

Philip Wilby

An English Passion according to Saint Matthew

Mhairi Lawson soprano
Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano
Thomas Elwin tenor
Seán Boylan baritone
Ben McAteer baritone
David Leigh chamber organ
Jack Wilson organ

Belfast Cathedral Choir
Matthew Owens conductor



Philip Wilby (b.1949)

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to Saint Matthew

Mhairi Lawson *soprano*^{6, 8, 10, 14, 15}

Helen Charlston *mezzo-soprano*^{6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16}

Thomas Elwin *tenor, Jesus*^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15}

Seán Boylan *baritone, Judas & Pilate*^{6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16}

Ben McAteer *baritone, Peter*^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16}

Jack Wilson *organ*

David Leigh *chamber organ*

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About Belfast Cathedral Choir:

*'An ensemble of high quality [...] The choir's tonal
purity and impeccable tuning are a pleasure'*

BBC Music Magazine

'[This] could well be the finest all-adult standing choir of its kind anywhere'

Gramophone

Philip Wilby (b.1949)

1. **God's Grandeur** [4:37]

The Knaresborough Service

2. Magnificat [5:54]

3. Nunc dimittis [3:55]

**An English Passion according to
Saint Matthew**

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Total playing time [67:44]

All world premiere recordings, made in the presence of the composer



Recording in Belfast Cathedral

We made this recording of some of my choral works, including *An English Passion according to Saint Matthew*, in the summer of 2021, with a small and expert group of socially distanced singers and organists.

The Passion setting takes, as its framework, five of the folksong hymns collected from Vaughan Williams's *English Hymnal*, arranged in a chiasmic design, and providing worshippers with welcome involvement in the narrative. Canon Richard Cooper, who prepared the text for my music, summed up Vaughan Williams's mighty example in these words: 'Rowan Williams said of Vaughan Williams that, although he was a self-professed agnostic, we can say that he was at least a Christian Agnostic, drawn back time and again to the great Christian tradition in which he had been brought up.'

As events have turned out, the recording of *An English Passion* falls into a celebration of the 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams.

As can be readily imagined in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, the experience was beset by logistical issues, presenting problems of travel, accommodation, musical preparation, and venue availability. That it happened at all is surprising. That it has

proved to be such a fine record of challenging times is miraculous, and a credit to the energy and expertise of all concerned.

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Philip Wilby: An English Passion

When Philip Wilby was a violinist in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, he attended classes by Herbert Howells which inspired his interest in composition. After graduating from Keble College, Oxford, he worked as a professional violinist before becoming Principal Lecturer (later Professor) in Composition at Leeds University. Though he has written for a wide variety of performing forces, including symphonic works, he has concentrated particularly on two areas: brass band music, and the Christian liturgy, for which he has composed extensively. The church music on the present disc was all composed between 2014 and 2019.

The earliest of the three works is the **Knaresborough Service**, commissioned by the Parish Church of St John the Baptist in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, and dedicated to Richard Darke, its Director of Music for many years. While always fresh and individual, Wilby's setting of the 'Magnificat' and 'Nunc dimittis' also has a

clear ancestry in the service music of previous British composers, particularly the liturgical compositions of his early mentor, Howells. The opening of the 'Magnificat' is muscular and energetic, giving way to a more serene section led off by three solo sopranos ('He hath filled the hungry with good things'). Finally, the music from the start is reworked for the closing Doxology ('Glory be to the Father'), and a triumphal 'Amen', ending on a chord of E major. The 'Nunc dimittis' is broader, starting with an idea introduced by tenors and basses, then altos, before the sopranos enter on 'For mine eyes have seen thy salvation'. In general, the music is subdued until the Doxology returns, bringing the service to a strong and confident close.

Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem **God's Grandeur** was written in 1877 and first published in 1895, six years after the poet's death. Since then, it has attracted numerous musical settings by the likes of Samuel Barber, Arthur Bliss, Peter Dickinson, Kenneth Leighton, Edmund Rubbra, and Martin Shaw. Philip Wilby joined this distinguished company in 2017 with his anthem for mixed voices and organ, composed 'for the Choir of Ripon Grammar School and their conductor Edward Seymour.' The organ part includes a number of fanfare-like

motifs (one of them marked 'heraldic') which energise the musical argument throughout, even in quieter passages such as the central section for three solo sopranos ('And for all this nature is never spent'). After a radiant climactic moment on the words 'Bright wings', the anthem ends softly.

Wilby composed **An English Passion according to Saint Matthew** in 2018, for Matthew Owens and the choir of Wells Cathedral. A clue to one important musical characteristic of the work can be found in the composer's note: 'The congregational hymns are taken from the collection of English tunes, published by Vaughan Williams in his *English Hymnal* of 1906.' These are threaded throughout the Passion narrative: after the opening Collect, the first Processional Hymn ('All glory, laud and honour') is set to the tune *Kingsfold* (also known as *Dives and Lazarus*). Hymn Two is a verse of the tune Vaughan Williams published in 1909 as 'This is the truth sent from above', a modal folk tune from Herefordshire, and this takes on a much greater musical significance in the scenes that follow. Hymn Three is the tune known as *King's Lynn*, collected by Vaughan Williams in 1905 from a fisherman in North Street, King's Lynn (usually sung to G.K. Chesterton's words, 'O God of earth and altar', but here set to 'The silent Saviour

stands alone'). Hymn Four, 'When I survey the wondrous cross', for choir alone, uses a variant of the tune 'O Waly, Waly' ('The water is wide'), published by Cecil Sharp as No. 66 of his *Folk Songs of Somerset* (1906); here it is given an elaborate *a cappella* harmonisation. The last of the congregational hymns, 'It is a thing most wonderful', is set to the tune Vaughan Williams called *Herongate*, named after the village in Essex where he collected it in 1903 and which he used to set the same words as No. 597 in the *English Hymnal*. These hymns, with their timeless melodies, anchor Wilby's *Passion* in a very English setting, and also serve as collective reference points for the congregation, reflecting on particular moments in the narrative. Wilby is clear that his setting needs participation from those present at live performances, and makes the unduly modest claim that it is 'designed to involve rather than to impress.'

The text was derived from St Matthew's Gospel by Richard Cooper, Canon Emeritus of Ripon Cathedral and a former chaplain to the Queen. The words and Wilby's music both make dramatic use of the silences inherent in the Gospel text – allowing time at several points for contemplation and reaction. The words of Jesus are given to the tenor soloist, while those of the

Evangelist are distributed among the other voices, and the choir adds its weight and colour throughout. Perhaps the most overtly theatrical passage comes in the 'Barabbas' scene (track 13), at the end of Part One. Here the dialogue between soloists, choir, and organ is marked by increasing urgency until stark reality hits – and the music is pared back to bare essentials – as Pilate yields to the wishes of the crowd, washes his hands of the situation, and has Christ taken away to be crucified. After the austerity of this scene, Part Two opens with the crowd gathered at Golgotha, but instead of continuing the agitated atmosphere of the scene with Barabbas, the music now has a more inward-looking air of tragedy, the eight-part choral harmonies at their richest, until the pitches converge on a single note (D) and Jesus breathes his last, followed by silence. The consoling words of 'When I survey the wondrous cross' are brutally interrupted by the organ and the 'Apotheosis' leads to one of the work's climactic utterances, 'This man was God's son'. An organ interlude precedes the closing hymn, 'It is a thing most wonderful', its fourth verse unaccompanied, the sixth crowned by a radiant descant, and a coda played on the full organ. This may seem a surprising way to end a Passion, but after exploring and reflecting on the calamity

and suffering of the Crucifixion story, Wilby's aim at the close is surely to affirm the faith of Christians today.

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Texts

1. **God's Grandeur**

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844–89)

The Knaresborough Service

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
hand-maiden.
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, vv 46–55 and Gloria Patri

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, vv 29–32 and Gloria Patri

An English Passion according to Saint Matthew

4. Collect for Palm Sunday
Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy
tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy
Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon
him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the
cross, that all mankind should follow the
example of his great humility: Mercifully
grant, that we may both follow the example
of his patience, and also be made partakers

of his resurrection; through the same Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Book of Common Prayer

Part One

5. Processional Hymn
All glory, laud and honour
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.
Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name cometh
The King and blessed one.

In vain the prophets' voices cry
Their message to God's own,
But now they look for one whose sword
May claim an earthly throne.
Come Lord of Life, come to your throne,
Your reign on earth begin,
O Son of Man, Messiah, Lord,
Come save us all from sin.

The Living Word, the Christ will show
What love and truth can be.
In Nazareth, in Galilee,
And soon on Calvary.
The messenger the message is,
In Christ are both made one.
The Father's Love revealed to us
In him, His only Son.

O come, O come Emmanuel,
of David's line foretold.
O come, O Lord, and here fulfill
The prophecies of old.
Your Holy Spirit dwells in us
And tells us of our worth,

Your Kingdom come, your will be done
In Heaven and on Earth.

*Richard Cooper (b.1946), with the refrain by
St Theodulph of Orleans (d.821);
translated J.M. Neale (1818–66)*

6. The Upper Room

Narrator: One of the twelve, who was called
Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests
and said,

Judas: What will you give me if I betray him
to you?

Narrator: They paid him thirty pieces of silver,
and from that moment he began to look for
an opportunity to betray him. On the first day
of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to
Jesus, saying,

Disciples: Where do you want us to make the
preparations for you to eat the Passover?

Narrator: Jesus said,

Jesus: Go into the city to a certain man and
say to him, 'The Teacher says, my time is near;
I will keep the Passover at your house.'

Narrator: So the disciples did as Jesus had
directed them and they prepared the Passover
meal. When it was evening, he took his place
with the twelve, and while they were eating,
he said,

Jesus: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray
me.

Narrator: And they became greatly distressed
and began to say to him one after another,

Disciples: Surely not I, Lord?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl
with me will betray me, the Son of Man goes as it
is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son
of Man is betrayed, it would have been better for that
one not to have been born.

Narrator: Judas, who betrayed him, said,

Judas: Surely, not I, Rabbi?

Narrator: Jesus replied,

Jesus: You have said so.

Narrator: While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of
bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the
disciples, and said,

Jesus: Take, eat, this is my body.

Narrator: Then he took a cup and, after giving thanks,
he gave it to them, saying,

Jesus: Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the
covenant, which is poured out for many for the
forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of
this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new
with you in my Father's Kingdom.

Hymn 2

The bread and wine that Jesus gives
Is love that binds us all to him;
Judas was there,
And so it is,

[Refrain] Your faithless friend can walk with you.

7. Denial

Narrator: When they had sung the hymn, they went out

to the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to them,

Jesus: You will all become deserters because of me this
night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the
sheep of his flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised
up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Narrator: Peter said to him,

Peter: Though all become deserters because of you,
I will never desert you!

Narrator: Jesus said to him,

Jesus: Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock
crows, you will deny me three times.

Narrator: Peter said to him,

Peter: Even though I must die with you, I will not deny
you.

Narrator: And so said all the disciples.

I too am Peter when courage fails,
my fear kills loyalty and trust.
Christ stands alone, and so it is

All: Your faithless friend can walk with you.

8. Gethsemane and the Arrest

Narrator: Then Jesus went with them to a place called
Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples,

Jesus: Sit here while I go over there and pray.
I am deeply grieved, even unto death; remain here,
and stay awake with me.

My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me;
yet not what I want but what you want.

Narrator: Then he came to the disciples and found them
sleeping, and he said to Peter,

Jesus: So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?
Stay awake and pray, that you may not come into the
time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is
weak.

Narrator: Again he went away for the second time and
prayed,

Jesus: My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it,
Your will be done.

Narrator: Again he came and found them sleeping for
their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went
away, and prayed for the third time, saying the same
words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,

Jesus: Are you still sleeping, and taking your rest? See, the
hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the
hands of sinners,

Narrator: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the
twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords
and clubs. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

Judas: The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.

Narrator: At once he came up to Jesus and said,

Judas: Greetings, Rabbi!

Narrator: and kissed him. Jesus said to him,

Jesus: Friend, do what you are here to do.

Narrator: Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and
arrested him. Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

And love is not killed by the sword,
but by a kiss the coward gives.
Forgive me Lord. And so it is,

All: your faithless friend can walk with you.

9. Before Caiaphas

Narrator: Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the High Priest, but Peter was following him at a distance. Now the chief Priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death.

Witnesses: This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'

Narrator: The High Priest stood up and said,

High Priest: Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?

Narrator: But Jesus was silent.

The messenger the message is.
It's love not law he comes to give,
But law is safe, and so it is,

All: Your faithless friend can walk with you.

10. Peter's Denial

Narrator: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said,

Servant-girl One: You also were with Jesus the Galilean.

Narrator: But he denied it before all of them, saying,

Peter: I do not know what you are talking about.

Narrator: When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him and she said, to the bystanders,

Servant-girl Two: This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

Narrator: Again he denied it with an oath,

Peter: I do not know the man.

Narrator: After a while the bystanders came up and said

to Peter,

Crowd: Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.

Narrator: Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath,

Peter: I do not know the man!

Narrator: At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

Judas and Peter, betrayers both,
Regret and guilt is all they know.
I know it too. And so it is,

All: Your faithless friend can walk with you.

Narrator: Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him,

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews?

Narrator: Jesus said,

Jesus: You say so.

11. Before the Governor

Narrator: But when he was accused by the high priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him,

Pilate: Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?

Narrator: But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

12. Hymn 3

The silent Saviour stands alone
before the Governor's throne.
Close by his side his healing hands

lie still, their work now done.
Soon others will task them
and raise them up on high,
not now to bless the ones who ask,
but then to love and die.

For Love of us, the Saviour waits,
his stillness calls our name.
He bears our love and anger,
our need to fear and blame.
He answers all with silence
which offers us the way.
His captors sing of darkest night,
his love of brightest day.

Richard Cooper

13. Barabbas

Narrator: Now at the festival the Governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd: anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Whom do you want me to release for you? Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?

Narrator: For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him,

Pilate's Wife: Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.

Narrator: Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them,

Pilate: Which of the two do you want me to release to you?

Narrator: And they said,

Crowd: Barabbas!

Narrator: Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Then what should I do with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?

Narrator: All of them said,

Crowd: Let him be crucified!

Narrator: Then he asked,

Pilate: Why? What evil has he done?

Narrator: But they shouted all the more,

Crowd: Let him be crucified!

Narrator: So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning; he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying,

Pilate: I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.

Narrator: So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Part Two

14. Golgotha

Narrator: And they came to a place called Golgotha, which means the Place of a Skull. They offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it, and when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' Then two bandits were crucified with him; one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,

Crowd: You who would destroy the Temple, and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Narrator: The chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders were mocking him, and saying,

Crowd: He saved others: he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now and we will believe in him. He trusts in God? Let God deliver him now, if he wants to for he said, 'I am God's Son!'

Narrator: The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

Narrator: That is,

Jesus: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'

Narrator: When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,

Crowd: This man is calling for Elijah.

Narrator: At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said,

Crowd: Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

Narrator: Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

15. Hymn 4

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down,
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
it were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Narrator: At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

16. Apotheosis

Narrator: Now when the Centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said,

Crowd: Truly this Man was God's Son!

18. Recessional Hymn

It is a thing most wonderful,
almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven,
and die to save a child like me.

And yet I know that it is true:
he chose a poor and humble lot,
and wept and toiled and mourned and died
for love of those who loved him not.

I cannot tell how he could love
a child so weak and full of sin;
his love must be most wonderful,
if he could die my love to win.

I sometimes think about the Cross,
and shut my eyes and try to see
the cruel nails, and crown of thorns,
and Jesus crucified for me.

But even could I see him die,
I could but see a little part
of that great love which, like a fire,
is always burning in his heart.

And yet I want to love thee, Lord,
O light the flame within my heart,
and I will love thee more and more,
until I see thee as thou art.

William Walsham How (1823–97)

Philip Wilby (composer) was encouraged to take up composition by Herbert Howells. He studied at Keble College Oxford, and was made Professor of Composition at Leeds University in 2002. In 2008, he was granted a Dutch Government BUMA award for his innovative works for brass band, and in 2009 an honorary fellowship by the Royal School of Church Music. He is proud to have served as the musical associate at the Black Dyke Band for thirty years, with which he made his recent album *Pilgrim's Progress*.

His recent recordings include several discs of choral music including *The Holy Face*, composed for the Halifax Choral Society, *A Brontë Mass* with the London Bach Choir, and *Heaven in Ordinarie* with Matthew Owens and the Exon Singers. With this recording, *An English Passion* represents the second in a trilogy of compositions marking the anniversary celebrations for Vaughan Williams's 150th birthday in 2022.

Irish baritone **Seán Boylan** studied on the Opera Course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Recent and upcoming operatic engagements include title role *Don Giovanni* (Nevill Holt Opera), Tarquinius *The Rape of Lucretia* (Kammerakademie Potsdam), Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* (Garsington Opera), and Moralès *Carmen* (Irish National Opera);

recent concert highlights include Handel's *Messiah* (Nevill Holt Opera), Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (Deutscher Chor London), and recitals in the UK, Ireland, and the USA.

Helen Charlston (mezzo soprano) joined Le Jardin des Voix academy with Les Arts Florissants in 2021, and the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme, and also became winner of the Ferrier Loveday Song Prize in the Kathleen Ferrier Awards. Recent and upcoming concert highlights include Bach's *Weihnachtoratorium* with Casa da Musica, *Judas Maccabaeus* with the RIAS Kammerchor, a worldwide tour of Handel's *Messiah* with the Seattle Symphony, the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and solo recitals at York Early Music Festival, London Handel Festival, Händel-festspiele Halle, Korčula Baroque Festival, Leicester International Music Festival, and Fitzrovia Festival.

Thomas Elwin (tenor) studied at the Royal Academy of Music, the Solti Accademia Bel Canto, and the Verbier Academy, and was a member of the opera studio at Oper Stuttgart. Recent and future engagements include Ferrando for Staatstheater Stuttgart and English Touring Opera (ETO), Don Ottavio for English National Opera, Jacquino for the Landestheater Bregenz, Rodolfo for ETO



Lloyd Smith Photography

Mhairi Lawson



Ben McKee

Helen Charlston



Thomas Elwin



Bertie Watson

Seán Boylan



Raphaëlle Photography

Ben McAteer

and Sam Kaplan for Oper Köln.

In concert he performs extensively as a soloist across the UK and Europe performing repertoire including both Bach Passions, Handel's *Messiah*, Britten's *Serenade*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

Thomas has an extensive recital repertoire and has appeared at the Oxford Lieder Festival, Song in the City, and the London Song Festival.

Soprano **Mhairi Lawson's** recent and future highlights include performances of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* and *King Arthur* with the Gabrieli Consort, *Purcell Songes & Ayres* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Dunedin Consort, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Diane/Daphne in Charpentier's *Acteon* with the Early Opera Company, Haydn's *The Creation* with the Arctic Philharmonic, and regular residencies at the Carmel Bach Festival in the USA. Recital engagements include songs from the British folksong tradition and Lieder by Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Strauss, and Wolf, with appearances in the Edinburgh Festival, Newcastle and York Universities, and recordings for BBC Radio 3.

Northern Irish baritone, **Ben McAteer** is a former winner of Les Azuriales' Opera prize, the Guildhall School's English song prize and Northern Ireland Opera's inaugural Festival of Voice. Notable operatic roles include Falke *Die Fledermaus* and Goryanchikov *From the House of the Dead* (Welsh National Opera), Papageno *The Magic Flute* and Marullo *Rigoletto* (Northern Ireland Opera), Sharpless *Madama Butterfly* (Opera Holland Park), Earl of Mountarat *Iolanthe* (English National Opera), Count Almaviva *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Irish National Opera), Pangloss & Voltaire *Candide* (West Green Opera/Xi'an Symphony Orchestra), and James in the world premiere of *The Devil Inside* (Scottish Opera).

Born in Londonderry in 1998, organist **Jack Wilson** began his musical training as a chorister of the Cathedral Church of St Columba, Londonderry. He is a graduate of The Queen's University of Belfast and completed the MMus in Choral Studies at the University of Cambridge. Jack held the posts of Organ Scholar, Acting Assistant Organist, and most recently Assistant Director of Music Belfast Cathedral, where he was principal accompanist for all cathedral services, studying the organ with David Stevens and Matthew Owens. In September of 2021, he took up the position of Graduate Organ Scholar at Ely Cathedral.

David Leigh is the Organist of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, where, in addition to presiding at the Willis organ, he runs the Schola (Senior Girls' Choir). He is also musical director of the University of Dublin Choral Society, Culwick Choral and of chamber choir, The Gaudete Singers. He maintains a busy freelance career as an organ recitalist, choral and orchestral conductor, and keyboard player, and is currently Artistic Director of the Pipeworks Festival.

David was educated at Bolton School, Lancashire and Oxford University and is also a prize-winning Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. He moved to Dublin in 1997.

Belfast Cathedral Choir

Choral music has always played a significant and central role at Belfast Cathedral, since its consecration in 1904, when there was a cathedral choir of forty-eight voices (ladies, gentlemen, and twenty-four boy choristers). Since then, the choir has undergone various transformations, most latterly in the late summer of 2019, when it became an all-adult, professional vocal ensemble.

This 'new' cathedral choir brings together some of the finest singers in Northern

Ireland who lead the liturgy and worship of Belfast Cathedral, known locally as 'St Anne's'. Under the direction of Matthew Owens, who took up the post of Director of Music in September 2019, the choir has sung a wide and diverse range of works from the mediaeval period through to the present day, including world premiere performances of works by Judith Bingham, the late John Joubert, and Philip Stopford.

A number of world premiere performances of newly composed works for the *Cranmer Anthem Book* are scheduled in 2022, by Richard Allain, Luke Bedford, Michael Berkeley, Richard Causton, Naji Hakim, Gabriel Jackson, Philip Moore, and Philip Stopford. In addition, Howard Skempton began as Belfast Cathedral's first ever Composer-in-Association, in September 2021.

Under Owens the cathedral choir has broadcast (live and recorded) on both BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Ulster. The choir records exclusively for Resonus Classics.



Matthew Owens (conductor)

Matthew Owens became Director of Music at Belfast Cathedral in September 2019 where he leads the fully professional, all adult choir of Northern Ireland's national cathedral. Later in 2019 he founded the Ulster Consort, a new professional vocal and instrumental ensemble for Northern Ireland. Previously, he had been Organist and Master of the Music at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh (1999–2004), and Organist and Master of the Choristers at Wells Cathedral (2005–2019). Under his leadership, Wells Cathedral Choir was named by an international jury for *Gramophone* as the best choir in the world with children, and the sixth greatest overall. Matthew served as President of the Cathedral Organists' Association (2010–2013); he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians in 2012; and in 2017 he was made a Prebendary (Canon) of Wells Cathedral 'for outstanding service' to the Diocese and the Cathedral. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2020.

Matthew was educated at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester; The Queen's College, Oxford; the Royal Northern College of Music; and the Amsterdam Conservatorium. Studying with Gordon Stewart, Margaret Phillips, and Jacques van Oortmerssen, he won all the

major prizes in the diplomas of the Royal College of Organists and the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

He has guest conducted, among others, the London Mozart Players, English Symphony Orchestra, Southern Sinfonia, Scottish Ensemble, Nash Ensemble, Brook Street Band, and the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra. As a conductor he has made over thirty albums with major labels, and now records exclusively for the award-winning label, Resonus Classics. Matthew has directed choral workshops and summer schools throughout the UK and abroad including Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and the USA.

He has championed new music, particularly of British composers, conducting over 200 world premieres, including works by leading composers ranging from Jools Holland to Sir James MacMillan, and John Rutter to Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. He is Director of the *Cranmer Anthem Book* (launched in 2017); a project that will set all eighty-eight Collects from the *Book of Common Prayer* to music, by some of the world's finest composers. As a composer himself, Matthew is published by Oxford University Press, Novello, and the Royal School of Church Music.

Belfast Cathedral Choir

Soprano

Lynda Barrett (Servant-girl One) ^{1, 2, 4, 10}

Ali Darragh (Servant-girl Two) ^{1, 2, 4, 10}

Susie Hunter

Susan Shepherd (Pilate's Wife) ^{1, 2, 13}

Alto

Jenny Bourke

India Chapman Webb

Tania Murphy

Elspeth Orr ²

Tenor

Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard (guest singer)

Caolan Keaveney ⁴

Owen Lucas ²

Matthew Quinn

Bass

Ethan Darby

Ryan Garnham (High Priest) ⁹

Adam Reaney ²

Samuel Quartermaine Smith

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