

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 3 February 2025
1.00pm

Tenebrae

Nigel Short artistic director

Victoria Meteyard soprano

Katie Trethewey soprano

Emma Walshe soprano

Rosanna Wicks soprano

Hannah Cooke alto

Elisabeth Paul alto

Anna Semple alto

Jeremy Budd tenor

Jack Granby tenor

Nicholas Madden tenor

Joseph Edwards bass

Jimmy Holliday bass

Jonathan Howard bass

Simon Whiteley bass

Philip Moore (b.1943)

Morning Prayers from *Three Prayers Of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*
(1980)

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

And the swallow (2017)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Hymn to St Cecilia Op. 27
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Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Rest (1902)

Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

Evening Prayer

In Winter's House (2019)


James MacMillan (b.1959)

Miserere

I saw Eternity the other night

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Nunc dimittis

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer was murdered by the Nazis at Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945 at the age of 39. Throughout his life, fervently disavowing the Third Reich while pondering the role of religion within an increasingly secular world, the bravely pious Bonhoeffer showed incredible resilience in the face of horror. His words provide an incipit for this afternoon's concert: 'I cannot pray alone'. In a musical context, they recall St Augustine's claim that 'those who sing, pray twice', as Bonhoeffer's words find voice – or voices – in **Philip Moore's** 2002 setting of 'Morning Prayers', the first of his *Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Beginning with monody and the plangent interval of a minor second, the darkest thoughts find the warmest comfort when supported by the whole ensemble and the thought of God's eternal goodness.

Prayer was Bonhoeffer's refuge to the very end of his life, even as he was stripped of his clothes and led naked into the yard at Flossenbürg to be hanged. Anticipating salvation, he might well have found solace in the words of Psalm 84, as set by the US composer **Caroline Shaw** in 2017. The inspiration for her luscious entreaty came from the text's description of nesting sparrows and swallows, reminding Shaw of a more recent theatre of war, as Syrian refugees found themselves searching for a new home.

St Cecilia was a Roman Christian martyr slaughtered for her chastity. Her sacrifice is remembered on 22 November, the birthdate of **Benjamin Britten**, to whom W.H. Auden dedicated his *Hymn to St Cecilia* in 1940. The composer repaid the compliment by setting the poem to music, in which form it was first heard in 1942. Auden had often upbraided his musical friend for being too chaste, though he celebrated both heavenly gifts and earthly talents in this beguiling text.

Like Britten's musical response, taking the form of an *capella cantata* or verse anthem, featuring refrains and solo passages, **Vaughan Williams** composed his response to Christina Rossetti's *Rest* early in his career. Dating to 1902, it is a guileless partsong, likewise speaking of peace at the hour of death.

Contemporary composer **Joanna Marsh** divides her time between Dubai and her native Britain. Her connection to the Cambridge choral tradition, as organ scholar at Sidney Sussex, and her studies with Richard Blackford and Judith Bingham, both known for their choral works, have continued to inform her career. She was composer in residence at her alma mater, before founding ChoirFest Middle East, an annual celebration of the region's choral music.

We hear two works from her extensive catalogue. 'Evening Prayer' sets a text by the Jacobean priest and poet Lancelot Andrewes, while its musical inspiration comes from *Abendlied* by the Liechtenstein-born composer Josef Rheinberger. The same six-part texture informs Marsh's composition, though she allows for much greater metrical and harmonic freedom. A more somnolent, spellbound quality characterises 'In Winter's

House', commissioned by Tenebrae and first performed at Wigmore Hall in December 2019. The words are by Jane Draycott and were published in *The Guardian* nine years earlier as part of the (then) poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy's *Carols for Christmas*.

Like Marsh, **James MacMillan** has enjoyed an international career, producing an output that spans various genres, including symphonic works and opera. Initially studying in his native Scotland, at Edinburgh, he then travelled to Durham to learn with the composer John Casken. Through him, MacMillan was introduced to the Polish avant garde, namely Andrzej Dobrowolski, with whom Casken had studied in Warsaw during the 1970s, and Witold Lutosławski. But like their compatriots and contemporaries, not least Henryk Górecki, MacMillan was increasingly drawn to the music of his roots and to his strong Catholic faith. These influences were never at the expense of wider interests, though the spiritual has often informed MacMillan's work, even beyond a church or cathedral setting.

Written for The Sixteen in 2009, MacMillan's 'Miserere', setting Psalm 51, is imbued with a high sense of drama, as well as characteristically Scotch rhythms and melodies, alongside plainchant and counterpoint. It was composed, MacMillan explained, with a 'nod' to Allegri's 'masterful setting', though the psalm chant is harmonised here, at times traditional, at others ethereal. At the close of the work there is, nonetheless, a hard-won sense of catharsis and calm: 'the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit'.

'I saw Eternity the other night' is the most recent composition on this afternoon's programme. MacMillan wrote the work for Tenebrae in 2021, with a text by the 17th-century Welsh metaphysical poet Henry Vaughan. The verse, taken from a larger work entitled *The World*, describes the separation of earthly and eternal realms, prompting the distinctions of MacMillan's setting, including incantatory ponderings on the essence of eternity and a rich partition of voice parts. Together, they speak of a division of light and dark that is germane both to story of creation and to God's sending his son to earth.

The opening of **Holst's** setting of the 'Nunc dimittis', Simeon's appeal to be released into the arms of the everlasting having seen salvation in the form of the Christ Child, begins as if it were coming from a similarly distant space. Gradually, as the voices of the double choir enter, the harmonies coalesce and we find ourselves returning to a point of prayer, specifically to the neo-Byzantine space of Westminster Cathedral, where the first performance took place on Easter Sunday 1915 under the Master of Music Richard Terry. His advocacy of music within the Catholic liturgy not only helped bring about the revival of forgotten Tudor repertoire, but also helped foster the early careers of Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, as well as those who followed them.

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Philip Moore (b.1943)

Morning Prayers (1980) from *Three Prayers Of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1980)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

O God, early in the morning do I cry unto thee, help me to pray, and to think only of thee. I cannot pray alone.

In me there is darkness, but with thee there is light. I am lonely, but thou leavest me not. I am feeble in heart, but thou leavest me not.

I am restless, but with thee there is peace. In me there is bitterness, but with thee there is patience.

Thy ways are past understanding, but thou knowest the way for me.

O heavenly Father I praise and thank thee for the peace of the night. I praise and thank thee for this new day.

I praise and thank thee for all thy goodness and faithfulness throughout my life.

Thou hast granted me many blessings: now let me accept tribulation from thy hand.

Thou will not lay on me more than I can bear.

Thou makest all things work together for good for thy children.

Lord Jesus Christ, thou wast poor and in misery, a captive and forsaken as I am.

Thou knowest all man's distress; thou abidest with me when all others have deserted me; though dost not forget me but seekest me.

Thou willest that I should know thee and turn to thee. Lord I hear thy call and follow thee; do thou help me.

Chiefly do I remember all my loved ones, my fellow prisoners, and all who in this house perform their hard service.

Lord have mercy, restore me to liberty, and enable me so to live now that I may answer before thee and before the world.

Lord, whatever this day may bring, thy name be praised.

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

And the swallow (2017)

Liturgical text

How beloved is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, My soul yearns, faints, my heart and my flesh cry.

The sparrow found a house and the swallow, her nest,

Where she may raise her young.

They pass through the valley of bakka,

They make it a place of springs.

The autumn rains also cover it with pools.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Hymn to St Cecilia Op. 27

W. H. Auden

I

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.
Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.
Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

II

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.
I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.
I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.
All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.
I shall never be Different. Love me.
Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

III

O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where Hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.
O dear white children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.
O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.
O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.
That what has been may never be again.
O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.
O bless the freedom that you never chose.
O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.
O wear your tribulation like a rose.
Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Rest (1902)

Christina Rossetti

O Earth lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth.
Lie close around her,
Leave no room for mirth with its harsh laughter,
Nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from her hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noon-day holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart hath ceased to stir;
Until the morning of Eternity her rest shall not begin
nor end,
But be, and when she wakes she will not think it long.

Joanna Marsh (b.1970)

Evening Prayer

Lancelot Andrewes

The day is gone, and I give Thee thanks, O Lord.
Evening is at hand, make it bright unto us.
As day has its evening, so also has life; make it bright
unto us.

Cast me not away in the time of age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

Abide with me, Lord, for it is toward evening,
And the day is far spent of this fretful life.
Let Thy strength be made perfect in my weakness.

In Winter's House (2019)

Jane Draycott

In winter's house there's a room
That's pale and still as mist in a field
While outside in the street every gate's shut firm,
Every face as cold as steel.

In winter's house there's a bed
That is spread with frost and feathers, that gleams
In the half-light like rain in a disused yard
Or a pearl in a choked-up stream.

In winter's house there's a child
Asleep in a dream of light that grows out
Of the dark, a flame you can hold in your hand
Like a flower or a torch on the street.

In winter's house there's a tale
That's told of a great chandelier in a garden,
Of fire that catches and travels for miles,
Of all gates and windows wide open.

In winter's house there's a flame
Being dreamt by a child in the night,
In the small quiet house at the turn in the lane
Where the darkness gives way to light.

James MacMillan (b.1959)

Miserere

Bible, Psalm 51

Miserere mei, Deus:
secundum magnam
misericordiam tuam. Et
secundum multitudinem
miserationem tuarum, dele
iniquitatem meam.
Amplius lava me ab
iniquitate mea: et a
peccato meo munda me.
Quoniam iniquitatem
meam ego cognosco: et
peccatum meum contra
me est semper. Tibi soli
peccavi, et malum coram
te feci: ut justificeris in
sermonibus tuis, et vincas
cum judicaris. Ecce enim in
iniquitatibus conceptus
sum: et in peccatis
concepit me mater mea.
Ecce enim veritatem
dilexisti: incerta et occulta
sapientiae tuae
manifestasti mihi.
Asperges me hyssopo, et
mundabor: lavabis me, et
super nivem dealabor.
Auditui meo dabis
gaudium et laetitiam: et
exultabunt ossa humiliata.
Averte faciem tuam a
peccatis meis: et omnes
iniquitates meas dele. Cor
mundum crea in me, Deus:
et spiritum rectum innova,
in visceribus meis. Ne
proicias me a facie tua: et
spiritum sanctum tuum ne
auferas a me. Redde mihi
laetitiam salutaris tui: et
spiritu principali confirma
me. Docebo iniquos vias
tuas: et impii ad te
convertentur. Libera me de
sanquinibus, Deus, Deus
salutis meae: et exultabit
lingua mea justitiam tuam.
Domine, labia mea aperies:
et os meum annuntiabit
laudem tuam. Quoniam si
voluisses sacrificium,
dedissem utique:
holocaustis non
delectaberis. Sacrificium
Deo spiritus contribulatus:
cor contritum, et
humiliatum, Deus, non
despicias. Benigne fac,
Domine, in bona voluntate
tua Sion: ut aedificentur

Have mercy upon me, O
God, after thy great
goodness; according to
the multitude of thy
mercies do away mine
offences. Wash me
thoroughly from my
wickedness; and
cleanse me from my
sin. For I acknowledge
my faults; and my sin is
ever before me. Against
thee only have I sinned,
and done this evil in thy
sight; that thou
mightest be justified in
thy saying, and clear
when thou shalt judge.
Behold, I was shapen in
wickedness; and in sin
hath my mother
conceived me. But lo,
thou requirest truth in
the inward parts; and
shalt make me to
understand wisdom
secretly. Thou shalt
purge me with hyssop,
and I shall be clean;
thou shalt wash me,
and I shall be whiter
than snow. Thou shalt
make me hear of joy
and gladness; that the
bones which thou hast
broken may rejoice.
Turn thy face from my
sins; and put out all my
misdeeds. Make me a
clean heart, O God; and
renew a right spirit
within me. Cast me not
away from thy
presence; and take not
thy holy Spirit from me.
O give me the comfort
of thy help again; and
stablish me with thy
free Spirit. Then shall I
teach thy ways unto the
wicked; and sinners
shall be converted unto
thee. Deliver me from
blood-guiltiness, O
God, thou that art the
God of my health; and
my tongue shall sing of
thy righteousness.
Thou shalt open my
lips, O Lord; and my

muri Jerusalem. Tunc
acceptabis sacrificium
justitiae, oblationes et
holocausta: tunc
imponenet super altare
tuum vitulos.

mouth shall show thy
praise. For thou
desirest no sacrifice,
else would I give it thee;
but thou delightest not
in burnt-offerings. The
sacrifice of God is a
troubled spirit; a
broken and contrite
heart, O God, shalt thou
not despise. O be
favourable and
gracious unto Sion;
build thou the walls of
Jerusalem. Then shalt
thou be pleased with
the sacrifice of
righteousness, with the
burnt-offerings and
oblations; then shall
they offer young
bullocks upon thine
altar.

I saw Eternity the other night

From 'The World' by Henry Vaughan

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great Ring of pure, endless light,
All calm as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved; in which the world
And all her train were hurled.
The doting Lover in his quaintest strain
Did there complain;
Near him, his lute, his fancy, and his flights,
Wit's sour delights;
With gloves and knots the silly snares of pleasure,
Yet his dear treasure
All scattered lay, while he his eyes did pour
Upon a flower.

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

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Nunc dimittis

Bible, Luke 2: 29-32

Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace:	Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.
Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum	For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation,
Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:	Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;
Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.	To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto:	Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.	As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

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