

SYMPHONIES AND SUNDRIES
THE ORGAN MUSIC OF GEOFFREY ÁLVAREZ



TOM WINPENNY
ORGAN OF ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

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CD1 [45:05]

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| 1. St Paul's Shipwreck: Organ Symphony | 34:47 |
| 2. Ave Maria | 10:16 |

CD2 [52:09]

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Citrinitas: Organ Symphony | 43:43 |
| 2. Transfiguration | 8:24 |

TOTAL TIME: 97:14

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Geoffrey Álvarez (b. 1961) is a British/Nicaraguan composer, conductor and writer.

Currently based in Sunderland, Álvarez has recently had three chamber music commissions from FILUM Musikschule, Filderstadt, Germany; the performances of two of these were awarded second prize in the finals of the Bundeswettbewerb Jugend musiziert 2023.

His *Rhapsody in Blue and Yellow* for cello and bayan (Russian button accordion) virtuoso Ukrainian Tatyana Balyana was premiered by this artist in a Ukrainian benefit concert in Hanover's Marktkirche in 2025.

Álvarez's other projects include a radio opera in collaboration with Maltese playwright Joseph Vella Bondin, *Dawk li fuq l-iġfna jbaħħru* (They that go down to the sea), and a UNESCO-supported CD recording of his work *Draco* for wind ensemble and Hammond organ by Bóreas Ventus in Granada, Spain. Encouraged by an invitation by Luciano Berio to Florence, he dedicated a piano concerto to the Italian master. Later, in November 2006, Álvarez was a prize-winning finalist and soloist with the Arthur Rubinstein Łódź Philharmonic Orchestra in the Tansman Composers' Competition, Łódź, 2006 (adjudicated by Krauze, Holliger, Penderecki and Nyman) performing a chamber version of this concerto. He has recently finished a nine-hour dream in five operas based on the beliefs of the Kogi of Colombia: *La profecía última del rey*, a work described by opera director Keith Warner as 'fresh, original and exciting – a piece that MUST be done'.

His organ music is published by Willowhayne Publishing (willowhaynerecords.com/publishing), with other works published by Cayambis Music, Virginia, USA (the Cayambis Institute for Latin American Studies in Music).

ST PAUL'S SHIPWRECK: ORGAN SYMPHONY (2012)

In 2011, Geoffrey Álvarez was invited to adjudicate a composers' competition on Malta. The dramatic nature of the vivid ochre landscape and the human monuments, from the megalithic temple to the Great Mother, Hagar Qim, to the huge Caravaggio canvass – *The Beheading of John the Baptist* – inspired local composers to write works of burning intensity of cyclopean scale, many refusing to blindly adopt the current contemporary trends. The godfather of this current Maltese school was Charles Camilleri. Álvarez was aware that organist Kevin Bowyer had made distinguished pioneering recordings of the works of this composer, so it seemed natural to dedicate a new work to Kevin inspired by the individuality of the Maltese muse. Malta is home to the Grand Masters of the Knights Hospitaller, so it is not surprising that many islanders continue to profess a strong Catholic faith. A work drawing on St Paul's shipwreck on Malta seemed inevitable.

The saint is represented by a quote from the plainsong versicle of the Alleluia from the Mass for Commemoration of St Paul Apostle beginning *Sancte Paule Apostole...* D G G A G F etc. As the storm rages, his diatonic 'innocence' is destroyed chromatically, by thickening with parallel harmonies, thematic development and canonic presentation.

The point of departure for the work was the opening pedal solo suggesting the brooding anger of the sea which boils over into leaping figures accompanied in the upper voices with dissonant harmonies – redolent of storm clouds: it is heard ten times in total throughout the work, each time with harmonisations representing different atmospheric states. It is only at the end of the piece, after stylised thunderbolts alluding to figurations in Olivier Messiaen's organ toccata *Dieu parmi nous*, and after further turbulence, that the leaping figure is finally drenched with blazing Mediterranean sun. Meanwhile the spirit of Michael Tippett's music sings as Noah's messenger-bird, hovering over the face of the waters at earlier moments of relative repose.

Kevin Bowyer premiered this work during the University of Glasgow Contemporary Organ Music Platform, 6th March 2015: Bowyer considers the piece 'the first great organ storm of the twenty-first century'. Simon Johnson, formerly Organist of St

Paul's Cathedral, London, similarly hailed this piece as 'an immensely significant work' in his introductory speech at the London premiere of *St Paul's Shipwreck* at St Paul's Cathedral by Tom Bell as part of the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, 18th May 2018.

Ave MARIA (2020)

This piece is a solo organ arrangement by Geoffrey Álvarez of his work *Is-sliem għalek Marija* for baritone, trumpet and organ – a Maltese *Ave Maria* conceived following his visit to Malta to conduct a version of the organ symphony, *St Paul's Shipwreck* for organ and brass with Russian virtuoso Daniel Zaretsky and the brass ensemble of the Maltese Philharmonic Orchestra. Part of the sung text of *Is-sliem għalek Marija* is presented here:

22 $\text{♩} = 66$ ***p***

Is - sliem għa - lek Ma - ri - ja,
Hail Mary,

26 ***mf*** ***mp***

bil gra - zja mim -
full of grace,

f

li - - ja,

41 ***pp***

u m - bie - rek il - frott tal - ġuf tiegħ - ek
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

p

il - frott tal - ġuf tiegħ - ek Ġe - sù. Qad - di - sa Ma
the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary,

51

ri - ja

56 ***f*** ***ff***

Omm Al - - - - - la,
Mother of God,

CITRINITAS: ORGAN SYMPHONY (2015)

Citrinitas is the third, xanthic or yellowing stage in the alchemical *magnum opus* – *opus maior* – represented musically by four symphonies by Geoffrey Álvarez for ensembles of various size, *Citrinitas* being an organ symphony.

The *magnum opus* is interpreted in many ways, from chemical processes to the development of the psyche. Pursuing the latter interpretation, the first stage is the *nigredo*, the *prima materia*, or the blackness of the undifferentiated, undeveloped psyche. The second stage is the *albedo* or the whitening – the individuation of the psyche has begun by the separation of the animus from the anima – the solar male principle from the female lunar principle. *Citrinitas*, the yellowing, is a process associated with ageing – the *animus* (the male solar principle) can no longer fly, but sinks to the cave, aware now of his physical limitations whilst the *anima* (the dreaming goddess), can now ascend to the stars, as dreams become the only possible reality. The work ends in preparation for the final, fourth stage of the *magnum opus*...

The work was inspired by Kevin Bowyer's premiere of *St Paul's Shipwreck*, by the alchemical researches of Adam McLean, and by the University of Glasgow's Ferguson Collection – a repository of significant alchemical incunabula and manuscripts such as those by Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim and others of equivocal authorship such as the fifteenth-century *Aurora consurgens* allegedly by Thomas Aquinas, the *Tabula Smaragdina* translated by Isaac Newton, and *The Rosary of the Philosophers*, an eighteenth-century English translation of the sixteenth-century German work.

TRANSFIGURATION (1977, 2015)

The premiere of *Transfiguration* took place as part of an organ recital by David Briggs in the Chapel of St Mary & St Katherine, Solihull School, Easter Term 1980. In part of the programme note for the first performance, David Briggs writes:

“Transfiguration was commissioned by David Briggs in 1977. The work is based upon a complex tone-row and shows the influence of Messiaen and Boulez”.

The revised version was prepared by Geoffrey Álvarez in April 2015 in response to a request by Kevin Bowyer for a copy of the work following his premiere of *St Paul's Shipwreck* in the presence of the composer in Glasgow University Memorial Chapel in March 2015. The revision contains a freer approach to the tone-row and the process of transfiguration itself is no longer a tonal presentation of the original chromatic series, but a textual and rhythmic transfiguration, a transformation of the hieratic counterpoint of the opening to the ecstatic dancing of the concluding passages.



“Álvarez’ Transfiguration deserves the attention of all organists who pride themselves on seeking to further the range and repertoire of the instrument. A powerful work of no little imaginative conceptual quality”.

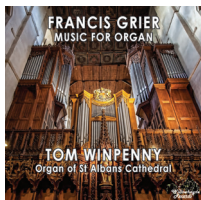
Robert Matthew-Walker: 'The Organ', No. 376 Spring 2016

The late Simon Campion bought Tom Winpenny’s work as a virtuoso organist to the attention of Geoffrey Álvarez – in particular, Tom’s vivid interpretations (on recordings on the Toccata Classics and Naxos labels) of Malcolm Williamson’s formidable oeuvre which he executed with great facility and artistry. This led Geoffrey to consider Tom as an ideal interpreter of his own organ pieces: the vivid colours Tom coaxes from St Albans Cathedral’s immensely versatile Harrison & Harrison instrument strengthens the emotional force of transitions from intimacy and tranquillity to majestic grandeur and paralyzing abject terror, investing the music with a Chagall-esque intensity and spirituality. The spirit of Peter Hurford, renowned organist, Master of the Music of St Albans Cathedral (1958-1978), founder of the St Albans International Organ Festival, and designer along with Ralph Downes, of the famous organ, may be discerned in some of the figuration – hovering above the turbulent sea – of *St Paul's Shipwreck*.

Tom Winpenny is a freelance organist and choral director based near London. He plays regularly for many of the country's leading choral groups, including the BBC Singers. He studied as Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, where he played twice for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, broadcast internationally. He was subsequently Sub-Organist at St Paul's Cathedral, London, where he played for many great state occasions. For sixteen years he was Assistant Master of the Music and Director of the Cathedral Girls Choir at St Albans Cathedral. He has broadcast regularly on BBC Radio and has been profiled on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*. As a soloist he has performed throughout Europe, the United States and the UK at venues including St Stephen's Cathedral (Vienna), Hallgrímskirkja (Reykjavík), Cathedral of the Madeleine (Salt Lake City), Hamburg Mariendom, and Kalmar Cathedral (Sweden).

His many solo organ recordings include surveys of composers including Judith Bingham, Gerald Hendrie, Malcolm Williamson, John Joubert, Elisabeth Lutyens, and Francis Pott's monumental organ symphony *Christus*. For Naxos he has recorded five critically-acclaimed volumes of music by Olivier Messiaen, including *Les Corps glorieux*, recorded at Hildesheim Cathedral. His other recordings for Naxos include music by Florence Price, and the complete organ works of Robert Schumann and Edward Elgar, the latter being selected as a Critics' Choice in Gramophone magazine. His recordings as choral director include discs for Naxos of sacred music by Elizabeth Poston, Felix Mendelssohn, Michael Haydn and William Mathias. He has served as a trustee of the Royal College of Organists and is Musical Director of the London Pro Arte Choir.
www.tomwinpenny.org

ALSO AVAILABLE





THE ORGAN OF ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

Built on the site of the execution of Alban, Britain's first martyr (died c.250 AD), the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban is situated in St Albans, around 20 miles north of London. The Benedictine monastery and abbey is said to have been founded by King Offa in 739, although churches and a shrine to St Alban had existed on the site for centuries before. Architecturally, the Cathedral is unusual: the tower, transepts and quire are predominantly Norman, but built of bricks reclaimed from the neighbouring Roman city of Verulamium. Parts of the nave and presbytery are in the Early English style, and elsewhere there are elements of the Decorated and Perpendicular styles. After the dissolution of the monastery by Henry VIII, the Abbey Church fell into a state of disrepair. Its restoration in the late nineteenth century was initially overseen by Sir George Gilbert Scott. On his death in 1878, one year after the Abbey was raised to Cathedral status, the financial and architectural responsibility for its repair was taken on by a wealthy local aristocrat, Lord Grimthorpe, who, whilst repairing the fabric of the building, removed many of the building's medieval features – such as the west front – in order to replace them with his own inharmonious and untrained designs.

Although various small organs are recorded as having existed in the building prior to the dissolution of the monastery in 1539, there is then no record of an organ until 1820. In 1553 the townspeople of St Albans had bought the Abbey and adapted part of it for use as a parish church. Over the next three centuries, it seems that accompaniment to the limited sung services was provided by instruments other than an organ.

In 1820 the St Albans Corporation bought a second hand organ of three manuals from St Dunstan-in-the-East, London, for the Abbey's use. Built as a one manual organ by 'Father' Bernard Smith in 1670, the two additional manuals had subsequently been added by John Byfield. This instrument was sold in 1861 and replaced by a new three manual organ built by William Hill to a specification devised by the Abbey's organist, John Booth, and approved by E.J. Hopkins of the Temple Church, London.

This instrument used the modern (German) compass for manuals and pedals (of 56 and 30 notes respectively, starting with a bottom C); it had no real case structure, being a façade of unsupported bass pipes that looked visually at odds with the Abbey's architecture.

With the restoration of the Abbey in the 1870s and 1880s, and its promotion in 1877 to Cathedral status, the Hill organ had been moved from its original site in the north transept to the floor of the nave, and finally (after repair) on the nave screen in 1881. Its remodelling and enlargement by Abbott & Smith of Leeds in 1885 improved slightly the acoustical impact of the instrument, but by the early twentieth century, with the beautifully carved Wallingford presbytery screen installed, a desire emerged for a clearer vista down the nave to the quire.

A major rebuild of the instrument was undertaken in 1907 by Abbott & Smith, with twin cases on opposite nave walls designed by John Oldrid Scott, son of George Gilbert, who had recently installed the bishop's throne and choir stalls in the quire. He also designed organ cases for Lichfield Cathedral and St John's College, Cambridge, and his beautifully decorated cases for St Albans remain to this day. The Abbott & Smith organ was a large romantic instrument of four manuals with tubular-pneumatic action. Because of space restraints, the large 32' and 16' flues and the wooden Trombone pipes of the pedal were laid horizontally across the floor of the organ loft on the nave screen. This instrument appears to have been mechanically unreliable from early on: in 1921 alterations were made by Messrs Tunks & Son, and it was again extensively rebuilt and re-voiced much louder in 1929 by Henry Willis.

In the late 1950s, a combination of factors coincided that resulted in today's Harrison & Harrison instrument and subsequently the famous St Albans International Festival and Competition. The frequently-rebuilt organ was again proving mechanically unreliable, and tonally was inadequate in a church which held regular services both in the nave and in the quire. Peter Hurford's appointment in 1958 as the Cathedral's organist provided a great boost for the cause of building a new organ: Hurford was young and rapidly gaining attention internationally for his flair and stylish playing,

particularly of Baroque organ music. His familiarity with the latest trends in organ building from Europe lent a fresh way of thinking to a traditional cathedral organ project. Additionally, work needed to be carried out on the plaster in the nave, quire and transepts, as well as restoration work on the Cathedral's historic wall paintings. This necessitated the dismantling in 1959 of the organ and proved the ideal opportunity for the commissioning of a new instrument.

The contract was placed with Harrison & Harrison of Durham: no other firm was invited to tender, and it was thought at the time that only an English organ builder would be able to achieve the 'English Cathedral' organ tone. Ralph Downes, who had worked with Harrisons in the 1950s on the building of the important organ in the Royal Festival Hall, London, was appointed as an independent consultant. Together, Downes and Hurford drew up a specification for a large three-manual instrument of 73 ranks (it was decided at a late stage to dispense with an expensive fourth manual): Hurford desired an organ that would not only accompany services in the nave and quire, and in particular the core English cathedral repertoire, but also an instrument that would serve most of the solo repertoire well. Downes would be closely involved in the scaling and voicing of the pipes, and the organ would be based on the principles of open-foot voicing and relatively low wind-pressures.

Assembly of the organ in the Cathedral began after Easter 1962 and the organ was dedicated by the Bishop of St Albans on 18th November the same year. Around a third of the instrument's ranks re-use pipework wholly or partially from the organ's previous Hill, Abbott & Smith and Tunks incarnations. The pipework of the Great, Swell and Pedal is housed in Scott's 1908 cases: the Great in the south case, the Swell in the north case and ranks of pedal pipes in both, at the level of the organ loft floor. The Fanfare Trumpet, hooded to face west, is situated at above the Great, and the Grand Cornet is positioned at the top of the central pipe-tower on the south case. The Choir division is housed in a separate Rückpositiv-style case specially designed by Cecil Brown to complement the existing cases.

The voicing and relatively low wind-pressures chosen for the instrument were

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justified in the clarity of sound that was apparent even at the west end of the nave. Downes considered the spatial separation of all divisions, with sufficiently wide scaling of the wide-open flutes important for the projection of sound. The coherent classical sound achieved – clear and focused to the listener and present to the performer – is highly effective and supportive for choral accompaniment. A fully-stocked Swell division and a wealth of 16' and 8' stops on the other divisions serve the traditional cathedral choral repertoire extremely well.

In 1963, Hurford founded the St Albans International Organ Festival and Competition, which secured the instrument's place in English organ-building history and connected the Harrison organ with a multitude of world-renowned organists, whether as jury members (such as Marie-Claire Alain and Anton Heiller) or as competitors (such as Guy Bovet, Gillian Weir and Thomas Trotter). At the time of the organ's first cleaning in 1973 the manual chorus mixture stops were all raised in pitch to provide even greater brilliance considered fashionable at that time and to assist the tonal projection when the building was full.

After more than forty years of trouble-free service, the organ was beginning to show signs of wear and tear: key actions were becoming less responsive, occasional notes would cease to work, and wind leaks became increasingly noisy. Most seriously, parts of the mechanism were badly affected from an over-dry heating system which had been in use in the Cathedral. The decision was taken to restore the instrument under the guidance of Andrew Lucas, the Cathedral's Master of the Music, and independent organ consultant Ian Bell. The work was again undertaken by Harrison & Harrison: dismantling of the instrument began after the 2007 Organ Festival, and the restored organ was heard for the first time on Easter Eve, 2009. It was dedicated on Trinity Sunday that year, in time for the 2009 Festival.

In the refurbishment, the soundboards were renewed and the wind reservoirs were fully restored and re-leathered. Any parts of the action that could not be expected to last for a significant period were renewed, whilst all other parts of the mechanism were returned to 'as new' condition. The opportunity was taken to address the

compromises reached in the earlier rebuild because of financial and other restraints. Downes's scheme had curiously avoided use of Principal stops at 2' pitch: the addition of a Swell 2' Principal now aids the build-up of the Swell chorus; the 1962 Great Quartane was split into a Quint and Principal, giving greater versatility. Elsewhere, the manual mixture stops were returned to their original form at a slightly lower pitch.

In 1962, the Fanfare Trumpet, designated on the Great division, was intended to fulfil a dual role as both chorus and solo reed. This had never been entirely successful: in the restoration, new Great reeds at 8' and 4' pitch were provided to join the existing 16' reed. The Fanfare Trumpet, along with the Grand Cornet and Corno di Bassetto (duplicated from the Great and Swell respectively), now form the Solo division, occupying the fourth manual of the new organ console. A Nave division has also been prepared for on this manual: whilst the organ speaks with clarity to the western end of the very long nave, the great length of the nave means that greater support for congregational singing at full Cathedral services would be beneficial.

Other notable changes at the last rebuild include the addition of a 32' reed (which, extended to 16' pitch is designed to balance with the Great flue chorus): in 1962 space was thought to be insufficient for such a stop, but with modern computer-aided design, this was achieved easily. Adjustable shutters (operated by a dial on the console) have been fitted to the Choir case, enabling the organist to direct the sound more towards the nave or quire, and a Cimbelsarn (a rotating star with six bells) adorns the upper flat of this case. The previously tarnished display pipes of the north and south cases have been replaced, and the majority are now speaking pipes.

It was felt strongly that no change in the style voicing should be made in the refurbishment: the flue stops are still regulated at the mouth and there is no nicking to the pipes. The enlarged organ console faces east, this allows the player to hear more of the Cathedral's acoustic whilst playing, and achieving an improved sense of balance between divisions. The console was updated to include a plethora of pistons, including stepper pistons that operate sequentially through the general pistons.

The instrument has given excellent service for over sixty years since its installation in 1962, proving remarkably versatile for its liturgical and concert demands.

Tom Winpenny

A more detailed history, *The Organs and Musicians of St Albans Cathedral* by Andrew Lucas is available from St Albans Cathedral: www.stalbanscathedral.org.



Mark Hartt-Palmer, Geoffrey Álvarez and Tom Winpenny

The Organ of St Albans Cathedral**Pedal Organ**

1. Sub Bass	32
2. ‡ Principal	16
3. Major Bass	16
4. Bourdon	16
5. Quint	10 ² / ₃
6. ‡ Octave	8
7. Gedackt	8
8. Nazard	5 ¹ / ₃
9. Choral Bass	4
10. Open Flute	2
11. Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
12. * Fagotto	32
13. Bombardon	16
14. Bass Trumpet (from 41)	16
15. * Fagotto (from 12)	16
16. Tromba	8
17. Shawm	4
i. Choir to Pedal	
ii. Great to Pedal	
iii. Swell to Pedal	
iv. Solo to Pedal	

Choir Organ

18. Quintaton	16
19. Open Diapason	8
20. Gedacktpommer	8
21. Flauto Traverso	8
22. Octave	4
23. Rohr Flute	4
24. Wald Flute	2
25. Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃
26. Sesquialtera 19.24/12.17	II
27. † Mixture 22.26.29.33	IV
28. Cromorne	8

Accessories

Full complement of memory levels and manual & toe pistons. Cimbels (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

Harrison & Harrison

v. Tremulant	
vi. Octave	
vii. Unison off	
viii. Swell to Choir	
ix. Solo to Choir	
Great Organ	
29. ‡ Principal	16
30. Bourdon	16
31. ‡ Principal	8
32. ‡ Diapason	8
33. Spitzflute	8
34. Stopped Diapason	8
35. Octave	4
36. Stopped Flute	4
37. Quint	2 ² / ₃
38. Super Octave	2
39. Blockflute	2
40. † Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV-VI
41. Bass Trumpet	16
42. * Trumpet	8
43. * Clarion	4
44. Grand Cornet 1.8.12.15.17	V
(tenor g)	
x. Choir to Great	
xi. Swell to Great	
xii. Solo to Great	
Swell Organ	
45. Open Diapason	8
46. Rohr Flute	8
47. Viola	8
48. Celeste (tenor c)	8
49. Principal	4
50. Open Flute	4
51. Nazard	2 ² / ₃

1962 & 2009

52. * Octave	2
53. Gemshorn	2
54. Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
55. † Mixture 22.26.29	III
56. Cimbels 29.33.36	III
57. Corno di Bassetto	16
58. Hautboy	8
59. Vox Humana	8
60. Trumpet	8
61. Clarion	4
xiii. Tremulant	
xiv. Octave	
xv. Sub Octave	
xvi. Unison Off	
Solo Organ	
62. Fanfare Trumpet	8
63. Grand Cornet (from Great)	V
64. Corno di Bassetto (from Swell)	16
xvii. Octave	
xviii. Unison Off	
xix. Great Reeds on Solo	
Nave Organ (prepared)	
65. * Bourdon (bass from 72)	16
66. * Principal	8
67. * Rohr Flute	8
68. * Octave	4
69. * Spitzflute	4
70. * Super Octave	2
71. * Mixture	IV
72. * Pedal Sub Bass	16
xx. Nave on Great	
xxi. Nave on Solo	