

Guy Johnston to perform in 100th *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* at King's College, Cambridge, premiering Judith Weir's new carol, *O Mercy Divine*



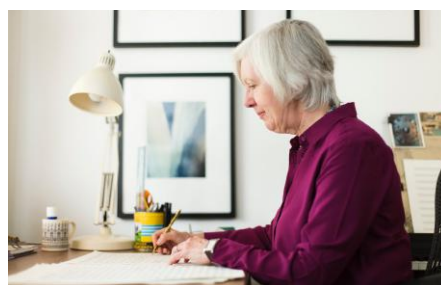
BBC Radio 4 broadcast (*Nine Lessons and Carols*): 24 December, 3pm
BBC Two broadcast (*Carols from King's*): 24 December, 5:45pm
(Filmed on the afternoon of Sunday 9th December)

Judith Weir *O Mercy Divine*

Internationally-renowned cellist **Guy Johnston**, a former chorister at **King's College, Cambridge**, returns for the 100th *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* at King's, to be broadcast on **BBC Radio 4** and as *Carols from King's* on **BBC Two** on **24 December**, marking **Stephen Cleobury's** 37th and final Christmas as Director of the world-famous choir before his retirement. Guy Johnston will give the world premiere of a new carol, ***O Mercy Divine***, by Master of the Queen's Music, **Judith Weir**. The recording will later be released on the King's College Label.

The **Nine Lessons and Carols** Service, first broadcast on radio in 1928, has now become a time-honoured Christmas tradition, heard by 30 million people around the world on radio and TV. Every year since 1983, the college and Stephen Cleobury have commissioned a new carol to be premiered during the service.

Guy Johnston's first musical experiences were as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge, under Stephen Cleobury, and he began to play the cello whilst singing in the Choir. He returned to Cambridge to perform **Ola Gjeilo's *O Magnum Mysterium*** on cello with the Choir as part of the 2015 service, later recorded for Johnston's recent ***Tecchler's Cello*** disc.



Judith Weir is also an alumnus of King's College. This year marks the second occasion that Weir has composed a carol for the service: her *Illuminare, Jerusalem* premiered in 1985 and has received frequent performances since. Previously commissioned composers for this event have included Jonathan Dove, John Tavener, Thomas Adès, James MacMillan, and Peter Maxwell Davies.

"When Stephen Cleobury invited me to include a cello in my new Carol, I was glad to oblige. And how appropriate that the cello will be played by a former King's chorister, Guy Johnston."

- Judith Weir

Next CD Recording: Howells' *Cello Concerto*

Recording: 10-11 January

King's College, Cambridge

Following the posthumous world premiere of **Herbert Howells' *Cello Concerto*** given by Guy Johnston at Cheltenham Festival in 2016, **King's College, Cambridge** will record and release the *Concerto* alongside Howells' *The English Mass* on **10 & 11 January 2019**. The *Cello Concerto* was first brought to Guy's attention by his mentor, Steven Isserlis at a memorial service for late Sir John Tavener, and for the recording, Johnston will record on Isserlis's Montagnana cello. This recording was made possible by the Herbert Howells trust and key supporters of Guy.



Watch a clip from a 2016 rehearsal of the *Concerto* here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8mqXUFXNA0>

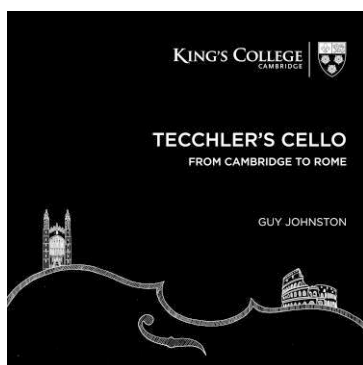
Herbert Howells first began sketching his *Cello Concerto* in 1933, but was struck by tragedy in 1935 when his nine-year-old son, Michael, contracted polio, dying three days later. The composer ultimately never recovered from his son's death, and used composition as a means of dealing with his grief. Yet he never finished the *Cello Concerto*, which he often worked on around the anniversary of his son's death in a sort of mourning ritual. Howells saw the cello as 'an extension of the male voice'

and in this highly personal *Concerto*, there can be no doubt that the voice is markedly his own.



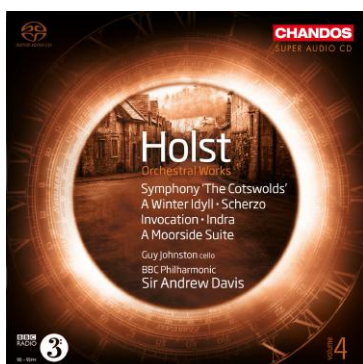
The *Concerto* was finally completed in 2014 by musicologist **Jonathan Clinch**, who worked from extensive sketches and an extant first movement to fill out the missing harmony. This first movement – submitted separately as a 'Fantasia' for Howell's DMus in Oxford – draws on the model of Vaughan William's own *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. The *Concerto* as a whole uses modal and chromatic harmonies and false relations, drawing on Tudor influences; Howells had concurrently been editing the Tudor Church Music series.

A former chorister at King's, Johnston also reconnects with his choral roots in recording Howells, best known for his choral works, including his many Canticle settings still sung at evensong at King's College today. Howells composed his *Collegium Regale* for the Choir and Chapel of King's College, and there is a strong tradition of performing and recording Howells at the college. King's College Chapel was close to Howells' heart, and the composer kept a picture of the Chapel in his teaching room throughout his life.



The recording will be Johnston's second CD with the King's College Label, following the successful release of ***Tecchler's Cello: From Cambridge to Rome*** in 2017. Marking the 300th anniversary of the creation of Johnston's David Tecchler Cello, the cellist recorded 3 new commissions from composers including Ola Gjeilo and collaborated with pianist Tom Poster, cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, the Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, and his brother, violinist Magnus Johnston.

Out Now: *Holst – Orchestral Works*



Released October 2018

Chandos (CHAN 5192)

Holst *A Winter Idyll*

Holst *Symphony in F, Op. 8 'The Cotswolds'*

Holst *Invocation, Op.19 No.2**

Holst *A Moorside Suite*

Holst *Indra*

Holst *Scherzo for Orchestra*

BBC Philharmonic
Sir Andrew Davis conductor
 *featuring **Guy Johnston** cello

★★★★★ **BBC Music Magazine**, Featured Orchestral Recording: "Guy Johnston's mellow-toned delivery of the poised and beautifully scored *Invocation*"

Released on **Chandos** in **October 2018**, a new CD of Orchestral works by Holst puts forward a number of little-known works that were never published in the composer's lifetime, ranging from those published at the start of his life to the end of his career. Guy Johnston is the soloist in **Holst's *Invocation***, composed for cello and orchestra in 1911. Written only three years before *The Planets*, this touching miniature looks forward to *Venus* in its expressive qualities. The recording is featured in BBC Music Magazine, where it received five stars as the **Orchestral Choice Recording** in the Christmas edition.

Next CD Release: *Themes and Variations*

Friday 1 March

Orchid Classics (ORC100095)



Ludwig van Beethoven *Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen'*
Robert Schumann *Adagio and Allegro*
Gabriel Fauré *Romance, Op. 69*
Felix Mendelssohn *Variations concertantes, Op. 17*
Franz Schubert *Auf dem Strom, D. 943**
Frédéric Chopin *Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op. 3*
Sergei Rachmaninov *Prelude, Op. 2 No. 1*

Bohuslav Martinů *Variations on a Theme of Rossini, H. 290*

James MacMillan *Kiss on Wood*

Sergei Rachmaninov *Vocalise, Op. 34 No. 14*

Camille Saint-Saëns *The Swan (from The Carnival of the Animals)*

Guy Johnston cello

Tom Poster piano

*featuring **James Gilchrist** tenor



Recorded in Manchester's **Stoller Hall**, the newly-opened concert hall at Chetham's School of Music where Johnston used to study, a new album of ***Themes and Variations*** with Guy Johnston and pianist **Tom Poster** will be released on **Orchid Classics** on **1 March 2019**, celebrating 20 years touring the works.

In this wide-reaching album, Johnston and Poster perform sets of variations from Beethoven to Martinů, interspersed with well-known famous 'themes', from **Saint-Saëns' *The Swan*** to **Rachmaninov's *Vocalise***. The pair are joined by celebrated tenor, **James Gilchrist**, for **Schubert's *Auf dem Strom***.

The programme also includes James MacMillan's *Kiss on Wood*, which calls on liturgical imagery of kissing the wood of the cross. An ornamentation of the Good Friday versicle, *Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pependit: Venite adoremus*, MacMillan draws on the parallels with the love and devotion shown to wooden instruments making music.



Watch a clip from behind-the-scenes at the recording here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSD8pkNTPn8>

Guy Johnston



Guy Johnston is one of the most exciting and versatile British cellists of his generation. Born into a musical family, Guy joined his brothers in the world-renowned choir of King's College, Cambridge, where he recorded the famous carol *Once in Royal David's City*, under Stephen Cleobury. He went on to achieve important early successes through the BBC Young Musician of the Year title, the Guilhermina Suggia Gift, the Shell London Symphony Orchestra Gerald MacDonald Award and receiving a Classical Brit Award at the Royal Albert Hall. His mentors have included Steven Doane, Ralph Kirshbaum, Bernard Greenhouse, Anner Bylsma as well as Steven Isserlis and David Waterman at IMS Prussia Cove. Guy has performed at chamber music festivals and with orchestras around the world and more recently with the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Japan, a premiere

performance of the Howells concerto at the Cheltenham Festival, and a new cello concerto by Charlotte Bray commissioned for the BBC Proms. He is Artistic Director of the Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival and enjoys teaching a class of young cellists at the Royal Academy of Music as well as being a patron of the Pierre Fournier Award. Guy plays a 1714 David Tecchler cello, generously on loan from the GodleeTecchler Trust which is administered by The Royal Society of Musicians. He has recently commissioned a number of short new works to celebrate its tricentenary by composers including Charlotte Bray, David Matthews and Mark Simpson. Guy has recently joined the cello teaching faculty at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, New York.

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