obliged to escape from Poznań, surviving the occupation in Kraków under tough conditions, poverty and threat of arrest. He remained active nevertheless, completing his final organ work, the tone poem *In Paradisum*. In 1941 he experienced a stroke and, although he recovered and managed to keep composing, he died shortly after his post-war return to Poznań, on 18 January 1946.

During his life, Nowowiejski enjoyed international fame, performing organ recitals on many occasions in Berlin as well as in Prague in 1929, London in 1931 and Paris in 1934. As a composer, he was the first Pole after Chopin to gain international recognition, receiving around 20 awards, including the Honorary Papal Gentleman in 1935, for his oratorios.

As a composer, Nowowiejski was the first Pole after Chopin to gain international recognition

Most of the composer's manuscripts survived the second world war, hidden in the Raczyński Library in Poznań. These included most of his compositions for the organ, such as the nine Symphonies, op.45 (described by Nowowiejski as his 'musical testament') and the four Organ Concertos, op.56. These form a distinctive input in the context of European symphonic organ repertoire.

Fantaisie polonaise

Nowowiejski wrote his *Fantaisie polonaise* op.9 no.1 'Minuit de Noël dans la Cathédrale au Wawel de Cracovie' in Kraków around 1910, together with two other modest pieces on a Christmas theme: *Weihnacht in der uralten Marienkirche zu Krakau*, op.31 no.3 and *Noël en Pologne*, op.31 no.4. The *Fantaisie* is particularly noteworthy for its programmatic character, anticipating Max Reger's 'Weihnachten' (*Sieben Stücke für Orgel*, op.145, of 1915) and Marcel Dupré's 'Nativité' (*Symphonie-Passion*, 1924). Nowowiejski



▲ Eight descending chords open Nowowiejski's *Fantaisie polonaise*, leading to the key of D major



▲ The 'highlander scale' (the Lydian mode with flattened seventh) is common in the folk music of the Tatra mountains

later included programmatic music in his symphonies (nos. 3, 7 and 8) and concertos (nos. 1, 3 and 4).

Although the *Fantaisie* sits firmly in the Polish tradition of Christmas organ pieces of the later 19th century, it is the first piece with a clear narrative leading the audience through the emotions associated with Christmas Eve, as experienced in the cathedral in Kraków.

pastoral scene with a D-A drone, over which is heard a folk-like melody, based on what Polish ethnomusicologists call the 'highlander scale'. Jerzy Erdman, my father and editor of the only complete edition of Nowowiejski's organ music, described the remainder of the piece as follows:

The next phase of the piece continues the 'highlander' motive, acting as a canvas for two popular Polish carols 'Anioł pasterzom mówił' and 'Gdy się Chrystus rodzi', presented as a contrapuntal, bitonal duet, combining the keys of G and D. [...] The emotional tension increases as the dynamic grows, before the initial chordal introduction reappears, this time forte, leading to the powerful restatement of 'Anioł pasterzom mówił'. The piece ends with an emotional relaxation, the material of the introduction reappearing in a modified version, completing an A-B-A1 structure.

Nowowiejski often included the *Fantaisie* in his concert programmes, and the piece was published for the first time by Gebethner & Wolff in 1911. This helped its distribution abroad and it made its way to England, being first performed in London by Edwin Stephenson in c.1915 and subsequently becoming quite popular. Archibald Farmer initiated Nowowiejski's honorary membership of the Organ Music Society (of which he was co-founder) in 1931.

Musical style

The style of the *Fantaisie* is typical of Nowowiejski's organ music, with polyphonic thinking and skilful, imaginative counterpoint, >



▲ Wawel Cathedral, Kraków, burial place of Polish kings and inspiration for Nowowiejski's *Fantaisie polonaise* op.9 no.1 'Minuit de Noël dans la Cathédrale au Wawel de Cracovie'

▼ The *Fantaisie* includes two popular Polish carols, 'Anioł pasterzom mówił' and 'Gdy się Chrystus rodzi', presented as a contrapuntal, bitonal duet

A - niół pa - ste - rzom mó - wił: Chry - stus się wam na - ro - dził!

W Be - tle - em nie ba - rdzo po - dłym mie - ście Na - ro - dził się

w u - bó - stwie. Pan wsze - go stwo - rze - nia.

Gdy się Chrystus ro - dzi, i na świat przy - cho - dzi,
Ciemna noc w jasnościach pro - mienistych bro - dzi.

A - nio - ło - wie się ra - du - ją, pod nie - bio - sy

wykrzy - ku - ją: Glo - ri - a, Glo - ri - a, Glo - ri - a

in ex - celsis De - o.

◀ requiring technical prowess. His works are also intellectually challenging, and require careful analysis. The colour palette employed in the *Fantaisie* is closely tied to the work's structure and intensity, as well as the folk-orientated melody. Nowowiejski's score abounds with agogic instructions, describing tempo fluctuations within a single meter, allied with the freedom inherent in the flexible and expressive melodies. The work also demands great sensitivity to varied articulation on a basically legato touch (already required in the introductory chords, but also in the further combination of melody and accompaniment and the projecting of two independent voices in one hand). The player also needs to have command of both the swell box and general crescendo pedal.

Instrument

In general, the aesthetics and technical possibilities offered by the symphonic organs of Berlin seem to have been an important source of inspiration. Nowowiejski's experiences in the class of Otto Dienel connected him to the Schlag & Söhne organ in the Marienkirche, where Dienel had served since 1869. The organ was romantic in nature, but many parts from its predecessor (1723) by Joachim Wagner had been incorporated. It also featured a Vox Humana by Hill and a variety of wind pressures among its 53 speaking stops, divided between Hauptwerk, Schwellwerk, Solowerk and Pedal. Schlag's organ offered an exceptionally wide variety of colour and dynamics, and a fluid crescendo enabled by the free combinations (designed by Dienel), and the various fixed combinations and accessories. The young Nowowiejski must also have seen and played the Schlag & Söhne organ in the Philharmonic Hall in Berlin, which was entirely designed by Dienel. This was the first big concert organ in the German capital featuring both pneumatic action and a movable console.

Another organ, on which Nowowiejski performed was E.F. Walcker's opus 1389 (1908) in the Blüthner Hall. This was an impressive organ of 61 stops and numerous accessories. The organs in Kraków at the time when *Fantaisie polonaise* was composed are also interesting, especially the organ in the Marienkirche, which had been enlarged to 46 stops and pneumatised by Aleksander Żebrowski of Lwów (Léopol) in 1908.

Registration

Nowowiejski provides various registration instructions in the score. Some of these are particularly interesting, such as the phonetically expressed 'Oboi' in the opening Pastorale (bar 7), indicating the French stop Hautbois, and hinting at the French inspiration Nowowiejski took from his travels through Europe in 1902-03. In bar 51 he specifies a *cantus firmus* sound with the 'Tromba', either a stop derived from the Walcker organ in the Blüthner Hall, or the Germanic 'Trąba', found in the Żebrowski organ in Kraków. The trilingual note 'Sonnerie, Dzwony, Glockenspiel' (bar 74) seems indicative of the German and French colouristic inspirations which typify Nowowiejski's later organ works. The influence of the Cecilian movement, meanwhile, is expressed by the presence of both a *cantus firmus* and skilful counterpoint.

Conclusion

My own experience with the organ music of Feliks Nowowiejski dates back to my childhood, as it formed such an important part of my father's research activities. The disapproval that surrounded such overtly romantic music at time was undoubtedly detrimental to Nowowiejski's reputation and certainly didn't make my father's task any easier. Fortunately, times have changed and Nowowiejski's œuvre is now enjoying a renaissance, hopefully to find its place in post-romantic European organ repertoire. ■ feliks.nowowiejski.pl

Thanks to Bogna Nowowiejska, the Nowowiejski family, Johannes Kalsow, Robert Tokarski and Magdalena Łowkiel.

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ROB SHIRET



Freestyle BY GRAEME KAY

On names up in lights...

In 1977, Charles Dutoit became music director of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (OSM). His friendship with Ray Minshull of Decca/London Records began when Minshull chanced upon the orchestra and conductor in rehearsal, at a time when the label was looking for a way to fill the void in French repertoire which had arisen due to the death of Ernest Ansermet. The result was a 20-year recording partnership, and during the 1980s Dutoit and the OSM churned out an entire catalogue's worth of superlative recordings, many of which won top awards; this was in no small part due to the rapid development of digital recording techniques; in 2016 Decca issued a *Charles Dutoit – The Montreal Years* compendium of 35 CDs, proudly proclaiming the new 'Decca Sound' on the set box.

In those days classical record companies had generous PR budgets, and I received an invitation to the elegant Church of Saint-Eustache, in an off-island suburb of Montreal, where the OSM made its recordings. Part of the gig was an interview with Dutoit. This was another era; it would be 30 more years before Dutoit received the Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal, shortly after which, in 2017, reports began to emerge of accusations of historic sexual abuse involving a number of women.

But back in the 1980s, Dutoit's fame and the good fortune he brought to the city of Montreal was handsomely repaid. They love their billboards in North America and on my way downtown from the airport, giant hoardings everywhere proclaimed Dutoit's directorship of the OSM; he told me proudly that a local automobile dealership had produced a 'Dutoit Edition' of a saloon car – I was shown one, in a lovely deep burgundy colour with Dutoit's signature etched into the quarterlights; when you turned on the ignition, the cassette player would kick in with the seductive opening of the OSM's recording of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*...

The trigger for this reminiscence is the esteem in which musicians generally are held in the UK, i.e. NONE... Typical of this is the government's treatment of amateur choirs, about which the editor wrote in the last issue and which has been widely discussed, not to say excoriated. As I write, Rupert Gough has just posted this on Facebook, from St Bartholomew-the-Great, West Smithfield: 'Just chatted with Oliver Dowden [culture minister] without realising. Thought he looked familiar. Even more extraordinary is the fact that he seemed surprised that church singers were paid professionals while also seemingly not concerned that we had more than six singing.'

What prevented me from hurtling down into this slough of despond – and what links these two stories – was another Facebook post, which certainly raised a smile. Magne H. Draagen, the popular and exceptionally talented organist of Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, has been appointed organist of 'Hamburger Michel', i.e. St Michael's in Hamburg, a landmark of the city and one of the finest Hanseatic Protestant baroque churches. There he will exchange Nidaros's Steinmeyer and Joachim Wagner organs for another Steinmeyer, a Marcussen/Klais and the 'C.P.E. Bach' organ by Hartwig und Tilmann Späth. The city of Hamburg takes this appointment seriously, and electronic newsboards put Draagen's name up in lights all over town (see photo). That's the way to honour an organist. ■

Graeme Kay is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.



MAGNE DRAAGEN

Harry Baker

Brave Face

A background in jazz has led Harry Baker to include a degree of improvisation in his new work for solo organ. He talks to **Matthew Power**



EMMA WERNER

▲ 'Your environment shapes you as a musician': Harry Baker

Supported throughout the Covid period by the young composers' scheme run by the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, jazz pianist and composer Harry Baker is grateful to have had this organ commission to focus on. We talk about how a two-way process with new pieces helps both performer and composer. Nathan James Dearden [May/June issue] described how he valued feedback from players which might offer insights into how he could improve his writing. Baker agrees: 'Often there can be that split between performer and composer. There should be a dialogue so that there is always work in progress. I feel inspired listening to Nico Muhly; his advice to young composers is "write for your friends". Muhly recently

composed a viola concerto for Nadia Sirota, with whom he has been friends since their studentship together at Juilliard 20 years ago.

How does Baker describe his initial formation at the University of Oxford? 'Your environment shapes you as a musician. Alongside all the essays there was a thorough grounding: imitating renaissance choral composers, writing fugues in the style of J.S. Bach, learning how to orchestrate in 20th-century styles and colours, alongside composition lessons. That background gave me the confidence to approach orchestras and ensembles and to collaborate with them. I learned to construct a narrative, like an arc, to use the colours of the orchestra and to be able to improvise with them and feel that

we are co-creating.' Prior to lockdown, he collaborated with the Ripieno Players on his piece *Lament*, which he describes as a short piano concerto with improvisation.

Excited to have Professor Robert Saxton as his composition tutor at Oxford, Baker had already been inspired by the music of Thomas Adès (also taught by Saxton) and Oliver Knussen. What did Saxton most help Baker to achieve? 'Robert was great with the "zooming out" into large-scale form. It's easy to get tunnel vision as a composer, to become self-absorbed; he encouraged me to think about the bigger picture, to analyse my own pieces and try to decipher my unconscious decisions. He was generous and would share some of the sketches and analyses that he had made decades ago – things that might help me in writing my next piece. It was a really thorough training in form, in having an awareness of what you are putting on the page and why.'

Arriving on the jazz scene at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), Baker was surprised by the tacit expectation that all jazz students be both performers and composers. 'It was quite tough to keep both of those skills up!' Baker found motivation from learning how the jazz greats wrote for their own bands and expressively blended composition with improvisation. 'In music by Miles Davis and John Coltrane it's not obvious what is preconceived and what has just been made up on the spot. Even if I'm not including improvisation in my music, I try to maintain that spirit of freedom and expression.'

How does being a jazz musician influence his composing? 'It's an interesting area. That experience of freedom, which performer-led expression provides, I find really important. Performers can be anxious to do exactly what it says on the page; for a composer, starting

a dialogue with the performer, who is an expert on their instrument, is valuable. Jazz has allowed me to break down that idea of a musical product and to engage with the process during the composition and the performance.' Although he does sometimes write technically exacting passagework, Baker does so with the knowledge that the performer is going to have to invest time and energy in learning to play it accurately.

Brave Face is written for Kit Downes, a composer, pianist and organist who had already taught Baker jazz piano at the RAM and who mentored him on the NYCGB scheme. 'I did start to learn the organ as a youngster,' admits Baker, 'but I gave up because it was really hard! For this piece I began by familiarising myself with the instrument and the potential it offers. This is my first solo organ piece, although I have written for choir and organ before. Kit's music expanded my vision, not least listening to his album *Obsidian* [2018, ECM]. He introduced

Berlioz, perhaps – is when you need to be most careful with improvisation. Putting [improvised] structural decision-making in the hands of the organist where a piece is narrative-led makes for a really hard job! It requires confidence and experience of that kind of improvisation.' Instead, Baker prefers to find places where the music can pause, stagnate and convey an emotion through improvisation.

Would he encourage players to try improvising the passage in different ways until they find what works best? 'Yes... spend some time experimenting. Maybe try playing cluster chords, or moving down the keyboard clumsily and lugubriously; then try exaggerating the gesture, tumbling down in a chaotic way.'

Listening to extracts of the choral pieces Baker wrote while on the NYCGB scheme reveals lush harmonies. What did he glean from the experience? 'It's hard to get away from the power of a choir blending well. It

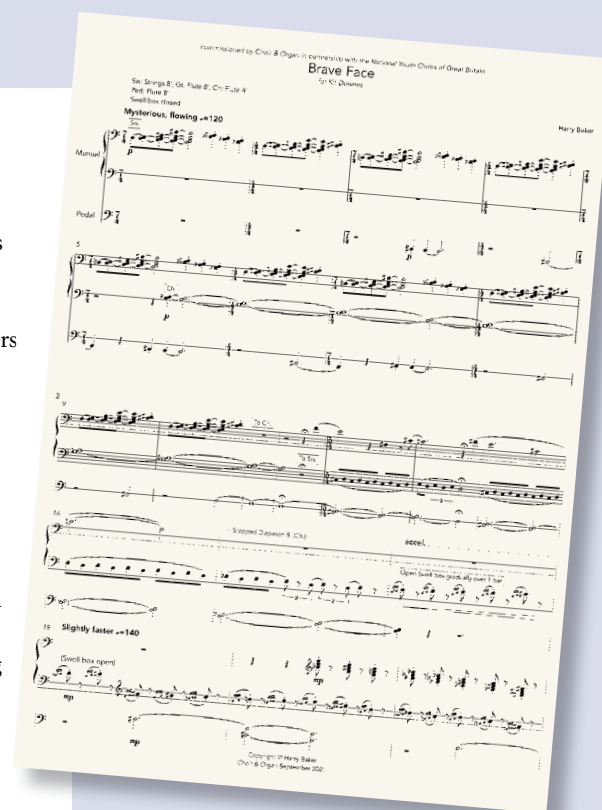
'I hope improvising will add something to this piece and to the performer's experience'

me to the work of some innovative organists: Nils Henrik Asheim, Cameron Carpenter, plus some traditional English composers – Stanford, for instance – and then Messiaen, Ligeti... We had conversations about how to include improvisation within a piece in a way which would not be intimidating.' Downes encouraged Baker to write plenty of music first, get his ideas clear, and then decide where improvised elements might best fit.

In *Brave Face*, Baker has introduced a segment of improvisation with an *ossia* suggesting texture, rhythm and the shape of what the player might do. 'I could have just written that out, but I hope [improvising] will add something to the piece and to the performer's experience at this climactic moment.' Can he suggest how best to integrate an improvised passage into a notated score? 'You have to tread carefully! There is a spectrum to how a composition is structured, whether it is more mood-based and expresses a sentiment; baroque arias and jazz [ballads] both do that. A narrative where the structure and story are paramount – the *Symphonie fantastique* of

was such a pleasure to write for the National Youth Choirs. We had workshops with composers including Toby Young, Jonathan Dove, Alexander L'Estrange. We explored graphic scores, aleatoric music, taking a folk tune and tearing it apart... My [choral] music will display polyphony and the harmonies I find in the music of Anna Meredith, for example, and also influences from the vocal groups Take Six and New York Voices.'

Composing and performing in both classical and jazz genres is a given for Baker's future direction. He is currently enjoying a duo partnership with cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Arrangements include a piece based on one of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, some Nadia Boulanger piano music, folk music, the jazz standard *Cry me a river* and some original compositions. The lyricism which binds this collection together acts as a springboard for the duo's creativity, says Baker. 'I sit at the piano every day to practise, and for me that is more of a lab where I'm able to expand my tool kit. It's a back and forth between improvising and composing.' ■ harrybakermusic.com



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Given the continuing uncertainty around Covid-19, details of the world premiere of Harry Baker's *Brave Face* will be announced in due course.

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LIZ ISLES

▲ 'A distinctive style': Cecilia McDowall

Pioneering spirit

Cecilia McDowall talks to **Matthew Berry** about the influence of unsung innovators in her recent works

Nestling within the Novello carol anthology *Noël! 2* lies a wonderful little carol vignette, *Of a rose*. Penned in 1993 for the Goodworth Singers and retaining the copyright of the composer's own publishing outfit, Gemini Publications, this work, written in her early forties, is the earliest published choral work of Cecilia McDowall.

McDowall turned to composition seriously some years later, and in 2010, in her late fifties, she signed as an Oxford University Press (OUP) house composer, the publisher emphasising her

'distinctive style that fuses fluent melodic lines with occasional harmonies and rhythmic exuberance'. A regular stream of commissions and compositions have followed, testament to a rapidly developing international reputation.

Indeed, OUP had taken on works from 2005 starting with the *Three Latin Motets* – 'Ave Regina', 'Ave Maria', 'Regina caeli' – commissioned by the City of Canterbury Choir and director George Vass, one of the earliest and long-standing enthusiasts for McDowall's music. Later, OUP retrospectively published *A Fancy of*

Folksongs, a 2003 collection of arrangements imbued with imaginative twists and turns. McDowall reflects on these early days: 'I was exceptionally lucky to meet performers and conductors at that time who were all so supportive and encouraging. To be given, early on, commissions and opportunity to write for a wide array of instrumentalists and singers offered invaluable experience.'

Her 70th birthday celebrations in May followed 12 months that, despite the universal and unremitting cultural turbulence due to Covid, have heralded two dedicated recordings – one of choral >

[illegible]

▲ The opening of McDowall's *Photo 51*: the text and music capture the structure of the double helix

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◁ works on Hyperion by the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, and another of organ works played by William Fox (both earning five-star reviews in this magazine) – in addition to tracks on discs by the choirs of St John's College, Cambridge, and The Queen's College, Oxford, and the Vasari Singers. In December 2020, The Ivors Academy awarded McDowall the Ivor Novello Award for Outstanding Works Collection, with Gary Carpenter, chair of the awards committee, commending her as a 'highly skilful and captivating composer who communicates through her music with stunning sensitivity and impact'.

**'[She is] a highly skilful and captivating composer
who communicates with sensitivity and impact'**

For McDowall, the social constraints and enforced isolation that came with lockdown the previous March, running in parallel with the care needs of her mother, led to a six-week period where she found it very hard to contribute anything towards the works lying in the commission in-tray. 'I found some comfort in hearing a couple of writers openly expressing what I was thinking; that part of the creative fabric is interacting socially, going out to museums and concerts and then returning home

to continue writing. Of course, there has been none of that.' One of these lockdown works is *Angel of the Battlefield* written for Composeher, a project devised by the Glasgow School of Art Choir and its founder and director, Jamie Sansbury. Here, McDowall linked up with her frequent collaborator, the writer and poet Seán Street, who interweaves his own text with that of the 19th-century pioneer nurse and American Red Cross founder Clara Barton. The essential message of the work is one of healing, a subject which, already relevant at the height of the pandemic, became even more poignant during the creative process

with the tragic death of George Floyd in May 2020. McDowall hadn't originally intended to use the spiritual 'There is a balm in Gilead' in *Angel of the Battlefield*. However, when the appalling death of Floyd and the inhumane actions of Derek Chauvin came so sharply into focus, McDowall felt compelled to add something to the work that would resonate with current world events. At a time when the singing of African-American spirituals has provoked much debate about cultural appropriation,

McDowall, aware of such sensitivities, extensively researched the provenance of the spiritual and is happy to defend the inclusion of her arrangement: 'As with so much oral music, passed on over so many years, it's not always easy to trace an exact lineage. However, it does seem that "There is a balm in Gilead" does have its roots in the Wesleyan tradition and was "shared" – if one can call it such – with the African-American community in the mid-19th century when America was on the brink of civil war. Clara Barton nursed wounded soldiers in the field in abject conditions during the ensuing American civil war. It felt right to bring both points of view together musically. I do feel, really strongly, that a "creator" should be able to use what he or she feels appropriate to a commission, and not back away from difficult topics; to be able to talk about the issues arising, not to sweep them aside and ignore them. Healthy discussion seems to be the right way to deal with sensitive subjects; we can't just airbrush history.'

Street and McDowall had previously worked together on works about two other extraordinary women whose achievements have not touched the public consciousness in a way that they undoubtedly deserve: The nurse Edith Cavell (*Standing as I do before God*), and the chemist and crystallographer Rosalind Franklin (*Photo 51*), whose contributions to the discovery of the structure of DNA were predominantly recognised after her death.

Although McDowall has written many works in direct response to liturgical texts, she is a fantastic storyteller, sometimes drawing on important but often underreported events, or referencing historical, scientific or political information that intrigues her: ‘Put simply, if I find the subject matter interesting, particularly if it’s something which has been overlooked, I hope that by sharing this in musical form it might arouse a similar interest in the listener or performer. Sometimes my “idea” is stimulated by an anniversary which deserves more exposure (*Brightest Star*, *Photo 51*, *Angel of the Battlefield*) or by a universally poignant situation like that of child refugees. *Everyday Wonders: The Girl from Aleppo*, written for the National Children’s Choir of Great Britain came with a brief to write a work inspired by “children in conflict”. Not

an easy topic, but one which encouraged the children of that choir to ask questions about the dire situation which had not generally been on their horizons previously.’

In *Photo 51*, Street created a text based on the tiny image taken by Raymond Gosling under Rosalind Franklin’s supervision in 1952. *Photo 51* is an X-ray diffraction image of DNA that some claim to be the most important ever taken. It provided the catalyst for the identification of the make-up of DNA, most importantly the double helix structure. Franklin’s (and Gosling’s) work was overlooked in 1962 when, four years after Franklin’s death from ovarian cancer aged 37, three men – Maurice Wilkins, James Watson and Francis Crick – were awarded the Nobel Prize for the discovery of DNA. McDowall and Street’s work is not an attempt to highlight or rectify a historical injustice, but perhaps more to demonstrate the expertise and resilience of a person who made such groundbreaking progress in the understanding of life’s genetic code – of which we all reap the lasting benefits – and who worked up until just a few weeks before

her death. The texture of the a cappella work and the structure of Street’s poem both reflect the shape of the double helix.

Commissions are not an obstacle for McDowall, and she is not aware of ever having compromised her style of writing. She states that she finds ‘writing to a specific commission brief can be, in its way, liberating.’ It’s also clear that she loves collaborating, and refers back to Street and also Kevin Crossley-Holland (*Everyday Wonders: The Girl from Aleppo, A Time for All Seasons*) as the poets behind some of her most powerful works. Crossley-Holland’s texts, especially, appear to be revered in choral circles, and McDowall follows an impressive line of composers setting his poetry, with Bob Chilcott’s *The Heart-in-Waiting* proving one of the most evocative settings, and Philip Cashian’s *Music for an empty sky* one of the most striking. Musical settings of Crossley-Holland’s work date back to 1963 and his early twenties when Sir Arthur Bliss set his translation of anonymous text from Codex Exoniensis in his *A Knot of Riddles* for baritone and 11 instruments.

McDowall believes that there are occasions when it’s important to see events, past or present, through a musical ‘eye’ in an attempt to bring whatever it might be into sharper focus as an enhancement to text on a page or a journalistic piece to camera: ‘Undeniably, music can have a far-reaching influence on the listener, and I think all composers now are aware of what they can bring to society by their work.’

As we approach a time when we hope and expect to be enveloped once again by a semblance of undeviating normality, it is comforting to think of the concert halls and churches awash with the bottleneck of delayed premieres such as *Angel in the Battlefield*. It is intriguing to reflect upon the direction composers like McDowall may now take, given the indelible impression that the pandemic has undoubtedly left on the creative imagination. ■

Photo 51, performed by The Swingles, can be heard at bit.ly/2SGcbHA.

Matthew Berry is a freelance choral consultant and director of the chamber choir Commotio.

▼ The Glasgow School of Art Choir, under the direction of Jamie Sansbury, will premiere McDowall’s *Angel in the Battlefield* in April 2022



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portsmouthcathedral.org.uk/music/
pgs.org.uk



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SCHOLARSHIPS & VOICE TRIALS

Guide to cathedrals, churches, universities and schools offering places for choristers, choral scholars and organists



Scholarships & voice trials

Guide to cathedrals, churches, universities and schools offering places for choristers, choral scholars and organists



©ASH MILLS

▲ Young choristers at Salisbury Cathedral

Key

c = chorister
cs = choral scholar
o = organ scholar
Gap = offers opportunities for gap year students

Listings are by town/city, then by the name of the institution, eg London, Westminster Abbey

If you have opportunities for choristers, choral scholars and organists that are not listed, please email maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com.

B

Bangor Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls; incl. funding for instr & vocal tuition and exam fees), cs, o

Gap yes

Deadline none

Open morning (Sing with the Choristers) at regular intervals, apply for details

Auditions by appointment

Contact Paul Booth 01248 354015, music@bangorcathedral.org.uk
www.bangorcathedral.org.uk

Birmingham Cathedral

Scholarships cs (sopranos), o

Gap yes

Contact David Hardie, head of music, 0121 262 1840, david.hardie@birminghamcathedral.com

www.birminghamcathedral.com

Blackburn Cathedral

Scholarships cs, o

Gap students or recent post-grads

Contact John Robinson 01254

277 442, john.robinson@blackburncathedral.co.uk

blackburncathedral.co.uk

www.blackburncathedral.com

Brighton College

Scholarships cs, o (boys & girls)

Gap yes (post-grad)

Contact Admissions Dept, 01273

704200, registrar@brightoncollege.net

www.brightoncollege.org.uk

Bristol University / Bristol Cathedral / St Mary Redcliffe / St Paul's, Clifton

Scholarships c, o

Contact Megan Holmes 0117 331 4044,

music-resources@bristol.ac.uk

www.bris.ac.uk/music/scholarships

Bristol, Clifton Cathedral

Scholarships (also Exhibitions) cs

(A,T,B), o

Gap yes

Deadline anytime

Trials by appointment

Contact Richard Jeffrey-Gray,

music@cliftondiocese.com

www.cliftonms.com

C

Cambridge University (all colleges)

Scholarships c (boys – King's & St John's only – contact individual colleges), cs (men & women), o

Contact (c & cs) Peter Foggitt, pif21@cam.ac.uk; (o) Andrew Arthur, aa373@cam.ac.uk

bit.ly/2TbcDy2

Cambridge, St John's College Scholarships c (boys)

Trials Mr Nethsingha is available to hear potential applicants all year round

Contact Caroline Marks, 01223 338718, c.f.marks@joh.cam.ac.uk
www.sjcchoir.co.uk

Canterbury, Christ Church Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys)

Open days St Edmund's School & Choir House

Trials by appointment, throughout the year

Contact 01227 865242, david.newsholme@canterbury-cathedral.org
bit.ly/3qwvKyN

Cardiff Metropolitan Cathedral

Scholarships c, cs & o

Gap yes

Trials by appointment at various points through the year

Contact Dominic Neville 07727 138621, dominicneville@cantab.net,
dpnmetropolitan@gmail.com
www.cardiffcathedralchoir.org

Carlisle Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls)

Deadline none

Contact Richard Solyom, Music dept administrator 01228 547916, musicadmin@carlislecathedral.org.uk
www.carlislecathedral.org.uk

Chelmsford Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (incl juniors 15-18 yrs), o

Gap yes

Deadline See website

Trials (o) autumn, (cs) autumn and spring, (c) throughout the year

Contact Elspeth Manders 01245 294481, music@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk
www.chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Cheltenham College

Scholarships c (11+, 13+, 16+), cs, o

Contact Director of music Gordon Busbridge 01242 265600, gordon@cheltenhamcollege.org; (11+) Mrs Lucinda Roskilly 01242 522639, l.roskilly@cheltenhamcollege.org; (13+, 16+) Ms Annalouise McQuilkin 01242 265 662, registrar@cheltenhamcollege.org
www.cheltenhamcollege.org

Cheltenham, Dean Close School

Scholarships c, o

Contact 01242 258070
www.deanclose.org.uk

Chester Cathedral

Scholarships c, cs

Deadline Auditions are available throughout the year

Contact Philip Rushforth 01244 500974, philip.rushforth@chestercathedral.com
www.chestercathedralchoir.co.uk

Chichester Cathedral

Scholarships c, o

Trials throughout the year

Contact Richard Paterson 01243 812487, liturgymusic@chichestercathedral.org.uk
www.chichestercathedral.org.uk

D

Derby Cathedral

Scholarships c (girls & boys from year 3), cs, (for students at Derby, Nottingham, Birmingham or any other local universities), o

Trials The director of music is happy to hear from applicants all year round.
Contact Alexander Binns 07760 766199, alexander@derbycathedral.org
www.derbycathedral.org

Dublin, Christ Church Cathedral

Scholarships c (girls), cs, o

Gap yes

Contact Ian Keatley +353 1 677 8099, ian@christchurch.ie
www.christchurchcathedral.ie

Dublin, St Patrick's Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys), o

Contact Stuart Nicholson, director of music +353 1 453 9472, organist@stpatrickscathedral.ie
www.stpatrickscathedral.ie

Durham Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs, o

Trials by appointment.

Contact Daniel Cook 0191 374 4066, music@durhamcathedral.co.uk
www.durhamcathedral.co.uk

Durham University, St Chad's College

Scholarships cs, o (12 choral scholarships available plus two organ scholarships, each worth £1,000 p.a.)

Trials Auditions in Mar prior to the start of the academic year, and in Oct.

Contact Roger Muttitt, director of music, roger.a.muttitt@durham.ac.uk
bit.ly/366CYjj

E

Edinburgh, Fettes College

Scholarships o

Contact Tracy Doig 0131 311 6706
www.fettes.com

Edinburgh, St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in conjunction with St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh

Scholarships c (boys & girls 9-13), cs (male & female), o

Deadline none, although (c) early application preferred

Auditions (c) Nov, Feb, May; advisory auditions and trials for younger years all year round.

Trials (cs) all year round, (o) Feb

Contact (c) Admissions secretary, admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk; also for younger years 7 to 9 bit.ly/3dpMzpv (cs), (o) Duncan Ferguson, music@cathedral.net
www.cathedral.net

Ely Cathedral, in conjunction with King's School, Ely

Scholarships c (boys yrs 3-8; girls yrs 7-11); sixth form awards (boys & girls yrs 12-13); o (sixth form)

Deadline applications anytime; formal trials (girls) Jan, (boys) Feb/Mar

Contact (boys) Edmund Aldhouse, e.alldhouse@elycathedral.org (also for informal pre-trial); (girls & all sixth form) Sarah MacDonald sarahmacdonald@kingsely.org for informal pre-trial; Admissions staff 01353 660702, admissions@kingsely.cambs.org
www.elycathedral.org, www.kingsely.co.uk

Exeter Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (c-t or a, t, b - through Exeter University or gap), o

Gap sometimes (cs)
Be a chorister for the day 27 Nov 2021

Deadline as soon as possible (cs & o)

Trials (c) late Jan; (cs) any time by arrangement

Contact (c) Katharine Pearce 01392 255298, k.pearce@exetercs.org, www.exetercs.org; (cs & o) Timothy Noon 01392 430923 timothy.noon@exeter-cathedral.org.uk
www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk

G

Glasgow Cathedral (St Mungo's or High)

Scholarships cs (men & women), o

Gap yes (students & postgrads)

Deadline Apply anytime

Contact Andrew Forbes, andrew.forbes@glasgowcathedral.org
www.glasgowcathedral.org

Glasgow, St Bride's Episcopal Church

Scholarships cs (alto, tenor, bass)

Gap yes

Deadline Applications accepted all year-round and trials arranged accordingly.

Contact Rebecca Tavener 07801 239596, cappella.nova@strath.ac.uk
<https://stbridesglasgow.wordpress.com>

Gloucester Cathedral

Scholarships c (girls & boys)

Deadline Apply anytime

Contact Helen Sims 01452 508212, helen@gloucestercathedral.org.uk
www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk

Guildford Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys 7-13, girls 9-18), o

Deadline (boys) Oct, (girls) by appointment, (o) please enquire

Trials (boys) Nov, (girls) by appointment, (o) see website

Contact Katherine Dienes-Williams 01483 547866, katherine@guildford-cathedral.org
www.guildford-cathedral.org

H

Hampton Court Palace, Chapel Royal

Scholarships c (boys), cs, o

Contact Carl Jackson 020 3166 6516, music@chapelroyal.org
www.chapelroyal.org

Hampton School

Scholarships cs (in conjunction with the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace)

Contact Dan Roland, director of music, 020 8783 4200, music@hamptonschool.org.uk
www.hamptonschool.org.uk

Hereford Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys), cs (a, t, b - one of each, lasting 1 year), o (annual)

Gap yes

Deadline none; enquire anytime

Contact Geraint Bowen 01432 374238, organist@herefordcathedral.org
www.herefordcathedral.org

Hexham Abbey

Scholarships c, o (scholarships for sixth-formers from the locality)

Deadline enquiries always welcome

Contact Michael Haynes 01434 602031, directorofmusic@hexhamabbey.org.uk
www.hexhamabbey.org.uk

L

Lancing College

Scholarships cs (boys & girls age 13+/year 9), o (16+/year 12)

Deadline mid-Dec before year of entry

Contact Mrs Sarah Linfield, 01273 465805, admissions@lancing.org.uk, www.lancingcollege.co.uk

Leeds (RC) Cathedral / Leeds University / Huddersfield University / Leeds College of Music

Scholarships cs (men & women, all voice parts), o. Also available: schools choral scholarships, and choral conducting scholarships

Deadline none, but early in the year is advisable

Trials on application

Contact (cs) Jessica Shears, Diocese of Leeds Music Office office@dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk; (o) Benjamin Saunders 0113 244 8634 www.dioceseofleedsmusic.org.uk

Leeds Minster / Leeds University / Leeds College of Music

Scholarships c, o

Contact Alex Woodrow 0113 245 2036, alex.woodrow@leedsminster.org, www.leedsminster.org

Leicester Cathedral

Scholarships cs (men & women), c (boys & girls)

Contact Christopher Ouvry-Johns 0116 261 5374, chris.ouvry-johns@leicestercofe.org, <http://leicestercathedral.org>

Lichfield Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (sixth form; alto, tenor, bass)

Contact Sandra Slater, registrar at the Cathedral School, 01543 306168, s.slater@lichfieldcathedralschool.com, www.lichfield-cathedral.org, www.lichfieldcathedralschool.com

Liverpool Anglican Cathedral

Scholarships cs (men & women) (£3,750 pa + free accommodation in Cathedral Close), o (2 available; £5,000 pa + accommodation)

Deadline please enquire

Contact Lee Ward, director of music, 0151 702 7291, lee.ward@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk, www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs, o
Contact Jacqueline Larrosa, 0151 708 7283, j.larrosa@metcathedral.org.uk, www.liverpoolmetroccathedral.org.uk

Llandaff Cathedral

Scholarships c
Contact Richard Moorhouse 029 2057 5218, rm1971@btinternet.com, www.llandaffcathedral.org.uk

London, All Saints Church, Fulham

Scholarships cs, o
Contact Organist and director of music, Jonathan Wikeley 07966 969746, jonathanwikeley@gmail.com (contact anytime for further information) www.allsaints-fulham.org.uk

London, Dulwich College

Scholarships c (boys), cs, o
Contact Mrs Elsa Tatevossian tatevossiane@dulwich.org.uk, www.dulwich.org.uk

London, Royal Hospital, Chelsea

Scholarships The Royal Hospital Organ Scholarship (£4,650 bursary and accommodation at low rent, age 18-27)

Contact William Vann, organist and director of music, 020 7881 5249, will.vann@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk, www.chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

London, St George's (RC) Cathedral, Southwark

Scholarships c (boys & girls)

Deadline end of April

Trials Annual auditions for boys & girls take place during May

Contact Jonathan Schrantz, director of music, music@stgeorges.org.uk, www.southwark-rc-cathedral.org.uk

London, St Martin-in-the-Fields

Scholarships cs (S,A,T,B), o

Deadline please enquire

Contact Cathy Martin 020 7766 1108, choirs@smiff.org, www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org

London, St Mary's Battersea

Scholarships cs (SATB), o

Contact Tyrone Whiting tyrone.whiting@googlemail.com, www.stmarysbattersea.org.uk

London, St Paul's Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys), o
Deadline (c) enquiries welcome throughout the year, (o) see website
Contact Angela Palotai, 020 7236 6883, apalotai@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

www.stpauls.co.uk

London, St Paul's Cathedral School

Scholarships c (boys)

Gap yes

Contact Clare Morgan 020 7248 5156, admissions@spcs.london.sch.uk, www.spcslondon.com

London, Southwark Cathedral

Scholarships cs, o

Contact Ian Keatley, director of music, cathedral@southwark.anglican.org, www.southwark.anglican.org

London, Temple Church

Scholarships c (boys); cs (girls), for the Temple Singers (*see feature, p.52*)

Deadline none

Trials throughout the year

Contact Susan Keeling 020 7427 5650, susan@templechurch.com, www.templechurch.com

London University, King's College London

Scholarships cs (men & women), o

Contact Joseph Fort, 020 7848 2333, choir@kcl.ac.uk, www.kcl.ac.uk/choir

London University, Royal Holloway

Scholarships cs (men & women), o

Contact Rupert Gough 01784 414970, choraladmin@rhul.ac.uk, www.chapelchoir.co.uk

London, Trinity Laban

Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Scholarships cs (12 Trinity College London choral scholarships p.a., for male & female undergrad. & postgrad. students)

Contact Ralph Allwood, r.allwood@trinitylaban.ac.uk, www.ornc.org/chapel-choir

London, University of Greenwich

Scholarships c (David Fussey Choral Exhibition, available to any student already enrolled on a full-time course at the University of Greenwich)

Deadline 30 Sep each year

Contact Chris Shelley, director of student and academic services, 020 8331 8905, c.j.shelley@greenwich.ac.uk, www.greenwich.ac.uk/choir

London, Westminster Abbey

Scholarships c (boys aged 7-9, incl. school bursaries), o

Chorister experience days

9 Oct 2021, 5 Feb & 7 May 2022

Deadline (c) enquiries welcome throughout the year; (o) see website

Contact (c) 020 7654 4981, choirschool@westminster-abbey.org, www.abbeychoirschool.org

(o) music@westminster-abbey.org, www.westminster-abbey.org

London, Westminster Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys 8-13), o

Open day please enquire

Contact (c) Lucy Augar, director of admissions, choir school 020 7798 9081, lauger@choirschool.com, www.choirschool.com/chorister.html (o) William Wayne, music administrator, musicadmin@rcdow.org.uk, www.westminstercathedralchoir.com

M

Manchester Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), o

Deadline none

Voice trials by arrangement with the director of music

Contact Christopher Stokes 0161 833 2220

www.manchestercathedral.org

N

Newcastle, Cathedral Church of St Nicholas

Scholarships c (in partnership with Newcastle School for Boys, Gosforth, for boys entering yrs 3-8); cs (men & women a, t, b in full-time education, from £2,012 pa + fees and free singing tuition; four services per week); o

Contact Michael Stoddart 0191 232 1939, directorofmusic@stnicnewcastle.co.uk, michael.stoddart@stnicholascathedral.co.uk, www.stnicholascathedralmusic.co.uk

Norwich Cathedral

Scholarships c, cs

Contact Tracy Bigwood 01603 218 306, liturgyandmusicpa@cathedral.org.uk

www.cathedral.org.uk

Nottingham, St Mary the Virgin

Scholarships cs, o

Contact John Keys, director of music, scholarships@stmaryschoirnottingham.com, www.stmaryschoirnottingham.com

O

Oxford, St Edward's School

Scholarships Music scholarship (13+ and 16+)

Open days 2 main open days and a regular mini-open day per term

Contact Registrar Nicola Jones 01865 319200, director of music Alex Tester, tester@stedwardsoxford.org
www.stedwardsoxford.org

Oxford University

Scholarships c

Contact Owen Rees 01865 279173 www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/orgscholars

Oxford, Magdalen College

Scholarships c (boys 7-12 yrs, held at Magdalen College School), cs (undergrad), o (2 for undergrads)

Gap enquire

Deadline (cs, o) early September; (c) not fixed

Trials Informal auditions can be arranged throughout the year; formal auditions usually in Sep.

Contact Melanie Bennette, 01865 286701, choir@magd.ox.ac.uk
www.magdalencollegechoir.com

P

Portsmouth Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys 7-14 & girls 11-18), cs (c-t, t, b), o

Gap yes (or while studying at the Universities of Portsmouth, Chichester or Southampton)

Deadline (c) Oct each year, (cs, o) Oct & Feb each year

Trials (c) by appointment, (cs, o) Nov & Mar each year

Contact Dr David Price 023 9282 3300 ext. 225, music@portsmouthcathedral.org.uk
www.portsmouthcathedral.org.uk

R

Radley College

Scholarships c (boys, yrs 2-8; music scholarships yr 9), o (yr 12)

Deadline (c) anytime; (music scholarships, o) Jan

Trials (c) termly

Contact Sam Gladstone 01235 543034, musicadmin@radley.org.uk
www.radley.org.uk

Ripon Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls)

Deadlines none; enquire anytime

Trials By appointment at any time

Contact 01765 603496, singing@riponcathedral.org.uk
www.riponcathedral.org.uk

Rugby School

Scholarships cs (boys & girls, yrs. 3-8 at Bilton Grange Prep. School; music scholarships yr.9 at Rugby School)

Gap yes (at Bilton Grange; post-grad. at Rugby School)

Trials by appointment

Contact Richard Tanner, rjt@rugbyschool.net
bit.ly/2TgKi9q

S

St Albans Cathedral

Scholarships o

Gap yes – pre-university, undergrads & postgrads considered (bursary and fees of c.£14-15,000 pa and rent-free accommodation (s/c 1-bed flat)).

Deadline Enquiries welcome anytime

Trials Early autumn term (tbc)

Contact Lizzie Smyth 01727 890245, music@stalbanscathedral.org
www.stalbanscathedral.org

St Andrews University

Scholarships cs (men & women), o

Trials by appointment

Contact Chris Bragg 01334 462226, cjb30@st-andrews.ac.uk
www.stsalvatorschapelchoir.co.uk

St Davids Cathedral

Scholarships cs, o

Gap undergrads & postgrads

Contact Oliver Waterer 01437 720128 stdavidsmusic@gmail.com
www.stdavidscathedral.org.uk

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys), cs (sixth formers, male c-t, t, b), o

Gap yes (but no accommodation)

Open days none; get in touch to organise visit

Deadline none; enquire anytime

Trials By appointment

Contact Richard Cook 01284 748737, adam@stedscathedral.org
www.stedscathedral.co.uk

Salford, St John's (RC) Cathedral

Scholarships cs (men & women)

Deadline none

Contact Alex Patterson 0161 817 2210, alex.patterson@dioceseofsalford.org.uk
www.salfordcathedral.co.uk

Salisbury Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), o

Deadline please enquire

Be a chorister for the day 2 Oct 2021

Voice trials workshop 4 Dec 2021

Voice trials (girls) 15 Jan 2022, (boys) 5 Feb 2022

Informal pre-audition Director of music David Halls, and assistant director of music John Challenger, are also able to offer an informal 'pre-audition'.

▼ Nicholas Freestone is organ scholar at St Paul's Cathedral, London



COURTESY ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON (GRAHAM JACKO)

JAMES PARSONS



▲ Choral scholars at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh

Deadline please enquire

Contact (c, o) David Halls 01722 555125, d.halls@salcath.co.uk; (c) 01722 555315, chorister.recruitment@salcath.co.uk bit.ly/1TJczdc, bit.ly/32oNTC9

Shrewsbury School

Scholarships c (boys & girls), o
Contact Stephen Williams 01743 280580, chapelchoir@shrewsbury.org.uk

www.shrewsbury.org.uk

Southwell Cathedral

Scholarships o
Contact Paul Provost 01636 817297, rectorchori@southwellminster.org.uk www.southwellminster.org.uk

Stowe School

Scholarships Music scholarship (ages 13 & 16)
Contact Admissions 01280 818323 www.stowe.co.uk

T

Tewkesbury Abbey

Scholarships c (boys), cs (men), o
Contact Simon Bell 01242 258000, sabell@deanclose.org.uk www.scholacantorum.org.uk

Truro Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (a, t, b), o
Deadline as soon as possible

Contact Director of music

01872 276782, christophergray@trurocathedral.org.uk www.trurocathedral.org.uk

W

Wakefield Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls)
Recruitment & trials Tests take place at any time of year, but the main recruitment time is May/Jun to Sep
Contact James Bowstead, 01924 373923, james.bowstead@wakefield.cathedral.org.uk www.wakefieldcathedral.org.uk

Warwick, St Mary's Collegiate Church

Scholarships c (boys attending Warwick Junior and Senior Schools), o
Deadline 31 Dec
Trials Jan, but the director of music is available to hear potential choristers all year round.

Contact Oliver Hancock 01926 403940, musicadmin@stmaryswarwick.org.uk www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk www.warwicksschool.org.uk

Wells Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (A (men & women), T, B)
Trials ongoing

Contact music office 01749 674483

www.wellscathedral.org.uk

Winchester Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls)
Voice trials workshop (boys) Jan
Trials (boys) by appointment
Auditions (girls) Mar

Contact Choirs administrator 01962 857219, choirs@winchester-cathedral.org.uk; Emma Short, The Pilgrims' School 01962 854189, admissions@pilgrims-school.co.uk www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk, www.thepilgrims-school.co.uk

Winchester College

Scholarships c, o
Contact Howard Ionascu or Emma Short at The Pilgrims' School (for Quirister places only) 01962 854189, admissions@pilgrims-school.co.uk www.winchestercollege.org

Winchester, Pilgrims' School

see Winchester Cathedral (above)

Windsor Castle, St George's Chapel

Scholarships c (boys, age 7-9), o
Contact (o) Chapter Office 01753 848888, chapteroffice@stgeorges-windsor.org; (c) Music administrator 01753 848797, music@stgeorges-windsor.org www.stgeorges-windsor.org

Worcester Cathedral

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (A, T, B), o

Gap cs, o (pre- & post-university)

Deadline choral and organ scholarships are advertised in Nov; closing date will be advised in the application pack. Choristers (boys & girls): please direct enquiries to Samuel Hudson at any time.

Contact Samuel Hudson, director of music, 01905 732916, samuelhudson@worcestercathedral.org.uk

www.worcestercathedral.co.uk

Wycliffe College

Scholarships c (boys & girls), cs (boys & girls)

Deadline please enquire

Contact Fiona Lawson-Best 01453 820412, fiona.lawson-best@wycliffe.co.uk www.wycliffe.co.uk

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York Minster

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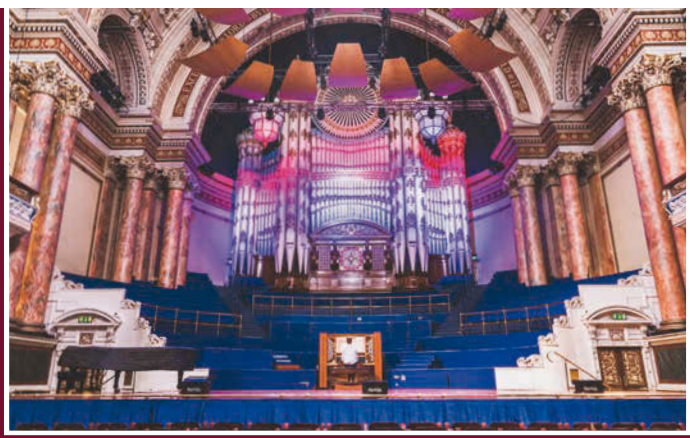


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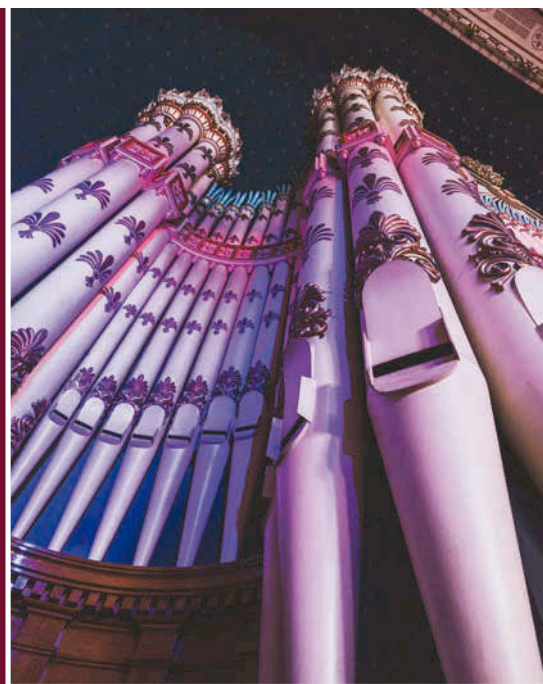
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Lucky star

It escaped the blitz and the worst excesses of fashion whims. Now, Liverpool Blue Coat School's recently restored Father Willis organ deserves its place centre-stage, writes

Tom Bell. PHOTOS BY PETER ELSON

By and large, the ranks of school organs in the United Kingdom are massed in the independent, fee-paying sector. Many, if not all, independent schools possess at least a small organ in a chapel; several have rather famous organs, such as the Hill at Eton College. Sadly, it is very rare indeed for a *state* school to possess a pipe organ, or even a digital instrument. The Liverpool Blue Coat School is an exception, and indeed it may come as a surprise to discover that it boasts *two* pipe organs. One was a small Edwardian organ in the fine chapel, the greatly rebuilt descendant of which remains in use. The other organ is a Father Willis, installed in 1875 in an earlier building before moving home with the school at the turn of the last century. Since that time, it has sat on the stage in the magnificent Shirley Hall and is, in the

'The Pedal Bourdon was split from end to end and had to be almost completely remade'

words of Peter Elson, the school's development officer, 'a lucky organ.' Lucky because, had it been left in the old building in central Liverpool, 'it would have been turned into a pile of ash during the blitz. Other than the façade [which still stands], the old building was virtually destroyed.' The Willis organ is lucky also for having mostly escaped the whims and fashions of successive generations of organists. Not so its neighbour in the chapel, whose massive – and silent, since the 1970s – front pipes belie the lean but effective neo-classical organ within. The Shirley Hall organ is also lucky in that it sits in superb acoustics; despite its small size it is a commanding presence in the room, tonally and visually. Its most recent stroke of luck was to be lovingly restored, and given an inspiring new purpose, helped by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

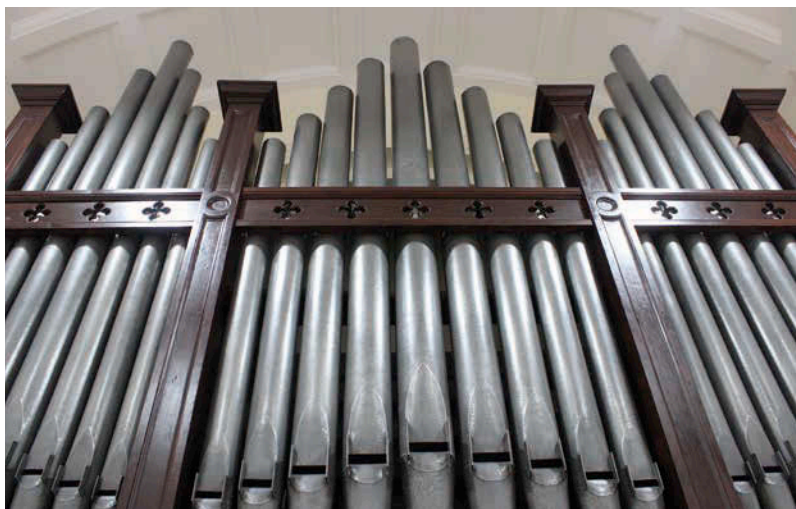
Of course, far from mere luck, the recent successful restoration owes an enormous debt to the hard work of a number of individuals. Peter Elson is one of them, having conceived the Pipe Up fundraising appeal,

providing matched funding for the lottery grant and a fund for the education of young organists. There was hard work also from David Wyld and his team at Henry Willis & Sons. 'The pedal Bourdon was split from end to end; it had to be almost completely remade,' reports Wyld, 'and several parts of the organ had been altered in the 1970s.' The reeds had been revoiced and, inexplicably, all the trackers had been replaced. New trackers of traditional pattern have been provided in the recent restoration, and changes to the reeds reversed. The pedals had seen the attention of a planer, reducing their width and making them awkward to play, so all-new pedals of the original 'swan neck' design now grace the 1875 pedalboard frame. The console woodwork had been planed as well, presumably in a bid to make it look fresh – needless to say, that process has not been repeated... A concession to modernity is the provision of an adjustable bench, since the organ is to be used for teaching teenagers. I expected David Wyld to explain that this was due to the small stature of the younger students, and was amused instead to be informed that the opposite is the case: 'Even some of the 14-year-olds are over six foot!'

An obvious visual change is the restoration of the wooden rail to the façade. The original had been removed and lost at some point in the distant past, and a replacement has been provided after careful study of early photographs. All this and much more was accomplished in time for a reopening event in the restored Shirley Hall in early 2020, after which the organ builders were anticipating a series of visits to attend to the organ as it settled back into its home. Needless to say, the pandemic and its attendant lockdowns intervened. Other than an emergency visit to extract an uncooperative pigeon – Peter Elson wisely having decided against chasing it out himself – the organ builders were unable to revisit the organ until May 2021. This must have been frustrating for all concerned, not least since the new bench had yet to be delivered. The opening event made use of a temporary bench, albeit a lovely understated art deco example borrowed from Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall. ➤

► Liverpool Blue Coat School's Father Willis organ, restored to its original 1875 state





▲ (from top) The wooden rail has been restored to the façade, after careful study of old photographs; the restored console, with water-damaged keys 'restored to their former glory'

◀ The restored console is an absolute treat to behold, and even when viewed from the back of the hall the woodwork seems to glow. The water-damaged keys have been restored to their former glory, complemented by the (very comfortable) new pedals. The oak kneeboard looks for all the world as if it has always been there but is, in fact, new, its poorly fitting plywood predecessor having been consigned to the dustbin of history.

During my visit, the former Blue Coat student Daniel Greenway – currently organ scholar at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and about to take up an organ scholarship at Keble College, University of Oxford – put the Willis through its paces. Tonally, it glows just as much as the console woodwork. The Swell strings are of the mild type typical of Father Willis, seeming almost to melt into nothing as the box is closed. The department is crowned by a brilliant Flageolet and robust Cornopean. The box retains its horizontal shutters, though these are controlled by a balanced pedal installed many years ago. Balanced pedals are often retained during 'historic restorations' in the UK, something I find puzzling,

since mastering a lever swell pedal is key to historically informed playing on Victorian organs.

Moving to the Great, the quietest stop is (of course) the Dulciana. Dulcianas are so often maligned. This one has a muted colour all of its own, and provides the ideal accompaniment to the quieter stops on the Swell. The Claribel Flute is a delight, blooming in the room as such stops are apt to. The Great 8ft and 4ft diapasons are substantial, the Super Octave less so. Nevertheless, Great to 2ft almost overwhelms full Swell, the latter department being more than expectedly subservient to the Great. The organ is crowned by a classic Willis tierce mixture, which binds the fluework to the Tromba. No survey of the organ should ignore the delicious Corno di Bassetto – stops of this ilk are perfectly common on organs of this size, yet always they feel like a luxury. The instrument is underpinned by two 16ft Pedal stops, both of which roll merrily round the room.

This is a special organ in a wonderful setting. Beautifully restored by Henry Willis & Sons, the overwhelming impression it gives is one of sheer quality. One can almost sense it enjoying itself in the fine acoustics of the Shirley Hall. Each stop is a joy, and in ensemble they fill the room with sound.

But what is this organ *for*? Creating new organists. The Pipe Up appeal included provision for two Blue Coat Organ Scholars. Olivia Stone and George Ke are taught by Lee Ward of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, and the school has close links with both cathedrals in the city. The scholars have access to the substantial organs in these places, and to the experienced musicians who play them, as well as the two fine organs at school. Indeed, they and Daniel Greenway have played the Anglican Cathedral organ on television. These first two organ scholars were supported by the Young Organ Scholars Trust and a generous local donor. Two more scholars have now been appointed – Alexandra Somova and Charles Fisher – and further support for the scheme has come from the Eric Thompson Trust and the Liz & Terry Bramall Foundation, with attention now turning to longer-term funding to continue to develop the scholarship scheme. The school is also an Accredited Institution of the Royal College of Organists. This is quite a resumé for an institution which only launched its organ project in 2017.

The Liverpool Blue Coat School is a place to watch, and its organ scholarship scheme richly deserves all our support. To have restored the Willis organ is a substantial achievement; to have commenced the training of young organists with such vigour and success – against the background of the pandemic, too – is remarkable. Truly, that Willis is a lucky organ. ■

Tom Bell is a performer, educator and independent organ consultant.

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Opening a door

Although London's Temple Church Choir has a boys-only top line, the Temple Singers are now offering choral scholarships to girls on the threshold of higher education and a possible singing career. **Stephen Pritchard** reports



MATTHEW POWER

Little did I know then that Lough was 16 going on 17 when he made that recording (actually his second: the master from his first had so many pressings it wore out in six months). It earned a gold disc and made the Choir of the Temple Church, London, world-famous. To hear it, a queue would reach from the ancient church – nestling among a warren of barristers’ chambers in the Middle Temple near the Thames – right out into Fleet Street.

Today, boys’ voices break very much earlier, a trend noticed even in 1952 by Lough’s music director, Sir George Thalben-Ball, who wrote that Lough’s longevity as a treble brought a wisdom to his music-making lacking in those whose voices broke earlier. The Temple’s current director of music, Roger Sayer, agrees, and says that when you listen to Lough his obvious understanding and appreciation of the text is a sure sign of his maturity: ‘It’s an old head on young shoulders.’

That 1927 recording – along with the BBC’s regular broadcasts of Choral Evensong from cathedrals and colleges that began the year before – perhaps helped to prolong the notion that well sung church music was a male preserve. All that has changed. A 2019 survey showed that girls now outnumber boys in cathedrals, and several recorded soprano renditions of *Hear My Prayer* can rival any sung by a boy (I particularly recommend Rachel Bennett’s 2005 recording with the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge).

Temple Church has a renowned choral foundation, run to cathedral standard since 1841, made up of 18 boys and 12 professional choirwomen. So how in 2021 is it making its own contribution towards equality of opportunity?

◀ Thomas Allery rehearses the Temple Singers. The groups sing for regular services as well as at weddings, memorial services and concerts

▼ Temple Church director of music Roger Sayer: ‘We want to provide a training ground for those considering studying music’

▷

Tucked away in my parents’ record collection in the 1960s was a little cardboard-covered HMV EP – a transfer from a 78rpm made in 1927 which had sold a million copies – Ernest Lough’s poised and pure account of Mendelssohn’s *Hear My Prayer*. As a young treble it both fascinated and alarmed me. How would I learn to sing like him? Surely I would never be able to tackle that majestic music with such assurance? Not so much ‘O for the wings of a dove’ as ‘O for a voice like that.’



SIM CAHILL-CLARE

Temple Singers Scholars

Tilly Heath (16)



COURTESY TILLY HEATH

'Most of my singing experience has been at school, where I've sung in the Chapel Choir since I was nine, and Chorale, a more professional school choir with more challenging repertoire. I was also a Soprano 1 in the National Youth Choir of Great Britain's Girls' Choir, and am now a Soprano 1 in NYCGB's Training Choir. I have weekly singing lessons.

'I first heard about this amazing opportunity from one of my music teachers at school. I decided to audition as I knew would gain invaluable experience and insight from the

professionals in the Temple Singers and the music leaders at Temple Church. I have always had a passion for music, especially singing, so when the opportunity arose to sing at such a renowned church, I jumped at it. I'm thrilled to have won the scholarship, as I know that many people would have been striving for it, and wanting it as much as I did. I am very proud to now be a part of the distinguished Temple Singers, and to have the resources and support from the church to pursue a career in music. I will sing one Evensong a week on a Wednesday, with a rehearsal beforehand, as well as occasional Sundays.

'I know I'll learn a lot from this amazing experience and hope it will help me obtain a choral scholarship at university, and open more opportunities for me to sing professionally.'

Yasmin Byng (17)



COURTESY YASMIN BYNG

'Singing is a large part of my life. I have been a member of NYCGB since I was 13, starting in their Girls' Choir before moving up to their Training choir, where I am now. I am also a member of the London Youth Choirs, which has included a performance of Mahler 2 at the Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic Choir and London Philharmonic Orchestra. At school, I sing in the student-led a cappella Chamber Choir and frequently perform in lunchtime concerts. I'm currently working towards taking an ARSM singing diploma.

'I applied for the scholarship as I saw it as an incredible opportunity to sing alongside professional musicians, develop as an ensemble singer, improve my technique and widen my repertoire, and gain an insight into the profession. The beautiful setting of the Temple Church also attracted me, providing the environment to sing in the magnificent acoustics of the church on a regular basis. I'm honoured to have been offered the scholarship, and look forward to developing my singing and my confidence in performing, as well as furthering my career in music.

'In addition to the regular services, there will be opportunities to sing in other services or concerts. The scholarship also offers a one-to-one mentor scheme, with a professional member of the Temple Singers providing me with support towards my development. I'm hoping this will provide me with a solid foundation to read music at university, and to prepare for a future career in singing.'

◀ Sayer explains that the Inner and Middle Temples – the Inns of Court that have governed the Temple Church since 1608 – were initially keen that he should mix boys and girls in the choir's front row, but he resisted on – he underlines – social, not musical, grounds.

'I base my arguments on my experience of running mixed choirs and boys' and girls' choirs. To sing correctly you have to have total commitment and freedom, you have to be daring and courageous. When a boy gets to the peak of his voice – when his spoken voice changes but he can still happily sing treble very well – if at that point you add girls into a choir, the boys lose the courage to sing like that. Singing is such a personal thing. And girls of that age are only just starting to develop their voice; they are not as strong as the boys. Girls are often shy at that age; it's not easy to get them to make the jump to be fully free in their performances. So put them together and neither boys nor girls sing to their full potential. The way forward for equality is to recognise this and allow them the freedom to express themselves in separate choirs without peer pressure.'

Cathedrals that formed girls' choirs from ages 13 to 18 have it right, he believes. 'If, like a cathedral, we were singing seven services a week, we could form a girls' choir, of course, but we sing just two services.' Their Wednesday Evensong is mostly sung by the Temple Singers, a professional choir formed in 2006 to complement the main choir and conducted by the Temple Church's assistant director of music, Thomas Allery. 'It has a female top line, so I proposed that we offered choral scholarships to that ensemble so that young sopranos and contraltos, either in sixth form or beyond, could enjoy the same level of training – and funding – as the boys.'

Sayer has auditioned his first candidates and appointed two singers – Tilly Heath and Yasmin Byng – for this year, with the possibility of extending into a second year; from 2022 there are places for up to four singers. He had received a healthy crop of applications: most candidates were aged around 18, with considerable choral experience already under their belt. Members of the Rodolfus Choir, English Chamber Choir and National Youth Choir were among the applicants.

At the audition, candidates were asked to perform two contrasting pieces that showed off their voice to its best potential. They were also given aural and sight-reading tests, followed by a question-and-answer session with a panel comprising Sayer, his colleagues, and a member of the Temple Singers, with whom candidates were also asked to perform some two-part music.

'We want to provide a training ground to those considering studying music and perhaps applying for a university choral scholarship,' says Sayer. 'The successful applicants will have individual singing lessons and be assigned a mentor with whom they can discuss the

► All the regular members of the Temple Singers have flourishing freelance careers as concert and opera soloists, as consort members, and as singing teachers

world of professional music – a world in which they might be hoping to make a career. We can offer mock auditions to help in that process.’

In addition to Wednesday Evensongs, the Temple Singers sing a Sunday service once a month, provide the music at memorial services and weddings and give concerts. All the regular members have flourishing freelance careers as soloists in opera and on the concert platform, as members of consorts and as singing teachers.

Successful applicants for the scholarship will become part of an establishment serving one of London’s most ancient churches, rich in history. The Temple was built by the Knights Templar to serve as their English headquarters, one of a network of nearly 1,000 institutions established across Europe and the Holy Land. It was dedicated on 10 February 1185, probably in the presence of Henry II. The church building contains two separate sections: the Round Church (known to be the original nave), and the Chancel, which was built about half a century later. The Round Church was created to represent the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, constructed over the site of Jesus’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection. It is also known to be one of only three Norman round churches still existing in England today. Magna Carta was engendered at the Temple in 1215, and in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* the church appears as the scene for the start of the War of the Roses. Most recently, the Temple served as a key location for Dan Brown’s novel *The Da Vinci Code*, with the church featuring in the subsequent film.

The Temple Church has premiered several prominent musical commissions, most notably Sir John Tavener’s *The Veil of the Temple*, an epic, seven-hour choral cycle, which the Choir took to the Lincoln Center Festival in New York, and then to the BBC Proms in 2003. Works by Thomas Adès, Gabriel Jackson, Nico Muhly and John Rutter have followed in recent years.

And what became of Master Ernest Lough? He continued to sing as a choirman once his voice had broken, and two of his three sons followed in his footsteps to become Temple choristers. Those sons still attend occasional services and events at the church. But it’s not always been a man’s world at the Temple. Emily Dowding was organist from 1796, though she is unlikely to be an inspiration for today’s new choral scholars: she was apparently dismissed in 1814 for appointing a deputy so that she need not turn up... ■

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.



MATTHEW POWER



MATTHEW POWER



MATTHEW POWER



MASCHINEN - SAAL

Work in progress

Choir & Organ hears from **Orgelbau Klais** about the reconstruction of a Michael Engler organ in Poland, and new instruments for Bavaria and Belgium. PHOTOS © KLAIS ARCHIVE

In a dreamy *Gründerzeit* courtyard in Bonn's old town, the sun is shining, the blackbirds are singing. But hammering is going on in the pipe workshop, sawing in the windchest department, and the voicing room emits a shrill squeak that wants to become an elegant Cornet stop one day. Organ building has hardly changed in the past four centuries, and in the Klais workshop time seems to have stood still. The buildings date back to 1895. 'It's very much a family atmosphere,' says Philipp Klais, who runs the workshop of this fourth generation of organ builders and lives adjacent to the assembly hall. 'All of us working here are a big family, all of us to the same exceptional degree devoted to and fascinated by what we are doing.'

Unexpected changes have had to be faced in recent months, he continues: 'When German organ building became part of world cultural heritage last year, no one could have foreseen

the impact the Covid pandemic would have on our craft. We had to interrupt several installations abroad because we were no longer allowed to travel. One team returned on the last possible day from the USA, where an 80-plus stop organ has been half-finished since March 2020. Fortunately, we were able to bring other projects forward, so we have had our hands full. And of course, we are looking forward to the moment when we are allowed to go back and complete our work.'

The Klais team is currently working on three organs that encompass the diversity of organ building. In Wrocław, Poland, a baroque organ by Johann Michael Engler from 1759 is being reconstructed in St Elisabeth's Church. 'After many changes and alterations, the original case and the substantial remains of the historic pipework were completely destroyed in a church fire in 1976. Now we are working on recreating the

instrument in its original state,' Klais relates. 'The mammoth task is a cooperation with the Belgian Thomas workshop and the Polish Zych workshop. This way we can combine our different competence and experience. We were fortunate that the Polish team could continue the work in Wrocław when travel restrictions were introduced.'

Such an extensive reconstruction poses many technical challenges, including the daunting task of recreating the sculptural decoration consisting of more than 50 figurines, some larger than life-size. 'We created a special workshop section for the sculptors and gilders. At the beginning of the work two and a half years ago, they made a model in 1/10 scale of the organ complete with all carvings and decoration. That gives you a good idea of the scope of the task. But we are confident that we will finish as planned this autumn. The case is installed in the church, ▶

◀ The Klais workshop in Bonn

▼ (clockwise, from below) Tonal director Andreas Saage; a 1759 Engler organ is being reconstructed in St Elisabeth's Church, Wrocław; one of the Engler crowning angels is prepared for lifting back into place



Orgelbau Klais – how it all began



▲ Johannes Klais founded the workshop in 1882

In 1882, when carriages still dominated the streets and electricity was not yet widespread, Johannes Klais (1852-1925) founded his organ building workshop in the city of Bonn, on the bank of the Rhine 15 miles from Cologne. Klais first moved into a small workshop, and within a few years constructed large premises on Kölnstraße, the street that runs alongside Beethoven's birthplace. This building is still home to the Klais family as well as the company's place of work.

The 30-year-old Johannes had already established a remarkable professional career. His first apprenticeship was with a builder called Bertram in Engers, Neuwied, about 30 miles down the Rhine from Bonn. To learn even more, Klais needed to travel. In Strasbourg he worked with the organ builder Coulen, moved on to southern Germany, then to Switzerland and France.

Johannes first built traditional instruments with slider windchests and mechanical key and stop action. Even before the turn of the century, he made significant innovations – designing high-pressure stops with two mouths and constructing pneumatically controlled cone chests. As early as 1906, in collaboration with his 16-year-old son Hans, he developed an electric action for his instrument in Erfurt Cathedral.

His vision was to undertake every element of organ building in his own workshop. He only bought raw materials – wood cut into logs, and tin and lead in ingots. From these he cast the sheet metal for pipe making; the same craft continues in the family's workshop today. Klais employed sculptors and



▲ Hans Klais took over the workshop in 1925

woodcarvers to produce the richly decorated, neo-Gothic cases so typical of Johannes Klais instruments at that time.

In 1925, Hans Klais (1890-1965) assumed responsibility for the workshop, and further developments in organ design soon followed. He maintained close contact with the Bauhaus architects and invented the so-called open façades with exposed pipework. The pipes, from the smallest at the front to the largest at the back, are arranged to be completely visible. This façade design was to influence many subsequent builders as far afield as the USA. Under his workshop management, ergonomically shaped consoles were developed (amphitheatre-style with steep tiers and curved stop tabs), and these remain a characteristic component of many Klais organs today. He had frequent written conversations with Albert Schweitzer, who favoured the combination of



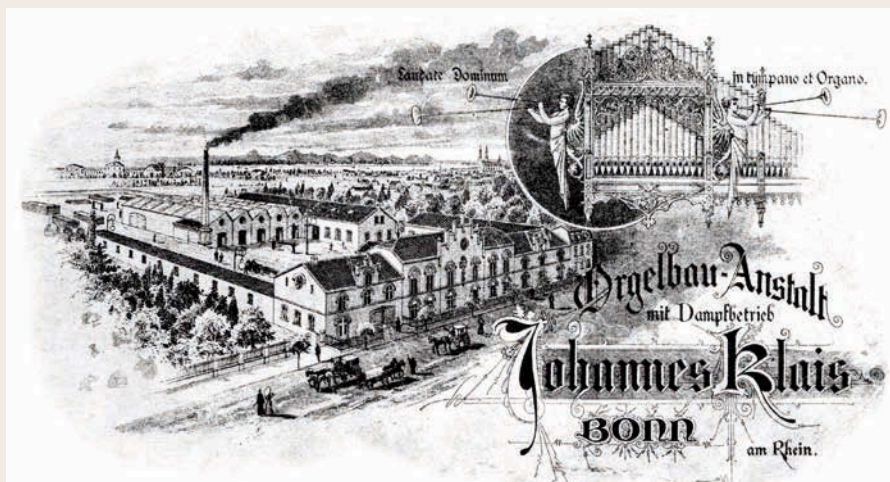
▲ Hans-Gerd Klais succeeded his father in 1965

historic sounds (baroque and romantic) with modern electric key and stop action.

Instruments by Hans Klais can be found in the cathedrals of Ghent and Bruges, Belgium. His first post-war organ was installed for the 700th anniversary of Cologne Cathedral; it was completed in 1948 and re-organised two generations later in 2002 under the direction of his grandson Philipp Klais.

Hans-Gerd Klais (b.1930) grew up in the family firm, succeeding his father in 1965 and returning to his grandfather's first design principles: mechanical key action and slider windchests. Hans-Gerd developed a further synthesis of the polyphonic and symphonic organ and thus combined a transparent, rather baroque sound ideal with the broad, orchestral sound of the late-romantic period in organ building. In 1969 the organ of Würzburg Cathedral was built under his

▼ The Klais logo in 1907



direction, followed in quick succession by the cathedral organs of Trier, Ingolstadt Münster Unserer Lieben Frau, St Hedwig Berlin, Limburg, Graz, Altenberg, Worms, Münster and Hildesheim.

His son Philipp C.A. Klais (b.1967) also grew up surrounded by the scent of seasoned wood and molten metal. He studied in Alsace, Germany and overseas. Initially, he worked closely with his father for several years, then managed the workshop from 1995. With his team of the fourth Klais generation, he professes a desire to build instruments with a strong personality of their own and distinctive tonal and aesthetic characteristics.

Construction of concert hall organs in landmark buildings has spread the Klais name worldwide, from North and South America to the Far East, across Europe to the Near East and Australia. In 1925, the firm's then largest instrument (125 stops) was built for Cologne Congress Hall, only topped in 2018 by the twin instruments for the National Kaohsiung Centre for the Arts in Taiwan.

With a fundamental knowledge of materials, sound and construction, the workshop has earned international recognition in the field of organ restoration in the past decades. The extensive experience of more than 135 years' organ building includes expert knowledge of styles spanning the 17th to 20th centuries; such understanding continues to inform the design of contemporary organs.

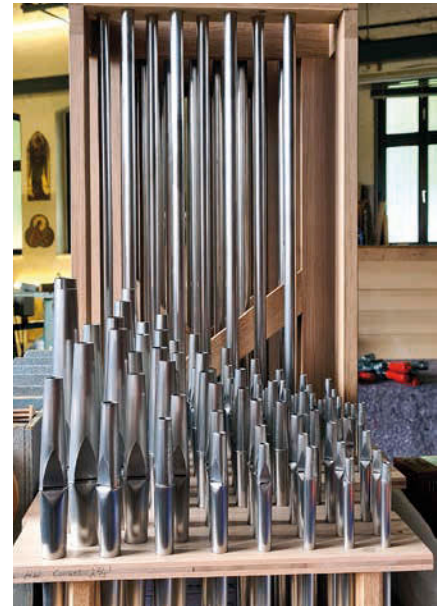
The Bonn workshop continues to manufacture every element across its specialist departments: flue and reed pipework, organ cases, wind supply, wind chests and channels, actions and consoles. Philipp Klais points to his team's ability to provide continuity from start to finish in each project: 'An instrument made under such conditions can only be created on the basis of an optimal team that constantly accompanies an organ from the milling of the wood to its completion on site. Organ building is a creative craft and requires constant interaction with all traditions. The organ builder works in and for his time, and his creations must face later evaluation by history.'

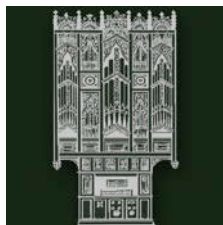
◀ the wind chests are also finished and await shipment to Wrocław. We are working on the pipework and hope to be allowed to start installing the technical part of the instrument on site in the next few days.' The final voicing of each pipe requires a special degree of sensitivity from the voicer. After all, it is about recreating an Engler organ, and it should sound like one. 'Unfortunately, there are only a few instruments by Engler left that we can use as a guide. But that makes this reconstruction all the more exciting,' says Klais.

A new organ is also in the workshop, destined for St Oswald's Church in Traunstein, Bavaria. The instrument will stand behind a ▶

▶ (top) The Cornet for a new organ in Traunstein, Bavaria, and (below) solenoids for the stop action

▼ The fourth generation: Philipp Klais at his desk





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◁ 19th-century façade. 'This will definitely be a new organ: but of course, we are taking into account the provenance of the façade. Some details of the specification, the actions and the console design hint in that direction,' Klais explains. 'Actually, the organ should have been finished a long time ago, but delays occurred in the renovation of the church interior and we had to postpone the project several times. Again, we were very lucky, because now we unexpectedly have the time for its completion.'

The framework of the organ, with the historic façade in front, is installed in the assembly hall. The wind system has been fitted, as have the wind chests and the mechanical stop action. The console has also found its place. 'Last week, the organist of the church was here to see how the work was progressing. We had just installed the front pipes. He had tears in his eyes from emotion.' Often, larger client delegations visit the workshop to see their commissions taking shape. 'Then on Saturday

'On Saturday afternoon we have a keg of Kölsch beer and a pot of potato soup for everyone'

afternoon,' says Klais, 'there is a keg of Kölsch beer and a large pot of potato soup for everyone. That's always very cosy! That way our clients can build an emotional relationship with their new instrument. After all, we want our organs to reach not only their ears, but also their hearts.'

Another project is in the final planning stages: an (almost) new organ for the Cathedral of St Salvator in Bruges, Belgium. 'My grandfather, Hans Klais, built a number of organs in Belgium in the inter-war years. The one in this cathedral dates from 1935, when a historic case together with the screen on which it stood was moved from the crossing to the west wall, and pedal towers were added to accommodate the then modern organ. Now the cathedral authorities want to reconstruct the lost baroque organ in the historic case core. My grandfather's organ will remain in the west gallery. We are building a new organ in a new case with my grandfather's pipework and console. It is very important to us to keep the history of the instrument visible and audible. The few stops that we are making new follow ▶



▲ In 1935 Hans Klais built a new organ in a historic case for the west wall of the Cathedral of St Salvator, Bruges. Orgelbau Klais are now reusing the pipework to build a new organ in a new case, but retaining the original console (below) and following Hans's scaling principles, wind pressures and voicing



◀ my grandfather's scaling principles, as do wind pressures and voicing. Of course, the action system and playing aids will be state-of-the-art, because that is the only way the organ can meet its liturgical requirements, which have changed over the decades. But the console will be retained and restored and will look exactly as it did in 1935.'

Preserving old organs and learning from the work of earlier masters is essential to Klais and forms the basis of the workshop's output. 'With every restoration we learn something new. When we restored the organ of the Tyn Church in Prague, we found in the Pedal wind chest original pallets that open sideways. In literature, such pallets are described as an

invention of 19th-century English organ building. But apparently the Cologne organ builder Johann Heinrich Mundt had this idea as early as 1673.'

The workshop's restoration team is currently setting up the restored organ of the collegiate church in Rottenbuch, Bavaria. With its filigree case, the two-manual instrument built by Balthasar Freywis in 1747 plays in the same league as the world-famous Gabler organs of Weingarten and Ochsenhausen. 'To be able to carry out such demanding restorations of this quality, you need organ builders with a lot of experience and sensitivity. We are proud of our own restoration department which deals almost exclusively with precious historical instruments. Working with such organs means a great responsibility for the history of those instruments and for their future. This is how we understand our new instruments too: with great respect for the past and with responsibility for the future.' ■

Thanks to Gesa Graumann and Philipp Klais for their help with the preparation of this article.

▼ The 1747 Balthasar Freywis organ in Rottenbuch (bottom) and its reconstructed console



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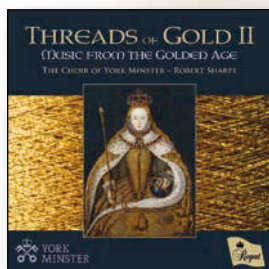
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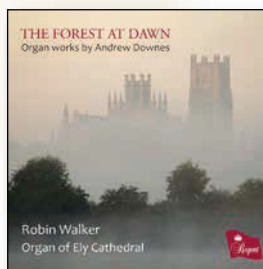
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THE FOREST AT DAWN

Organ works by Andrew Downes

Robin Walker plays the organ of Ely Cathedral

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Birmingham-born Andrew Downes studied at Cambridge and subsequently with Herbert Howells at the Royal College of Music. He is in demand internationally as a composer for a wide-range of musical forces and taught composition at Birmingham Conservatoire for 30 years. This is the first recording entirely devoted to his organ music, played on the organ of Ely Cathedral by Robin Walker.

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Whether you are on a tight budget or have cash to splash, Moscow offers a wealth of cultural riches, writes **Rebecca Tavener**

Arriving in Moscow for the first time with a head packed full of romantic notions from Russian music and Pushkin's folk tales, images of onion-domed churches, military parades in Red Square, troikas, matryoshkas, and other clichés, makes the heart beat faster. Faster still when you launch yourself on your first solo Metro journey. There's too little time to admire the stations, great temples of transport, as trains come and go within seconds of each other, the astonishingly brief intervals between the services proudly displayed on timers by the platforms.

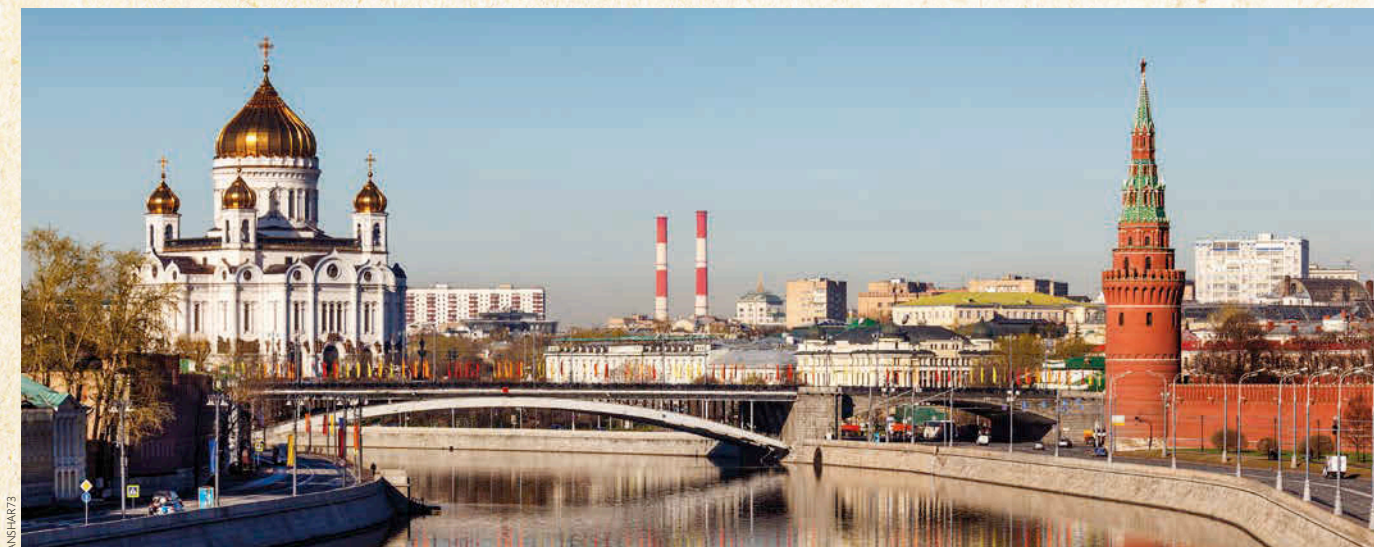
Emerging, elated, I drifted about, taking in fabled views, when I noticed, and followed, a stream of people carrying lilies into a church. It was the Feast of the Annunciation. Gold and bejewelled colours all over the walls, a mystically fantastic iconostasis, incense, a wall of choral sound, and the evident fervour of the congregation worked like a drug. After the liturgy, emotionally exhausted, I wandered further, soon finding myself in Lubyanka Square, looking across at a handsome, neo-baroque building, formally the headquarters of the KGB and a deeply dreaded prison – a reminder that appalling things can

happen in deceptively 'normal' places. Those visions of heaven and hell in one brief walk made an indelible impression.

It doesn't have to be a feast day for visitors to hear fantastic sacred singing in churches across Moscow. Many choral aficionados head for the Danilov Monastery with its several groups, including one of choral students and another of monks. Look out for performances, both liturgical and concert, from the Synodal Choir, one of the oldest professional choirs in Russia, founded in 1721. St Basil's, even though it may seem to be just for tourists, can be visited for choral liturgies. Its baffling warren of internal spaces creates intriguing acoustic effects. There are churches in the Kremlin, too, which are a must-see even if you don't attend a service. Liturgies usually begin at 10am on Sunday but there are exceptions, so check in advance. Since the end of communism, some churches have been reconstructed with incredible attention to detail: the vast Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, for example, was blown up by the Soviets and the site used for a swimming bath. Now fully restored, its golden cupolas dominate the riverside.

Everyone knows the sacred choral music of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, built on ancient traditions going back to Znamenny chant; but here's another name in Russian sacred music we really should explore – Alexander Kastalsky (1856-1926), a composer of liturgical music rooted in Russia's chant traditions and whom Rachmaninov consulted when writing his *All-Night Vigil*. He influenced a modern school of Russian church music

▼ Church and state stand-off: the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour faces the Kremlin across the Moscow River



including composers such as Kompaneisky, Tolstikov, Nikolsky, Gretchaninov, and Chesnokov. Kastalsky's symbol of international solidarity, *Requiem for Fallen Brothers*, composed during the first world war and including elements of Catholic (representing France/Belgium/Italy) and Anglican (for the British Empire) ideas alongside Russian Orthodox material, is a fine introduction. A recent recording from the USA on Naxos, directed by Leonard Slatkin, follows two others with compellingly authentic credentials: *Commémoration fraternelle* (Hortus 724) with performers from France, Germany and Russia, and *The Fraternal Commemoration* (MAXclassic & Company) featuring Yaroslavia Capella. Both of those also involve the excellent Kastalsky Moscow Male Chamber Choir, directed by Alexei Rudnevsky, who has worked closely with Kastalsky expert Svetlana Zvereva. Zvereva is keen for musical tourists from the UK to visit, and advises that the place to go for choral liturgies is the monastery Holy Trinity-St Sergius Lavra, one of the most sacred places in Russia. Just an hour from Moscow by train, many Orthodox Christians view this sacred site as their spiritual centre.

The Moscow Conservatory (make sure you take a selfie with the statue of Tchaikovsky) has an impressive postgraduate choral conducting programme, and its Chamber Choir is justly famed. Visit the Rachmaninov Hall where his *All-Night Vigil* received its premiere; or if you fancy a coffee, the nearby trendy, boho café will make you a delicious brew for about double London prices. Fortunately, Moscow is full of excellent cafés with less inflated tariffs and superb patisserie.

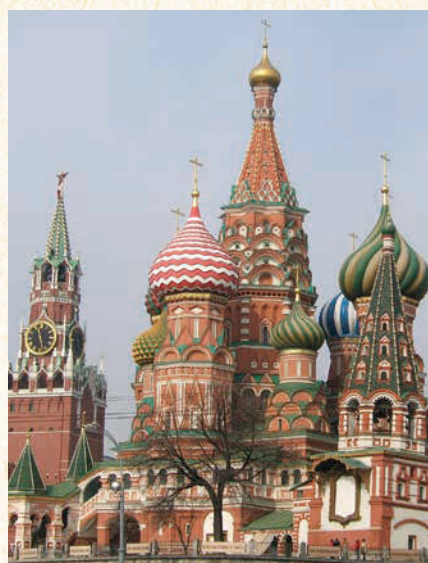
As for organs, there are 35 in Moscow but only four in churches, including the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Cathedrals.

Our international relations may not be the warmest, but we can still be musical tourists

The Conservatory is naturally a place to go for recitals, as are the Bolshoi Theatre and the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall. But now there's also the brand new Zaryadye Hall with one of Europe's largest organs: built by Muhleisen, it boasts 5,737 pipes, 85 registers, and two (one stationary and one mobile) four-manual consoles, playable simultaneously. On 29 February 2020 it was launched with



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▲ (clockwise, from top) Cavaillé-Coll organ (III/50) in the great hall of Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory; a choral performance in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Art; St Basil's Cathedral

a successful *Guinness Book of Records* bid in which 24 organists, led by Olivier Latry and resident organ curator Lada Labzina, played the instrument without a break for 24 hours; more than 20,000 people attended.

Moscow has a wealth of culture for the tourist. The Kremlin Museums and Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (which also hosts choral concerts) are fabulous. Monasteries house superb collections of religious art, such as the ikon gallery of the Novodevichy Convent, where inconvenient royal females were enclosed in Tsarist times. You can shop in the Arbat for souvenirs; experience the

swanky delights of department store GUM (now filled with designer concessions and exquisite cafés); enjoy great food and drink; and find accommodation for every pocket. You might want to splash the cash for a stay in one of The Seven Sisters, a group of seven skyscrapers built from 1947-53 on the orders of Stalin in an elaborate combination of Russian baroque and gothic styles, several of which are now expensive hotels. So, while our international relations may not be the warmest just now, we can still be musical tourists. Zvereva insists, 'Just GO!' My best piece of advice? Learn just a few words and phrases of Russian in advance – it's easier than you think. ■

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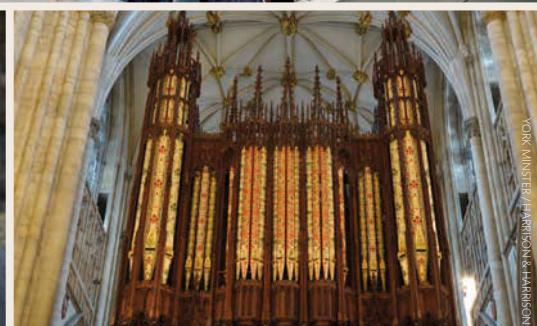


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CHOIR & ORGAN NEXT ISSUE OCTOBER 2021

CONDUCTORS' CORNER

David Hill launches his new series of conversations with choral conductors by talking with James O'Donnell.

YORK MINSTER

Harrison & Harrison have completed their project to restore the Grand Organ – how does it shape up?

BAVARIAN RADIO CHORUS

Founded in the aftermath of the second world war, the prestigious choir is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

JEANNE DEMESSIEUX

Assessing the life and work of the prodigiously gifted French organist of La Madeleine.

BOB CHILCOTT

How does the composer approach writing for children's voices and community choirs?

Plus...

International news and previews, specialist reviews, readers' offers, and a supplement of Touring Companies.

NEW DISCS COMING OUT IN... SEPTEMBER 2021



▲ The Illyria Consort and the Marian Consort team up to recreate a 16th-century Venetian statesman's voyage down the Dalmatian coast

Delphian Records' new release **Adriatic Voyage** [DCD 34260] brings together the Marian and Illyria Consorts, who recreate a well-documented voyage in 1575 by the Venetian statesman Giacomo Soranzo along the Istrian and Dalmatian coasts (at that time part of the Republic of Venice). The disc features sacred and secular music by composers working

along the Dalmatian coast in the period after Soranzo's expedition, a time when the peripatetic nature of tradespeople created a linguistic and cultural melange.

From Toccata Classics comes a disc of choral music by **Anatoly Lyadov** [TOCC 0614]. Despite his oeuvre featuring a notable handful of orchestral favourites, his choral works, here falling into three distinct

categories – religious chants, folk song arrangements and original compositions – remain relatively unknown.

Also from Toccata Classics comes **Felix Woyrsch: The Complete Organ Music** [TOCC 0120], performed by Ruth Forsbach on the Sauer organ in the Reformed Church, Ronsdorf, Wuppertal. Woyrsch's late-romantic organ music, written between 1895 and the end of first world war, inhabits a harmonic world somewhere between Brahms and Reger.

Meanwhile, Signum Records unveils Anna Lapwood's debut solo organ album, **Images** [SIGCD 688], recorded on Ely Cathedral's Harrison & Harrison. The disc features original works by Patrick Gowers, Kerensa Briggs, Nadia Boulanger, Owain Park (the eponymous *Images* inspired by a passage from Walt Whitman's 'Reconciliation' from the collection *Drum-Taps*) and Cheryl Frances-Hoad, in addition to arrangements of Ravel, Debussy and Messiaen. The most substantial work is Lapwood's own arrangement of Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*. ■

CHORAL CDS

Adriatic Voyage – 17th-Century Music from Venice to Dalmatia
Marian Consort, Illyria Consort/
McCleery, Čičić
Delphian DCD 34260

Dufay: Le Prince d'Amours
Ensemble Gilles Binchois/Vellard
Evidence Classics EVCD 082

Andrea Gabrieli: Motets, Psalms and Organ Works
Ensemble Weser-Renaissance
Bremen/Cordes
CPO 555291-2

Carlo Gesualdo: Dolcissima mia vita – Madrigali a cinque voci, libro quinto (1611)
Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe
Phi LPH 036

In Dulci Jubilo – Michael Praetorius Christmas Concertos (Sammlung Musae Sioniae)
SWR Vokalensemble/Creed
SWR Classic 19109CD

Josquin des Prez: The Renaissance Master
Ensemble Organum/Hillier,
Herreweghe
Harmonia mundi HMX 290401618

Anatoly Lyadov: Choral Music
Academy of Russian Music Chamber
Choir/Nikiforchin
Toccata Classics TOCC 0614

Mozart: The Complete Masses vol.1
West German Radio Chorus,
Cologne Chamber Orchestra/
Poppen
Naxos 8.574270

The Musical Universe of Andreas Pevernage
Utopia Ensemble
Ramée RAM 2006

Arvo Pärt: Stabat Mater
Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks,
Münchner Rundfunkorchester/
Repušić
BR Klassik 900335

Pēteris Plakidis: Eternity
Latvian Radio Choir/Kļava
Skani LMIC 123

Purcell: Birthday Odes for Queen Mary
King's Consort/King
Vivat 122

Agnus Dei
The Sixteen/Dougan, Christophers
Coro COR 16186

Swithun!
Dialogos/Livljanić
Arcana A 491

KEYBOARD CDS

Grand Tour – The 1747 Dulcken Harpsichord
Korneel Bernolet
Ramée RAM 2009

Images
Anna Lapwood, Harrison &
Harrison organ, Ely Cathedral
Signum SIGCD 688

Johann Ludwig Krebs: Keyboard Works vol.1
Steven Devine, harpsichord
Resonus Classics RES 10267

Northern Lights
Christopher Herrick, Steinmayer
organ (rest. Kuhn), Nidaros
Cathedral, Trondheim
Hyperion CDA 68376

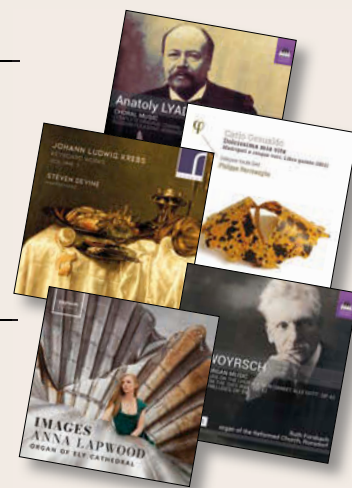
Paris Impact, Organ Suites
Stephen Price, Goulding & Wood
organ Opus 45 (2006), Ball State
University, Muncie, Indiana
Raven OAR 168

The Roots and the Flower – Counterpoint in Bloom: Schumann opp.56 & 60
Jens Christiansen, Botzen Brothers
organ (1698, rest. Andersen 1965),
Vor Frelsers Kirke, Copenhagen
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Trente Années de Création pour Orgue (1991-2021)

Bernard Foccroulle (org), Yoann
Tardivel (org), Sonia Wieder-
Atherton (vc)
Fuga Libera FUG 789

Felix Woyrsch: Complete Organ Music
Ruth Forsbach, Sauer organ,
Reformed Church, Ronsdorf,
Wuppertal, Germany
Toccata Classics TOCC 0120



REVIEWS

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



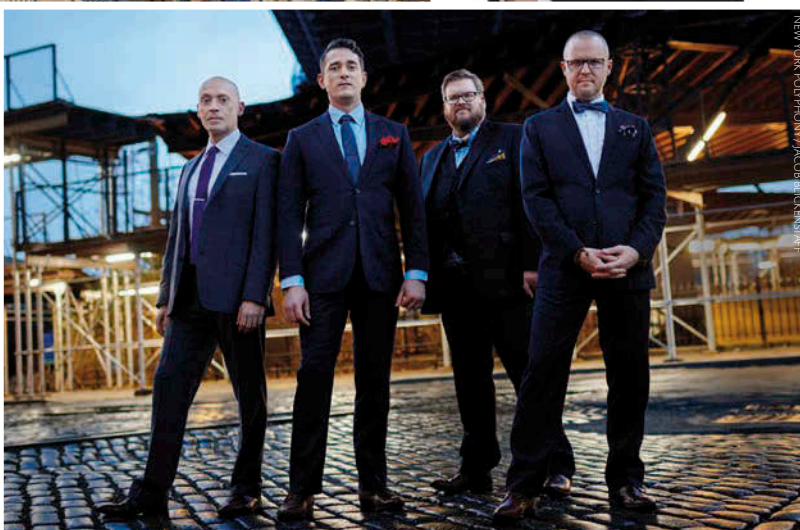
LEGRENZ IN VENICE / WOLFGANG MORODER



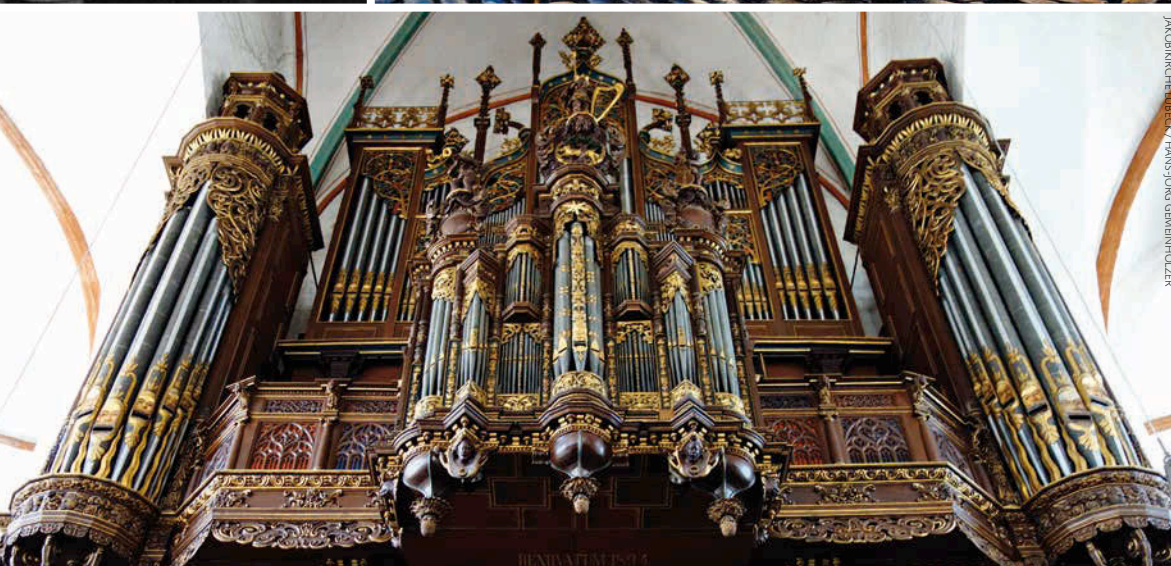
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CONCERTS

**Gabriel Jackson:
The World Imagined**

Nick Pritchard (t), Three Choirs Festival Chorus, Philharmonia Orchestra / David Hill (dir)
27 July 2021, Three Choirs Festival, Worcester Cathedral

In *The World Imagined*, Gabriel Jackson has created a work of universal mysticism outside the boundaries of any one religion or time, the composer drawing on texts from the 4th-century St Ambrose to the Estonian poet Doris Kareva (b.1959) by way of medieval Talmudic scholar Samuel ha-Nagid, 19th-century Italian philosopher Giacomo Leopardi, two US poets – Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens – and the Scottish poet Kenneth White (b.1936). As Jackson told *Choir & Organ* (July/August 2021 issue), 'I look for vivid, striking words that music, and I'm always drawn to images of light. The work is about many things,

but in part it's about ecstatic contemplation, and the smallness of man and our insignificance in the wider scheme of things.'

Scored for tenor solo, SATB choir and large orchestra, the work's harmonic language is rooted in diatonicism with shades of modality, to which Jackson adds a poignant dissonance. Filigree threads and intimate solo lines contrast with choral washes of sound rising to radiant climaxes and the searing attack of the third movement, 'Blazing, unmoving sun'.

Choirs in England have been sorely tried by three Covid lockdowns since March 2020. Irregular patterns of meeting disrupt the rhythm of any choir or ensemble, and political U-turns around the stages out of lockdown have not helped. The Festival committee's courage and faith in continuing with their 2021 plans were echoed in the Festival Chorus and their respective choir directors, who even took to rehearsing outdoors.

Their tenacity paid off. The choir sang with confidence, and acquitted themselves well. Only in a few places, where the men sang alone, did they run the risk of being drowned by the orchestra – but then so was the tenor soloist at times, mainly in the last movement when the orchestral writing was particularly luscious. Otherwise, Nick Pritchard brought a light lyricism to his interpretation, which was in keeping with the contemplative nature of the text.

The Philharmonia Orchestra played supremely well and gave excellent support to the choir; stand-out wind solos and percussion provided additional vividness to the performance. And holding it all together on the rostrum was David Hill, who brought to bear his vast experience of conducting choirs and orchestras, giving clear and commanding direction throughout, successfully steering the performers through this magnum opus, and drawing

from them a premiere that had conviction.

The World Imagined formed the second half of an all-English programme. The first half saw two works that were premiered at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in 1899: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's romantic orchestral *Solemn Prelude*, which deserves to be performed more often; and Elgar's revised version of his *Enigma Variations*, in which David Hill coaxed out immeasurable individual instrumental strands and cameos – the end of 'Nimrod' was met by a cathedral in which one could hear a pin drop, as though it had acquired additional significance due to the ravaging effects of the Covid pandemic. An evening to remember.

The World Imagined is published by Oxford University Press (vocal score 9780193540200 £11.95; conductor's score and parts 9780193543652 on hire). bit.ly/3rIxxg19

MAGGIE HAMILTON

▼ David Hill conducts Nick Pritchard, the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Three Choirs Festival Chorus in the premiere of *The World Imagined*



MICHAEL WHITEOOT

KEYBOARD CDS

Duruflé: Complete Organ Works

Thomas Trotter, King's College, Cambridge

King's College, Cambridge

KGS 0053 [73:25]

★★★★★



With the complete organ works of Duruflé fitting so neatly on a single

disc, it is unsurprising that there are plentiful recordings to choose from. For many organists, this music presents the ultimate combination of technical complexity and emotional depth. Thomas Trotter returns to his alma mater for this recording, which also includes the posthumously published *Méditation* and *Chant donné*. The recently restored Harrison & Harrison organ and its famous acoustics are superbly captured here, including the intimacy of the Choir division. Trotter's performances are elegant, unhurried and beautifully crafted – you can hear that the affection for and love of these pieces has been nurtured over a long and distinguished performing career.

RUPERT GOUGH

Gerben Mourik: Domkerk Utrecht

Bätz organ (1831; rest. Van Vulpen, 1975)

Vita Recordings 202101 [79:28]

★★★★★



Something of a personal celebratory CD, this recording

presents music by composers with whom Gerben Mourik has had personal connections. A specialist in both improvisation and in Dutch contemporary

music, Mourik gives convincing performances of music by Jan Bonefaas, Jan J. van den Berg, Arie J. Keijzer, Paul Damjakob, Ernst Pepping, as well Mourik's own improvisation on *Nun danket*. The large and versatile III/50 organ sounds inspirational in these generous acoustics, the tonal colours of which are constantly varied to musical advantage. The programme opens with Bach and Karg-Elert, and ends with works by Franck, Duruflé and Thierry Escaich.

DAVID PONSFORD

Matthias Weckmann: Complete Organ Works

Léon Berben, Stollwagen organ (1637), Jakobikirche, Lübeck; Scherer organ (1624), Stephanskirche, Tangermünde

Aeolus AE 11261 [72:27; 78:29]

★★★★★



Twenty-odd years ago the music of Matthias

Weckmann was niche repertoire, lurking on the fringes of pre-Buxtehudian obscurity. The pioneering work of Hans Davidsson, both in his recordings and his thesis on the interpretation of this transcendent repertoire has changed perceptions thoroughly: in addition to Davidsson's pair of complete recordings, there are similar sets available from (at least) Zerer, Flamme, Venturini and Focroulle. This new recording by Léon Berben matches Weckmann to the pre-Schnitger north German organ type akin to that over which he presided at the Jakobikirche in Hamburg. The Stollwagen organ in Lübeck is particularly popular at the moment, while the Scherer organ in Tangermünde, with its vocal sound and of course its Zinck, perhaps provides the most

obvious match with the music; it's a real shame we don't have any registrations in the booklet.

Berben's interpretative approach is mercurial, his sense of gesture and rhythmic expression complex, his registrations often creative and his ornamentation fulsome and free. Berben writes at length about this latter aspect in the notes, though sometimes I feel it upsets the momentum too much. Listening blind, it would be easy to assume that this was a Weckmann cycle from an organist hailing from south of the Alps, certainly if compared to Davidsson's first cycle from Norden (Motette) or Zerer's Hamburg recording on Naxos in which the sense of Hanseatic, and especially Protestant, 'prüfen' is perhaps more tangible. Inevitably there is some discretion as to what comprises the 'complete organ works': Berben includes one of the two Toccatas in E minor while omitting the other, the latter seeming to belong more naturally to the harpsichord. In his thesis, Davidsson observes that the source for the omitted work twice notes 'tasti' indicating the bass should be played by the left hand rather than the pedal, but speculates that that pedal may have belonged to a pedal harpsichord rather than an organ.

In general, the ascribing of Weckmann's Toccatas to organ or harpsichord is a subjective question. The included E minor Toccata here also feels to me quite harpsichord-like and is omitted by Zerer. Berben also omits the *Praeludium a 5 vocom*, an anonymous piece included by Davidsson. In the epic sixth verse of 'Es ist das Heil', Berben observes the practice preserved in the Pelplin manuscript of the chorale fantasias by Scheidemann and Tunder, whereby the 2ft

pedal reed is added and cancelled at the moment the role of the pedal changes from continuo to cantus firmus and vice versa. It's an interesting detail, but as the delineation between the two roles is far more complex than in the Pelplin pieces, I'm not entirely convinced by it. That there's a free spirit at work in these interpretations may put some off, but they make a valuable and enjoyable addition to the ever-growing recorded oeuvre of Matthias Weckmann nonetheless.

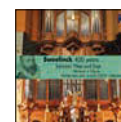
CHRIS BRAGG

Sweelinck – 400 years between West and East

Pieter van Dijk, Krzysztof Urbaniak, Jan van Covelens organ (1511; rest. Flentrop, 2000), St Laurens, Alkmaar; Hans Hummel organ (1623; rest. Flentrop, 2018), Olkusz

DMP-records DVH 140363 (2CDs) [80:45; 80:04]

★★★★★



These two wonderful historic organs, the oldest extant instruments

in Holland and Poland, are recorded here with commendable clarity and resonance to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the death of Sweelinck (1562–1621), the Dutch national composer and influential teacher. Two renowned organists, both with fine scholarly credentials, combine in this programme of toccatas, fantasias, and variations both sacred and secular, in which the playing is well-schooled with authentic fingerings. However, tempi sometimes plod. Sweelinck's teaching must have centred on composition and improvisation, and although 'in time' and accurate, there is scope in these interpretations for more vitality, flexibility, and imagination.

DAVID PONSFORD

▷

Jeanne Demessieux – The Decca Legacy

Jeanne Demessieux, various European instruments

Eloquence 484-1424 (8CDs) [72:59; 75:11; 70:52; 81:21; 64:40; 77:01; 71:41; 48:41]

★★★★★



This year marks the centenary of the birth of the legendary virtuoso Jeanne Demessieux. Amid an organ culture entirely dominated by men, she emerged to become one of the world's most famous organists, dazzling audiences with her phenomenal pedal technique – made all the more dramatic by her flamboyant, high-heeled, silver organ shoes. This fascinating new compendium of historic recordings illustrates her entire career from 1947 (the year after her famous Paris debut) to 1967, the year before her death. D'Arcy Trinkwon provides comprehensive and highly illuminating notes, including a discussion of 'la rupture' – the Dupré family's sudden turn against Demessieux, leaving her scandalously ostracised in the Paris organ world. In the booklet we also find full details of the recording sessions, rare photos and facsimiles of some of her programmes, and full specifications for each of the five organs recorded.

The first recordings were made in the now-redundant church of St Mark's in Mayfair, London in 1947. The 1930s Rushworth & Dreaper organ would have been seen as the pinnacle of contemporary British organ design, replete with all the console aids of the day. However, it clearly struggled to keep up with the speed of Demessieux's playing. In fact, at 4:24 this is the fastest recording of Widor's Toccata I can find on

Here is a true virtuoso of the kind rarely heard in our modern era

record! Together with breakneck renditions of Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D minor and Mendelssohn's Third Sonata, I am left questioning why so many great virtuosos feel that they have to prove themselves by playing as fast as possible. Interestingly, the same disc contains comparison Bach recordings from three to four years later and already the style has matured – Bach's D major Prelude & Fugue is stunning and quite ahead of its time. The real highlight for me is a beautifully poised performance of César Franck's *Trois pièces*. There is such clear affection for this music which regularly featured in her recital programmes.

Many of the recordings from the 1950s were made in Victoria Hall, Geneva on an instrument built in 1949 by Rudolf Ziegler (later destroyed by fire in 1984). To modern ears the sound is perhaps rather harsh and Demessieux certainly favours a lot of piquant mixtures, whatever the repertoire. However, the instrument allows us to hear her playing in greater detail. Ironically, although playing on an instrument built in a 'neo-classical' style, Demessieux largely turned her back on the classical revival happening at the time. Here we have a true virtuoso of the kind rarely heard in our modern era, where the individuality of the performer overrides any sense of duty to 'authenticity'. Her individuality extended to the interpretation of César Franck, too. In her landmark recording of the complete works from La Madeleine (included in this

ASOCIACIÓN DE AMIGOS DE JEANNE DEMESSIEUX



▲ 'Outstanding and enigmatic': Jeanne Demessieux

CD compilation) one hears both a deep sense of emotional connection to the music alongside a libertarian attitude to registration and tempo. There is quite a contrast between the passionate pathos of the *Prière* and Franck's Third Choral, which becomes a stormy, rhapsodic toccata.

In another disc of recordings made at La Madeleine in 1958 (where Demessieux was to become titular organist four years later) we find more interesting Bach examples – including surely the slowest end to the Fantasia in G BWV 572 you are ever likely to hear. The two Mozart performances are particularly worthy of mention, with a wonderfully dramatic account of the F minor Fantasia K608.

Further recordings in this box-set of eight CDs include two Handel organ concertos. These are extraordinary period pieces with inevitably heavy massed string playing and an organ part adapted to the 20th century, replete with some remarkable flights of fancy in the cadenzas. By all accounts these sessions were a war of attrition between organist and conductor and Demessieux relates, 'One of us had to concede, and I decided it would not be me.' Also recorded in Geneva were three Bach arias with the Belgian soprano Suzanne Danco. Most compelling though are Liszt's Fantasia & Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam' and Demessieux's own *Te Deum*. Enjoyable too are two different renditions of a regular recital 'party piece': *Mouvement*, composed by her close friend Jean Berveiller, is a diversion into the jazz world, which would have infuriated Marcel Dupré.

Demessieux was the first to introduce the music of Messiaen to the wider public. For the final disc we are treated to a recording which includes *Transports de joie* made just after her recital on the brand-new Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral organ. Messiaen also features on the final recording: a previously unreleased BBC live recording of a concert at the former Colston Hall, Bristol in September 1967. A 12-minute improvisation from this concert provides a fitting conclusion. Sadly, only a year later her remarkable career was to be cut short by cancer. She will surely always be remembered as one of the most outstanding, and yet enigmatic, organists of all time.

RUPERT GOUGH

◀ J.S. Bach: Goldberg Variations

Malcolm Archer (hpschd)
Convivium Records CR 064 [65:20]

★★★



The *Goldberg Variations* take courage and musicianship in

equal parts. Malcolm Archer generally rises to the challenge, using a fine Alan Gotto harpsichord after the 1728 Zell, an ideal instrument for this music, with beautiful sound and perfect balance between manuals. The central Overture (variation 16) uses the full coupled registers to splendid effect, and it's here and in some of the virtuoso two-manual variations, such as 5, 17 and 26 that Archer is at his best. The slower lyrical variation 13 is lovely, but the G minor Adagio variation 25 is rather stilted.

Trills sometimes fall ahead of the beat when precision on the beat is desirable, and some ornaments defining the Sarabande character of the opening and closing Aria are misunderstood. Not all repeats are taken, but this is essentially an enjoyable and honest performance, with excellent sleeve notes by David Owen Norris.

DOUGLAS HOLLICK

Johann Jakob Froberger: Suites for Harpsichord vol.2

Gilbert Rowland (hpschd)
Athene ATH 23209 (2CDs)
[56:44; 60:12]

★★★



This is wonderful music by an important composer of the 17th century; but although the Wooderson copy of a 1750 Goermans is lovely, it's a century too late for this music.

A Ruckers or Italian of around 1650 would have been perfect, and a much more transparent sound. There is also the expectation of a C/E short octave by Froberger, as in the final cadence of the Sarabande of Suite FbWV 603, and the resulting loss of sonority with the inevitable compromise. Gilbert Rowland overloads all this music with a huge amount of ornamentation, sometimes beautifully done, but just too much. Every trill is rigorously from the upper note, which in this repertoire is often incorrect, and can lead to consecutive octaves far too often, as in the final cadences of the lovely Sarabande of FbWV 610. This music should be heard, but sadly there are too many misgivings here.

DOUGLAS HOLLICK

Sebastián Aguilera de Heredia: Organ Music

Miguel de Barco Díaz, renaissance organ, Iglesia de Santa Maria de la Consolación, Garrovillas de Alconétar, Spain
Brilliant Classics 96180 [75:42]

★★★★★



Aguilera de Heredia (1561-1627) was organist of Saragossa

Cathedral (La Seo) and he is an important link between Cabezón and Cabanilles. Only 18 of Aguilera's organ pieces survive, all played on an anonymous and undated instrument (pre-1578) – the only Spanish organ dating from Aguilera's time. Genres include *tientos de falsas*, multi-sectional *tientos*, *tientos de medio registro*, and three-voice *Pange lingua* settings. Aguilera's invention in these polyphonic pieces is astonishing. An excellent contrast is his popular *Ensalada*,

which derives its style from earlier vocal works such as Jannequin's *La guerre*. Very well played, with real empathy for the style.

DAVID PONSFORD

A Kind of Organ School: Bach | Mendelssohn – The Organ Sonatas

Hans-Eberhard Roß, Goll organ (1998), St Martin's, Memmingen
Audite 23.447 [68:58; 72:29]

★★★



Hans-Eberhard Roß presents a fascinating side-by-side look at the

organ sonatas of Bach and Mendelssohn. Bach wrote his as study pieces for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. Asked to produce organ works for the British market, Mendelssohn gradually developed an idea to compose six sonatas to mirror Bach's works, representing 'a kind of organ school'. Both composers certainly tested the technical possibilities of organs and organists in their time, Mendelssohn particularly challenging British organists' slow embrace of the pedalboard.

Disappointingly, I find the Bach performances lacking sufficient careful control of tempo or internal rhythmic detail. On the other hand, one would expect more freedom in the music of Mendelssohn. Indeed, the composer encourages a general sense of progression of tempo and dynamic through his fugues, but here any organic development and phrasing is constantly overly punctuated. The modern Goll organ of St Martin, Memmingen serves well for this project, but the pedal sounds consistently late on this recording.

RUPERT GOUGH

Dupré: Complete Organ Works vol.1

Alessandro Perin, Tamburini/Bonata organ, San Lorenzo Cathedral, Padua
Brilliant Classics 95644 [64:44]

★★★★★



A strong start, full of striking colours, telling atmospheres and

rich, artfully employed registrations, marks the first instalment of Alessandro Perin's projected Dupré survey, recorded in the favourably crepuscular acoustics of Padua's San Lorenzo Cathedral. There's stiff competition from Jeremy Filsell (Guild), Ben van Oosten (MDG) and a multi-authored *intégrale* on Naxos, but Perin shows a strong, flexible sense of Dupré's chiaroscuro contrasts in the Suite in F minor, a sure grasp of sudden shifts of mood in the 4 *Versets de l'hymne 'Ave Maris Stella'* and a feeling for form and function in *Évocation* and *Variations sur un vieux Noël*. The Carillon from the *Sept pièces* op.27 is treated to a bravura display.

MICHAEL QUINN

New Music for a New Organ

Rebecca Davey and JanEl Will, Dobson organ, Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg; Suzanne Daniel (bsn)
Raven OAR-167 [52:50]

★★★★★



An enterprising programme of new American music composed

since 2010 provides a perfect introduction to the resourceful, beautifully voiced III/46 Dobson organ in Williamsburg's colonial-era Bruton Parish Church. It's a nimble instrument with a voice as

▶

EARLY MUSIC



Rebecca Tavener rounds up the latest releases

This selection of releases from consorts of greatly contrasting character begins with a great rarity. Don't be bemused by the idea of **Jistebnický Kancionál – Sound of the**

Bohemian pre-Reformation [Supraphon SU 4291-2], featuring the glorious female voices of Tiburtina Ensemble singing liturgical texts translated from Latin to Czech from a 15th-century Hussite manuscript, intended to reform liturgical practices before the Reformation. Eight ravishingly toned, expert singers convey the comfort and joy of worship in the vernacular, conveying the devotional fervour of the texts which include a Credo, Lamentations, and works for Easter. Exemplary liner notes provide translations, and the recording glows with affectionate, exploratory zeal. Similarly rare, but with less glow and much acoustic research, arrives **Music for the King of Scots – Inside the Pleasure Palace of James IV** [Hyperion CDA 68333]. Fine academic credentials support this virtual reality studio recording: a realisation of the intimate acoustics of the Chapel Royal in Linlithgow Palace. Dry but not desiccated, efficient and accurate performances by the seven male voices of The Binchois Consort feature works from the Carver Choirbook (that rich, miraculous survivor of the Scottish Reformation, associated with the Chapel Royal of Stirling Castle and Church of the Holy Rude) as St Katherine's Day devotions, including the marvellously named *Missa Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento*.

▼ 'Exquisite, refined, aristocratic singing': Alamire



© CLIVE BARD A

The music-loving James IV of Scotland might well have heard this Mass: **Johannes Ockeghem – Missa Prolationum** [Raumklang RK 3902]. Wonderfully tender, sustained, and eloquent performances by the four singers of a recently formed group, sounding as though they've been together for years, are graced with the extraordinary, eerily other-worldly tones of Axelle Bernage as cantus. Far from an academic exercise, they reach to the very heart and give it a spiritual squeeze. Are they living up to their name L'Ultima parola ('the last word')? It's too soon to say, but they're definitely one to watch. Meanwhile, the well-established Cinquecento continually spread fresh musical vistas before us as they tour Habsburg-related repertoire, this time with **Heinrich Isaac – Missa Wohlauff gut Gsell von hinnen** [Hyperion CDA 68337], a Mass setting of solemnly monumental sonority, programmed with a variety of motets, all given roundly recorded, perfectly paced performances. If you love renaissance polyphony and are not collecting this series, you're missing out.

A stunning sense of presence for a terrific project, brilliantly realised

The seven-voice consort Beauty Farm had the lovely idea of singing Palestrina's most famous Mass setting, with polyphony interleaved with plainsong hymns (including the aptly chosen 'Bernardus doctor inclitus'), to honour the 90th birthday of celebrated musicologist Bruno Turner, to whom all of us in this business owe an immense debt of gratitude. A limited edition, their live recording of **Missa Papae Marcelli** [fra bernardo FB 2017671] is so utterly 'in your face' that the significantly edgy resonance feels paradoxically enclosed. Male voices at low pitch make for satisfying sonorities and the freedom of their singing and unpretentious interpretation are refreshing, but the recorded sound quality is less than pleasing.

There's truly exquisite, refined, aristocratic singing, both as soloists and in consort, by six voices from Alamire, plus guest vocalists and the viols of Fretwork, adorning **Byrd 1588 – Psalms, Sonets & songs of sadness and pietie** [Inventa INV 1006], a double album of vernacular works on both secular and spiritual themes, tending towards the melancholy but shot through with flashes of *joie de vivre*. Patron and dedicatee of the 1588 publication Sir Christopher Hatton was surely thrilled with so rich a collection. Near-perfect recording values and superb balance from expert singers and instrumentalists ensure a stunning sense of presence: a terrific project, brilliantly realised, and a must-have for collectors of Byrd and all who relish the plangent combination of voices and viols.

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.

◀ poetic as it is robust. Of interest are Dan Locklair's *Holy Seasons*, four 'tone poems' for major days in the Christian calendar, and Carson Cooman's five-part neo-baroque homage *Concerto per organo* – both specially commissioned for the Bruton organ – and Aaron David Miller's bassoon-accompanied *Suite Nederlandish*, based on three Dutch hymns. Craig Phillips's *Archangel Suite* and Gwyneth Walker's *Sanctuary*, with its delightful birdsong-led middle movement, complete a beautifully played and enjoyable first encounter with a nimble instrument.

MICHAEL QUINN

Orgelpunkt

Lea Suter, Stephan Leuthold, Felix Monde, and David Schollmeyer, Sauer organ (1928), Die Glocke, Bremen

MDG 9512201-6 [77:26]

★★★



1928 was a febrile moment in German organ building. The

resonances of the grand conferences held in Hamburg/Lübeck (1925), Freiburg (1926) and Freiberg (1927) are keenly felt in the Sauer organ of the Glocke concert hall in Bremen, in which the usual panoply of graded 8ft colour, an Echowerk and pneumatic key action co-exist with Scharf, Cymbel, Rankett, Krummhorn and Singend Regal. Following its recent restoration by Christian Scheffler, a group of local organists teamed up to make the present recording. I'm not entirely delighted with the programming of this disc, however. As Lea Suter correctly surmises, the ambition of an organ such as this was to play the music of the *alte Meister* as

well as modern German music, especially of Reger. The only *alter Meister* here is Bach, and Lea Suter plays BWV 542 as if she were playing any classically oriented mechanical action organ – absolutely not how Bach was played on organs like this in 1928. It would have been interesting and informative were someone to have played some excerpts, for example, of Straube's *Alte Meister des Orgelspiels* with its extraordinarily detailed instructions for manual changes and articulation. There's no Reger either, nor Karg-Elert, nor Franz Schmidt. Instead we have Alain, Duruflé and Vierne, all well played, but none really convincing on the organ. The highlight is Felix Mende's performance of Bossi's splendid *Theme and Variations* – the only moment, other than a pair of Jongen miniatures from David Schollmeyer, when organ and music seem to be really attuned. A missed opportunity to evoke the turbulent and fascinating birthing pains of the *Orgelbewegung*.

CHRIS BRAGG

CHORAL CDS

Septem Verba and Membra Jesu Nostri – music by Buxtehude, Schütz and Dijkman

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé (dir)
Harmonia mundi HMM
902350.51 (2CDs) [57:54; 65:15]

★★★★



Having focused on the French baroque in their previous recordings, Ensemble Correspondances here makes a rewarding excursion northward

to the Baltic to explore music by Buxtehude, Schütz and the little-known Swedish organist and composer Lüderik Dijkman, in a well thought out Passiontide programme. Buxtehude is the principal composer, with his familiar *Membra Jesu nostri* (lit. 'The Limbs of Our Jesus') filling the first disc. This seven-part cycle of Passiontide cantatas receives a profound yet intimate reading from these musicians, who extract every ounce of meaning from Buxtehude's austere writing. They are no less moving in the well-chosen complementary items on the second disc, which includes more from Lübeck's celebrated composer as well as Schütz (*The Seven Last Words from the Cross*) and Dijkman's *Lamentum eller en Sorge-Music*, which mourns the death in infancy of two Swedish princes in quick succession in 1685. Taken altogether, this outstanding recording offers a very special experience of the 17th century's ability to delight in bold experiment and innovation in Protestant sacred music, all superbly executed and recorded.

PHILIP REED

Bach: Mass in B minor

Aleksandra Lewandowska (s), Zoë Brookshaw (s), Marianne Beate Kielland (m-s), Alex Potter (a), Valerio Contaldo (t), Stephan MacLeod (b), Gli Angeli Genève / Stephan MacLeod (dir)
Claves 503014-5 (2CDs)
[50:35; 50:52]

★★★★



This studio recording of Bach's greatest work, though one he only ever heard in his imagination, is notable for its

transparent textures due to MacLeod's decision to limit his singers to ten – a decision taken when Gli Angeli Genève was founded in 2005. In his booklet note MacLeod persuasively argues that such restrictions are not undertaken for strict historical authenticity – other reasons pertain, including placing all the singers in front of the instrumentalists, as would have occurred in the Thomaskirche in Bach's day. On the recording this has the benefit of foregrounding the text and thereby to an extent solving many of the balance issues that occur in a conventional set-up. MacLeod's reading of the piece results in a relaxed but never slack account of the score, with beautifully polished instrumental playing, both tutti and obbligato. Tempi are never pushed, with the music and text always given space to sound; however, one does sometimes hanker for a bit more dynamic variety. In the choruses the ten singers cannot offer the conventional blend that greater numbers would achieve, but the resulting intimacy and personality of the vocalists more than compensates – actually, it's one of the recording's strengths.

PHILIP REED

Aeternum

State Choir Latvija / Māris Sirmāis (dir)
Skani 089 [68:27]

★★★★



To mark the Republic of Latvia's centenary (declared in 1918; recognised in 1921; restored in 1991 after the end of Soviet rule) the State Choir Latvija and its artistic director, Māris Sirmāis, created a special and ▶

◀ lasting gift to Latvia: a new repertoire of choral pieces for professional and amateur choirs. To this end they established a creative laboratory in which 77 composers wrote new music for choir. The composers of the contributions comprise a diverse range of talents, from those considered contemporary classics to those still studying and those with backgrounds in other genres. Each composer chose one of five elements as inspiration – fire, water, earth, sky and love – and related to it as they wished.

The present celebratory CD offers a representative selection of the project's fruits, with pieces by Ešēnvalds and Vasks among others. It's an imaginative project and typical of a country where choral music is something of a national pastime. The performances are uniformly excellent, though the engineering might be a bit dry for some tastes.

PHILIP REED

Philippe Manoury: Lab.Oratorium

Rinnat Moriah (s), Tora Augestad (m-s), Patrycia Ziolkowska, Sebastian Rudolph (actors), SWR Vokalensemble, Lab.Chor, IRCAM (Nicolas Stemmann, dir), Gürzenich-Orchester Köln / François-Xavier Roth (dir) Wergo WER 73962 [61:04]

★★★★



Lab.Oratorium is a complex theatre piece that builds its drama round the notion that an orchestra is in some way like the passenger manifest on a ship, beginning in milling disorder and then joining toward a common destination. The choral component, handled by a

chamber chorus on 'Die Häfen waren geöffnet', is meant to suggest the thoughts of illegal migrants on the boat. Leaving aside the obvious references, musically Manoury's sprawling score bears some resemblance to Carla Bley's famously disjointed and non sequitur 'chronotransduction' *Escalator over the Hill*, with a few additional echoes of Gavin Bryars's *The Sinking of the Titanic*. The large choir is magnificent on 'Grodek' and the actors are surprisingly well integrated.

BRIAN MORTON

Andreas Hallén: Missa Solemnis

Pia-Karin Helsing (s), Maria Forsström (m-s), Conny Thimander (t), Andreas E. Olsson (bar), Erik Westberg Vocal Ensemble, Lars Nilsson (org), James Jenkins (pno), Lars Sjostedt (vc) / Erik Westberg (dir) Swedish Society Discofil SCD 1178 [61:18]

★★★★



Andreas Hallén exerted a powerful influence on Swedish musical

life for five decades straddling the turn of the 20th century, but the *Missa Solemnis* has rarely been revived since its first performance in Stockholm in 1923. It's a curious oversight, for this is a work that combines a generous singability with real weight and authority.

The quartet of soloists gives the work a coherence and sense of direction, and the keyboard parts manage the transitions of the liturgy very clearly. Quite why it has taken so long to record the piece remains a mystery, but it's a most welcome recovery from a rich period.

BRIAN MORTON

And the Sun Darkened – Music for Passiontide

New York Polyphony BIS 2277 [58:28]

★★★★



There's something slightly odd about the order of the material presented here, which begins with Loyset Compère's *Crux triumphans* instead of his *Officium de Cruce*, which is reserved for the end. That aside, the selection of material – by four Franco-Flemish composers from the 15th and 16th century, plus Cyrillus Kreek who died in 1962, and the Anglo-Norwegian Andrew Smith who was born in 1970 – can't be faulted.

There are no complaints about the singing by New York Polyphony, who are natural eclectics and sing with a plainness and directness which further mitigates any stylistic jarring that might ensue from such a mixed programme. Smith's *Salme 55* was written specially for NYP and offers a perfect vehicle for their skills.

BRIAN MORTON

Giovanni Legrenzi: Christmas Mass

Cappella Marciana / Marco Gemmani (dir) Concerto Classic CNT 2121 [53:21]

★★★★



Christmas Mass at St Mark's Basilica has been a highlight of Venice's musical calendar since the 16th century and is now reinterpreted as a televised Christmas concert. Historically, the *maestro di cappella* was expected to write a new Mass for the occasion every year. For the 2019 broadcast concert, of which this is a recording,

current incumbent Marco Gemmani chose to perform the setting by Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-90), presented in a sequence that is both plausible liturgically and a chronological representation of Legrenzi's career. The singers of the Cappella Marciana are impressive both as soloists and in double chorus, but for me the stand-out feature of the recording is the eloquence of the small instrumental ensemble that forms the 'third choir' typical of the St Mark's tradition, interpolating sonatas between the choral movements of the Mass. The collection of original string instruments includes the famous 'Il Dragonetti' double bass made by Gasparo da Salò in 1590 and owned by the basilica.

CLARE STEVENS

Gavin Bryars: A Native Hill

Maren Montalbano-Brehm (a), Steven Bradshaw (t), The Crossing / Donald Nally (dir) Navona Records NV 6347 [68:31]

★★★★



Gavin Bryars has been a composer to be reckoned with in British contemporary music since he was propelled to 'fame' by *The Sinking of the Titanic* (1969) and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971). Both works are recognisably Bryars, yet his output is hugely diverse and never predictable. He has walked his own path for decades and his music is all the better for that independence of thought and spirit. This latest piece for Donald Nally's chamber choir, *The Crossing – A Native Hill* (2018/19), with words by Wendell Berry – is clearly a major a cappella work that builds on the success of their previous collaboration. Full of

personal significance for Bryars, *A Native Hill* is a detailed, beautifully crafted response to Berry's 'descriptions of the minutiae of his rural existence' which 'have a profound metaphysical and even political force' (Bryars's words). Nally and his choir rise to the challenges set by Bryars without apparently breaking sweat, unfolding the composer's textures with ease, and always finding the perfect balance of meaning between music and text.

PHILIP REED

Johann Simon Mayr: Messa di Gloria in E minor/F minor

Dorota Szczepańska (s), Anna Feith (s), Freya Apffelstaedt (m-s), Maria Grazia Insam (a), Markus Schäfer (t), Fang Zhi (t), Thomas Stimmel (b), Elia Merguet (b), Simon Mayr Chorus, Concerto de Bassus / Franz Hauk (dir)

Naxos 8.574203 [80:09]

★★★



The Munich-based Simon Mayr Chorus was founded by Franz

Hauk primarily to promote authentic performances of works by Johann Simon Mayr (1763-1845) and his contemporaries. Both they and the characterful instrumental ensemble deliver spirited performances of these two Italian *Messa di Gloria*, although not all the solo voices are to my taste. Both works are examples of the 'pasticcio' practice, whereby there was no fixed order for the movements, some of which could be inserted as individual arias according to the occasion or the resources available. Mayr's expressive and inventive scores are a refreshing tonic in the current gloom.

CLARE STEVENS

Kim André Arnesen: Holy Spirit Mass

Trondheim Vokalensemble, Trondheim Soloists, Alex Robson (vn), Mona Spigseth (pno) / Sofi Jeannin (dir)

Decca 4851563 [50:00]

★★★



Kim André Arnesen follows the now-common practice of mixing

the usual Mass texts with new versions of other texts, in this case the *Veni Creator Spiritus* and Martin Luther's *Come Holy Ghost, God and Lord*, both in English. The choir sounds unusually mannered in places, as if so directed. It's not jarring, but it does take the performance further from shared liturgical expression and makes it sound more of a concert piece. Some will welcome that, but it doesn't play to this choir's great strength, which is spontaneity and freedom of expression.

BRIAN MORTON

Anton Bruckner and Michael Haydn: Motets

MDR Leipzig Radio Choir / Philipp Ahmann (dir)

Pentatone Music PTC 5186868 [61:52]

★★★★



Parallels between the working lives of Michael Haydn (1737-1806) and

Anton Bruckner (1824-96) are the rationale for this pairing. Separated by a century, both were deeply influenced artistically and personally by 'Austrian-Danubian Catholicism' (to quote Markis Schwering's interesting liner essay).

Bruckner's motets, expansively treated by this large choir, include two Offertorium settings with added trombones. ▶

The Music of Gerre Hancock

Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Fifth Avenue, New York, Saint Thomas Brass, Benjamin Sheen and Nicholas Quardokus (org) / Jeremy Filsell (dir)

Signum SIGCD 631 [81:14]

★★★★★



Conducting his very impressive debut recording with the choir he has directed since 2019, Jeremy Filsell was standing on the stone marking the interred ashes of his predecessor but two, Gerre Hancock (1934-2012). Organist and choirmaster at St Thomas, Fifth Avenue for over 30 years and a pivotal figure in the choir's history, Hancock created a wealth of choral and organ music during his career – much of it composed for friends and colleagues across the USA. His teachers included Nadia Boulanger, Jean Langlais and Marie-Claire Alain, and

Choir and organists do Hancock proud in a recital that combines professional polish with deep affection

their influence can certainly be heard in many of the pieces included here, but so can the Anglican tradition of which Saint Thomas is such a proud and unique US representative. The recording illustrates Hancock's skill in writing for the weekly liturgy, for the seasons and for special occasions. Repertoire ranges from a Breton carol, in which the choristers show off their lively, bright, sound, to expansive, romantic anthems and service settings that, as Filsell writes in his notes, are redolent of the church's Gothic arches. Choir and organists do Hancock proud in a recital that combines professional polish with deep affection.

CLARE STEVENS

▼ Gerre Hancock, an inspirational organist and choirmaster at St Thomas, Fifth Avenue for over 30 years



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◁ I suspect some conductors would have requested another take for the first chord of *Locus iste* and the big 'Jesus' chord in *Ave Maria*; but the range of dynamics and the shaping of key phrases are impressive. Immaculate performances of six surprisingly romantic Haydn settings provide a welcome introduction to this neglected repertoire.

CLARE STEVENS

Santa Ratniece: *Vigilia del Mattino*

Latvian Radio Choir / Sigvards Klava, Kaspars Putniņš (dirs)
Skani LMIC 086 [47:17]

★★★



Fascinating as the individual components are, this programme

as a whole feels like a ragbag. It brings together the title piece with *War Sum Up – Music. Manga. Machines*, fragments from a theatre piece done by the Danish Hotel Pro Forma group, but not really illuminating without the dramatic elements.

The other pieces are more satisfying as an audio experience, even if interpretation of Santa Ratniece's highly individual approach to (non-)harmony can be a challenge, as it is on *fuoco celeste* and the beautiful *Nada el layli*. Ratniece evokes places and transcendent states with great, if mysterious, authority, a soundworld that is as mysterious as it is rich.

Perhaps not ideal as a first introduction to Ratniece's world – the 2016 choral work *My soul will sink within me* would serve better – this disc will, however, widen and enhance her reputation as a unique contemporary.

BRIAN MORTON

ORGAN MUSIC

Cecilia McDowall: *First Flight*

Oxford University Press, £8.25

Ad Wammes: *Toccatina*

Oxford University Press, £8.25

Philip Moore: *Via Crucis*

Encore Publications, £10.25

First Flight is a further welcome addition to the growing body of inventive and impeccably written works for solo organ from Cecilia McDowall – a full CD's worth now, and more to come (we hope). In essence it's a rhapsody or fantasia, an energetic kaleidoscope of textures and figurations inspired by the anniversaries, in 2019, of the first moon landing and the death of Leonardo da Vinci. From tenebrous and static beginnings the music grows inexorably in energy and momentum, with a brief recapitulation of an earlier episode bringing the work to a close, taking in some beautifully idiomatic and crystalline writing along the way.

Harmonic and motivic elements are cannily aligned, giving a sense of unity to what in less experienced hands could have been thoughtlessly episodic writing – no danger of that here. Experience of performing it suggests that some agility and precision is needed to realise the writing to full effect; the pedal part is not hard at all, but the manual figurations need to be very fluently managed. Registration suggestions are provided, but the work can be coloured as vividly as you like, to great effect, and it's a rewarding and unusual recital work. The American commissioners (Bruton Parish

Church, Williamsburg, who have yet to hear the work) must have been delighted.

Ad Wammes's *Toccatina* is an entertaining *jeu d'esprit*, using the tropes familiar from his other works. To the familiar recipe of jazzy syncopation, short phrases, and clean textures are added influences from Sweelinck and South American music. It's an entertaining bit of fizz and carefully placed in a programme will raise a smile. But getting it right will be far harder than it looks. *Caveat emptor*.

Philip Moore's *Via Crucis* is an altogether more serious proposition. There haven't been many upsides to the ravages of the last dismal year, but one of them has been the creativity musicians have brought to the task of finding ways to explore the restricted resources and opportunities available (think Schütz and the Thirty Years' War). Several Holy Week performances of this new work by Philip Moore revealed it to be a piece which entirely transcended current circumstance, and it deserves to take a place in Passiontide observances in more normal times, being less self-consciously prolix and more accessible to a liturgical (or even concert) audience than some better known examples in a similar genre. It's structured around the Stations of the Cross, plus a short chorale prelude on 'Rockingham', juxtaposing mostly short meditations for organ with prayers by Eric Milner-White; while it convinces in its published form, the score suggests several ways in which it could be expanded and enriched by the addition of hymns and

audio-visual elements. The organ writing is, as one would expect, elegant and idiomatic, unflinchingly pertinent and expressive; technical demands are not extreme, although there are some tricky moments. Opportunities for expressive and colourful use of the instrument are legion. This review has missed the boat for 2021, but plan ahead for 2022.

STEPHEN FARR

CHORAL MUSIC

Vaughan Williams for Choirs 1 Vaughan Williams for Choirs 2

John Leavitt (ed.)

SATB & pno

Oxford University Press

(vol.1) 9780193532106, £7.50;

(vol.2) 9780193532090, £7.50



When Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote for choirs, and particularly when he had small- to medium-sized groups in mind, he tended to write for unaccompanied voices, or for choir and organ; there is hardly any repertoire for mixed-voice choir and piano. For those SATB groups who welcome the support of a piano, and for those venues where there is no full-size organ with pedals, Oxford University Press has produced two volumes of choral items where accompaniment, if required, is for piano. Volume 1 contains ten sacred pieces, vol.2 ten secular works: they are edited by John Leavitt, and are available nicely in time for

the 150th anniversary of RVW's birth in 2022.

This is not the first time others have rescored RVW's vocal music. Perhaps the best example of this is the SATB version of *Linden Lea* (not included in this collection), about which two mistakes are commonly made: first, that it's a folk song – it isn't, it's an original composition (the composer once said of it, 'It pays the rent'); second, that the well-known mixed-voice version is his own arrangement – it isn't, it was arranged by Sir Arthur Somervell. So the notion is not new. But these volumes offer us collections of pieces, which makes them handy for concerts, and at a reasonable price.

A closer examination of the contents leaves this writer less convinced about the merits of the sacred volume than those of its secular counterpart. For the latter, Dr Leavitt has for the most part chosen wisely from Vaughan Williams's songs and duets, expanding the choral parts by taking his cue from the piano accompaniments. This minimal rearrangement of the composer's intentions means that we are largely unaware of such alterations as the editor has made. This is seen to best effect in *She's like the Swallow*, in which the unison-and-piano original becomes an a cappella arrangement for mixed voices and soprano solo. *Greensleeves* is an amalgam of various different pre-existing arrangements. RVW's own unaccompanied arrangement of *John Dory* is included here, the editor's only contribution being to 'improve' the rehearsal-only piano part. There is similar minimal intervention for *Silence and Music*, one of Vaughan Williams's finest part-songs.

Personally, I would not consider programming the final piece in the secular collection: Rudyard Kipling's poem *Land of our Birth* strikes a patriotic note more suited to the world of a century ago.

The sacred collection has, in my view, less to recommend it. Four of the ten items are Christmas pieces – difficult to programme at any other time of the year – and two of these have been available in their original form in *Carols for Choirs 1* for 60 years. The added piano parts (intended for performance) rely to quite some extent on eighth note/quaver movement, which to my ear is less than wholly welcome. *A Song of Thanksgiving* was never one of VW's best pieces to begin with, and something more martial than the tone of a piano is required for the accompaniment. *O Taste and See* is included in this volume, but for the life of me I cannot see what editing was required in its presentation.

Much more welcome are choir-and-piano versions of *Let us now praise famous men*, *At the name of Jesus*, *O how amiable* and *He that is down need fear no fall*. This last can be performed to advantage with the addition of a solo melody instrument. The editor has opted for B flat clarinet, but it would have to play this piece in A major to conform to the piece's concert pitch of G major. Unfortunately the note A (a sixth above middle C) is one of the weakest notes on the instrument: an oboe or violin might be a better choice.

Whatever my views about the strengths and weaknesses of this sacred collection, we should remember that full-scale organs with pedalboard are



COURTESY OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

▲ Ralph Vaughan Williams: OUP has published two volumes of his choral works

disappearing from churches and concert halls in increasing numbers; so there is certainly a place for a volume such as this. Vaughan Williams was one of my favourite composers from earliest years. I look forward to many performances of his music in 2022 and beyond.

JEREMY JACKMAN

Bob Chilcott: *Circlesong*

SATB & upper voices + pno (or 2pno and 4perc)

Oxford University Press ISBN 978-0-19-354043-9, vocal score £12.50



Circlesong was written in 2003 and first performed in the following year. Bob Chilcott

revised the work two years ago and the first performances of this revised version narrowly preceded 2020's first UK lockdown. *Circlesong* is a 13-movement piece lasting around 40 minutes, its texts selected from indigenous poetry of North America

– Seminole, Pueblo, Yaqui, Kwakiutl, Sioux, Chinook, Ojibwa, Eskimo, Dakota, with Iroquois featuring alongside Navajo and Comanche poems. Although Chilcott sets all of the poetry in English translations, there is a musical atmosphere of spaciousness and tradition throughout, and each movement serves its texts appropriately and inventively. What is most impressive is that Chilcott inevitably sees his task through the lens of the British choral tradition, yet without demeaning or diluting the native American subject matter. The colourful images in the poetry are a gift for a composer and Chilcott does not disappoint. In particular, the youthful upper voices are challenged, but they are also given chances to shine and show themselves and the poetry in a favourable light.

Chilcott's not-so-secret weapon is a solid compositional technique that frames every melodic motif and every harmonic progression. In an age when there is scepticism in

►

JOHN BELLARS



▲ Bob Chilcott's music is 'coherent, approachable and engaging'

◁ certain quarters about the value of conventional compositional methods (and indeed of staff notation itself), Chilcott's work stands out as serving traditional forces in a coherent, approachable and engaging manner. Turning the pages of *Circlesong* is deeply satisfying. Each word is set logically and imaginatively; and each phrase in every voice part is the right length to be breathed without resorting to vocal trickery. Voice ranges are respected, and no voice part is asked to do anything that compromises self-respect. Moreover, the score carries just enough marks of articulation and expression to tell the conductor how to proceed: if you do what the score says, the music will unfold. Certainly, there is much to be worked at in rehearsal, but the game plan is self-evident: accurate tuning and ensemble must be tempered by fluidity of line and careful pacing within and between movements. *Circlesong* is proper music, plain and simple.

Circlesong has been well

plotted. There is plenty of contrast of mode and key, ballad and choirfest, extrovert and intimate, bold and impressionistic, and the work offers a variety of textures and vocal approaches. There is a satisfying shape to the whole, which ends, musically, as it began – the work is a circle song. Broadly speaking, it follows a human narrative from birth to death, and the concentration of its texts on the natural world makes *Circlesong* a piece with contemporary resonance. The standout – and potentially stand-alone – movement is the a cappella SATB setting of the Pueblo poem 'Newborn'. The images of nature are beautifully reflected in Chilcott's default musical language: added-note chords to provide gently dissonant harmonies and inflection-based additive rhythms – the new natural, as it were.

On the surface, there is little common ground between Bob Chilcott's *Circlesong* and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Chilcott's sincerity could not be further from Orff's irony and iconoclasm if it tried. Yet Carl Orff was a passionate educator, as is Bob Chilcott; moreover, the focus of the two works is tradition (the Middle Ages in Orff's case and North American tribal culture in the case of Chilcott). Added to which, the instrumentation of *Circlesong* is comparable to the chamber version of *Carmina Burana*: two pianos, a group of children's voices, a mixed-voice choir, and a battery of percussion (Orff calls for six players; Chilcott needs only four). Here's a serving suggestion: a concert of *Circlesong* and *Carmina Burana* would last two hours (including an interval) and would be as enthralling as it would thought-provoking.

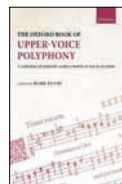
JEREMY SUMMERLY

BOOKS

The Oxford Book of Upper-Voice Polyphony – A collection of sixteenth-century motets in two to six parts

Mark Keane (ed.)

Oxford University Press ISBN 978-0-19-353485-8, £20.95



There are so many good reasons to buy this wonderful anthology of 43 motets, both from an academic as well as practical and fun point of view. All in new editions, ranging from two to six parts (with the exception of two double SSAA choruses), made exclusively from primary sources, including some first editions in modern notation, it covers the church year and all major feasts. Palestrina, Victoria

and Lassus are well-represented, but here one also discovers Pedro de Christo, Isabella d'Este, Marc'Antonio Ingegneri, and more, and there's a chronological span from Josquin to Handl. Styles and compositional techniques are greatly varied, with busy counterpoint and solemn homophony ensuring that there's something for all levels of ability, indicating that this book could be the basis for a course of study and a great builder of musicianship, sight-reading, and vocal technique.

The excellent and illuminating introduction from the editor together with helpful and sensitive editorial suggestions make for ease of use, along with piano reductions for rehearsal, translations provided with each work, and a refreshingly readable editorial commentary that students will appreciate.

There's plenty for the all-female choir, with ranges not too low for balance, as well as material best suited to choirs with alto falsettists who can slip into chest-voice. Why not invite more female 'tenors' (a type of voice Este will have been well aware of in Italian convents) to tackle those lines?

The arrangement on the page is excellent and printing very clearly printed – just as well as, one imagines, the need to reduce bulk and weight has clearly influenced the use of rather thin, slightly see-through paper.

This isn't a book you might buy just to get one or two works: it's one of those anthologies you pick up for a flick through and then realise that significant time has passed while you're enthralled by the contents. A jewel-box of high-voice loveliness and an invaluable resource.

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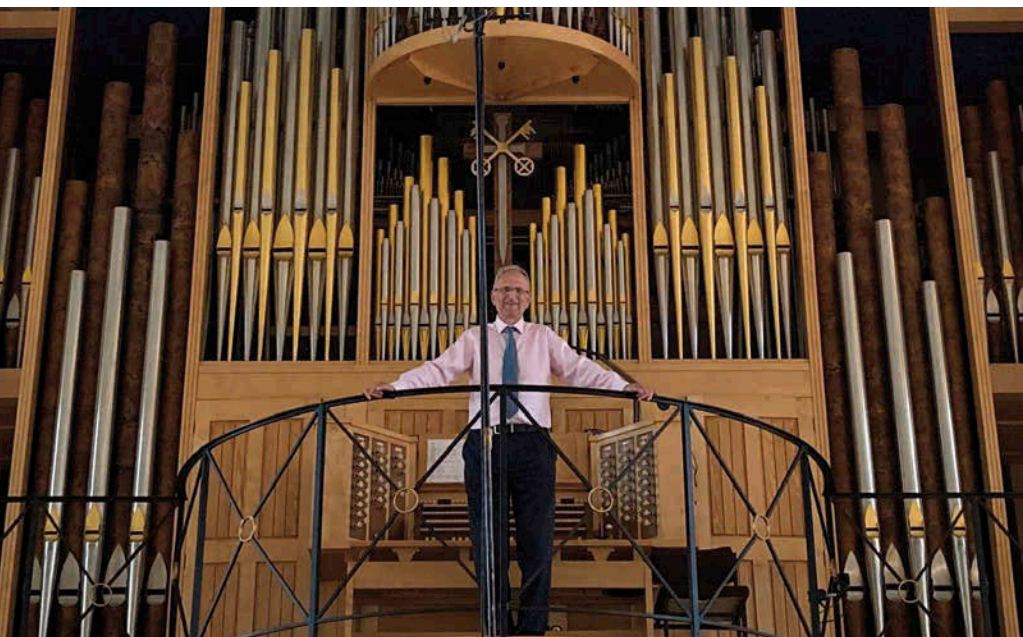


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ENCOUNTERS

MICHAEL BACON, BBC STUDIO MANAGER



COURTESY/MICHAEL BACON

In 1977 a fellow music student came back from Liverpool University's Careers Service clutching a list of jobs: "Here's one for you – Trainee Studio Manager [SM] at the BBC." I applied, bluffed my way through describing how a microphone and tape recorder works (no change there) and had the job before I graduated. At the end of January 1978 I began training on the fourth floor of the Langham (a beaten-up BBC building then), where quite a bit of the gear still had valves and the bloke in charge's most recent operational experience seemed to have been doing sound effects on Larry the Lamb [from the children's radio programme *Toytown*]. We didn't spend any time with the classical SMs because we were told the chances of getting a job there were close to nil. Newly qualified, I spent six months at Bush House, where some of the programmes I did solo had an audience of 30 million, and the one time I worked with the Bulgarian Service was the night that Georgi Markov was murdered by the KGB on Waterloo Bridge.

I returned to Broadcasting House [BH] and submitted to five weeks' Edit Training, ten-till-six every day. Essential, because the BBC's "big green" RD4/4 reel-to-reel tape machines had the power to take your finger off, and because "undo" involved unsticking the physical tape

edit and putting the piece you had just cut out back in. Many, many times ... Despite what we had been told, there were chances to do attachments to the classical team, but I decided that those Radio 3 types were far too scary.

But in 1983 I had the fantastic opportunity to work as a producer of Choral Evensong and to work alongside Barry Rose (a choral genius and a great influence on me); I decided that maybe I was now strong enough to try an attachment to the classical team of SMs. I was right – they were a bit scary (still are), but after three months I was offered a job and after thinking long and hard, took the leap. It was a great decision, and I've had a fantastic time: 35 Proms seasons, trips abroad, listening to great music every single working day, learning so much, but most of all working with a fantastic and dedicated group of people.

I had a special mentor in Geoffrey Klinton Parker. Geoff had been all over the world recording with the likes of Gillian Weir – he was a fabulous organist and the coolest-headed SM you could possibly imagine. And as a player myself, it was my teacher Thomas Trotter who taught me so much and convinced me that I had the wherewithal to play the instrument to public recital standard.

Worst day at work? "Could you stick up a pair of mics to record the rehearsal in Maida

Vale studio 1?" which turned into a very long night of remixing in Studio 80A back in BH and a (non-classical and actually not very good) singer threatening to call her lawyer because she didn't like the reverb I was using on her voice. The one consolation being that I would never meet her again. Until the time that she turned up in an evening show at Cadogan Hall. I hid in the truck all day.

Highlights? Too many. Lufthansa Festival of Early Music for many years, all sorts of crazy venues (a tool shed in Wiltshire, a cupboard in Wilton's Music Hall, the Lord Mayor's Parlour); Lorraine Hunt Lieberson at Wigmore; the re-opening of the Royal Festival Hall organ; hundreds of New Generation Artists sessions; and definitely Duruflé's Requiem with the BBC Singers and BBC Concert Orchestra in King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Radio 3's *A Bach Christmas* inspired my quest to play all his organ music, in public. Plus the banter over a delicious lunch at the Royal Albert Hall.

The Albert Hall is a special place. It is very difficult to balance the organ recitals because we usually only have an hour and the "organ mics" are above the acoustic canopy. My "secret weapon" is a pair of mics placed at floor level where the orchestral oboes usually sit. And it was the RAH which played host to two of the most memorable organ events I ever worked on: Richard Hills's Light Organ Prom in 2013 showed his complete mastery of the organ's colours and reminded us that the organ was built in part to entertain. Then last year Jonathan Scott, making a live TV recording, which I balanced, for the "Covid" Proms season, pretty much just him and presenter Georgia Mann in an empty Albert Hall. This was virtuoso playing and his detailed attention to registration made the organ sound terrific.

But now, after 43 years, I am hanging up my BBC cans. It's been fantastic, and even the scary types turned out to be very, very good friends. How lucky was it that I did, indeed, find the ideal job for me. ■

Michael Bacon is director of music at The Church of King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells. He is pictured at St Peter's, Eaton Square, the venue for his last BBC concert, with Thomas Trotter and the BBC Singers, conducted by David Hill. He was in conversation with Graeme Kay.

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