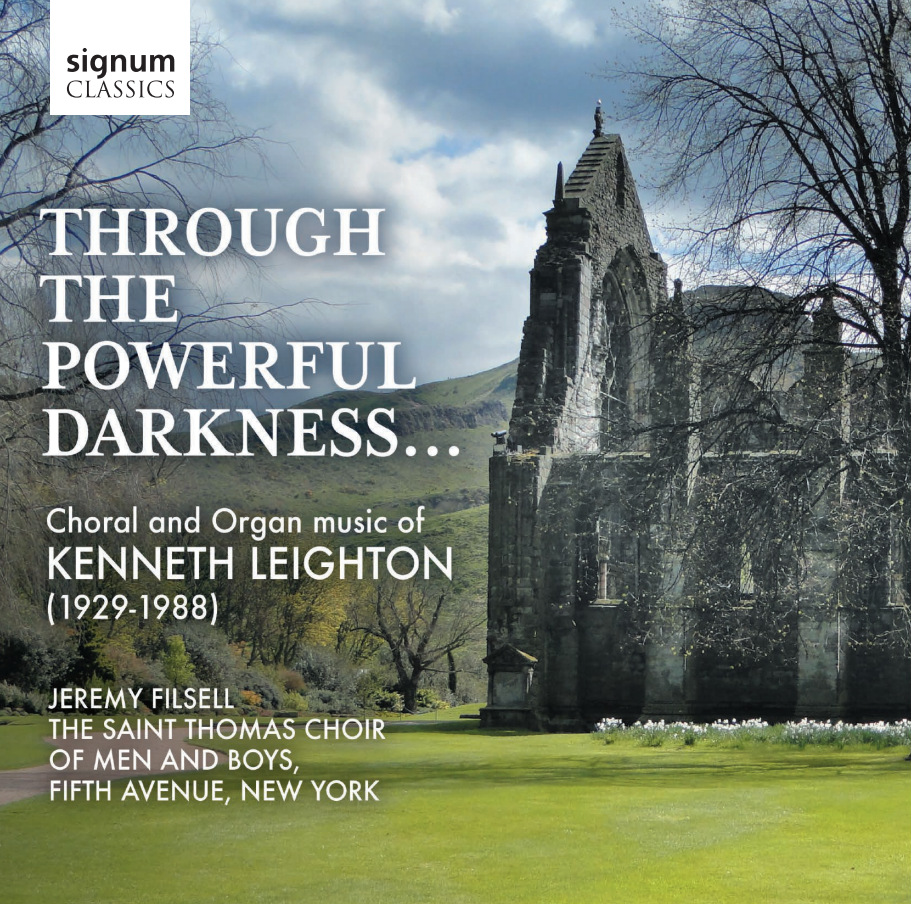




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CLASSICS

THROUGH THE POWERFUL DARKNESS...

Choral and Organ music of
KENNETH LEIGHTON
(1929-1988)

JEREMY FILSELL
THE SAINT THOMAS CHOIR
OF MEN AND BOYS,
FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

THROUGH THE POWERFUL DARKNESS...

CHORAL AND ORGAN MUSIC OF KENNETH LEIGHTON (1929-1988)

CD1

Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense

[1] Magnificat [5.14]

[2] Nunc Dimittis [3.37]

[3] **Columba Mea Op. 78: Set me as a seal** [3.21]

Soloists: John Ramseyer, Edric Baty

[4] **O God enfold me in the sun** [3.55]

Missa Christi

[5] Kyrie [2.46]

Soloists: Joshua Shin, Daniel Castellanos

[6] Gloria [3.41]

[7] Sanctus [0.56]

[8] Benedictus [1.38]

Soloists: Arthur Stowe, Biraj Barkakarty,
Alex Longnecker, Benjamin Howard

[9] Agnus Dei [3.22]

Soloist: Jayden Hwang

[10] **Adventante Deo** [6.27]

[11] **Of a Rose is all my song** [7.26]

Soloist: Jacob Hwang

Three Psalms Op. 54

[12] Like as the hart [5.44]

[13] The Lord is my shepherd [4.40]

[14] O Sing unto the Lord [4.08]

A Sequence for All Saints Op. 75

[15] Introit [3.54]

[16] Gradual [3.56]

Soloist: Brian Mummert

[17] Offertory [2.36]

[18] Communion [6.17]

Soloist: Benjamin Howard

[19] **Finale** [5.08]

Total timings: [1.18.50]

CD2

[1] **Alleluia, Amen** [7.49]

Soloist: Benjamin Howard

[2] **Festival Fanfare *** [6.13]

Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40

[3] Kyrie [2.22]

[4] Gloria [4.52]

Soloists: Bakore Camara, Tomas Cruz, Mike Williams

Missa de Gloria Op. 82 *

[5] Kyrie [3.44]

[6] Gloria [10.28]

Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40

[7] Credo [4.57]

Missa de Gloria Op. 82 *

[8] Credo [6.58]

Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40

[9] Sanctus [1.44]

[10] Benedictus [2.18]

Missa de Gloria Op. 82 *

[11] Sanctus [3.24]

[12] Benedictus [2.16]

[13] Agnus Dei [6.44]

Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40

[14] Agnus Dei [3.26]

Missa de Gloria Op. 82 *

[15] **Ite Missa est** [5.42]

* Jeremy Filsell, organ

Total timings: [1.13.01]

THE SAINT THOMAS CHOIR OF MEN AND BOYS
JEREMY FILSELL

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“All my music, instrumental as well as vocal, is lyrical, and that is due to my upbringing as a chorister. My whole background is choral church music – the deep and exciting experiences of music that I had were in Palestrina and the Messiah ... I find in religious-mystical-visionary ideas the most exciting stimuli for composition ... some sort of spiritual attitude is behind most of my work.”
Kenneth Leighton (Musical Times, 1989)

Born in Yorkshire, Kenneth Leighton’s musical training began in the choir stalls of Holy Trinity Church, Wakefield. Although a child of innate musical talent, his family background made the affording of a formal musical education a challenge. Nevertheless, at the age of 9, he was offered a choristership at Wakefield Cathedral where, along with singing daily choral services, he received a strong musical formation. Wakefield was a ‘High-Church’ English cathedral, and Leighton was exposed to both Victoriana and an eclectic repertoire of earlier sacred music which included Sarum chant and a high volume of English and continental polyphony. As is indicated above, he attributed his later success as a composer to early musical experiences at the cathedral.

At Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School, Wakefield, Leighton broadened his musical knowledge and

was encouraged to dabble in composition by teachers who had noted his emergent talent. He thus penned a significant number of pieces before going up to Queen’s College, Oxford, to read Classics. During undergraduate years, Leighton’s musical talents were noticed by the then organist of Magdalen College, Bernard Rose, who took on the young Leighton as a private student, tutoring him through the Bachelor of Music course. Taking *two* sets of Final Examinations, Leighton graduated from Oxford with the highest marks in both Classics and Music in 1951. Rose had introduced him to Finzi in 1949 whilst a student, and Finzi became a good and supportive friend, helping to secure a number of early Leighton performances. Finzi also introduced him to Vaughan Williams, yet on leaving University, Leighton was already distancing himself from a distinctive and perhaps pastorally-directed English musical tradition.

Leighton was awarded a Mendelssohn Scholarship in 1951 (when any reputation he had would have rested principally on the *Symphony for Strings* (1949), and some early piano pieces), providing funds permitting travel to Rome to study with the influential modernist Italian composer Goffredo Petrassi. According to Leighton’s contemporary Peter Maxwell Davies, Petrassi was an exacting

tutor who taught principally by questioning and interrogating students on the musical logic of their compositions. Whilst relatively little is known about Leighton’s year in Rome, he plainly got on well with Petrassi, for they remained in touch for several years thereafter. He developed there a keen interest in the music of Dallapiccola, and indeed in the music of the formative Second Viennese School, preparing a lecture on



© Robert and Angela Leighton

dodecaphonic music (*“a subject that interests me greatly”* – he wrote to his mother in January 1953) during which he had planned to play a piece or two of Schoenberg.

On return from Italy, Leighton enjoyed a burgeoning reputation, with Leopold Stokowski directing the premiere of *Primavera Romana* (1951), and Jacqueline du Pré appearing as a soloist in a performance (1965) of *Veris Gratia* (conducted by Finzi’s son, Christopher). Leighton came to hold a succession of academic posts from this time onwards, most notably at Worcester College, Oxford, the University of Leeds, and then at the University of Edinburgh (close to the northern landscapes which he loved), where he was Reid Professor of Music between 1970 and 1988. Despite the administrative burden of such roles, Leighton adored teaching, and whilst he found time to compose a significant corpus of music before his untimely death at the age of 58, this was a time when he deserved to be in the prime of artistic life. As with many composers who have left us prematurely, one wonders what music might have appeared in the years of dotage, particularly as there is a striking maturity to Leighton’s late voice (*Earth, sweet earth* Op. 94, and the Four Romantic Pieces for piano Op. 95).

Leighton's daughter Angela (a noted academic and Professor of English Literature at Cambridge) wrote movingly of her father's last days in her memoir *Spills* (Carcanet Press 2016). In it she refers to a late glimpse of religious sensibility;

By the time [his throat cancer] was diagnosed in spring 1988, there were only months to live. During those months he finished what he was composing, put his manuscripts – more than a hundred opus numbers – in order, and maintained a silence about what he was feeling. In those hard months, first in the hospice and finally at home again, I talked to him mostly about poetry: the poets he loved and had set: Patrick Carey, Traherne, Donne, Herbert, Hopkins, in a lifetime of writing for the voice. His was a deeply literary sensibility, as I knew from having helped him find texts for his third symphony: Thomas Browne, Shelley, Barrett Browning – texts that became, in his hands, a touching reflection on what I myself had written. I now own his copy of my book on Elizabeth Barrett Browning, given to him only a couple of years before. There I had written about Aurora Leigh as the disinherited or orphaned daughter who wakes to a world of stones, all gravestones, after the death of her father. The only mark that Kenneth had made, under his name on the title page, was 'page 132 etc'—pointing precisely to those pages about the father's

death. Finding it after he died seemed to open a conversation across the stars—a conversation of uncanny premonition on his part, perhaps reproach, perhaps encouragement—which I could then only answer into thin air. The day before he died, I offered to read some of the psalms out loud. He nodded, and signalled 121: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' – the line he was fond of quoting when we walked together in the Highlands. I read first that one, then went on to another. But suddenly he waved his hand at me to stop. Enough, he croaked. Enough of that. It was a gesture full of the old defiant Kenneth – religious up to a point, as he was, naturally, but then impatient of things pious, churchy. He didn't want prayers; he wanted poetry. So I returned to Hopkins. It was he who constituted our last 'conversation', holding apart our two necessary, nearly unbearable silences—but also, in a sense, holding them together. And the next day, when he was too far away either to see or speak to me, I went on talking and reading to the ear that is, we are told, the very last of our senses to go. It has probably not quite gone from me, yet."

Over the course of his life, Kenneth Leighton developed a truly individual compositional style, which he described as one always being '*tempered by common sense*'. At its heart lies the distinctive 'logic' of counterpoint, first experienced as a

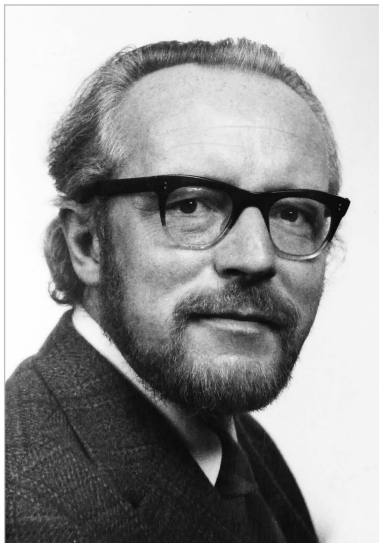
chorister at Wakefield Cathedral, and skillfully nurtured later by both Rose and Petrassi. An apt description of Leighton's compositional voice can be found in the epilogue of Adam Bink's monograph on his musical style:

Leighton is never reckless within his composition. Everything is measured, as well as having meaning and an appropriate place within a work, which also supports its sound structural policy...and an acute sense of musical economy. Nothing can ever be taken for granted or underestimated in Leighton's music. The careful sense of integrity and a reverence for form and traditional techniques within his musical language is poignant, but ultimate satisfaction within a work is rarely gained easily. Leighton's music is crammed with music material, invention, and eventually revelation. He presents a real and present challenge to any listener to process works that are conceived with the maximum intelligence and intellectual creativity that Leighton poured into every composition. (Binks, 2007)

Leighton's spirituality was perhaps unconventional, for although raised in the choirstalls of Wakefield Cathedral, he identified readily as agnostic, and was never a member of the church during his adult years. The irony

of his having arguably been 'pigeon-holed' as a composer of liturgical choral music may not be lost on us today, but such a musical profile was catalysed by the 1956 publication of *Lully, lulla*, composed whilst still at Oxford. This exquisite and charming carol motivated a continuous stream of commissions from churches and cathedrals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Although Leighton's liturgical music is harmonically gritty, its individuality, elegance, veracity of voice-leading, and uncompromising contrapuntal integrity makes it aurally compelling and spiritually poignant. Whilst his organ music is oft-played, his choral and organ music together represents but a small part of his compositional output, and the volume of piano, chamber, and orchestral works Leighton created is remarkable for its outstanding quality. A widespread absence of it on contemporary chamber and orchestral programs is to be mourned, and it may be no exaggeration to suggest that he is one of the most under-appreciated British composers of the twentieth century, a genuine renaissance of his lesser-known music being arguably overdue.



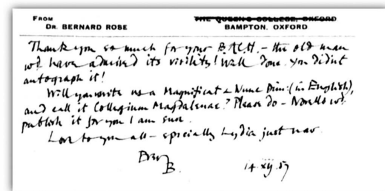
The fulcrum of this recording is formed by three of Leighton's eleven Mass settings (ten for choir, and the *Missa de Gloria* for solo organ), which are today perhaps largely neglected. Individual movements of the Organ Mass have received periodic exposure, but the two choral settings here are rarely heard. The *Missa Christi* (1988) was commissioned by Christ Church Cathedral,

Indianapolis in the US for the 150th anniversary of its consecration. Composed in the last year of Leighton's life, he wrote on the manuscript that it was 'my last setting of the mass'. Whilst this may have indicated something of a Mozart *Requiem*-esque presaging of his death from cancer in August that year, it is more likely that, having previously composed nine settings of the Mass Ordinary, he felt he had little more to say on the subject (Leighton did not assign this Mass an opus number). The *Missa Christi*, set to the American Prayer Book form of the text (and without a sung Creed), is a challenging work for executants, and its premiere on 12th June 1988 was, by all accounts, disappointing. A former Christ Church chorister recently told this writer that the setting was, owing to its difficulty, seldom performed, and had pejoratively been nicknamed 'Missa Screechy'. It is nonetheless a classic example of Leighton's mature style, with the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, and *Sanctus* all characterized by a rhythmic drive, customary contrapuntal veracity, and a harmonic insistence, perhaps with healthy spiritual irony, on the *diabulos in musica* (augmented fourth). The *Benedictus* opens with an almost unmeasured baritone solo leading into an undulating section of imitation, resolving with a seductive, beautiful *pianissimo* 'Hosanna' – one contrasting starkly with that of the preceding *Sanctus*. The *Agnus*

Dei, still marked by the *diabulos in musica*, is luxuriously contrapuntal with a dynamic build-up ending with a lyrical cry for peace. A jarring *sforzando* chord in the organ part then resolves to another augmented fourth-inflected dissonance to end Leighton's final Eucharistic testament. Did this represent musically for Leighton, a late life skirmish betwixt heaven and hell?

In many English cathedrals, Leighton's first setting of evening canticles, *Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense*, is well-known. They were commissioned in December 1957 by Leighton's undergraduate tutor Bernard Rose, Organist of Magdalen College, Oxford, and it is unclear as to when the work was completed and premiered. Apocryphally, Dudley Moore (Magdalen's then-organ scholar, and later a renowned satirist and actor) was the organist for the first performance. The *Magnificat* is a contrapuntal *tour-de-force* with sections of text broken up by organ interludes, and as is common in many evening canticle settings, the *Gloria Patri* forms a recapitulation of the opening. The ending is a series of cataclysmic, downward cascading phrases on the words "world without end. Amen"—and forms a favoured technique of Leighton's which featured in a number of his later choral works (it also appears in the *Gloria* of the *Missa Sanctae Thomae*, track 24).

Leighton himself wrote of the *Nunc Dimittis*: "The quiet opening sung by the choir contains the melodic and harmonic features of the movement as a whole. The main section consists of a single sustained paragraph in which the contrapuntal lines are constantly expanded, and a rising tension results from an ever more complex interplay between voices and organ. The words "to be a light" are insisted on in a gradual build up (using material from the Magnificat), but the climax is not reached until a final cadence on organ alone. The Gloria Patri, in complete contrast, is a light dance-like section ending with a mystical treatment of the words 'world without end. Amen'."



Set me as a seal is the unaccompanied and concluding 'chorale' of Leighton's cantata *Columba Mea*, Op. 78. Commissioned by the John Currie Singers & Orchestra in 1978, the complete work sets a selection of texts from the *Song of Songs*, and this exquisite final movement for choir,

tenor and treble soloists is intensely beautiful in its harmonic and textual expediency. In a similar *a capella* but more extended manner, *Of a Rose is all my song* sets a mediaeval English devotional text dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Written in 1970, it consists of a lengthy dialogue between seductive whole-tone melodic strands (framing once again the *diabulos in musica*) sung by a treble soloist, and full choir strophic-style passages.

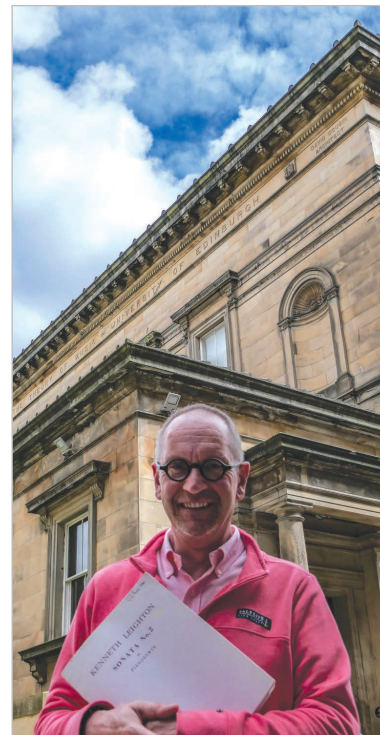
A number of anthems on this recording were written for parish churches which once possessed cathedral-style music programs. *O God enfold me in the sun* is one, and was composed in 1967 in response to a commission from the church of St. Philip & St. James, York, for its centenary celebrations. Now firmly in the contemporary evangelical tradition, this church nowadays appears some distance from the liturgical and musical traditions for which Leighton wrote his anthem. Setting words by Jacqueline Froom, it is an outstanding example of Leighton's prowess at word-painting, with the sun's brilliant and blazing light permeating the work's harmony, texture, and dynamics. *Adventate Deo* was commissioned in 1970 by Barnet Parish Church and their then organist, David Patrick – a favoured pupil of Harold Darke. It sets an advent poem by John Addington Symonds about the Second Coming

of Christ. Harmonically 'gritty', it nonetheless comprises moments of great beauty amidst the prevalent grandeur and terror.

If one were curious as to what Leighton's response might have been to the genre of a *cappella* close-harmony, one could look no further than the lower-voice settings of *Three Psalms*, Op. 54. Dating from June 1968, these portions of Psalms 42, 23, 98, and 149 were commissioned by the Baccholian Singers of London, a men's vocal quintet active in London during the mid to late twentieth century, receiving their premiere on 23rd October 1968 in Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. Arguably, these are challenging to sing one-to-a-part and, as such, they are presented here with full ensemble. *Like as the hart* is an intense, even angry, setting of the psalmist's frustration at God's absence. *The Lord is my shepherd*, with its gentle 6/8 time signature, brings a bucolic expression of the text, whilst *O Sing unto the Lord* is joyful and dance-like. The initial section here features long drawn-out trills, something of a hallmark of the music of James MacMillan, one of Leighton's illustrious protégés at the University of Edinburgh.

The West Riding Cathedrals' Festival had commissioned Leighton in 1968 for the *Festival*

Fanfare for organ, and in 1977 it requested what became the *Sequence for All Saints*, Op. 75. This was first performed on 14th October 1978 in Wakefield Cathedral – where Leighton had been a chorister – by the combined cathedral choirs of Bradford, Sheffield and Wakefield. It sets the Propers for the Feast of All Saints over the course of five movements. The Introit's unison *pianissimo* 'C' flowers outwards into a classic Leighton chord of gentle dissonance, recalling many similar instances of the technique in his more familiar *Preces and Responses*. The ensuing dramatic acclamation '*Gaudeamus*' (let us rejoice) is thus heightened. A joyful dance exhorting the faithful to '*Rejoice and praise the Lord*' precedes a return to the opening's heavenly mist. The Gradual's sonorous baritone solo (*O fear the Lord*) induces choral responses of '*Alleluias*' which build to intensive cries. The opening trebles-only lyricism in the Offertory meanders around the *holy places*, the abode of the '*God of Israel*', and the Communion sets the text *The souls of the righteous*, purified by the Lord in the fire, with an image painted by organ interludes of elaborate figuration. The Finale recreates much of the opening movement but concludes with a bold, congregational rendition of Isaac Watts' classic hymn *Give us the wings of faith*. The descant here in the final verse has been humbly added by Jeremy Filsell.



Jeremy Filsell at the Reid Concert Hall, University of Edinburgh

The second part of this recording juxtaposes two further Mass settings of Leighton, the choral *Missa Sanctae Thomae* (1962), and his *magnum opus* for organ, the *Missa de Gloria* (1980). The *Missa Sanctae Thomae* was commissioned by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral to mark the octocentenary of the Consecration of St. Thomas Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury. It is a setting of the Communion Service with text from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and was heard for the first time at Canterbury sung by the choir under the direction of Gerald Knight.

As is so often the case with Leighton's music, the *Missa Sanctae Thomae* is a masterclass in thematic usage and development. The short ascending melodic motif sung by the trebles at the outset of the *Kyrie Eleison* serves as a melodic foundation for the entire setting, a motto idea which undergoes various transformations, augmentations, and diminutions. The melodic ascent of the motif is reflected in the work's counterpoint, its harmonic profile invoking ever-rising modulations, the arch-shaped structure of individual movements, and thus the setting at large. The Mass is set chiefly in the Lydian mode – giving perhaps an overwhelmingly mysterious and authentic medieval aura (was Leighton perhaps evoking the musical soundscape of Becket's consecration 800 years earlier?).

The *Kyrie* presents the germinal head-motif in the home key of G – one which Leighton will constantly approach, yet largely deny the listener. Ingeniously, every measure of this opening movement contains the motif both at different pitches and in different voices.

In the setting of the BCP Communion Service, the *Gloria in Excelsis* comes at the end of the work, for it was briefly deemed theologically appropriate as a hymn of thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Whilst Leighton thus placed his *Gloria* at the conclusion of the published work, it is juxtaposed here in its customary place alongside the more conventional sequence found in the *Missa de Gloria*. The head-motif first heard in the *Kyrie* finds a certain recapitulatory apotheosis here, re-exposed in various guises. At the words '*For thou only art Holy*' the head-motif reaches its full flowering, and begins a gradual motivic, dynamic, and harmonic crescendo towards the contrapuntal climax – in E major – at '*Amen*'.

Perhaps the toughest text with which any liturgical composer has to wrestle is the *Credo* – because of its repetitive and non-narrative nature. Leighton's setting is suitably economical here, and follows the '*missa brevis*' principle in which the composer

does not repeat words. It is musically energetic and, even in its quietest sections, features a rhythmic drive which, after various harmonic twists and turns, lands finally in the home key of G.

The opening of the *Sanctus* contains an effective demonstration of how a slow, undulating melodic motif of simply two notes can be of great harmonic and dynamic drive without the alteration of tempo or note value. '*Holy, holy, holy*' builds towards a strong conclusion, heralded by the firm, martial declaration of '*heaven and earth are full of thy glory*' from the trebles, before the full choir offers a rousing '*glory be to thee, O Lord most high*'. A slow, lilting version of the germinal head-motif in triple-time dominates the *Benedictus*. As in the *Sanctus*, however, this gradually grows in harmonic and dynamic intensity before the movement concludes with a grandiose '*Hosanna in the highest*'.

The *Agnus Dei* is indebted to the *Nunc Dimitis* of Leighton's early setting of evening canticles (album 1 track 2 here), and significant parts of the organ interjections here appear *verbatim*. It is a slow-moving movement with weeping dissonances at the words '*have mercy upon us*'. This is no doubt informed by similar phrasings in the masses of William Byrd and his contemporaries – a style

of music which had spoken so deeply to Leighton as a young chorister.

The *Missa de Gloria*, Op. 82 was completed in March 1980 to mark the first Dublin International Organ Festival. Subtitled the *Dublin Festival Mass*, it was premiered in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, by Gerard Gillen in June of that year. Leighton composed sporadically for the organ, beginning in 1964 with the *Prelude, Scherzo, and Passacaglia*, Op. 41, and nine works followed, most of which are relatively small in scale. At thirty-five minutes in length, the *Missa de Gloria* is both Leighton's *magnum opus* for the instrument and, by his own admission, his first work based entirely on plainchant.

In seven movements, the *Missa de Gloria* freely utilizes elements from the twelfth-century Sarum plainchant for Easter Day. Whilst Leighton clearly marks where the representation of sections of text and chant come throughout the score, the chant itself is rarely overt, and is seamlessly integrated into the musical style. The 'organ-mass' is a curious genre, but one which developed from the need to provide accompaniment to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, where clergy would say the Mass *sotto voce*. With its origins in the liturgy of the medieval church, the genre reached a high-point in eighteenth-

century France with the organ-masses of François Couperin and his contemporaries. This present recording seeks to reflect, to a degree, that *milieu* with the various organ movements of the *Missa de Gloria* functioning as reflections on the movements of the *Missa Sanctae Thomae*. Despite its Sarum plainsong themes, the *Missa de Gloria* provides a neat counterpoint to the more mediaeval and modal sound world of the choral setting. The 2020 pandemic and the resulting absence of choral provision at Saint Thomas Church gave Jeremy Filsell the opportunity to present the *Missa de Gloria* as an organ-mass during a livestreamed Solemn Eucharist.

Dark, gloomy, and brooding, the freely-composed *Kyrie* (without direct plainchant reference) serves as a prelude of sorts to the rest of the work, perhaps suggestive of the three women arriving at the tomb on that first Easter morning. It is rich in counterpoint and builds in harmonic intensity. The *Gloria* is quite the opposite, and replete with resurrection joy. It begins, in Leighton's words, with '*introductory fanfare-like sections*' followed by a toccata, based on the plainsong theme. A soft coloratura of the plainchant follows before the toccata figurations resume. The movement concludes with a fugal, plainsong-based coda forming an 'Amen'.

The statements of plainchant themes are clear in the *Credo*. In a calm and meditative movement, Leighton calls for frequent changes of registration, and the chant, in his words, '*speaks for itself and becomes increasingly more decorated*', with meanderings on the plainsong being improvisatory in nature.

As with the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus* is joyous, beginning with a flourish before entering a '*soft and dance-like*' (KL) portion quoting the plainchant 'Pleni sunt caeli gloria tua'. The *Benedictus* is a '*slow and mystical*' (KL) polytonal duet, before the dance returns at 'Hosanna in excelsis'.

A poignant and exquisite *Agnus Dei* precedes the final movement, a thrilling paraphrase of the chant as a closing dismissal: *Ite Missa Est* – 'Go forth, the Mass is ended'. It is, in Leighton's words, a '*brilliant toccata with a massive acclamation*'. A highly virtuosic tour-de-force, it plays the part on this recording of a spectacular postlude to the *Missa Sanctae Thomae*.

Alleluia, Amen is a festival anthem commissioned the same year as the *Missa Sancti Thomae* (1962) to mark the 50th anniversary of the church of St. Nicholas Radford, in Coventry, England. It is thus the third anthem on this recording originally

commissioned by an 'ordinary' parish church reflecting a contemporaneous parish musical aspiration and ability found perhaps more rarely within today's ecclesiastical *environs*.

The original (Victorian) church of St. Nicholas, Radford was destroyed by Luftwaffe bombs the same night as was, famously, the city's great mediaeval cathedral (November 14th 1940), but a new church was erected by modernist architect Richard Twentyman in 1957. Although blessed with a compelling acoustic, the new church came

in the heyday of modernist concrete structures (as did virtually all of blitzed central Coventry), and was plagued by both poor post-war building materials, and extensive asbestos wall lining. Saint Thomas Church's current Director of Music grew up in Coventry, and as a teenager, periodically practiced on the Nicholson organ in St. Nicholas – perhaps inspired more by the church's favorable acoustic than by the uncertain distinction of its organ. However, the 1950s church structure had become untenable and unsafe by the early 2000s, and in 2025 it was finally demolished. It is thus



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perhaps a rather sombre late twentieth-century tale in which a church once commissioning a foremost composer of the day to provide commemorative music for its choir is now sadly *sans* music, having awaited the wrecker's ball after just 60 years.

In the manner of a repeating *Alleluia*, Leighton's splendid anthem is formed by incessant and cascading bell-peal-like motifs (see above comments regarding tracks 1 and 6), punctuated only by the briefest appearance of a Revelation text ('*Salvation and glory be unto the Lord our God*'). Most affecting perhaps is the hushed start, and the equivalent close – of a text for which one might anticipate an ebullient, dazzling response. However, perhaps the post-war story of St. Nicholas Radford itself is inadvertently encapsulated in this musical setting.



TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

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 showed 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.

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.

Alleluia, Amen. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia, Amen. Salvation and lory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.

Set me as a seal upon your heart

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; For love is strong as death, Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it (Song of Solomon)

O God, enfold me in the sun

O God, enfold me in the sun,

Hard and bright

As shining as steel, and save me from The night.

*Send your saints to fight with me,
Side by side
Against this darkness in my heart
Of pride and fear and hate.*

*Send me Christ,
your Son,
Who was the greatest battle fought
And won.*

*A splendid sunburst then my shield,
And fierce
Bright sunbeams through the powerful dark
Will pierce.*

*Darkness and death before him must
Depart.
Light and life in triumph take
My heart.*

Jacqueline Froom (1929-2018)

Missa Christi
Kyrie
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Gloria
*Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people
on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,*

*we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you
for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of
the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the
Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the
Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

Sanctus and Benedictus

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Agnus Dei

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.*

Adventante Deo

*Lift up your heads, gates of my heart,
Unfold your portals to salute the King of Kings!
Behold Him come, borne on cherubic wings
Engrained with crimson eyes and grail of gold!*

*Before his path the thunderclouds
Withhold their stormy pinions,
And the desert sings:
He from his lips divine and forehead
Flings sunlight of peace unfathomed, bliss untold.*

*O soul, faint soul, disquieted how long!
Lift up thine eyes, for lo, thy Lord is near,
Lord of all loveliness and strength and song,
The Lord who brings heart-sadness better cheer,
Scattering those midnight dreams that dote on wrong,
Purging with heaven's pure rays love's atmosphere!*

John Addington Symonds (1840-1893)

Of a Rose is all my Song

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*Listen, nobles, old and young,
How this rose at outset sprung;
In all this world I know of none
I so desire as that fair rose.*

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*The angel came from heaven's tower
To honour Mary in her bower,
And said that she should bear the flower
To break the Devil's chain of woes.*

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*In Bethlehem that flower was seen,
A lovely blossom bright of sheen;
The rose in Mary, heaven's Queen;
Out of her womb that blossom rose.*

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*The first branch is full of might,
That sprouted on the Christmas night
When star of Bethlehem shone bright,
For far and wide its lustre shows.*

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*The second branch sprang forth to hell,
The Devil's fearful power to quell;
And there henceforth no soul could dwell;
Blessed the coming of that rose!*

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

*To heaven sprang the third shoot,
Sweet and fair, both stem and root,*

To dwell therein and bring us good;
In priestly hands it daily shows.

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

Let us then with honour pray
To her who is our help and stay.
And turns us from the Devil's way;
From her that holy bloom a rose.

Of a rose, a lovely rose, is all my song.

Anon. 15th century

Three Psalms

*The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.
He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.
He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.
Thou shalt prepare a table before me in the presence of them that trouble me;
thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.
But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me*

*all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Psalm 23

*Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?
My tears have been my meat day and night: while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God?
Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul: And why art thou so disquieted within me?
My bones are smitten asunder as with a sword: While mine enemies that trouble me cast me in the teeth;
While they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God? O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank him: Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

Psalm 42:1-3, 6, 12-13, 15

*O sing unto the Lord a new song, let the congregation of saints praise him.
Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, and let the children of Sion be joyful in their King.
Let them praise his Name in the dance, let them sing praises unto him with tabret and harp.
With trumpets also and shawms, O shew yourselves*

*joyful before the Lord the King.
Let the sea make a noise and all that therein is, the round world and they that dwell therein.
Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for he is come to judge the earth.
With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*

Psalm 149:1-3, Psalm 98: 7-10

Sequence for All Saints

Introit

*Gaudeamus. Rejoice we all and praise the Lord,
Celebrating a holy day in honour of All Saints:
In whose solemnity the Angels are joyful,
And glorify the Son of God. Gaudeamus.*

Gradual

*O fear the Lord, all ye saints of his:
For they that fear him lack nothing. Alleluya.
But they that seek the Lord:
Shall want no manner of thing that is good. Alleluya.
The saints shall judge the nations,
and have dominion over the people:
and their Lord shall reign for ever.*

Psalm 34:9-10; Wisdom of Solomon 3:8

Offertory

*O God, wonderful art thou in thy holy places:
Even the God of Israel, he will give strength and power unto his people;
Blessed be God. Alleluya.*

Psalm 68:35

Communion

*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
And there shall no torment touch them:
In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die;
But they are in peace.*

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-2

Finale

*Gaudeamus. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous:
for it becometh well the just to be thankful.
Rejoice we all, and praise the Lord:
celebrating a holy day in honour of all saints.
Alleluya.*

Hymn

*Give us the wings of faith to rise
Within the veil, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How great their glories be.*

*We ask them whence their victory came;
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death.*

*Our glorious leader claims our praise
For his own pattern given;
While the long cloud of witnesses
Show the same path to heaven.*

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Alleluia, Amen.

*Alleluia, Amen. And after these things I heard a
great voice of much people in heaven, saying,
Alleluia, Amen. Salvation, and glory, and honour,
and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, Amen.*

Revelation 19:1, 4

Missa Sancti Thomae

Kyrie

*Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon
us, Lord have mercy upon us*

Gloria

*Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good
will towards men.
We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we
glorify thee.
We give thanks to thee for thy great glory,*

*O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty,
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that
takest away the sins of the world, have mercy
upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have
mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive
our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the
Father, have mercy upon us.
For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou
only, O Christ.
With the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of
God the Father. Amen.*

Creed

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible
and invisible:
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten
Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds.
God from God, Light of Light, very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with
the Father; by whom all things were made:
who for us men and for our salvation came down
from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary,*

*and was made man. And was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried, and the third day he
rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right
hand of the Father.
And he shall come again with glory to judge both
the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have
no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver
of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is
worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.
And I believe in one Catholick and Apostolic
Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the
remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the
life of the world to come. Amen.*

Sanctus and Benedictus

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Agnus Dei

*O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world, grant us thy peace.*



THE SAINT THOMAS CHOIR OF MEN AND BOYS

Choristers

Edric Baty *
 Julian Calemmo *
 Bakore Camara
 Daniel Conrado
 Christian Goudge #
 Andrew Guyer *
 Rocco Halvey
 William Hanoian #
 Ephrem Henthorn *
 Jacob Hwang *
 Jayden Wang *
 Elias Jeon #
 Royce Jung
 Ian Kim
 Nathan Kim #
 Allan Lee
 William Lee #
 Arthur Li
 Henry Mohan *

Julian Moreno

Aiden Park *

Henry Park #

William Park

Emrys Pengelly

Dominic Scarozza

Joshua Shin

Arthur Stowe

Tenor

Daniel Castellanos

Alex Longnecker

John Ramseyer

Mike Williams

Countertenor

Biraj Barkakarty *

Philip Cheah *

Padraic Costello

Tomas Cruz

Jonathan May #

Clifton Massey #

Calvin Wentling *

Bass

Elijah Blaisdell #

Jonathan Bolena *

Benjamin Howard

Brian Mummert

Charles Perry Sprawls

Christopher Trueblood *

Jared Swope

*2025 sessions only

2024 sessions only

SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL AND ITS CHORISTERS

The Saint Thomas Choir School has been home to the treble choristers of the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys for 106 years. It was founded in 1919 at the request of Dr. T. Tertius Noble, organist and choirmaster, who had previously been organist at York Minster in England, where all of his boys attended the choir school. When the Rector and Vestry of Saint Thomas called Noble to New York in 1913, he accepted the position on the understanding that a Choir School was desired in order to achieve the musical standards anticipated by the parish. The school opened in 1919 on 55th Street with 21 boys, and remained there, with periodic renovations and additions until 1987, when it relocated to a purpose-built, fifteen-storey building on 58th Street, with dedicated teaching and music spaces, a full-size gymnasium and Choir area, and housing for both choristers (a 45-strong body at its height) and the full-time faculty. This unique school – in North America – has thus, since 1919, educated and supported young boys to offer an enviably professional standard of daily music making.

Saint Thomas Choir School's mission statement remains *'to house, nurture, and educate the boy choristers of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue. We work together to cultivate a love of learning through challenging academic study and professional musical training rooted in the Anglican choral tradition. Our unique, familial environment fosters self-reliance and personal growth, preparing students to contribute productively to their communities'*. The school's small student-to-staff ratio has always ensured that the needs and well-being of the boys has been at the forefront of its work, and the focus on music has ensured that boys grow, and are transformed in myriad ways, by their daily singing commitment. Through the boys' central role in a professional choir, they learn discipline, responsibility, hard work, and teamwork, all of which carry into the broader curriculum. They also partake of all that New York City has to offer, from skating in Central Park, catching a Yankees game, attending an opera at the Met, singing at Carnegie Hall for major concerts, at the tree lighting ceremony in Rockefeller Center, and alongside *Sting*, to ringing the opening bell on the Wall Street stock exchange. In 2019 they appeared as the opening act at the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular. The boys often record commercially alongside the professional



© The Choir of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York

Gentlemen of the Choir, and perform regularly with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, New York Baroque Incorporated, and Modus Operandi Orchestra as part of Saint Thomas Church concert series. The choir has toured throughout the US, Europe and Scandinavia, and has appeared at Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, King's College, Cambridge, the Aldeburgh Festival, the Vatican, and the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.

September 2025 marks Saint Thomas Church's entering into a new collaborative partnership with the Professional Children's School of New York, in order for this school to provide the choristers' academic education and formation. The church's vision is also concurrently to broaden its outreach to include the provision of other choirs within its storied musical program.

JEREMY FILSELL

Jeremy Filsell was appointed Nancy B. & John B. Hoffmann Organist and Director of Music at Saint Thomas Church in 2018, and led the Choir of Men & Boys until 2025. He is also one of only a few recognized virtuoso performers as both a pianist and organist. His piano concerto repertoire encompasses Bach, Mozart and Beethoven through to Shostakovich, John Ireland, Constant Lambert, and the complete Rachmaninov cycle. He has recorded commercially the solo piano music of Herbert Howells, Bernard Stevens, Eugène Goossens, and Johann Christoph Eschmann, and recent releases have included albums of Rachmaninov's piano music (*Signum*), the first and second Rachmaninov Concertos (*Raven*), the piano music of Francis Pott (*Acis*), and – as an organist – the *Clavier-Übung III* of J. S Bach (*Signum*), recorded on all five pipe organs of Saint Thomas Church.

Jeremy Filsell is on the international roster of Steinway Piano Artists, and has recorded for BBC Radio 3, US, and Scandinavian radio networks in both solo and concerto roles. His discography numbers more than 35 solo recordings, Gramophone magazine commenting on the series of 12 CDs comprising the premiere recordings of

Marcel Dupré's complete organ works for *Guild*, that it was '*one of the greatest achievements in organ recording*'. In 2005, Signum released a 3-disc set of the six organ symphonies of Louis Vierne, recorded on the 1890 Cavaillé-Coll organ in St. Ouen, Rouen. He has taught at universities, summer schools, and conventions in both the UK and US and has served on international competition juries in England, Switzerland and the US. Solo engagements have taken him across the US and UK and to Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Australia and New Zealand in recent years. In North America, he concertizes under the auspices of Philip Truckenbrod Concert Artists.

As a teenager, Jeremy Filsell was a Limpus, Shinn & Durrant prize-winner for FRCO, and studied with Nicolas Kynaston as Organ Scholar at Keble College, Oxford, and with Daniel Roth in France, before completing graduate studies in piano performance at the Royal College of Music in London. His Musicology PhD from Birmingham City University/Conservatoire was awarded for research involving aesthetic and interpretative issues in the music of Marcel Dupré.

Before moving to the US in 2008, Jeremy held Academic and Performance lectureships at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and was an alto lay clerk in the choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Before coming to New York to lead the music at Saint Thomas, he combined an international recital and teaching career with serving music programs at the Basilica of the National Shrine, the National Cathedral, the Church of the Epiphany in Washington DC, the Catholic University of America (DC), and, as Professor of Organ, Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. He is now Organist and Director of Music at Christ Episcopal Church, Bradenton, Florida.

NICOLAS HAIGH

Nicolas Haigh, Associate Organist at Saint Thomas Church is originally from the UK, and has held positions with the Gramophone Award-winning Choir of New College, Oxford, and York Minster. He is a recipient of the Limpus Prize from the Royal College of Organists and held the Sir William McKie Organ Scholarship at Clare College, Cambridge. In January 2026, he moves to Sweden to become Organist and Choir Director at Uppsala Cathedral.

Active throughout the US as a historical keyboardist, continuo performer, and conductor, Nicolas appears regularly with American Bach Soloists, Oxford Bach Soloists, and is principal keyboardist and artistic advisor to *Bach Akademie Charlotte*. He is also the co-founder of early music consort *L'Académie du Roi Soleil* with which he has performed throughout the US and UK.

Nicolas has also performed as both a soloist and accompanist in Australia, France, Italy, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, and Israel. He can be heard on numerous recordings including *Veni Emmanuel*, *Imogen Holst: Choral Works* (Harmonia Mundi USA), and on a number with the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys. Nicolas has

performed frequently on radio (BBC Radio 3 & 4), and his teachers have included Malcolm Archer, Clive Driskill-Smith, James McVinnie, and Jonathan Moyer.

MAKS ADACH

Maks Adach, Assistant Organist and Associate for Musical Studies at Saint Thomas Church and Choir School, was a chorister at the London Oratory School, and continued his musical studies at the Royal College of Music Junior Department, and at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where he held the organ scholarship at the Old Royal Naval College Chapel in Greenwich.

Maks went up to Oriel College, Oxford, to read music as organ scholar, and then remained at Oxford for a master's degree in musicology. At Oxford, he spent four years as Master of Music at Pusey House, and served as Director of Chapel Music at both St. John's and St. Cross Colleges. Following organ scholarships at Lichfield and Liverpool Anglican cathedrals, he moved to the US to become Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Church, Harvard Square, home to the only Roman Catholic boys' choir school in the US.

In 2026, Maks takes up a new post as Director of Music at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Greenwich, CT. He will oversee the establishment of a new choral foundation, and a center for the revitalisation of traditional music and liturgy under the aegis of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport.

Maks is active as a musicologist and music editor, and his critical edition of Ethel Smyth's *Five Sacred Partsongs* has been published by Stainer & Bell as part of the *Multitude of Voyces* series. Current projects include an edition of Jean-Francois Lallouette's *Motetes* (1726) prepared for imprimis.uk, and research into the life and music of Calvin Hampton.

This recording was made possible through the generous funding of the choir's parish supporters, Mr. Michael Purcell, and Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Gauster-Filek, whose financial gift was made in honour of Wilhelm. B and Norma S. Gauster.

'O God Enfold Me In The Sun' by Kenneth Leighton © Oxford University Press 1968. All rights reserved.

Jeremy Filsell, The Nancy B. & John B. Hoffmann Organist and Director of Music
Nicolas Haigh, Associate Organist
Maks Adach, Assistant Organist
Recorded in Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York, February 7-9, 2024; February 15, 17-18, 2025.
Production & Editing – Adrian Peacock
Recording Engineer – David Hinit
Booklet Notes – Maks Adach and Jeremy Filsell with insights generously offered by Professor Angela Leighton (Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge), and Dr Robert Leighton (Senior Lecturer in European and Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Edinburgh).

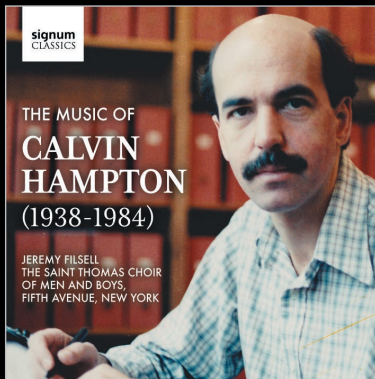
Cover Image – Holyrood Palace ruins in Edinburgh, where Leighton spent most of his professional life. © Simon Filsell
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CD1

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THROUGH THE POWERFUL DARKNESS...

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THROUGH THE POWERFUL DARKNESS...

CHORAL AND ORGAN MUSIC OF KENNETH LEIGHTON (1929-1988)

CD1

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| [1] - [2] | Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense | [8.51] |
| [3] | Columba Mea Op. 78: Set me as a seal | [3.21] |
| [4] | O God enfold me in the sun | [3.55] |
| [5] - [9] | Missa Christi | [12.23] |
| [10] | Adventante Deo | [6.27] |
| [11] | Of a Rose is all my song | [7.26] |
| [12] - [14] | Three Psalms Op. 54 | [14.32] |
| [15] - [19] | A Sequence for All Saints Op. 75 | [21.51] |

Total timings: [1.18.50]

THE SAINT THOMAS
CHOIR OF MEN AND BOYS
JEREMY FILSELL

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CD2

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---------|
| [1] | Alleluia, Amen | [7.49] |
| [2] | Festival Fanfare * | [6.13] |
| Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40 | | |
| [3] | Kyrie [4] Gloria | [7.14] |
| Missa de Gloria Op. 82 * | | |
| [5] | Kyrie [6] Gloria | [14.12] |
| [7] | Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40 Credo | [4.57] |
| [8] | Missa de Gloria Credo * | [6.58] |
| Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40 | | |
| [9] | Sanctus [10] Benedictus | [4.02] |
| Missa de Gloria Op. 82 * | | |
| [11] | Sanctus [12] Benedictus [13] Agnus Dei | [12.24] |
| [14] | Missa Sancti Thomae Op. 40 Agnus Dei | [3.26] |
| [15] | Missa de Gloria Op. 82 Ite Missa est * | [5.42] |

* Jeremy Filsell, organ

Total timings: [1.13.01]