

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 28 September 2024
1.00pm

This series is kindly supported by the Marchus Trust

Wigmore Hall Voices of Today: Alexander Campkin

Alexander Campkin composer

Fretwork

Emilia Benjamin viol
Jonathan Rees viol

Joanna Levine viol
Sam Stadlen viol

Richard Boothby viol

Tenebrae

Victoria Meteyard soprano
Katie Trethewey soprano
Emma Walshe soprano
Hannah Cooke alto
Martha McLorinan alto

Elisabeth Paul alto
Jeremy Budd tenor
Nicholas Madden tenor
Tom Robson tenor
Joseph Edwards bass

Jimmy Holliday bass
Simon Whiteley bass

Nigel Short conductor

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

O vis eternitatis arranged by Alexander Campkin

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Instrumental dance I from *Ordo virtutum* (c.1151)

Alexander Campkin (b.1984)

Do not repine, fair sun (1617)

Orlando Gibbons

The Crimson Sun (2018)

The silver swan (pub. 1612) arranged by Alexander Campkin

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

Fantasia a3 No. 1

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Hear my prayer, O Lord Z15 (?1682)

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

My prayer (2000)

Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)

Thule, the period of cosmography (pub. 1600)

Alexander Campkin

Waking Dreams (2024) world première

Commissioned by Wigmore Hall (with the generous support of the Marchus Trust and the Wigmore Hall Endowment Fund

The Dream • Dreams shake us • Sunset Dreams •

A dream within a dream • Crowded like waves •

We dream • Was it a vision

Hildegard of Bingen

Instrumental dance II from *Ordo virtutum* (c.1151)

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This concert brings together a remarkable selection of sacred and secular music spanning nearly a millennium. From the mystical chants of Hildegard of Bingen of the 12th Century to contemporary works, the programme journeys through serene yet surreal soundscapes; through dreams, visions, fantasias and cosmography.

The first two pieces are by **Hildegard of Bingen**, a visionary abbess, composer and polymath whose contributions to music, theology and philosophy are unparalleled. It is said that more works can be attributed to Hildegard than any other composer from the Middle Ages, and her music continues to be revered for its ethereal beauty and spiritual depth.

O vis eternitatis is a chant that reflects Hildegard's visionary experiences and profound theology, speaking of divine eternity and the unending light of God. The expansive phrases are typical of Hildegard's music, evoking a sense of mystical transcendence. Edited from the *Riesencodex* – a compendium published shortly after Hildegard's death of most of her works – this new arrangement leads with a solo soprano, whilst other singers are invited to stand in specific locations within Wigmore Hall immersing the audience in this unique soundworld.

Ordo Virtutum ('Order of the Virtues') is often considered the earliest known morality play and a precursor to later forms of sacred drama. This allegorical work presents a dialogue between the soul and various Virtues, who guide her on the path to salvation. Hildegard composed both music and text, with the characters of the Virtues singing monophonic melodies while the Devil, symbolizing evil, speaks in harsh tones, unable to sing. The work reflects Hildegard's deep concern with the battle between good and evil, and its music is marked by radiant melodies that express the triumph of divine grace. Both instrumental dances in this concert are improvised by Fretwork, using melodic material from *Ordo Virtutum*.

Moving to the English Renaissance, *Do not repine, fair sun* is a lively yet delicate madrigal that showcases **Orlando Gibbons's** keen sensitivity to text and skill in word painting. The imagery of the 'fair sun' in the text by Joseph Hall, a Dean of the Chapel Royal, is vividly depicted in the music with bright harmonies and flowing lines. The piece is a fine example of the 'serious' and contrapuntal textures of Gibbons's style.

The Crimson Sun offers a striking contrast, with its more modern musical language and sensibility. Characterised by evocative imagery and shimmering atmospheric textures, each verse builds to a swirling and overlapping motif in the chorus 'Gloria in excelsis Deo!'. The piece was commissioned by Jennifer Weller and Caroline Harrison QC for the choir of Jesus College Cambridge, but was first informally sung by five singers in the intimate setting of their candlelit 16th-century Devonshire barn.

The silver swan tells of a swan that, according to legend, sings only once: just before its death. Gibbons's use of word painting is particularly effective here, with the melodic lines gently descending, as though echoing the

swan's graceful end. The madrigal's blend of elegance and melancholy has ensured its enduring popularity. In this new arrangement, music is passed antiphonally between double choir, two soaring solo sopranos, and viol consort. A brief instrumental introduction derived from the Gibbons further intensifies the emotions.

Thomas Tomkins, a contemporary of Gibbons, demonstrates his mastery of the English instrumental fantasia, a genre that allowed composers to explore counterpoint and structure with considerable freedom. Characterised by its intricate imitative textures and flowing polyphony, the music moves seamlessly between sections of contrasting character, **Purcell's** *Hear my prayer, O Lord* is a deeply expressive anthem, despite its brevity. The piece is an unfinished fragment, yet it stands as one of his most powerful works. It begins with a single voice, gradually expanding into rich eight-part harmony. The repeated cry of 'Hear my prayer' builds, creating a sense of pleading and desperation. Purcell's use of dissonance is masterful, heightening the emotional tension and giving the music an almost unbearable poignancy.

Bob Chilcott's *My prayer* is a lyrical setting written for the Vancouver Chamber Choir in 2000, who commissioned three different composers to write new versions based on Purcell's *Hear my prayer, O Lord*. Beginning with elements of the Purcell transported to a 5-in-a-bar pulse, the music quickly diverges, bringing an altered and extended climax.

Thule, the period of cosmography is a vivid and imaginative madrigal, combining complex counterpoint with colourful word painting and fantastical imagery. The phrases depicting 'Thule' (a mythical northern land) and 'burning Aetna' are especially striking, with chromatic shifts and dynamic contrasts that could evoke both the cold extremes of the Arctic and the fiery eruptions of a volcano, brought to life through **Weelkes's** music.

Waking Dreams draws inspiration from the elusive and shifting landscapes of dreams. The boundaries between sleep and waking blur ('Our life is twofold; sleep hath its own world', Byron). The piece captures the sensation of drifting through moments that feel vivid and real yet dissolve as soon after they are formed.

Setting seven texts, we enter a twilight world where the mind, untethered from the logic of waking life, conjures scenes of impossible beauty, laced with longing and nostalgia. The music shifts between shimmering harmonies and shadowy textures, reflecting how dreams flit between the glowing remnants of the day and the encroaching mystery of night.

Echoes of a single musical thread appear and vanish amongst delicate layers of sound. *Waking Dreams* invites us to explore the liminal space where waking life and dreams intertwine, a place where fleeting images hold both mystery and truth.

A second improvised instrumental dance based on musical material from *Ordo virtutum* brings the concert to a resonant and thought-provoking close.

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Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

O vis eternitatis (n/a) O power of eternity

arranged by Alexander
Campkin
Liturgical text

O vis eternitatis Que omnia ordinasti in corde tuo, Per Verbum tuum omnia creata sunt Sicut voluisti, Et ipsum Verbum tuum Induit carnem In formatione illa Que educta est de Adam.	O power of eternity who has ordered all things in your heart, through your Word all things were created, according to your will, and your very Word has taken on flesh in that form which was brought forth from Adam.
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Et sic indumenta ipsius A maximo dolore Abstersa sunt.	And so his garments from greatest suffering were washed clean.
--	--

O quam magna est benignitas Salvatoris, Qui omnia liberavit Per incarnationem suam, Quam divinitas exspiravit Sine vinculo peccati.	O how great is the Saviour's kindness, who has freed all things through his incarnation, breathed forth by divinity without the chains of sin.
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Et sic indumenta ipsius A maximo dolore Abstersa sunt.	And so his garments from greatest suffering were washed clean.
--	--

Gloria Patri et Filio Et Spiritui sancto.	Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
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Et sic indumenta ipsius A maximo dolore Abstersa sunt.	And so his garments from greatest suffering were washed clean.
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Instrumental dance I from *Ordo virtutum* (c.1151)

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Do not repine, fair sun (1617) *Joseph Hall*

Do not repine, fair sun, to see these eyne,
Welcomer far than thine,
To see the beams of a more glorious face
Shine on his native place,
And overrun thee to his northern line;
Fair sun, do not repine.
And thee, thrice blessed bowers which long agone

His cradle rocked on,
Which at the first the vital breath did give,
Whereby our world doth live;
Do not envy the spheres of heaven above
In his dear light and love,
Whose presence under Arthur's Seat can frame
An Eden both in deed and name.

Alexander Campkin (b.1984)

The Crimson Sun (2018)

George P Grantham

When the crimson sun had set
Low behind the wintry sea,
On the bright
And cold midnight
Burst a sound of heavenly glee:
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Where the manger crib is laid,
In the city fair and free,
Hand in hand,
This shepherds band
Worship Christ on bended knee.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Join with us in welcome song,
Ye who in Christ's Home abide,
Sing the Love
Of God above,
Shown at happy Christmas-tide.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Orlando Gibbons

The silver swan (pub. 1612) arranged by Alexander Campkin *Anonymous*

The silver swan, who, living, had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat;
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:
Farewell, all joys; O death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools than
wise.

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

Fantasia a3 No. 1

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Hear my prayer, O Lord Z15 (?1682)

Liturgical text

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And let my crying come unto thee.

Bob Chilcott (b.1955)

My prayer (2000)

Liturgical text

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And let my crying come unto thee.

Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)

Thule, the period of cosmography (pub. 1600)

Thomas Weelkes

Thule, the period of cosmography,
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulfurous fire
Doth melt the frozen clime and thaw the sky;
Trinacrian Etna's flames ascend not higher:
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

The Andalusian merchant, that returns
Laden with cochineal and china dishes,
Reports in Spain how strangely Fogo burns
Amidst an ocean full of flying fishes:
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

Alexander Campkin

Waking Dreams (2024) world première

The Dream

Lord Byron

Our life is twofold; Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy,
And look like heralds of eternity.

Dreams shake us

Lord Byron

Dreams shake us with the vision that's gone by,
The dread of vanished shadows, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.

They pass like spirits of the past -
They have power, -
The tyranny of pleasure and of pain.

Sunset Dreams

Madison Cawein

The moth and beetle wing about
The garden ways of other days;
Above the hills, a fiery shout
Of gold, the day dies slowly out,
Like some wild blast a huntsman blows:
And o'er the hills my Fancy goes,
Following the sunset's golden call
Where awaiting
Between the lily and the rose,
With arms and lips of warm perfume,
The dream of Love my Fancy knows.

The glowworm and the firefly glow
Among the ways of bygone days;
A golden shaft shot from a bow
Of silver, star and moon swing low
Above the hills where twilight lies:
And o'er the hills my Longing flies,
Following the star's far-arrowed gold,
Awaiting
With star-bright hair and night-dark eyes,
The dream, to whom my heart is true,
My dream of Love that never dies.

A dream within a dream

Edgar Allan Poe

All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

Crowded like waves

*There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me.
- Lord Byron*

We dream

WB Yeats

We dream - it is good we are dreaming -
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Was it a vision

John Keats

Was it a vision or a waking dream?
Do I wake or sleep?

Hildegard of Bingen

Instrumental dance II from *Ordo virtutum*
(c.1151)