

KENNETH LEIGHTON
ORGAN WORKS
VOLUME 2



STEPHEN FARR ORGAN
NICKY SPENCE TENOR
THE KLAIS ORGAN OF SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

Complete Organ Works Vol. 2

Stephen Farr *organ*

with

Nicky Spence *tenor*⁵

The Klais Organ of Symphony Hall, Birmingham

About Volume 1:

'Indeed, it is the sheer musical quality of Farr's playing and his obvious sensitivity towards the rhythmic and textural detail of Leighton's music which makes this a hugely impressive release'
Gramophone (Editor's Choice)

'[...] unimpeachable performances and sound'
Classical Ear

1. **Festival Fanfare** (1968) [6:12]

Et Resurrexit (Theme, Fantasy & Fugue), Op. 49

2. Theme: Sostenuto, lontano e religioso [2:39]

3. Fantasy: Largo alla marcia [5:22]

4. Fugue: Andante sostenuto [7:58]

5. **These are Thy Wonders (A Song of Renewal)**, Op. 84 [8:04]

6. **Veni Creator Spiritus** (1987) [7:00]

Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia, Op. 41

7. Prelude: Largo sostenuto [4:23]

8. Scherzo: Allegro molto, ritmico e chiaro [3:07]

9. Passacaglia: Adagio sostenuto [8:25]

Total playing time [53:16]



Kenneth Leighton: Organ Works, Vol. 2

I still feel I'm a Yorkshireman – very much so – because I have all the natural qualities of one. I think this of my music too, because of a certain directness and a common-sense attitude. I'm also very much a romantic basically; there's a very emotional attitude behind it all, which I think is characteristically Yorkshire actually.

Kenneth Leighton, 1979

The first of Kenneth Leighton's oeuvre of organ works is also one of his most enduring compositions for the instrument – the **Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia**, Op. 41. For a first foray into composition for solo organ it is ambitious and conceived on a relatively large scale at approximately twenty minutes over three movements. It was commissioned by the organist Bryan Hesford, who was organist of Brecon Cathedral in Wales at the time of the work's completion in January 1963. Hesford himself premiered the work on 24 October that same year at the organ of Norwich Cathedral in a recital that also contained works by François Couperin, François d'Agincour, Felix Mendelssohn and Jean Langlais.

The Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia was itself begun during 1962, a year in which

choral works were dominant in Leighton's output. The anthem *Give me the wings of faith*, an arrangement of a traditional French carol *O leave your sheep* and the *Missa Sancti Thomae*, Op. 40, were all penned in 1962, the latter composed for Canterbury Cathedral to celebrate the 800th anniversary of St Thomas Beckett's consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury. The only other composition completed in that year was the fairly short *Festive Overture* for small orchestra, written with young players in mind. Leighton completed no other works during 1963, the remainder of which was taken up with work on his brooding and dramatic *Symphony No. 1*, Op. 42, of which the *Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia* is a vivid precursor.

When Leighton began the *Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia*, his experience of writing for the organ was entirely limited to accompaniment writing for choral works, and Herrick Bunney (then organist of St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Organist) later recalled how Leighton "[...] came to me and said, "I want to write something for the organ, but I don't know anything about the organ. Can you help me?" So then we sat down together at a console at the concert hall organ at the University, at the McEwan Hall, one of those big, Romantic machines, and I showed him roughly how an organ worked, what

made it tick, and gave him scores of music by [Marcel] Dupré, for example, for him to take away and look at and see how those fellows wrote for the instrument. [...] lo and behold, fairly soon after that he produced the Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia [...] which showed instant mastery of the idiom.'

Indeed, Leighton's ability to write idiomatic music effectively for the instrument was evident from this early organ work, which demonstrates his particular gift to sustain tension and interest for extended periods while inviting the individual organist to supply his own thoughts on registration. The work is brimming with compositional ideas, although the main melodic material of the work is slight, based mostly around the ambiguity between major and minor heard in the first bars of the 'Prelude'. This ambiguity, punctuated by the alternating major and minor of the pesante pedal part, leads directly on to a growth of tension that is both organic and deeply chromatic while loaded with counterpoint.

The 'Scherzo' is typical of a reasonable number of scherzos that Leighton wrote, some of the most notable being the 'Toccata' from the Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani, Op. 58 of 1970, and the two scherzos contained in the Symphony No. 2 'Sinfonia Mistica', Op. 69

completed in 1974. Most of Leighton's scherzos are similar in nature, style and approach, often providing a conflict between a playful and anxious mood.

While not being strictly twelve-tone in its construction the main 'Passacaglia' theme is a twelve-tone row. Leighton was interested in the concept of twelve-tone techniques as used by composers such as Alban Berg, Béla Bartók and Luigi Dallapiccola, and was prone to using elements of these methods within tonal boundaries, which, here, is underlined by the resounding C major that ends the work. (The Nine Variations Op. 36 for solo piano provide a rare example of Leighton composing stricter twelve-tone music). The 'Passacaglia' is often both dense and dark, the tension provided initially by an intensely austere recurring passacaglia theme in the pedals. As the movement continues, the theme becomes developed and distorted in increasingly more rapid, energetic and virtuosic variations. A short improvisatory section ensues before six relentless statements of the passacaglia theme, now returned to the pedal, precede a declamatory C major resolution.

All of Leighton's works for solo organ were written to commission, and the completion and publication by Novello of Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia led on to a number

of commissions for solo organ works soon afterwards with five further works completed before his departure from Edinburgh and his brief appointment as Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. The two most substantial of these works are the Festival Fanfare and **Et Resurrexit (Theme, Fantasy & Fugue)**, Op. 49.

Begun during late 1965 and completed in August of 1966, *Et Resurrexit* is dedicated to Robert Munns, who gave the first performance of this work on 16 November the same year in Brompton Parish Church. (Munns also premiered Leighton's organ concerto in April 1971 in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge). Not dissimilar in scale to the Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia, *Et Resurrexit* is also spread over three movements – Leighton notes how: 'Although purely abstract in design, the work attempts to give musical expression of the individual's struggle for belief in the middle of the resurrection.'

Once again Leighton displays immense musical economy, the material of the whole work being derived from the opening four-note theme. Leighton writes how 'The opening phrase of four notes is a kind of symbol, and in musical terms the struggle is between chromatic and diatonic versions of this simple idea.' The manuscript of the

second sketch of *Et Resurrexit* contains an earlier title for the work as 'Theme, Fantasia & Variations' and Leighton further remarks how 'Although in three distinct movements the form of the piece could also be described as continuous variation, since the opening phrase undergoes constant transformation in the course of each movement.'

The **Festival Fanfare** was composed during August of 1968 and written for the inaugural West Riding Cathedrals Festival, which combined the three Yorkshire cathedral choirs of Sheffield, Bradford & Wakefield and took place on the 1 and 2 November that same year, hosted by Sheffield Cathedral. Graham Matthews, the then recently appointed organist of Sheffield Cathedral, writes how: 'Knowing that Kenneth Leighton was associated with Wakefield Cathedral, I wrote to him personally about the forthcoming festival, suggesting the title 'Festival Fanfare' and requesting a five-minute solo organ piece. This commission was promptly fulfilled to the letter.' Matthews gave the Festival Fanfare its first two performances during the festival, as a voluntary for a festal evensong and as the opening work of a grand concert of the combined choirs with a Festival Orchestra.

The final two works in this programme both date from the 1980s – *These are Thy Wonders*

(*A Song of Renewal*), Op. 84 for tenor and organ (1981) and Leighton's last composition for solo organ, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (1987).

Composed between April and May of 1981, **These Are Thy Wonders** was commissioned by the tenor Neil Mackie in honour of the seventieth birthday of Peter Pears. Mackie, accompanied by the organist Richard Hughes, premiered the work on 23 June 1981 in St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney. In setting words to music Leighton was drawn to the work of the metaphysical poets, often to great effect. *These Are Thy Wonders* provides no exception in a luminous setting of George Herbert's poem 'The Flower' from *The Temple* (1633). The imagery is strong here in this vivid through-composed work – the garden of life in which some flowers perish and die while others soar towards heaven. The challenge of balancing a solo voice with the wide range of the organ is fluently negotiated while the intensely lyrical nature of Leighton's music is here in abundance.

Composed just a year before Leighton's untimely death at the age of fifty-eight **Veni Creator Spiritus** was written for the Dunfermline Abbey Festival and first performed in Dunfermline Abbey by the organist Andrew Armstrong on 21 June

1987. Leighton frequently described the importance of both plainchant and hymn tunes in his music ('My work is littered with hymn tunes'), and this short work, described as a 'Prelude' by Leighton, is an exquisite meditation on the plainchant hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Between lilting sections based around the ninth-century *Veni Creator Spiritus* theme, the chant itself is brought out *in rilievo*, suggesting the structure of a Baroque chorale prelude with one complete verse fractured into its four separate phrases.

© 2016 Adam Binks



The Klais Organ of Symphony Hall, Birmingham (2001)

Photography: Bob Hall (Creative Commons - flickr.com)

**The Klais Organ of Symphony Hall,
Birmingham**

Positiv (Manual I)

1. Quintadena	16
2. Praestant	8
3. Voce humana	8
4. Gedackt	8
5. Principal	4
6. Koppelflöte	4
7. Nasat	2 2/3
8. Octave	2
9. Terzflöte	1 3/5
10. Sifflöte	1 1/3
11. Scharff	V 1 1/3
12. Dulzian	16
13. Trompette	8
14. Cromorne	8
Tremulant	
Swell to Positiv	
Solo to Positiv	
Chamade to Positiv	

Great (Manual II)

15. Praestant	16
16. Principal	8
17. Flaut major	8
18. Gambe	8
19. Bordun	8
20. Quinte	5 1/3
21. Octave	4
22. Nachthorn	4
23. Terz	3 1/5

24. Quinte	2 2/3
25. Superoctave	2
26. Mixtur	V 2
27. Cymbel	III 1/2
28. Cornet	V
29. Trompette	16
30. Trompette	8
31. Clairon	4
Positiv to Great	
Swell to Great	
Solo to Great	
Chamade to Great	

Swell (Manual III - enclosed)

32. Bourdon	16
33. Flûte harmonique	8
34. Gamba	8
35. Voix céleste	8
36. Rohrflöte	8
37. Principal	4
38. Flûte octaviante	4
39. Nasard	2 2/3
40. Octavin	2
41. Tierce	1 3/5
42. Sifflet	1
43. Plein jeu	2
44. Basson	16
45. Trompette harmonique	8
46. Hautbois	8
47. Voix humaine	8
48. Clairon harmonique	4
Tremulant	
Solo to Swell	

Chamade to Swell
Chamade to Solo

Solo (Manual IV - enclosed)

49. Salicional	8
50. Cor de nuit	8
51. Traversflöte	8
52. Céleste	8
53. Viola	4
54. Rohrflöte	4
55. Waldflöte	2
56. Baryton	16
57. Clarinette	8
Tremulant	
58. Trompette en chamade	8
59. Trompette en chamade	4
Sub-octave Chamade to Chamade	
Chamade on Solo	
Chamade on Great	
Chamade on Positiv	

Right-hand Echo Division (enclosed;
inside reverberation chamber)

60. Unda maris I-II	8
61. Trombone	16
62. Trumpet	8
63. French Horn	8

Left-hand Echo Division (enclosed;
inside reverberation chamber)

64. Tuba	8
65. Cor anglais	8
66. Tuba clarion	4

Right Echo on Positiv
Left Echo on Great

Pedal

67. Openflute	32
68. Untersatz	32
69. Principal	16
70. Violon	16
71. Subbass	16
72. Octave	8
73. Cello	8
74. Gedackt	8
75. Superoctave	4
76. Hohlflöte	4
77. Mixtur	IV 2 2/3
78. Contrabombarde	32
79. Bombarde	16
80. Fagott	16
81. Trompette	8
82. Clairon	4

Positiv to Pedal

Great to Pedal

Swell to Pedal

Solo to Pedal

Chamade to Pedal

Great & Pedal Combinations Coupled

Manual compass: C-c 4

Pedal compass: C-g1

798 combinations & sequencer

General Crescendo roller pedal

Stephen Farr

Stephen Farr pursues a varied career as a soloist and continuo player, activities which he combines with the post of Director of Music at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge. He was Organ Scholar of Clare College, Cambridge, graduating with a double first in Music and an MPhil in musicology. He then held appointments at Christ Church, Oxford, and at Winchester and Guildford Cathedrals.

A former student of David Sanger and a prizewinner at international competition level, he has an established reputation as one of the leading recitalists of his generation, and has appeared in the UK in venues including the Royal Albert Hall (where he gave the premiere of Judith Bingham's *The Everlasting Crown* in the BBC Proms 2011); Bridgewater Hall; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; Westminster Cathedral; King's College, Cambridge, St Paul's Celebrity Series and Westminster Abbey: he also appears frequently on BBC Radio 3 as both performer and presenter. He has performed widely in both North and South America (most recently as guest soloist and director at the Cartagena International Music Festival), in Australia, and throughout Europe.

He has a particular commitment to contemporary music, and has been involved in premieres of works by composers including Patrick Gowers, Francis Pott and Robert Saxton; he also collaborated with Thomas Adès in a recording of *Under Hamelin Hill*, part of an extensive and wide-ranging discography

. His concerto work has included engagements with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra and the London Mozart Players; he made his debut in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in 2005. He has also worked with many other leading ensembles including the Berlin Philharmonic (with whom he appeared in the premiere of Jonathan Harvey's *Weltethos* under Sir Simon Rattle in October 2011), Florilegium, the Bach Choir, Holst Singers, BBC Singers, Polyphony, The English Concert, London Baroque Soloists, City of London Sinfonia, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Wallace Collection, Endymion Ensemble, the Philharmonia, Academy of Ancient Music, Britten Sinfonia and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

www.stephenfarr.co.uk



Nicky Spence

Hailed by the *The Daily Telegraph* as ‘a voice of real distinction,’ Nicky Spence is fast emerging as one of ‘our finest young singers.’ An artist of great integrity, Nicky Spence’s unique skills as a singing actor and the rare honesty in his musicianship are steadfastly earning him a place at the top of the profession.

On the opera stage, Nicky Spence created the role of Brian in the world premiere of Nico Muhly’s opera *Two Boys* at the ENO, a role he reprised for his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2013 conducted by David Robertson. His other recent roles include Števa in *Jenůfa* at La Monnaie, Brussels, *Steuermann in Der Fliegender Holländer* in concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Andris Nelsons and at Scottish Opera, Iago in Rossini’s *Otello* for the Buxton Festival, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* at New Zealand Opera. Recent concert performances include *Tristan und Isolde* with the BBC Scottish Symphony under Donald Runnicles, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony at the Barbican with the Philharmonia, Finzi’s *Dies Natalis* with the BBCCO, Elgar’s *The Kingdom* at King’s College, Cambridge, Mozart’s C Minor Mass at Cadogan Hall, and Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* with L’Orchestre National d’Ile de France and at The Wigmore Hall.

In recent years, Nicky Spence also made his New York recital debut with Malcolm Martineau, performed a live broadcast at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, a Britten Song-Cycle Series in Aldeburgh, a recital series at Kings Place as part of their Britten 100 celebrations, and appearances at the Oxford Lieder Festival, Middle Temple Hall, St John’s Smith Square, Spitalfields festival with the Songsmiths and the Purcell Room.

Nicky trained at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the National Opera Studio. He took his place as an inaugural Harewood Artist at the ENO in 2011, which is made possible by the American Friends of the ENO.

Nicky was recently been nominated by the International Opera Awards for Young Singer of the Year 2015 and was also one of ten artists up for this year’s Times Breakthrough Award at the South Bank Sky Arts Awards celebrating the best of up and coming young British talent from across the Arts.

www.nickyspence.com



Photography: Raphaëlle Photography

5. **These are Thy Wonders**
(**A Song of Renewal**), Op. 84

How fresh, oh Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! even as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shriveled heart
Could have recovered greenness? It was gone
Quite underground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown,
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickening, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing-bell.
We say amiss
This or that is:
Thy word is all, if we could spell.

Oh that I once past changing were,
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Offering at heaven, growing and groaning thither;
Nor doth my flower
Want a spring shower,
My sins and I joining together.

[But while I grow in a straight line,
Still upwards bent, as if heaven were mine own,
Thy anger comes, and I decline:
What frost to that? what pole is not the zone
Where all things burn,
When thou dost turn,
And the least frown of thine is shown?]

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing. Oh, my only light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

[These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide;
Which when we once can find and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us where to bide;
Who would be more,
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.]

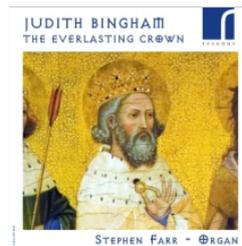
The Flower by George Herbert (1593-1633)
(stanzas 5 & 7 not set)

More titles from Resonus Classics



Kenneth Leighton: Organ Works, Volume 1
RES10134

'Stephen Farr is a committed advocate. Nimble and nuanced in the multi-faceted Six Fantasies on Hymn Tunes, [...] and unabashedly muscular in Leighton's magnum opus, the dramatically variegated Missa de Gloria. [...] Recorded sound is exemplary'
Choir and Organ (5 stars)



Judith Bingham: The Everlasting Crown
Stephen Farr
RES10108

'[Farr's] breadth of vision, intense sense of purpose and brilliant technique combine to make this a recording which, every bit as much as Bingham's music itself, deserves repeated listening.'
Gramophone

© 2016 Resonus Limited

© 2016 Resonus Limited

Recorded in Symphony Hall, Birmingham on 27-28 August 2014

Producer, Engineer & Editor: Adam Binks

Recorded at 24-bit / 96kHz resolution (DDD)

Cover image: *Edinburgh* by Yiannis Theologos Michellis (Creative Commons - Flickr.com)

RESONUS LIMITED — UK

info@resonusclassics.com
www.resonusclassics.com

