

**ALEX
WOOLF
REQUIEM**

VOX LUNA

NICKY SPENCE *TENOR* | IAIN BURNSIDE *PIANO*

PHILIP HIGHAM *CELLO* | ANTHONY GRAY *ORGAN*

DELPHIAN

ALEX WOOLF (b. 1995) REQUIEM

Nicky Spence *tenor* (tracks 3, 6, 8)

Iain Burnside *piano* (tracks 3, 6, 8)

Philip Higham *cello* (tracks 1-4, 6-8, 10)

Vox Luna (tracks 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10)

Anthony Gray *organ* (tracks 1, 2, 4-6, 8, 10)

Alex Woolf *conductor*

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

Alex Woolf is supported by the PRS Foundation's Open Fund
<https://prsfoundation.com/>




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|----|---|---------|
| 1 | Introit | [4:26] |
| 2 | Kyrie | [7:33] |
| 3 | The Fall | [7:34] |
| 4 | Offertory | [4:44] |
| 5 | Sanctus
Christopher Mitchell <i>alto</i> , Joseph Edwards <i>bass</i> | [4:20] |
| 6 | A Crowd of Cares | [3:24] |
| 7 | Agnus Dei
Gwendolen Martin <i>soprano</i> , Sophie Timms <i>alto</i> ,
William Wright <i>tenor</i> , Joseph Edwards <i>bass</i> | [5:45] |
| 8 | The Year's Midnight | [6:33] |
| 9 | Pie Jesu | [5:45] |
| 10 | In Paradisum
Gwendolen Martin <i>soprano</i> | [5:37] |
| | Total playing time | [55:46] |

premiere recording

A note from the composer

*Grant them eternal rest, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

The opening lines of a Requiem Mass contain its most essential prayer. Perhaps nowhere are our profoundest hopes for the departed more succinctly and beautifully expressed, in language rich with metaphor. 'Eternal rest' here is no mere slumber, but rather the full attainment of God's inheritance after the toils of life; 'perpetual light' signifies all the good that flows from God. Yet at their core, these words convey a simple and universal message: rest in peace.

Encapsulating all that follows, these are the only lines of text I set in my own Requiem's **Introit**. This opening movement begins in darkness, gradually coming into focus through the cello's opening solo and in the choral entries which follow. The **Kyrie's** appeal for mercy then runs the gamut of emotion, beginning as an urgent plea and ending as a solemn prayer.

Where a 'Dies irae' might be expected, I instead offer the first of three settings of poems by Gillian Clarke. **The Fall** describes a different 'day of wrath' – September 11, 2001. For Clarke's combination of a very human immediacy with powerful religious allegory, we enter the more intimate sound-world of solo tenor, cello and piano. The **Offertory** which follows becomes almost a response to Clarke's words, its appeal that the departed 'fall not into darkness' acquiring new significance.

Sanctus sees both choir and organ at their most emphatic, with cello absent for the first time. The first half of this movement is full of ecstatic praise, while the second points toward the more introspective mood of the second Clarke setting, **A Crowd of Cares**. Here, organ joins with cello to act as a musical bridge between sacred and secular texts – between the collective sentiment of a choir and the solitary reflection of a soloist. The choir returns *a cappella* in the **Agnus Dei**; when the cello rejoins, it is increasingly emboldened and expressive, pushing through the expanding choral texture and emerging above it.

The Year's Midnight, in its textual ascent from earth to sky, from falling leaves to a rainbow, acts as a fitting prelude to the final two movements, which appeal again for rest and then for angels to lead the departed into paradise. By invoking the language of *The Fall* to refer no longer to a 'fall from grace' but rather to a natural cycle of renewal, this movement advances the despair-to-hope, sin-to-redemption narrative which I hope permeates the work as a whole. The entirely *a cappella* **Pie Jesu** which follows sees the choir at both its most prayerful and – later – its most ecstatic, as the homophonic texture eventually shatters into intense, rhythmically free declamation. Finally, **In Paradisum** surveys much of the music that has preceded it, until – recalling the very first choral entry of the Introit – it weaves its own course upwards, toward that perpetual light.

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The requiem in history and today

What constitutes a requiem in the twenty-first century? Our understanding of the genre is shaped by its canonical works – settings by composers such as Mozart, Cherubini, Berlioz, Verdi or Fauré. We usually encounter them in concert performances rather than in their original context as part of a funeral mass, where their functions included interceding on behalf of the dead, providing consolation for the bereaved and also (certainly in the cases of Cherubini, Berlioz and Verdi) celebrating the memory of famous and important deceased. As members of a concert audience we are invited to consider the meaning of death in more general ways, whether or not we are personally affected by the loss of a loved one at the time. Hence we can appreciate the aestheticisation and sublimation provided by texts and music differently, not reacting on the basis of an immediate emotional need but adopting a broader, more reflective viewpoint.

This broader perspective might be considered part of the modern definition of a requiem: a piece of music that engages with death while retaining some – if sometimes rather distant – link to the 'traditional' requiem genre. Of course, from the point of view of the Roman Catholic liturgy any piece that does not restrict itself to the liturgical text would not be regarded as suitable to feature in a funeral mass. This is complicated further by the fact that the traditional text was in fact altered in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, when several sections – particularly those (such as the 'Dies irae' sequence) highlighting

the fear and dread associated with the Last Judgment and a potential descent to hell – were removed from the liturgy. The use of the vernacular was also sanctioned as part of these reforms.

Yet the requiem genre had already moved from the church to the concert hall much earlier. Mozart's (and Süssmayr's) setting may have been the first one to be performed outside a church when it featured in a benefit concert for the composer's widow and children in 1793, while those by Cherubini (his Requiem in C minor), Berlioz and Verdi were premiered as part of a sacred ceremony yet then moved straight into the secular sphere. Dvořák's setting for the Birmingham Music Festival (premiered in 1891) may be the first requiem by a 'major' composer written for immediate use in the concert hall. With this secularisation of the genre came a greater freedom to 'play' with the text. While leaving out certain sections had always been common (after all, whatever was not composed would still be represented by Gregorian chant during the mass), composers now started moving words around, adding new texts (even to the point of replacing the liturgical texts entirely) and also turning to languages other than Latin. Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* (1868), with its non-liturgical German text, probably marked a breakthrough for this approach. Despite its title it would not have been regarded as a 'genuine' requiem by most listeners at the time, whereas today, most of us have no

The requiem in history and today

problem accepting it as one. This is because the twentieth century has dissolved generic norms; nowadays a piece of music can be called symphony, string quartet or requiem without having to display any of the structural or functional features hitherto associated with these genres – except their title. Yet the latter is crucial: it ensures that even if there is no reference to the ‘original’ generic traditions, a listener’s reception will be guided by his or her knowledge of the norms represented by most of the canonic requiems which – despite being centuries old – still dominate the concert and recording scene. Hence when encountering a work such as David Popper’s *Requiem* (1891; a purely instrumental piece for three cellos and orchestra) or Frederick Delius’s ‘pagan’ *Requiem* (1922, with a very individual, Schopenhauer- and Nietzsche-inspired selection of English texts), the title ‘Requiem’ is likely to frame audiences’ approach to their reception as they will try to interpret what they hear in relation to their general knowledge of the older, better-known representatives of the genre.

Following this modern requiem tradition, Alex Woolf’s use of the traditional text is a selective one. Engaging with those sections that particularly inspire him, he leaves out entire movements like the ‘Dies irae’ or the ‘Lux aeterna’ (in the latter’s place stands the ‘Pie Jesu’, which expresses a similar sentiment yet is normally positioned between the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei), while shortening others to varying degrees: the opening ‘Requiem

aeternam’ excludes the psalm verses and the repeat of the antiphon; the Offertory omits both the ‘Sed signifer sanctus Michael’ and the ‘Hostias’ sections; the ‘In Paradisum’ dispenses with two lines of text; while in the Agnus Dei there is no ‘sempiternam’ added to the final repetition of the plea to the lamb of God. Conversely, Woolf includes three recent poems by Gillian Clarke; these counterpoint the liturgical text with a more modern reflection on dying and loss.

In its structure the work invites comparison with Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*. Britten similarly juxtaposes the text of the Latin requiem mass with modern-day poetry – in his case, poems by Wilfred Owen reflecting Owen’s experiences in the trenches of the First World War. Like Britten, Woolf creates clearly contrasted sound-worlds for these two spheres. Both composers set the Latin texts chorally (Britten uses a mixed choir as well as a boys’ choir, with a soprano soloist also being associated with this sphere) and assign the modern poetry to soloists. Woolf places his choruses in a religious sphere by accompanying them with organ (with the notable exception of a few *a cappella* sections), while pairing the solo voice with piano (though the organ also remains intermittently present in two of the three movements concerned). In both works the choral sections often move in a comparatively slow, serene style, while the music for the poems tends to engage with their words in a more individual, expressive and dramatic

way. Woolf unites the two spheres by means of the solo cello that features in both worlds, directly interacting with the vocal parts in an often responsorial or imitative way.

However, there are also significant differences between the two works: Britten uses Owen’s poetry to critique the positions expressed in the liturgical texts, and the vivid depictions of the hell on earth that was trench warfare contrast often brutally with the hope and consolation offered by many of the Latin words. Gillian Clarke’s poems also interact directly with the Latin texts surrounding them, but in a less confrontational way – they are rather like commentaries that help make the age-old words of the Latin requiem more applicable to our time.

Furthermore, Britten’s *War Requiem* is, of course, much larger in scale than Woolf’s piece, using larger and more varied forces: gathering and rehearsing its several choirs, orchestras and soloists is difficult and expensive. Although, at 55 minutes, Woolf’s *Requiem* is substantial in its own right, its smaller forces mean a performance can be organised much more easily; in that respect it is perhaps more closely related to Gabriel

Fauré’s *Requiem* (or that by Maurice Duruflé, who was in turn influenced by Fauré). Their requiems are intended to be suitable for liturgical use, avoiding the use of orchestras and elaborate vocal solo parts that would restrict performances to professional concert situations. Woolf’s *Requiem* expects professionals in both the solo and accompanimental parts, but his musical style is accessible and engaging. In the omission of the ‘Dies irae’ and the inclusion of the ‘In Paradisum’ (which is part of the Office of the Dead yet not the Mass for the Dead proper, and therefore only included in some requiem settings), Woolf’s selection of movements also mirrors the choices made by Fauré and Duruflé. Placing the ‘Pie Jesu’ and particularly the ‘In Paradisum’ at the end ensures the most consoling and reassuring conclusion possible to this requiem for our times.

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Wolfgang Marx is a lecturer at University College Dublin. His research interests include the representation of death in music, with a particular focus on requiem compositions. He is editor of the series ‘Dublin Death Studies’.

Texts and translations

1 Introit

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Grant them eternal rest, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

The slow evolution of the world is over.
And never again
will retina, or memory, or soul be free
of our second fall from grace,
or be washed clean of that stain.

Gillian Clarke (b. 1937)

2 Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.*

3 The Fall

We watched them fall,
like leaves, rubble, dust,
limbs akimbo on the air

as if arms could be wings,
as if men and women could be angels,
as if birds might spread their wings,
slow their fall,
lend them flight,
as if God would extend a hand
and set them down into safe hands.

Too far to hear their screams,
or the screech of accelerating air
stuffing our mouth with ashes,
filling the lungs of the falling,
of the fallen,
of the fleeing ...

4 Offertory

Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae, libera
animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de
paenis inferni et de profundo lacu. Libera
eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas tartarus,
ne cadant in obscurum. Quam olim Abrahae
promisisti et semini eius.

*Lord Jesus Christ, king of glory, set free the
souls of all the faithful departed from the
punishment of hell and from the deep pit. Set
them free from the lion's mouth, so that hell
does not swallow them, so that they fall not
into darkness.*

Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae, libera
animas omnium fidelium defunctorum.

*Lord Jesus Christ, king of glory, set free the
souls of all the faithful departed.*

5 Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua:
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory:
Hosanna in the highest.*

Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini:
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Blessed is he that comes
in the name of the Lord:
Hosanna in the highest.*

Texts and translations

6 **A Crowd of Cares**

When there comes over me
a crowd of cares,
I ponder my fears,
breathless as if
I'd been running,
and I weep.

I grieve for the dear one,
the dear one I loved,
the glorious stag.

I ponder my fears,
and I weep.

Gillian Clarke

7 **Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem.

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins
of the world, grant them rest.*

8 **The Year's Midnight**

The flown, the fallen,
the golden ones,
the deciduous dead, all gone
to ground, to dust, to sand,
borne on the shoulders of the wind.

Listen! They are whispering
now while the world talks,

and the ice melts,
and the seas rise.
Look at the trees!

Every leaf-scar is a bud
expecting a future.
The earth speaks in parables.
The burning bush. The rainbow.
Promises. Promises.

Gillian Clarke

9 **Pie Jesu**

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem.

Loving Lord Jesus, grant them rest.

10 **In Paradisum**

In paradisum deducant te angeli.

May angels lead you into paradise.

Chorus angelorum te suscipiat, et cum
Lazaro quondam paupere aeternam
habeas requiem.

*May the choir of angels receive you, and
with Lazarus, who was once a poor man,
may you have eternal rest.*

Gillian Clarke's poems are used by kind permission.
'The Fall' appears in *Making Beds for the Dead* (Carcenet
Press, 2004); 'The Year's Midnight' in *Selected Poems*
(Picador, 2016). 'A Crowd of Cares' is unpublished.



Biographies

© Bertie Watson



Nicky Spence is one of Scotland's proudest sons. His unique skills as a singing actor and the rare honesty of his musicianship have earned him a place at the top of the classical music

profession. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in New York before the age of thirty, and is now safely inhabiting the repertoire of Strauss, Janáček and Wagner. Recently described by *The Times* as 'a tenor who combines heroic tone with a poetic sensibility that takes the breath away', he is fulfilling his exciting potential as a Heldentenor, having recently made his role debut as Parsifal to great acclaim, with The Hallé under Sir Mark Elder.

He made strong debuts at The Royal Opera (Covent Garden), English National Opera and Scottish Opera, and has gone on to appear regularly at L'Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Deutsche Staatsoper, La Monnaie (Brussels), Seattle Opera, The Metropolitan Opera (New York), Opéra National de Lyon, the Teatro Real (Madrid), Dutch National Opera and Oper Frankfurt.

Nicky gives prolific recitals, and has recorded over twenty recital discs. He is a regular

featured recitalist at Wigmore Hall, London and on other stages across the world. His recent album of vocal works by Janáček, including the song cycle *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, was Vocal category winner in the 2020 BBC Music Magazine Awards.

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Pianist **Iain Burnside** has appeared in recital with many of the world's leading singers. His recordings straddle an exuberantly eclectic repertoire, from Beethoven and before to the to the

Gramophone Award-winning *NMC Songbook* (2009 – 'Contemporary' category) and beyond. Delphian outings include two volumes of Schubert songs, with Ailish Tynan (DCD34165) and Roderick Williams (DCD34170) respectively, and multi-singer sets of Rachmaninov (DCD34127, 3 CDs) and Medtner (DCD34177, 2 CDs). 'Seven phenomenal young singers ... Burnside remains a firm, clear companion throughout,' wrote *BBC Music Magazine*, naming the Rachmaninov box its 'Choral and Song Choice' for May 2014. 'The results are electrifying,' concurred the *Daily Telegraph*.

Biographies

Away from the piano Burnside is active as a writer and broadcaster. As presenter of BBC Radio 3's *Voices* he won a Sony Radio Award. His play *A Soldier and a Maker*, based on the life of Ivor Gurney and devised at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, was performed at the Barbican Centre and Cheltenham Festival and broadcast by Radio 3 on Armistice Day. Iain is Artistic Director of the Ludlow English Song Weekend and Artistic Consultant to Grange Park Opera.



Philip Higham enjoys a richly varied musical life. A passionate chamber musician, equally at home in concerto, duo and unaccompanied repertoire, he especially relishes Classical and

German Romantic music, in which he is frequently and happily immersed as principal cellist of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He has appeared several times in recital at London's Wigmore Hall – including a notable performance of the six Bach suites there in 2017 – and at other prominent venues and festivals both at home and abroad; and he is regularly broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Philip's two solo recordings for Delphian Records, of the Britten and Bach solo suites (DCD34125 and DCD34150 respectively), have received considerable praise, including both *Gramophone* Editor's Choice and *BBC Music Magazine* 'Instrumental Choice' for the Britten. He enjoys collaborations with pianists Alasdair Beatson and Susan Tomes, violinists Erich Höbarth and Alexander Janiczek, the Navarra and Benyounes string quartets, Hebrides Ensemble, and, as concerto soloist, with Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Philharmonia, the Hallé, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Born in Edinburgh, Philip studied at St Mary's Music School with Ruth Beauchamp and subsequently at the Royal Northern College of Music with Emma Ferrand and Ralph Kirshbaum. He also enjoyed mentoring from Steven Isserlis, and was represented by YCAT (Young Classical Artists Trust) between 2009 and 2014. In 2008 he became the first British cellist to win First Prize at the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig, and followed it with major prizes in the 2009 Witold Lutoslawski International Cello Competition and the Grand Prix Emanuel Feuermann 2010. Philip plays a cello by Carlo Giuseppe Testore, made in 1697. He is grateful for continued support from Harriet's Trust.

Vox Luna is a UK-based vocal ensemble directed by Alex Woolf. Described by Classic FM as 'absolutely glorious', the choir is fast establishing a reputation for its vibrant performances, eclectic programming and championing of works by living composers. Since its founding in 2018, the choir has enjoyed numerous performances throughout the UK, collaborating with a wide range of renowned soloists. *Requiem* is Vox Luna's debut recording.

Anthony Gray is an organist, choral director and composer based in Yorkshire. He is Director of Music of St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate, Director of The Fairfax Singers, Organ Tutor for the Diocese of Leeds, Accompanist of Morley Music Society and Assistant Director of the Florence International Singing Programme. He graduated as Organ Scholar of Robinson College, Cambridge, where he co-founded and directed The Robinson Consort, focusing on contemporary repertoire, and toured to destinations including East Asia, Switzerland, Portugal and the Saint-Rémy-de-Provence Opera Festival. He has been musical director of acclaimed theatre productions including *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor*

Dreamcoat and his own co-authored *A Very Brexit Musical* at the Edinburgh Fringe. In 2019 he was shortlisted in the final of the BBC Radio 3 Carol Competition with his setting of 'Go to the Child'.

Alex Woolf is an award-winning British composer. His music has been performed by artists and ensembles including Sir James Galway, Sir Bryn Terfel, the London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Alice Coote, and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House under Sir Antonio Pappano.

Recent works include *M1 Symphony* for the BBC Philharmonic, *Fairfield Fanfare* for London Mozart Players, and the song cycle *Quiet London* for Rowan Pierce, Elgan Liÿr Thomas and Iain Burnside. *NHS Symphony* (2018) – a collaboration with BBC Radio Documentaries – won awards at the Radio Academy ARIAS and the Prix Europa, and was praised as 'groundbreaking' (*The Times*) and 'haunting' (*Metro*). 2021 sees the premiere of Alex's first opera, *Pandora's Box*.

Alex's choral music has received particular acclaim, with recent performances by the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

Biographies

(Andrew Nethsingha), ORA Singers (Suzi Digby), The Bach Choir (David Hill), the combined choirs of Ely, Peterborough and Norwich cathedrals (Ashley Grote), and The Tallis Scholars (Peter Phillips).

Alex is also active as a conductor and broadcaster. In 2018 he founded chamber choir Vox Luna, and in 2019 he created and led the national Sing for Shelter project, bringing together 2,500 amateur singers from around the country to record his charity single 'A Place to Call Home' for homelessness charity Shelter; this project has raised more than £8,000 to date. Alex is a frequent contributor to BBC Radio 3, and in April 2020 presented his own edition of *Inside Music*.

Alex studied St John's College, Cambridge, and at the Royal Academy of Music with David Sawer, Huw Watkins and Oliver Knussen. He was BBC Young Composer of the Year in 2012, and in 2018 received the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize.

www.alex-woolf.com

Vox Luna

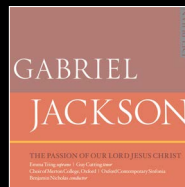
Soprano
Elizabeth Adams
Carys Brown
Isabella Gibber
Gwendolen Martin

Alto
Amy Blythe
Clare Cavenagh
Christopher Mitchell
Sophie Timms

Tenor
Jack Bazalgette
Oscar Golden-Lee
William Wright

Bass
Gavin Cranmer-Moralee
Robin Davis
Joseph Edwards
Tom Herring

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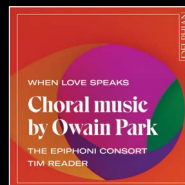


Gabriel Jackson: The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
Emma Tring *soprano*, Guy Cutting *tenor*, Choir of Merton College, Oxford & Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia / Benjamin Nicholas
DCD34222

Strikingly coloured and richly imaginative, Gabriel Jackson's re-telling of the age-old story of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion – commissioned by Merton College, Oxford – interweaves biblical narrative, Latin hymns and English poetry by Merton alumni, culminating in a rare setting of lines from T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding'. Under the direction of longtime Jackson collaborator Benjamin Nicholas, and with soloists and instrumentalists handpicked by the composer for this world premiere recording, *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ* receives here a performance to match the work's own harrowing drama and dark ecstasy.

'majestic and deeply moving'
— Choir & Organ, March/April 2019, *****

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARDS 2020 – Choral winner

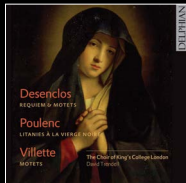


When Love Speaks: Choral music by Owain Park
The Epiphoni Consort / Tim Reader
DCD34239

The Epiphoni Consort follow up their acclaimed Delphian debut, of music by David Bednall, with a portrait album of another young choral composer on the ascendant. Still in his late twenties, Park's innate understanding of the choral medium is shown in the skillfully contrasted weights and colours of *Shakespeare Songs of Night-Time*, one of two Shakespeare cycles included here, and the Epiphoni singers make the most of the luxuriant chordal writing that characterises Park's style as a whole – what his former teacher John Rutter has described as 'towers of sound'. The choir is joined by a solo violin for the call-and-response patterns of *Antiphon for the Angels*, while *Sing to me*, *windchimes* movingly sets loss and yearning alongside poetic images of spring and rebirth.

New in June 2020

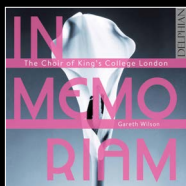
Also available on Delphian



Desenclos/Poulenc/Villette: Requiem; Litanies à la Vierge noire; Motets
The Choir of King's College London / David Trendell
DCD34136

Winner of the coveted Prix de Rome, Alfred Desenclos remains an almost unknown figure in twentieth-century music. His contribution to the distinguished French tradition of Requiem Mass settings dates from 1963; incorporating influences from Gregorian chant as well as rich harmonies based on added-note chords, this piece with its passionate outpourings is a revelation. David Trendell's programme also features music by Villette – who shared Desenclos' interest in jazz – and Poulenc, whose return to Catholicism in 1936 yielded some of the most significant religious choral music of the century. Trendell's choir is on ravishing form, and the organ at his *alma mater*, Exeter College, Oxford, fits this music like a velvet glove.

'spaciously dignified and meditative ... [The choir] has a formidable musical unity'
— Sunday Times, March 2014



In Memoriam
The Choir of King's College London / Gareth Wilson
DCD34146

The choir which David Trendell directed for twenty-two years pays tribute in a collection of specially chosen pieces by David's colleagues, friends and former students, interspersed with the Renaissance polyphony which was Trendell's area of scholarly expertise. His deep love for the Song of Songs has inspired many of the inclusions, and its nature imagery threads through the disc, adding a suggestion of renewal and rebirth to the memorial tone of works written in the difficult months after his untimely death. The composers' affection for David and gratitude for his life and musical achievements is matched by the intelligence and deep musicality of the choir which he raised to an international reputation, and which here takes on a sophisticated and challenging programme in his memory.

'The choir sings with assured intonation and a controlled vibrancy ... For quality of performance and diversity of repertoire, this is an outstanding disc'
— Choir & Organ, March/April 2016, *****



Buxton Orr: Songs

Nicky Spence, Iain Burnside, Jordan Black *clarinet*, Nikita Naumov *double bass*,
Edinburgh Quartet
DCD34175

When Nicky Spence was first shown the score to Buxton Orr's *Songs of a Childhood*, he was transported to the late 1980s – his own childhood in Scotland. 'Something about Buxton's sense of humour, excitement and honesty resonated with me,' Spence says, 'and fed my desire to discover more about his work. On contacting his widow, I was led to a treasure trove of unrecorded works for voice.' Sometimes thrillingly complex and always beautiful, and given character and verve by Orr's delightful setting of the Scots language, this rich body of work has found a worthy modern-day advocate.

'a revelation. Imagine a gentler, quirrier Britten with dabbings in 12-tone technique and old Scots poems set to generous vocal lines and off-piste instrumentation ... Burnside and his colleagues bring out all the care and wit in the contractual writing'
— The Guardian, March 2017



Britten: Suites for Solo Cello

Philip Higham
DCD34125

Britten's meeting with Mstislav Rostropovich in 1960 was a watershed, the great Russian cellist becoming the primary collaborator of his later years and inspiring a whole series of masterworks – including these three suites for solo cello, written as a conscious homage to those of Bach (there were originally to have been six). In a lucid and perceptive booklet essay, Britten scholar Paul Kildea sees the first as a coda to the *War Requiem*, the second as a snapshot of a lifetime of musical obsessions, and the third as both reaching back to much earlier works and suffused with Russian melody. Young virtuoso Philip Higham is one of the only British cellists in generations to have won top prizes at three major international competitions.

'There's nowhere to hide in these three solo suites – but why hide a technique as assured, a musical imagination as finely attuned to Britten's expression, or a Tschler cello sound as burnished and wonderfully textured as this?'

— BBC Music Magazine, May 2013, INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE



