



**THE CHOIR OF SELWYN COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, UK**
Sarah MacDonald, conductor
Tour to the North and Scotland 2018

The performances by the choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge are sublime, and the recording captures them in all their glory – Classic FM

Excellent singing that's clear, polished and committed... Sarah MacDonald has obviously trained the choir very thoroughly – MusicWeb International

The Chapel Choir of Selwyn College, under the skillful leadership of Sarah MacDonald provides sterling performances... Their vocalism is distinguished by clarity of diction, immediacy, purity of tone, superb balance, blend, intonation, rhythmic precision, and subtle expression. – The American Organist

A beautifully sustained performance [of Rachmaninov's 'All Night Vigil'] in which intonation remained secure — no mean feat — and the blend of voices was cool, elegant and textually responsive. – The Times

[Christmas from Selwyn is] so well done that even Scrooge would smile. – Cross Rhythms

ABOUT THE COLLEGE AND THE CHOIR

SELWYN COLLEGE, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Cambridge was founded in 1882 in memory of Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, the first Bishop of New Zealand. The college community consists of about 350 undergraduates, 100 postgraduates, and 60 academic Fellows covering the full spectrum of academic disciplines, as well as about 110 non-academic staff. Famous alumni of the college include the Archbishops of York and Wales, novelist Robert Harris, actors Hugh Laurie and Tom Hollander, journalist Clive Anderson, and musicians Sir David Lumsden, Andrew Lawrence-King, Grayston Ives, Percy Young, and Richard Marlow. The Victorian Gothic chapel was consecrated in 1895 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, and services have been said or sung daily during Full Term ever since.

The **CHAPEL CHOIR** has led worship in the college chapel since its foundation. For the first two thirds of the twentieth century, chapel attendance was compulsory for all students and the all-male choir of undergraduates was directed by the Organ Scholars and sang Choral Evensong every day. For occasional larger works, and on Sundays, the men borrowed sopranos and altos from Newnham College, the women's College across the road from Selwyn. The mixed choir, formed in 1976 with the admission of women to Selwyn, now consists of up to twenty-eight singers, Choral Scholars (called Choral Exhibitioners) and volunteers, and the choir's link with Newnham continues to the present day. Most of the choir members are undergraduates or graduates at Selwyn or Newnham, with a few volunteers from other colleges, and they read a wide variety of subjects including Music, Classics, English, Physics, and Biochemistry. During term, the choir sings three services per week in the chapel, as well as concerts and services throughout the UK, recently in venues including Westminster Abbey, Lincoln, Ely, Edinburgh, and St Paul's Cathedrals. Its repertoire ranges from the 10th to the 21st century. They have broadcast services for BBC Radio, have sung live on television, and every year undertake an international tour (in the recent past destinations have included Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Israel and Palestine, and much of continental Europe). In an on-going collaboration with London's John Armitage Memorial Trust, Selwyn Choir has premiered major new works by some of the UK's foremost composers, including Jonathan Dove, John McCabe, Paul Mealer, Gabriel Jackson, Paul Patterson, and Judith Bingham. The choir regularly works with international guest conductors, recently including David Hill, Sir David Lumsden, Judith Clurman, Grayston Ives, Andrew Carwood, Christopher Robinson, Nicholas Cleobury, and Timothy Brown.

The choir has made many critically acclaimed recordings, for labels including Priory, Herald, URM, Kevin Mayhew, and Regent Records, with whom they work most frequently. They have made something of a niche

for themselves recording single-living-composer discs, and have released several over the past few years, including discs of works by Colin Mawby, Paul Spicer, Paul Edwards, Gary Higginson, two Alan Bullard discs, Phillip Cooke, John Hosking, and Ben Ponniah (released in November 2017). Discs of works by composers Mark Gotham and Iain Quinn are currently in production, and planned for the future are discs for composers Stuart Turnbull, Paul Ayres, and Ben Parry. Their recent release on the Regent label, *The Eternal Ecstasy*, a selection of British and American music by Paul Mealor, Eric Whitacre, Morten Lauridsen, John Tavener, and James MacMillan, and other proponents of the so-called Choral Ecstatic Style, was featured as Classic FM recording of the week and spent three weeks in the Top Ten of the specialist charts.

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

SARAH MACDONALD is a Canadian-born organist and conductor, living in the UK, and currently holds the positions of Fellow and Director of Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and Director of Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir. She has been at Selwyn since 1999, and is the first woman to hold such a post in an Oxbridge Chapel. Sarah came to the UK from Canada in 1992 as Organ Scholar of Robinson College, Cambridge after studying piano, organ, and conducting at The Royal Conservatory of Music's Glenn Gould School in Toronto with Leon Fleisher, Marek Jablonski, and John Tuttle. At Cambridge she read for a degree in Music, and studied the organ with David Sanger. Sarah has played numerous recitals and conducted choirs throughout the UK, North America, the Middle East, New Zealand, and much of mainland Europe. She has made over 35 recordings, variously in the guises of pianist, organist, conductor, and producer, and currently works most frequently with Regent Records. Sarah is a winner of the Royal College of Organists' (RCO) coveted Limpus Prize, and has taught organ and conducting for Eton Choral Courses, Oundle for Organists, the Jennifer Bate Organ Academy, and courses run by the RCO and the RSCM. For its first decade, she was a Director of the annual Girls' Chorister Course at St Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, in New York City. Sarah is a Fellow and Examiner of the RCO, and for many years served on the Academic Board and as a Trustee. She has had a number of choral compositions published by Encore Publications, the Royal School of Church Music, and St James Music Press. Sarah also writes a popular monthly column for the American Guild of Organists' magazine 'The American Organist', called "UK Report".

TOUR ITINERARY

Thursday 12 July – Newcastle Cathedral (Evensong, 5.30pm)

Friday 13 July – Bradford Grammar School (concert, 7:30pm)

Saturday 14 July – Manchester Cathedral (concert, 7:30pm)

Sunday 15 July – Manchester Cathedral (Eucharist, 10:30am and Evensong, 5:30pm)

Monday 16 July – Glasgow St Aloysius RC Church (concert, 7:30pm)

Wednesday 18 July – Edinburgh St John's Princes Street (concert, 7:30pm)

For more information on the choir or the tour, please contact the choir's administrative assistant, Caille Sugarman-Banaszak, cps29@cam.ac.uk.