

**SCHOLA**  
Cantorum of Oxford

Steven Grahl  
Conductor

Patrick Maxwell  
Conducting Scholar



**MacMillan:**  
***Miserere***

**MacMillan and Gibbons**  
***Sacred and Secular***

Monday 10 March 2025, 8:30 pm

New College Chapel

Holywell St, Oxford, OX1 3BN

## From the Chairman of the Trustees



Schola Cantorum of Oxford, the University's premier chamber choir, is delighted to be presenting this concert of music by Orlando Gibbons and James MacMillan. Schola Cantorum provides a great musical experience for its members, but also gives audiences in Oxford access to a wonderful range of choral repertoire – both sacred and secular. The choir sets out to challenge the best young singers from across the University to perform to the highest standards, and to provide an outstanding musical performance experience.

The choir has an enviable and unbroken 60-year history and has played a pivotal role in the development of an astonishing number of singers and choral conductors of the last six decades, building an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings.

If you would like to receive regular information about its concerts, please email us at [admin@schola-cantorum.net](mailto:admin@schola-cantorum.net) or use the QR code below to sign up via our website at [www.schola-cantorum.net](http://www.schola-cantorum.net).

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**Schola Cantorum of Oxford acknowledges with gratitude the generous support of the Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Trust.**



# PROGRAMME

James MacMillan (b. 1959)	A new song
MacMillan	Miserere
Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)	See, see, the Word is incarnate
MacMillan	Gaudeamus in loci pace (ORGAN)
Gibbons	The Silver Swan
MacMillan	The Gallant Weaver
Gibbons	Fair is the Rose
Gibbons	Fantazia of Foure Parts (ORGAN)
MacMillan	Bring us O Lord God
Gibbons	O clap your hands

Please switch off mobile phones  
Photography is not permitted during the performance

## PROGRAMME NOTE

What is there to connect James MacMillan with Orlando Gibbons? Not much, it would seem. Gibbons died of what contemporaries termed 'apoplexy' in 1625, probably due to the stress of his royal role in the days before the coronation of Charles I. James MacMillan has established his name as one of the most trenchant musical and intellectual critics of 'secular modernity' since his rise to fame in the 1990s.

Yet links there are. Both composers have been advanced by royal patronage. MacMillan shares a first name with the King who approved Gibbons' directorship at Westminster Abbey, and whose death marked a point of closure in some of the most productive artistic flourishing at the English royal court.

The most obvious way to link the two composers is in their profound religion. Tonight's programme brings together both sacred and secular pieces, but there should be no doubt of the hierarchy of importance with which both have treated their work. Gibbons was a fervent Protestant; MacMillan is a devout Catholic.

In many ways the heart of this programme is MacMillan's *Miserere*. MacMillan has a tendency to set words well-fashioned by others. Allegri's setting of Psalm 51 is perhaps the most ubiquitous choral setting in the sacred repertoire. MacMillan makes certain nods to Allegri – the chordal passages in the middle of the piece, for example, are reminiscent of simple plainsong. These references and sub-texts are a crucial feature of MacMillan's work, and in this piece they are at their most obviously theological. These nods to different modes of thinking have earned MacMillan the title of a 'retrospective modernist', constantly critiquing and complicating cultural debates.

The text of the piece is in three parts: the Confession of Sin, the Expectation of Deliverance, and National Redemption. The more personal call for mercy and redemption is delivered by the individual voices, often in some of the composer's most expressive and direct choral writing. The ecstatic ending, voicing collective hope of redemption, is homophonic, a culmination of the previously disjointed voices. Most of all, it is designed somewhat to simulate the Eucharistic sacrament, the image of 'oblations and whole burnt offerings' which are 'laid upon thy altar.' These are the sacrifices made by the individual, and by the collective, together, at the table of the Eucharist.

MacMillan's debate with the past is also glaringly evident in his setting of *Bring Us, O Lord God*. John Donne's text was given immortal musical form by William Henry Harris, Organist of New College from 1919–1933. Harris wrote the 'sibling' piece *Faire is the Heaven* for the Choir of New College in 1925, and *Bring us, O Lord God* followed in 1959. Donne was a near contemporary of Gibbons, and the incredible text set is from the end of a long sermon preached in February 1627. MacMillan's piece has incredibly personal connections for this Choir. Lydia Press was a devoted

member of Schola Cantorum during her time as a student at Oxford. Lydia died on a climbing holiday, on the side of Mont Blanc, in 2008. MacMillan's commission was made in her memory, and its premiere came in the Sheldonian Theatre in 2010. In its highly original treatment of the text and irrepressible momentum, it is some of the most powerful music he has written.

Gibbon's music is often described as highly characterful. The description holds up: perhaps none more so than in the whistlestop tour of the Church year made in a matter of six minutes by the verse anthem *See, see, the word is incarnate*. With its florid solo lines dominated by the altos, Gibbons makes the dreary text of Bishop Godfrey Goodman come to life in dazzling colour. *The Silver Swan* is a limpid setting of a short witticism. Macmillan's *The Gallant Weaver* is a perfectly crafted setting of a Robert Burns poem. In both cases, the command of voices and texture is subtle and convincing.

Such capacity for invention has made the name of Gibbon's wonderful anthem *O Clap Your Hands Together*. There is debate about its origins. The story has gone down in cathedral choirs that Gibbons wrote the piece for a job at Christ Church Cathedral that he failed to gain. In reality, he was awarded a Doctorate in Music, though whether this highly versatile example of characterful polyphony was part of his application is uncertain. For its characterful and ingenious harmonic moves and dazzling part writing, it is a testament to Gibbons' innovations in choral writing. In these pieces Gibbons took English music beyond the generations of Byrd and Tallis, and gave a model followed only much later in the seventeenth century.

*Patrick Maxwell, Schola Cantorum of Oxford Conducting Scholar, 2024-25*

## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

**James MacMillan**

**A new song**

*O sing unto the Lord*

*Unto the Lord a new song*

*Sing unto the Lord*

*All the whole earth*

Sing unto the Lord, and praise His name

Be telling of His salvation from day to

day

*O sing unto the Lord*

*Unto the Lord a new song*

*Sing unto the Lord*

*All the whole earth*

For he cometh to judge the earth

And with righteousness to judge the  
world and the people with his truth

*O sing unto the Lord*

*Unto the Lord a new song*

*Sing unto the Lord*

*All the whole earth*

*Text from Psalm 96*

## James MacMillan

### Miserere

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 iudicaris.

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 dealbabor.

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 sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae: et exultabit lingua mea iustitiam tuam.

### Have mercy

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy.*

*And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.*

*Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.*

*To thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before thee: that thou mayst be justified in thy words, and mayst overcome when thou art judged.*

*For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.*

*For behold thou hast loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to me.*

*Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.*

*To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness: and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.*

*Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*

*Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.*

*Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me.*

*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.*

*I will teach the unjust thy ways: and the wicked shall be converted to thee.*

*Deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall extol thy justice.*

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  
despicies.

Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate  
tua Sion: ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.

Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiae,  
oblaciones et holocausta: tunc imponent  
super altare tuum vitulos.

*Psalm 51 (50): 3-21  
Douay-Rheims translation*

*O Lord, thou wilt open my lips: and my  
mouth shall declare thy praise.*

*For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would  
indeed have given it: with burnt offerings  
thou wilt not be delighted.*

*A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a  
contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou  
wilt not despise.*

*Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good will  
with Sion; that the walls of Jerusalem may  
be built up.*

*Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice  
of justice, oblations and whole burnt  
offerings: then shall they lay calves upon  
thy altar.*

## **Orlando Gibbons**

### **See, see, the Word is incarnate**

See, the Word is incarnate; God is made man in the womb of a Virgin.  
Shepherds rejoice, wise men adore and angels sing  
'Glory be to God on high: peace on earth, good will towards men.

The law is cancelled,  
Jews and Gentiles converted by the preaching of glad tidings of salvation.  
The blind have sight and cripples have their motion;  
diseases cured, the dead are raised, and miracles are wrought.  
Let us welcome such a guest with Hosanna.

The Paschal Lamb is offered, Christ Jesus made a sacrifice for sin.  
The earth quakes, the sun is darkened, the powers of hell are shaken;  
and lo, he is risen up in victory.  
Sing Alleluia.

See, O see the fresh wounds, the gored blood,  
the prick of thorns, the print of nails.  
And in the sight of multitudes a glorious ascension.

When now he sits on God's right hand  
where all the choir of heaven all jointly sing:  
Glory be to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne.  
Let us continue our wonted note with Hosanna:  
Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord;  
with Alleluia, we triumph in victory,

the serpent's head is bruised, Christ's kingdom exalted,  
and heaven laid open to sinners.  
Amen.

### **Orlando Gibbons**

#### **The Silver Swan**

The silver swan, who living had no note,  
When death approached unlocked her silent throat.  
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,  
Thus sang her first and last and sung no more:  
Farewell all joys, O death come close mine eyes,  
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.

### **James MacMillan**

#### **The Gallant Weaver**

Where Cart rins rowin' to the sea,  
By mony a flower and spreading tree,  
There lives a lad, the lad for me,  
He is a gallant Weaver.  
O, I had wooers aught or nine,  
They gied me rings and ribbons fine;  
And I was fear'd my heart wad tine,  
And I gied it to the Weaver.  
My daddie sign'd my tocher-band,  
To gie the lad that has the land,  
But to my heart I'll add my hand,  
And give it to the Weaver.  
While birds rejoice in leafy bowers,  
While bees delight in opening flowers,  
While corn grows green in summer showers,  
I love my gallant Weaver.

*Robert Burns (1759-1796)*

### **Orlando Gibbons**

#### **Fair is the rose**

Fair is the rose, yet fades with heat or cold.  
Sweet are the violets, yet soon grow old.  
The lily is white, yet in one day 'tis done.  
White is the snow, yet melts against the sun.  
So white, so sweet was my fair mistress' face,  
Yet altered quite in one short hour's space.  
So short-lived beauty a vain gloss doth borrow,  
Breathing delight today, but none tomorrow.



**James MacMillan**  
**Bring us O Lord God**

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the habitations of thy glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.

*John Donne (1572-1631)*

**Orlando Gibbons**  
**O clap your hands**

O clap your hands together, all ye people: O sing unto God with the voice of melody. For the Lord is high and to be feared: he is the great King of all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us: and the nations under our feet. He shall choose out an heritage for us, even the worship of Jacob, whom he loved. God is gone up with a merry noise: and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God: O sing praises unto the Lord our King. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with the understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon his holy seat. For God, which is highly exalted, doth defend the earth: as it were with a shield. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

*from Psalm 47 (with Gloria)*

**BIOGRAPHIES**

**Steven Grahl (Conductor)**



Steven Grahl is a sought-after conductor and keyboard player, and has been Conductor of Schola Cantorum of Oxford since 2017. Since January 2024, he has also been Director of Music at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Steven served as Organist and Tutor in Music at Christ Church, Oxford, and Associate Professor of Music at Oxford University from 2018 to 2023. He was also Musical Director of Benson Choral Society. From 2014 to 2018 he was Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral, where he was responsible for training the Cathedral Choir, and for the re-pitching of the Hill Organ, on which instrument he has recorded a solo CD. Peterborough Cathedral Choir's recording of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *EvenYouSong*, made under Steven's direction, was released to critical acclaim in December 2017. He also held positions as Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford, and as Organist and Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church, London.

Steven was an interpretation finalist in the International Organ Competitions at St Albans (UK) in 2011, and in Dudelange (Luxembourg) in 2013, and completed his term as President of the Incorporated Association of Organists in 2019. He is a prize-

winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Royal Academy of Music. He gained the top prizes in the FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion. In 2010, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

### **Patrick Maxwell (Conducting Scholar)**



Patrick Maxwell is currently an academical clerk in the Choir of New College, Oxford, where he reads History. Having enjoyed international choral experience as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, he started conducting under Neville Creed at St Edward's School, Oxford, and has continued to conduct choral and orchestral groups in Oxford and in London. Highlights include Handel's *Messiah* in London and a concert performance of Rachmaninoff's *Vespers* in New College Chapel in November last year. He sings as a tenor in the Choir at New College, where he is taught by Bronwen Mills.

### **Schola Cantorum of Oxford**

Schola Cantorum of Oxford is the University of Oxford's premier chamber choir. Schola's mission is to share the joy of choral music with our singers, our community of alumni and supporters, and with audiences in Oxford and around the world. We challenge ourselves to perform to the highest standards, providing outstanding musical training for young singers and conductors.

The choir was founded by László Heltay in 1960 at a point when there were few opportunities for men and women to sing together to a high standard. Times have changed and Schola's role has changed too. We've now built a reputation as Oxford's premier concert choir – engaging deeply with complex repertoire, and providing a space for performance outside religious services.

Schola has worked with many of the foremost musicians of the last six decades and has built an international reputation through extensive tours and recordings. We are proud of our alumni who have gone on to lead successful musical careers such as John Mark Ainsley, Emma Kirkby, Christine Rice, Susan Gritton, Ian Bostridge and Roderick Williams – many came to Oxford to study other subjects but developed their musical talents during their time in Schola.

Recent concerts include Brahms - *Liebeslieder Walzer* in the de Jager Auditorium at Trinity College, Schönberg - *Friede auf Erden*, Ginastera - *Lamentations of Jeremiah* and Bach - *Komm, Jesu, komm* in Oxford and London, a concert in The New Space auditorium with baritone Patrick Keefe featuring Frank Martin - *Songs of Ariel* and a selection of English song, and Brahms *Requiem* in Somerville College. Future plans include a 65th Anniversary Concert including JS Bach - *Magnificat* with Instruments of Time and Truth in Oxford Town Hall and Mozart C *Minor Mass* with La Nuova Musica in the Sheldonian Theatre.

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