



# Le Poisson Magique

Organ works by

## John McCabe

### Tom Winpenny

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral

Cd  
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# Le Poisson Magique

Organ works by  
John McCabe (b. 1939)

Tom Winpenny organ

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral

About Tom Winpenny:

*'Resident organist Tom Winpenny clearly knows his way around St Albans Cathedral's magnificent IV/72 Harrison & Harrison and makes much of its versatility in an eclectic half-century-spanning programme'*  
Choir and Organ

*'The combination of instrument, repertory and Tom Winpenny's immaculate playing is beyond reproach'*  
International Record Review

1. Dies Resurrectionis (1963)	[8:08]
Sinfonia, Op. 6 (1961) *	
2. Introduzione	[0:38]
3. Passacaglia & Cadenza I	[4:19]
4. Notturno	[1:59]
5. Interludium I & Elegia	[2:26]
6. Capriccio & Cadenza II	[1:56]
7. Interludium II & Toccata	[3:27]
8. Prelude (1964) *	[4:44]
Johannis-Partita, Op. 30 (1964) *	
9. Overture	[4:27]
10. Intermezzo	[2:08]
11. Ritornello	[4:25]
12. Nocturne (1964) *	[4:22]
13. Le Poisson Magique *	
Meditation after Paul Klee (1964/2004)	[5:53]
Carol-Preludes (2008) *	
14. Weinachtslied (Es kam ein Engel)	[1:33]
15. Christmas Eve	[2:22]
16. On Christmas Day in the Morning	[1:47]
17. Angels from the Realms of Glory	[1:53]
18. Tomorrow shall be my dancing day	[2:27]
19. Es sungen drei Engel	[1:24]
20. Gen Himmel aufgefahren ist	[2:51]
21. Esperanza (2010) *	[8:12]
Total playing time	[71:43]
* world premiere recording	



John McCabe  
(photography: Gareth Arnold)

### Le Poisson Magique: Organ Works by John McCabe

During the first half of the 1960s I wrote a substantial number of organ works, largely because a lot of my friends were organists, and they asked me to write pieces for them. As a young composer this was a splendid way of getting performances as well as exploring the potentialities of a remarkably versatile instrument – a veritable orchestra in itself, though not (in my view) a replacement for the orchestra, but rather a different kind of one. One of the friends in question was Gordon Thorne, who gave the premiere of the *Sinfonia* in 1961. When he was invited to give a recital in the inaugural series of concerts on the new Manchester University organ in 1963, he commissioned me to write a piece for the occasion, and *Dies Resurrectionis* was the result. Gordon recalls that he asked me for a toccata '[...] and received one with more serious content'. I felt unable to restrain my innate desire for detailed structure and thematic integration, and thus produced a work which, though relatively short (about 6-7 minutes) is in three linked movements, all based on the motto theme heard in the pedals in the opening 'Maestoso' section. The three

sections follow almost a traditional sonata outline, with an opening 'Allegretto' (*Filius Mortuus*) of somewhat toccata-like character, a central slow part (*Filius in sepulchro*), and a faster final section (*Filius resurrectus*) which, with its irregular rhythms and C major chord punctuations, most closely resembles a straightforward toccata (though one organist described it as like a crazy tango). The final chord combines the tonalities of C major and F sharp major, which are at the heart of the work.

*Dies Resurrectionis* really falls into the virtuoso tradition of the French organ toccata, with plenty of elaborate figuration and flashing chords. It also indicates early examples of my interest in different layers of activity (e.g. tonality) happening simultaneously. This continues to be something that fascinates me, and provides a way of developing material, as well as varying the texture.

The *Sinfonia* (1961) previously mentioned was in fact commissioned by Gordon Thorne, and first performed by him in Armley, Leeds. *Sinfonia* is a work for which, despite its occasional gaucheries, I have retained great affection. It was an attempt at writing a really substantial organ work, and dealing with a 20-minute timescale. The movements are Introduzione – Passacaglia



Tom Winpenny

– Cadenza I – Notturno – Interludium I – Elegia – Capriccio – Cadenza II – Interludium II – Toccata, playing without a break, and these titles indicate the character of most of them. The work is based on what becomes the bass theme of the Passacaglia (which has since become a favourite form) and is in this case a series of thirds, which are filled out later on in some of the sections, such as the final fugue. The piece ranges widely over my interests at the time, including rhythms from Indian music, for which I also retain a fondness. In a sense, however, the Sinfonia might be taken as a journey from the deep slow bass of the Passacaglia to the higher-pitched, exhilarated final fugue, i.e. as a precursor of later dark-to-light pieces.

The movements of the **Johannis-Partita** are Overture (Grave – Allegro vivo – Grave); Intermezzo (Lento mallincolica); Ritornello (Tempo I); Allegro giocoso (Tempo II); Tempo I; Tempo II; Tempo I; Grave (Tempo comenciatu). It was composed in 1964 during a study course in German in Lüneburg and is named after the local church where Bach often played as a young man. It revives the old form of the partita in three movements: a vigorous French

Overture replete with dotted rhythms, a lyrical, somewhat melancholy slow piece, and a rondo finale. It was written for the Pershore Abbey Organ Week, 1965, and is dedicated to Rodney Baldwyn, who gave the premiere.

The short piece entitled **Le Poisson Magique** (1964) was commissioned by the late Brian Runnett, to whom it is dedicated. The idea for the work came from the painting of that name by Paul Klee, and my response to the colours of the picture can be noted in the harmonic style of the work and the use of arabesque-like decoration of the chords. There are two tempi, which alternate, and the work is in the form of both a free Passacaglia and a set of alternating variations in the tradition of Haydn. In the painting there is tremendous variety both of colour and line, unified by a delicate balance of form and an overall sense of a single experience. I hope that a similar unity through diversity is to be found in the music.

The **Carol-Preludes** were written in 2008, but the idea was in my mind for many years before this. Essentially they revive the old style of the Chorale-Prelude, but using carol tunes instead of hymns or chorales. They are derived from German, French

and English melodies. Some of the German tunes were found in my mother's old school songbook from her schooldays in Germany after the First World War.

The movements are: 'Weihnachtslied' (*Es kam ein Engel*), a vigorous treatment of an old German tune; 'Christmas Eve', a flowing, reflective setting of an English tune, with many shifts of metre; 'On Christmas Day in the Morning', a familiar English carol, given a mysterious, rather misty treatment; 'Angels from the Realms of Glory', a full-blooded, virtuoso toccata on this old French tune; 'Tomorrow Shall be my Dancing Day', a light-hearted scherzo, taking its cue from the title of this well-known English tune; 'Es singen drei Engel', a German tune, given a quietly thoughtful setting; and 'Gen Himmel aufgefahren ist', another virtuoso toccata, on an old German theme, dominated by fanfare-like figures.

**Esperanza** was composed in 2010, and was inspired by the amazing rescue of the thirty-three miners trapped underground for seventy days in that year, at the San Jose Mine in Chile. The rescue camp was known as Esperanza (Camp Hope), and the rescue itself, televised live, was one of the most moving things I have ever seen. By the most extraordinary coincidence

I had already done a good deal of sketching for this organ piece before this all happened, and had determined on a 'darkness-to-light' kind of piece – so the coincidence, as well as my feelings of elation, were both too strong to ignore.

The piece pursues a course from a fairly knotty slow beginning (heralded by a few chords that recur at the very end), full of rising themes (another coincidence – the material had already been sketched before the miners were trapped underground), and reaching a loud climax, the quick, toccata-like second section bursting vigorously out of the tension which is created at the beginning of the work. *Esperanza* was commissioned for the 26th International Organ Festival at St Albans in 2011.

There remain on this recording two very short early works, namely a **Prelude**, and a **Nocturne**. In 1969, Novello published an album of five simple new organ pieces entitled *Music Before Service: 5 Modern Pieces for Organ*, of which this short Prelude was one. It was written in 1964, and it explores a brief 'wriggling' motif and a chordal theme.

Finally, in 1964 Oxford University Press published a collection of *Easy Modern*

**Organ Music.** *Nocturne* is a single movement, consisting of a slow piece from a piano sonata written during my teens, and the title indicates its character. The main theme is not unlike a slow version of the main theme of the finale of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony, which had an important therapeutic effect on me during a severe teenage illness.

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### **Tom Winpenny**

Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral where his duties include accompanying the daily choral services and directing the acclaimed Abbey Girls Choir. Previously, he was Sub-Organist at St Paul's Cathedral, and during this time he performed with the Cathedral Choir at the American Guild of Organists National Convention, performed in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with Valery Gergiev and the LSO, and played for many great state occasions. He has also broadcast regularly on BBC Radio and been featured on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*.

He began organ lessons under John Scott Whiteley while a chorister at York Minster, and continued as a music scholar at Eton College under Alastair Sampson. After holding the post of Organ Scholar at Worcester Cathedral and then St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, he was for three years Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with a degree in music. With the Choir of King's College, he gave concerts in the USA, Hong Kong and throughout Europe, in addition to appearing as their accompanist on CD releases on EMI Classics.

He has taken part in the first performance of works by Cecilia McDowall, Judith Bingham, Jonathan Dove, Paul Mealor, Francis Grier and Francis Pott. He has studied with Thomas Trotter and Johannes Geffert, and won First Prize and the Audience Prize at the 2008 Miami International Organ Competition.

Recent and forthcoming engagements include recitals in Birmingham Town Hall, Coventry Cathedral, Stockholm Cathedral and St Paul's, K Street, Washington DC and a performance as organ soloist in John Rutter's Christmas Celebration concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. His solo organ recordings include a recital on the organ of St Albans Cathedral (JAV Recordings), organ works by Olivier Messiaen and Judith Bingham (Naxos), music by Malcolm Williamson (Toccata Classics) and works by Charles Villiers Stanford and Lennox & Michael Berkeley (Resonus Classics). He also directs St Albans Abbey Girls Choir in a recording of Mendelssohn Choral Works (Naxos).

[www.tomwinpenny.org](http://www.tomwinpenny.org)



The Harrison and Harrison Organ of St Albans Cathedral  
(1962 & 2009)

### **The Harrison & Harrison Organ of St Albans Cathedral**

Built in 1962 by Harrison & Harrison of Durham, the design of the organ at St Albans Cathedral was revolutionary, being the first cathedral instrument in Britain to be voiced and built on neo-classical lines, to a specification by Ralph Downes and Peter Hurford. The organ incorporates pipework from the previous instrument together with the north and south cases of 1908, designed by John Oldrid Scott. However, all of the old pipework was revoiced and the tonal design was entirely new. Its unusual versatility means it is possible to perform all schools of organ repertoire on the instrument, as well as being ideal for accompanying the English cathedral repertoire.

In 2007-9 the organ was comprehensively refurbished and enlarged, again by Harrison & Harrison, with the addition of a new console with a fourth manual, new Great reeds and a 32' pedal reed. The facade pipes on the north and south cases were all replaced, while a new nave division was also prepared for, to be installed in the coming years.

Aside from its regular liturgical duties, the organ is the centerpiece of the biennial St Albans International Organ Festival and Competitions, which were founded by the cathedral's former Master of the Music, Peter Hurford, in 1963.

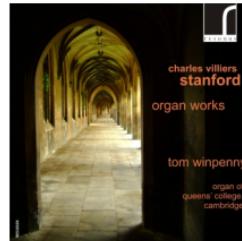
## Organ Specification

PEDAL ORGAN	GREAT ORGAN	(SWELL ORGAN cont.)	ACCESSORIES
1. Sub Bass	32	29. Principal	16
2. Principal	16	30. Bourdon	16
3. Major Bass	16	31. Principal	8
4. Bourdon	16	32. Diapason	8
5. Quint	10 2/3	33. Spitzflute	8
6. Octave	8	34. Stopped Diapason	8
7. Gedackt	8	35. Octave	4
8. Nazard	5 1/3	36. Stopped Flute	4
9. Choral Bass	4	37. Quint	2 2/3
10. Open Flute	2	38. Super Octave	2
11. Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV	39. Blockflute	2
12. Fagotto	32	40. Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV-VI
13. Bombardon	16	41. Bass Trumpet	16
14. Bass Trumpet (from 41)	16	42. Trumpet	8
15. Fagotto (from 12)	16	43. Clarion	4
16. Tromba	8	44. Grand Cornet 1.8.12.15.17. (tenor g)	V
17. Shawm	4	x Choir to Great	
i Choir to Pedal ii Great to Pedal		xi Swell to Great xii Solo to Great	
iii Swell to Pedal iv Solo to Pedal			
CHOIR ORGAN		SWELL ORGAN	
18. Quintaton	16	45. Open Diapason	
19. Open Diapason	8	46. Rohr Flute	
20. Gedacktpommer	8	47. Viola	
21. Flauto Traverso	8	48. Celeste (tenor c)	
22. Octave	4	49. Principal	
23. Rohr Flute	4	50. Open Flute	
24. Wald Flute	2	51. Nazard	
25. Larigot	1 1/3	52. Octave	
26. Sesquialtera 19.24/12.17	II	53. Gemshorn	
27. Mixture 22.26.29.33	IV	54. Tierce	
28. Cromorne	8	55. Mixture 22.26.29	
v Tremulant vi Octave vii Unison off		56. Cimbel 29.33.36	
viii Swell to Choir ix Solo to Choir			



The organ console of St Albans Cathedral  
Harrison & Harrison, 2009

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*'Tom Winpenny clearly knows his way around St Albans Cathedral's magnificent IV/72 Harrison & Harrison and makes much of its versatility'*  
Gramophone

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Recorded at 24-bit / 96kHz resolution

Cover image: *Le Poisson Magique* by Paul Klee (1879-1940)

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