



Exeter
Cathedral

Candlelight *concert*

WITH EXETER CATHEDRAL CHOIR

SATURDAY 7 MARCH 2026

Timeless Light

Light has always shaped sacred music — not only the light of candles and stained glass, but the inward light of faith, penitence, and praise. Tonight's programme traces that radiance across five centuries, as ancient words are refracted through ever-changing musical voices.

From the luminous polyphony of **Thomas Tallis** and **William Byrd**, whose motets glow with restrained intensity, we move to the rich harmonic colours of twentieth-century France in music by **Jean Langlais**, **Francis Poulenc**, and **Pierre Villette** — music of mystery, incense, and shadowed brilliance. Alongside them stand contemporary composers including **Gabriel Jackson**, **Alec Roth**, and **Nico Muhly**, who continue to find fresh colours in texts that have resonated for centuries.

This evening's performance invites you to encounter that light in an unconventional way. Sung entirely by candlelight and unfolding in different spaces of the Cathedral, the music is not fixed to a single vantage point. As you move — or settle — within these ancient stones, sound will gather and recede, harmonies will bloom and dissolve, and familiar architecture may feel newly alive. You are warmly encouraged to experience the space freely: sit, stand, wander, listen closely.

In this shared journey through darkness and illumination, lament and glory, ancient prayer becomes present voice. The light is timeless; we step into it together.



And When the Builders *Richard Shephard (1949-2021)*

And when the builders laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord
They set the priests in their apparel with trumpets,
And the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals,
To praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel.
And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east.
And his voice was like the sound of many waters;
And the earth shined with his glory.
And, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.
And I heard him speaking to me out of the house.
Thus saith the Lord of hosts:
Yet once, a little while, and I will shake the heavens,
and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;
And the desire of all nations shall come:
And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.
The silver is mine, and the gold is mine.
And when the builders laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord,
They sang together in praising the Lord
And all the people shouted with a great shout,
Because the foundations of the temple were laid.

Words selected from Ezra, Ezekiel and Haggai by Michael Sadgrove

Civitas sancti tui
William Byrd (1543-1623)

Civitas sancti tui facta est deserta:
Sion deserta facta est:
Jerusalem desolata est.

*Your holy city has become a wilderness. Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem has been made desolate.*

Words: Isaiah 64,

Messe Solennelle
Jean Langlais (1907-91)

AND

Quatre motets pour le temps de penitence
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Kyrie – Langlais

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy

Timor et tremor – Poulenc

Timor et tremor venerunt super me,
et caligo cecidit super me:
miserere mei Domine,
quoniam in te confidit anima mea.

Exaudi Deus deprecationem meam
quia refugium meum es
tu adjutor fortis.
Domine, invocavi te, non confundar.

*Fear and trembling came upon me
And darkness fell upon me.
Have mercy on me, O Lord,
For my soul trusts in you.*

*Hear, O God, my prayer
For you are my refuge,
You are a strong helper.
O Lord, I have called upon you; let me not be put to shame.*

Words: Responsories for Matins on Good Friday

Gloria – Langlais

Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te; benedicimus te;
adoramus te; glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,

Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe;
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris;

Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis;
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram;
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus:
Tu solus Dominus:
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe,
cum Sancto Spiritu,
in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

*Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace to men of good will.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
we worship Thee, we glorify Thee,
We give thanks to Thee
for Thy great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty.*

*Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ; Lord God,
Lamb of God, Son of the Father;*

*Who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Who takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Who sittest at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.*

*For Thou only art holy;
Thou only art the Lord;
Thou only art most high, Jesu Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

Vinea mea electa – Langlais

Vinea mea electa, ego te plantavi:
quomodo conversa es in amaritudinem,
ut me crucifigeres et Barrabam dimitteres.

Sepivi te, et lapides elegi ex te,
et ædificavi turrim.

*My chosen vineyard, I planted you;
how have you turned into bitterness,
that you would crucify me and release Barabbas?
I fenced you in, and removed the stones from you,
and I built a tower.*

Words: Reproaches on Good Friday

Sanctus and Benedictus – Langlais

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosana in excelsis.
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,

Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Tenebrae factae sunt – Poulenc

Tenebrae factae sunt, dum crucifixissent Jesum Judaei:
et circa horam nonam exclamavit Jesus voce magna:
Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
Et inclinato capite, emisit spiritum.

Exclamans Jesus voce magna, ait:
Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.

*Darkness fell when the Jews had crucified Jesus;
and about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice:
“My God, why have you forsaken me?”
And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.
And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said:
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”*

Words: Responsories for Matins on Holy Saturday

Agnus Dei – Langlais

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

Tristis est anima mea – Poulenc

Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem:
sustinete hic, et vigilate mecum:
nunc videbitis turbam, quæ circumdabit me:
Vos fugam capietis, et ego vadam immolari pro vobis.

Ecce appropinquat hora, et Filius hominis
tradetur in manus peccatorum.

*My soul is sorrowful even unto death;
remain here and keep watch with me.
Now you will see the crowd that will surround me;
you will take flight, and I shall go to be sacrificed for you.*

*Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man
will be delivered into the hands of sinners.*

Words: Responsories for Matins on Maundy Thursday

INTERVAL

Glory be to God for dappled things *Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)*

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Words: Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89)

Magnificat, from The Hatfield Service *Alec Roth (b. 1948)*

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm.
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things.
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel
as he promised to our forefathers Abraham, and his seed forever.
Amen.

Words: Book of Common Prayer

Hymne à la Vierge *Pierre Villette (1926-98)*

O toute belle, Vierge Marie, votre âme trouve en Dieu le parfait amour ; il vous revêt du manteau de la Grâce comme une fiancée parée de ses bijoux. Alleluia. Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur, car tu as pris soin de moi, car tu m'as enveloppée du voile de l'innocence.

Vous êtes née avant les collines, O sagesse de Dieu, Porte du Salut ; heureux celui qui marche dans vos traces qui apprête son cœur à la voix de vos conseils. Alleluia. Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur, car tu m'as faite, avant le jour, car tu m'as fait précéder le jaillissement des sources.

Avant les astres vous étiez présente, Mère du Créateur, au profond du ciel ; quand Dieu fixait les limites du monde vous partagiez son cœur étant à l'œuvre avec lui. O toute belle Vierge Marie.

O fairest Virgin Mary, your soul finds perfect love in the Lord; he clothes you in robes of grace like a bride attired with jewels. Alleluia. I will sing thy praise, O Lord, for thou hast looked after me, and covered me with the veil of innocence.

You were born before the hills, O wisdom of the Lord, Gate of Redemption; blessed be he who walks in your steps and tunes his heart to the counsels of your voice. Alleluia. I will sing thy praise, O Lord, for thou hast made me before the dawn, and before the gushing forth of springs.

Before the stars you were there, Mother of the Creator, in the highest Heaven; when God was setting the limits of the world you shared his love as you laboured with him. O fairest Virgin Mary.

Words: Roland Bouhéret (1930-95)

Salvator mundi *Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-85)*

Salvator mundi, salva nos;
qui per crucem et sanguinem
redemisti nos, auxiliare nobis,
te deprecamur, Deus noster.

*Saviour of the world, save us
Who has redeemed us by the cross and by his blood
We beseech thee, help us, our God.*

Words: Antiphon for Holy Unction

Drop, drop slow tears *William Walton (1902-83)*

Drop, drop, slow tears,
and bathe those beautiful feet,
which brought from heaven
the news and Prince of Peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
his mercies to entreat;
to cry for vengeance
sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
nor let his eye see sin,
but through my tears.

Words: Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650)

The Panther

Nico Muhly (b. 1981)

Widely across the world there are
multitudes of birds and of beasts, land-treading,
established to live as far as the water,
the roaring sea, the salt-waves' surge,
encircles this bright bosom. Of one we have heard tell,
a wondrous kind of wild beast,
famed among men in far-off lands,
which guards a habitat, enjoys a home,
among mountain caves. That beast is called the 'panther'
by name, as the children of men,
those steadfast in wisdom, tell in their writings
about that solitary wanderer....

That is a marvellous beast, wondrously beautiful
in all his colours...Joseph's tunic
was in various colours of every hue,
each of which shone more brightly, more splendidly,
than the next to the sons of men.

...

He has a special nature,
merciful and moderate. He is gentle,
loving and gracious, wishing to do no harm
to anyone.

...

After he takes food, contented with his fill,
he always seeks rest after feasting
in a hidden place under the mountain caves.
There, for three nights' space, the mighty warrior

slips into slumber, overcome by sleep.
Then the brave one rises up again,
adorned with majesty, swiftly from sleep
on the third day. A melodious voice,
the sweetest of sounds, comes from the wild beast's mouth.

...

On the third day
he arose from a hidden place, after he suffered death for us
for three nights, prince of the angels,
giver of victories. That was the sweet fragrance,
bright and joyous throughout all the world!

...

So said the wise one, St Paul:
'Manifold throughout middle-earth
are the unstinting goods which the Father Almighty
and the one hope of all creatures,
above or below, dispenses to us
as grace and life sustenance.'

Words: Anon. 10th century, from The Exeter Book, tr. Eleanor Parker

This anthem was commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, with generous support of the Malcolm Walker Fund, to celebrate the opening in 2025 of Exeter Cathedral's Treasures Exhibition, putting The Exeter Book on public display for the first time since its bequest to Exeter Cathedral in 1072. The anthem was premiered by the Exeter Cathedral Choir at Evensong on Wednesday 4 February, which was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.



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