



# The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music

Saturday 17 May 2025, 7.30pm  
St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge

## **“Wisdom and Strength”: New sacred music by women composers**

Siglo de Oro  
Simon Hogan *organ*  
Patrick Allies *direction*

# Programme

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## *I. Morning: Holy Week and Easter*

<i>Kerensa Briggs</i>	Media vita
<i>Judith Ward</i>	In manus tuas
<i>Judith Ward</i>	Kyrie and Gloria ( <i>from St Mark's Mass</i> )
<i>Sarah Cattley</i>	Haec dies
<i>Joanna Marsh</i>	Worthy is the Lamb
<i>Judith Ward</i>	Sanctus and Benedictus ( <i>from St Mark's Mass</i> )
<i>Kristina Arakelyan</i>	Christ, Our Paschal Lamb
<i>Judith Ward</i>	Agnus Dei ( <i>from St Mark's Mass</i> )
<i>Judith Weir</i>	Love Bade Me Welcome

## *Interval*

## *II. Evening: Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity*

<i>Judith Ward</i>	O Clap Your Hands	
<i>Marisse Cato</i>	Flamed Tongue	<i>World premiere</i>
<i>Shruthi Rajasekar</i>	Psalm 59	
<i>Judith Bingham</i>	The Spirit of Truth	
<i>Alison Willis</i>	Magnificat	
<i>Amy Summers</i>	Nunc Dimittis	
<i>Kerry Andrews</i>	O lux beata trinitas	
<i>Judith Ward</i>	Gloria tibi trinitas	

# Programme Notes

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The services which the Church of England celebrates on a typical Sunday have roots which are thousands of years old. During their existence, they have undergone changes both subtle and more dramatic. The musical content of these services is a living tradition, fed by the contributions of successive generations of composers. Tonight's concert celebrates some of the most recent of these contributions, eavesdropping on an imagined day of liturgical music, which progresses from the morning celebration of the Eucharist to Choral Evensong at the other end of the day. In parallel, the works featured represent a progression through part of the Church year: from Lent and Easter, through Ascension and Pentecost, to Trinity Sunday.

The celebration of a Sunday feast properly begins the night before. Accordingly, this recital begins with two motets associated with the office of Night Prayer, or Compline. The text of **Media vita** comes from a Lenten antiphon attached to the Nunc Dimittis, which forms a frame around Simeon's Song, a comment on the canticle's acknowledgement of Christ's mastery over life and death. This *Media vita* setting by Kerensa Briggs was commissioned by Siglo de Oro in 2015 for a project commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Tudor composer John Sheppard. Briggs cites the expansiveness and intensity of Sheppard's setting of this antiphon as influences on the motet. A low tessitura prevails, giving the sense of humanity trapped under the weight of sin, struggling to free itself, until the impassioned cries of "morti" break through towards the conclusion of the piece.

**In manus tuas** is a responsory which in the Use of Sarum also belonged to the office of Compline in Holy Week. This setting introduces the central figure of this programme: Judith Ward, an Oxfordshire-based choral conductor, teacher and composer. The opening section of this piece is plainchant-inspired and austere textured. A sense of timeless ritual is extended in subsequent sections by the use of a quasi-liturgical "call-and-response" between the choir and a quartet of soloists.

The **Mass for St Mark**, while largely making use of a diatonic musical palette, incorporates a number of different styles, including imitative polyphony, plainchant and movements for organ and choir that are always sensitive to the liturgy. The tripartite **Kyrie**, a prayer which prepares the congregation for the Communion rite by seeking absolution, establishes a modal flavour. Its inner section, "Christe eleison", is given a homophonic texture, in contrast to the more imitative outer sections. This unaccompanied, introspective movement is followed by the **Gloria**, which introduces the organ's gently undulating accompaniment. A more reflective "Qui tollis" section harkens back to the polyphonic masses of the Renaissance, before the propulsive organ accompaniment returns to carry the movement to its finale.

The **Sanctus** begins gently, building towards a climax of "Hosanna", before a segue into the **Benedictus**, which again employs an imitative texture. This then gives way to a more forceful "Hosanna" which calls for full organ. In the **Agnus Dei**, the three sections progress from prayerful, largely unison choral singing to a more dramatic texture, as if gaining in confidence with each repetition of this prayer for deliverance, which is offered in the Eucharist during the distribution of communion.

Sarah Cattle's **Haec dies**, a setting of an Easter Day antiphon, was commissioned by Caritas Chamber Choir. Its arresting opening has the sopranos establish the motif, appropriate for the resurrection, of a rising fifth. A deft key change introduces an aleatoric section, in which the singers may proceed individually at their own pace, creating a wash of celebratory sounds in which motifs emerge and submerge. These ideas unify the piece, with the combination of the two providing a rapturous conclusion.

The well-known Eastertide text **Worthy is the Lamb** receives an apocalyptic, double-choir treatment from composer Joanna Marsh. The organ opens proceedings with a lively fanfare figure, over which the singers move more slowly, with tectonic grandeur. An inexorable momentum drives the music forward, the two choirs alternating phrases. Towards the end the fanfare returns, grand and dissonant, frequently making use of chords with both a major and minor third. It is as if the vision from the Book of Revelation has come before us, at once triumphal and terrible.

In our imagined liturgy, Kristina Arakelyan's **Christ, our Paschal Lamb** serves as the first communion motet. The text emerges only gradually; at first the voices are wordless, before the "ah" is recontextualised as the beginning of "alleluia". This exordium then leads to the central motet text, sung alternately by the lower and upper voices of the choir. After a radiant climax, the alleluias gradually subside in rhapsodic fashion. The second communion motet is Judith Weir's glowing setting of George Herbert's poem **Love Bade Me Welcome**. In Herbert's words, Love – understood to be the manifestation of God – welcomes frail humanity with a warm embrace. Weir's music matches the text's internal conflict with dissonance and consonance.

Joy bursts forth in Judith Ward's **O clap your hands**, which takes the position of a "choral voluntary" after the morning service. The idea of the voluntary after a church service came into being as the use of organs in church buildings became widespread in the fifteenth century, with the name implying a free or improvised piece. Ward's piece exhibits this same sense of spontaneity, the lively syncopations establishing an ebullient mood, and frequent changes of metre suggesting irrepressible excitement.

Choral Evensong is the result of a sixteenth-century liturgical experiment, which fused the monastic offices of Vespers and Compline together to create a single office of Evening Prayer to balance that of Morning Prayer (or Matins). Its rubric that anthems may be included "in Quires and Places where they sing" has given rise to centuries of musical creativity, and, together with its distinctive use of language, helped lead to this service's status as the artistic jewel of the Anglican liturgy.

It is often customary to begin Evensong with an introit, which here is a work by Marisse Cato: **Flamed Tongue**, a Siglo de Oro commission. The title refers to the flames which were seen as the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost, bestowing upon them the gift of tongues. Cato's approach here is highly pictorial and imaginative, giving voice to the flickering flames, the rushing wind, and finally the world of dreams.

The Book of Common Prayer allows for all of the 150 Psalms of David to be recited over the course of a month, with a section of them appointed to each service of Morning and Evening Prayer. The distinctive form of Anglican chant evolved from this requirement: a way of singing which preserved vernacular speech-rhythm, with a "pointed" text indicating changes of note. The

heading of **Psalm 59** gives its context: “When Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill [David]”. This desperate plea for deliverance is given a suitably dissonant double chant by Indian-American composer Shruthi Rajasekar.

Following the Psalm, in place of an office hymn, we have **The Spirit of Truth** by Judith Bingham. Written in response to Thomas Tallis’ famous anthem *If ye love me*, Bingham’s motet is scored for low voices, depicting a Holy Spirit that is bound up in the depths of the earth, with a haunting melody above the profound harmonies.

In the new service of Evensong, the chief canticles of Vespers and Compline were combined into the same service. This creates a narrative of revelation: after the Old Testament reading, the Magnificat interrupts with the words of Mary, heralding the New Testament that will follow, and the fulfilment of God’s promise to his people. Alison Willis’s setting of the **Magnificat** was originally written to sit alongside the *Nunc Dimittis* by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and was premiered in 2017. Its key of D $\flat$  major parallels the C $\sharp$  minor of Pärt’s, and the focus on choral sonority and syllabic text-setting also seem informed by Pärt’s distinctive style, as is the use of long pedal tones in various voices.

The **Nunc Dimittis** responds to the revelation of the New Testament reading which immediately precedes it with Simeon’s song of acceptance and farewell, having seen the promised light of the Saviour. Amy Summers, a London-based composer and orchestrator, achieves this sense of mystical acceptance with a delicate and subtly shifting harmonic texture. The prevailing mood is of a gentle progress towards peace, with the piano dynamic only briefly yielding in the doxology.

**O lux beata Trinitas** is one of the most ancient hymns of the Church, traditionally ascribed to the fourth-century St Ambrose. Appropriately, Kerry Andrew’s setting begins with three voices, circling around each other to rest on a close cluster of notes. Gently insistent ostinatos are a feature of the piece, whether in the quietly rocking “unitas” or the cascading melismas of the next section’s ‘lumen’. Later, this same idea will form the basis of an aleatoric section, gradually forming a vast, spacious outpouring of sound over which soloists intone the doxology, before the opening two-note ostinato returns, calmly retreating into warm dyads.

The final voluntary, once more by Judith Ward, is this concert’s only organ solo, a lively toccata also on a Trinitarian theme, **Gloria tibi Trinitas**. After a declamatory opening, a pattern of semiquavers is established, over which is quoted the titular plainchant melody. A more lyrical harmonisation of the tune follows, before the semiquavers return, at first fragmented, then spiralling into a dramatic, declamatory conclusion.

– Programme notes by James Potter with additional material by Patrick Allies

## Texts and translations of Latin motets

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**Media vita** in morte sumus: quem quaerimus adiutorem nisi te Domine qui pro peccatis nostris iuste irascaris?

*In the midst of life we are in death: whom shall we seek to help us if not you, Lord, who are rightly angry at our sins?*

Sancte Deus, sancte fortis, sancte et misericors salvator: amarae morti ne tradas nos.

*Holy God, holy and strong, holy and merciful saviour: do not give us over to bitter death.*

**In manus tuas** Domine commendo spiritum meum. Redemisti me Domine Deus veritatis.

*Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.*

**Haec dies** quam fecit Dominus; exultemus et laetemur in ea. Alleluia.

*This is the day that the Lord has made: let us exult and rejoice in it. Alleluia.*

Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus, alleluia. Itaque epulemur in azymis sinceritatis et veritatis, alleluia.

**Christ, our Paschal Lamb** is sacrificed for us, alleluia. And so let us feast on the unleavened bread of purity and truth, alleluia.

**O lux beata Trinitas,**  
et principalis Unitas,  
iam sol recedit igneus,  
infunde lumen cordibus.

*O blest Trinity of light,  
and primal Unity,  
now the fiery sun is sinking,  
pour light into our hearts.*

Te mane laudum carmine,  
te deprecemur vespere:  
te nostra supplex gloria  
per cuncta laudet sæcula.

*May we pray to you with morning song,  
may we pray to you in the evening:  
may our suppliant hymn of glory  
praise you throughout all ages.*

Deo Patri sit gloria,  
eiusque soli Filio,  
cum Spiritu Paraclito,  
et nunc, et in perpetuum. Amen.

*Glory be to God the Father  
and to his only Son,  
with the Spirit, the Comforter,  
both now and forever. Amen.*

## Performer Biographies

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### Siglo de Oro

Siglo de Oro is one of the leading British vocal ensembles of its generation. The group is recognised internationally for its golden tone, fresh interpretations, and innovative programming. Since its acclaimed debut at the Spitalfields Festival in 2014, Siglo de Oro has performed all over the UK,

Europe, and North America, recorded five albums for Delphian Records, and broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3.

Siglo de Oro's recordings with Delphian Records range from 15<sup>th</sup> century music written for Milan Cathedral to new pieces for choir and saxophone composed specifically for the ensemble. Among these albums was the world premiere recording of a late-Renaissance mass by Hieronymus Praetorius, released in 2018, which was BBC Music Magazine's Choral and Song Album of the Month. Siglo de Oro's most recent recording, *The Mysterious Motet Book of 1539*, reached number nine in the UK specialist classical chart, and was one of Music Web International's Recordings of the Year for 2022.

Siglo de Oro has long been committed to performing contemporary music. The ensemble has regularly commissioned new works, including pieces by Kerensa Briggs, Owain Park, Ben Rowarth, and Marisse Cato. Siglo de Oro gave the first performance of Emily Hall's hotel-based opera *Found and Lost*, and has an ongoing association with the charity Multitude of Voyces, whose mission is to promote the work of under-represented composers. In the 2024-25 season, the group will take up a three-concert residency at Wigmore Hall, as well as giving concerts across the UK and in Canada, the United States, and Finland.

*Soprano* Ailsa Campbell Fiona Fraser Rachel Haworth Elspeth Piggott  
*Alto* Rebekah Jones Sophie Overin  
*Tenor* Paul Bentley-Angell Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard James Robinson  
*Bass* David Le Prevost Jonathan Pratt Ben Rowarth

## Simon Hogan

Simon Hogan is the Sub-Organist and Assistant Director of Music at Southwark Cathedral, a post which he combines with being Organist to the Cathedral Singers of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and a portfolio of freelance work in and around London.

Simon was a chorister at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and it was during this time that he started learning the piano and organ, developing a passion for cathedral music which has stayed with him to this day. Following organ scholarships at Bristol and Salisbury Cathedrals he moved to London in 2008 to study organ performance at the Royal College of Music where he subsequently graduated with first class honours. During his final year at the RCM Simon was Organ Scholar at St Paul's Cathedral, where he regularly accompanied and directed the world-famous choir and gave recitals on the renowned Willis organ. In 2012 Simon moved to Southwell, Nottinghamshire, where he spent seven years as Assistant Director of Music at Southwell Minster. Here he directed the Minster's girls' choir and the Minster Chorale, and played the organ for all services, recordings, tours and broadcasts.

As a soloist Simon has given recitals in venues across the UK, including the cathedrals of Durham, Hereford and Westminster, The Albert Hall, Nottingham Town Hall, and Rochdale Town Hall. Recent notable performances include the complete organ symphonies of Louis Vierne in a single day, the premiere of a new work for eight organs and electronics by Wolfgang Mitterer for Karlsruhe's 300th anniversary, and a performance of the Poulenc *Organ Concerto* with the Orchestra of the Kolobov Novaya Opera Theatre, Moscow.

Simon has studied organ performance with Sophie-Véronique Cauchefer-Choplin, Daniel Cook, David Graham, Robert Quinney, and Colin Walsh. He studied conducting with Paul Brough and Peter Stark, and harpsichord with Terrance Charlston. Simon is the principal organist for JAM, an organisation which commissions and performs new music for brass, organ and choir by leading contemporary composers, and as such he has enjoyed working with some of the country's finest ensembles, including The BBC Singers, the Chapel Choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge, Gesualdo Six, and Onyx Brass. Simon's solo recording from Southwell Minster on the Priory label, released in 2015, has been met with critical acclaim.

## Patrick Allies

Patrick Allies is a conductor and musicologist based in London. He began his musical education as a chorister at the Temple Church, and sang in Gloucester Cathedral Choir before taking up a choral scholarship to study music at King's College London. Patrick went on to postgraduate study at the University of Cambridge where he was a member of Jesus College Choir.

In his role as artistic director of the London-based vocal ensemble Siglo de Oro, Patrick has made five acclaimed recordings with Delphian Records of music from the Renaissance to the present day. Under Patrick's direction the group has taken up invitations to perform in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Malta, Canada, and the United States.

Patrick is currently conductor of Imperial College Chamber Choir, the flagship choir of Imperial College London. In addition to directing the choir in its regular services and concerts on the college's South Kensington campus, Patrick has led the choir on international tours to Estonia and Finland, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3's "Choral Evensong" programme.

Alongside his work as a conductor Patrick is a doctoral student in music at the University of Oxford. Patrick's research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, involves 15<sup>th</sup> century choirs and their performance spaces.

## The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music

The London Festival of Contemporary Church Music was founded by Christopher Batchelor in 2002 with the aim of showcasing contemporary liturgical music in both service and concert. Now more than 20 years old, the LFCCM has grown to include nearly 60 events, dozens of composers, hundreds of performers, and thousands of audience members, both live and online.

## Make the LFCCM part of your Legacy

Artistic groups across the United Kingdom have seen funding cuts and financial pressures since the global coronavirus pandemic. In the face of challenges like these, the secure future of classical music in this country can no longer be taken for granted. The LFCCM's endowment fund ensures the Festival's ongoing financial security and independence for generations to come. Your lasting legacy will be reflected in new commissions, live performances, educational programmes, and supporting the development of church music in perpetuity.

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