# ANGELS OF CREATION ORGAN SEBASTIAN THOMSON

#### UPLIFTING NEW ORGAN WORKS

On This Disc

Angels of Creation 1 homas Hewitt Jones | 07.10

**Berceuse 2**David Briggs | 05.28

**Toccata for St Matthew's Day** *3* David Briggs | 07.00

> **Festal Paean** 4 Simon Whalley | 04.44

**Rhapsody** 5 David Bednall | 11.43

Variations: 6 Noël Nouvelet Philip Moore | 04.43

Laudate 7 Neil Cox | 06.22

- 8- The Fourteen
  22 Stations of the Cross
  John Hosking | 29.02

  Jesus is condemned to death
  Jesus is given his cross
  Jesus falls the first time
  Jesus meets his mother
  Simon of Cyrene carries the cross
  Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
  Jesus falls the second time
  Jesus meets the daughters of
  Jerusalem
  - xi. Jesus falls the third time
  - xi. Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross xii. Jesus dies on the cross
  - xiii. Jesus' body is removed from the cross xiv. Jesus is laid in the tomb and covered in incense

Detailed programme notes and the powerpoint for The Fourteen Stations of the Cross can be viewed at www.sebastianthomson.co.uk "Angels" page. ew music and instrumental development frequently go hand–in–hand, and nowhere is this more evident than on the organ.

Composers have been inspired by new instruments and devices, and organ builders have strived to create the technologies capable of realizing these new musical ideas. The organ is fortunate to possess such an impressive and wide–ranging repertoire, including substantial bodies of work by some of the greatest of all composers, but new music is essential to maintain the link between creation and re–creation, and to prevent any sense of this most historic of instruments becoming a museum piece or a repository of old musical ideas.

Sebastian Thomson is to be whole-heartedly praised and admired for his vision in commissioning these new works, and for committing them to CD in performances of such intense musical intelligence and technical grasp. It has been a great privilege to have been asked to be part of this, and one can only hope that the pieces here will find new audiences and promote the creation of new music for the King of Instruments.

-David Bednall, 2016

## *I put my trust in the composer to write and they put their trust in me to interpret.*

Creation Angels commissions are a collection of organ works composed for and premiered by Sebastian Thomson. The project's inception began with David Bednall's Rhapsody, which was premiered at St Paul's Cathedral in 2010. All subsequent commissions-Simon Whalley's Festal Paean, Thomas Hewitt Jones' Angels of Creation (from which the title of the project originates), Neil Cox's Laudate, and most recently, John Hosking's Fourteen Stations of the Cross -have been premiered at Keble College, Oxford. Additional contemporary works by David Briggs and Philip Moore compliment this recording.

My thanks go to Adaq Khan and Adrian Green for their complete professionalism throughout and faith in this project. I would also like to thank Benjamin Giddens for producing this CD and for the countless times he had to listen to takes on my behalf. This CD is dedicated to Andrew and Rosemary Thomson and Simon Whalley. Simon has been hugely influential and without his encouragement, The *Angels of Creation* commissioning project would not have started.

-Sebastian Thomson, 2016



## *Keble College Oxford: The Organ*

College is one of the eble the masterworks eminent of William Victorian architect Butterfield. The magnificent, lofty chapel, completed in 1876, is a riot of decorative brickwork, tiling and mosaics. The original organ was provided by William Hill; Butterfield designed its case, and is said to have personally executed the stencilled decoration of the front pipes.

In 1892 the memorial side chapel was created to house William Holman Hunt's The Light of the World, and the organ was elevated to its present gallery position. From that time it saw a series of rebuilds and enlargements, but by the 1980s had fallen into serious disrepair. Earlier proposals for a new organ did not reach fruition, and from 1992–2011 the chapel music relied on an electronic instrument.

Great manual II

Swell manual III

The new pipe organ aims to have a consonance with its Victorian surroundings, and an important aspect of the instrument was the cleaning and conservation of the decorated prospect pipes, which have an architectural integrity with Butterfield's magnificent chapel. The building boasts perhaps the finest acoustic in Oxford, with generous reverberation, and the organ benefits from its placement in the wide, shallow and tall transept loft.

The core departments of the new organ recognise the spirit of the late nineteenth century, enriched by the colours of the third and fourth manuals and enabling the performance of a wide repertoire, both solo and choral.

-Kenneth Tickell

| 1<br>2<br>3<br>4<br>5<br>6<br>7<br>8<br>9<br>10<br><i>i</i><br><i>i</i><br><i>i</i>   | Double Diapason<br>Open Diapason<br>Stopped Diapason<br>Gamba<br>Principal<br>Wald Flute<br>Fifteenth<br>Sesquialtera II<br>Mixture IV<br>Trumpet<br>Bombarde to Great<br>Swell to Great               | 16<br>8<br>8<br>4<br>4<br>2<br>2 2/3<br>1 1/3<br>8   | Bombarde Solo-Choir<br>manual IV manual I | 23<br>24<br>25<br>26<br>27<br>28<br>29<br>30<br>31<br>32<br>v<br>vi                         | Open Flute<br>Viola<br>Flauto Traverso<br>Fugara<br>Nazard<br>Flageolet<br>Tierce<br>Cor Anglais<br>Clarinet<br>Vox Humana<br><i>Tremulant</i><br><i>Swell to Solo</i>                   | 8<br>8<br>4<br>2 2/3<br>2<br>1 3/5<br>16<br>8<br>8         |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| <ul> <li>iii</li> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> <li>21</li> <li>22</li> <li>iv</li> </ul> | Solo to Great<br>Open Diapason<br>Gedackt<br>Salicional<br>Vox Angelica<br>Principal<br>Rohrflute<br>Fifteenth<br>Mixture III-IV<br>Contra Fagotto<br>Cornopean<br>Oboe<br>Clarion<br><i>Tremulant</i> | 8<br>8<br>8<br>4<br>4<br>2<br>2<br>16<br>8<br>8<br>4 | Pedal Boml<br>manu                        | 33<br>34<br>35<br>36<br>37<br>38<br>39<br>40<br>41<br>42<br>43<br>vii<br>viii<br>viii<br>ix | Posaune<br>Cornet V<br>Open Wood<br>Bourdon<br>Violone<br>Quint<br>Octave<br>Bass Flute<br>Fifteenth<br>Mixture III<br>Trombone<br>Bombarde to Pedal<br>Swell to Pedal<br>Great to Pedal | 8<br>8<br>16<br>16<br>10 2/3<br>8<br>8<br>4<br>3 1/5<br>16 |

Electric stop and combination actions



### Sebastian Thomson

ebastian Thomson is currently Head of Academic Music and Assistant Director of Music at Bloxham School. He was a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford before moving to Harrow School with the top music scholarship. Sebastian was then awarded the Bristol University Organ Scholarship where he studied with Mark Lee. After this, he moved to Chichester Cathedral as Organ Scholar. In 2005, Sebastian was appointed Director of Music at St Matthew's Church. Northampton, a post held alongside teaching piano, organ, and theory at Eton College.

Aside from teaching, Sebastian continues to pursue a freelance

career as a choral conductor and organist. Having studied the organ with David Goode and David Briggs, he is in demand as both a recitalist and an accompanist. His recent solo engagements include recitals at Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, King's College Cambridge, and St Paul's Cathedral, Sebastian has also made appearances as a performer and speaker on local and national television and radio. He has also been invited to give a recital at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, in 2017. Sebastian is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and a prize winner in the Choral Training Diploma examination from the College.

-www.sebastianthomson.co.uk



#### Angels of Creation Thomas Hewitt Jones (2013)

This work was first performed by Sebastian Thomson at Keble College, Oxford, on 21 November 2013. Reflecting on angels, both as God's messengers and also as bringers of great joy, *Angels of Creation* is a jubilant organ piece, intended to create a rousing emotional experience for performer and listener alike.

The overall tone of *Angels of Creation* is one of extreme anticipation and excitement. The principal thematic material, based around a triplet motif, is developed, elongated and altered over the entire course of the piece, right through to a jubilant coda.

#### **Berceuse** David Briggs (2006)

Written in celebration of Ronald Gates' 80th birthday and commissioned by his many students and friends. Ron Gates was for many years, Assistant Organist of St Matthew's Church and then All Saints', Northampton.

This is a moving work in a Cochereauesque style—full of garlic, snails and red wine. This was first performed by Andrew Reid on the organ at All Saints' during a celebratory meal for Ron. This piece highlights the beautiful quieter stops of the Keble organ with rich and varied Anglo-French harmonies which we have come to expect from David Briggs.

#### **Toccata for St Matthew's Day** David Briggs (2008)

I had the great pleasure of playing the wonderfully restored Walker instrument at St Matthew's, Northampton in a concert in the autumn of 2006 and was very impressed by the tonal vivacity of the ensemble. We talked about the possibility of my writing an extrovert 'Toccata for St Matthew's Day' (in fact, originally this was going simply to be called 'Cool Toccata'). The result is a vigorous, ternary form Dupré like Toccata, based on a free theme (in the pedals) with mainly 12/8 figuration in the manuals. The work was premiered by Sebastian Thomson at St Matthew's at the Patronal Festival in September 2008.



The Festal Paean was written for and commissioned by Sebastian Thomson as a celebratory piece to demonstrate the huge variety of colouristic effects that the Keble organ has to offer. It is a loose rondo in form, starting with a fanfare of musical ideas in dialogue that eventually arrive at the main rondo theme. Episodes of contrasting material include a chorale, based on the commercium hymn Gaudeamus igitur, and a rhythmically jagged section to be heard on the bizarre effect of the vox humana stop combined with mutations. At the conclusion of the piece the different material is all combined whilst the pedals play the chorale theme.

-Thomas Hewitt Jones

-David Briggs

-David Briggs

-Simon Whalley



Rhapsody was commissioned by the dedicatee. Sebastian Thomson, and received its World Premiere at St Paul's Cathedral, London. A dramatic opening introduces the conflict between the chords of B-flat and E. These two keys, separated by the extreme musical interval of a tritone, will be important throughout the work. This introduction is followed by the main thematic material, marked 'turbulently'. The climax is reached and from the echo emerges a second, contrasting theme. A return of the opening material follows with a reprise of the central theme, this time on full organ. The harmonic language becomes denser and its culmination is followed by a huge diminuendo. The closing bars are dramatic and leave the conflict between the two tonal centres unresolved.

#### **Variations: Noël Nouvelet** *Philip Moore (2012)*

*Noël Nouvelet* was written in 2012. It consists of a series of variations. The quiet opening, in which the melody is stated with fairly plain harmonies, belies the liveliness that follows. Fragments of the melody appear in various guises, with much use of fugato. The music builds to a climax, with the melody in the pedals, as well as being roughly in canon with the right hand. After a brief and dramatic flourish, peace descends.

The work finishes with a gentle statement of the melody, again in canon. Some of the harmony here is somewhat astringent, but warmth eventually takes over, with the music drawing to a tranquil close.

#### Laudate Neil Cox (2014)

Based on the Psalm 150 window in Chichester Cathedral.

from 1978. A blaze of red with and yellows, its theme is psalm 150. It teems with small figures, spiralling upwards in a vortex of play and dance, and creatures sound trumpets, horns, flutes, cymbals, tambourine and fiddle. David with his harp and above the word of God. Laudate is an

Let everything that hath breath, Praise the Lord!

### The Fourteen Stations of the Cross John Hosking (2015)

Cross; indeed one must recall suffering, torture and grief throughout. My overall aim has been to depict with a constant feeling of unsettlement and not quite though the opening theme does appear at various points throughout the work, it has been my intention should leave the performance in a state of shock or not quite known what was happening or even why. In are exploited in a very short space of time; in others, the listener is left wondering what just happened. It cheering Jesus and then shouting "Crucify". I hope that some of this feeling is depicted throughout the work.

This work was inspired by the various colours the organ can produce, a Stations of the Cross that I improvised in Holy Week 2012, a walk through the Stations of the Cross at Pantasaph Monastery and some fragments of plainsong.

-Philip Moore

**Organ** Sebastian Thomson

**With Thanks** The Warden, The Chaplain Jenn Strawbridge and Director of Music of Keble College

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