

## The Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead

### Music Notes ~ May 2022

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, based at St Pancras Parish Church but involving several choirs in London and beyond. Many events take place between Saturday 7th and Sunday 15th, including concerts and lectures as well as regular services (see [www.lfccm.com](http://www.lfccm.com)), and the 70th birthday of Judith Bingham plays a central role in this year's celebrations. Here at Hampstead we shall be performing contemporary church music within four services over the two Sundays that fall within the Festival. Notably we feature two first performances: the *Jazz Mass* by Paul Edis, whose jazz ensemble has performed in the church twice in the last year, on Sunday 8th (see [www.pauledis.co.uk](http://www.pauledis.co.uk)), and my new choral arrangement of the *Fitzwilliam Communion Service* by Peter Tranchell on Sunday 15th (see <https://peter-tranchell.uk>). The two Evensongs contain a varied selection of new works by many different contemporary composers, representing a wide range of compositional styles (jazz-influenced, neo-Romantic, minimalist...) and featuring music by two former Directors of Music at Hampstead, Martindale Sidwell and Peter Foggitt, and two recently-graduated Cambridge University music students Mark Zhang and Lucy Walker.

By contrast, the oldest piece we're performing this month is the Latin psalm-motet *Omnes gentes* by Christopher Tye, another Cambridge degree-holder, who probably composed the piece whilst serving as Director of Music at Ely Cathedral around the middle of the 16th century. Tye's polyphonic style is notably animated in nature, and is well suited to the Ascensiontide psalm 'O clap your hands together'. Rhythm plays an important part in the Easter motet *Dic nobis Maria* by the late sixteenth-century Venetian composer Giovanni Bassano. He worked as a cornettist, and the distinctive repeated-note refrain of the motet is appropriately instrumental in nature. Bassano's music was performed across Europe, and the Hamburg organist Heinrich Scheidemann made an arrangement of the piece for organ solo, which will be played as the voluntary after the service.

Amongst the pieces selected for the season of Easter this month is the motet *In exitu Israel* by Samuel Wesley. Samuel, the father of the more well-known Samuel Sebastian Wesley, did not hold a regular church music post, partly due to his Roman Catholic sympathies (far removed from the life and work of his uncle John), and many of his compositions were originally written for concert performance rather than liturgical use. *In exitu* is an extraordinary work of eight-part counterpoint, based on a number of contrasted themes, the first of which derives from a plainsong psalm-tone. The singers are put through their paces with extended runs and leaps, and the work ends mysteriously with a sudden infusion of lush harmony. For the Eve of Ascension Day we perform the sumptuous *Messe solennelle* by Jean Langlais as well as the exuberant *God is gone up* by Gerald Finzi, with Richard Gowers at the organ.

Finally, some explanation of my arrangement of music by Peter Tranchell. Peter Tranchell composed his *Fitzwilliam Communion Service* for Fitzwilliam House in Cambridge, later Fitzwilliam College, in 1960. It was composed for congregation, choir, organ and 2 optional trumpets, and was carefully designed to fit the liturgy and resources for which it was intended. The movements are scored differently, with no congregational part in the Agnus Dei; there is a Creed but no setting of the Benedictus, and organ chords are provided to underpin the singing of the Preface following the Sursum corda. Such features, and the often demanding nature of the congregational part, render the piece unlikely to be widely performed as it was originally composed. The aim of this new arrangement is present Tranchell's music in a version for choir and organ only, containing the four movements of the Ordinary of the Mass that are usually sung today: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus & Benedictus, and Agnus Dei. Given the varied nature of the original piece, I have taken a different approach to each movement, and have inserted a setting of the Benedictus from amongst those Tranchell wrote at around the same time for his own College, Gonville & Caius.

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