
CECILIA McDOWALL



Choral Catalogue 2011

BIOGRAPHY

Born in London, 1951, Cecilia McDowall has been described by the International Record Review as having 'a communicative gift that is very rare in modern music'. Often inspired by extra-musical influences, her writing combines a rhythmic vitality with expressive lyricism and is, at times, intensely moving.

Her music has been commissioned and performed by leading choirs, including the BBC Singers, the Phoenix Chorale, orchestras, ensembles and at festivals worldwide. In 2005 she was short-listed for the British Composer Awards in the Liturgical and the Making Music sections, in 2008 for Making Music and most recently for the 2010 British Composer Award in the Liturgical section. Her works are regularly broadcast on BBC Radio and abroad and readily available on CD. Dutton Epoch released a CD of her choral work in 2004 (CDLX 7146), an orchestral and chamber music CD in 2005 (CDLX 7159) and a further choral CD in 2007 (CDLX 7197) with the City of Canterbury Chamber Choir and the Joyful Company of Singers. In 2006 *Three Antiphons* were recorded by an international trumpet ensemble consisting of players from the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic and are available on the Brass Classics label (*Proclamation*).

In 2006 she was selected from a large list of composers by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir to compose a choral and instrumental work, *Five Seasons*, whose brief was to 'celebrate the organic landscape.' This exciting and unique project, which was premiered in Sherborne Abbey in November 2006, involved the composer and the novelist and poet, Christie Dickson, taking up mini-residences at five organic farms (under the auspices of the Soil Association).

2009 saw a number of new commissions, both choral and instrumental, including the Musicians Benevolent Fund anthem for St Paul's Cathedral for the 2009 Festival of St Cecilia. In 2011 new works for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Welsh Chamber Orchestra and the City of London Sinfonia have been commissioned and many other shorter choral and instrumental works.

A CD of vocal and choral music (Rachel Nicholls, soprano, City of Canterbury Chamber Choir, Orchestra Nova, conductor George Vass) was released in July, 2009 on the Dutton Epoch label CDLX 7230. *Three Latin motets*, recorded by the renowned American choir, Phoenix Chorale, were released on the Chandos label in 2008; this recording, *Spotless Rose* (Hymns to the Virgin Mary) won a Grammy award in February, 2009, and was nominated for Best Classical Album.

Cecilia McDowall is 'composer in residence' at Dulwich College, London.

Oxford University Press signed Cecilia McDowall as an 'Oxford' composer last year.

'Cecilia McDowall is another of the new generation of highly communicative musicians who, though often inspired by extramusical influences, favours writing which, without being in any way facile, is brightly cogent, freshly witty and expressive in its own right. (Her music) constantly tweaks the ear with her range of spicy rhythms and colours, then suddenly produces a highly atmospheric and grippingly expressive interlude which is just as compelling.'

Gramophone 2006

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CHORAL WORKS, A CAPPELLA

Three Latin Motets – commissioned by Janet and Douglas MacKay for the City of Canterbury Chamber Choir.

Recorded by the Joyful Company of Singers (Dutton Epoch CDLX 7197) and by the Phoenix Chorale (Chandos) *Spotless Rose Hymns to the Virgin Mary* (CHSA 5066) which received a Grammy award for Best Small Ensemble performance and nomination for Best Classical Album.

1. Ave Regina (2004)

SSATB | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (New Horizons)

A gentle and lyrical setting of the text 'Hail, Queen of the Heavens'. The calm and memorable opening phrase is hinted at in passages of more intensity, and its partial statement at the end leaves it lingering after the voices have faded away.

Review: In 55 bars the compression and economy of Cecilia McDowall's *Ave Regina* are impressive, but so too is the sense of spaciousness. The structure is underwritten by recurring appoggiaturas - bitter-sweets - supplying also a particularly characteristic flavour. Being slightly polytonal, tuning would have to be very accurate, but it would be well worth the effort in this sumptuous music where expressive highlighting of key words gleams like episodes in a Chagall window. *Choir & Organ* Jan 06

2. Ave Maria (2004)

Upper voices: SSA | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (New Horizons)

This is the second and most intimate of the motets. Scored for upper voices, this gentle supplication to the Virgin is built on a plainchant opening, and contains expressive dissonances and suspensions in a setting of great purity and directness.

Review: The *Ave Maria*, the second of the triptych, is sparer, a little faster, and slightly shorter. Writing for SSA only, McDowall makes a virtue of carefully placed repetitions. In the *Ave Regina* it is the appoggiaturas that recur; here it is a pair of laddering motifs, the one rising in close harmony quavers, the other cascading down in chains of suspensions. Once again, sensitivity to the words - their passion, their dignity and their metrical quantities - is faultless. *Choir & Organ* Jan 06

3. Regina Caeli (2004)

Regina Caeli was short-listed for the Liturgical Section of the British Composer Awards in 2005.

SATB (divisi) | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (New Horizons)

This hymn to the 'Queen of the Heavens' is a glorious work, replete with dramatic changes of mood and texture. An approachable and rewarding motet, appropriate for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary or Eastertide.

Review: Its alternating Alleluia and verses give the whole a secure structure, and there is harmonic sensitivity in the way contrasting variants of both homophonic and polyphonic sections are built. Throughout the piece is that linear logic so much needed to make any music - but especially choral music - satisfying to perform. *Choir & Organ* Jan 06

Deus, qui clarum lumine (2005) commissioned by the Yoxford Festival for the Choir of New College (CDLX 7197)

SSATB + S solo or for Upper voices: SSSAA + S solo | Text: Liturgia Horarum | Duration 7'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

The Vesper hymn, *Deus, qui clarum lumine*, is by turns contemplative and ecstatic. The beginning unfolds around a single note, extending upwards to the high solo soprano entry. The fading light of day is suggested by the downward shift of tonality and the work closes with the gradual descent of the soprano solo over the gently repeated Amens.

Annunciation (2005) available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7197) commissioned by Choros

A carol for Advent for unaccompanied SSATB | Words by John Donne | Duration 4'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Cantate Astra (2006)

A multi-cultural carol for unaccompanied SATB | Words by Christie Dickason | Duration 3'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

CHORAL WORKS, A CAPPELLA

A Canterbury Mass (2006) Short-listed for the Making Music Award of the British Composer Awards in 2008
commissioned by Janet & Douglas MacKay for George Vass and the City of Canterbury

Chamber Choir (CDLX 7230)

SATB | Text: Missa Brevis | Duration 13'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Anthem/Introit: I have done what is mine to do (2006) commissioned by the Revd Canon Dr Peter Sills,
Vice Dean of Ely Cathedral. Recorded on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7230)

SATB | Text: St Francis of Assisi | Duration 2'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A short, contemplative work suitable as either introit or anthem

Now may we singen (2007) commissioned by the Concord Singers, available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7230)

A Christmas carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Anon | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (*The Ivy and the Holly* – New Horizons)

The skies in their magnificence (2008) commissioned by the English Music Festival for the London Chorus, conductor
Ron Corp

SSAATTBB | Double choir | Words by Thomas Traherne | Duration 5'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A beautiful, stately setting of the 'metaphysical' poet's work, *Wonder*. This 17th century poet was not published until 1903 when he was 'discovered'. Finzi set several of Traherne's poems to music, including *Wonder* in his *Dies Natalis*.

Towards the morning (2008) commissioned by Berkhamsted Collegiate School for Head Teacher, Dr Priscilla Chadwick

SATB | Text: Psalm 139 (New International Version) | Duration 5'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A meditative yet uplifting anthem suitable for both concert and liturgical use

I know that my redeemer liveth (2009) commissioned by Robin Kimber and the Epsom Choral Society

SATB unaccompanied | Optional piano accompaniment | Text: Job 19 v 25-26: I Corinthians 15 v 20 | Duration 5'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

This anthem was written at the suggestion of Robin Kimber to be performed with Brahms' *A German Requiem* and is a setting of the words used by Handel in *Messiah*; this year is the 250th anniversary of Handel's death.

The *Requiem* was probably not conceived as a liturgical work and Brahms avoided any reference to Christ or life after death. However, the first performance of six movements was given in 1868 in Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday and in order to compensate for the absence of texts associated with Christ, the music director, Karl Reinthaler, interpolated Handel's aria, *I know that my redeemer liveth*, into the *Requiem*.

This new setting of *I know that my redeemer liveth* has been scored for unaccompanied mixed voices and I have added an optional accompaniment for piano should this be appropriate. *I know that my redeemer liveth* was performed as part of the Leith Hill Festival 'own choice' category. The Epsom Choral Society won the 'own class' category with the work.

CHORAL WORKS, A CAPPELLA

Thy voice, o Harmony, is divine (2009) commissioned by Magdalen College School, Oxford, in the year of Haydn's bi-centenary to celebrate his visit to Oxford.

SATB | Text: Haydn | Duration 4'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Deus, Portus Pacis (2009) commissioned by the Musicians Benevolent Fund in the name of Sir Thomas Armstrong. First performed at the Festival of St. Cecilia Service in St. Paul's Cathedral on 18 November 2009 by the combined choirs of St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey under the direction of Andrew Carwood.

SSATB | Text: John Walton c.1410 | Duration 6'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (October 2009)

Short-listed for the Liturgical section of the British Composer Awards in 2010

Psallite Domino (2010) commissioned by the Reverend Dr Hugh White, Vicar of Deddington

First performed by The Choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor, conductor Tim Byram Wigfield

SSATB | Text: Liber Usualis I | Duration 5'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Jesu, the very thought of Thee (2010) commissioned by The Right Revd. Professor Stephen Sykes.

First performed by the choir of St John's College, Durham, conductor George Richford.

SSAATTBB | Text: St Bernard of Clairvaux (trans: Edward Caswall) | Duration 9'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Alma Redemptoris Mater (2010) commissioned by the Conwy Festival

First performed by The Marian Consort in Conwy, Wales

SSATBB | Text: Liber Usualis | Duration 6'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

CHORAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS

Of a Rose (1993)

A Christmas carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Anon | Duration 3'

Publisher: Novello (*Noël* 2, edited David Hill)

Christmas Bells (1993) for SA and organ – see *Choral works for Upper Voice* below | Duration 2'

Christus Natus Est (2002) Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7146) commissioned by St Albans Choral Society | Duration 15'

A Christmas cantata featuring five carol arrangements for SATB choir, soprano solo, unison children's choir and three possible accompaniments:

1. Orchestra 2(1).2.0.1-2.0.0.0-hp-perc-strings
2. Brass quintet, organ and percussion (1)
3. Organ/piano

1. Personent Hodie 2. Entre le boeuf 3. Gaudete 4. Infant Holy 5. Angelus ad virginem

Publisher: Oxford University Press

CHORAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS

Christus Natus Est cont.

Review: 'The Christmas cantata *Christus natus est* is a hit: an absolute delight from start to finish, scored for children's choir, solo soprano, mixed chorus and small orchestra. . . Try to find the time to hear this disc; I am sure you will not be disappointed.'

International Record Review 2005

Cradle Song (2005)

A Christmas carol for SA and piano | Text: William Blake | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (*For Him all Stars – New Horizons*)

Review: 'Pianists will enjoy the idiomatic writing of Cecilia McDowall. [Her] delightful two part setting of William Blake's Cradle Song could be sung at any time of year as it is not specifically a Christmas text.'

Sheet Music Review 2006

The Angels for the Nativity (2005) commissioned by the Addison Singers for David Wordsworth

A Christmas carol for SATB and organ | Text: William Drummond | Duration 3'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Annunciation (2005) available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7197) commissioned by Choros.

A carol for Advent for unaccompanied SSATB | Text: John Donne | Duration 4'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Cantate Astra (2006)

A multi-cultural carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Christie Dickason | Duration 3'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Now may we singen (2007) commissioned by the Concord Singers, available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7230)

A Christmas carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Anon | Duration 4'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (*The Ivy and the Holly – New Horizons*)

Talking Turkeys!! (2007) commissioned by the Portsmouth Grammar School

A Christmas carol for SATB, glockenspiel, piano and double bass | Text: Benjamin Zephaniah | Duration 3'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

The Night is Still (2009)

A Christmas carol for Voice 1 & 2 and organ | Text: Tennyson | Duration: 2'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (*The Oxford Book of Flexible Carols*)

An Hevenly Songe (2010)

Commissioned by Dulwich College, London and first performed by the Dulwich College Chapel Choir, conducted by Richard Mayo

SATB and organ | Text: Medieval English | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (2011)

CHORAL WORKS FOR UPPER VOICE

Christmas Bells (1993) commissioned by Ian Hunter for the Colet Court Choir

SA and organ | Text: Longfellow | Duration 2'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

The Crystal Spring (*A Fancy of Folksongs*) (2003) (CDLX 7146) commissioned by the City of Canterbury Chamber Choir

SSA and piano or harp | Text: English folksongs | Duration 4'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (Spring 2010)

Also from **A Fancy of Folksongs**: 1. Green Bushes (SATB) 2. The Rambling Sailor (men only) and 4. O, No John (SATB)

The folksongs are not only witty and quirky but also charming and, in the case of the third folksong, *The Crystal Spring*, genuinely touching. (David Wordsworth)

Ave Maria (2004) (CDLX 7197 and Chandos label: CHSA 5066)

Upper voices: SSA. | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (New Horizons)

This is the second and most intimate of the motets. Scored for upper voices, this gentle supplication to the Virgin is built on a plainchant opening, and contains expressive dissonances and suspensions in a setting of great purity and directness.

Review: The *Ave Maria*, the second of the triptych, is sparer, a little faster, and slightly shorter. Writing for SSA only, McDowall makes a virtue of carefully placed repetitions. In the *Ave Regina* it is the appoggiaturas that recur; here it is a pair of laddering motifs, the one rising in close harmony quavers, the other cascading down in chains of suspensions. Once again, sensitivity to the words - their passion, their dignity and their metrical quantities - is faultless. *Choir & Organ* Jan 06

Cradle Song (2005)

A Christmas carol for SA and piano | Text: William Blake | Duration 3'

Publisher: Oxford University Press (*For Him all Stars* – New Horizons)

Lonely Hearts (2005) available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7197) commissioned by the City of Canterbury Chamber Choir

Three songs for SSAA with piano or harp accompaniment | Text; Christie Dickason | Duration 8'

1. Autumn Migration 2. Night Garden 3. Would like to meet

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Lonely Hearts is a setting of three poems by the poet and novelist, Christie Dickason, each offering a different view of being alone. The first song, *Autumn Migration*, describes the flight of a flock of birds across the sky pursued by a 'single late flyer' stitching 'together earth and sky'. The second song, *Night Garden*, beautiful and atmospheric, evokes the delicate fragrance of a still, summer's evening in which 'lives too small to risk the light' bravely begin to stir. The final, witty song, *Would like to meet*, presents a 'Lonely Hearts' column, with a difference.

City Almanac (2006) commissioned by South Hampstead High School for the Junior Choir

SSA and piano | Text: Christie Dickason | Duration 4'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A light hearted, anti-pastoral song about the seasons, with words by the novelist and poet, Christie Dickason. *City Almanac* was commissioned by South Hampstead High School for the Chorale, conductor, Diana Kiverstein. It was first performed on 6 July, 2006 at Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod on Junior Choirs Competition Day.

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen (2008) commissioned by Portsmouth Grammar School

Anthem: SSAA unaccompanied | Text: George Herbert | Duration 2'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A joyous anthem, particularly suitable for Eastertide/Ascensiontide

ACCOMPANIED CHORAL WORKS

Ave maris stella (2001) available on Dutton Epoch CDLX 7146, commissioned by Portsmouth Grammar School

Soprano solo, SATB and string orchestra | Text: Psalm 26 and 106 | Duration 12'

An anthem for peace

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Ave Maris Stella is a gem; there are some tricky rhythms in the fast central passage to keep the orchestra alert, whilst the slower outer sections glow with gentle dissonance and perfectly judged climaxes. The vocal lines rise and fall in the most natural way. Most rewarding for any choir to sing. (David Wordsworth)

Reviews: 'a lovely new setting of *Ave maris stella*, tender in unaffected simplicity.'

The Spectator 2004

'*Ave maris stella* is a splendidly original setting (because it is so obviously *meant* as a composition) for solo soprano, chorus and string orchestra ... a Britten influence may be found here but only in passing and I mention this to try to urge McDowall's 'Englishness' upon you - I love it, and I think you will, also.'

International Record Review 2005

'Other agreeable Presteigne memories? Cecilia McDowall's moving motet *Ave Maris Stella*, written in 9/11's shadow. And the sun, every day.'

The Times 2007

On Angel's Wing (1998 rev.2002) (CDLX 7197) commissioned by Janet Lincé and the Leamington Spa Bach Choir.

Soprano and baritone soloists, SATB, children's choir, piano and percussion (1) | Text: John Clare | Duration 13'

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

On Angel's Wing was written in memory of the young composer Tim Stevenson. The cantata is a setting of John Clare's poem *Love lies beyond the tomb*, interspersed with plainchant from the *Vatican Prefaces*. 'This exquisite and exotic work audaciously juxtaposes sensitive lyricism in its solo writing with choral passages of great passion and joy.' (Paul Conway)

Magnificat (2003) (CDLX 7146) commissioned by the Finchley Choral Society

Soprano and mezzo-soprano soloists, SATB and chamber orchestra | [0.2/1.0.1 - 0.0.0.0 - strings] | Duration 28'

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Review: 'A reflective and graceful work, adorned with deft, Baroque flourishes. Her setting of the *Magnificat* is quite splendid, in that it 'grows' in intensity as the text progresses; by the time of the concluding chorus, *Deposuit potentes*, a genuine sense of exultation (without exaggeration) has been achieved.'

International Record Review, March 2005

St Martin's Canticles (2003) commissioned by Joyce Wright for the Choir of St Martin-in-the-Field

SATB and organ | Magnificat 8' | Nunc Dimittis 2'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

This beautiful setting of the *Magnificat* draws on similar material to the opening movement of the orchestral *Magnificat*. It is suitable for both concert and liturgical use.

A Fancy of Folksongs (2003) available on CDLX 7146, commissioned by the City of Canterbury Chamber Choir

SATB and piano or harp. Text: English folksongs. Duration: 12'

Publisher: Oxford University Press, Feb. 2010

1. Green Bushes 2.The Rambling Sailor (men only) 3.The Crystal Spring (women onl) 4.O, No John

The folksongs are not only witty and quirky but also charming and, in the case of the third folksong, *The Crystal Spring*, genuinely touching. (David Wordsworth)

Review: 'A *Fancy of Folksongs* is an utterly charming setting of four familiar English folk-songs for mixed voices, soprano solo and harp. Try to find the time to hear this disc (of choral music CDLX 4176) I am sure you will not be disappointed.'

International Record Review 2005

Stabat Mater (2004) (CDLX 7197) commissioned by St Albans Choral Society.

Baritone soloist, SATB, children's choir and small orchestra (compatible scoring to Fauré's *Requiem*) | Duration 30'

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

Short-listed for the Making Music Award of the British Composer Awards in 2005.

ACCOMPANIED CHORAL WORKS

Stabat Mater cont. *Stabat Mater* is an outstanding work of great solemnity and poignancy. Structured in seven sections the work proceeds from its impassioned opening through to the poised simplicity of the plainchant chorales, the searing intensity of the baritone solo, *Pro peccatis suae gentis*, and the bright optimism of the children's choir (or semi chorus) in *Eia Mater* and the finale, *Paradisi Gloria*. (Paul Conway)

Five Seasons (2006) (CDLX 7230) commissioned by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir

a cantata to celebrate the organic landscape

SATB, oboe/cor, harp, string quartet or oboe/cor, harp and string orchestra | Text: Christie Dickason | Duration 25'

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

A unique, adventurous collaboration between the Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir, award-winning composer Cecilia McDowall, poet and novelist Christie Dickason and five organic farms from across Britain. The brief - to celebrate the organic landscape in the modern world. The result - a fresh take on the pastoral tradition, of vigour, drama and haunting beauty. Premiered by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir and players from Kokoro, contemporary music ensemble of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at Sherborne Abbey November 2006.

Laudate (2008)

A cantata for mezzo-soprano solo, SATB, chamber orchestra [0.2/1.0.1 - 0.2.0.0. timps.(1)-strings] commissioned by

St Albans Choral Society | Text: Psalm 112 (Clementine Vulgate) | Duration 12'

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

Premiered by mezzo-soprano soloist, Frances Bourne, St Albans Choral Society, Orchestra Nova, conductor George Vass at the Cathedral and Abbey of St Alban, April, 2008.

Review: 'I feel this powerful *Laudate* is something of a milestone in McDowall's output, as she has managed to set an age-old biblical text with stunning effect, still preserving the purity of the message, whilst also at times incorporating some of the jaunty, quirky almost jazzy harmonic touches for which she has become so noted. It is a most interesting addition to the choral repertoire.'
Tempo 2008

Ad Lucem – a canticle of light (2009)

A cantata for soprano solo, SATB and strings or organ accompaniment.

Commissioned by Alan McGynn for the St Albans Choral Society | Text: Words taken from religious texts, proverbs, poets and philosophers | Duration 12'

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

Aurea Luce (2010) commissioned by the Friends of Liverpool Cathedral and first performed by The Choir of Liverpool Cathedral, conducted by David Poulter.

SATB and organ | Text: Elpis (wife of the philosopher Boethius) | Duration 4'

Song of the Sea (2011) commissioned by The Liberal Jewish Synagogue for its Centenary and was first performed as part of the Sabbath Morning Service by the Choir of The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, organist Timothy Farrell, conducted by Cathy Heller-Jones on 5 February, 2011.

Shipping Forecast (2011) commissioned by the Portsmouth Festival Choir and will be performed by them, conducted by Andrew Cleary on 18 June, 2011 in the Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral.

SATB and organ | Text: Seán Street and Psalm 107: 23-27:29 | Duration 13'

REVIEWS

McDowall's work has qualities that include a communicative gift that is very rare in modern music, without 'writing- down' or in any way diluting her natural skills. McDowall is a composer well worth seeking out; she is very gifted, and always knows exactly what she is doing, and why, and the music on this CD proves my point time and again. (Dutton Epoch CDLX 7146) *International Record Review 2005*

During the past few years the music of this British composer has been heard more and more, and her output has impressed audiences, players and critics alike. It deserves to. Having first encountered her music by chance some years ago, and been very taken by it, I have followed her career with interest.' *International Record Review 2005*

'Although her compositional style will not pose problems to listeners attracted to what one might call 'contemporary mainstream', hers is an attractive voice which probes beneath the music's surface colouration with much skill.

. . . Each of these works has what one might term a kernel of genuine creativity that says it simply had to be, and each also exhibits a sense of forward rhythmic momentum which adds to its attractiveness. However one categorizes it, this is very good music. This release contains (CDLX 7156) eminently worthwhile contemporary music by one of the most gifted British composers of her generation. I recommend it unreservedly.' *International Record Review 2005*

'Cecilia McDowall is another of the new generation of highly communicative musicians who favours writing which, without being in any way facile, is brightly cogent, freshly witty and expressive in its own right. She constantly tweaks the ear with her range of spicy rhythms and colours, then suddenly produces a highly atmospheric and grippingly expressive interlude which is just as compelling.

Gramophone 2006

'The life-affirming, restorative strength of her direct and unaffected speech is fully communicated in these carefully prepared, joyous performances.' (CDLX 7156) *Tempo 2006*

'Chamber works (*Dream City* and the grippingly moving *The case of the unanswered wire*) bring the musicianly Tippett Quartet into play on this disc which deserves to be part of any collection representing the best, most communicative contemporary music.' *Birmingham Post 2006*

(Works by) 'Cecilia McDowall proclaim an instinctive understanding of the medium allied to the ability to speak directly to the listener and wholly without artifice.' (Review of *Spotless Rose*, Phoenix Chorale on the Chandos label. Grammy Award and nominated for Best Classical Album, 2008.) *Gramophone, 2008*

Dutton's fourth anthology devoted to Cecilia McDowall launches in delightful fashion with *Laudate* (2008), an exuberant and ingratiating setting of Psalm 112. The present account under George Vass's sympathetic lead finds mezzo Katherine Allen in fine form - as, for that matter, are Vass's own combined City of Canterbury Chamber Choir and Orchestra Nova cohorts. Choir and orchestra join forces again in the 2006 'green cantata', *Five Seasons*, another involving and readily assimilable canvas designed as a 'celebration of the organic landscape in the 21st century' to words by the theatre director, novelist and poet Christie Dickason. We also get three *a capella* offerings, the most ambitious being *A Canterbury Mass*, a *missa brevis* written in 2007 and *Now may we sing* . . . irresistible, certainly has the potential for widespread appeal.

I have, however, left the best till last. Specially orchestrated for this recording, *Radnor Songs* comprises six powerfully imaginative and strikingly resourceful settings of poetry by Simon Mundy. Not only do the words and music serve up an absorbing and moving exploration of the ancient past of this once bustling and prosperous corner of the Welsh marches, but they also effortlessly convey the overwhelming natural beauty of the region. Soprano Rachel Nicholls is in gorgeous voice and she enjoys customary alert support from Vass and his useful band.

With consistently top-notch sonics and helpful presentation, this well-filled and most enterprising collection earns a strong recommendation. *Gramophone, 2009*

Dutton Epoch CDLX 7146 (2004)

Ave maris stella

Ave maris stella
Magnificat
Christus natus est
A Fancy of Folksongs

Dutton Epoch CDLX 7197 (2007)

Stabat Mater

Stabat Mater
On Angel's Wing
Three Latin Motets
Dues, qui claro lumine
Annunciation
Lonely Hearts

Dutton Epoch CDLX 7230 (2009)

Laudate

Laudate for mezzo-soprano, mixed voices and chamber orchestra
I have done what was mine to do SATB, a cappella
Now may we sing a Christmas carol, SATB, a cappella
Radnor Songs soprano solo and chamber orchestra
A Canterbury Mass SATB, a cappella
Five Season, a cantata to celebrate the organic landscape [for ob.hp and string orchestra]

Chandos label (CHSA 5066)

Spotless Rose

Hymns to the Virgin Mary
Phoenix Chorale
Charles Bruffy, conductor
Includes Britten, *A Hymn to the Virgin*, Howells, *A Spotless Rose*,
Cecilia McDowall: *Ave Regina*, *Ave Maria* and *Regina Caeli*

Two Grammy nominations – Best Classical Album and Best Small Ensemble Performance (Dec 2008)
Grammy award for Best Small Ensemble Performance (Feb 2009)

Avie label (AV 2147)

A Song More Silent: new works for Remembrance

Portsmouth Grammar School Chamber Choir
London Mozart Players
Nicolae Moldoveanu, conductor
Cecilia McDowall: *Ave maris stella*, *Lynne Plowman*, *Cries like Silence*, *Tarik O'Reagan*, *And there was a great calm*, *Sally Beamish*, *The Lion and The Deer*

Cecilia McDowall's music is available from all good music shops.

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for Gemini Publications repertoire, contact Choral Connections:

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visit Cecilia's website at www.ceciliamcdowall.co.uk

If you would like to talk to someone about existing or forthcoming repertoire, commissions or workshops, and any other queries relating to Cecilia McDowall, please contact:

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