

THE MASSES

ARNOLD

ROSNER

BLOSSOM STREET & HILARY CAMPBELL

CONVIVIUM
RECORDS

The Choral Masses

Across his composing career, Arnold Rosner produced a number of choral works, ranging from a concert-length *Requiem* (with large orchestra and non-traditional texts) to a few smaller sacred motets. The chorus also figures heavily in his grand opera, *The Chronicle of Nine*. Three of his most significant and representative choral works are the three *cantus firmus* polyphonic masses. Rosner wrote the following comments about these works:

“Between 1967 and 1974, I wrote three traditional settings of the Roman Catholic mass for unaccompanied choir. In my youth I was at first attracted to traditional repertoire, but as soon as I heard the music of the Renaissance and early Baroque I was entirely taken with it. This material surpassed for me (and indeed continues to do so) the more tonally predictable music of the late Baroque and Classical periods. So I wrote several instrumental pieces imbued with devotional feelings and a modal harmonic style, culminating in Symphony No. 5, something of a mass without voices. The three a cappella choral

masses may hearken somewhat to the styles of 400 or so years ago – as if Josquin and Lassus were just a generation past – ignoring vast musical universes in between. I argued that neo-modal masses had been written by Vaughan Williams in 1922, Stravinsky in 1948, and there were admittedly youthful, but creditable, attempts by Ginastera and Martin. But my masses were as far from timely as they could be during the atonal age in which they were composed. Then into the bargain was added the notion of ‘where did it come for a composer of unmixed Jewish descent to write Catholic masses?’ When asked, I would simply respond ‘We are all God’s children, and music is my religion.’”

From examining Rosner’s sketchbooks and manuscripts, it is clear that the first of these masses, *Missa Greensleeves*, Op. 34 (1967), began to emerge while Rosner was taking a course in modal counterpoint during his graduate studies in Buffalo. Some of the music can be found written in between notebook pages containing traditional counterpoint assignments. While Rosner’s interest in

“early music” in general had begun previously, it was during these Buffalo years that he studied this repertoire in a formal academic way and also was exposed to the university’s early music ensemble. (*Missa Greensleeves* is not included on this recording and the style of the work, while still certainly Rosnerian in many places, is much closer to the Renaissance models.)

It is in the next two choral masses, *Missa L’homme armé*, Op. 50 (1971) and *Missa In nomine*, Op. 62 (1974), that Rosner found a characteristically personal approach to the genre-blending Renaissance contrapuntal practice with his free approach to modality and his desire for the dramatic contrasts of romantic emotional expression. The result is music that is both deeply connected to traditional Renaissance models while at the same time being completely different from them in the affectual language used and the moods created.

Like many Renaissance masses, each is based on a *cantus firmus* (a traditional melody) that appears throughout: the French secular song “L’homme armé” (The Armed Man) and the “Gloria tibi trinitas” plainchant (pieces based on which have long been called “In nomine.”) Unlike most Renaissance masses, Rosner uses the *cantus firmus* melody not just in a traditional manner (long-note interior

parts) but also motivically/melodically in the manner of post-Renaissance music.

The music throughout the Rosner masses varies widely: pillar-like triadic edifices (something Rosner explored in many of his compositions); complex counterpoint; asymmetrical meters; proportional rhythmic relations; hushed, distant textures; and powerful, energetic ecstasy. Given the musical extremes that are found (and the modal freedom), the music is extremely difficult to perform. The *Missa Greensleeves* was performed by a student choir at Buffalo during Rosner’s graduate studies, but only one movement of the other two masses was ever performed in the composer’s lifetime. In 2008, editor Carson Cooman and music engraver Jeffrey Grossman worked with the composer to prepare authoritative editions of the works.

Rosner was a lifelong pacifist who was, like many Americans of the time, deeply troubled by the Vietnam War. He expressed his deep and uncompromising pacifism in several musical works, including *A My Lai Elegy*, Op. 51 (1971, rev. 1993) and with the dedication of the aforementioned *Symphony No. 5* (a symphonic *cantus firmus* mass for orchestra alone) to George McGovern, a United States senator and 1972 presidential candidate who was an outspoken opponent of the USA’s

involvement in Vietnam. When asked about the extroverted “Dona nobis pacem” that ends the *Missa In nomine* (all the other masses, including the symphony, end quietly), he commented that it was a joyous response to the fact that the USA had officially withdrawn from Vietnam via the January 1973 peace agreement.

As a college student in 1962, Rosner was asked to compose incidental music for a production of *Cycle of Spring* by the Bengali author Rabindranath Tagore. The incidental music served its purpose for the production and was then put aside, but its musical material and subject generated several subsequent works: an orchestral tone poem (Op. 23) and the third movement of his *Piano Sonata No. 1* (Op. 25). Then a few years later, when Rosner was pursuing his graduate studies (and gaining further exposure to early choral music), he composed a set of *Nine Tagore Madrigals*, Op. 37 (1968). On this CD, the final madrigal *Peace, My Heart* is heard between the two masses. It is a sweetly beautiful setting of one of Tagore’s most famous poems.

For more information about the music of Arnold Rosner, visit: arnoldrosnermusic.com

Notes by Carson Cooman

Arnold Rosner

During his fifty-year compositional career, the American composer Arnold Rosner (1945–2013) produced a body of work that combined diverse influences into a powerful, distinctly personal musical voice. His catalogue comprises compositions in nearly every genre, including three operas, eight symphonies, numerous works for orchestra and wind band, several large-scale choral works, and many chamber, solo, and vocal pieces.

Rosner’s musical language was founded upon the harmonic and rhythmic devices of the polyphonic music of the Renaissance and early Baroque periods. These roots can be found, to a greater or lesser extent, in virtually all his music. To them he added a free triadicism and exotic modalities, intensified in some works by more contemporary harmonic dissonance, combining this language with the lavish orchestration and emotional drama of late-nineteenth-century Romanticism. What makes Rosner’s music worthy of serious consideration, rather than being merely an integration of earlier styles, is the way he shaped his unusual language to embrace an enormous expressive range – far broader than one might imagine possible – from serene beauty to violent rage. Yet despite its fusion of seemingly incongruous elements, most of his music is



Arnold Rosner

readily accessible even to untutored listeners.

Born in New York City in 1945, Rosner took piano lessons as a boy and soon developed a voracious interest in classical music. Some sounds in particular appealed to him – juxtapositions of major and minor triads, as well as modal melodies – and before long he was working these sounds into music of his own. His family, fully aware of the remote prospects of success offered by a career in classical music composition, encouraged him to pursue more practical endeavors, and so he attended the Bronx High School of Science, whence he graduated at the age of fifteen, and then New York University with a major in mathematics. But all the while he was composing: sonatas, symphonies, concertos and more – not that anyone was especially interested in hearing the

fruits of his labors. His composer-heroes at the time were Hovhaness, Vaughan Williams, and Nielsen, and their influence is evident in much of his earlier creative work.

Graduating from New York University before he turned twenty, Rosner then spent a year at the Belfer Graduate School of Science, continuing his studies in mathematics. But, no longer able to resist the inner drive to pursue musical composition as his primary activity, he entered the University of Buffalo the following September, with a major in music composition. This was in 1966, when serialism was the dominant style in university music departments, and young composers were often coerced, directly or indirectly, into adopting it. Rosner often recounted how the Buffalo faculty dismissed his creative efforts

with varying degrees of contempt. Later, in describing his educational experience there, he would say that he “learned almost nothing” from these pedants. Although most of his peers capitulated to the pressure to embrace the *style du jour*, Rosner was adamantly opposed to serialism and stubbornly refused to accept a view of music that violated his most fervently held artistic values. And so, in response, his department repeatedly rejected the large orchestral work he had submitted as his dissertation. Realizing that they would never accept the kind of music he considered meaningful, he gave up the notion of a doctorate in composition, and decided instead to pursue a degree in music theory, with a dissertation – the first ever – on the music of Alan Hovhaness. He completed this task

successfully, and in the process became the first recipient of a doctorate in music granted by the State University of New York.

He devoted the rest of his life to writing the music that represented his personal aesthetic ideals, supporting himself through academic positions at colleges in and around the New York City area. His most enduring position was as Professor of Music at Kingsborough Community College (of the City University of New York), which he held for thirty years, until his death. During the course of his compositional career, his musical language gradually broadened and expanded from its idiosyncratic and intuitive beginnings. Arnold Rosner died in Brooklyn, in 2013, on his 68th birthday.

Notes by Walter Simmons

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son". The second staff is a piano accompaniment line. The third staff is another vocal line with lyrics: "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line. Dynamics include *mp cresc* and *f*.

The second system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son". The second staff is a piano accompaniment line. The third staff is another vocal line with lyrics: "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son", "Ky-ri-e", "le-i-son". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line. Dynamics include *mp cresc*, *f*, and *mf*.





Blossom Street

Blossom Street is a versatile chamber choir comprising some of the UK's most experienced young singers, which performs regularly on TV and radio as well as on the concert platform, has released three critically acclaimed CDs with Naxos.

Directed by Hilary Campbell, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, the group was formed over a decade ago, while the singers were studying at the University of York, and relocated to London in 2007. Whilst in York, Blossom Street filmed a medley of Christmas carols for BBC2, which was broadcast during the snooker final in 2005, and since then has performed nationwide and beyond. They sang to Prince Charles on ITV1 as part of his 60th birthday celebrations, and gave their debut in Queen Elizabeth Hall as part of the Voicelab series in 2009. More recent projects include performances in Sweden, Japan and Spain as well as at the Edinburgh Fringe, regular broadcasts on BBC Radios 3 and 4, recording projects for Resonus and Guild, several education projects and corporate, concert and festival work. The group has featured regularly on BBC Radio 3, performing live on The Choir and

In Tune. The group also works in partnership with the Royal Academy of Music, running an annual composition project for postgraduate students, led by Judith Weir, Master of the Queen's Music. In 2015, the group filmed for the remake of *'My Best Friend's Wedding'* for Columbia Pictures, and in 2017 filmed for a new Film 4 project entitled *'Beast'*. The group also recorded for the Eden Project's 2017 Festival of Light and Sound.

On the concert platform, Blossom Street has performed at many of the major London venues including Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square and St James Piccadilly, and further afield at places like the Royal Palace, Madrid. Their Naxos CD, *'Sleep, Holy Babe'*, was released in 2011, tracks from which featured on BBC Radio 3's 'The Choir' and on Classic FM. They performed tracks live on BBC Radio 3's In Tune, and the disc was announced as 'Christmas CD of the Year 2011' on David Mellor's New CD Show, Classic FM. It received several 5* reviews. In 2013, their second disc, *'Down by the Sea'*, a compilation of a cappella choral folk songs, many of which are premiere recordings, was released by Naxos, again to critical acclaim ("At the risk of prejudicing any

latecomers and with 2013 barely half gone, I declare this release to be my choral album of the year. I'd be stupefied if anything stronger comes long. Five stars." Norman Lebrecht). In 2014, they released a disc of Warlock repertoire on the digital label, Resonus ("A programme offering a genuine expansion in our understanding of Warlock... Gorgeous sound; highly engaging, dedicated performances" BBC Music Magazine). In 2019, the group released their third Naxos disc, *This Day*, featuring works by British women for upper voices ("A veritable chocolate box album" BBC Music Magazine).

www.blossomstreetchoir.com

Hilary Campbell

Hilary Campbell is a freelance choral specialist, and is founder and Musical Director of Blossom Street, and Musical Director of Bristol Choral Society, Chiswick Choir and the Music Makers of London. Her project work includes acting as guest conductor of ensembles including the BBC Singers, Trinity Laban Chamber Choir and the University of Greenwich Choir, and chorus master of the BBC Symphony Chorus and Royal Academy of Music Symphony Chorus. She also runs an annual project

with Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Weir, at the Royal Academy of Music, in conjunction with Blossom Street and the RAM composition department, and began working there in 2017 as a BMus Lecturer. In addition, she is conductor of P&O Ferries Choir, the group which won the BBC2 series The Choir, and which she met whilst filming for the series.

Hilary gained a Distinction for an MMus in Choral Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music with Patrick Russell; she was also awarded the three choral conducting prizes. She received a Distinction for an MA in Vocal Studies at the University of York, and undertook an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in singing at Trinity College of Music. Following her studies, she returned to the RAM as the Meaker Fellow 2012-13, the first choral conductor to have been thus honoured. In 2018, Hilary was honoured to be made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM). In addition to her regular conducting work, Hilary also acts as an adjudicator, choral workshop leader and guest conductor. She is a founder member of the Voices of London Festival, and is also a published and prize-winning composer.

www.hilarycampbell.com



Hilary Campbell

Texts and Translations

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy upon us.
Christe eleison.	Christ have mercy upon us.
Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy upon us.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.	Glorify to God in the highest, And peace to his people on earth.
Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Glorificamus te, Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex cælestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.	We worship you, We bless you, We adore you, We glorify you, We give you thanks for your great glory. Lord God, heavenly King, Almighty God and Father.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; Qui tollis peccata mundi, Suscipe deprecationem nostram;	Lord, Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
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Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
Miserere nobis.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father,
Have mercy on us.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe,
Cum Sancto Spiritu
In gloria Dei Patris.

For you alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord;
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit,
In the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Amen.

Credo

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, Factorem cæli et terræ, visibilium omnium et invisibilium.	I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible:
Et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, Et ex Patre natum ante omnia sæcula.	And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, The only-begotten Son of God, Born of the Father before all ages;
Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, Genitum non factum, consubstantialem Patri; Per quem omnia facta sunt.	God from God, Light from Light, True God from true God; Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, By whom all things were made;

Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram
salutem descendit de cælis.
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub
Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est,
Et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum Scripturas,
Et ascendit in cælum,
(sedet ad dexteram Patris).

Et iterum venturus est cum gloria,
Judicare vivos et mortuos,
Cujus regni non erit finis;
Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
Dominum et vivificantem,
Qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio,
simul adoratur et conglorificatur:
Qui locutus est per Prophetas.

Et unam, sanctam, catholicam
Et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
Et vitam venturi sæculi.
Amen.

Who for us men and for our salvation
descended from heaven.
He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
out of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

He was crucified also for us under
Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried:
And he rose again on the third day
according to the Scriptures:
And ascended into heaven,
(and sits on the right hand of the Father):

And he shall come again, with glory,
To judge the living and the dead:
Of whose kingdom there shall be no end;
And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and life-giver,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who, with the Father and the Son,
together is worshipped and glorified,
Who has spoken through the Prophets.

And I believe in one, holy, catholic,
And apostolic church,
I confess one baptism
for the remission of sins.
And I await the resurrection of the dead:
And the life of the word to come.
Amen.

Sanctus & Benedictus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth!
Pleni sunt cæli et terra
gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full
of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis.

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

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world,
Grant us peace.

Peace, My Heart

From *The Gardener* by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Peace, my heart,
let the time for the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt into memory
and pain into songs.

Let the flight through the sky
end in the folding of the wings over the nest.

Let the last touch of your hands be gentle
like the flower of the night.

Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment,
and say your last words in silence.

I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

Tracklist

Missa L'homme armé, Op. 50 (1971)

1	Kyrie	5.07
2	Gloria	4.01
3	Credo	7.02
4	Sanctus & Benedictus	9.56
5	Agnus Dei	7.28
6	Peace, My Heart	3.31

From Nine Tagore Madrigals, Op. 37 (1968)

Missa In nomine, Op. 62 (1974)

7	Kyrie	6.39
8	Gloria	6.24
9	Credo	6.42
10	Sanctus & Benedictus	10.55
11	Agnus Dei	4.26

CREDITS

Soprano

Gwen Martin
Lucy De Butts
Ellie Martin
Felicity Davies

Alto

Phillipa Thomas
Eleanor Dann
Felicity Buckland
Clara Kanter

Tenor

Dale Harris
Rob Jenkins
Sam Corkin
Alex Haigh

Bass

Rene Bloice-Sanders
Sebastian Charlesworth
Sean Webster
Christopher Webb

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Cover image

Steve Johnson

Conductor

Hilary Campbell

Sound Engineer

Adaq Khan

Assistant Engineer

Joshua Kenney

Creative Director

Mike Cooter

Producer

Andrew King

Executive Producer

Adrian Green



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