

LONGER 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 'which is, at times, intensely moving'.

She has won many awards, been short-listed eight times for the British Composer Awards, and in 2014 won the Choral category of the British Composer Awards (re-named the Ivors Composer Awards) for her haunting work, *Night Flight*, which celebrates the pioneering flight of the American aviatrix, Harriet Quimby, across the English Channel. McDowall's distinctive style speaks directly to listeners, instrumentalists and singers alike. Her most characteristic works fuse fluent melodic lines with occasional dissonant harmonies and rhythmic exuberance. Her music has been commissioned and performed by leading choirs, including the BBC Singers, The Sixteen, Oxford and Cambridge choirs, ensembles, and at festivals worldwide. Recent important commissions include *When time is broke* (Three Shakespeare Songs) for the BBC Singers and *Adoro te devote* for Westminster Cathedral Choir, London, *A Prayer to St John the Baptist* for St John's College, Cambridge and *O sing unto the Lord* for King's College, Cambridge. *Three Latin Motets* were recorded by the renowned American choir, Phoenix Chorale, conductor, Charles Bruffy; this Chandos recording, *Spotless Rose*, won a Grammy award and was nominated for Best Classical Album. The National Children's Choir of Great Britain commissioned a work focusing on 'children in conflict', called *Everyday Wonders: The Girl from Aleppo*. This cantata is based on the real-life escape of Nujeen Mustafa (who is wheelchair-bound) and her sister from war-torn Aleppo; it tells of their harrowing journey across 3,500 miles, through seven countries, eventually arriving in Germany with relief and great gratitude. The work has been much performed in the UK, US, Sweden and the Middle East.

Wimbledon Choral Society commissioned the *Da Vinci Requiem*, to coincide with the 500th anniversary of Leonardo's death in May 2019; this large-scale work was premiered by the choir and The Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, London. In 2012 the Scott Polar Research Institute commissioned *Seventy degrees below zero* to mark Captain Scott's ill-fated expedition to the South Pole. This was performed by the City of London Sinfonia with tenor soloist, Robert Murray. In 2020 the Wimbledon Choral Society will record the *Da Vinci Requiem* with The Philharmonia Orchestra, Roderick Williams, conductor Neil Ferris and, on the same disc, Neil Ferris and The Philharmonia will record Robert Murray performing *Seventy degrees below zero*. McDowall's works are regularly broadcast on BBC Radio and readily available on CD.

Cecilia McDowall is an Oxford composer and also Visiting Composer to Dulwich College, London. In 2013 she received an Honorary Doctorate from Portsmouth University and in 2017 McDowall was selected for an Honorary Fellow award by the Royal School of Church Music. In 2020 discs of her music will be recorded on the Delphian, Naxos and Somm labels. (489)