

Dubai-based British composer Joanna Marsh to mark 40th anniversary of the admission of women undergraduates to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge



22 October 2016

2pm-5pm

Seminar and panel discussion with Sidney Sussex alumnae including
Joanna Marsh and Carol Vorderman

Full list of panelists below

6.45pm

Joanna Marsh *Martha and Mary* (world premiere)
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, has commissioned Resident Composer Joanna Marsh to write three new works, commencing with ***Martha and Mary*** to mark the 40th anniversary of women's admission as undergraduates of the College. On 22 October 2016 following a seminar with Sidney Sussex alumnae discussing their careers in various fields, the Choir of Sidney Sussex will perform the world premiere of Marsh's new anthem *Martha and Mary* during Evensong.

To launch the year-long programme of events celebrating 40 years of women at the college, Sidney Sussex alumnae have been invited back to speak about two defining moments of their careers. The chairs are Professor Sandra Dawson and Professor Rebecca Kilner and panelists include **Joanna Marsh, Carol Vorderman MBE** and **Sue Gibson OBE**.

An alumna and former organ scholar of Sidney **Joanna Marsh** has been based in Dubai since 2007. Recent commissions have included *Arabesques* for the Kings Singers in 2015 and *Kahayla* (inspired by the world's tallest building the Burj Khalifa) for Welsh National Opera at the Dubai Shopping Festival in 2014. Marsh was appointed the first female Composer at Sidney in summer 2015, following her predecessor Eric Whitacre. Marsh is also the Founder of ChoirFest Middle East in Dubai, which brings together choirs from across the Arab-speaking world. To this year's festival, Marsh invited the Choir of Sidney Sussex College alongside others from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and the UAE. Marsh is currently

writing a new work to be premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Dubai next year at the new Dubai Opera House.

For her first commission, to celebrate 40 years of women undergraduates at Sidney, Marsh has created a 6-minute anthem *Martha and Mary*, based on Luke 10:38-42 (see below), which recounts the tale of Jesus teaching at the house of a friend. Mary sits listening intently while her sister Martha is in the kitchen becoming increasingly frustrated at being left to do all the domestic work on her own. However, Jesus supports Mary's choice against her sister.

As Marsh explains:

"The wider interpretation of this biblical text is that Jesus is endorsing the opportunity for women to become disciples. Traditionally only men were allowed to learn to teach and interpret scripture, i.e. to become priests themselves. This is a very apt text for a service celebrating the opportunity given to women to study at the former male only College."

The anthem will be performed at a special event on Saturday, 22 October in Sidney Sussex Chapel, following a series of panel discussions with notable former Sidney women and a keynote speech by alumna Professor Susan Gibson OBE.

Further commissions for the College include a piece to celebrate the installation of the new organ, which has been constructed by the Dutch firm Flentrop Orgelbouw, on 19 November and a setting of a psalm by Sir Philip Sidney.

"As a Sidney alumna and former Organ Scholar, we are delighted to welcome back Joanna Marsh as Composer in Residence in the year in which we are celebrating the impact and achievements of Sidney women since the first admission of female undergraduates in 1976, and are thrilled to host the premiere of the specially-composed anthem in October." David Skinner

"Some of Joanna's works that the choir has particularly enjoyed have been very strongly influenced by English church music from the Elizabethan period and later. With an eye on this and the types of organ now in the college, we know that the music she will write for us will be excellent fit for both the choir and instrument and will tie in well with our desire to develop something new artistically while respecting our traditions and roots. We are very excited to be working with her!" - David Skinner

Panel speakers 22 October

Professor Sue Gibson OBE (research chemist)

Professor Dame Sandra Dawson (1998, first female Master)

Baroness Young (2000, first female Honorary Fellow)

Dr Denise Reed (1977, first female president of the MCR)

Professor Alison Blunt (1987, now Professor of Geography, Head of School, Queen Mary University of London)

Dr Denise Reed (1977, first female president of the MCR)

Professor Joanne Martin (1978, now National Clinical Director of Pathology for the NHS Commissioning Board)

Ms Fiona Parkin QC (1989)

Dr Neha Pathak (2006, Cosmopolitan Ultimate Game-Changer winner 2014)

Ms Diane Samuels (1979, playwright and author)

Mrs Sue Toft (1976, Head of Learning and Development, British Council)

Mrs Rebecca Evans (1997, Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Welsh Assembly)

Dr Helen Castor (1994)

Ms Carol Vorderman MBE (1978)

Joanna Marsh (1989, former organ scholar)

Sidney Sussex College

Sidney Sussex College of the University of Cambridge was established in 1596, founded by Lady Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex. The college has produced five Nobel Prize winners and includes Oliver Cromwell among its alumni. Miss Lynne Brydon made history on Wednesday 18 June 1975 when she became the first woman to be admitted to College on a Research Fellowship. The same year Sidney's first four female graduate students were admitted. This followed Churchill, Clare and Kings College who had opened their doors to women in 1972. Following Sidney, all the other previously all-male Cambridge colleges, followed suit with the last doing so in 1988.

Sidney's former female students include:

Carol Vorderman MBE, Rebecca Evans Welsh MP, author and playwright Diane Samuels, High Court Judge Ingrid Simler, Director of think tank Politeia Sheila Lawlor and Professor Joanne Martin (National Clinical Director of Pathology for the NHS Commissioning Board). Female Fellows of the College include Baroness Young (first female Honorary Fellow, 2000) and the first female President of the Royal Academy of Engineering Professor Dame Ann Dowling (Order of Merit in 2016 for her pioneering work in the field of acoustics and aircraft engine design).

Choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Since the appointment of Dr David Skinner as its Music Director in 2006, the Chapel Choir has quickly become one of the finest mixed-voice ensembles in Cambridge. The Choir is made up of six to eight sopranos, six to eight altos, six tenors, three baritones, and three basses, and exists to sing the weekly Chapel services. The Choir regularly performs at home and abroad and, more recently, has made a niche in making professional recordings for specialist markets, including museums, art galleries, and national libraries. Skinner's ambitions have been aided by generous donations to provide instruments for the College, to build a new organ and to enable numerous recordings and touring opportunities for the choral scholars.

Though the choir was only founded in recent times, the great Elizabethan composer William Byrd would have been well-known to the College's foundress, Lady Frances Sidney. Two elegies by Byrd survive for her nephew, the poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney.

The Choir tours two to three times a year, and has sung to full and appreciative audiences in Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Dubai. They have also toured the east and west coasts of the USA, with highlights in Carnegie Hall, Washington DC National Cathedral, Harvard, Cape Cod, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Monterey, and Las Vegas. In 2016/17 the Choir will visit Germany, Rome, Dubai and Australia, featuring the works of Joanna Marsh.

The Choir's first recording with the new early music label Obsidian (www.obsidianrecords.co.uk), Thomas Tomkins 'These Distracted Times', was awarded Editor's Choice and CD of the Month in the Gramophone, and they have since gone on to record and tour a number of innovative programmes. There have been further recordings of the music of Ludwig Senfl with the early brass ensemble QuintEssential, which took place in Regensburg in Bavaria.

David Skinner is a renowned scholar and choral director. He was co-founder of The Cardinal's Musick in 1989, and has also worked with many other leading early music groups in the UK including The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, the Hilliard Ensemble and the King's Singers. David founded Alamire in 2005 (www.alamire.co.uk) as an extension to his research and performance activities. The ensemble has already received critical acclaim for their performances and recordings and has released nine CDs on the Obsidian label, of which David is Artistic Director. They received a Gramophone Award in 2015 for their recording of The Spy's Choirbook, while their latest release, Anne Boleyn's Songbook, received Australia's Limelight Award for best choral and song recording in 2015 as well as a nomination for a BBC Music Award.

An engaging presenter, David has worked extensively for BBC radio, appearing in and writing a variety of shows on Radio 3 and 4. He acted as music advisor for the Music and Monarchy series on BBC 2 with historian David Starkey; he and Alamire appear in the first two episodes of the series. He has published widely on music and musicians of early Tudor England and has an excellent reputation as an editor of performance scores. David's edition of the complete Tallis Psalter was published by Novello in 2012 and was well reviewed, receiving 5 stars in Early Music Today. The follow up to this collaboration, "The Gibbons Hymnal" was released in March 2014. David is also working with the King's Singers on a series of early music recordings, the first of which was the Richafort Requiem.

David is Fellow, Praelector, and Osborn Director of Music at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge where he teaches historical and practical topics from the medieval and renaissance periods. He directs the Choir of Sidney Sussex College, with whom he has toured and made highly

acclaimed recordings. David is frequently invited to lecture, lead workshops and coach choirs throughout Europe and the USA, and is noted for his refreshing and entertaining approach. Most recently, he gave a lecture on Tallis' life for Martin Randall Travel in Canterbury in November 2013, and will be lecturing and giving masterclasses throughout the USA, UK, Italy and Spain in 2014-15. He is currently preparing an collected edition of Tallis's early Latin works for Early English Church Music (Stainer & Bell) for publication in 2017.

Joanna Marsh

Joanna Marsh is a British composer who has been living in Dubai since 2007.

The Middle East has provided inspiration for many of Joanna's works including "Arabesques" for The King's Singers, "A Short Handbook of Djinn" for harpist Catrin Finch and "The Travels of Ibn Battuta" for the Maggini Quartet. The British Embassy in Dubai commissioned her brass fanfare "The Falcon and the Lion" in 2010 for H.M. Queen Elizabeth II's state visit to Abu Dhabi.

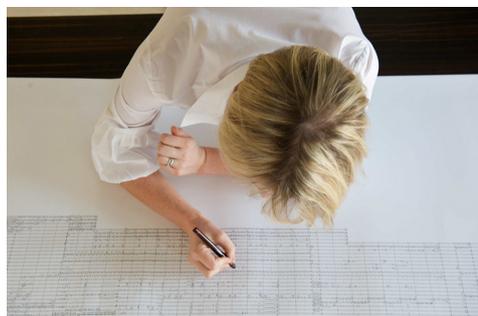
The inspiration for Joanna's compositions frequently comes from seeing contemporary subjects in a historical context. For example, "The Tower" (2008) for the BBC singers, (John Armitage Trust) a reflection on the Burj Khalifa, Dubai's famously tall tower and its parallels with the mythical Tower of Babel. Her orchestral work about the Burj, Kahayla, written two years later, is called after one of the major Dubai horse races. It received its UAE premiere on 1st January 2015, with Welsh National Opera.



Joanna (b. 1970) studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London and was an organ scholar at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge. She studied composition privately with Richard Blackford and Judith Bingham and in 2015 was appointed "Composer in Residence" to her former college, Sidney Sussex.

In addition to her concert music, Joanna composed the music for the short film "The Morse Collectors" which has won prizes at seven international film festivals including the Chicago Children's Film Festival. Her songs for children's choirs based on the poetry of Brian Patten, have been performed at festivals and choral competitions internationally and across the UK including Choir of the Year. In 2005 she wrote a musical installation for the Pier 6 Bridge at Gatwick Airport which played for 10 years from 2005-2015.

Joanna is Co-founder and Artistic Director of Middle East region's largest choral festival, ChoirFest Middle East. Last summer, Marsh piloted a new festival *SOUND TRACKS: Forest Music* introducing contemporary music through a series of walking sound installations in Furnace Wood, Fairwarp in East Sussex. Marsh hopes that those who attended the future festival will come for the experience of being in the nature and of being open to the new sound world around them, enhanced by the natural habitat.



www.joannamarsh.co.uk

www.soundtracksforestmusic.com

For more information please contact:

Nicky Thomas Media

020 725 80909 | 020 3714 7594

info@nickythomasmedia.com

www.nickythomasmedia.com

@ntmediauk