



LINN

New College
Commissions & Premieres

ROBERT QUINNEY
CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD



LINN

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'Finger bowl'
by Sidsel Dorph-Jensen (b. 1973),
The Warden and Scholars of New
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New College Commissions & Premieres

57:18

ROBERT QUINNEY director
CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD
DÓNAL MCCANN organ

SIR WILLIAM HARRIS (1883–1973)

1 — **Faire is the heaven** 5:11

HERBERT HOWELLS (1892–1983)

New College Service

2 — Magnificat 6:32

3 — Nunc dimittis 3:09

KENNETH LEIGHTON (1929–1988)

Crucifixus pro nobis, Op. 38

4 — Christ in the Cradle 4:11
NICK PRITCHARD tenor

5 — Christ in the Garden 4:03

6 — Christ in his Passion 7:08
NICK PRITCHARD tenor

7 — Hymn 2:57

PAUL DRAYTON (b. 1944)

New College Service

8 — Magnificat 5:52

9 — Nunc dimittis 5:04

CAITLIN HARRISON (b. 1996)

10 — **O pastor animarum** 2:16

DEBORAH PRITCHARD (b. 1977)

New College Service

11 — Magnificat 3:50

12 — Nunc dimittis 2:22

TOBY YOUNG (b. 1990)

13 — **O God, make the door
of this house** 4:06

New College

Commissions & Premieres

Narrative accounts of the history of British music tend to focus on Great Composers, of symphonies and opera, and on Significant Moments – the arrival of Handel, the first performance of the *Enigma Variations* or *Peter Grimes*, for example. There is, however, an alternative history that sits in tangential relationship to the perceived ‘mainstream’, a story largely of continuity and conservatism: a performing and composing tradition quietly at work in cathedrals and the collegiate chapels of Oxford and Cambridge (and, lately, in many other places beside). In these institutions there is – and, one imagines, always has been – an acute sense of *genius loci*, the spirit of place. Here, the composition of the musical forces, and the architecture and acoustical properties of the building in which they perform, exert a silent but pervasive influence, which can perhaps only be seen clearly as it is reflected in music written specifically for the place and its choir. Here, then, we have a reflection, or perhaps an imprint, of St Mary’s College of Winchester in Oxford, known more-or-less from its inception as New College. A choir has been an integral part of the college since its foundation in 1379; this recording presents nearly a century of music composed for it.

William Henry Harris was Organist (a role that encompasses the direction of the choir) of New College between 1919 and 1929, succeeding the formidable Hugh Percy Allen, to whom the double-choir motet *Faire is the*

heaven is dedicated. Harris looks back to what for many of his generation was the Golden Age of this country’s music, the period from the English Reformation to the Civil Wars: in musical terms, from Tallis to Tomkins. Not only is the text by the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser, and its ‘olde worlde’ spelling faithfully preserved in the printed music, but the choral writing employs antique traits: antiphony between two equal choirs, a triple-time section where the syllabic speed quickens, and delicious moments of accented dissonance (‘suspensions’) between the voices. The silky enharmonic shifts (where notes are ‘respelled’, e.g. from D flat to C sharp, facilitating a change of key) betray a more modern sensibility. Likewise, in the New College Service by Harris’s contemporary Herbert Howells, the striking whole-tone harmony that announces the ‘Gloria Patri’ of both canticles sits alongside reference to much earlier styles. The *Magnificat* makes frequent use of *hemiola*, a rhythmic device that plays with the normal accentuation of triple time by grouping six successive beats in three groups of two; Howells may here be making reference to the work of Herbert Kennedy Andrews, Organist of New College when the service was written, as a scholar and performer of Renaissance polyphony. As Lionel Pike has suggested, there may be further references hidden in the music, including a representation of the double chevron of the New College crest in the (otherwise difficult to explain) five-note motif played by the organ pedals at the end of both canticles.

The New College Service is Howells at his sunniest and most straightforward; the chapel’s dry acoustic does not allow for the ethereal atmosphere of the Gloucester or slow-burn grandeur of the St Paul’s Service. By contrast, Kenneth Leighton’s cantata *Crucifixus pro nobis* must be one of the most intense and impassioned choral works of the twentieth century. Composed

in 1961, it sets three remarkable meditations on the Passion of Christ by the seventeenth-century poet Patrick Carey: the first for a solo tenor, the second for choir, and the third combining the two. In all three movements, the organ plays an *obbligato* role, not only supporting the voices but contributing independently to the musical argument. When the piece was written, plans were already being made by David Lumsden for a new organ in New College Chapel, one capable of realizing contrapuntal music with great clarity and character (Lumsden waited until the Grant, Degens and Bradbeer organ had been installed in 1969 to make his own recording of the cantata). In the final movement, however, the organ falls silent, leaving the choir to respond to the tenor's final exhortation, 'weep down a melting tear' with a devastatingly simple setting of Phineas Fletcher's hymn 'Drop, drop, slow tears'.

Just as a choir was at the heart of William of Wykeham's foundation of 1379, so was a school; at first exclusively for the education of the choristers, it expanded to include non-choristers in the late seventeenth century. Paul Drayton was the Head of Music at New College School for several years during David Lumsden's time as Organist of New College, during which much new music was commissioned for the choir from composers – including Drayton himself. The *Magnificat* of his New College Service alternates between a driving, cross-rhythm-inflected style and passages of more expansive music, culminating in a virtuoso codal 'Amen'. The *Nunc dimittis* immediately strikes a more inward, reflective note; but in spite of the much shorter text, it is on a similar scale to the *Magnificat*, with a grand central climax at 'to be a light' and a delicate treble duet beginning the 'Gloria', which then grows to a rhapsodic high point, before subsiding into a hushed coda.

The final three works are all from the recent past. Caitlin Harrison's introit *O pastor animarum* of 2022 sets a text by Hildegard of Bingen; voices are often paired, as in the opening sections of bell-like exchange between trebles and altos. Deborah Pritchard's numinous New College Service – completing a trio of evening canticles on this album – was commissioned to mark the fortieth anniversary of the admission of female undergraduates, and first performed in February 2020. The *Magnificat* has a protean sensibility, the tempo fluctuating in tandem with the intensity of the harmony and vocal tessitura; by contrast, the *Nunc dimittis* is composed of several gently unfolding canons between the voices, lending the movement a timeless quality. Finally, Toby Young's *O God, make the door of this house* is a setting of a prayer by New College fellow Thomas Ken (1637–1711), composed in 2016 for the Installation of Miles Young as Warden. Its use of ostinato figures and pop-inflected rhythm and harmony – not to mention its unabashed conclusion on a blazing chord of C major – has proved popular in concert as well as liturgical performance. Together with the other New College music presented here, it may also be heard speaking to Ken's prayer for breadth and diversity in this house of scholarship and prayer.

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THIS RECORDING IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF SIR DAVID LUMSDEN (1928–2023), ORGANIST OF NEW COLLEGE, 1959–1976; HONORARY FELLOW, 1996–2023.

1. FAIRE IS THE HEAVEN

Faire is the heaven, where happy soules have place
In full enjoyment of felicitie,
Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
Of the Divine Eternall Majestie;
Yet farre more faire be those bright Cherubins,
Which all with golden wings are overdight,
And those eternall burning Seraphins,
Which from their faces dart out fiery light;
Yet fairer than they both, and much more bright,
Be th' Angels and Archangels, which attend
On God's owne Person, without rest or end.
These then in faire each other farre excelling,
As to the Highest they approach more neare,
Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
Fairer than all the rest which there appear,
Though all their beauties joynd together were;
How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?
EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599),
FROM AN HYMN OF HEAVENLY BEAUTY, 1596

2. MAGNIFICAT

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded:
the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth:
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him:
throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy
hath holpen his servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed, for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.

LUKE 1: 46-55

3. NUNC DIMITTIS

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation;
which thou hast prepared:
before the face of all people;
to be a light to lighten the Gentiles:
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.

LUKE 2: 29-32

4. CHRIST IN THE CRADLE

Look, how he shakes for cold!
How pale his lips are grown!
Wherein his limbs to fold
Yet mantle has he none.
His pretty feet and hands
(Of late more pure and white
Than is the snow
That pains them so)
Have lost their candour quite.
His lips are blue
(Where roses grew),
He's frozen everywhere:
All th' heat he has Joseph, alas,
Gives in a groan: or Mary in a tear.
PATRICK CAREY (c. 1624-1657)

5. CHRIST IN THE GARDEN

Look, how he glows for heat!
What flames come from his eyes!
'Tis blood that he does sweat,
Blood his bright forehead dyes:
See, see! It trickles down:
Look, how it showers amain!
Through every pore
His blood runs o'er,

And empty leaves each vein.
His very heart
Burns in each part;
A fire his breast doth sear:
For all this flame,
To cool the same
He only breathes a sigh, and weeps a tear.
PATRICK CAREY

6. CHRIST IN HIS PASSION

What bruises do I see!
What hideous stripes are those!
Could any cruel be
Enough, to give such blows?
Look, how they bind his arms
And vex his soul with scorns,
Upon his hair
They make him wear
A crown of piercing thorns.
Through hands and feet
Sharp nails they beat:
And now the cross they rear:
Many look on;
But only John
Stands by to sigh, Mary to shed a tear.
Why did he shake for cold?

Why did he glow for heat?
Dissolve that frost he could,
He could call back that sweat.
Those bruises, stripes, bonds, taunts,
Those thorns, which thou didst see,
Those nails, that cross,
His own life's loss,
Why, oh, why suffered he?
'Twas for thy sake.
Thou, thou didst make Him all those torments bear:
If then his love
Do thy soul move,
Sigh out a groan, weep down a melting tear.
PATRICK CAREY

7. HYMN

Drop, drop, slow tears,
And bathe those beautiful feet
Which brought from heaven
The news and Prince of Peace;

Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
Sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye see sin,
but through my tears.
PHINEAS FLETCHER (1582–1650)

8. MAGNIFICAT

See track 2

9. NUNC DIMITTIS

See track 3

10. O PASTOR ANIMARUM

O pastor animarum et o prima vox
per quam omnes creati sumus,
nunc tibi, tibi placeat ut digneris nos
liberare de miseriis et languoribus nostris.
HILDEGARD OF BINGEN (1098–1179)

*O shepherd of our souls, O primal voice,
whose call created all of us,
now hear our plea to thee, to thee, and deign
to free us from our miseries and feebleness.*

11. MAGNIFICAT

See track 2

12. NUNC DIMITTIS

See track 3

13. O GOD, MAKE THE DOOR OF THIS HOUSE

O God, make the door of this house wide enough
to receive all who need human love and fellowship;
narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife.
Make its threshold smooth enough
to be no stumbling-block to children,
nor to straying feet, but rugged and strong enough
to turn back the tempter's power.
God make the door of this house
the gateway to thine eternal kingdom. Amen.
THOMAS KEN (1637–1711)

Choir of New College Oxford

The Choir of New College Oxford is firmly established as one of the most acclaimed British choral ensembles. Celebrated for its distinctive sound, it embodies the splendour of the English choral tradition. The choir frequently performs in prestigious venues worldwide, and its versatility is reflected in its diverse core repertoire, with a particular scholarly focus on Renaissance and Baroque music.

When William of Wykeham founded his 'New' College in 1379, a choral foundation was at its heart, and daily chapel services have been a central part of college life ever since. The choir comprises sixteen boy choristers and fourteen adult clerks; the latter a mixture of professional singers and undergraduate members of the college.

The Choir of New College is often to be heard in concert around the world, on broadcasts and recordings, as well as via regular webcasts. Touring is an important part of the choir's profile, and recent highlights have included singing for Pope Francis in the Sistine Chapel, Rome, concerts in Hungary and Normandy, and in spring 2023 concerts in the USA, culminating in New York.

The choir has performed with many of the UK's finest ensembles, including the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The English Concert, and more recently in performances of Bach and Handel with Instruments of Time & Truth. Bach is fundamental to the choir's year, with a

regular cantata programme and an annual performance of the St John Passion. In March 2022 the choir made a triumphant return to the concert platform, in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, with a performance of Handel's *Coronation Anthems* with the Choirs of Christ Church and Magdalen College.

The choir has an impressive discography of over 100 recordings, reflecting the diversity of its repertoire. Equally at home in Baroque and contemporary music, the choir has attracted stellar reviews for its distinctive sound and expressive interpretations. It was the first choral foundation to establish its own recording label, Novum, and has also recorded for Decca, Erato, Hyperion and Linn.



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Robert Quinney

director

Robert Quinney is Organist of New College, Oxford. In addition to the daily direction of New College's choir, he is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Music, University of Oxford. He also maintains a parallel career as a solo organist, and is a prolific recording artist: his albums of organ music by J. S. Bach, Elgar, Dupré, Wagner and Brahms have been widely praised. He made his debut at the Royal Festival Hall in 2017, returning in 2023 to give a recital of music by J. S. Bach.

Quinney read music at King's College, Cambridge, where he was organ scholar. After four years as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, he became Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey in 2004. While at the Abbey he performed on concert tours to the United States, Australia and Russia, and at several televised services, including the Marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. From 2013 he was Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral, before moving to New College in September 2014.

His role in Oxford enables a unique synergy between the latest scholarship and the academic traditions of the university; performance and research illuminate each other in the work of the Choir of New College. His particular research interests have borne fruit in regular performances of J. S. Bach's church music in the context of reconstructed liturgies; and he is committed to refreshing the choral repertory by commissioning new works.

Dónal McCann

organ

Originally from Belfast, Dónal McCann is the Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford. At New College, McCann is involved in all aspects of musical life, including the teaching and the training of the choristers. Before moving to New College to take up the post of Assistant Organist in 2020, he was an organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he read music, graduating with a double first. At King's, he accompanied the choir in daily chapel services, as well as in recordings, tours and broadcasts, including the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.

In addition to his work at New College, McCann maintains a busy freelance schedule, having given many recitals in the UK and abroad. Recent collaborations include with the Instruments of Time & Truth, Oxford Bach Soloists and appearing as a guest soloist with the Ulster Orchestra and Academy of Ancient Music. In 2022 he released his debut solo album, *Bach & Walther: Concerto Transcriptions*, on the New College organ.

Nick Pritchard

tenor

Nick Pritchard was a choral scholar at New College, Oxford, and studied with Russell Smythe at the Royal College of Music. He was an inaugural member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's 'Rising Stars' scheme (2017–19) and is a Samling artist. In 2017 he won the Whatsonstage Opera Poll award for Breakthrough Artist in UK Opera. Described as a 'Masterly Evangelist' in *The Guardian*, he has sung the role in Bach's St John and Matthew Passions around the world, and in the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestras' Grammy-nominated recording of Bach's St John Passion under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, released on Deutsche Gramophon.

On the concert platform he has performed with leading ensembles such as Concerto Köln, Les Talens Lyriques, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The English Concert, Early Opera Company, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and many others. He has worked under conductors including Edward Higginbottom, Laurence Cummings, Harry Bicket, John Butt, Jonathan Cohen, Christian Curnyn, Ryan Wigglesworth, Emmanuelle Haïm and Sir Andrés Schiff.

Operatic roles include Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Anfinomo (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), Henry Crawford (*Mansfield Park*) and Colonel Fairfax (*The Yeomen of the Guard*). He is a regular recitalist, performing at the Oxford Lieder Festival, Leeds Lieder and Wigmore Hall.

After graduating from Oxford University, **Paul Drayton** taught music (and a little maths) at New College Choir School. While there he created music for a children's staged version of *The Hobbit*, attended by J. R. R. Tolkien. A later BBC Radio 4 documentary told the story of this venture, the first ever staged *Hobbit* with music.

His love of the piano led him into a variety of genres – concertos with orchestra, chamber music, solo recitals, even jazz. As Director of Music for Duchy Opera he conducted many theatre works, including his own opera *The Hanging Oak*, based on a ghost story by M. R. James.

Drayton's *Passion as told by Mark the Evangelist* was performed in Truro Cathedral and also broadcast on Radio 3 by the BBC Singers. His choral arrangement of Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* was recorded by the Swedish Chamber Choir with the violinist Jennifer Pike. He has also enjoyed a long association with The King's Singers. His book, *Unheard Melodies*, a light-hearted guide to classical music for the non-specialist, is available from Amazon. His beginner's piano book (published by OUP) has sold 80,000 copies to date.

Caitlin Harrison is a British composer based in Oxford. Her works have been performed by ensembles including the Kreutzer Quartet, Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Singers, Trio Atem and the Choir of New College Oxford. She was shortlisted for the NCEM Young Composers Competition 2020, ERSO emerging composers competition 2020, Henfrey Composition Prize 2021 and was a composer for Adopt a Music Maker 2022. Harrison studied composition at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and the University of Oxford.

Deborah Pritchard is an award-winning British composer known for her concert works and synaesthesia. She won a British Composer Award for her solo violin piece *Inside Colour* in 2017 and her new violin concerto *Calandra* was premiered by Jennifer Pike and the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican in 2022. Her music has been performed worldwide by ensembles including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBC Singers and the Choir of New College Oxford. She has been broadcast by BBC Radio 3, Radio 4 and commercially released by NMC, Signum, Nimbus, BIS, Hyperion, Orchid Classics and Linn.

As a synaesthetic composer Pritchard's violin concerto *Wall of Water*, after the paintings by Maggi Hambling, was performed by Harriet Mackenzie and the English String Orchestra at the National Gallery in 2015, reviewed by *Gramophone* as a 'work that will take one's breath away'. She also painted a series of music maps for the London Sinfonietta, described in *The Times* as 'beautifully illustrated ... paying visual homage to those wonderful medieval maps of the world'. Choral works include *Benedicite* (2014) for choir and trumpet commissioned to celebrate the Tercentenary of Worcester College, Oxford and *EXODUS* (2018), performed by the BBC Singers. Pritchard studied for her MMus degree in composition at the Royal Academy of Music with Simon Bainbridge and was awarded her DPhil from Worcester College, Oxford, where she studied with Robert Saxton, now holding Associate Membership of The Faculty of Music, Oxford. She was made Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2019 and held the tenure of Visiting Research Fellow at Keble College, Oxford from 2022–2023, previously teaching composition tutorials for the University of Oxford from 2008–2022.

Toby Young is a composer and producer whose work explores influences ranging from plainchant to electronic dance music. His music has been performed by ensembles and orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Rambert Dance Company, Academy of Ancient Music, Fretwork, London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia and CHROMA.

Young has created soundtracks to a variety of TV and stage works, including BAFTA-nominated productions for HBO, Sky Arts and the BBC, and is currently the Music Director for Punchdrunk who specialize in immersive and site-specific theatre. In the pop world, Young has collaborated with pop and jazz artists including The Rolling Stones, Chase & Status, Duran Duran, Kano, Snow Ghosts, MOKO and Jacob Banks. He has written string, choral and orchestral arrangements for Ellie Goulding, The King's Singers, Tame Impala, Ilayaraja, London Symphony Orchestra, Mark Lettieri (Snarky Puppy) and Cassidy Janson (*Beautiful – The Carole King Musical*). Young is Professor of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.



Paul Drayton

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Catilin Harrison

© Joseph Crane



Nick Pritchard

© Nick James



Deborah Pritchard

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Toby Young

© Christian Kennett

Choir of New College Oxford

treble

Patrick Armstrong
Alexander Compton-Burnett
Toby Conway
Harry Davies⁹
Thomas Howarth⁹
Peter Kendall
Finnbar Lawrence
Monty Lawrence
Alexander Remoundos⁹
Didrik Tarras-Wahlberg¹²
George Walker
Jacob Whyte
Nahum Whyte
Benjamin Wilson
Ethan Zhang

alto

Jay Chitnavis⁸
Emily Fraser
Karol Jozwik
Stephen Taylor

tenor

Andrew Bennett
James Brown
Hamish Fraser
Nathanael Thomas-Atkin
Jonathan Venn⁸

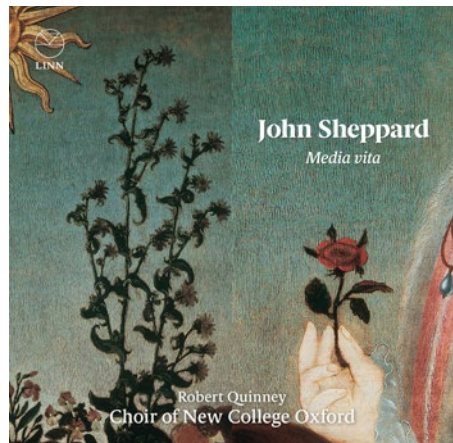
bass

James Andrews
Ben Davies
John Furse
Daniel Gilchrist
Dominic Grimshaw
John Johnston
Thomas Lowen
Theo Nisbett
Daniel Tate⁸

organ

Dónal McCann
James Andrews¹³

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