

Guy Johnston and Tom Poster release *Themes and Variations* on Orchid Classics



1 March

Orchid Classics (ORC100095)

Music by **Beethoven, Schumann, Fauré, Mendelssohn, Schubert*, Chopin, Rachmaninov, Martinů, MacMillan, and Saint-Saëns**

Guy Johnston cello

Tom Poster piano

*with **James Gilchrist** tenor

On **1 March**, cellist **Guy Johnston** and pianist **Tom Poster** release ***Themes and Variations*** on **Orchid Classics**. Recorded in Manchester's **Stoller Hall**, the disc celebrates two decades of collaboration between the pair. On **7 June**, Johnston's recording of **Howells' *Cello Concerto*** is released with **King's College, Cambridge**.

At the core of *Themes and Variations* are the three sets of variations recorded by Johnston and Poster: **Beethoven's *Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen'***, **Mendelssohn's** charming ***Variations concertantes*** written for his brother, and **Martinů's *Variations on a Theme of Rossini***. Beethoven's lyrical variations reach back to Mozart, taking their theme from a duet between Pamina and Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, while Martinů's variations, written in 1942, reach forwards into the second half of the twentieth century.



Watch the album trailer here: <http://bit.ly/2Pw7Sak>

In *Themes and Variations*, Johnston and Poster also compile many of the works they regularly return to in recital, including lyrical favourites **Fauré's *Romance***, **Rachmaninov's *Vocalise***, and **Saint-Saëns' *The Swan. Kiss on Wood***, by the contemporary Scottish composer **Sir James MacMillan**, is included, and with the cello often regarded as the

instrument closest to the human voice, they are joined by tenor James Gilchrist for **Schubert's *Auf dem Strom***.

Johnston and Poster first met at the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 2000, and have remained friends and frequent collaborators since.

Full track listings

Beethoven *Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen'*
Schumann *Adagio and Allegro*
Fauré *Romance, Op. 69*
Mendelssohn *Variations concertantes, Op. 17*
Schubert *Auf dem Strom, D. 943*
Chopin *Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op. 3*

Rachmaninov *Prelude, Op. 2 No. 1*
Martinů *Variations on a Theme of Rossini, H. 290*
MacMillan *Kiss on Wood*
Rachmaninov *Vocalise, Op. 34 No. 14*
Saint-Saëns *The Swan (from The Carnival of the Animals)*

Howells' Cello Concerto



7 June

King's College, Cambridge

Howells *Cello Concerto*
Howells *The English Mass*

Guy Johnston cello
The Choir of King's College, Cambridge
Stephen Cleobury conductor

Following the posthumous world premiere of **Herbert Howells' *Cello Concerto*** given by Johnston at Cheltenham Festival in 2016, Johnston has recorded the work with the **Britten Sinfonia** in **King's College Chapel, Cambridge**. The *Cello Concerto* was first brought to Johnston's attention by his mentor, Steven Isserlis, at a memorial service for late Sir John Tavener, and was recorded on Isserlis's Montagnana cello.

The recording was made possible by the Herbert Howells trust and key supporters of Guy. The concerto will be released alongside Howells' ***The English Mass***, recorded with **Stephen Cleobury** and the **Choir of King's College Cambridge** in the conductor's final recording with the choir. A former chorister himself at King's College, Cambridge, Johnston reconnects with his choral roots in recording Howells, who composed his *Collegium Regale* for the Choir and Chapel of King's College. Howells kept a picture of the Chapel in his teaching room throughout his life.

"It has been a fascinating process getting to know this hidden gem. It's extraordinary to think of the connections"

- Guy Johnston



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 Howells'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.

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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