



# Choral Music by **SAMUEL BARBER**

SOMMCD 0152



Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir

Ben Kennedy *piano*\* • Matthew Firkins *timpani*+ • Birmingham Conservatoire Brass Ensemble\*\*  
Paul Spicer *director*

## Reincarnations, Op. 16

- |   |                             |      |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 1 | Mary Hynes                  | 2:20 |
| 2 | Anthony O'Daly              | 3:03 |
| 3 | The Coolin                  | 3:14 |
| 4 | Easter Chorale***           | 2:50 |
| 5 | God's Grandeur              | 6:40 |
| 6 | Let down the bars, O Death! | 2:12 |

## Two Choruses from Anthony and Cleopatra

- |   |                            |      |
|---|----------------------------|------|
| 7 | On the death of Anthony*   | 3:18 |
| 8 | On the death of Cleopatra* | 3:19 |

## Two Choruses

- |    |                         |      |
|----|-------------------------|------|
| 9  | Twelfth Night           | 4:12 |
| 10 | To be sung on the water | 2:51 |
| 11 | The Monk and his Cat*   | 2:25 |

- |    |                                  |      |
|----|----------------------------------|------|
| 12 | Under the Willow Tree*           | 3:09 |
| 13 | A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map+ | 5:59 |

## Motetto on Words from the Book of Job

- |    |                                    |      |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 14 | 1. Job 3:17-19                     | 1:37 |
| 15 | 2. Job 5:1, 11:7-8, 5:7-8          | 3:33 |
| 16 | 3. Job 9:16-17                     | 3:49 |
| 17 | The Virgin Martyrs                 | 3:35 |
| 18 | The Moon*                          | 2:06 |
| 19 | Sure on this Shining Night*        | 2:29 |
| 20 | Ad Bibinem cum me Rogaret ad Cenam | 1:50 |
| 21 | Heaven-Haven                       | 1:54 |
| 22 | Agnus Dei                          | 6:37 |

**Total duration** 73:11

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# Choral Music by **SAMUEL BARBER**

Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir  
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# Choral Music by Samuel Barber

During his lifetime, Samuel Barber (1910 – 1981) saw some of the greatest changes to music since the early 17th century. During his 71 years, Expressionism overtook late Romanticism, only to give way to Experimentalism almost immediately. Composers who maintained a 19th century idiom, like Barber, were deemed *passé*, irrelevant, reactionary, and marginal. However, despite these Modernist and Postmodern revolutions, Barber's technical brilliance and emotional immediacy placed him, sometimes uncomfortably, at the forefront of American music.

This prominence made his music, inevitably, a centre of controversy. A letter to the *New York Times* decried his music's lack of 'evidence of youthful vigour, freshness or fire...a contemporary idiom,' calling it 'utterly anachronistic as the utterance of a young man of 28, A.D. 1938!' Barber's professional and personal partner Gian Carlo Menotti retorted that the contemporary preoccupation with revolution was 'very amusing,' but now 'the younger generation is left with the thankless job of building in their ruins.'

Though he avidly read his critics, Barber was largely impervious to this whirlwind of proscriptive musical upheavals. His work was overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, neo-Romantic; a dedication to emotional self-expression was carried out through creative, individual, yet unrepentantly traditional means. That traditionalism insulated him from the vagaries of a fickle artistic scene, allowing him an expressive freedom perhaps best exemplified in his choral music, a body of work that lays bare the thoughts and preoccupations of a complex individual.

At the heart of his self-expression was an intimate relationship with the text he was setting. He read poetry ardently, marking texts he might later use, and honed vocal pieces until he was satisfied that they reflected the rhythm, contour, and meaning of words. He confessed in his diary that he spent 'much more time looking for the poems than setting them' for his first group of choral works, a set of a *cappella* rounds (1927) written as a composition exercise for Rosario Scalero, his teacher at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. In ***The Moon*** (the only round to be re-imagined as an independent piece with accompaniment), expressive rising figures are repeatedly defeated by the sheer gravity of descending chromatic lines, matching the inescapable melancholy of the Shelley text. Tortuous chromaticism characterises another early work, the ***Motetto on Words from the Book of Job*** (1930). While not an exercise, the 'Motetto' is clearly a young composer's exploration of styles. Barber scholar and biographer Barbara Heyman writes:

The alternating homophonic and contrapuntal texture, the sombre harmonies, imitative entrances, and antiphonal double-chorus passages all reflect Barber's interest in early Baroque choral music, in particular the motets of Schütz....

Interestingly, a long-lost additional movement may have been replaced by the Gerard Manley Hopkins setting ***God's Grandeur*** (1938), whose richly swelling antiphonal phrases appear to be recycled from the third movement of the 'Motetto'.

***The Virgin Martyrs*** (1935) sits at the intersection of two of Barber's fascinations: medieval lyrics and the idea of saintly isolation. This piece, marked by the same

expressive chromaticism as *The Moon* and the *Motetto*, uses text from Helen Waddell's translation of medieval author Sigebert of Gembloux. It presages both the austere, ascetic passions in ***Heaven Haven (A Nun Takes the Veil)*** (1961) – another Hopkins setting – and ***The Monk and His Cat*** (1967), from a collection of Gaelic monks' texts that Barber quipped were 'perhaps not always meant to be seen by their Father Superiors.' Both *Heaven Haven* and *The Monk and His Cat* are adaptations of much earlier solo songs: he often revisited works in this manner.

Melancholic isolation is also at the heart of ***Let Down the Bars, O Death*** (1936). Some of Barber's most candid music underpins a text of mesmerizingly serene morbidity. He wrote, offhand, to his parents, 'I wrote a little chorus the other morning, quite good, it will be all right for someone's funeral.' *Let Down the Bars, O Death* would be performed at his own memorial service in 1981. In a similarly somber vein, ***A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map*** (1940), written for the men of the Curtis Institute of Music Madrigal Chorus, was described by Robert Horan as 'unique in its cumulative and elegiac desperation.' Timpani and voices collaborate on a martial dirge, memorializing a soldier killed in the Spanish Civil War; the choir later fractures into an *a cappella* interweaving of gnarled chromaticism for the text's abrupt shift to surreal pastoralism.

So much of his music exposed his melancholy – indeed, a deep-seated depression would plague him later in life – yet the kind, gregarious, likable side of his character, seen by so many of his friends is abundantly evident in works like *Mary Hynes*, the first of a set of three ***Reincarnations***. The set is the result of another one of his great loves: Irish literature, here reinterpreted – or

'reincarnated' – from its 17th century origins by the poet James Stephens. The second piece, *Anthony O'Daly*, is another prolonged crescendo of funereal anguish. The third, *The Coolin*, exposes a Barber infrequently seen, the nostalgic, wistful romantic who would later set Neruda's erotic poetry in the oratorio *The Lovers*. The lightness of *Mary Hynes* returns in a subsequent work, ***Ad Bibinem cum me rogaret ad cenam***, written soon after *Reincarnations*, a jocular homage to his publisher: 'Nectar, wine, wit and learning, such is your fashion,' the original Latin says of Carl Engels, nicknamed Bibi; 'You overwhelm us with words and food.'

For the next several decades, the only choral works Barber produced were adaptations. ***Under the Willow Tree*** (1961) is taken from his 1958 opera *Vanessa*, which won him his first Pulitzer prize. During this period, he also made the choral versions of the songs *Heaven Haven* and *The Monk and His Cat*, as well as the poignant and deservedly famous ***Sure on this Shining Night*** (1961). ***Agnus Dei*** (1967), an arrangement of the famed *Adagio for Strings* (itself adapted from his opus 11 string quartet), has gained a place of prominence alongside its instrumental counterpart. This profoundly impactful music has become a sort of American national anthem of mourning, performed in memory of FDR, Einstein, and JFK. ***Easter Chorale*** (1964) is another instrumental transcription, less famous than *Agnus Dei*, but equally elegant in its melodic simplicity.

Despite the success of *Vanessa*, an opera, in many ways, ended Barber's career: the premiere of *Antony and Cleopatra*, marred by a bloated production, was a critical failure that catalysed Barber's descent into alcoholism and depression. *Antony and Cleopatra* is nevertheless a work of enormous power, and the choruses extracted from it, ***On the Death of Antony*** and ***On the Death of***

*Cleopatra* (1968) embody a culmination of his past choral experience. Thick contrapuntal textures are deftly propelled by lush dissonances toward unified climaxes of tremendous impact.

After *Antony and Cleopatra*, Barber wrote considerably less, finding an outlet and solace in small vocal pieces. Two such works are the choruses *Twelfth Night* and *To Be Sung on the Water* (1968). The former, on text by Laurie Lee, resolves the sombre, errant hopelessness of the opening – ‘No night could be darker than this night’ – with the forceful, almost violent *fortissimo* declaration of Christ’s birth. *To Be Sung on the Water*, on text by Louise Bogan, offers a benumbed answer to the anguish of *Twelfth Night*. A gently undulating melody floats above a placid ostinato evocative of rowing; the piece never quite resolves, closing on a stark open fifth.

Except for *The Lovers*, the ambiguous ending of *To Be Sung on the Water* was Barber’s final utterance in the choral genre. It offers a fitting close to a series of works that represent the many sides of a composer who, despite his warmth and humour, could never fully escape his own sadness. It is also a return to his deeply personal compositional objective. *To Be Sung on the Water*, as all of his choral works, exemplifies his declaration that: ‘I myself wrote always as I wished, and without a tremendous desire to find the latest thing possible.... I wrote as I wanted to for myself’.

Daniel Galbreath  
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## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

### Reincarnations, Op. 16

#### 1. Mary Hynes

She is the sky of the sun!  
She is the dart of love!  
She is the love of my heart!  
She is a rune!

She is above the women of the race of Eve,  
As the sun is above the moon!

Lovely and airy the view from the hill  
That looks down Ballylea!  
But no good sight is good,  
Until you see the blossom of the branches  
Walking towards you, airily.

#### 2. Anthony O’Daly

Since your limbs were laid out  
The stars do not shine!  
The fish leap not out in the waves!  
On our meadows  
The dew does not fall in the morn,  
For O Daly is dead!

Not a flow’r can be born!  
Not a word can be said!  
Not a tree have a leaf!  
Anthony! After you there is nothing to do!  
There is nothing but grief!

### 3. The Coolin

Come with me, under my coat,  
And we will drink our fill  
Of the milk of the white goat,  
Or wine, if it be thy will;  
And we will talk until  
Talk is a trouble, too,  
Out in the side of the hill,  
And nothing is left to do,  
But an eye to look into an eye  
And a hand in a hand to slip,  
And a sigh to answer a sigh,  
And a lip to find out a lip:

What if the night be black  
And the air on the mountain chill,  
Where the goat lies down in her track  
And all but the fern is still!  
Stay with me under my coat,  
And we will drink our fill  
Of the milk of the white goat  
Out on the side of the hill.

*James Stephens*

### 4. Easter Chorale

The morning light renews the sky.  
Across the air the birds ignite  
Like sparks to take this blaze of day  
Through all the precincts of the night.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

The fires of dawn refresh our eyes.  
We watch the world grow wide and bright  
And praise our newly risen Light.

The winter land receives the year.  
Her smallest creatures rouse and cling  
To swelling roots and buds that stir  
The restless air to reel and ring!  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

The sounds of waking fill our ears.  
We listen to the live earth sing  
And praise our loving Source and Spring

*Pack Browning*

### 5. God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feet, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There he lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

*Gerald Manley Hopkins*

### 6. Let down the bars, O Death!

Let down the bars, O Death!  
The tired flocks come in  
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,  
Whose wandering is done.

Thine is the stillest night,  
Thine the securest fold;  
Too near thou art for seeking thee,  
Too tender to be told.

*Emily Dickinson*

## Two Choruses from Antony and Cleopatra

### 7 1. On the death of Antony

Noblest of men, woo't die?  
Hast thou no care of me?  
O see, my women,  
The crown o' the earth doth melt. My Lord!  
O withered is the garland of the war,  
The soldier's pole is fallen: young boys and girls  
Are level now with men. The odds is gone,  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon.

I dream't there was an Emperor Antony  
O, such sleep that I might see,  
But such another man!  
His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm  
Crested the world. His delights  
Were dolphin like, they showed his back above  
The element they lived in.  
Think you there was, or might be such a man  
As this I dreamed of?  
Gentle madam, no!  
you lie, up to the hearing of the gods  
But if there be or ever were one such,,  
It's past the size of dreaming.

*Shakespeare Antony and Cleopatra, excerpts from IV, xv, 59-68, V ii, 76-97*

### 8 2. On the death of Cleopatra

She looks like sleep,  
As she would catch another Antony  
In her strong toil of grace,  
Take up her bed  
And bear her women from the monument  
She shall be buried by her Antony,  
No grave upon the earth shall clasp in it  
A pair so famous.  
Our army shall  
In solemn show attend this funeral,  
And then to Rome!

*Shakespeare – Antony and Cleopatra, excerpts from V, ii, 343-362*

## Two Choruses

### 9 1. Twelfth Night

No night could be darker than this night,  
No cold so cold,  
As the blood snaps like a wire  
And the heart's sap stills,  
And the year seems defeated.

O never again, it seems, can green things run,  
Or sky birds fly,  
Or the grass exhale its humming breath,  
Powdered with pimpernels,  
From this dark lung of winter.

Yet here are lessons for the final mile  
Of pilgrim kings;  
The mile still left when all have reached  
Their tether's end:  
That mile where the Child lies hid.

For see, beneath the hand,  
The earth already warms and glows;  
For men with shepherd's eyes  
There are signs in the dark,  
The turning stars,  
The lamb's returning time.

Out of this utter death he's born again,  
His birth our saviour;  
From terror's equinox he climbs and grows,  
Drawing his finger's light across our blood  
The sun of heaven,  
And the son of God.

*Laurie Lee*

## 10 2. To be sung on the water

Beautiful, my delight,  
Pass, as we pass the wave,  
Pass, as the mottled night  
Leaves what it cannot save,  
Scattering dark and bright.

Beautiful, pass and be  
Less than the guiltless shade  
To which our vows were said;  
Less than the sound of an oar  
To which our vows were made,  
Less than the sound of its blade  
Dipping the stream once more.

*Louise Bogan*

## 11 The Monk and his Cat

Pangur, white Pangur,  
How happy we are  
Alone together,  
Scholar and cat.  
Each has his own work to do daily;  
For you, it is hunting, for me study.  
Your shining eye watches the wall;  
My feeble eye is fixed on a book.  
You rejoice when your claws  
Entrap a mouse,

I rejoice when my mind  
Fathoms a problem.  
Pleased with his own art,  
Neither hinders the other,  
Thus we live ever  
Without tedium and envy.  
Pangur, white Pangur,  
How happy we are.

*8th or 9th century Irish translation.  
arr. W.H. Auden*

## 12 Under the Willow Tree

Under the willow tree two doves cry,  
Ah, oh!  
Where shall we sleep, my love, whither shall we fly?  
The wood has swallowed the moon,  
The fog has swallowed the shore,  
The green toad has swallowed the key to my door.

*Gian Carlo Menotti – from the Opera 'Vanessa'*

### 13 A stopwatch and an ordnance map

A stopwatch and an ordnance map.  
At five a man fell to the ground  
And the watch flew off his wrist  
Like a moon struck from the earth  
Marking a blank time that stares  
On the tides of change beneath.  
*All under the olive trees.*

A stopwatch and an ordnance map.  
He stayed faithfully in that place  
From his living comrade split  
By dividers of the bullet  
Opening wide the distances  
Of his final loneliness.  
*All under the olive trees.*

A stopwatch and an ordnance map.  
And the bones are fixed at five  
Under the moon's timelessness;  
But another who lives on  
Wears within his heart forever  
The space split open by the bullet.  
*All under the olive trees*

*Stephen Spender*

## Motetto on Words from the Book of Job

### 14 1. There the wicked cease

There the wicked cease from troubling  
And the weary be at rest;  
There the prisoners rest together,  
They hear not the voice of th'oppressor.  
The small and the great are there,  
And the servant is free from his master.

*Job 3:17-19*

### 15 2. Call now!

Call now, if there be any that will answer thee!  
And to which of the saints wilt thou turn?  
Canst thou by searching find out God?  
He is as high as Heav'n; what canst thou do?  
Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?  
Yet man is born to trouble,  
As the sparks fly upward.  
I would seek unto God.

*Job 5:1, 11:7-8, 5:7-8*

### 16 3. Praise Him!

Praise Him! Then shalt thou forget thy misery,  
And remember it as waters pass'd away.  
And thou shalt be secure because there is peace!  
Thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning!  
Praise Him! Amen.

*Job 9:16-17*

## 17 The Virgin Martyrs

Therefore come they, the crowding maidens,  
Gertrude, Agnes, Prisca, Cecily,  
Lucy, Thekla, Juliana, Barbara,  
Agatha, Petronel, and other maids  
Whose names I have read not and now record not,  
But their souls and their faith were maimed not.  
Worthy now of God's company.  
Wand'ring through the fresh fields go they,  
Gath'ring flowers to make them a nosegay  
Gath'ring roses red for the Passion,  
Lilies and violets for love.

*Helen Waddell (after the Latin of Sigebert of Gembloux)*

## 18 The Moon

Art thou pale of weariness  
Of climbing heaven and gazing on earth,  
Wandering companionless  
Among the stars that have a different birth,  
And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
That finds no object worth its constancy?

*(2nd verse of a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley)*

## 19 Sure on this shining night

Sure on this shining night  
Of starmade shadows round,  
Kindness must watch for me  
This side the ground.  
The late year lies down the north.  
All is healed, all is health.  
High summer holds the earth.  
Hearts all whole.  
Sure on this shining night I weep for wonder wand'ring far alone  
Of shadows on the stars.

*James Agee*

## 20 Ad Bibinem cum me Rogaret ad Cenam

Nectar vina cibus vestis doctrina facultas  
muneribus largis tu mihi, Bibi, sates;  
tu refluus Cicero, tu noster Apicius extas,  
hinc satias verbis, pascis et inde cibus.  
Sed modo da veniam; bubla turgente quiesco,  
nam fitlis uteri si caro mixta fremat.  
Et modo iam somno languentia lumina claudio;  
nam dormire, meum carmina lenta probant.

*Venantius Fortunatus*

translation:

*Nectar, wine, wit and learning, such is your fashion, Bibi,  
But even beyond these plentiful gifts, you charm us.  
You are Cicero and Apicius reborn,  
you overwhelm us with words and food.  
But no more please! bursting with ragout, I succumb,  
For there is war in my stomach when mixed foods growl at each other.  
Already my eyes begin to droop and slowly my songs go to sleep.*

## 21 Heaven haven

I have desired to go  
Where springs not fail,  
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail  
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be  
Where no storms come,  
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,  
And out of the swing of the sea.

*Gerald Manley Hopkins*

## 22 Agnus Dei (sung in Latin)

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.

*Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God,  
who takes away the sins of the world,  
grant us peace.*

## Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir

**SOPRANOS**  
Rosemary Walker  
Bethany Cox  
Elizabeth Adams  
Theodora Raftis  
Eleanor Hodgkinson  
Myfanwy Hollywell  
Victoria Adams  
Felicity Rogers  
Naomi Berry

**ALTOS**  
Davina Brownrigg  
Darrel Chan  
Nicola Starkie  
Eloise Waterhouse  
Felicity Evans-Waite

**TENORS**  
Robert Tilson  
David Emerson  
George Stuart  
Charles St.John  
Luke English  
Richard James

**BASS**  
William Drakett  
William Gee  
Daniel Wyman  
Daniel Galbreath  
Philip Mizen  
Timothy Emberson

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## Birmingham Conservatoire Brass Ensemble (Easter Chorale)

**TRUMPETS:** Jonathan Sheppard, Emily Walker, Eric Brookes

**TROMBONES:** Josh Large, Jay Hall, Scott Harris

**HORNS:** Sian Collins, Freddie Miles

**TUBA:** Steven Mayes

## Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir

Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir is a group of twenty-four auditioned student singers who form an expert and flexible group. They perform with sensitivity, energy and panache and are gathering an enviable reputation for their musicianship partly through their increasing recording presence which reflects their conductor's specialist interest in 20th- and 21st-century British music.

Their first CD called *To Music* was an Anthology of English 20th-century choral music and was released on the Regent label. It was CD Review recording of the month (MusicWeb International) and the review commented: "... *this is one of the finest discs to have come my way in some time*". Their disc of music by Kenneth Leighton and James MacMillan had five star reviews and MacMillan (who attended the sessions) wrote: *'I am delighted to be the focus of this new disc by this exceptional young choir from the Birmingham Conservatoire. I was present at some of the recording sessions and was astounded at how high the performance standards were.'*

Their disc of music by Ireland and Delius part songs on the Somm label (SOMMCD 0119) was also awarded 5 star reviews and their recording of the first ever disc to be devoted to Stanford's part songs (also on Somm – SOMMCD 0128) was chosen as 13th out of 24 discs considered the best releases of 2013 on Classic FM and *The Observer* commented that the music was "*dressed in the richly jewelled sound of the Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir*" and that "*many a choir could learn from these singers*". The Somm disc of choral music by Herbert Howells *When first thine eyes unveil* (SOMMCD 0140) was *Gramophone* Editor's Choice in December 2014.

## Paul Spicer

Paul Spicer was a chorister at New College, Oxford. He studied with Herbert Howells and Richard Popplewell (organ) at the Royal College of Music.

Paul is best known as a choral conductor, partly through the many CDs he made with the Finzi Singers for Chandos records. He conducted Bach Choirs in Chester and Leicester before moving to conduct the Bach Choir in Birmingham in 1992. He has conducted the Whitehall Choir in London since 2000. He taught at the Royal College of Music in London between 1995 and 2008. He now teaches choral conducting at the Birmingham Conservatoire, where he also directs the chamber choir which has an increasing reputation through its regular recordings of British music, and at Oxford and Durham Universities.

Until July 2001 Paul Spicer was Artistic Director of the Lichfield International Arts Festival and the Abbotsholme Arts Society, posts he relinquished in order to pursue a freelance musical career. He was Senior Producer for BBC Radio 3 in the Midlands until 1990 and today is in considerable demand as a composer. He has also been a much sought-after recording producer.

Paul Spicer's highly-acclaimed biography of his composition teacher, Herbert Howells, was published in August 1998 and has been reprinted twice. His large-scale biography of Sir George Dyson was published in 2014 and he is now writing a biography of Sir Arthur Bliss. His *English Pastoral Partsongs* volume for OUP is widely used. As a writer he has written countless articles for many periodicals and is a contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was commissioned by the Britten-Pears Foundation and Boosey & Hawkes to write the first practical guide to all Benjamin Britten's choral music for the Britten centenary in 2013, something he continues to do for all James MacMillan's growing choral output.

As a composer his *Easter Oratorio* was hailed as 'the best of its kind to have appeared... since Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi*.' It was also chosen as an Editor's Choice in the same magazine. His new large-scale commission, a choral symphony *Unfinished Remembering* to a text by Euan Tait commemorating the centenary of the First World War was premiered in Symphony Hall, Birmingham in September 2014.

Paul Spicer is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an Honorary Research Fellow of Birmingham University, an Honorary Fellow of Birmingham Conservatoire, an Honorary Fellow of University College, Durham, a Trustee of the Finzi Trust, Vice-President of the Herbert Howells Society, and Advisor to the Sir George Dyson Trust.

## Ben Kennedy

Ben Kennedy graduated from Birmingham Conservatoire in 2005, and now works as freelance pianist, keyboard player, musical director/supervisor and arranger.

He is currently a staff accompanist at the Conservatoire playing for masterclasses, performances and final recitals. He also works with the Vocal Department, where he has conducted several full-scale productions of both operas and musicals.

Ben also works extensively in theatre on West End productions and has also been involved in national and international tours, both as a keyboard player and conductor.

Orchestral credits include the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, The Hallé, Opera North and BBC Philharmonic.

## Matthew Firkins

Matthew Firkins is a versatile musician specialising in Drum Kit and Percussion. A music scholar at school he joined the Birmingham Conservatoire in 2011 on the Orchestral Percussion course. In his second year he was successful in gaining a place on the CBSO Orchestral training scheme and has also participated on the Royal Shakespeare Company Professional Training Programme. In 2012 Matthew was made the Principal Percussionist of the CBSO Youth Orchestra and CBSO Academy.

He has a keen interest in musical theatre and has performed in bands for various shows. Matthew has been Musical Director of Highbury Youth Theatre since 2010. In 2015 he won the Birmingham Conservatoire Percussion Prize and the Doris Newton Music Club Prize. In the summer of the same year he was selected to perform in the BBC Chamber Proms. Matthew won a scholarship to continue his studies on the Masters course at the Birmingham Conservatoire in 2015.

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