



Director ~ Matthew Berry
Organ ~ David Bednall

Alfred Desenclos
Messe de Requiem

Naji Hakim
Messe Solennelle

Saturday 18 March 2023 7.30pm
Keble College Chapel, Parks Road
Oxford

Please make sure all mobile phones are switched off during the performance

Please note that photography and all unauthorised video and audio recording are strictly prohibited.

Alfred Desenclos ~ *Salve Regina*

Naji Hakim ~ *Messe Solennelle*

Naji Hakim ~ *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt*

Interval of 20 minutes ~ CDs on sale

Alfred Desenclos ~ *Messe de Requiem*

Alfred Desenclos [1912-1971]

Salve Regina (1958)

Salve Regina is one of two short a cappella motets written in 1958, the other being *Nos autem*. It has a flowing, melismatic quality through the influence of chant, and the final chaste cadence has the imprint of Poulenc.

Naji Hakim [b.1955]

Messe Solennelle (1999)

Kyrie

Gloria

Sanctus

Agnus Dei

This, the original, version for SATB and two organs (second organ *ad lib*) follows the French tradition of the 19th and 20th century *Messe Solennelle* as represented by Widor, Vierne and Langlais and with a specific regard to the antiphonal and soloistic character of the Grande-Orgue. Apart from a few references to Gregorian or secular sources, the free thematic material is developed in a tonally expanded harmony. The general atmosphere of this mass is of a festive and joyful thanksgiving. *Messe Solennelle* was commissioned and then premiered by Christopher Stokes and Manchester Cathedral Choir in March 2000.

Naji Hakim

Vexilla Regis Prodeunt (1994)

Vexilla Regis Prodeunt is a processional hymn with words and, possibly, the melody by the sixth-century Bishop of Poitiers Venantius Fortunatus; traditionally it has been sung at Vespers in Passiontide, from the Fifth Sunday in Lent to the Thursday before Easter. Naji Hakim describes his work as a symphonic paraphrase on the poem and its melody. The music evolves continuously based on the structure of the poem, and Hakim says that its passionate character serves what he calls the dramatic nature of the text. The music also draws on the hymn, *Vive Jesus, vive sa croix*, which is sung in France on Palm Sunday. The work was premiered by its dedicatee, Leo Abbott, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington DC in July 1995.

Interval of 20 minutes

CDs will be on sale

Alfred Desenclos

Messe de Requiem (1963)

Soloists: Hannah Wight, Helen Burn, Tim Ambrose, Paul Thomas

Introit et Kyrie

Offertoire

Sanctus

Pie Jesu

Agnus Dei et Communion

Libera me, Domine

In paradisum

It was a tremendous scandal that heralded a revival of *Messe de Requiem*. Back in 2001, the work was virtually unknown outside France. It wasn't a scholar, conductor or critic who

discovered there was a problem with the American premiere of *Requiem Mass* by the Atlanta-based composer Tristan Foison, but a local amateur singer in the audience. Foison's Mass, billed as a new work, was supposedly being heard outside Europe for the first time, a major coup for the performing choir, Capitol Hill Chorale. But the audience member was sure he had sung it before only a year or so previously, with the Fairfax Choral Society in Vienna, Virginia.

Not only was the piece not an American premiere, it was not by Foison. It was by Alfred Desenclos, a composer who had died thirty years previously, and was published by Durand in 1967. In 1999, it was somehow printed under Foison's name. The plagiarist composer revelled in the audience applause, but the next day the scam began to unravel. The audience member checked his score, and discovered that Foison had not only borrowed thematic material, but had stolen the work wholesale. Foison was confronted by the choral director, and proffered many elaborate excuses for this musical theft. Shortly after, he vanished from the classical music scene. It was discovered that much of his CV was fake, including an entry that he had won the 'Prix de Rome' despite the last award being made in 1968 when he was just ten years old. Desenclos won this award in 1942.

In the past 20 years, *Messe de Requiem* has begun to receive additional prominence thanks to three commercial recordings, most notably, in the UK with the Choir of King's College, London, under the direction of David Trendell. Trendell's interpretation is remarkable for its breadth, and the whole work comes in at eight minutes longer than the recording by the French ensemble Les Éléments accompanied by Desenclos' son. *Messe de Requiem* is cast in seven sections, and like the Fauré and Duruflé settings omits the *Dies irae*. The work is influenced by plainchant, without actually adopting any chant melodies. The harmonic language is rich with chords in parallel motion often featuring the added second or sixth.

The oeuvre of Alfred Desenclos, most of which was little-known outside the world of liturgical music during his lifetime, has rightfully enjoyed a strong revival in the concert hall and the recording studio over the last two decades; his '*Quatuor de saxophones*' in particular establishing itself in the 20th century chamber music repertoire.

Commotio was formed in August 1999 to promote neglected contemporary choral repertoire. Performances have included the second UK performance of Alfred Schnittke's mighty *Requiem* and other rarely heard works including Paul Hindemith's *Mass* and Kenneth Leighton's *Mass for Double Choir*, and the world premiere of Pierre Villette's *Inviolata*. Commotio also promotes and performs the works of a younger generation of composers including, most recently, Grace-Evangeline Mason, David Bednall, and Kerensa Briggs.

Their début CD of South African choral music was released in February 2006, followed by a CD for choir and cello in February 2008. A track from the latter disc, Richard Allain's *Ubi caritas*, was chosen to feature on the Classic FM core playlist and appears in the compilation CD *Smooth Classics – the Ultimate Collection*. The choir recorded a disc of the music of James Whitbourn which was released on the Naxos label (8.572103) in February 2010 and reached no.2 in the *Specialist Classical Chart*. Their second Naxos CD, *In the Heart of Things* (8.572739), the choral works of Francis Pott, was released on the Naxos label in February 2012. In August 2013 Commotio featured as a gala choir at the Association of British Choral Directors' Convention. In November 2013, the choir's fifth CD *The Rose in the Middle of Winter – Carols by Bob Chilcott* was released and reached no.1 in the *Specialist Classical Chart*.

Commotio's sixth recording, featuring jazz-inspired choral works by Bob Chilcott, was released in September 2017 and reached no.11 in the UK Jazz Charts. The choir gave the first UK performance of Rolande Falcinelli's *Messe de Sainte Dominique* in June 2018 and in March 2019 they embarked on their seventh recording featuring Francis Pott's *Word* and his new work for cello and double choir, *At First Light* (released July 2020).

Commotio celebrated its 20th anniversary in September 2019, with a reunion concert of current and past choir members. Works included the 24-part *In Nomine* by Bo Holten, Pierre Villette's *Attende Domine*, and the world premiere of Richard Allain's *Music*, commissioned and written for the occasion. Post-pandemic, Commotio returned under the direction of Will Dawes and Sarah Tenant-Flowers, with director, Matthew Berry, returning in June 2022.

David Bednall is recognized as one of the leading choral composers of his generation. He studied for a PhD in Composition with Professor John Pickard at the University of Bristol and is signed to Oxford University Press. He has an extensive freelance playing and conducting career and is Sub Organist at Bristol Cathedral. He studied with Naji Hakim and David Briggs and was Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral.

He was Organ Scholar at The Queen's College, Oxford and then at Gloucester Cathedral. He also spent periods there as Acting Director of Music and Acting Assistant Organist and was closely involved with the Three Choirs Festival.

He won prizes in Improvisation and Performance at the examination for Fellow of The Royal College of Organists and has given recitals at La Trinité, Paris, and many English Cathedrals. In June 2008 he gave a recital at Notre-Dame de Paris.

He has performed all the major works of Messiaen and his debut solo recording and CD of improvisations with Malcolm Archer have received excellent reviews. He has improvised on live radio and in concert. He has also appeared as stunt-organist on BBC TV's *Dr Who*.

He is most prominent as a composer and is a House Composer at Oxford University Press. The first CD of his choral music, *Hail, gladdening light*, was a Gramophone Editor's Choice, the recording of his *Requiem* received similar accolades, and a further recording of his choral music, *Flame Celestial*, received a *Gramophone Recommendation*. A number of his works have been broadcast on radio and recent work has included *Missa Sancti Pauli* for St Paul's Cathedral and *Welcome All Wonders* for The Queen's College, Oxford. The latter is his largest work to date and the recording on Signum has garnered superb international critical

acclaim. His *Stabat Mater* was premiered in New York in 2015, and the recording of this on Regent with Jennifer Pike (violin) and the Chapel Choir of Benenden School under Edward Whiting was an Editor's Choice in the Awards Edition of Gramophone 2016.

Recent work includes the 40-part motet *Lux orta est iusto*, a commission from the Finzi Trust to write a Gloria and Nunc dimittis to accompany Finzi's setting of the Magnificat for the Three Choirs Festival 2016, and a BBC Commission for James Gilchrist, Philip Dukes, and Anna Tilbrook which was premiered in Hull, City of Culture, in July 2017. The Presteigne Festival commissioned *Regina Caeli* for the 2018 Festival, and December 2018 saw the premiere of *Make We Merry* for Upper Voices, Brass, and Organ, commissioned by Benenden and the recording of this has been released on Regent Records. Sherborne Chamber Choir premiered David's new set of Advent Antiphons in November 2022. In February 2023, he was appointed the new music director of Bristol Bach Choir. He is also choral director at Clifton Cathedral.

More information can be found at www.davidbednall.com

Matthew Berry, the conductor and joint-founder of the choir, studied music at University College, Oxford, where he was Organ Scholar and then Assistant Organist. He has studied organ under David Sanger, David Goode and Ian Curror. After conducting The Oxford Chamber Choir for two years as a student, he founded Commotio in 1999. Having finished his degree, he studied post-graduate choral direction with Patrick Russill for two years at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

His expertise lies in the research and promotion of little-known contemporary choral repertoire, principally from Scandinavia, South Africa, the United States and Slovenia. In 24 years working with Commotio he has initiated many premieres including, most recently, the UK Premiere of Falcinelli's *Messe de Sainte-Dominique*.

In February 2013, the Governing Body of the Royal Academy of Music elected Matthew as Associate of Royal Academy of Music (ARAM), an award to 'former students who have made a significant contribution to the music profession'.

Matthew now lives in Sudan, moving to Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in August.

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Alex Burgar	Anne-Marie Boylan	Tim Ambrose	Hugh Conway Morris
Aoife Dudley	Rosie Breckon	Ian Fawcett	Neil Goble
Anne Marie Lo	Helen Burn	Philip Fine	Martyn Matthews
Lizzy Morland	Sue Chamberlin	Michael Hosking	Michael Rowley
Francesca Mosely	Susan Glaisher	Tim Nightingale	Paul Thomas
Lorna Richerby	Rupert Griffin		Philip Towler
Kate Smith	Julia Hollander		
Hannah Wight	Laura Jones		
	Griselda Sherlaw-		
	Johnson		
	Helen Swan		

Commotio are immensely grateful for the support of our Friends

Judith Godsland
Bryant and Margaret Ambrose
Derek and Clare Mowbray
Anne Mackintosh and Michael Gardiner
Alexandra Green

Anyone interested in becoming a Friend can find more information at www.commotio.org/friends

Commotio would like to thank the following for their invaluable help

Keble College, Oxford
St John the Evangelist Church, Oxford
St Margaret's Church, Oxford
Naji Hakim
Griselda Sherlaw-Johnson
Paul Thomas

Forthcoming concerts

Tickets available at www.commotio.org or on the door

Saturday 10 June 2023
St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road, Oxford

Peter Warlock: The Full Heart

with works by

Lennox Berkeley, Geoffrey Bush, Benjamin Britten, Kerensa
Briggs, Gabriel Jackson, Kenneth Leighton, Herbert Murrill,
Ralph Vaughan Williams and others

Auditioning for Commotio

We are always interested in hearing from anyone who might be interested in auditioning for Commotio. Singers should email Matthew Berry on info@commotio.org for more information.



[@commotio_choir](https://twitter.com/commotio_choir)



[@commotiochoir](https://www.facebook.com/commotiochoir)



www.commotio.org

To join our mailing list or if you are able to support the choir in any way (for example financial donation, commissioning a new work, advertising/marketing), please email info@commotio.org