
CECILIA McDOWALL



Catalogue 2011

Chamber, Choral, Orchestral, Vocal, Wind, Brass,
Stage Works, Educational, CDs and Reviews

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1951, Cecilia McDowall was educated at Edinburgh and London Universities later continuing her studies at Trinity College of Music, London. She has studied composition with Robert Saxton, Michael Finnissy and Adam Gorb. The winner of several composition awards, she has a distinctive style which speaks directly to listeners, instrumentalists and singers alike. Her output has been described as having a 'freshness, brightness and fidelity' about it, combining flowing melodic lines and occasionally astringent harmony with rhythmic vitality.

Her music has been commissioned and performed by leading choirs, including the BBC Singers, ensembles and at festivals nationwide. 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 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 Dickason, 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

for more information please contact :

Cecilia McDowall

phone: +44 (0)20 8994 6270

email: mcdowall@ceciliamcdowall.co.uk

Oxford University Press

phone +44 (0)1536 454590

email: music.orders.uk@oup.com

web ordering: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/music/composers/mcdowall.do>

for Gemini Publications repertoire, contact Choral Connections

phone +44(0) 1494 866389

email: val@choralconnections.com www.choralconnections.com

for a complete listing and more information please visit Cecilia's website: www.ceciliamcdowall.co.uk

CHAMBER WORKS

Eleven (1999)

7 mins

Flute, piano or harp. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Commissioned by Danielle Perrett and premiered by her and by Lise-Maree Amos (flute) at the Purcell Room, London

Inspired by middle-European folksongs and the sound of the cimbalom, *Eleven* (meaning alive in Hungarian) was written during the troubles in Kosovo. The work is dedicated 'to all those who are in danger of losing their cultural identity, in the hope that they can keep their 'voice' alive.' This explains the work's distinctive passion and strength and its affinity with various folk-style songs and improvisations. (Simon Hunt)

The Night Trumpeter (2002) ATCL Recital syllabus of Trinity Guildhall Examinations

13 mins

Trumpet and piano or trumpet, violin, cello, clarinet, bassoon and piano.

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications and Gemini Publications (ensemble work)

Commissioned by Paul Archibald and premiered by him and by Kathron Sturrock (piano) at Dartington 2002

Both movements reach for historical connections between different uses, in the 16th Century, of the trumpet as a conveyor of information. Inspiration for the opening movement has been drawn from Rose Tremain's novel, *Music and Silence*, where she describes how the Duchess of Mecklenburg hired a night trumpeter to stand guard over her sleeping grandson, the future King of Denmark, Christian IV. If the baby awoke the trumpeter was instructed to sound the alarm (probably waking the entire royal household as he did so). The Duchess feared the 'power of dreams' so the trumpeter was also commanded to play a lively melody 'to chase away the child's terrors'.

The introduction sets the nocturnal pace, followed by a gentle rocking motion in the accompaniment with sustained trumpet line. Darker textures follow, leading to an alerting call. The middle section gives way to a distant bright trumpet tune to lift the baby's spirits. The nightmare dispatched, the household now returns to its somnolent state.

The German architect, Kircher, a contemporary of Christian IV, designed an early 'bugging' device which was shaped like a huge trumpet, structured on the Fibonacci sequence. This trumpet 'ear' was secreted between walls where Court conversation could be monitored in seclusion. In my imaginings this aural instrument might have produced diverse results, from sweeping reverberation to a *perpetuum mobile* of discourse. The trumpet opens the movement with the bell directed into the piano, to exaggerate the resonance of the harmonics. After this, all manner of musical exchanges follow.

Review: 'It had a lasting impression on me...a superbly atmospheric piece that leaves the audience, even on first listening, wanting to revisit it again, to delve deeper into its many musical facets...the evocative music seemed to strike a chord with all present. It is a work to watch out for as I have a feeling it will find itself into the mainstream trumpet repertoire before too long – and a welcome arrival it will be.'
Music Teacher 2006

Dream City (2002)

20 mins

Flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet | Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by the Presteigne Festival and first performed by the Presteigne Festival Ensemble, August 2002

1. Method of measuring time 2. Walking the line 3. Before the snow 4. I had to dance

Dream City draws its inspiration from the life and work of the artist, Paul Klee, and in particular, his painting, *Traumstadt*, or *Dream City*. Klee, a keen violinist, took a passionate interest in the highly developed structures of the music of Bach and Mozart which was reflected in his interest in rhythm and musical forms, playing an integral part in his artistic conceptions. He painted a series of pictures with transparent layers of paint, which he referred to as his 'polyphonic paintings'. *Dream City* (1921) is one such example. As the French scholar, Jean-Louis Ferrier, writes: 'the contrapuntal composition of *Dream City*, in which forms are allowed to float beyond their own boundaries, evoke the art of fugue. We see a juxtaposition of houses, trees, plants and abstract motifs which are echoed to the very edges of the painting. This is a dream city, but also a glass city, so transparent to the mind's eye. It is perhaps also an ideal city.'

I have called the brief opening movement, 'method of measuring time,' as I was intrigued by Klee's application of that phrase to his technique of layering watercolours (tonality) in the 'polyphonic paintings'. In this introduction the flute, clarinet and harp give a bright edge to the supporting texture of the sustained string ensemble. Each instrumental flourish is 'measured' to give a feeling of rhythmic freedom and spontaneity.

Klee also described drawing as 'taking a line for a walk'. In the second movement the first violin takes charge of the 'line', sometimes held in suspension and sometimes sent in wild zigzag motion. The other instruments of the ensemble are either 'with' the solo or in opposition to it.

The third movement suggests the distant, still world of the 'Oriental' landscape, *Before the Snow* (1929). Klee's painting evokes the poise and transparency of the Japanese artists, Hokusai and Hiroshige. The texture of the strings provides a gently rustling backdrop to the solos of the flute, clarinet, harp and cello.

CHAMBER WORKS

In 1921 Klee moved to a studio at the Bauhaus in Weimar, where he became lecturer, the same year in which he painted *Dream City*. One day, a fellow artist, working in the studio below his, heard a strange rhythmical banging. Curious, he asked Klee what it might have been when they next met. Mortified, Klee explained, 'I was painting and painting and suddenly, I don't know why, I had to dance!' The last movement opens with angular dance-like shapes which move swiftly towards a twelve note fugue. Each entry, whether inverted, in retrograde or in augmentation, is interrupted by the clarinet and flute, both inveterate dancers, intent on bringing levity to the proceedings. In a lyrical middle section the flute and clarinet use rhythmic motives from the opening section of the movement and intertwine them across the supporting string texture. The opening 'dance' is then reprised followed by a return to the initial flourish of *Dream City*; the final bars leave the *City* suspended in the air.
© 2002, Cecilia McDowall

Review: '*Dream City* translucently draws on the paintings of Paul Klee. The lusciously gentle third movement, 'Before the Snow', is memorable in its poised, oriental stillness.'
Gramophone 2006

The Moon Dances (2003)

15 mins

Flute and piano | Publisher: Hunt Edition.

Commissioned by Susan Milan and premiered by her and by Ian Brown (piano) at Wigmore Hall, September 2003

1. Paper sea and silver coins 2. Black with shadow and wolves 3. The red star trembles

Inspired by the intense imagery of Lorca's poetry, *The Moon Dances* evokes contrasting aspects of dance. The first movement gives a festive exuberance to a carnival atmosphere and in the second the moon dances above the shadows that engulf the dead. In the last, the girl on the swing arcs across the sky, her dance shimmering beneath the moon.

String quartet (2004)

9 mins

The case of the unanswered wire

Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by the Presteigne Festival and premiered by the Sorrel Quartet at the Presteigne Festival, August 2004

The case of the unanswered wire was inspired by *The Donkey's Ears*, a verse novel by the Scottish poet, Douglas Dunn, in which he describes the life of a Russian engineer on board ship at the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The work of the engineer is necessarily meticulous and repetitive (as well as dangerous) and to preserve the other side of his life he writes tender poetic letters to his wife, to be sent by telegram.

In this quartet I have thought of the pulsation of those communicating wires, conveyors of fact, terror and joy, but also, bound into this, is an expression of despair at the tyranny of war and its calamitous consequences. The stoical Russian engineer prepares for battle in the closing lines of *The Donkey's Ears*, 'well dressed to meet the horrid sea,' and in the final section of the quartet there is a suggestion of Morse code, stuttering into silence. As ships go down communication fails.
© 2004, Cecilia McDowall

Reviews: 'Its (*The case of the unanswered wire*) bold rhythmic drive was reminiscent of the Bartókian protean energy of Elizabeth Maconchy's quartets whilst the moving final bars, dying away to nothing, made a delicately poignant ending to an intensely personal work that betrayed an acutely responsive creative sensibility.'
Tempo 2005

'The repetitive pulsating ostinatos of the fascinating closing work (of the CD) for string quartet, *The Case of the Unanswered Wire*, draws on the Morse code sent out from a Russian ship in 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War and stutters into silence as the ship is attacked and sinks into the ocean.'
Gramophone 2006

Not Just a Place (2004)

7 mins

Dark memories from an old tango hall

Flute, cello and piano. Publisher: Friedrich Hofmeister.

Commissioned by Duncan McTier, rescored for Anna Noakes (flute) and premiered by her, Michael Stirling (cello) and Caroline Palmer (piano) at the Yoxford Festival, August 2004

In Buenos Aires, birthplace of the tango, there is an old tango hall just off the Avenida Corrientes which is known as 'the street that never sleeps'. A faded sign hangs over the stage: 'Salon Argentina – not just a place but somewhere to make friends.' In the hall the dancers move under a dim light in grim, passionate embrace. In this homage to Piazzolla, the tango opens with an air of desolation and loneliness, but then gradually gathering itself into a dance of defiance.

Mein blaues Klavier (2006)

10 mins

Soprano saxophone or clarinet and piano | Publisher: Friedrich Hofmeister | Commissioned by Amy Dickson and premiered by her and by Catherine Milledge (piano) at the Wigmore Hall, March 2006.

This duo for soprano saxophone and piano, commissioned by Amy Dickson, finds its inspiration in the poem *Mein blaues Klavier* (*My blue piano*) written during the Second World War (1943) by the German Expressionist, Else Lasker-Schüler. Though the composition is essentially abstract the fractured, tilted world of the poem pervades the piece; it is as if the broken, disused piano, standing in shadow, is a metaphor for all that has been lost in wartime. The work opens with a bright-edged four note motif which then becomes fragmented; it takes many shapes before its final utterance, narrowing down to a single note at the end of the final section. The central section of *Mein blaues Klavier* is a lament in which the two instruments intertwine their melodies over a falling bass line.

Colour is the Keyboard (2007)

5 mins

Piano | Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by Helen Reid and funded by Dartington International Summer School. Helen Reid premiered the work at Dartington, August 2007

'Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many strings.' *Kandinsky*

A commission focusing on synaesthesia (the crossing over of the senses) provided a fascinating opportunity to explore lines of parallel thinking between artist and composer; in this case the two contemporary Russian synaesthetes, Kandinsky and Scriabin. Kandinsky, an accomplished cellist, had strong associations with colour and sound, often using music as a structural model of reference, asserting that, for him, colour was an aural experience. Scriabin associated colour with all the keys, though some scepticism has been levelled at the essential nature of his synaesthesia, notably from Rachmaninov.

My starting point for *Colour is the keyboard* was Kandinsky's magnificent canvas, *Yellow-Red-Blue*, in which he describes the 'earthly' yellow standing for firmness and the linear 'heavenly blue' floating gracefully. The red, with heavier, intuitive ideas, intercepts.

Three colours, three chords, taken from Scriabin's key/colour scheme of yellow (D), red (C) and blue (F#), structure the piece. The opening 'hammer' section, centred around D dances a toccata leading to a three chord falling motif, which pervades the piece. This is followed by a warmly, expressive passage revolving around C which in turn leads to the 'cool romanticism' of the F# section. With a return of the opening material the work climaxes on the three chords in the coda, all now clearly diatonic. The closing bars bring together a superimposition of all three chords melting into stillness.

© 2007, Cecilia McDowall

Y Deryn Pur (2007)

5 mins

Oboe, violin, viola and cello. Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by the Presteigne Festival and premiered by Virginia Shaw (oboe) Sara Trickey (violin) Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola) and Alice Neary (cello), August 2007

The title of the work, *Y Deryn Pur*, refers to a Welsh folksong often translated as *The Gentle Dove*. When I was asked to write a work for oboe quartet as part of a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Presteigne Festival my immediate thought was how better to evoke the beauty of the surrounding countryside than to make an arrangement of this graceful, if slightly melancholic, melody. However, the call of the dove did not spring to mind as a useful starting point – musical cooing has its limitations.

The opening rising fourth and descending four note motif of the folksong gave me the basis for the first two sections. At the start of *Y Deryn Pur* the oboe solo intertwines with high string writing, perhaps suggestive of other birdsong, and slowly shifts downwards before taking flight again. In the passage that follows, the oboe line – now further extended – soars over the softly moving trio, leading to the final section in which the folksong is simply stated.

© 2007, Cecilia McDowall

Review: Cecilia McDowall's *Y Deryn Pur*, scored for the same forces as Britten's *Phantasy Quartet* (Virginia Shaw the expressively plangent oboist in both) was substantial, elegiac and evocative of landscape and birdsong, in an unaffected style that charmingly spoke from the heart.

The Birmingham Post, 2007

Four piano solos (2002) ATCL Recital Diploma syllabus of Trinity Guildhall Examinations

16 mins

Publisher: Hunt Edition. Premiered by Philip Mead, Robert Bell and Philip Fowke

1. Shades of Solace 2. *Vespers in Venice 3. Pavane 4. *Tapsalteerie. *Trinity Guildhall ATCL Recital Diploma

Four contrasting works: an energetic, driving, rag-inspired *Shades of Solace*; the delicate, impressionistic *Vespers* with intimations of Monteverdi; the poised stillness of the contemplative *Pavane*; the quirky, Scottish *Tapsalteerie* (or *Topsy Turvy*).

CHAMBER WORKS

Falling Angels (2008)

8 mins

Cello and piano. Publisher: Oxford University Press.

Commissioned by Gemma Rosefield and premiered by her and by Nicola Eimer (piano) at the Park Lane Group Concerts, Purcell Room London, January 2008

Falling Angels, a meditation for cello and piano, draws inspiration from the book *City of Falling Angels* in which the writer, John Berendt, gives a richly atmospheric portrayal of Venice where decay and disintegration are part of the allure. The rhythm of the lagoon, the gentle tides and waves of the Adriatic, frame the city like the rhythm of breathing. Extended melodies contrast with fragmented, falling phrases, sometimes ghostly, in this reflection on a beautiful city. The title was suggested by the sign 'Beware of falling angels' which was posted outside the Santa Maria della Salute Church in the 1970s before the marble angels were restored.

Strange violin, are you following me? (2008)

10 mins

Violin and piano. Publisher: Friedrich Hofmeister. Commissioned by Peter Hewitt (piano) and Peter Fisher (violin) and premiered by them at St John's, Smith Square, April 2008

This work draws its inspiration from the evocative, nocturnal poem, *Der Nachbar (The Neighbour)*, by the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. Its eerie, elegiac mood pervades the dark, meditative duo in which extended melodic lines intertwine between instruments, seemingly in pursuit of each other. Intensely lyrical, there is a constant pulse that beats a course throughout the work. The poem begins:

*Strange violin, are you following me?
In how many distant cities has your
lonely night already spoken to mine?
Are a hundred playing you? Or just one?*

Cavatina at Midnight (2008)

12 mins

Clarinet, cello and piano or violin, cello and piano. Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust and premiered by Catriona Scott (clarinet) Gemma Rosefield (cello) and Michael Dussek (piano) at the Hampstead and Highgate Festival, May 2008.

Cavatina at Midnight encloses, at its centre, a reference to the opening of the sublime *Cavatina*, the fifth movement from Beethoven's String Quartet in Bb Major, Op 130. Shapes and shades of the long lyrical line are hinted at throughout the work. *Cavatina at Midnight* also brings together songs of another kind, two allusions to the nightingale; one drawn from the poem by John Keats, who wrote *Ode to a Nightingale* one springtime under a plum tree in a Hampstead garden, and the other from the first ever birdsong recording in 1927, in which the cellist, Beatrice Harrison, played well-known songs in nocturnal duet with a nightingale in her garden. In the trio the clarinet/violin takes an agile role, suggestive of birdsong, often with arpeggio motifs, and is supported by the lyricism of the cello. As I was writing the piece a blackbird sang at my window, not its beautiful, mellifluous evensong but an insistent F sharp which somehow found its way into *Cavatina at Midnight*.

© 2008, Cecilia McDowall

Review: 'Those threads are tied together in spellbindingly evocative writing for clarinet and cello, exquisitely realized by Catriona Scott and Gemma Rosefield, ably accompanied by Michael Dussek at the piano.' *Evening Standard*, 2008

Colour of Blossoms (2009) a trio for peace

12 mins

Violin, cello and piano. Publisher: Gemini Publications

Commissioned by the English Piano Trio and premiered by the trio at St James's Piccadilly, March 2009

The Colour of Blossoms has been inspired by a 13th century Japanese story, *The Tale of the Heike Family*; the book centres on the emptiness of war, a recurring theme in Japanese literature. *The Colour of Blossoms* draws on the delicate imagery from the famous opening passage; 'The bell of the Gion monastery echoes slowly, warning that all is vanity. The colour of blossoms symbolizes the truth, that the prosperous will inevitably decline. The proud will fall in no time like a dream on a spring night. The valiant must perish too, as frail as dust blown by a puff of wind.' For most Japanese people the temple gongs are associated with peace and they differ considerably from Chinese gongs or European church bells. They are huge, sometimes weighing as much as thirty tons, and are often hung in high places so that the reverberation can be heard across the valley. *The Colour of Blossoms* is punctuated throughout by the low, deep sonorities of the piano; the violin and cello etch delicate, lyrical lines against this darker resonance, opening into a fast, driving central section and then folding back into melodic meditation.

CHORAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS

- Of a Rose** (1993) 3 mins
A Christmas carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Anon.
Publisher: Novello (*Noël 2*, edited David Hill)
- Christmas Bells** (1993) for SA and organ – see *Choral works for Upper Voice* below 2 mins
- Christus Natus Est** (2002) Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7146) commissioned by St Albans Choral Society. 15 mins
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
- 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) c. 3 mins
A Christmas carol for SA and piano. Words by William Blake.
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 3 mins
A Christmas carol for SATB and organ. Words by William Drummond.
Publisher: Gemini Publications
- Annunciation** (2005) available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7197) commissioned by Choros. 4 mins
A carol for Advent for unaccompanied SSATB. Words by John Donne.
Publisher: Gemini Publications
- Cantate Astra** (2006) 3 mins
A multi-cultural carol for unaccompanied SATB. Words by Christie Dickason.
Publisher: Gemini Publications
- Now may we singen** (2007) commissioned by the Concord Singers, available on Dutton Epoch (CDLX 7230) c.4 mins
A Christmas carol for unaccompanied SATB | Text: Anon.
Publisher: Oxford University Press (*The Ivy and the Holly – New Horizons*)
- Talking Turkeys!!** (2007) commissioned by the Portsmouth Grammar School 3 mins
A Christmas carol for SATB, glockenspiel, piano and double bass. Words by Benjamin Zephaniah.
Publisher: Gemini Publications
-

CHORAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS

The Night is Still (2009)

2 mins

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, 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)

3 mins

SSATB

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 McDowell'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)

3 mins

Upper voices: SSA

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, McDowell 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)

c. 3 mins

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

SATB (divisi).

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 claro lumine (2005) commissioned by the Yoxford Festival for the Choir of New College (CDLX 7197) 7 mins

SSATB + S solo or for Upper voices: SSSAA + S solo | Text: Liturgia Horarum.

Publisher: Gemini Publications

CHORAL WORKS, A CAPPELLA

cont. The Vesper hymn, *Deus, qui claro 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 4 mins

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

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Cantate Astra (2006) 3 mins

A multi-cultural carol for unaccompanied SATB. Words by Christie Dickason.

Publisher: Gemini Publications

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: 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

CHORAL WORKS, A CAPPELLA

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.

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)

Psallite Domino (2010) commissioned by the Reverend Dr Hugh White.

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

SSATB | Text: Liber Usualis | 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 WORKS FOR UPPER VOICE

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

SA and organ. Words by 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. Words by William Blake. Duration: 2'30"

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. Words by 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 Words by 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. Words by George Herbert. Duration: 2'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A joyous anthem, particularly suitable for Eastertide

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 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'

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Seraphim (1999, rev. 2002) available on CDLX 7159 commissioned by the London Mozart Players for Paul Archibald

Trumpet concerto. Solo trumpet, string orchestra and percussion (3 tom toms, bowed vibraphone, crotales, bass drum).

Duration: 12'

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

1. Blow your trumpets 2. Angells 3. Imagin'd corners

Reviews: '*Seraphim*, the immediately engaging trumpet concerto, has rhythmically insistent outer movements with a hauntingly ethereal centrepiece.' *Gramophone 2005*

'Written in memory of Adam Raphael, *Seraphim* is a brightly-hued concerto for solo trumpet, strings and percussion. In the opening movement, 'Blow your trumpets', airily textured strings chatter in half-Baroque, half-jazz language, supporting the flexible trumpet solo, played with admirable technical security and poetic sensibility by Paul Archibald. The central 'Angells' is hauntingly memorable,

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

with eerie, ethereal whispering bowed crotales and string harmonics hovering above delicately searing semitonal clashes between solo violin and muted trumpet lines. The worldly finale, 'Imagin'd Corners', is predominated by the soloist's arpeggiated figures, punctuated by tom-tom interjections. Increasingly florid solo lines drive the work to a decisive conclusion.' *Tempo 2006*

Not Just a Place (2001) available on CDLX 7159 commissioned by Duncan McTier, rescored for the London Mozart Players.

Dark memories from an old tango hall

Violin and double bass solos and string orchestra Duration: 7'

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

Reviews: 'Not Just a Place, interestingly and resourcefully scored for violin and double bass (soloists) and string orchestra, moves into an increasingly intense evocation of the Argentinean tango of Astor Piazzolla.' *Birmingham Post 2006*

'Conceived in homage to Astor Piazzolla, *Not Just a Place* is a highly-charged single-movement structure for violin, double bass and strings. The tango opens with an air of repression, desolation and loneliness with the two soloists, a seemingly odd couple, locked in imitative writing. They gradually untwine as the music marshals itself for a final dance of defiance. Double bass slaps, stabbing accents and riotous glissandi turn up the heat. The grimly stalking ostinato in the lower strings calls to mind the hulking bass line in the finale of Andrzej Panufnik's *Sinfonia Rustica*: something of that great work's earthy passion informs McDowall's torrid, sultry score. Soloists Freya Ritts-Kirby and Benjamin Griffiths capture perfectly the oppressive seductiveness of the music.' *Tempo 2006*

Dance the Dark Streets (2003 rev.2005) available on CDLX 7159. Duration: 12' Commissioned by McFalls Chamber

Concerto grosso for string orchestra with piano obbligato

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

1. Haar 2. Whirlwind

Reviews: 'Dance the Dark Streets is a *concerto grosso* for solo piano, string quintet concertino and string orchestra, rather more impressionistic in its instrumental colouration, having been inspired by 'different aspects of Scottish weather.' It is also more searchingly mysterious in essence but is equally impressive.' *International Record Review 2005*

'Dance the Dark Streets is a two-movement concerto grosso for strings and piano obbligato, unexpectedly inspired by Scottish weather, the drifting mists and stillness contrasting with the wildness of the winds.' *Gramophone 2005*

Dancing Fish (2003 rev.2005) available on CDLX 7159 commissioned by Sarah Field

Soprano saxophone, string orchestra. Duration: 10'.

Publisher: Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire). Also available for soprano saxophone and string quartet.

NEW: ALSO AVAILABLE FOR NARRATOR, SOPRANO SAXOPHONE AND STRING ORCHESTRA

Reviews: 'Dancing Fish (originally for saxophone and string quartet - here in a new version for string orchestra) is based on a fable by the Russian poet Ivan Krylov; in some respects it is the most immediately attractive of these works, a single-movement mini-concerto.' *International Record Review 2005*

'Dancing Fish for soprano saxophone (Amy Dickson) and string orchestra combines lyricism with deft rhythmic activity.' *The Birmingham Post 2006*

'A Russian fable by Ivan Krylov led to *Dancing fish*, for soprano saxophone and strings. The soloist plays a fragment of Russian folksong in the opening section, and this recurs as the piece gathers momentum, progressing from flowing tranquillity to frenetic dancing. Conceived as a single beautifully-controlled *accelerando*, it ends with a vigorously propulsive jig.' *Tempo 2006*

Rain and Steam and Speed (2006) commissioned for the London Mozart Players by Portsmouth Grammar School to celebrate the life of Brunel.

for chamber orchestra [strings; 2.2.2.2 - 2.2.0.0 perc. (1)]. Duration 10'

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

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Rain and Steam and Speed cont.

Turner's painting, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844) depicts a broad gauge engine steaming across Maidenhead Viaduct, one of Brunel's greatest achievements. The painting offers several perspectives to the viewer: a dark diagonal of bridge and train, crossing the Thames, intersects visions of tranquillity. To the left, far below, a fisherman sits in his skiff and to the right of the picture a ploughman turns his furrow. Ahead of the train a startled hare, the swiftest of creatures, leaps across the track.

In writing *Rain, Steam and Speed*, rather than follow a programmatic development of the title I have tried to convey a feeling of wide open spaces and pastoral repose in the opening section with the hare (a pair of clarinets) making a playful appearance. In Turner's painting the 'iron horse' emerges in the distance, pressing powerfully forwards and so, from out of the calm, a clear rhythmic motif, pianissimo at first, rattles to a full orchestral crescendo, gradually disappearing from view. © Cecilia McDowall 2006

Great Hills (2007) commissioned by the Shipley Arts Festival to celebrate the locality

Concertante for solo violin, two flutes and strings. Duration: 12'

Publisher: Oxford University press 2010 (orchestral score and parts for hire)

1. Prelude: Lady Blunt's Stradivarius 2. Passacaglia: the still night 3. Perpetuum mobile: Belloc's Mill

Compatible in scoring with Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4

Great Hills takes its title from the poem, *The South Country*, by Hilaire Belloc, the distinguished West Sussex poet, in which he describes with great warmth his love for the surrounding countryside. *Great Hills* is inspired by many local connections to Shipley.

One of these associations is with the violinist, Lady Anne Blunt, an ancestress of the Lytton family of Newbuildings Place, Shipley: her Stradivarius was made in 1721 which was about the time Bach wrote his Brandenburg Concerto No.4, also programmed at the premiere performance, and it was this connection that seemed to me a perfect starting point for the work. *Great Hills*, using the same instrumental combination as the Bach concerto grosso (solo violin, two flutes and strings). The first movement, *Prelude*, takes on some of the characteristics of this 18th century form with some unexpected twists. The second movement, *Passacaglia: The still night*, grew from the poem, *A Summer Evening Churchyard*, by Shelley (who was born in neighbouring Horsham). The gentle pace of this beautiful poem is echoed by the ground bass as it unfolds beneath the meditative, lyrical line of the solo violin and the interlocking flutes. The busy, continual motion of the final movement was suggested to me by the sails, grinding cogs and mechanical action of the windmill, owned by Belloc in Shipley, in *Perpetuum Mobile: Belloc's Mill* (the windmill was also known as King's Mill and as Mrs Shipley). The perpetual movement is shared between the soloists and the strings, always driving the work onwards. In the coda of the 'mobile' the energetic patterns are repeated and, as they unwind, the work gradually comes to a halt before an exuberant finish. © 2009, Cecilia McDowall

The Descending Blue (2008) commissioned by the Shipley Arts Festival to mark the 50th anniversary of Ralph Vaughan

William's death.

Flute, harp and string orchestra. Duration: 10'

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

A work to complement the well-loved, *The Lark Ascending*, a beautiful, musical response to the poem by Meredith. *The Descending Blue* is based on *Spring*, by Gerard Manley Hopkins. As I read the poem I found there were many similar resonances with the Meredith poem:

NOTHING is so beautiful as spring—
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs, too, have fair their fling Gerard Manley Hopkins

Perhaps this work should be called *The Thrush Descending!* As an acknowledgement to Vaughan Williams I have used five tunes in the work; *The Springtime of the Year*, *Greensleeves*, *Down Ampney*, *Monks Gate* and the John Ireland's *My song is love unknown*.

Four Shakespeare Songs (1993) commissioned by Gillian Humphreys

Soprano and piano *or* soprano and string orchestra. Texts from: *As you like it; Antony and Cleopatra; Hamlet; Midsummer Night's Dream*. Duration: 10'

Publisher: Friedrich Hofmeister (soprano and piano) Gemini Publications (orchestral score and parts for hire)

1. What 'tis to love 2. Bring me my robe 3. How should I my true love know? 4. First rehearse

This collection has proved to be highly popular worldwide. The four songs reflect some very different aspects of love. The first, *What 'tis to love*, gives a gentle affirmation of it, using text from the closing scenes of *As You Like It* – an exchange between Rosalind, Orlando and two shepherds. The second song, *Give me my robe*, is sung by Cleopatra who, devastated at having been abandoned by Antony, prepares herself for her own death. *How should I my true love know?* is sung by Ophelia in the play, *Hamlet*, when she finally loses her reason, provoked by Hamlet's harsh treatment of her. The simple old melody is used here, altered slightly, with an agitated accompaniment to mirror her unhinging. *First rehearse*, sung by Titania, appears in the closing scene of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here, Oberon and Titania cast their fairy blessing on the lovers, united at last. The light texture of the ensemble gives an exuberant finish to the song cycle.

Two Ratushinskaya Songs (1996 rev. 2002) was first commissioned by Mary Hamilton in 1996 for contralto and piano and later the Presteigne Festival commissioned a rescoring for soprano and piano in 2002.

Premiered by Mary Hamilton (contralto) and Kathron Sturrock (piano) in 1996 and in the revised soprano and piano version in 2002, Rachel Nicholls (soprano) and Simon Lepper (piano)

Words by Irina Ratushinskaya from *Pencil Letter*. Duration: 10'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

1. Song of the Mice 2. *Chipmunk (*also available for tenor or baritone)

In March 1983, on her 29th birthday, the Russian poet, Irina Ratushinskaya, received a seven year prison sentence for expressing 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' in her verse. Undaunted, she continued writing poems in prison, aware of the possibility of yet more serious danger and punishment. She wrote, in minute handwriting, on tiny scraps of paper, anything available, and gradually the verses were smuggled out of the prison camp. Later they were gathered into a collection called *Pencil Letter*. The *Song of the Mice* and the *Chipmunk* both come from this anthology. In the *Song of the Mice* the mother sings her tender lullaby to her little one. She sings of sweet things, of a sleepy crust of bread and of the pleasure of eating cats, yet there is always an underlying sense of real fear. The *Chipmunk* is an unfortunate character. Life has dealt him a poor hand and he is outraged by the injustices heaped upon him. At the start of the song the chipmunk stutters 'nonsense', in his best colloquial Russian, before unleashing a diatribe against the 'bear.' His ridiculous plea is that he should be born again but this time . . . as a tiger!

White Fox Woman (2002) commissioned by Paul Goodey (oboe) for Linda Hirst (mezzo-soprano). Recorded on Oboe Classics (CC2003)

Mezzo-soprano or countertenor and oboe. Words by Christie Dickason. Duration: 9'

Publisher: Hunt Edition

White Fox Woman, a dark, mini-opera for middle to low voice and oboe, was inspired by an Oriental myth; the novelist, Christie Dickason, gives this ancient legend a dramatic and contemporary edge.

Radnor Songs (2005) commissioned by Presteigne Festival of Music and the Arts. Premiered by Rachel Nicholls (soprano) and Paul Plummer (piano) at Presteigne August 2005.

Soprano and piano *or* soprano soloist and chamber orchestra. Words by Simon Mundy. Duration: 15'

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

Reviews: 'The composer's genuine gift for illuminating and embellishing texts was instantly in evidence. 'The Buzzard', which opened the cycle, used liberating, outspread intervals to illustrate the awesome, swooping bird. The brooklet in 'Summertil', which 'ingratiates the birds', was laced with filigree ornithological ornamentation, whilst the final, spacious setting of 'Radnor (Old), Church and Harp' created a movingly nostalgic, but valiantly unsentimental evocation of the area's lost glories. Tempo 2006

'Unostentatious and refined, McDowall's vocal lines and accompaniments were alert to the meaning and nuance of the poems, so that musical ideas grew naturally from them. *Radnor Songs* was a model of how to give insight into words through music, as opposed to paraphrasing or merely adorning them.' Guardian 2006

VOCAL

If there are angels (2005) commissioned by Boosey & Hawkes. **Grade 8 ABRSM**

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Words by Caroline Natzler. Duration 3'

Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes *Song Collection Volume 2* (Editor Eileen Field)

Review: [This] 'volume saves the best till last. Cecilia McDowall's *If there are angels*, genuinely of today both in music and in the poem by Caroline Natzler, deserves to be in every singer's repertoire. This is a beautiful song exquisitely written... this volume is worth getting for McDowall's song alone.'
David Owen Norris, Sheet Music Review September 2006

Christmas Eve at Sea (2006) commissioned by Jane Wickenden on the occasion of her husband, Robin's 50th birthday.

Baritone and piano. Words by John Masefield. Duration: 6'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

A subtle, atmospheric evocation of the John Masefield poem for baritone and piano. Works well with *Sea Fever* and other songs of the sea.

WORKS FOR WIND AND BRASS

Cool It (1999)

Trumpet in C, percussion (vibraphone, sus cym and drum kit). Duration: 4'

Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Commissioned by Paul Archibald (trumpet) and Simon Limbrick (percussion)

Written for Paul Archibald and Simon Limbrick in 1999, the opening of *Cool It* is based around the tritone which initiates the song, *Maria*, from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. A slow, languorous introduction, a dialogue between trumpet and vibraphone, sets the scene. A quick change into a fast-paced 6/8 rhythm with a drum kit underlay allows the trumpet to explore thematic allusions to the song of Riff and the Jets (*Cool*) from the same musical. Some of the material is linked to the last movement of my trumpet concerto, *Seraphim*, commissioned by the London Mozart Players and premiered by Paul Archibald, also in 1999.

Seraphim (1999, rev. 2002) available on CDLX 7159 commissioned by the London Mozart Players for Paul Archibald

Trumpet concerto. Solo trumpet, string orchestra and percussion (3 tom toms, bowed vibraphone, crotales, bass drum).

Duration: 12'

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

1. Blow your trumpets 2. Angells 3. Imagin'd corners [See **Orchestral Works** for programme notes]

Reviews: '*Seraphim*, the immediately engaging trumpet concerto, has rhythmically insistent outer movements with a hauntingly ethereal centre-piece.' *Gramophone 2005*

Inferno (1999)

Trumpet, countertenor and percussion. A dramatic scena. Duration: 15'

Script devised by Christie Dickason from Dante's *L'inferno* and Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer*

Commissioned by the Fibonacci Sequence, *Inferno* is a dramatic musical piece based on the writings of Dante and Rimbaud and was premiered by Paul Archibald, trumpet, Renzo Murrone, countertenor and Simon Limbrick, Percussion, at St John's, Smith Square, 1999.

Publisher: Gemini Publications.

Parts of Dante's *L'inferno* and Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer* have been interwoven by the novelist and poet, Christie Dickason, to form a dramatic scena in which the voice gives utterance first to omnipotence, then uncertainty and despair and finally to the optimism of the poet. At the start, all seems possible but as the scena unfolds obstacles present themselves causing panic, chaos and desolation but then there is a return to hope. The poet is committed to a continuing cycle which he must live through, not turning back but advancing into the uncertainty of the next creative possibility. Orpheus, singer and poet, did turn back and lost everything that was precious to him. Monteverdi uses Dante's words, *Abandon all hope, you who enter* in his opera, *Orpheo*, which is quoted in this work and used as an impetus for improvisation and an opportunity to display the countertenor's vocal technique.

Bells in the Air (2000)

Trumpet and horn. Duration: 4'

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications

Commissioned by Paul Archibald and premiered by Paul Archibald (trumpet) and Stephen Stirling (horn) at Minterne Summer Festival, Dorset

The clangorous sound of a peal of bells always fills me with a sense of great joy. The skill of bell-ringing seems to require such a fine balance between physical strength and perfect timing and yet when the sounds do collide with each other these imperfections seem just as endearing. I wrote *Bells in the Air*, a fanfare for trumpet and horn duo, thinking of that characteristically uneven fall of sound and how each pitch can set rich overtones a-jangling. The musical direction 'bells in the air' or 'bells up' is an exhortation to the brass player to bring the sound forward by raising the bell of the instrument. But in this fanfare there is also a suggestion that bells of a different kind may be heard, peals of bells, both near and far.

Framed (2009)

Trumpet in Bb (optional Eb) and piano. Duration: 8' **Associated Board syllabus Grade 6**

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications.

1. Ball at the moulin de la galette 2. Nocturne in blue and gold 3. Walking man 4. Winter landscape with skaters
5. Marilyn diptych 6. A choir of angels 7. Overcoming red.

This colourful collection of pieces for trumpet and piano draws its inspirations from a variety of art works. They range from the gentle Parisian waltz, *Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* inspired by the artist Renoir; an atmospheric night piece, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold* by Whistler; a bright, dazzling *Winter Landscape with Skaters* by the Dutch painter Avercamp; the Baroque brilliance of *A Choir of Angels* by the 15th Century painter, Marmion; and two cool jazzy works, *Marilyn Diptych* by pop artist Andy Warhol and *Walking Man* (a powerful elongated sculpture by Giacometti) which is in five time. The final and most challenging piece of **Framed**, *Overcoming Red*, is inspired by the abstract artist, Rodchenko, who asserted in 1921 that the 'end of painting' was imminent; an appropriate choice for the concluding work of the picture gallery. Something for all tastes and abilities.

Hodie Gloriosa (2001)

Brass octet (4 trumpets, 4 trombones) Duration: 8'

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications. Available on Brass Classics (*Hodie Gloriosa*)

Commissioned by the London Mozart Players and premiered by London Mozart Players Brass at St Michael and All Angels, Chiswick 2001

The Night Trumpeter (2002) On ATCL Recital syllabus of Trinity Guildhall Examinations

Trumpet and piano or trumpet, violin, cello, clarinet, bassoon and piano (Same scoring as Martinu's *La Revue de Cuisine*). Duration: 13'

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications and Gemini Publications

Commissioned by Paul Archibald and premiered by him and by Kathron Sturrock (piano) at Dartington 2002
[See **Chamber Music** for programme note and reviews]

Winter Music (1992) available on Deux Elles *Piper's Dream* (DXL 1033)

Wind quintet. Duration: 10'

Publisher: Hunt Edition

Commissioned by Harold Clarke and premiered by the Sheridan Wind Quintet 1993

Piper's Dream (1997) Deux Elles *Piper's Dream* (DXL 1033)

Flute and piano. Duration: 4'

Publisher: Hunt Edition

Commissioned by Georgina Roberts (flute) and premiered by her and David Elwin (piano) at the BMIC, London

Le Temps Viendra (1998)

Oboe/cor, clarinet/bass and piano or for trumpet, trombone and piano. Duration: 7'

Publisher: Gemini Publications

Premiered by Sounds Positive, Vestry Hall, Ealing, London

WORKS FOR WIND AND BRASS

The Moon Dances (2003)

Flute and piano. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Duration: 15'

Commissioned by Susan Milan and premiered by her and by Ian Brown (piano) at Wigmore Hall, September 2003

1. Paper sea and silver coins 2. Black with shadow and wolves 3. The red star trembles

[See **Chamber Music** for programme note]

Century Dances (2005)

Oboe, clarinet and bassoon trio. Duration: 9'

Publisher: Hunt Edition

Commissioned and premiered by the Thorne Trio at St George's, Brandon Hill, Bristol 2005

Five dances stretch a time-line from the 18th Century to the present day, each very different in character. The Allemande, which was often an introductory movement to the Baroque dance suite, ushers in Century Dances with flourishes and trills, using the conventional form of the period. This is followed by Menuet, subtitled 'ghost dance', distant and fragmented. Mazurka, a Polish dance form much favoured by Chopin, expansive and stately, is succeeded by the dark intensity of the Tango. The Last Dance rocks the suite to an exuberant conclusion.

Mein blaues Klavier (2006)

Soprano saxophone or clarinet and piano. Publisher: Gemini Publications. Duration: 10'. Commissioned by Amy Dickson and premiered by her and by Catherine Milledge (piano) at the Wigmore Hall, March 2006

[See **Chamber Music** for programme note]

STAGE WORKS

King Leo (1993) an eco-musical or an eco-cantata | Libretto: Sarah Dawson

There's been a bungle in the jungle! King Leo is getting old; his sight is not as good as it once was and his stamina is declining. He makes the decision to take a sabbatical from his rainforest responsibilities. What he needs is a place in the sun to rejuvenate and revitalise. He divides his kingdom between Panther, honourable but a bit too upfront with the truth, and Tiger, a rampant rascal who is out to make a fast buck. Tiger reveals a penchant for property development by cutting down the forest and selling to the highest bidder. Naturally, the animals are wild with worry. Will Tiger make the take-over total or will Panther save the day, the forest and the planet . . . ?

King Leo can be performed as a staged production (60') or more simply as a cantata with narrative links (40')

- suitable for ages of 7/8 and upwards
- 7 solo parts (either gender) suitable for adults as well as children
- chorus from 20 up to as many as you have!
- scored for piano, violin, cello, flute, clarinet in Bb and drum kit and percussion (timps. optional)

'the music was atmospheric, humorous and heart lifting . . . this musical should go on living as other companies should find it fun and rewarding to perform.'

Lloyds Bank Challenge Review 1993

'As a fan of the Walt Disney *Jungle Book* score I had assumed *Trust in Me* to be the ultimate in snake songs but McDowall and Dawson have come up with *Adapt and Survive* (for their snake, Miss Anna Conda, who else?) in an original and slippery smooth tango. *King Leo* is an eco-musical with a message or two. Charming, witty and never patronising, it's intelligent enough to be read on a number of levels and should find itself well placed to make regular stage appearances.'

Kevin Amos, (London West End MD)

Deep Waters (2000) a children's opera

Book and Lyrics: Christie Dickason

Deep Waters was specially commissioned by the WII Opera as its Millennium production, for a cast of over 80 children. In a wild, raging storm, four children fall overboard to the bottom of the sea and find themselves in a supernatural, aquatic world where the fish play havoc with each other in a bid to survive. The children also discover that they can now breathe. After an over-eager welcome from the fish, they begin to realise, with a ghastly sense of impending doom, that it was no accident that brought them here. They have a dangerous task to perform. With allusions to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, this opera is both playful and witty but with a dark edge and a serious environmental issue at its heart - overfishing. The music includes a hot blues number, sung by Tina Tuna and the Electric Eels, a twenties flapper dance for the delectable Jelly Babes and a big gospel showstopper for Angel and the Fillettes. These flamboyant set pieces are linked by some serious singing which gives a special chance to show off any outstanding voices.

STAGE WORKS

Deep Waters cont.

Includes:

- 8 main solos (including Angel (Top Fish), Ariel, Miranda, Tina Tuna, Sting (Ray), Scorpio (the capo di capi) and the Solitary Sole)
- chorus from 20 upwards (including card sharks, cross porpoises and mobster lobsters) Parts for younger/less experienced children as Plankton and Sea Weeds
- scored for flute, clarinet/sax, keyboard, cello, bass and percussion
- duration: 60'

Notes on costumes: Should be fish-ish – not literal – huge spectacles, face paint, lots of sequins and shimmer. Puppets could also be used to add to the numbers and the swirl.

More information from: mcdowall@ceciliamcdowall.co.uk

EDUCATIONAL

8 Folk Songs for 4 Flutes (1992)

Flute. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE6

Associated Board Music Medals (2004)

Gold flute ensemble pieces. **Baroque-n Heart; Takes 4 2 Tango**

Associated Board Music Medals (2004)

Silver flute ensemble pieces. **A Minute Minuet**

Associated Board Music Medals (2004)

Bronze flute ensemble pieces. **In the Mode**

Bass in Space (2001)

7 contemporary works for double bass and piano. Publisher: Recital Music. **Blue Giant**

Boosey & Hawkes Song collection Volume 2 (2006)

35 songs by various composers. 1901-2004

If there are angels. Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes. Edited by Eileen Field

Associated Board syllabus Grade 8

Review: [This] 'volume saves the best till last. Cecilia McDowall's *If there are angels*, genuinely of today both in music and in the poem by Caroline Natzler, deserves to be in every singer's repertoire. This is a beautiful song exquisitely written... this volume is worth getting for McDowall's song alone.'
David Owen Norris, Sheet Music Review September 2006

Finger Prints (2006)

14 easy contemporary pieces for violin and piano

Sunday on Fifth Avenue. Publisher: Faber Music. Edited by Mary Cohen

Finger Prints (2006)

14 easy contemporary pieces for clarinet and piano

Flights of Angels. Publisher: Faber Music. Edited by David Campbell

EDUCATIONAL

Framed (2009)

Trumpet in Bb (optional Eb) and piano. Duration: 8'

Publisher: Brass Wind Publications.

Associated Board syllabus Grade 6 [ends 2014]

1. Ball at the moulin de la galette 2. Nocturne in blue and gold 3. Walking man 4. Winter landscape with skaters
5. Marilyn diptych 6. A choir of angels 7. Overcoming red.

This colourful collection of pieces for trumpet and piano draws its inspirations from a variety of art works. They range from the gentle Parisian waltz, *Ball at the Moulin de la Galette* inspired by the artist Renoir; an atmospheric night piece, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold* by Whistler; a bright, dazzling *Winter Landscape with Skaters* by the Dutch painter Avercamp; the Baroque brilliance of *A Choir of Angels* by the 15th Century painter, Marmion; and two cool jazzy works, *Marilyn Diptych* by pop artist Andy Warhol and *Walking Man* (a powerful elongated sculpture by Giacometti) which is in five time. The final and most challenging piece of **Framed**, *Overcoming Red*, is inspired by the abstract artist, Rodchenko, who asserted in 1921 that the 'end of painting' was imminent; an appropriate choice for the concluding work of the picture gallery. Something for all tastes and abilities.

Five Images (1987)

Guitar. Publisher: Nova Music. Cat no NM380

Flute Starter Book 3 (2007)

Composers: Simon Hunt, Cecilia McDowall. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no PEM97

Harlequin Books 1 and 2 (2004)

Flute and piano Publisher: Cramer Music. CD included

Kaleidoscope (1987)

Ten little pieces for guitar. Publisher: Nova Music. Cat no NM381

Seven Impressions (1993)

Piccolo and piano Publisher: Pan Educational Music. Cat no PEM43

Shuffle by the Seaside (1991)

2 picc. 4 flutes in C. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE1

Six Pastiches (1985)

Flute and piano Publisher: Pan Educational Music. Cat no PEM40. CD: Deux Elles DXL1033

Associated Board syllabus Grade 5 [ends 2013] Trinity Guildhall Grades 3-5 [ends 2012]

Snap (1990) | Guitar. Publisher: Trinity College London. (On Trinity exam board 1998-2001)

Song and Dance (2007)

Flute and piano Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE95.

Soundtracks (1998)

Flute and piano. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE51. CD: Deux Elles DXL1033

1. The Italian Connection 2. Russian Encounter 3. Grounded 4. Star Time 5. One to One

Three Concert Studies (1994)

Flute and piano. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE15. CD: Deux Elles DXL1033

1. Chromatic Waltz 2. Tongue in Cheek 3. Spaces

Trinity Guildhall Grades 5-6 [ends 2012]

Three Pastiches (1987) Associated Board Grades 4-5 [ends 2013]

Clarinet and piano. Publisher: Hunt Edition. Cat no HE22.

1. Hornpipe 2. Romantic Song 3. Music Hall

Unbeaten tracks (2005)

8 contemporary pieces:

Oboe and piano. Publisher: Faber Music.

Prairie Song

Associated Board Grades 5

WORKS CURRENTLY ON EXAMINATION SYLLABUSES

ASSOCIATED BOARD

Unbeaten tracks Oboe and piano / Prairie Song / Grades 5

Three Pastiches Clarinet and piano / Romantic Song / Grade 4: Hornpipe or Music Hall / Grade 5

Boosey & Hawkes Song collection Volume 2 Voice and piano / If there are angels / Grade 8

Six Pastiches Flute and piano / Comic Song / Grade 4: Hornpipe / Grade 5

Framed Trumpet and piano / A Choir of Angels / Grade 6 (from 2010)

Music Medals (Associated Board) Gold flute ensemble pieces. Baroque-n Heart; Takes 4 2 Tango

Music Medals (Associated Board) Silver flute ensemble pieces. A Minute Minuet

Music Medals (Associated Board) Bronze flute ensemble pieces. In the Mode

TRINITYGUILDHALL

Six Pastiches Flute and piano / Grades 3-5

The Night Trumpeter Trumpet and piano / ATCL Recital syllabus

Three Concert Studies Flute and piano 1. Chromatic Waltz 2. Tongue in Cheek 3. Spaces Grades 5-6

Four piano solos Vespers in Venice / Tapsalteeie / ATCL Recital Diploma

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)

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

REVIEWS

'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 singen* . . . 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

CD RELEASES IN 2008 and 2009

New Choral/Vocal CD from Dutton Epoch, released June 2009 – a mix of sacred and secular

Laudate

Laudate for mezzo-soprano, mixed voices and chamber orchestra

I have done what was mine to do SATB, a cappella

Now may we singen 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

CDLX 7230 (for **Gramophone Review**, see above)

Fire Island

Music for Flute and piano

Anna Noakes, flute Caroline Palmer, piano

Includes Martin Yates, *Sonata for flute and piano* **Cecilia McDowall: The Moon Dances**

Dutton label CDLX 7210

CD RELEASES IN 2008 and 2009

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*

Chandos label CHSA 5066

Two Grammy nominations – Best Classical Album and Best Small Ensemble Performance (Dec 2008)

Grammy award for Best Small Ensemble Performance (Feb 2009)

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*

Avie label AV 2147

Susan Milan

Susan Milan, flute and Andrew Ball, piano

Includes Richard Rodney Bennett, Robert Saxton, Dave Heath, **Cecilia McDowall:** *The Moon Dances*

Metier label msv 28510.

For full details visit www.ceciliamcdowall.co.uk

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

Alternatively, for OUP repertoire, contact Oxford University Press Customer Services:

phone +44 (0)1536 454590

email: music.orders.uk@oup.com

web ordering: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/music/composers/mcdowall.do>

for Gemini Publications repertoire, contact Choral Connections:

phone +44 (0)1494 866389

email: val@choralconnections.com

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:

Val Withams at Choral Connections:

phone +44 (0)1494 866389

email: val@choralconnections.com

Music Enquiries at Oxford University Press:

phone +44 (0)1865 355067

email: music.enquiry.uk@oup.com
