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COUPERIN

LEÇONS DE TÉNÈBRES

GESUALDO

TENEBRAE RESPONSORIES  
FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY



TENEBRAE

NIGEL SHORT



# COUPERIN LEÇONS DE TÉNÈBRES GESUALDO TENEBRAE RESPONSORIES FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

## Trois Leçons de Ténèbres

François Couperin (1688-1733)

- |     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
| [1] | Première Leçon <sup>JD</sup>              | [16.40] |
| [2] | Seconde Leçon <sup>GD</sup>               | [12.05] |
| [3] | Troisième Leçon <sup>JD (I) GD (II)</sup> | [12.08] |

Grace Davidson *Soprano* • Julia Doyle *Soprano*  
Steven Devine *Organ* • Jonathan Rees *Viola da gamba*

## Tenebrae Responsories for Maundy Thursday

Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613)

### First Nocturn

- |     |                       |        |
|-----|-----------------------|--------|
| [4] | In monte Oliveti      | [4.45] |
| [5] | Tristis est anima mea | [4.21] |
| [6] | Ecce vidimus eum      | [4.14] |

### Second Nocturn

- |     |                         |        |
|-----|-------------------------|--------|
| [7] | Amicus meus osculi      | [3.24] |
| [8] | Judas mercator pessimus | [2.30] |
| [9] | Unus ex discipulis meis | [3.56] |

### Third Nocturn

- |      |                           |        |
|------|---------------------------|--------|
| [10] | Eram quasi agnus innocens | [5.17] |
| [11] | Una hora non potuistis    | [3.14] |
| [12] | Seniores populi consilium | [4.36] |

Grace Davidson, Julia Doyle,  
Jeremy Budd, David de Winter,  
Gabriel Crouch & Jimmy Holliday

Total timings: [77.09]

TENEBRAE  
NIGEL SHORT DIRECTOR

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## INTRODUCTION

Some of the most atmospheric music from the numerous Liturgical settings in Holy Week is that composed for the Office of Tenebrae. Victoria's are the most well-known, but equally beautiful and arguably more dramatic are the settings composed by Gesualdo. They have an intensity unrivalled in most music of that time owing to the extraordinary and sudden harmonic shifts, which at times sound almost contemporary, and rhythmic outbursts led on occasion by a single word. As a result the listener is always kept on their toes, waiting for the next wild change of direction. Set for two higher voices (sopranos), three middle voices (tenors) and one low bass, they create an unusual vocal timbre, and with extremely high tenor parts there is a tension that is never far from the surface. I loved singing these settings many years ago and have long been looking forward to taking the next step on our path to recording all three sets of Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories*, this being the second set that we have recorded. Singers with an extraordinary ability to colour text and jump through technical hoops – even at the extremes of their range – are needed to pull this music off, and I am delighted that for this recording

two former soprano members of Tenebrae (Julia Doyle and Grace Davidson) have returned to join four of our current members (Jeremy Budd, David de Winter, Gabriel Crouch and Jimmy Holliday).

Also harking back to my days as a singer, my other favourite music to sing at Easter time (Bach Passions aside) were Couperin's beautiful and mesmerising settings of some of the other texts from the Tenebrae Offices. I first came across this music in a wonderfully atmospheric film all about another French composer, Marin Marais: *Tous les matins du monde*. The soundtrack to the film features heavily the music written at the time for viola da gamba – one of the two accompanying instruments for the two sopranos in Couperin's settings, and played on our recording by the wonderful Jonathan Rees. Jonathan was joined on the continuo line by Steven Devine on harpsichord, and I am delighted to have had them both on board for this project, bringing a huge amount of skill, knowledge and joy to our interpretation of this work. Of course, as a countertenor, I sang the *Leçons de Ténèbres* at a much lower pitch, but here on this recording I hope you will enjoy hearing these two sublime soprano voices work together – at the correct pitch – to shape every phrase perfectly and bring each

Lesson to its serene conclusion with the familiar text used in settings of the Lamentations: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum tuum.*

Nigel Short

### Couperin's Trois Leçons de Ténèbres

It would be hard to find a more exemplary patron of the arts than France's illustrious Louis XIV. Throughout his long reign (indeed, the longest of any monarch of a sovereign nation in European history), he was acutely attuned to the power of spectacle. Regularly commissioning dazzling displays of his country's collective musical prowess, he was unwavering in his quest to promote his deeply held belief in the divine right of kings; and, here, François Couperin (1688–1733) could often be found, centre stage, directing this grand music.

Universally known as 'Le Roi Soleil', the French Sun King appointed many musicians, and Couperin was added to his long list in 1693, at the age of 25, as one of four Organistes du Roi. The most illustrious member of his talented family, Couperin was ennobled in 1696 and made Chevalier de l'Ordre de Latran in 1702. He was instructed to provide music that would glorify his king, and the Royal

Chapel of the lavish Palace of Versailles saw some of the greatest spectacles of the 18th century in the daily celebration of High Mass. Sadly, like much of Couperin's music (and his correspondence with other composers, including J. S. Bach), his large-scale sacred works that were said to have existed in manuscript at his death are no longer in existence.

In fact, only a very small amount of Couperin's ecclesiastical music was published during his lifetime, but his devoted followers, of which there have been, and are, many, delight at what remains. The settings we have been left with are some of the most expressively beautiful pieces of church music of the Baroque. The surviving small-scale pieces are scored for one, two or three voices and continuo, sometimes with concertante instruments and chorus. In comparison to the signature grandiose ceremonies that serenaded the height of Louis XIV's reign, this sacred music is comparatively subdued but spiritually profound and alive with vivid emotional intensity.

Of this sacred music, Couperin's *Trois Leçons de Ténèbres* are widely regarded as some of the great masterpieces of the French liturgical tradition. They are a mixture of Italian and

French styles, and while the declamatory and melodic text settings align with the *tragédie lyrique* style of the time, the incipits are traditionally set in plainsong formula, and the Hebrew letters of the alphabet appear in the text as melismas. The three *Leçons* appeared in print between 1713 and 1717, unlike the remaining six of the full nine settings (of which Couperin made reference in his writings), which are now lost.

The text derives from the Book of Lamentations where Jeremiah mourns the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586BC. The intensity of the tone of gloom and bleakness is punctuated at the end of each *Leçon*, with Jeremiah's words to the people of the Holy City, 'Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God'. The *Leçons* are believed to have been composed for the Abbey of Longchamp to be sung in intimate performance conditions for Matins on Maundy Thursday (which would have been observed on a Wednesday evening to increase attendance). We can deduce that the word "Ténèbres" is in reference to the darkness that would have resulted from the gradual extinguishing of the fifteen candles until the completion of Matins. This slow dimming of the candle light stunningly accompanied by the soft

expressive vocal lines recalling the depth of Jeremiah's noble anguish would have created an atmosphere of incomparably deep emotion.

2018 saw the 350th anniversary of the birth of Couperin, and in the 80 years or more since the recording history of the *Leçons de Ténèbres* began, they are now ranked among the most frequently recorded of all settings from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. This recording, performed by two sopranos, a chamber organ and viola da gamba, is played from a facsimile of the original edition, and the beautiful settings are intensely personal and exquisite in their evocation of an atmosphere of sublime devotion.

Hannah Perrin-Haynes

### Gesualdo's Tenebrae Responsories

An appreciation for great music is often enhanced by an understanding of its context; but in the case of Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613) the perceived significance of his troubled disposition, and of that shocking crime, (maybe you've heard?) may just have got out of hand. Two feature-length movies, at least six biographies, ten operas and countless articles – the temptation to further dramatize the story is understandable,

but honestly, the plain old truth is lurid enough and is ultimately more instructive: Gesualdo wrote music in outrageous defiance of logic and convention, but he was not the only composer in southern Italy who favoured a musical shock tactic; he lived in partial estrangement from society after 1590 (the year of his crimes), but that didn't stop him from courting the musical world with enthusiasm; and while he was certainly a premier-grade sado-masochist with any number of fascinating perversions, he was actually considered 'conservative' in his day, by some standards at least.

At the start of the 17th century, Italian music was leading the world away from the edifices of Renaissance polyphony. A new era of melody and accompaniment was dawning, in which the dramatic burden was placed on individual singers to convey emotion through the varied powers of the human voice, rather than through interactions between different musical lines. The pioneers were Monteverdi, Peri and Caccini. By contrast, Gesualdo continued to employ the old tools – five or six voices in counterpoint, modal harmony (stretched to the limit, admittedly), no accompaniment – to place his eccentric autograph on the style

most closely associated with the house of Este in Ferrara, and which was forged by the Mannerists – Luca Marenzio, Luzzasco Luzzaschi and Giaches de Wert. Mannerism was the perfect ideology for a man of Gesualdo's volatile disposition and vivid imagination: its architecture, literature, art and music were full of whimsical folly and dramatic hyperbole, and Gesualdo would have felt encouraged to pour out his rage, grief, guilt and ardour to the last drop. But whilst he was not the musical lone ranger the stories sometimes depict, Gesualdo most certainly pushed the permissive nature of Mannerism well beyond the posturing of his peers. Where others seasoned their music with the element of surprise, Gesualdo seems intent on distorting every musical line with huge intervallic leaps, shattering every *pianissimo* with a furious cascade of semi-quavers and spoiling every logical harmonic progression with some piece of chromatic invention. In fact, the surprise comes in the perfect cadences and the moments of stillness, and by offering us these occasional moments of musical reprieve Gesualdo is able to create a pathos no other composer of his era could match. We may notice the unhinged moments first, but ultimately it is the craft that lingers.

The *Tenebrae Responsories*, composed late in the composer's life and setting the nine responsories appropriate for each of the three most solemn days of Holy Week (thus 27 responsories in all), are his masterpiece. The settings for Maundy Thursday are the most tortured, lingering repeatedly on the betrayal of Judas and, by association, the guilt of all mankind. (Whilst the twisting harmonies and jagged emotional threads remain in part through the next two days, they settle in to a profound and tangible darkness by the time we reach the Responsories for Holy Saturday – recorded by Tenebrae in 2012). Gesualdo uses his vivid madrigalian language, honed by a quarter-century of practice, to capture Christ's Passion with almost unbearable directness. Witness the second responsory, where the shameful flight of the cowardly onlooker (vos fugam) is contrasted with the sacrifice of Christ (et ego vadam immolari pro vobis) in a musical expression of desolation as profound as any that Monteverdi could conjure in the coming decades; or the sixth responsory, where Gesualdo paints the image of Judas's suicide at the words 'se suspendit', with the voices at the top of their range, suddenly and brutally cut off.

In their liturgical setting these responsories are to be sung each day in three groups of three, these groups known liturgically as 'nocturns', with each nocturn preceding the extinguishing of a candle on the altar, as the church draws closer and closer to darkness. The end of the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service is one of the most solemn moments in the liturgical calendar. The final candle on the altar – by now the only source of light left in the church – is hidden beneath the altar table as it is stripped of its finery, to symbolize the apparent triumph of evil represented by the betrayal of Christ. Gesualdo rises to this portentous occasion in the final responsory of his Maundy Thursday cycle – *Seniores populi*. "The elders gathered to apprehend Jesus by trickery, and kill him. They came out with swords and clubs as against a robber". Listeners will notice the plaintive, almost sensuous quality with which Gesualdo sets the word 'occiderent' – 'they might kill' – as if revelling in the pain of the moment. Perhaps this is the moment to remind ourselves that Gesualdo spent his entire life in ostentatious atonement for the crimes of his youth, insisting on daily physical punishment, and praying for the welcome release of his own death.

Gabriel Crouch

## COUPERIN LEÇONS DE TÈNÈBRES LECONS DE TENEBRES

### 1 Première Leçon

Incipit lamentationem Jeremiae prophetae.

*The beginning of the lamentations of Jeremiah.*

*Aleph*

Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua, Domina gentium; princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo.

*How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary.*

*Beth*

Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lachrimae eius in maxillis eius; non est qui consoletur eam ex omnibus charis eius, omnes amici eius spreverunt eam et facti sunt ei inimici.

*She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.*

*Gimel*

Migravit Juda propter afflictionem et multitudinem servitutis; habitavit inter gentes, nec invenit requiem: omnes persecutores eius apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

*Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.*

*Daleth*

Viae Sion lugent, eo quod non sint qui veniant ad solemnitatem: omnes portae eius destructae, sacerdotes eius gementes, virgines eius squalidae, et ipsa oppressa amaritudine.

*The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.*

HETH

Facti sunt hostes eius in capite, inimici eius locupletati sunt; quia Dominus locutus est super eam, propter multitudinem iniquitatum eius. Parvuli eius ducti sunt in captivitatem, ante faciem tribulantis.

*Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.*

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

*Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*

Lamentations 1: 1-5

### 2 Seconde Leçon

*Vau*

Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor eius; facti sunt principes eius velut arietes non invenientes pascua; et abierunt absque fortitudine ante faciem subsequentis.

*And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.*

*Zain*

Recordata est Jerusalem dierum afflictionis suae, et praevaricationis omnium desiderabilium suorum, quae habuerat a diebus antiquis, cum caderet populus eius in manu hostili, et non esset auxiliator. Viderunt eam hostes, et deriserunt sabbata eius.

*Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her Sabbaths.*

*Heth*

Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem, propterea instabilis

*Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she*

facta est. Omnes qui glorificabant eam spreverunt illam: quoniam viderunt ignominiam eius. Ipsa autem gemens conversa est retrorsum.

#### *Teth*

Sordes eius in pedibus eius, nec recordata est finis sui: deposita est vehementer non habens consolatorem: vide, Domine, afflictionem meam, quoniam erectus est inimicus.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Lamentations 1: 1-5

### **3 Troisième Leçon**

#### *Jod*

Manum suam misit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia eius; quia vidit gentes ingressas sanctuarium suum, de quibus praeceperas ne intrarent in ecclesiam tuam.

#### *Caph*

Omnis populus eius gemens, et quaerens panem, dederunt pretiosa quaeque pro cibo, ad refocillandam animam. Vide, Domine, et considera quoniam facta sum vilis.

*is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.*

*Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself.*

*Jerusalem, return unto the Lord your God.*

*The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.*

*All her people sigh, they seek bread: they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O Lord, and consider: for I am become vile.*

#### *Lamed*

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus; quoniam vindemiavit me, ut locutus est Dominus in die irae fuoris sui.

#### *Mem*

De excelso misit ignem in ossibus meis, et erudit me: expandit rete pedibus meis, convertit me retrorsum: posuit me desolatum, tota die maerore confectam.

#### *Nun*

Vigilavit iugum iniquitatum mearum; in manu eius convolutae sunt, et impositae collo meo; infirmata est virtus mea; dedit me Dominus in manu de qua non potero surgere.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Lamentations 1: 10-14

*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.*

*From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.*

*The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.*

*Jerusalem, return unto the Lord your God.*

## GESUALDO TENEBRAE RESPONSORIES FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

### 4 In monte Oliveti

#### *Responsory*

In monte Oliveti oravit ad Patrem: Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste: Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma, fiat voluntas tua.

#### *Verse*

Vigilate, et orate, ut non intretis in tentationem.

*On mount Olivet he prayed to his father: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: the spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh weak.*

*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

### 5 Tristis est anima mea

#### *Responsory*

Tristis est anima mea, usque ad mortem: sustinete hic, et vigilate mecum: nunc videbitis turbam, quae circumdabit me: Vos fugam capietis, et ego vadam immolari pro vobis.

#### *Verse*

Ecce appropinquat hora, et filius hominis tradetur in manus peccatorum.

*My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay here and watch with me: now shall ye see the crowd that shall surround me: ye shall take flight, and I shall go to be offered up for you.*

*Behold the time draweth nigh, and the son of man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners.*

### 6 Ecce vidimus eum

#### *Responsory*

Ecce vidimus eum non habentem speciem, neque decorem: aspectus ejus in eo non est: hic peccata nostra portavit, et pro nobis dolet: ipse autem vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras: cujus livore sanati sumus.

#### *Verse*

Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit.

*Lo, we have seen him without comeliness or beauty: His look is gone from him: he hath borne our sins and suffered for us: He was wounded for our iniquities: by his stripes are we healed.*

*Truly he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.*

### 7 Amicus meus osculi

#### *Responsory*

Amicus meus osculi me tradidit signo: quem osculatus fuero, ipse est, tenete eum: hoc malum fecit signum, qui per osculum adimplevit homicidium: Infelix praetermisit pretium sanguinis, et in fine laqueo se suspendit.

#### *Verse*

Bonum erat ei, si natus non fuisset homo ille.

*My friend betrayed me by the token of a kiss: whom I shall kiss, that is he, hold him fast: that was the wicked token which he gave, who by a kiss accomplished murder: unhappy man, he relinquished the price of blood, and in the end hanged himself.*

*It had been good for that man, if he had never been born.*

**8 Judas mercator pessimus**

*Responsory*

Judas mercator pessimus osculo petiit Dominum: ille ut agnus innocens non negavit Judae osculum: denariorum numero Christum Judaeis tradidit.

*Verse*

Melius illi erat, si natus non fuisset.

**9 Unus ex discipulis meis**

*Responsory*

Unus ex discipulis meis tradet me hodie: Vae illi per quem tradar ego: melius illi erat, si natus non fuisset.

*Verse*

Qui intingit mecum manum in paropside, hic me traditurus est in manus peccatorum.

**10 Eram quasi agnus innocens**

*Responsory*

Eram quasi agnus innocens: ductus sum ad immolandum, et nesciebam: consilium fecerunt inimici mei adversum me, dicentes: Venite, mittamus lignum in panem ejus, et eradamus eum de terra viventium.

*Judas, worst of the traffickers, approached the Lord with a kiss: he like an innocent lamb refused not the kiss of Judas: for a few pence he delivered Christ to the Jews.*

*It had been better for him if he had never been born.*

*One of my disciples will this day betray me: woe to him by whom I am betrayed: it had been better for him if he had not been born.*

*He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he it is that will deliver me into the hands of sinners.*

*I was like an innocent lamb: I was led to the sacrifice and I knew it not: my enemies conspired against me, saying: come, let us put wood into his bread, and root him out of the land of the living.*

*Verse*

Omnes inimici mei adversum me cogitabant mala mihi: Verbum iniquum mandaverunt adversum me, dicentes: Venite, mittamus lignum in panem ejus, et eradamus eum de terra viventium.

**11 Una hora non potuistis**

*Responsory*

Una hora non potuistis vigilare mecum, qui exhortabamini mori pro me? Vel Judam non videtis, quomodo non dormit, sed festinat tradere me Judaeis?

*Verse*

Quid dormitis? Surgite, et orate, ne intretis in tentationem.

**12 Seniores populi consilium**

*Responsory*

Seniores populi consilium fecerunt: Ut Jesum dolo tenerent, et occiderent: cum gladiis et fustibus exierunt tamquam ad latronem.

*Verse*

Collegerunt pontifices et pharisaei concilium.

*All my enemies contrived mischief against me: they uttered a wicked speech against me, saying: Come, let us put poison into his bread, And let us cut him off out of the land of the living.*

*Could ye not watch one hour with me, ye that were ready to die for me? Or see ye not Judas, how he maketh haste to betray me to the Jews?*

*Why sleep ye? Arise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

*The elders gathered to apprehend Jesus by trickery, and kill him. They came out with swords and clubs as against a robber.*

*The priests and the pharisees held a council.*



## TENEBRAE



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Described as “phenomenal” (The Times) and “devastatingly beautiful” (Gramophone Magazine), award-winning choir Tenebrae is one of the world’s leading vocal ensembles, renowned for its passion and precision.

Under the direction of Nigel Short, Tenebrae performs at major festivals and venues across the globe, including the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International Festival, Leipzig Gewandhaus (Germany) and Melbourne Festival (Australia).

The choir is renowned for its highly-acclaimed interpretations of choral music ranging from the hauntingly passionate works of the Renaissance through to contemporary choral masterpieces, and is a dedicated advocate for contemporary composers, having worked with Judith Bingham, Ola Gjeilo, Alexander L'Estrange, Alexander Levine, Paweł Łukaszewski, Paul Mealor, Hilary Tann, Joby Talbot, Sir John Tavener and Will Todd. Tenebrae is also frequently engaged with the world’s finest orchestras, regularly appearing

alongside the Academy of Ancient Music, Aurora Orchestra and Britten Sinfonia, and also curates an annual Holy Week Festival in partnership with St John’s Smith Square.

In 2012 Tenebrae was the first-ever ensemble to be multi-nominated in the same category for the BBC Music Magazine Awards, securing the accolade of ‘Best Choral Performance’ for the choir’s recording of Victoria’s *Requiem Mass, 1605*. The following year Tenebrae’s Fauré Requiem with the London Symphony Orchestra was nominated for the Gramophone Awards, having been described as “the very best Fauré Requiem on disc” and “the English choral tradition at its zenith” (Richard Morrison, Chief Music Critic, The Times). In 2014 the choir’s recording of Russian Orthodox music, *Russian Treasures*, reached number 1 in the UK Specialist Classical Chart. In 2016 Tenebrae received its second BBC Music Magazine Award for a recording of Brahms and Bruckner motets, the profits from the sale of which benefit Macmillan Cancer Support, and in 2018 it received a Grammy nomination for *Music of the Spheres*, its album of part songs from the British Isles.

‘Passion and Precision’ are Tenebrae’s core values. Through its continued dedication to performance of the highest quality, Tenebrae’s vision is to deliver dramatic programming, flawless performances and unforgettable experiences, allowing audiences around the world to be moved by the power and intimacy of the human voice.

## GRACE DAVIDSON

Grace grew up in a house whose hallway was entirely filled by a grand piano which was being stored for a friend of the family – music was physically unavoidable. She learned the piano and the violin but it was singing that she loved best. Taken to *Cats* when she was three years old, she sang along throughout or, rather, whenever her mother’s hand wasn’t clamped over her mouth. And it was her singing that won her a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where she won the Early Music prize.

Since then she has worked as a soloist with leading Baroque ensembles, under the batons of Sir John Eliot Gardner, Paul McCreesh, Philippe Herreweghe and Harry Christophers.



Her discography includes a decade of recordings with The Sixteen, many of which feature her as soloist – Handel's *Jephtha* (as Angel), *Dixit Dominus*, Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, *Pianto della Madonna*, *Acis and Galatea* (as Galatea) and the *Lutheran Masses* of Bach. On Radio Three's 'Building a Library' her singing in Fauré's Requiem with the London Symphony Orchestra and Tenebrae, Nigel Short conducting, was reviewed by Richard Morrison quite simply: "Grace Davidson's *Pie Jesu* is matchless".

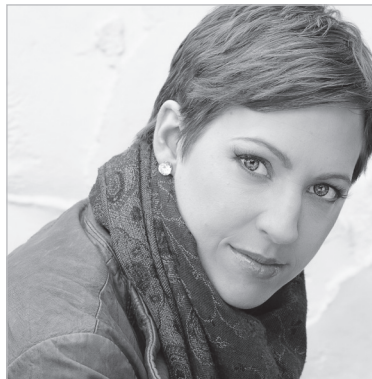
Grace's purity of tone has attracted many of the leading contemporary composers to write for her, most notably Max Richter, who chose her as the solo singer for many of his works, such as *Sleep*. This piece – lasting all night – has now been performed all over the world, including a performance in 2019 on the Great Wall of China.

Recent solo recordings for Signum Records are *Vivaldi & Handel*, a disc of sacred solo cantatas with the Academy of Ancient Music and *John Dowland: First Booke of Songes Or Ayres* with lutenist David Miller.

[www.gracedavidsonsonoprano.com](http://www.gracedavidsonsonoprano.com)

## JULIA DOYLE

Julia was lucky enough to have a childhood filled with music; as the daughter of musical parents, she regularly presented the concert bouquets and bottles from a very young age and was principally a violinist before her first singing lesson at the age of 16. Her first singing teacher, Linda Kitchen, inspired a deep love of communication and attention to text, and this, combined with her instrumental upbringing, helped to shape the foundations of her singing.



Julia sang as a Choral Scholar at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge whilst studying Social Political Sciences. After leaving university, she spent ten wonderful years singing with many of the UK's most distinguished ensembles such as Tenebrae, The Sixteen, Polyphony and The Monteverdi Choir. Gradually her work evolved into more of a solo career, and Julia is now widely known as a specialist in music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Some personal highlights include performances at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig (English Baroque Soloists), Alice Tully Hall in New York

(Collegium Vocale Gent), the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam (Orchestra of the 18th Century), the Royal Albert Hall (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra), concerts in Toronto (Tafelmusik), at the Handel Festival, Halle (The English Concert), in the Palace of Versailles (The King's Consort), Moscow International House of Music (Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment), and at Sydney Opera House (Australian Chamber Orchestra).

Her discography includes J. S. Bach *St John Passion* and *Mass in B Minor* (J. S. Bach Stiftung/Rudolf Lutz), *Magnificat* (Dunedin Consort/John Butt and The Bach Choir of Bethlehem/Greg Funfgeld) and *Lutheran Masses* (The Sixteen/Harry Christophers), Handel *Messiah* (Britten Sinfonia/Stephen Layton and B'rock Orchestra/Peter Dijkstra), *Occasional Oratorio* (Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin/Howard Arman), *Israel in Egypt* (Arsys Bourgogne/Pierre Cao and Le Concert Lorraine/Roy Goodman), and *L'Allegro* (Kölner Kammerchor/Peter Neumann), Handel – Mendelssohn *Israel in Ägypten* (The King's Consort/Robert King), *Codebreaker*, a new piece by James McCarthy (BBC Concert Orchestra/David Temple), and a new disc of Purcell songs with Matthew Wadsworth and Ensemble Unmeasured.

## NIGEL SHORT

Award-winning conductor Nigel Short has earned widespread acclaim for his recording and live performance work with leading orchestras and ensembles across the world.

A former member of renowned vocal ensemble The King's Singers (1994–2000), in 2001 Nigel formed Tenebrae, a virtuosic choir that combines the passion of a cathedral choir with the precision of a chamber ensemble. Under his direction, Tenebrae has collaborated with internationally acclaimed orchestras and instrumentalists and now enjoys a reputation as one of the world's finest vocal ensembles.

To date, Nigel has conducted the Academy of Ancient Music, Aurora Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, English Chamber Orchestra, English Concert, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble and Britten Sinfonia. He has directed the London Symphony Orchestra alongside Tenebrae in a live recording of Fauré's Requiem, which was nominated for the Gramophone Awards (2013) and since then,



he has conducted the orchestra at St. Paul's Cathedral as part of the City of London Festival. Other orchestral recordings include Mozart's Requiem and *Ave Verum Corpus* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and a disc of music by Bernstein, Stravinsky and Zemlinsky with the BBC Symphony Orchestra described as a "master stroke of programming" (Financial Times). Recent guest conducting appearances include the BBC Singers, Leipzig's MDR Rundfunkchor and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble.

Nigel has vast recording experience having conducted for many of the world's major labels including Decca Classics, Deutsche Grammophon,

EMI Classics, LSO Live, Signum and Warner Classics. In 2018, he received a Grammy nomination in the category of 'Best Choral Performance' for Tenebrae's album of parts songs from the British Isles, *Music of the Spheres*. As a Gramophone award-winning producer, Nigel works with many of the UK's leading professional choirs and vocal ensembles including Alamire, Ex Cathedra, Gallicantus and The King's Singers.

## STEVEN DEVINE

Steven Devine enjoys a busy career as a music director and keyboard player working with some of the finest musicians.

He is the Principal Keyboard Player with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and also the principal keyboard player for The Gonzaga Band, and Classical Opera (The Mozartists) and performs regularly with many other groups around Europe. He has recorded over 30 discs with other artists and ensembles and made six solo recordings. His recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (Chandos Records) has received critical acclaim – including Gramophone magazine describing it as "among the best". The complete harpsichord works of Rameau (Resonus) has received five-star reviews



from BBC Music Magazine and Steven's latest recording of Bach's *Italian Concerto* has been voted Classic FM's Connoisseur's choice. Steven has released Book 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* ("It's the one of all I've heard in the past ten years that I am happiest to live with." Early Music Review) with Book 2 to be released in 2020.

He made his London conducting debut in 2002 at the Royal Albert Hall and is now a regular performer there – making his Proms directing debut in August 2007 with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. He has conducted the Mozart Festival Orchestra in every major

concert hall in the UK and also across Switzerland. Steven is Music Director for New Chamber Opera in Oxford and with them has performed repertoire from Cavalli to Rossini. For the Dartington Festival Opera he has conducted Handel's *Orlando* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. He is currently conductor and Artistic Advisor for the English Haydn Festival in Bridgnorth.

Steven works regularly with the Norwegian Wind Ensemble, Trondheim Barokk, the Victoria Baroque Players (BC, Canada) and Arion Baroque Ensemble (Montreal).

He teaches harpsichord and fortepiano at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London and is Early Keyboard Consultant to the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Royal Welsh Colleges.

Finally, Steven is thrilled to be a member of the ground-breaking Art of Moog: an electronic music group specialising in the performance of Bach.

## JONATHAN REES

Jonathan Rees has performed across the globe as cellist and gamba player with the UK's leading historical performance and chamber ensembles. He has performed as continuo / principal cellist and gamba soloist with the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The Sixteen, ENO, Britten Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata, La Nuova Musica and Solomon's Knot.

He has performed with the viol consorts Fretwork and Phantasm and is a founder member of Neue Vialles. As a chamber musician and soloist he has performed at the Wigmore Hall, London



Baroque Festival, York Early Music Festival, Bristol Early Music Festival, and venues across Europe.

He has been employed by the University of Cambridge as a researcher into 17th-century French street song. He has given historical performance classes at the Royal Academy of Music, Guildhall School of Music, Cambridge University and Royal Northern College of Music.

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Tenebrae would like to thank Roger Mayhew, Richard Baker and The Fernside Trust for the generosity which made this recording possible.

**This album is dedicated to Cora Angela Mayhew (5 July 1928 – 19 October 2018), a much loved daughter, wife, mother and friend.**

Julia and Grace have wanted to record Couperin's *Leçons* together for a very long time, and are hugely grateful to Nigel Short and Signum Records for making that dream come true.

Organ – Jennings Organs  
Viola da Gamba – after Colichon, 1693; Jane Julier,  
Devon, 1993

He also works as a music workshop leader, and for five years directed and performed at Bristol's acclaimed annual festival, Really Classical Relay. He is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. Outside of the world of music he spends a lot of his time making compost and growing plants for the sustenance of humans, bees, butterflies and even the odd lucky greenfly.

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Recorded in All Hallow's Church, Gospel Oak, London on 13th – 14th of March 2019 (*Leçons de Ténèbres*) and 2nd – 3rd July 2019 (*Tenebrae responsories*)  
Producer – Nigel Short (March) & Nicholas Parker (July)  
Editor – Dave Rowell  
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch  
Recording Assistant – Tom Mungall  
Organ Technician – Malcolm Greenhalgh

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## **Tenebrae Responsories:**

**Tomás Luis de Victoria**

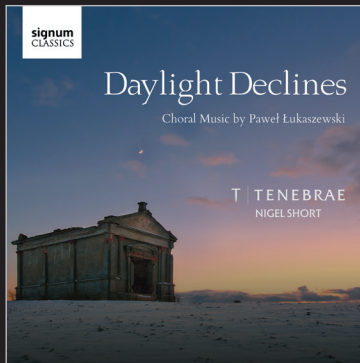
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