



# The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music

Thursday 20 May 2021, 5.30pm  
St Pancras Parish Church

## **“William Blake meets Sebastian Forbes”: Sebastian Forbes at 80**

The LFCCM Festival Singers  
Joanna Forbes L'Estrange *soprano*  
Paul Plummer *organ*  
Christopher Batchelor *direction*

*pre-concert talk at 5pm by Sebastian Forbes*

# Programme

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## *Music of Sebastian Forbes*

### Evensong Canticles: "Aedis Christi 2"

- i. Magnificat
- ii. Nunc Dimittis

### Four Psalms

- i. Psalm 130
- ii. Psalm 64
- iii. Psalm 131
- iv. Psalm 100

### Prelude for Organ on the Chorale

"Gott der Vater wohn' uns bei"

### The Lamb

## Notes

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*Programme notes by Sebastian Forbes*

### **Evensong Canticles: "Aedis Christi 2" (1984)**

As with my *Aedis Christi 1* (1980), this work was commissioned by Rupert Bursell for Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. It was first heard there in 1984. Though different in approach to the familiar words, each of these settings has firm structure, colourful textures, rich harmony, and some individual aspects of organ writing.

### **Four Psalms (1968)**

This work was commissioned by Barnet Music Society for soprano Prudence Lloyd and her husband, organist David Patrick. I gave its first London performance in October 1968, in this church, accompanying soprano Caroline Churchill.

Psalm texts are attractively varied, and my selection aimed to achieve a balance of moods – supplication, fear, humility, and praise. The final psalm concludes with the doxology.

- i. Psalm 130: Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice...
- ii. Psalm 64: Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy...
- iii. Psalm 131: Lord, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks...
- iv. Psalm 100: O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: serve the Lord with gladness...

## Prelude for Organ on the Chorale "Gott der Vater wohn' uns bei" (2015)

This is one of 118 preludes, by different composers, commissioned in order to complete Bach's unfinished Orgelbüchlein. My brief contribution puts the melody in the pedals, and, reflecting an aspect of baroque practice, each phrase has snatches of the melody previewed in the two manual parts; these are heard in canonic, staccato semiquavers.

## The Lamb (2017)

I introduced this setting with my choir, Surrey Cantata, in a special Christmas event in Guildford Cathedral in December 2017. It's an intimate piece, but above all it seeks to preserve the structure of William Blake's text, particularly by recognising that the central six lines of each verse call for a contrasting rhythmic feeling. Blake himself presented his poem in a way that indicates this:

*Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?  
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing woolly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice.  
Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?*

*Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:  
He is call-ed by thy name,  
For He calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child;  
I a child & thou a lamb;  
We are call-ed by his name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee,  
Little Lamb, God bless thee.*

## Biographies

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### Sebastian Forbes

Sebastian Forbes is a member of an active musical family, beginning with his father Watson Forbes (viola) and including many of his relations, offspring and grandchildren. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music and then at Cambridge University; there he gained a first-class degree in Music, sang bass in the chapel choir at King's College, and was later awarded a doctorate for composition (MusD). In 1964-68 he was based in London, as composer, organist, choral conductor, and BBC producer. He was then a university lecturer, first at Bangor and soon at Surrey, where he became Professor in 1981. Emeritus Professor from 2006, he continues with composition, choral conducting, organ playing, and occasional CD production.

His early musical outlook was shaped by two experiences, his father's activity in chamber music, particularly the Aeolian String Quartet's involvement in new music, and his own training as a chorister under Martindale Sidwell at Hampstead Parish Church, with plenty of solo singing there and elsewhere.

His compositional style, which found its particular focus in the early 1960s, can be summarised by epithets that appear in volumes of *The New Grove*: “a composer of intellectual toughness” (1981) and “subtle harmonic plotting” (2000).

## The LFCCM Festival Singers

The Festival’s own professional vocal ensemble, The LFCCM Festival Singers, expands and augments the Choir of St Pancras Parish Church with additional singers from London’s world-class choral institutions. Most members of the ensemble have come from a collegiate background and gone on to study as postgraduate students at one of the London conservatoires. This combination of superb sight-reading and world-class vocal training gives the group tremendous flexibility, enabling the performance of a repertory that spans five centuries: ranging from motets from the Eton Choirbook to new commissions by composers such as Roxanna Panufnik, Michael Berkeley, Cecilia McDowall, Howard Skempton, Michael Finnissy, Gabriel Jackson, Francis Pott, Sebastian Forbes, Francis Grier, Kerry Andrew, Antony Pitts, and many more.

## Christopher Batchelor

Christopher was an organ scholar of Hertford College, Oxford, during which time he was taught by James Dalton. After graduating he moved to Cambridge where, under the supervision of Peter le Huray, he pursued research into 17th century English church music, being awarded both an MPhil and a PhD. During this time he held positions at both Downing and Gonville & Caius Colleges. He moved to London in 1988, succeeding Christopher Bowers-Broadbent as Director of Music and Organist of St Pancras Parish Church. He has taught at a number of institutions, including University College School and the Royal Military School of Music where he was Professor of Orchestration and Arranging. Following the re-establishment of the London College of Music in 2006, Christopher became head of the institution, working with many well-known colleagues and establishing a modern conservatoire. His contributions to education and contemporary church music have recently been acknowledged by the award of an Hon. FLCM. Alongside his performing experience, he has a long-standing practical interest in the organ and was Managing Director of Harrison and Harrison Organ Builders until July 2017; his legacy has been described as “unprecedented”. He continues his association with the organ as an advisor/consultant.

Christopher founded The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music in 2002.

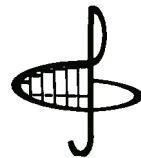
## Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange is a British soprano and jazz singer. Following an MA (Hons) degree in Music from Oxford University her career began with seven years as Soprano and Musical Director of the five-time Grammy Award-winning cappella group *The Swingles*. Its unique sound has inspired many composers, notably Luciano Berio who included “eight amplified solo singers” in his orchestral masterpiece *Sinfonia*, a piece which Joanna has performed over sixty times with orchestras throughout the world.

Contemporary music plays a significant role in Joanna's solo career. Her repertoire includes multiple works by Steve Reich, including *Desert Music* and *Music for 18*, and *Grand Pianola Music* by John Adams. At London's iconic Abbey Road Studios Joanna records Hollywood film soundtracks (more than 200 to date) and is a soloist for the live-to-projection concerts of Howard Shore's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Her solo recordings include Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* on Convivium.

Joanna's choral music is published by the RSCM. She is the founder and Musical Director of *AQUILA*, an all-female vocal group based in Cambridge and this summer will be conducting *The Self-Isolation Choir*. She lives with her composer/jazz musician husband and their two musical sons.

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The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music was founded in 2002  
with the aim of showcasing contemporary liturgical music  
in both service and concert.

*The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music is an artistic project of  
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