

C H O R A L
I N S P I R
A T I O N S

Sonoro

Michael Higgins piano

Neil Ferris conductor

Choral Inspirations

Sonoro
Michael Higgins *piano*
Neil Ferris *conductor*

About Sonoro:

'Outstandingly refreshing'
BBC Music Magazine

*'A rich, robust texture, abundant in
vibrant colour and undoubted excitement'*
The Guardian

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)		Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901)	
1. Beati quorum via	[3:36]	11. Abendlied	[2:57]
Janet Wheeler		Joanna Marsh (b. 1970)	
2. Beati quorum via	[4:20]	12. Evening Prayer	[4:11]
Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)		Total playing time	[42:18]
3. Locus iste	[2:34]		
Will Todd (b. 1970)			
4. Locus iste	[3:19]		
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)			
5. Bogoróditse Dévo, ráduisya	[2:29]		
Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980)			
6. Bogoróditse Dévo, ráduisya	[3:32]		
Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)			
7. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen	[4:50]		
Russell Hepplewhite (b. 1982)			
8. How lovely are thy dwellings fair	[4:02]		
Thomas Tallis (1505–1585)			
9. If ye love me	[1:56]		
James McCarthy (b. 1979)			
10. If ye love me	[4:23]		



Choral Inspirations

For its latest project, *Choral Inspirations*, Sonoro has commissioned six composers to each write a work inspired by a 'choral classic'. The composers are Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Russell Hepplewhite, Joanna Marsh, James McCarthy, Will Todd and Janet Wheeler.

Each new piece and its classic partner-piece has been recorded here, and released online as freely accessible music videos. Sonoro will also take all twelve pieces on tour, leading workshops hosted by choirs in Cardiff, Newcastle, Birmingham and London, with side-by-side performances in each city.

Artistic Directors Neil Ferris and Michael Higgins say, 'As well as introducing six new works into the choral repertoire, our aim is to encourage amateur and community choirs to have the confidence to sing more ambitious and contemporary music. The new commissions have all been written at a suitable level for amateur choirs, beautifully judged and without being simplistic. We are delighted with the pieces that have been written and are confident that they will offer fresh and positive additions to the choral repertory.'

This project has been funded by the generosity and support of: Arts Council England, the RVW Trust, Hinrichsen Foundation, individual sponsors for each commission, and friends and supporters through a crowdfunding campaign.

Sonoro

Sonoro, founded in 2016 by Neil Ferris and Michael Higgins, has attracted attention for its warm tone, rich blend of colours and vibrancy in performance. 'Sonoro' in Italian means 'sonorous, voices that are rich and full' and Sonoro lives up to that name as a choir with a distinctive and perfectly blended sound.

Sonoro have performed at major national and international festivals and venues including the London Chamber Music Society series at Kings Place, the Wimbledon International Music Festival, the St Magnus International Festival, Orkney and in St Gallen, Switzerland.

Sonoro's debut album *Passion and Polyphony* featuring works of James MacMillan and Frank Martin was released in March 2018 to critical acclaim. Their recent album *Christmas with Sonoro* was named *BBC Music Magazine's* 2018 'Christmas Choice'.

Neil Ferris (conductor)

Neil Ferris is Chorus Director of the BBC Symphony Chorus, Artistic Director of Sonoro and Music Director of Wimbledon Choral Society. He has worked with the

National Youth Choir of Great Britain, the National Youth Choir of Wales, London Symphony Chorus and the BBC Singers. He has conducted the London Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Orchestra of the Swan, the orchestra of Welsh National Opera and Florilegium. Neil is recognised as one of the UK's leading teachers of choral conducting and has led masterclasses in the UK, USA, Ireland, and Denmark.

Michael Higgins

Michael Higgins is a pianist, composer and arranger, and is Artistic Director of Sonoro. With a special interest in choral accompaniment, Michael is in demand with some of the leading choirs in the country and works with the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, London Voices, and the BBC Singers. As a composer and arranger he has written for Farnham Youth Choir, the National Children's Choir of Great Britain, as well as music for television, corporate films and commercials. Many of his works are published by the Royal School of Church Music, Novello, and Oxford University Press. Michael studied piano at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, the Royal Academy of Music, London, and at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest.

Sonoro

Soprano

Jenny Bacon
Nina Bennet
Helen Semple
Joanna Tomlinson

Alto

Lucy Goddard
Carris Jones
Ruth Kiang
Martha McLorinan

Tenor

Dan Bartlette
Tom Herford
Greg Tassell
Gareth Treseder

Bass

James Birchall
Colin Campbell
Olly Hunt
Geoff Williams

Texts & Translations

1. & 2. **Beati quorum via**
Beati quorum via integra est,
qui ambulans in lege Domini.

*Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord.*

Psalm 119:1

3. & 4. **Locus iste**
Locus iste a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum,
irreprehensibilis est.

*This place was made by God,
a priceless mystery;
it is without reproach.*

Gradual at Mass for the dedication of a church

5. & 6. **Bogoroditse Devo, raduisya**
Bogoróditse Dévo, raduisya,
Blagodátnaya Mariye, Góspod s Toboyu.
Blagoslovénna Ty v zhenákH,
i blagoslovén plod chréva Tvoyegó,
yako Spása rodilá yesí dush náshikh.

*Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos,
Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the saviour of our souls.*

Liturgy of Vespers

7. **Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen**

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen,
Herr Zebaoth!
Meine Seele verlangt
und sehnet sich nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn;
mein Leib und Seele freuen sich
in dem lebendigen Gott.
Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,
die loben dich immerdar.
Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen!

Psalm 84:1–2

8. **How lovely are thy dwellings fair**

How lovely are thy dwellings fair,
O Lord of Hosts.
My soul ever longeth
yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and flesh cry out for the living God.
Blest are they that in thy house are dwelling.
They ever praise thee, ever more!

Psalm 84:1–2

9. & 10. **If ye love me**

If ye love me, keep my commandments.
And I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another comforter,
that he may 'bide with you forever;
Even the spirit of truth.

John 14:15–17

11. **Abendlied**

Blieb' bei uns, denn es will Abend warden;
Und der Tag hat sich geneiget, sich geneiget,
O bleib' bei uns, denn es will Abend earden.

*Bide with us, for evening shadows darken,
And the day will soon be over, soon be over,
O bide with us, for evening shadows darken.*

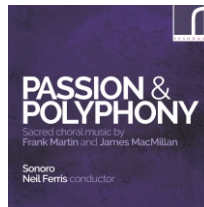
Luke 24:29

12. **Evening Prayer**

The day is gone, and I give thee thanks, O Lord.
Evening is at hand, make it bright unto us.
As day has its evening so also has life;
make it bright unto us.
Cast me not away in the time of age;
forsake me not when my strength faileth me.
Abide with me, Lord, for it is toward evening,
and the day is far spent of this fretful life.
Let thy strength be made perfect in my weakness.

Preces Privatae, Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626)

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Frank Martin & James MacMillan
Sonoro; Neil Ferris (conductor)
RES10208

*'[...] the choral sound is robust and the delivery
highly charged'*
Gramophone



Christmas with Sonoro
Sonoro; Michael Higgins (organ);
Neil Ferris (conductor)
RES10226

*'There's stillness and great joy in this standout
festive offering from London's young choir'*
BBC Music Magazine (5 stars,
Christmas Choice 2018)

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Cover design: Bruno Lasnier (www.brunolasnier.com)

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