

FRANCIS GRIER (b.1955) Te Deum (1996) 20:00 Te geternum Patrem omnis terra venerator 2:02 3:59 VIII. Pleni sunt cæli et terra majestatis gloriae tuæ 3. XIII. Patrem immensæ maiestatis 2:01 3:01 XVIII. Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem 2:04 XXII. Te ergo quæsumus 2:36 XXVI. Per singulos dies, benedicimus te 4:17 7. XXX Fiat misericordia tua Domine super nos 8. Domine, probasti (1992) 7:50 Deo Gratias (1993) 11:43 Laraamente-Allearo assai 3:53 9. l. 10. II. Andante 2:18 11. III. Tempo primo-Allegro 5:32 12. Vigilia Noctis (1989) 8:40 In nomine (2000) 10:57 13. I. In nomine (John Taverner) 1:54 14. II. In nomine I 3:52 1:22

15. III. In nomine (William Blytheman) 16. IV. In nomine II 3:49 17. Chorale prelude on Wir haben schwerlich (2015) 4:03 Sonata (1989) 12:41

18. I. With passion, anger and arrogance 4:03 19. II. Mournfully 3:07 20. III. Allegretto-Nervously 2:24 21. IV. Allegro-With joy

3:07

Meditation (2012) - download from willowhaynerecords.com

world premiere recordings TOTAL TIME: 75:35

TOM WINPENNY (organ of St Albans Cathedral)

* with the Lay Clerks of St Albans Cathedral

(William Glendinning, William Houghton, Peter Martin, Oliver Martin-Smith) This recording has been generously supported by Richard Barnes of Cathedral Music / RSCM, Rogers Covey-Crump and Ralph Allwood.

Thanks are also due to the Dean and Chapter of St Albans Cathedral

Francis Grier was born in Kotakinabalu, Borneo, in 1955, where his father worked for the Colonial Service. In 1963, Grier became a chorister at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle under Sidney Campbell, whose guidance would become profound. Already a prodigiously talented pianist, Grier began organ lessons with Campbell on the chapel's Harrison & Harrison organ. The instrument was newly constructed in 1965; its specification bears resemblances to the recently-built organ of Coventry Cathedral (1962), for which Campbell had been advisor. Both instruments marked, to a certain extent, a departure from the 'romantic' ideal of a cathedral organ. They reflect both Campbell's love of French music and his concern for the properly-contrapuntal approach to Bach's music then being espoused on mainland Europe.

On leaving St George's in 1968, Grier took up the first music scholarship to be awarded by Eton College. The college's Choir School, having struggled to survive for a number of years, was forced to close that summer: the Provost and Fellows established music scholarships with the proceeds from the closure. At Eton, Grier came under the tutelage of the Precentor Kenneth Malcolmson – a figure cut from a very different cloth from Campbell. A former organist of Newcastle Cathedral, Malcolmson had himself studied at Eton, and progressed to the Royal College of Music and Exeter College, Oxford. The 1885/1902 Hill organ in Eton College Chapel and the large number of opportunities for student-led performances supported by the burgeoning music department and the College's thriving Musical Society provided new stimuli for Grier. He was inspired by the infectious and insightful teaching of the College's young Organist, Alastair Sampson, who helped him prepare for the FRCO diploma, which Grier received in 1972.

During his sixth-form years at Eton, Grier returned regularly across the Thames to St George's Chapel to play as Organ Scholar for his former teacher Sidney Campbell. Grier attributes his own particular fondness for Couperin's organ works to Campbell's introduction to French classical repertoire – music all too often overlooked by British organists. Equally influential for Grier were Campbell's performances of works by Franck and contemporary French composers, including Messiaen. Towards the end of his school years, occasional lessons with one of the country's leading organists – Peter Hurford at St Albans Cathedral – continued to extend Grier's already-broad musical horizons.

Grier left Eton in 1973 – he signed off with a performance of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto, accompanied by the school orchestra – to take up the Dr Mann Organ

Scholarship at King's College, Cambridge. His studies at King's straddled the end of David Willcocks's distinguished time as Director of Music and the beginning of Philip Ledger's celebrated tenure. Ledger's multi-faceted career as conductor, organist and pianist – not restricted to the narrow confines of church music – particularly chimed with Grier's voracious musical appetite. Whilst reading for a music degree at Cambridge, Grier took organ lessons from Gillian Weir. Her powerful advocacy of the organ as a musical – not solely liturgical – instrument, and of the need for organists to be well-rounded, and not isolated musicians, resonated with him. Weir's particularly elegant performances and perceptive tuition of French baroque music made a lasting impression.

On graduation from King's, Grier moved to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, to become Assistant Organist to Simon Preston. Preston's thrilling solo playing and passionate choir direction immediately made their mark on Grier. During this period, the Cathedral's new Rieger organ was completed: Grier made the first solo recording on this striking instrument in July 1980. Its specification and voicing – particularly suited to the polyphonic corpus of European organ music – set this mechanical-action instrument apart from most British cathedral instruments.

Grier succeeded Preston as Organist of Christ Church in 1981 at the age of 25, a post he held until 1985. During this time he made many recordings with the choir and as a solo organist. He was active in commissioning new works for the Cathedral choir from composers including William Mathias, John Tavener, and Giles Swayne – whose Magnificat I (commissioned by Grier for the cathedral) has become something of a modern classic.

After an intensely productive period, and in order to pursue options unavailable to full-time musicians, Grier relinquished his post at Christ Church in 1985. Taking a complete turn in direction – but perhaps motivated in part by his early upbringing in Asia – he travelled to India to study music, theology and meditation. Later he worked in Bangalore and in London with communities of people with learning difficulties.

Returning permanently to the UK in 1989, Grier trained as a pyschoanalyst whilst building up a portfolio of compositions, including commissions for Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral. He was the recipient of a British Composer Award for his Missa brevis (2011), composed for St Paul's Cathedral. His large-scale works include two collaborations with the poet Elizabeth Cook: The Passion of Jesus of Nazareth

(2006) for chorus and instrumental ensemble, and a Christmas Oratorio – Before all worlds – for performance by the BBC Singers in 2019.

In addition to his work as a composer, Grier has established himself as a leading chamber music pianist, and has collaborated with soprano Dorothee Jansen, cellist Steven Isserlis and violinist Joshua Bell. With his talented daughters Savitri (violin) and Indira (cello) he formed The Grier Trio, and performs regularly at music festivals.

As an organist of the highest calibre (in 1985 he gave the BBC Proms premiere of Messiaen's La Nativité du Seigneur – the first Proms concert to be devoted to a single performer), it was natural that Grier should be drawn to compose for the instrument. Whilst many of his organ works draw on liturgical texts, central to all his organ writing is the inspiration of the experience of playing and hearing an instrument in a large ecclesiastical space.

Grier's first organ work, *Vigilia Noctis*, (Track 12) was composed in 1989 during an intensely productive period which included commissioned choral works for his almae matres Eton College and King's College, Cambridge. The title is drawn from Psalm 63 verse 6: 'In the watches of the night, my heart yearns for you, O God'. An evocative and atmospheric work, its spacious and improvisatory qualities reflect the contemplative nature of the text. Delicate fantasia-like manual figurations waft above faint trills or gentle, sustained chords, yet crucially – always underpinning the rhythmic fluidity – is an implied pulse. The central *Andantino* section sets a gentle manual arabesque figure against a supple pedal melody – freed (as often in 20th century French organ music) from its traditional role as a low bass line, and heard at 4' pitch in the pedals. The resulting cross-rhythms may appear challenging for the performer: rather they are incidental, the result of two super-imposed musical lines, and are more easily approached from this point of view.

Concurrent rhythmically-independent lines are a common feature of Grier's writing, and draw on his study of Indian classical music. He cites the experience of the rhythmic interaction of the sitar and tabla as important: the occasional coinciding of these instruments' independent rhythms generates a momentary release within a complex musical dialogue. In a similar way – but harking back many centuries in Western music – the intricate isorhythmic devices generated by the independent interweaving of polyphonic lines in the music of pre-Tudor composers such as John Dunstable have influenced Grier's interest in the layering of seemingly unrelated

contrapuntal lines.

Composed in the same year as Vigilia Noctis was the **Sonata** (**Tracks 18-21**). In 1991 Grier recorded both works at Gloucester Cathedral for broadcast on BBC Radio 3, coupling them with Couperin's Messe pour les paroisses and music by J.S. Bach and Mendelssohn. Cast in four movements, the *Sonata* is an appealing work: its striking outer movements – both technically highly demanding – are balanced by the economical writing of the effective inner movements. The fiery opening movement – marked 'With passion, anger and arrogance' – is written unashamedly in a stormy D minor, but is peppered with highly chromatic chords. Two balancing manual choruses, set in opposition, provide contrast. There are no sustained harmonies – each biting chord attacks like a jabbing finger – and jagged dotted rhythms, trills and accents add to the potent energy of this duel-like movement.

The second movement, **(Track 19)** marked 'mournfully', is written for manuals only, and is an excellent foil to the tempestuous first movement. A gentle, slowly pulsing accompaniment is adorned by a lyrical melody prominently featuring a 'sighing' motif. An embellished and extended restatement of the opening statement concludes this short and beautifully-crafted movement.

The beguiling third movement (**Track 20**) is a fleeting scherzo – marked 'nervously' – with a trio. Again written for manuals only, the scherzo is formed of a single musical line, traversing (with varied articulation) two contrasting manuals. The trio employs a confident solo melodic line supported by an ostinato accompaniment. It is followed by a reprise of the scherzo, which floats away into the ether.

Written in variation rondo form, the final movement – 'Allegro – with joy' (Track 21) – is a tour-de-force which creates considerable demands for the performer's hands and feet. The movement gains in complexity as it progresses, the harmony becoming increasingly chromatic and the rhythms more intricate. Having begun in G major, the tightly-knit structure allows the movement to retain its tonal centre, and Grier's careful use of parallel chromatic sequences preserves the movement's logic. A tremendous coda combines B major scales against G major broken chords (with the added spice of an F natural) alternately in manuals and pedals, bringing the work to a blazing conclusion on G major.

Composed for Thomas Trotter, and first performed by him at Birmingham Town Hall

in May 1992, **Deo Gratias (Tracks 9–11)** expresses the composer's admiration for the music of J.S. Bach. The title ('Thanks be to God') was a phrase with which Bach sometimes signed off his compositions. The work was inspired by Bach's famous Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C (BWV 564), its three movements corresponding roughly to the plan of Bach's masterpiece, and making use of many of its gestures, textures, rhythmic motifs and contrapuntal techniques. Like Bach's work, Grier's piece is written in C major 'the fundamental tonality of our musical language', as Grier describes it. He goes on to write that the work is '...Bachian in its harmonic design, in that it starts out in a virtually undiluted C major, gradually gaining in chromatic richness, until with the arrival of the final movement it becomes positively jagged, and then is finally resolved back into the warmth and glory of C major.'

A solemn C major fanfare (marked 'organo pleno') opens the first movement: it recedes, relaxing to a tender cantabile passage which precedes an assertive Allegro assai which borrows the opening rhythm from Bach's Magnificat. The second movement, a delicate Andante trio, corresponds closely to the largest part of Bach's Adagio, but with glimpses of Grier's individual harmonic style. The opening fanfare material, interspersed with a delicate Cornet solo, heralds the final movement, of which a deft chromatic fugue is the principal feature. At the fugue's climax, the fanfare motif returns before the work subsides – with 'no sense of hurry whatsoever' – towards a peaceful conclusion.

Domine, probasti (Track 8) was first performed by the composer as part of a recital at Westminster Cathedral in August 1992. The title is taken from the first verse of Psalm 139: 'O Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me'. The composer has described the work as a 'Psalm-Prelude', and it reflects his absorption at a young age in the music of the then senior figure in British church music, Herbert Howells. Whilst Grier's musical style is in many ways far removed from Howells' writing, the searching, anxious atmosphere conjured in many of Howells' *Psalm-Preludes* is evident in this work. Following the elder composer's example, Grier only conveys the general moods of the psalm texts and has attempted neither to pictorialise nor to write in a programmatic manner.

An opening left-hand cluster chord is joined by repeated low pedal Cs, not always regularly restated, generating a feeling of unease. (These repeated pedal notes call to mind Howells' op. 32 no. 3 Psalm Prelude – Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death). An expressive right hand melody, making prominent use of

the augmented fourth interval, gradually works its way to the top of the keyboard, before descending to the depths, obscured by more cluster chords.

The gloom is dispelled – in part – by a reflective passage for 8' and 2' flutes, accompanied by a sinuous melody heard high in the pedals on a 4' reed. Then the music alternates between the style of the opposing initial sections and a devastating climax is reached when fortissimo contrary motion chromatic scales reach a violent tremolando. After the volatile, menacing outbursts have subsided, the work concludes with the reflective music for flutes, later introducing a solo oboe stop. The flute figures ascend higher and higher, eventually drifting into the distance.

Te Deum (Tracks 1–7) was composed in 1996 for performance by Patrick Russill in a concert at the Brompton Oratory based around the theme of the Last Judgment. The concert also featured a solo trumpet work by Grier – *The Last Trump* – based on the plainsong *Dies irae* and performed by John Wallace. The *Te Deum* is written in the French classical alternatim form: the plainchant canticle is intended to be sung, with the organ providing seven versets in the manner of liturgical performances, for example, of François Couperin's organ masses.

The first and sixth versets (Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra venerator (Track 1) and Per singulos dies, benedicimus te) (Track 6) share the same musical material, and both display the influence of the French classical tradition. The stirring rhetoric generated by sweeping ascending scales, combined with the tonic D pedal point throughout much of the opening movement denotes the sense of solemn grandeur depicted at the outset of this hymn of praise. Meanwhile, the graceful ornamentation of the melodic lines adds stylish elegance.

The harmonic nature of the second and seventh versets is in a twentieth century French idiom, and both employ Grier's fondness for intricate superimposed rhythmic lines. The second verset (*Pleni sunt cæli et terra majestatis gloriæ tuae*) (Track 2) utilises a string registration, and a very steady tempo, although the note values of the right hand chords become progressively faster than those in the left. In the final verse (*Fiat misericordia tua Domine super nos*), (Track 7) the right hand is given over to a solo 4' stop to ravishing effect: it encompasses the stop's whole register through long-breathed scales frequently unrelated to the supporting harmonies.

The dramatic third verset (Patrem immensae majestatis) (Track 3) is a remarkable

study in parallel chords. Built around whole tone scales, the number of notes in each chord increases as the movement progresses, until twelve-voice chords burst into a blazing toccata. The following verset (Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem) (Track 4) – a tender Sarabande – is another hommage to French baroque repertoire. Ornamentation becomes integral to the musical line, which is again built around Indian-influenced modes. In this fusion of styles it is perhaps possible to appreciate the intrinsic importance of ornamentation both in the elegance of music of the French grand siècle and of the rasa – or emotional meaning – of Indian classical music which Grier has imbibed.

The fifth verset (Te ergo quæsumus) (Track 5) is an elusive moto perputuo trio of considerable difficulty. The manual lines chase each other around the keyboards using only the white notes, whilst the pedal line (sounding at 2' pitch) quotes the plainchant melody in successively higher statements. Te Deum is a remarkable work which draws on the organ's distinguished heritage in imaginative ways.

Grier's two *In nomine* (Tracks 13–16) settings were commissioned by the BBC for performance by David Goode at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford as part of Radio 3's 'Organ Night' in May 2000. Each of Grier's *In nomine* settings is intended to be preceded by a Tudor *In nomine* setting. The *Benedictus* in Tudor composer John Taverner's six-voice mass on the plainchant *Gloria tibi Trinitas* contains a four-voice setting of the words '*In nomine Domini*' ('in the name of the Lord'). This eloquent section had become popular as an instrumental work, and was the basis of consort and keyboard works over the following 150 years. In 1526 Taverner himself was appointed the first Organist and Master of the Choristers at Christ Church – then known as Cardinal College, having been founded by Cardinal Wolsey the previous year.

Taverner's original work (**Track 13**) precedes Grier's *In nomine I* and a setting by another 16th century Master of the Choristers of Christ Church – William Blytheman (**Track 15**) (now more usually referred to as John Blitheman) – is heard before *In nomine II* (**Track 16**). Grier's settings ingeniously elaborate on each composer's original, preserving the *Gloria tibi Trinitas* plainchant as a distinct contrapuntal voice, heard at 8' or 4' pitch in the pedal.

Grier's first setting (Track 14) reflects Taverner's reserved style of the 'original' In nomine: the lowest three voices of the Tudor work are preserved, heard on gentle

8' stops whilst the elaborate a newly-composed improvisatory top voice alternates between a lyrical 4' flute and a keen 8' Cromorne.

Blytheman's more elaborate three-voice setting (Track 15), the inspiration for Grier's second *In nomine*, (Track 16) contains constant triplet motion. For this second transformation, the natural energy of Blytheman's music suggested a *Plein jeu* registration, with the plainchant melody declaimed in by pedal 8' and 4' reeds. Whilst the lower voices preserve the lower voices of Taverner's (rather than Blytheman's) work, Grier's chromatic virtuosic adornment, played in the right hand, takes its lead from the momentum of Blytheman's animated keyboard writing. These fascinating works again demonstrate Grier's innate ability successfully to re-imagine a seemingly opposing musical style within his distinctive personal idiom.

Meditation (download available from willowhaynerecords.com) is another work dedicated to Thomas Trotter (who was Grier's immediate successor as Organ Scholar at King's) and first performed by him in Canterbury Cathedral in 2012. This slow, expansive work alternates solemn chorale-like phrases with long-breathed solo melodies and modal harmonies sometimes redolent of Messiaen's exquisite slow movements.

For the Orgelbüchlein Project – which seeks to provide chorale settings of the 118 melodies which Bach intended to set – Grier contributed the penitential **Wir haben schwerlich (Track 17).** Commissioned for the 2015 Oundle Festival and first performed by Ann Elise Smoot, this intensely expressive work is written in the style of Bach's most profound and highly-ornamented preludes such as O Mensch, bewein and Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein. Grier's instinctive assimilation of Bach's ornate embellishments once again demonstrates his ability sympathetically to pay homage to music of previous centuries, whilst employing a distinctly-contemporary musical vocabulary.

As a gifted pianist and organist, Grier often makes no concessions for the technical demands of his keyboard writing. Yet his idiomatic keyboard writing demonstrates his skill and intuitive understanding as a performer. This important oeuvre is music of great integrity which can be immensely rewarding for performers and listeners alike.

Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral where his duties include accompanying the daily choral services and directing the acclaimed Abbey Girls Choir. Previously, he was Sub-Organist at St Paul's Cathedral, and during this time he performed with the Cathedral Choir at the American Guild of Organists National Convention, performed in Mahler's Symphony no. 8 with Valery Gergiev and the London Symphony Orchestra, and played for many great state occasions. He has also broadcast regularly on BBC Radio and been featured on American Public Media's Pipedreams. He is also Musical Director of the London Pro Arte Choir.



He began organ lessons under John Scott Whiteley while a chorister at York Minster, and continued as a Music Scholar at Eton College under Alastair Sampson. After holding the post of Organ Scholar at Worcester Cathedral and then St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, he was for three years Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with a degree in music. With the Choir of King's College, he gave concerts in the USA, Hong Kong and throughout Europe, in addition to appearing as their accompanist on CD releases on EMI Classics.

He has taken part in the first performance of works by Judith Weir, Cecilia McDowall, Judith Bingham, Jonathan Dove, Paul Mealor, Francis Grier, Alec Roth and Francis Pott. He has studied with Thomas Trotter and Johannes Geffert, and won First Prize and the Audience Prize at the 2008 Miami International Organ Competition. He has worked regularly for the Eton Choral Courses and he serves as a trustee of the Royal College of Organists.

As a recitalist, he has performed throughout the UK, the USA and in Europe. His solo organ recordings include a recital on the organ of \$t Albans Cathedral (JAV Recordings), discs of organ works by Judith Bingham (Naxos), John Joubert and Malcolm Williamson (Toccata Classics), and works by Charles Villiers Stanford, John McCabe and Lennox & Michael Berkeley (Resonus Classic). For Naxos he has made several recordings of the organ works of Olivier Messiaen, including L'Ascension, La Nativité du Seigneur, and Les Corps Glorieux. He also directs \$t Albans Abbey Girls Choir in recordings of choral works by Felix Mendelssohn and William Mathias (both on Naxos).

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral			Harrison & Harrison		1962 & 2009		
Pedal Organ 28.			Cromorne	8	51. Nazard 22	2/3	
1.	Sub Bass	32	٧.	Tremulant	U	52. * Octave	Ž
2.	‡ Principal	16	vi.	Octave		53. Gemshorn	2
3.	Major Bass	16	vii.	Unison off		54 Tierce 13	3/5
4.	Bourdon	16	viii.	Swell to Choir			III
5.	Quint	$10^{2}/_{3}$	ix.	Solo to Choir		56. * Cimbel 29.33.36	Ш
6.	‡ Octave	8	Gre	at Organ			16
7.	Gedeckt	8	29.	‡ Principal	16	58. Hautboy	8
8.	Nazard	$5^{1}/_{3}$	30.	Bourdon	16	59. Vox Humana	8
9.	Choral Bass	4	31.	‡ Principal	8	60. Trumpet	8
10.	Open Flute	2	32.	‡ Diapason	8	61. Clarion	4
11.	Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV	33.	Spitzflute	8	xiii. Tremulant	
12.	* Fagotto	32	34.	Stopped Diapason	8	xiv. Octave	
13.	Bombardon	16	35.	Octave	4	xv. Sub Octave	
14.	Bass Trumpet (from	41) 16	36.	Stopped Flute	4	xvi. Unison Off	
15.	* Fagotto (from 12)	16	37.	Quint	$2^{2/3}$	Solo Organ	
16.	Tromba	8	38.	Super Octave	- 2	62. Fanfare Trumpet	8
17.	Shawm	4	39.	Blockflute	2	00.	٧
i.	Choir to Pedal		40.	† Mixture 19.22.26.29		64. Corno di Bassetto (from Swell) 1	16
ii.	Great to Pedal		41.	Bass Trumpet	16	xvii. Octave	
iii.	Swell to Pedal		42.	* Trumpet	8	xviii.Unison off	
iv.	Solo to Pedal		43.	* Clarion	4	xix. Great Reeds on Solo	
Choir Organ 44.			Grand Cornet 1.8.12.15.17 (te	enor g) V	Nave Organ (prepared)		
18.	Quintaton	16	х.	Choir to Great		65. * Bourdon (bass from 72) 1	
19.	Open Diapason	8	xi.	Swell to Great		66. * Principal	8
20.	Gedacktpommer	8	xii.	Solo to Great		67. * Rohr Flute	8
21.	Flauto Traverso	8		II Organ		68. * Octave	4
22.	Octave	4	45.	Open Diapason	8	69. * Spitzflute	4
23.	Rohr Flute	4	46.	Rohr Flute	8	70. * Super Octave	2
24.	Wald Flute	, 2	47.	Viola	8		IV
25.	Larigot	171/3	48.	Celeste (tenor c)	8		16
26.	Sesquialtera 19.24/12	, II	49.	Principal	4	xx. Nave on Great	
27.	† Mixture 22.26.29.3	i3 IV	50.	Open Flute	4	xxi. Nave on Solo	
Accessories							

Accessories

Full complement of memory levels and manual & toe pistons.

Cimbelstern (drawstop and foot pedal); Balanced expression pedal to the Swell Organ; Rotary switch for Choir Organ west shutters; The actions are electro-pneumatic.

* new additions, 2009 † restored or revised ranks, 2009 ‡ new façade pipes, 2009 Manual compass 58 notes; pedal compass 32 notes